

AN INTRODUCTION TO CERTAIN BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

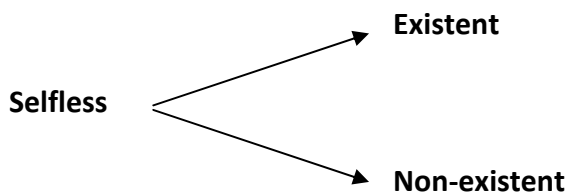
There are four Buddhist tenet systems in ascending order:

- The **Great Exposition School** / Vaibhashika
- The **Sutra School** / Sauntranika (divided into those following scripture and those following reasoning)
- The **Mind-only school** / Cittamatra
- The **Middle Way school** / Madhyamika (divided into the Autonomy Middle Way school and the Consequence Middle Way school)

The following presentation is from the viewpoint of the **Proponents of Sutra Following Reasoning**.

ESTABLISHED BASES

The broadest possible category, including all existents and non-existents as well, is that of the selfless. All Buddhist tenet systems assert selflessness as the main principle of their philosophies. What is selfless is empty of or lacks a certain type of self. A fundamental assertion in Buddhism is that only through understanding selflessness, or emptiness, can one gain liberation and thereby be relieved of powerless rebirth.



In order to understand selflessness, it is necessary to understand the phenomena that are the bases of selflessness. Therefore, in the beginning, students are taught what exists and how one can know those existents.

Established base is mutually inclusive with:

- object of knowledge
- existent
- phenomenon
- object of comprehension
- object
- object of comprehension of an omniscient consciousness
- hidden phenomenon

Also, established base is mutually inclusive with its own definition as well as with the definitions of the phenomena mutually inclusive with it.

Table: Established Base and the phenomena mutually inclusive with it

Definienda	Definitions
1. Established Base	Established by a valid cognizer
2. Object of knowledge	Suitable as an object of an awareness
3. Existent	Observed by a valid cognizer
4. Phenomenon	That which holds its own entity
5. Object of comprehension	Object realized by a valid cognizer
6. Object	Object known by an awareness
7. Object of comprehension of an omniscient consciousness	Object realized by omniscient consciousness
8. Hidden phenomenon	Object realized in a hidden manner by a thought consciousness apprehending it

There are many divisions of established bases and the phenomena mutually inclusive with it but the chief of these is the exhaustive division of established bases into **permanent phenomena** and **functioning things**.

Functioning things or simply, things are impermanent phenomena which are produced, abide, and disintegrate moment by moment. On the other hand, permanent phenomena in this system, are not necessarily eternal but are those existents which are not momentary in the sense that they do not disintegrate moment by moment.

Functioning thing

A thing is defined as: **that which is able to perform a function**

The main function or the main object produced by a functioning thing is an effect which is the substantial continuum of that functioning thing itself in the next moment. Thus, functioning things principally perform the function of producing effects. Only such things, impermanent phenomena, are produced by their causes and conditions, abide for a single moment, and disintegrate only to be re-produced in the next moment. The main or substantial cause of the table of this moment is the table of the former moment which has produced a type similar to but not the same as itself. Reflecting this nature of functioning things, the phenomena mutually inclusive with it include:

- functioning thing
- impermanent phenomenon
- product
- composed phenomenon
- cause
- effect
- ultimate truth

- specifically characterized phenomenon
- manifest phenomenon

Table: Functioning thing and the phenomena mutually inclusive with it

Definienda	Definitions
1. Functioning thing	That which is able to perform a function
2. Impermanent phenomenon	Momentary phenomenon
3. Product	Created phenomenon
4. Composed phenomenon	Disintegrating phenomenon
5. Cause	Producer
6. Effect	Object produced
7. Ultimate truth	Phenomenon which is ultimately able to perform a function
8. Specifically characterized phenomenon	A phenomena which is established by way of its own character without being merely imputed by a term or thought consciousness
9. Manifest phenomenon	Object explicitly realized by a direct valid cognizer

The Divisions of Functioning Thing

Matter

Definition: *That which is atomically established*

- mutually inclusive with form

A. **External matter:** *that which is atomically established and not included within the continuum of a person*

1. Form source
2. Sound source
3. Odor source
4. Taste source
5. Tangible source

B. **Internal matter**

1. Eye sense power
2. Ear sense power
3. Nose sense power
4. Tongue sense power
5. Body sense power

Consciousness

Definition: *That which is clear and knowing.*

- mutually inclusive with awareness and knower

A. **Sense consciousness:** *a knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, a physical sense power.*

1. Eye consciousness
2. Ear consciousness
3. Nose consciousness
4. Tongue consciousness
5. Body consciousness

B. **Mental consciousness:** *a knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, a mental sense power.*

OR DIVIDED IN ANOTHER WAY

A. **Mind**

B. **Mental factor**

Non-associated compositional factor

Definition: *A composed phenomenon which is neither matter nor consciousness*

A. **Non-associated compositional factors which are persons** (or more exactly, all living beings)

B. **Non-associated compositional factors which are not persons** (e.g. time)

Permanent phenomena

Other than functioning things, all remaining established bases are permanent phenomena. A permanent phenomenon is defined as:

A common locus of a phenomenon and the non momentary

That is, permanent phenomena are both phenomena and non-momentary. An example of a permanent phenomenon is uncomposed space, which is a mere absence of obstructive contact. Space is all pervading because there is an absence of obstructive contact everywhere, even where solid objects exist, for without an absence of obstructive contact an obstructive object could not be there in the first place. Such space is not produced from causes and conditions. Uncomposed space is to be distinguished from composed space which results from removing objects to allow passage and so forth.

In all of the Buddhist systems except Proponents of the Great Exposition School, permanent is not taken to mean lasting eternally. Rather, “permanent” refers to phenomena that are not momentary. Permanent phenomena are of two types: *those that are stable in time* and *those which are occasional*.

Some permanent phenomena are not eternal, but are occasional. For instance, the uncomposed space inside a pot is a permanent phenomenon but is not eternal. When the pot is destroyed, the space inside is no longer suitable to be designated. Also, the space inside a pot does not change moment by moment and thus cannot be called impermanent. It is an occasional permanence.

Table: Permanent phenomenon and the phenomena mutually inclusive with it

Definienda	Definitions
1. Permanent phenomenon	A common locus of a phenomenon and the non momentary
2. Non-produced phenomenon	Non-created phenomenon
3. Uncomposed phenomenon	Non-disintegrating phenomenon
4. Conventional truth	Phenomenon which is ultimately unable to perform a function
5. Phenomenon which is a non-thing	Phenomenon which is empty of the ability to perform a function
6. Generally characterized phenomenon	A phenomena which is merely imputed by a term or thought consciousness and is not established as a specifically characterized phenomenon

Another way of dividing Object of Knowledge

Singular phenomenon – a phenomenon which is not diverse e.g. existent, person, etc.

One with pot – a phenomenon which is not diverse with pot, i.e. pot

Different phenomenon – phenomena which are diverse e.g. existent and object of knowledge, pot and pillar, etc.

Different from pot – a phenomenon which is diverse from pot

THE COMPARISON OF PHENOMENA

The boundaries of pervasion or extension of a phenomenon is its range – what it pervades, what it includes, and what it excludes. By understanding clearly a phenomenon's boundaries of pervasion one is able to ascertain the scope of that phenomenon. The essential tool in this investigation is the analytical comparison of phenomenon. By comparing two phenomena and establishing their relative boundaries of pervasion, the limits of each phenomenon in relation to the other, one comes to understand the points of similarity and dissimilarity between them.

The comparison of phenomena presupposes that those phenomena are **different** in the sense that they are not *exactly* the same from the point of view of *name* and *meaning*. Phenomena which are not different are **one**. A pot is the only thing which is one with pot, for it is exactly the same as a pot in name and meaning. The investigation of differences does not address the cases of phenomena which are exactly the same. There is no difference between a pot and a pot. **Any two phenomena must compare in one of the following ways:**

1. Mutually inclusive phenomena

Things which are mutually inclusive are different phenomena which have all eight approaches of pervasion. The Tibetan term for “mutually inclusive” literally means “the same meaning”. Mutually inclusive phenomena are different only in the sense of not having the same name, for their meanings – the objects which are included within the extension of each – are exactly the same. Also, any two mutually inclusive phenomena have all *eight approaches of pervasion*. That is, whatever is a *p* is necessarily a *q* (and vice versa), if a *p* exists, then a *q* exists (and vice versa).

That mutually inclusive phenomena have all eight approaches of pervasion entails that there is a **common locus**; that is, there is something which is those two mutually inclusive phenomena. A common locus is not something that exists halfway between the two and is neither. Rather, it is something which is both of them.

2. Three possibilities

If there are three possibilities between two phenomena, there must be a common locus of the two and there are two points of difference, at least one of which is something which is one of the two phenomena but not the other. The three possibilities are such that:

1. There is something which is both a p and a q .
2. There is something which is a p but not a q
3. There is something which is a q but not a p .

3. Four possibilities

If there are four possibilities between two phenomena, all the points of similarity and difference are exemplified. The four possibilities are such that:

1. There is something which is both a p and a q .
2. There is something which is a p but not a q .
3. There is something which is a q but not a p .
4. There is something which is neither a p nor a q .

4. Mutually exclusive phenomena

Mutually exclusive phenomena are those which are different and a common locus of them is not possible. There is nothing that is both a p and a q .