

Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi

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All page references refer to this root text unless otherwise stated.

**Lesson No: 24¹
2013**

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Consequence School

The explanation of the Consequence School (*Skt. Prasangika*) has seven outlines, as before.

1 Definition

The definition of a Consequentialist is: a Proponent of the Middle Way who, by way of accepting just other-approved consequences, does not assert true existence even conventionally.

2 Divisions

Examples [of Consequentialists] are Buddhapalita, Chandrakirti, and Shantideva.

3 Etymology

There is a reason why Acharya Buddhapalita is called a ‘Consequentialist.’ He is called such due to asserting that an inferential cognizer realizing a thesis is generated in the continuum of an opponent just by [stating] consequences (Page 24).

When we look at the etymology of the word, “Consequentialist” (or *Prasangika*), it is someone who is able to cause an opponent to generate an inferential cognition realising a particular thesis by merely stating a consequence of the opponent’s argument or statement.

In order for an opponent to generate an inferential cognition realising a thesis, it is not necessary for the Consequentialist to cause him to realise that thesis by stating a reason, “This is such and such.” All he has to do is to merely state a consequence of the opponent’s position by saying, “It follows then that ...”

¹ There are no transcripts for Lesson 23 held on 4th June 2013 as this was a class exercise session.

Let us use as an example a consequence that a Consequentialist could use against a Proponent of the Autonomy School in order to refute true existence. A Consequentialist may say, “It follows then that the subject, a sprout, is not produced in dependence upon its own cause, because it is inherently existent.” It is said that the opponent, by simply hearing the consequence, can realise that there is an internal contradiction in his own position and, in the process doing, he may come to realise the emptiness of inherent existence.

The Consequentialists state that in order for an opponent to generate an inferential cognition realising a particular thesis, it is not necessary:

- to state a subject that is commonly agreed upon by both parties and
- to always state a reason.

The point is that the Consequentialists state that, in order for an opponent to generate an inferential cognition realising a thesis, it is not necessary to cause the opponent to do so by always stating a proof or reason. One can do that simply by pointing out the absurdity of a consequence of their position.

The root of the Consequence School stems from Nagarjuna, father and son, namely Nagarjuna and his spiritual son, Aryadeva. Nagarjuna composed *Fundamental Wisdom*. Nagarjuna and Aryadeva did not employ many consequences in establishing the general procedure of the Madhyamaka view.

Later on Acharya Buddhapalita, in his commentary on Nagarjuna’s *Fundamental Wisdom*, employed only consequences in explaining Nagarjuna’s view and intent. He did not use any autonomous reasons.

Bhavaviveka disagreed with Buddhapalita’s commentary on Nagarjuna’s *Fundamental Wisdom* and the idea that one can simply use consequences in order to establish the view of selflessness. He felt that one cannot realise Nagarjuna’s intent by employing consequences only. He was not saying that a consequence is not a line of reasoning but he explained that one must use autonomous proofs and reasons in order to be able to cause an opponent to generate an inferential cognition realising selflessness. He wrote a few commentaries explaining Nagarjuna’s *Fundamental Wisdom* by using autonomous proofs and reasons. This is how Bhavaviveka became the trailblazer of the AMWS (*Svatantrika-Madhyamaka*).

Later the great master Chandrakirti, in one of his famous commentaries called *Clear Words*, supported Buddhapalita’s position by saying that one can cause an opponent to generate an inferential cognition realising the thesis by merely stating a consequence. In his *Clear Words*, Chandrakirti agreed with Buddhapalita’s mode of explaining Nagarjuna’s *Fundamental Wisdom*, stating clearly that Buddhapalita’s explanation was exactly according to the intent of Nagarjuna. He also stated that the use of autonomous reasons in order to generate an inferential cognition realising a thesis in an opponent is wrong.

Chandrakirti stated very clearly that the position of the *Prasangika* is correct whereas the assertions of the Autonomists were incorrect. For that reason, most people would attribute Chandrakirti to be the trailblazer of the *Prasangika-Madhyamika*. However there are scholars who say that Buddhapalita is the trailblazer of the *Prasangika*, not Chandrakirti.

4 Way of asserting objects

There are two types of objects:

1. hidden objects and
2. manifest objects.

Objects that are necessarily realized in dependence on a reason are posited as hidden objects, and objects that can be ascertained by an ordinary person through the force of experience without depending on a reason are posited as manifest objects (Page 24).

“Ordinary person” can be taken literally and not necessarily “ordinary” in the spiritual sense of a person who is only concerned with this life.

Illustrations of hidden objects are, for example, the impermanence of sound and the emptiness of sound being truly existent.

Illustrations of manifest objects are, for example, a pot and a woollen cloth.

Perceptible object² and manifest object are equivalent (Page 24).

Perceptible/manifest objects

A perceptible object and a manifest object are mutually inclusive. It is obvious whether it is a pot, a table, a cup, and so forth. When we see a cup, we do not have to think, using reasons, to try to figure out what the object is. Obviously it is a cup. You realise that through experience. All the objects of the five senses are obvious:

- visual form is the object of the eye consciousness
- sound is the object of the ear consciousness
- smell is the object of the nose consciousness
- taste is the object of the tongue consciousness
- tactility is the object of the body consciousness

In order to realise a perceptible, manifest, or obvious object, you do not necessarily have to depend on a reason. There are exceptions in which you may need to think about what this is and what that is but, in general, these things need not be realised by using a reason.

Hidden objects

These are objects that you have to realise, at least initially, by using a reason. The examples of hidden objects that are given in the text are the impermanence of sound and the emptiness of sound being truly existent. In order to realise the impermanence or the emptiness of sound, one has to depend on a reason. Without depending on a reason, they cannot be realised.

According to the Consequence School, anything that exists is either a hidden

² *mngon sum* (Skt. *pratyaksa*) This can also be translated as ‘direct’. For schools other than the Consequence school, this is normally translated as ‘perception’ or ‘direct perceiver’ since it refers to the cognitive subject. In the Consequence school however it primarily refers to the object of cognition and hence it is translated here as ‘perceptible object’.

object or a manifest object. There is no common locus between the two, i.e., you will *not* be able to find something that is *both* a hidden object and a manifest object. Therefore these two are mutually exclusive.

Hidden and extremely hidden objects

Within the category of hidden objects, there are (1) hidden objects and there are (2) extremely hidden objects (or extremely obscured objects).

Examples of extremely hidden objects will be the extremely subtle details of the workings of a particular cause and effect relationship and the existence of the pure lands of the buddhas, which are very extensive, exist in the ten directions, and are countless in number.

Extremely hidden objects can only be realised in dependence on scriptural authority. In dependence upon scriptural authority, one generates an inferential cogniser through belief. This is how one comes to understand extremely hidden objects.

According to the Consequentialists, manifest objects and hidden objects are mutually exclusive. However the lower schools define a manifest object in a different way. For example, according to the Sutra School:

- that which is explicitly realised by a direct valid cogniser is a manifest object.
- that which is explicitly realised by an inferential cogniser is a hidden object.

Because of this understanding of what constitutes a hidden object—that which is explicitly realised by an inferential cogniser—for them, everything can be explicitly realised by an inferential cogniser. If that is the case that makes everything a hidden object. But as seen in the previous module on lo-rig, existents and non-existents are mutually exclusive.

According to the Consequentialists, manifest objects can be realised directly through experience without having to depend on a reason necessarily, whereas hidden objects have to be realised in dependence on a reason. This is one way of looking at existents—hidden objects and manifest objects.

Hidden objects	Manifest objects
Objects that are necessarily realised in dependence on a reason.	Objects that can be ascertained by an ordinary person through the force of experience without depending on a reason.
Illustrations: the impermanence of sound and the emptiness of sound being truly existent.	Illustrations: a pot, a table, a cup, a woollen cloth.
Two divisions: 1. Hidden object 2. Extremely hidden object Extremely hidden objects can only be realised in dependence on scriptural authority. Examples: the subtle details of the workings of a cause and effect relationship or the existence of the pure lands of the buddhas.	Perceptible object and manifest object are mutually inclusive

Another way of dividing objects is into:

1. conventional truths and
2. ultimate truths.

The two truths

The definition of being a conventional truth is: an object that is found by a valid cognizer analyzing a conventionality and with respect to which that valid cognizer analyzing the conventionality becomes a valid cognizer analyzing a conventionality.

It is inadmissible to divide conventional truths into two – real conventional truths and unreal conventional truths – because there are no real conventional truths. This is so because if it is a conventional truth, it is necessarily not real. This is so because if it is a conventional truth, it is necessarily unreal. [i.e., a falsity]

It is admissible to divide conventional truths into two – real and unreal – relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness because a form, relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness, is real, while the reflection of a face in a mirror [being a face], relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness, is unreal. If it is real relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness, it does not necessarily exist because truly existent forms are [real with respect to a worldly consciousness but do not exist] (Pages 24 – 25).

There are many ways of translating *kun rdzob bden pa*: conventional truth, obscurational truth, truth of a concealer, concealer truth, and so forth. In the context of the Consequentialists, sometimes obscurational truth is more accurate. Let us stick with conventional truth for the time being.

Alternative definition of conventional truth from Ven. Gyurme: an object that is found by a valid cogniser *distinguishing* a conventionality and with respect to which that valid cogniser *distinguishing* the conventionality becomes a valid cogniser *distinguishing* a conventionality.

Ven Gyurme: I prefer the term “distinguishing” rather than “analysing.”

“A valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality”: there is a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality and there is also a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate. For ease of understanding:

- A conventional truth is the final or main object of a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality.
- An ultimate truth is the final or main object of the valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate.

The definition of being an ultimate truth is: an object found by a valid cognizer analyzing the ultimate and with respect to which that valid cognizer analyzing the ultimate becomes a valid cognizer analyzing the ultimate (Page 25).

What exactly is an ultimate truth? It is the emptiness of true existence. There is nothing higher or more exalted than that. Any existence other than true existence is a conventional truth. This is an easy way to understand the two truths according to the Consequentialists.

The definition of a conventional truth is an object that is found by a valid

cogniser distinguishing a conventionality and with respect to which that valid cogniser distinguishing the conventionality becomes a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality. When we look at a conventional truth from the perspective of a sentient being, then the first part—an object that is found by a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality—is enough. Why then do we have the rest of the definition? Because there is a buddha who is different from us.

The omniscient mind of a buddha directly perceives the two truths simultaneously. This makes that *one* omniscient mind of a buddha *both* a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality *and*, at the same time, a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate.

Is there a phenomenon that is both these two cognisers?

A vase is a conventional truth and is not an ultimate truth. But someone says to you, “The vase is an ultimate truth because it is the final object that is distinguished by a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate.”

Then you say, “No. It is a conventional truth.”

But the other person continues to say, “It follows that the vase is the final object of a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate because it is the object of comprehension of a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate.”

Khen Rinpoche spoke in English: Are you getting somewhere or not? All right. We try one more time.

Do you know why we are going through this process? Someone may ask you, “Why can we not define a conventional truth only as an object that is found by a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality and an ultimate truth as an object that is found by a valid cogniser distinguishing the ultimate? It should be enough to just state that because they are the final objects that are distinguished by both valid cognisers respectively. Why can we not just leave it at that?”

If the definition of an ultimate truth is simply, “An object that is found by a valid cogniser analysing the ultimate,” then in this case, an ultimate truth will not necessarily be limited to emptiness.

So the question is, “If it is an object found by a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate truth, is it necessarily emptiness?”

The point is this. What would be the problem if the definition of an ultimate truth is just like that alone, i.e., an object that is found by a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate? The problem then is that you can posit any existent, not necessarily just emptiness, to be the object that is found by a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate. It can be anything *other than* emptiness. *All* phenomena are objects that are found by a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate. Likewise all phenomena are also the objects that are found by a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality.

The problem becomes clear when somebody tells you, “The subject is the omniscient mind of a buddha that realises emptiness.” The omniscient mind of a

buddha realises emptiness. Is that a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate? Yes it is.

Does the omniscient mind of a buddha realising emptiness realise *only* emptiness? The omniscient mind of a buddha realises everything else, which means everything other than emptiness. Because of this, therefore it follows that *all* phenomena are objects that are found by a valid cogniser distinguishing an ultimate. All phenomena are the objects that are found by the Buddha's omniscient mind.

Likewise all phenomena are also objects that are found by a valid cogniser distinguishing a conventionality because a buddha's omniscient mind directly perceives all conventionalities. All phenomena become objects found by that mind.

Because we have to consider the workings of the mind of a buddha, if you were to define the two truths as the objects that are found by their respective valid cognisers, whether distinguishing an ultimate or a conventionality, it is not going to work. Therefore the definition of a conventional truth is posited to be an object that is found by a valid cognizer distinguishing a conventionality and—not stopping there—with respect to which that valid cognizer distinguishing the conventionality *becomes* a valid cognizer distinguishing a conventionality.

Divisions of conventional truth

Unlike the Autonomists, the Consequentialists do not divide conventional truth into (1) real conventional truth and (2) unreal conventional truth. According to the Consequentialists, there is no real conventional truth. Why? Because if it is a conventional truth, it is necessarily unreal and is a falsity.

However, the Consequentialists do divide conventional truths into real and unreal relative only to the perspective of a worldly consciousness. As stated in the root text, “Because a form, relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness, is real, while the reflection of a face in a mirror [being a face], relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness, is unreal.” (Page 25).

“Relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness”: “worldly” refers to someone who has not realised emptiness. In the perspective of such a person, a form is real. Everything that appears to that person appears to (1) exist by way of its own character, (2) exist truly, and (3) exist inherently. Not only is there that appearance, the person *assents* to the appearance and thinks, “This is how things exist.” Therefore in the perspective of such a person, everything is *real* in that sense. Here “form” is considered to be a real conventional truth according to the perspective of a worldly consciousness.

The text continues: “If it is real relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness, it does not necessarily exist because truly existent forms are [real with respect to a worldly consciousness but do not exist].” (Page 25).

The reflection of a face in the mirror is an unreal conventional truth in the perspective of a worldly consciousness. Even someone who has not realised emptiness realises that the reflection of the face in the mirror is not an actual face. So the person realises that there is a disparity between appearance and reality.

For the worldly person who has not realised emptiness, with regard to certain phenomena, he cannot realise that there is a disparity between how they appear and how they exist. To this worldly person, they exist in the way they appear. Those phenomena are what we call real conventional truths in the perspective of a worldly consciousness.

The reflection of the face in the mirror is an unreal conventional truth relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness. Why? Because even for a worldly person who has not realised emptiness, that person realises that the reflection of the face in the mirror is not an actual face. The person sees that there is a disparity between appearance and reality. The example of the reflection of the face in the mirror is an example of an unreal conventional truth relative to the perspective of a worldly consciousness.

Do real conventional truths exist? No.

Do unreal conventional truths exist? One may be able to say “Yes.” Like the reflection of the face in the mirror, it is a falsity. It is unreal.

The definition of being an ultimate truth is: an object found by a valid cognizer analyzing the ultimate and with respect to which that valid cognizer analyzing the ultimate becomes a valid cognizer analyzing the ultimate.

The divisions [of ultimate truths] are similar to those in the context of the Proponents of Mind Only, however in this context it is asserted that true cessations are necessarily ultimate truths (Page 25).

The Consequentialists are alike in asserting that true cessations are ultimate truths.

Next is the way of asserting object-processors. Here there are some differences in the position of the Consequentialists.

5 Way of asserting object-processors

The mere I that is imputed in dependence on the five aggregates is asserted to be the illustration of the person.

Person is necessarily a non-associated compositional factor (Page 25).

Illustration of the person

With the exception of the Consequentialists, all the other tenets believe that things exist inherently. This means that when you look for the object, you definitely will be able to find something that you can point to and say, “There it is (referring to the object).” That is the meaning of “the imputed object when sought is findable.”

With the exception of the Consequentialists, some say that the “I” or person is the body. Many say that the “I” or person is the mind.

The Consequentialists do not say that the person is either the body or mind. In fact they say that the person is *not* the mind. To them, the person cannot be the mind. The person cannot be the body either. When you look for the person,

ultimately you cannot find it. You are not able to find the person when you look for it yet the person exists. The person exists, but when you look for it, it cannot be found. So what is the person?

To the Consequentialists, the person is none other than that which is merely imputed in dependence upon the five aggregates. This is how the “I” exists. The “I” exists as merely imputed in dependence upon the five aggregates. There is nothing beyond that. Therefore in this school, the person is a non-associated compositional factor. It is neither matter nor is it consciousness.

Valid cognition

There are two types of awarenesses:

1. valid cognizers and
2. non-valid cognizers (Page 25).

There are two types of valid cognizer:

3. direct valid cognizers and
4. inferential valid cognizers (Page 25).

The Consequentialists define a valid cogniser differently from the other tenets. To them, as long as the mind realises its object and it is infallible with respect to the object, it is a valid cogniser.

This position is unlike the schools below it who all insist that a valid cogniser has to be a *newly* incontrovertible knower. “Newly” refers to the very first moment of cognition. The Consequentialists say that that is unnecessary. A valid cognition need not be the *first* moment of realisation of the object. For that reason, according to the Consequentialists, subsequent cognisers are considered to be valid cognisers as well. As mentioned in the previous module on lo-rig, a subsequent cogniser is not a valid cogniser. A subsequent cogniser is a knower that realises what has already been realised.

You have to understand these differences in the assertions of the Consequentialists and the other tenets with regard to what constitutes a valid cogniser. The difference comes in their definition of a valid cogniser.

There are two types of valid cognizer:

1. direct valid cognizers and
2. inferential valid cognizers (Page 25).

According to the Consequentialists, a direct valid cogniser

- is a valid cogniser that arises *without* necessarily having to depend on directly (or explicitly) realising a sign and
- is an incontrovertible knower with respect to its object of the mode of apprehension.

They assert (1) direct valid cognisers, (2) inferential valid cognisers, and (3) yogic direct perceivers. They do not assert self-knowing direct perceivers. This is another difference in the position of the Consequentialists.

There are two types of direct valid cognizers:

1. conceptual direct valid cognizers and
2. non-conceptual direct valid cognizers (Page 25).

As mentioned in lo-rig, according to the lower schools such as the SS, a direct valid cogniser is necessarily free from conceptuality. But according to the Consequentialists, there are *conceptual* direct valid cognizers.

Illustrations of conceptual direct valid cognizers are, for example, the second moment of an inferential cognizer realizing sound to be impermanent and a remembering consciousness that is a factually concordant memory of blue generated through being induced by a sense direct perceiver apprehending blue (Page 25).

The illustration given of a conceptual direct valid cogniser is the second moment of an inferential cogniser realising sound to be impermanent. What about the first moment of this inferential cognition?

- The first moment of an inferential cogniser realizing sound to be impermanent is an inferential valid cogniser.
- In the second moment, it becomes a subsequent cogniser but it is a conceptual direct valid cogniser.

Why is the first moment of an inferential cogniser realising sound to be impermanent an inferential valid cogniser and then, in the second moment, it becomes a conceptual direct valid cogniser?

As mentioned before, according to the Consequentialists, the difference between a direct valid cogniser and an inferential valid cogniser hinges on whether that mind is generated by relying directly on a sign or reason or not. The generation of a direct valid cogniser does not come about by relying directly on a sign whereas an inferential cogniser is generated by relying directly on a sign or reason.

The first moment of a mind realising the impermanence of sound comes from relying on a reason. That makes that first moment an inferential valid cogniser because that first moment is generated by relying directly on a reason. It is a valid cogniser. Not only that, it is an inferential valid cogniser.

How come in the second moment that same mind is then considered to be a direct valid cogniser? Is that second moment generated in dependence on a reason or not? In the second moment, it is *not* generated in dependence directly on a reason. Since in the second moment of an inferential cogniser realising sound to be impermanent is not generated directly in dependence on a reason, therefore it is not an inferential valid cogniser. It is a direct valid cogniser. Is it a conceptual mind? Yes it is. So it is a conceptual direct valid cogniser.

An illustration of a non-conceptual direct valid cognizer is, for example, a sense direct perceiver apprehending a form.

If it is a direct valid cognizer it does not necessarily have a perceptible object because if it is a yogic direct perceiver it necessarily does not have a perceptible object. This is so because perceptible object and manifest object are equivalent.

If it is a subsequent cognizer it is necessarily a direct valid cognizer (Page 25).

For the second moment of an eye consciousness apprehending blue, that second moment of an eye consciousness apprehending blue is not generated directly in dependence on a sign or reason. Because it is a second moment of an eye consciousness apprehending blue, it is a subsequent cogniser. It is non-conceptual. It is a valid cogniser. That makes it a non-conceptual direct valid cogniser.

What you have to get is that, according to the Consequentialists, a valid cogniser need not be newly incontrovertible. As long as it is incontrovertible with respect to its object, then it is a valid cogniser.

Because of this, according to the Consequentialists, subsequent cognisers are also valid cognisers.

What distinguishes a direct valid cogniser from an inferential valid cogniser? Both are valid cognisers, but direct valid cognisers are not generated by directly depending on a sign or reason whereas an inferential valid cogniser is generated by relying directly on a sign. For that reason, the second moment of an inferential cogniser is not posited to be an inferential valid cogniser but a conceptual direct valid cogniser.

According to the Consequentialists, a direct perceiver is not necessarily a knower that is free of conceptuality.

If we have some time, we will look at the rest of the way of asserting object-processors according to the Consequentialists. Then what is left is explaining the objects of negation according to the Consequentialists. Then that is about it.

It is understandable that after being used to a certain presentation of the mind, suddenly you now encounter the Consequentialists who have their own unique understanding of the mind. It is important to know clearly the differences. Think about the differences between the Consequentialists' way of presenting the object-processors and what we had studied previously. If there are any differences that you do not understand or cannot reconcile, then bring it up in class.

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