

Sword of Wisdom — A Contextual Outline Sept 27, 2022

Note:

The following is a rough draft, only, written in order to aid my own contextual comprehension of this profound text which Ann Helm has so beautifully translated. Please bear with my errors and make your own corrections. The Tibetan words are in phonetics, and in the interest of getting this to those who wished to see it sooner rather than later, some of these words have not been 100% checked for spelling — I wrote them as they sound for the time being. Hopefully Joe and Greg will come back and add the Tibetan script in time.

This contextual outline is according to the Tsema/Valid Cognition teachings, by Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche. I find it helpful to keep in mind that there are other ways in which Relative Truth (and to a certain degree Absolute Truth) is explained by Mahayana Madyamaka schools, such as the Yogachara Madyamaka view of the Three Natures, or the Svatantrika Madyamaka approach as taught in Shantarakshita's *Adornment of the Middle Way*. And, of course, the Prasangika Madyamaka school does not hold a view for Relative Truth and simply accepts the consensus of beings regarding relative appearance. Ideally, we want to understand and respect each approach, regarding them as complementary, not contradictory.

Zhar-ja — what we are studying or discerning: denpa nyi or the two truths

Zhar ji — what discerns: tsema

- Tanyi cho chi gi tsema — tsema or valid cognition that discerns relative truth
- Dundam cho chi gi tsema — tsema or valid cognition that discerns ultimate truth

In order to accurately know or discern the Relative Truth, we have the Four Rigpas/Reasonings and Three Tsema/Valid Cognition.

Mipham Rinpoche's unique terms are in relation to the tanyi cho chi gi tsema — tsema that discerns relative truth or appearance:

- Ma dak nangwa la cho pi tsema — tsema that discerns the impure world of conventional beings.

- Dak pi zikpa la cho pi tsema — tsema that discerns the pure world/appearances of realized beings.

The Four Rigpas are reasoning which allow us to develop valid cognition and thus accurately understand what we are discerning, in this case the two truths. We say "rigpa" because it is the genuine or valid wisdom which results from proper reasoning.

1. gyu chawa chepe rigpa — the reasoning of causal efficacy
2. drewu tupe rigpa — reasoning of dependency

- These first two are relative. To illustrate these, Rinpoche used the example of COVID. When the virus first arrived we had the fruit, and then had to trace it back to the cause or causes in order to try to discover how we got to the fruit. That would be an example of the reasoning of dependency. Then, when we decided that we wanted the vaccine, we

knew the fruit at which we wanted to arrive, but then had to work on developing the causes to get there. This would be an example of the reasoning of causal efficacy.

3. *chonyi kyi rigpa* — the reasoning of the nature. The first two *rigpas* must be based on this 3rd *rigpa*, the reasoning of the nature, meaning that causes and fruits, of any kind, that we are examining or contemplating, must be found in the relative nature or the natural world: the way things function.

4. *tepa drupe rigpa* — the reasoning of valid proof. This refers to first accurately understanding the topic to be discerned, first in our own mind, and then being able to communicate that to others through presentation or argument.

How we accomplish this 4th *rigpa* is — first we have to become clear. For that we have *ngosum* and *jepak*, direct perception and inference. Then in order to communicate with others there is *drupnak* and *sunjin*, establishing one's point of view and refuting mistaken perception. Again, *ngosum* and *jepak* benefit one's own understanding, *drupnak* and *sunjin* are to communicate to others. In detail:

- *Ngosum* — direct perception, which can be *yangdak*, effective/accurate, or *tarnang*, ineffective/inaccurate.
- *Jepak* — inference, which can be *yangdak*, effective/accurate, or *tarnang*, ineffective/inaccurate.
- *Drupnak* — establishing one's point of view, which can be *yangdak*, effective/accurate, or *tarnang*, ineffective/inaccurate.
- *Sunjin* — refuting mistaken perception, which can be *yangdak*, effective/accurate, or *tarnang*, ineffective/inaccurate.

As a means to first understand ourselves, and then be able communicate to others, we use syllogism — a form of reasoning. This is employed to gain clarity, or valid cognition, of a particular topic. For instance, there is the following classical example of a syllogistic statement: “Sound (the subject) is impermanent (the property to be proven), because it is compounded or produced (inferential sign).” There are three properties we would like to identify for this type of deductive reasoning.

- *chojin* — the topic/subject to be discussed is agreed upon: sound.
- *drupchi cho* — the property to be proved: impermanence.
- *tak* — the inferential sign or evidence: compounded-ness.

These three things need to be there as a base to then make one's case to another — *drupnak*.

Tsulsum — to the make one's case one needs *tsulsum*: three criteria of a valid sign as evidence. In the case of “The sound is impermanence because it is compounded,” as a basis in order discuss this, we first agree on the topic, “sound,” as stated above. Then in order to effectively prove our point we must meet the three criteria, *tsulsum*:

1. *chokcho* — the inferential sign or reason must be self-evident/present in the subject. I.e. the sound is compounded or produced.
2. *Jechap* — positive pervasion. This means that it must be true in *all* cases. I.e. *all* compounded things are impermanent.
3. *Dokchap* — counter pervasion. This means that the opposite must also be true in *all* cases. I.e. *all* uncompounded things are permanent.

Valid Cognition or tsema is critical because it is how we accurately discern the two truths, or in other words the way things function and appear in our relative experience, nangtsul, and the way things are in the absolute nature, netsul. Valid cognition allows us to know the truth — both relatively and in the absolute.

1. Ngonsum tsema — valid cognition through direct perception. This apprehends things that are “close,” meaning close to our senses or our experience which we can directly engage without anything in the middle. There are 4 types of ngonsum:
 - a. Wangpo ngonsum — sensory direct perception: This is the non-conceptual encounter of the objects of the senses; when the object, organ, and consciousness all meet. This can be accurate or inaccurate, yangdak or tarnang (or lokshi), like seeing a snow mountain as either white or yellow.
 - b. Yi kyi ngonsum — mental direct perception: This is the non-conceptual *recognition* of the object of sense which happens directly after the sense encounter. There is no label yet. It is still ngonsum, so no thought process has happened. This can be accurate or inaccurate, yangdak or tarnang. Mipham Rinpoche says this is like images in a dream, without a label or any thought process (it is pre-thought process), it is still non-conceptual. It is just recognizing the images or sounds, etc., and what they are.
 - c. Rangrik ngonsum — self aware direct perception: This is knowing one’s present thought, which is an inherent mechanism built into all moments of consciousness. All thought is aware to itself, and this is always present in all wangpo and yi kyi ngonsum.
 - These first three are to with our relative experience.
 - d. Naljor ngonsum — yogic direct perception: This is directly encountering and empirically knowing the nature, or emptiness, non-conceptually.
 - This last one has to do with the absolute nature.
2. Jepak tsema — valid cognition through inference. This relates to what is a bit more hidden from our direct perception. It is the knowing of things conceptual through signs or tak. It is our thought process, our conceptual mind. The following are some important points of jepak tsema/inference that we covered in the text:
 - Inference has to be based on something we have encountered in the ngonsum. In inference we call these signs or tak.
 - There are various types of signs or tak.
 - Drewu tak — sign of the fruit. For example: “There must be fire over there because there is smoke.” Here, “smoke” is the tak.
 - Rangzhin gi tak — sign of relative nature. For example: “Sound is impermanent because it is compounded.” Here, “compounded” is the tak or sign.
 - Mamik pi tak — sign of “not seen.” This is using tak to prove something is *not* there. For example: “There is no fire out there because we are looking out over the ocean.” The tak or sign is the fact that we are looking out over an ocean and fire cannot exist on a body of water.
 - Mayin pi tak — sign of “it isn’t” An example of this would be: “That animal is not a rabbit because it has horns.”
 - There are valid tak or yangdak tak, and invalid tak or tak tarnang gi tak. All above examples are yangdak tak. Valid tak proves the point and is convincing. Invalid tak does not.
 - Dradon drendzin gi tokche — inference works based on this. Dra is the image we hold in our mind, or it can be sound or any other object of the senses, which we join

with a label (word) and then hold those two things as one and being identical to the object.

- Dunchi — All dradon drendzin gi tokche, or inference, is based upon dunchi, a mental image that we hold in the mind. This is not possible if we have never encountered the wangpo ngonsum, the direct perception with our senses. I.e. if someone is born blind they cannot have a dunchi of white clouds. We have to have once known the object through ngonsum to have a dunchi about that object.
 - Tokpa and chopa are based on the dradon drendzin gi tokche. Tokpa is general and chopa is specific details of the general. I.e. the thought of a flower as a whole is general and then discerning the various details about the flower are all chopa. Our thought process is made up of these.
 - Based on above, the thought process uses zhensel to discern an object. In doing so, all that it is not, is cleared away.
 - Another aspect of inference that is important to know is: chi and chedak. Chi is perceiving something as a whole, like a forest. Chedak is like the pine tree, which we can cut down.
 - Zhensel and chi are takyu, which means mentally designated, meaning they only exist in the mind as a projection.
 - Chedak, like the pine tree, is dreyu, which means made of material. Material can be atoms or it can be made of awareness.
3. Lung tsema — Valid Cognition based on Scriptural authority. This is for things that are very hidden, like knowing the details of the karma, mainly. Buddha said, “Unless you are like me, don’t preach to know details of karma.”

In order to accurately know or discern the Absolute Truth we have the dundam cho chi gi tsema — tsema or valid cognition that discerns ultimate truth, or how we come to accurately understand dak mepa and tongpa nyi — selflessness and emptiness.

- Approximate absolute truth or expressible ultimate — namdrang (numbers) pi dundam denpa. This is the process of breaking down existence and leads to the realization of megak (non-existence), or the tongpa (empty) aspect of all phenomena.
 - The Svatantrika Madyamaka use this method to establish the non-existence of all phenomena, which counters our deep clinging to the existence of things. The Svatantrika Madyamaka use this method as a stepping stone to the trutal. According to Mipham Rinpoche, this is the main important difference between the Svatantrika Madyamaka and the Prasangika Madyamaka.
- Absolute ultimate truth or inexpressible ultimate — namdrang mayin (without numbers) pi dondam denpa. This is the ultimate truth without numbers, meaning it is free of the four ontological extremes of existence, nonexistent, both, and neither.
 - This is the ultimate view of trutal shared by both the Prasangika and Svatantrika Madyamaka schools. In this regard, they have no differences.

Four Reliances: How the four rigpas or reasonings function, or what we rely upon in order to gain clarity.

1. Rely on the Dharma rather than individuals.
2. Rely on the meaning rather than the words.

3. Rely on the definitive meaning rather than the provisional meaning.
4. Rely on timeless awareness (yeshe/jnana) rather than consciousness (namshe).

The Fruition:

The Eight Great Treasures of Confidence

1. Not forgetting the treasury of memory.
2. Having a discerning mind is the treasure of intelligence.
3. Internalizing the meaning of all the sutras is the treasure of realization.
4. Holding everything one has studied is the treasure of retention.
5. Satisfying everyone by teaching well is the treasure of confidence.
6. Completely protecting the noble Dharma is the treasure of the Dharma.
7. Maintaining the unbroken lineage of the Three Jewels is the treasure of bodhicitta.
8. Accepting the unborn nature of phenomena is the treasure of accomplishment.