

BARRIERS TO EMPTINESS

A STUDY GUIDE ON THE NATURE OF
CONDITIONED STATES

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BARRIERS TO EMPTINESS

I salute the Buddha.

The foremost of all teachers

He has taught the doctrine of dependent origination,

The cessation of all conceptual games.

Nagarjuna

The goal of Mahayana Buddhism, and Zen in particular, is to open the mind to the truth of Emptiness, the view that impermanence, interdependence, and intimacy underlie all existence. The entire phenomenal world arises from causes and conditions and lacks a persisting fixed self-nature. All forms are interdependent; nothing stands alone unaided in the world. Awakening to Emptiness is accomplished by overcoming the barriers to perceiving the world “just as it is” – an extraordinary network of intricate relationships.

The heart of Buddha’s teaching is captured in his statement, “I teach the nature of suffering [*dukkha*] and its cessation.” The study guide *Barriers to Emptiness*, addresses suffering and cessation. It introduces a means to expand the understanding of the nature of *dukkha* and the means to resolve its effects. This guide facilitates an individual’s understanding of the first and third Noble Truths by examining the operation of the conditioned states that are the root of suffering (1st Noble Truth), and the Liberated Activities that express the cessation of suffering (3rd Noble Truth). It communicates how the barriers of conditioned states operate within an individual, and then describes the freedom of Liberated Activities that appears with transformation of the barriers. Learning to regard *dukkha* as a focus of study and reflection, and to recognize how to work with conditioned states, promotes right view and right thought, the first two steps on the Eightfold Path.

Barriers to Emptiness’s main emphasis rests on introspective understanding: verification that conditioned states exist and how they reveal themselves in thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Doing so enhances understanding how conditioned states operate within oneself, and how they relate in the wider scope of a practitioner’s life. In actual practice, conceptual understanding does not bring about cessation of the actions of conditioned states; an inner realization is essential, one that creates a transformed perception of the world. Learning the myriad ways *dukkha* manifests requires a meditative mind, one rigorously schooled in observation and inquiry. An analytic introspection of conditioned states together with a diligent *Zazen* practice provides the essential internal environment that sets the stage for a revolution of mind. Even a momentary insight can generate the resolution that overturns the hold that conditioning has on our view of the world and our subsequent behavior.

METHOD OF STUDY

The study guide is written in short statements that describe a specific point. Longer explanations are deliberately avoided to allow the student(s) room to reflect and add their own insights. Study can be accomplished either individually or in a group. *Barriers to Emptiness* is probably best utilized in a small group where shared understandings would spark insights. Either way, the brevity of the statement sets the stage for internal reflection or group discussion.

Each section begins with general ideas and moves toward the particular and personal. Time should be allowed for the information to have a chance to mature within one's Zazen practice. One to two weeks or more of separation between studies of sections permit insights to build.

BARRIERS TO EMPTINESS SUMMARY CHART

The Barriers to Emptiness Summary Chart [p. 17] contains the constituents of the 1st and 3rd Noble Truths, the barriers that condition suffering and the transformed barriers that manifest when the conditioning is resolved. The chart is helpful as a synopsis for the definitions, and as a guide to the relationships of the specific barriers and their transformations.

The summary chart contains these elements

1st Noble Truth – The Truth of Suffering

1. The general definition of what constitutes conditioned states
2. Six different Barriers: Permanence, Ownership, Randomness, Mind Constructs, Problems, and Objective Definitions.
3. Definitions of each barrier's characteristics

3rd Noble Truth – The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

1. The general definition of what constitutes Liberated Activities.
2. Six Transformed Barriers and their accompanying Liberated Activities: Impermanence, Autonomy, Relatedness, Openness, Oneness, and Indivisibility
3. The Liberated Activities are listed and commented on.

Why these barriers?

The barriers chosen provide a wide scope of issues that most practitioners face at some time. The first two barriers reiterate the teachings of the 1st Turning school of Hinayana, while the last four arise from the 2nd and 3rd Turning schools of the Mahayana. Their order of arrangement is not arbitrary; studying them as they are laid out allows understanding to build one upon the other. Permanence and Ownership probe the common impressions that most people have of an abiding sense of self and unlimited control over their thoughts and feelings. The barriers of Randomness and Mind Constructs move into the realm of the Mahayana's teaching of Emptiness. They require

a finer distinction of the causal nature of phenomena and their origination and development. Finally Problems and Objective Definitions point toward Madhyamika wisdom, where freedom is established by transformation and retraction of man-made obscurations. Each section of Barriers and Transformed Barriers concludes with a short description of a different aspect of Emptiness that the study of that barrier provides.ⁱ

GENERAL DEFINITIONS OF CONDITIONED STATES AND LIBERATED ACTIVITIES

Conditioned States

The conditioned states that underlie the 1st Noble Truth – The Truth of Suffering – are rooted in these two actions:

1. Unexamined assumptions are used as a basis for actions in the world. Assumptions are the personal experiences and universal karmic inheritance of an individual that are accepted without observation and inquiry into how they came to be.
2. The attribute of self-existence is assigned to all phenomena. Self-existence denies that all phenomena arise from an ever-changing interdependent web of causes and conditions.

Barriers evolve from conditioned states. They take form and solidify within one's life from repetitive responses to conditioned states. Conditioned states manifest as a continuous stream of habitual reactions to environmental causes, either from a sensory stimulus or an internal event. They express themselves automatically with a negative emotional tone; even so they are often considered “normal” because they have existed within an individual for most or all of their conscious life.

Conditioned states leave a painful wake, one of reactive response and disharmony. No amount of well-intended willful action has any permanent effect at alleviating its effects, let alone its root cause. Understanding what conditioned states are helps in forming a right view of our existential circumstance. Without right view, Zazen practice rests on a shaky foundation. However, with both intellectual knowledge and first-hand experience of the form and function of conditioned states, Zazen practice becomes infused with energy and direction. If one knows how conditioned states function, then there is more opportunity for success. Conditioned states are resolved within Zen practice, where their toxic and inhibiting activity is converted into a healing remedy.ⁱⁱ

Liberated Activities

The Liberated Activities that unfold in the 3rd Noble Truth – The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, arise from these understandings:

1. Sutra study, inference, and direct experience form the bases of the process of awakening.
2. The universal operation of interconnectedness recognizes the interdependence of all phenomena and noumena.

Transformation of barriers launches one into a new world where the stranglehold of the conditioned state is suddenly uprooted. They are unexpected events; new information “breaks” into consciousness. A strange and intriguing environment of openness presents itself. Former attitudes and conceptions of self, once considered essential, are no longer supported. Associated afflictive emotions no longer dominate.

The characteristics of the transformed barriers listed on the summary chart can be said to be speculation on what a mental landscape may exhibit after resolution of a conditioned state. They are attributes of the mind of freedom. With a mind cleared of the confusion of obscurations, the so-called personal and universal aspects of mind attain unity, producing the field of Liberated Activities. All beings are then free to enter into intimate interplay with the heretofore-alienated self. Liberated Activities signifies openness, changing the context of how the individual relates to the world, letting all beings come forth and manifest realization within an individual’s day-to-day life.

BARRIERS AND TRANSFORMED BARRIERS

I. Permanence and Impermanence

Conditioned state – Permanence: Assumes phenomena have an independent and permanent existence. One perceives the transitory as enduring.

Liberated Activity – Impermanence: Phenomena have a dependent existence and are in a constant state of unfolding. Daily endeavors are in temporal accord with causes and conditions without the pain of afflictive emotions. One perceives the transitory as transitory.

How is Permanence assigned to phenomena?

Phenomena arise from a set of causes. They exist in ever-changing forms that eventually pass away. All beings are wrapped in this web of Impermanence. Nothing can be found in nature that does not follow this pattern of existence. Yet, the fleeting cyclical nature of phenomena is often ignored. It is useful to understand the components of a life cycle that go beyond commonly held notions. We can then analyze how conditioning causes a transitory event to be considered permanent.

A lifecycle consists of the following stages:

1. Creation: A phenomena is produced with a particular form and composed of materials arising from an unfolding ephemeral set of conditions.
2. Lifetime: Phenomena provide an inherent utility, filling a niche, giving a service to its environment.
3. Dissolution: Eventually all beings come to the end of their physical lives and the their forms and materials are dispersed.
4. Afterlife: The effects of the phenomena's form and function are manifested in some manner after its extinction.

The life cycle can be understood as birth and death as we normally consider a lifetime. Zen uses the terms birth and death instead of life and death to indicate many cycles occur within one lifetime. For example in humans, a breath, a kind of birth and death, follows the cyclical pattern, beginning with the intake of air that vivifies the body, filling the body with new energy, reaching a peak, and then exhaling waste materials that had gathered in the lungs. A short period of rest occurs before the start of another inhalation. Much the same can be said for thoughts and feelings: they arise, take on a form, after a time recede, leaving behind their effects on the body and mind.

Ignoring lifecycle patterns, and ascribing permanent existence to the transitory state of phenomena, is rooted in the fundamental misperception of viewing the world as made up of as distinct “things” rather than as beings existing within a web of interdependent relationships.

Examples of how the conditioned state of Permanence operates

1. The fleeting nature of phenomena is not perceived.
2. Attachments instigate confusion and misunderstanding to rapidly changing events.
3. Ignoring the lifecycle of a being or object enhances the pain of separation at a being or object's passing

Examples of how the Liberated Activities of Impermanence operate

1. The dynamic nature of the physical and mental worlds is recognized and behavior is in accord with its variations.
2. The middle path between rigidity and conscious spontaneity is discovered and lived.
3. Understanding and witnessing the life cycle of all beings diminishes the effects of attachments, allowing an individual to accept and move quickly and amicably through all phases of a lifecycle.

What was learned about Emptiness?

The nature of phenomena is empty of rigid identity. Phenomena consist of a ceaseless unfolding of novel expressions of reality.

II. Ownership and Autonomy

Conditioned state – Ownership: Assumes material objects and mental formations can be restrained, manipulated, and exist within the range of our influence. It does not regard that everything can be taken away without our consent.ⁱⁱⁱ

Liberated Activity – Autonomy: Acknowledges the limits of our ability to control the destiny of self, others, and events. Recognizes where and how the will can be applied to create positive results.

What is Ownership?

A young woman during her first experience of sitting in Zazen observed the willy-nilly coming and going of her thoughts and the feelings they evoked. She chuckled as she reflected to herself at that time, “Well, will you just look at what’s going on!” She saw that her internal world was not what she had assumed. Both the content and operation of her mind were not in the simple order she previously considered it to be. The power of meditative observation dispelled the assumption that she was totally in charge.

Before engaging in meditation practice, asking someone if they are control of their thoughts, most would answer, “Of course.” However, in Zazen, thoughts are discovered to occur much on their own. Zazen offers a fresh view of our internal world where control over our thought process is realized to be partial at best. The same is true of many other physical and mental functions. Even beginners in Zazen become aware of this, at times being frightened by the perception of newly perceived limits of volitional authority. Dennis Overbye commented on the extent and influence of willpower in his New York Times article on free will. “A bevy of experiments in recent years suggest that the conscious mind is like a monkey riding a tiger of subconscious decisions and actions in progress, frantically making up stories about being in control.”^{iv}

Examples of how the conditioned state of Ownership operate

1. Our commonly held culturally conditioned sense of self produces the belief we are more in control of our lives than we really are.
2. Having cognitive awareness of an afflictive situation does not dissipate pain. Thinking alone does not resolve the root of the issue. At best, this type of effort brings about a partial, temporary solution.
3. Spiritual security is mistakenly sought for in occupations, family, and other roles that we are expected to fulfill. Because of adherence to this false sense of identity, alienation from others and ourselves occurs.
4. Living with the illusion of control generates efforts to try to be in command of events that are essentially uncontrollable. This causes instability, erodes confidence, and sets up a

defensive posture in our internal and external relationships.

5. For the most part, consideration of the precarious nature of our life circumstance is not taken into account.

Examples of how Liberated Activities of Autonomy operate

1. With meditative insight, relationships to the processes of thoughts and emotions can be understood.
2. Zazen dissipates habituated notions that a job or any other role can provide genuine spiritual security.
3. Going beyond being possessed by Ownership and the feelings of control, allows one to mature in self-reliance and trust, gaining a worldview of spiritual self-determination. Relinquishing the false sense of control (domination, manipulation) reveals the elements of true control (autonomy, closeness, intimate relations).

What was learned about Emptiness?

Almost all life situations are empty of control. They arise from a source of causes beyond our power of volition.

III. Randomness and Relatedness

Conditioned state – Randomness: Events are viewed as accidental and occur without following any discernible pattern or principle.

Liberated Activity – Relatedness: Events unfold without accidents. Subject and object arise from the same karmic origin.

How does Randomness manifest in daily life?

The “normal” view of the world is seen as freestanding events only loosely connected with previous incidents. Daily life is considered a series of fragmentary inadvertent happenings. The cause of this lies in a narrow focus on the immediate event, not perceiving the wide extent of its origins. In Buddhist terms, the principle of dependent origination is overlooked.

Dependent origination offers the means to witness the wholeness of an event or being. For example, imagine a tall blade of grass waving in a light breeze. Each movement of the grass is entirely in sync with the air gently passing across its blade. The grass dances in the wind, in harmony with its surroundings. The situation for human beings is similar but complicated by willful consciousness. Grass moves easily in accord with its environment; people require a moral compass before concordance is possible with the complex nature of society and their personal internal world. Randomness means acting without knowledge of dependent origination and the moral compass its teachings deliver. Without an inclusive scope of the inter-connection and intimate relationships of events and beings, missteps are inevitable.

Examples of how the conditioned state of Randomness operate

1. Considering the world as random is frightening and sets up patterns of fear in our relationships to others and the world at large. Taking life as random leads to poor choices and seeing the world as a threat. The ability to make good choices is seen as a mystery. The world is regarded as chaotic and confusing. Relationships to the world are haphazard, with fragmentary understanding.
2. Personal feelings range from “I do not deserve this” to “How lucky can I get.” Both of these statements evolve from not closely observing the underlying circumstances of events.
3. The conditioning of randomness is strong, preventing recognition of it as an incomplete perception of how the world functions.
4. The personal (subjective, individual, relative) and universal (objective, collective, absolute) aspects of mind are considered to operate independently and in opposition to each other.

Examples of how Liberated Activities of Relatedness operate

1. Looking at the backside of a tapestry, the place of tangles, it appears chaotic and random. But turning it over, the harmony of the artistry is seen. Considering the universal along with the personal is turning the tapestry over.^v
2. Our situation, whatever it is, demonstrates a perfect accord with underlying circumstances. As a cloud is in perfect harmony with the wind that pushes it along, so too the unfolding of our life is in lock step with the environmental and self-generated conditioning that makes up our physical and mental being.
3. We avoid discord by recognizing how the personal and universal worlds act in harmony. Decisions and actions made from this vantage point promote good fortune and avoid unnecessary trouble.
4. Comprehending the rational basis for all activities, be it external or internal, removes a sense of fatalism and provides a strong foundation for actions appropriate to the needs of the moment.

What was learned about Emptiness?

Randomness is empty because the personal and universal sides of reality arise simultaneously from the same set of causes and conditions. Their relationship is the natural principle of how all phenomena intimately interact.

IV. Mind Constructs and Openness

Conditioned state – Mind Constructs: Conclusions, beliefs, opinions are considered “true” and are protected from being refuted by one’s own and others’ conclusions, beliefs, and opinions.

Liberated Activity – Openness: Judgments are seen as personal and not necessarily true, devoid of any inherent certainty.

What are Mind Constructs?

Mind Constructs grow root and branch out of the personal and universal conditioning every being takes from its environment. Conditions arise from events near and far. They grow out of immediate happenings, and those of the remote past. Each of the many impulses that affect our momentary consciousness arises from a complex web that reaches deep into the vastness of space and time. Mind Constructs take shape from this convoluted network, imposing mental states that are both difficult to understand and even harder to transform.

One time after a five-day retreat, a fellow participant related his experience. He said a voice arose within him, one that constantly took the attitude of an autocratic teacher. As soon as he sat down the voice would begin, forcing its way into the center of attention. No amount of willful effort could dissipate its hold or reduce the acute mental pain associated with its expression. The voice continued throughout the first four days, only receding toward the end of the retreat.

The above story is an extreme example of how Mind Constructs can dominate the mental landscape. They are reactive, form without conscious intent, take over without awareness, and act out of habit, not choice. Without reflection and inquiry, our unfolding life is defined by whatever momentary perception is presently occurring. Mind Constructs emerge from a mental landscape where conditioning unconsciously dominates.

Examples of how the conditioned state of Mind Constructs operate

1. Much of our personality is formed from the preferences produced in us by growing up in a particular culture, and by our life experience. These preferential judgments assign a state of independent self-existence to phenomena. Thus we think of them as real and act accordingly.
2. Recognizing the hold opinions and judgments have on others is easy to see, but difficult to witness in ourselves.
3. Our attachment to our preferences, judgments, and opinions tends to fragment any attained sense of unity.

4. Holding preferences blocks smooth accord with life as it comes along. Likes and dislikes inhibit the possibility of awakening. Being locked into judgments and automatic assumptions imprisons action to the habitual. Acting out of habit is reactive and impedes harmony.
5. Mind Constructs operates as having the answers before asking the questions.

Examples of how Liberated Activities of Mind Constructs operate

1. Opinions are a necessary stepping stone, a means of coming to one's own truth. Liberated activity requires seeking information from outside sources to check the validity of conclusions.
2. Opening to new ideas is beneficial. Clinging to notions of what a situation might be or become causes rounds of pointless worry and anxiety.
3. Mind Constructs are transformed with a thoroughgoing inquiry. Questioning discloses their roots and the way they assert themselves in an individual's life.
4. Reasoned particulars grow into valid generalities.

What was learned about Emptiness?

Mind Constructs are empty of objective truth. They are unsubstantiated mental structures of thoughts and feelings that condition and limit free expression.

V. Problems and Oneness

Conditioned state – Problems: Troublesome events are experienced as “problems” to be solved by thinking alone.

Liberated Activity – Oneness: “Problems” are resolved by taking non-judgmental responsibility for our life as it unfolds.

What are the roots of Problems?

Everyone is challenged by problems each day; they are unavoidable and occur with numbing regularity in countless forms. Human life from birth to death confronts existential concerns, one after the other. Perhaps the concerns are not named for what they are, but when the veneer of distraction, discord, and dismay is stripped away, the questions that remain are, “How did I get here? How do I deal with today? Where am I going? What is death?” The issues may appear unrelated, but if one takes the time to trace their cause back to their root, the differences merge into the problem the Buddha identified as the common source of *dukkha*: ignorance of the reality that all phenomena are derived from causes and conditions and that nothing exists independently. Overcoming the core obstruction of ignorance understands how to apply Buddha’s remedy of Emptiness.

Emptiness grasps the world as a whole, lifting the curtain of distinctions that is ascribed to phenomena. What is revealed is a holistic vision of ourselves with all of the ambiguities, dreams, desires, strengths, and weaknesses – the unstudied storehouse of our karmic history. Along with this complicated environment, Emptiness also teaches us how to negotiate the Way, providing each with knowledge of the problem, the path to its resolution, and the energy and courage to succeed.

Examples of how the conditioned state of Problems operate

1. Mind Constructs are not recognized as the foundations of problems.
2. The reification of problems creates barriers to true understanding.
3. Problems become the “normal” pattern that defines our life circumstance. We respond by becoming experts at coping with them. Anxiety, worry, and confusion are emotions often tied to coping with problems.

Examples of how Liberated Activities of Problems operate

1. Zazen cultivates insight of the nondual mind and its associated means of resolving problems.
2. Transforming Mind Constructs allows our response to the world to take shape accurately without resistance.
3. Problems become challenges when a synchronistic viewpoint (personal and universal aspects of mind intimately interrelate) is attained. The oneness of the personal and universal reveals the non-reality of problems “out there” in the world.

What was learned about Emptiness?

Problems seem insurmountable. However, with understanding the nature and relationship of the personal and universal aspects of mind, Problems reveal themselves as empty and open to resolution.

VI. Objective Definitions and Indivisibility

Conditioned state – Objective Definitions: Objects are made “real” by verbal and conceptual activity. Objective Definitions are established through application of names and labels.

Liberated Activity – Indivisibility: Refrains from defining events and objects by personal characterizations. Liberated Activities are the withdrawal of conceptual and linguistic projections.

How do Objective Definitions change perception?

Socrates wrote nothing in his life, proclaiming that written literacy would ultimately undermine the use and strength of memory. Perhaps an ancient pre-vocal relative of Homo sapiens asserted a similar opinion that the use of spoken words would create a breach between the self and immediate experience of the world. Setcho, the compiler of The Blue Cliff Record, in his own way, echoed his imaginary ancestor by declaring the heart of Zen is realized “before mention is made.” Here we encounter the work of all Zen Masters: to relieve us of the habituation of reifying concepts and words, where labels placed on phenomena replace the simple truth of the phenomena’s existence.

Words and labels are not the problematic issue; it is that we take them as the standard of reality. Because they describe direct experience, and are not direct experience itself, taking words and labels as real prevents the “myriad things”^{vi} from entering and completing the self. Assuming labels are the only reality establishes and fortifies the falsehood of an insignificant and disconnected self.

Examples of how the conditioned state of Objective Definitions operate

1. “Reality” is created by attachment to conceptual definitions.
2. Labels attached to an object are considered substantial. The “reality” of an object depends on conceptualization and the subsequent label.
3. The world of labels and definitions is considered real and all subsequent considerations are based on this error.
4. Words and labels are reified creating the world of substance.
5. Categories are believed to be the only way of thinking.
6. Labeling limits behavior to patterns that induce suffering. Definitions apply limitations where none exist.
7. An object is viewed as self-existing when interdependence is not recognized.

Examples of how Liberated Activities of Objective Definitions operate

1. Liberation is experiencing the world without definitions.
2. Zazen clears the way to the recognition of the personal, historical, and succinct meaning of words, and how their attending concepts affects our behavior.
3. Projections – the mistaken view of objective self-existence – are replaced by indivisibility and interdependence.
4. The Zen realization of thusness contains both the symbol and that which is symbolized

What was learned about Emptiness?

Phenomena are empty until labels are affixed. Without a label, objects and beings are “just what they are.”

A Summary Table of the Six Examples of Barriers to Emptiness

Conditioned States	Liberated Activities
Permanence – Frozen behavior	Impermanence – Flexibility
Ownership – False sense of control	Autonomy – Conscious free-flowing mentality
Randomness – A world of accidents	Relatedness– Logical unfolding of life
Mind Constructs – A priori mental formations	Openness – Freedom to act
Problems – Solutions by thought	Oneness – Resolution arises from unity
Objective Definitions – Labels define reality	Indivisibility – Withdrawal of projections

Barriers to Emptiness Summary Chart

1st Noble Truth – The Truth of Suffering

Barriers	Conditioned States	Liberated Activities	Transformed Barriers
	<p>Unexamined assumptions are used as the basis for actions in the world. Assumptions are the personal experiences and universal karmic inheritance of an individual that are accepted without observation and inquiry into how they came to be.</p> <p>The attribute of self-existence is assigned to all phenomena. Self-existence denies that all beings arise from an ever-changing interdependent web of causes and conditions.</p>	<p>Sutra study, inference, and direct experience are the bases of the process of awakening.</p> <p>Recognizes the universal operation of interconnectedness and interdependence of phenomena and noumena.</p>	
1. Permanence	Assumes phenomena have an independent permanent existence. One perceives the transitory as enduring.	Phenomena have a dependent existence, and are in a constant state of unfolding. Daily endeavors are in accord with causes and conditions without the pain of afflictive emotions. One perceives the transitory as transitory.	Impermanence, Continuous Change
2. Ownership	Assumes material objects and mental formations can be restrained, manipulated and exist within the range of our influence. It does not recognize that everything can be taken away without our say so.	Acknowledgment of the limits of our ability to control the destiny of self, others and events. Recognizes where the will can be applied to create positive results.	Autonomy, Self-determination
3. Randomness	Events are viewed as accidental and occur without following any discernible pattern or principle.	Events unfold without accidents. Subject and object arise from same karmic origin.	Relatedness, Discernment
4. Mind Constructs	Conclusions, beliefs, opinions are considered “true” and are protected from being refuted by our own and others’ conclusions, beliefs, and opinions.	Judgments are seen as personal and not necessarily true, devoid of any inherent certainty.	Openness, Insight
5. Problems	Troublesome events are experienced as “problems” to be blamed on others or solutions sought by thinking alone.	“Problems” are resolved by taking responsibility for our life as it unfolds.	Oneness, Acceptance
6. Objective Definitions	Objects are made “real” by verbal and conceptual activity. A subject defines objects, not by an object itself. Objective Definitions are established through application of names and labels.	Refrains from defining events and objects by personal characterizations. A “standard of reality” does not exist. Liberated Activities are the withdrawal of conceptual and linguistic projections.	Indivisibility, Interdependence

Traditional Indian Schools on Right View

Scope	School	Sanskrit	English	Dependent Origination	Emptiness	Mahamudra	Turning of the Wheel
Hinayana	<i>Functionalist</i>	Vaibashika or Abhichharma	Detailist	Everything comes from causes.	Things are empty of rigid identity.	Unchanging	The Buddha began teaching the First Turning of the Wheel at Deer Park, Varanasi now called Sarnath. He taught the Four Noble Truths and the 12 links of dependent origination and how to use cause and effect to use Nirvana. The viewpoint is that everything has a nature of existing by definition.
		Sautrantika	Sutrist or Logic	Things function because they come from causes.	Things are empty of control	Control	
Mahayana	<i>Functionalist</i>	Yogachara or Cittamatra	Mind Only or Yogi's Way	Ripening seeds create the subject and object simultaneously	The subject and object are empty because they come from the same causes and conditions	Accidents	The Buddha taught the third Turning of the Wheel at Shravasti (Vaishali). The viewpoint is that we must make fine distinctions about all existing objects which either do or don't have a nature of existing by definition.
		Madhyamika Svatantrikas (Lower)	Independent School	Everything depends upon parts. More subtle: explains uncaused things like space and emptiness.	Things are empty of objective truth	Objective Judgments	The Buddha began teaching the Second Turning of the Wheel at Vulture's Peak, Rajagriha. This teaching gives the explanation on the perfection of Wisdom and the Six Perfections of the Bodhisatva.
Mahayana	<i>Madhyamika (Middle Way)</i>	Madhyamika Svatantrikas (Higher)	Independent School	Things are empty of not being transformed	Things are empty of not being transformed	Untransformable	The viewpoint is that no existing thing has a nature of existing by definition.
Mahayana	<i>Madhyamika (Middle Way)</i>	Madhyamika Prasangika	Implication School or Consequence	Everything depends on your thinking and labeling them as you do.	Things are empty until a label is affixed	Defined By concept	

NOTES

- ⁱ For additional study of Emptiness see Hsing Yun's *Lotus in the Stream*, and Guy Newland's *Introduction to Emptiness*
- ⁱⁱ See our book, *Tending the Fire: An Introspective Guide to Zen Awakening*, for a comprehensive treatment of conditioned states.
- ⁱⁱⁱ A rich man died. A bystander asked, "How much did he leave?" He was told, "He left everything." This anecdote reveals our true situation. The personality that is developed and cultivated throughout life is taken away without regard for an individual's desire. Death is not negotiable. Related by Jack Kornfield in his Sounds True recordings on Buddhist Psychology.
- ^{iv} Dennis Overbye, *Free Will: Now You Have It, Now You Don't*, New York Times, January 2, 2007
- ^v Thanks to Prajnatarā Paula Hirschboeck, Zen priest and retired Professor of Philosophy at Edgewood College, for this image.
- ^{vi} "Myriad things" refers to Dogen's verse from the Genjo Koan "To forget the self is to be actualized by the myriad things." This refers to the moment where the universal dawns within the practitioner and the roots of separation and alienation begin to drop away. The verse is by Kazuaki Tanahashi's translation in *Enlightenment Unfolds*, p. 70