

༥ །གངས་ཅན་གྱི་སྐབ་བརྒྱད་ཤིང་ཏྲ་ཆེན་པོ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རྒྱད་ཕྱེ་
དང་མན་ངག་ལས་འཕྲོས་པའི་བློ་བྱིས་ཅི་རིགས།
འདུས་མ་བྱས་གསུམ་དང་མཁས་པར་བྱ་བའི་གནས་རྒྱལ།

Miscellaneous Notes on the Classes of Tantra and Pith Instructions of the Great Chariots of the Practice Lineage in the Land of Snows

*The Three Unconditioned Phenomena and the Six Topics of
Scholarship*

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo



KHYENTSE VISION
PROJECT

gangs can gyi sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po rnams kyi rgyud sde dang man ngag las 'phros pa'i zin
bris ci rigs
'dus ma byas gsum dang mkhas par bya ba'i gnas drug

B326.15

Kabum, vol. 3 (ga), 203.3–205.1, Dzongsar 2014.

Excerpted from:

B326

Kabum, vol. 3 (ga), 182.2–212.1, Dzongsar 2014.

This translation was completed by Anders Bjonback under the patronage of Khyentse
Foundation and the supervision of Khyentse Vision Project.

Published 2023

Version 1

Generated from KVP's reading room on 19-Nov-2023

Khyentse Vision Project: Translating the Works of
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo

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INTRODUCTION

This text, only about one folio page long, follows a series of notes about the five aggregates and precedes a set of notes on the four tenet systems of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. Its first sentence concerns the three types of unconditioned phenomena, and then it proceeds with six topics for study: the aggregates, the elements, the sources of perception, dependent origination, the possible, and the impossible.

The list that Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo provides here is slightly different from the one found in Jamgön Mipham's *Gateway to Knowledge*, covering just the first half of that version. The list found here likely follows the same source used by Khenpo Zhenga in his *Clear Mirror of Phenomena*. Khyentse Wangpo's other sources include Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Verses on Madhyamaka*¹ and Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Abhidharma*.²

To better understand the classification of causes and results included here, the reader is invited to consult commentaries on the *Treasury of Abhidharma* and debate manuals that expand on this topic. Literature that teaches the stages of the path can also provide explanations on this subject, as some of these classifications touch on the topic of karma and rebirth.

འདུས་མ་བྱས་གསུམ་དང་མཁས་པར་བྱ་བའི་གནས་བྱུང་།

The Three Unconditioned Phenomena and the Six Topics of Scholarship

There are three types of unconditioned phenomena: space, analytical cessation, and non-analytical cessation.³ Accordingly, having arrived at an understanding of objects of knowledge in general, there are six topics of scholarship that are to be engaged in. In summary, the six types are aggregates, elements, sources of perception, dependent origination, the possible, and the impossible.⁴

There are five aggregates. There are eighteen elements: the eye element, the form element, the element of eye consciousness, and so on. There are twelve sources of perception: the eye sense source, the form sense source, and so on. In addition, each has its own individual characteristic, such as the arising of form as the object of the eye, and so on. There are twelve links of dependent origination. The possible signifies [204] that it is possible for merit to be caused by virtue, and the impossible signifies that it is impossible for it to be caused by non-virtue.

In this context, if we provide a little explanation of the presentation of causes, results, and conditions, causes are as follows in the *Treasury of Abhidharma*:

There are six types of causes: productive (these are the same as the primary condition),⁵ co-arising, a similar lot (like being born from karma), congruent (being dependent on each other), omnipresent, and maturation.⁶

As for results, there are five: results of maturation, those that are in accordance with their cause (understood afterward),⁷ dominant (those with jaundice seeing a yellow conch shell), those caused by persons (i.e., they are created through effort), and result of separation (this is a result of a condition in the same way wind is a condition that separates the sun from the clouds).⁸

As for conditions, the *Fundamental Verses on Madhyamaka* states:

There are four conditions: the causal condition, the objective condition, the
immediately preceding condition,
And the dominant condition; there is no fifth condition.⁹

Moreover, there are seven parts to the element of dharmas:¹⁰

Feelings, perceptions, formations,
Unconditioned phenomena, and unknowables are the seven.¹¹

The twelve links of dependent origination are also summarized into the three paths of affliction, karma, and maturation. As Nāgārjuna states, the first (ignorance), eighth (craving), and ninth (grasping) are afflictions; formations and becoming are karma; and the other seven are maturation (consciousness, name and form, the six sources of perception, contact, feeling, and birth, old age and death).¹²

“A cause that is congruent with the five congruencies” [205] is the definition of a congruent cause. It is congruent with regard to the observed object, mental image, substance, support, and time.

NOTES

1. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.
2. *Abhidharmakośa*.
3. These are three categories of unconditioned phenomena often found in Abhidharma and debate literature. Conditioned phenomena are impermanent, arising and functioning due to causes and conditions. Unconditioned phenomena, on the other hand, are free from these characteristics. Analytical cessation refers to the elimination of afflictive emotions and other factors to be abandoned on the path through the attainment of realization. Non-analytical cessation refers to the absence of something in a particular place because it lacks the cause to be there.
4. It is unclear where this quotation is from, but these are six topics of knowledge commonly said to relate to becoming learned. Khenpo Zhenga (*rgya kong mkhan chen gzhan phan chos kyī snang ba*, 4–5) quotes a sūtra that names these topics.
5. “Primary conditions” are the dominant cause of phenomena; in the case of an eye sense consciousness, its eye faculty is its primary condition. A “productive cause,” on the other hand, is a type of cause that produces something other than its own continuum as its result, such as an eye faculty (which is material) producing eye consciousness (which is mental). The terms are essentially referring to the same phenomenon here.
6. *Abhidharmakośa* 2.49.
7. “Ripened results” of a karmic action happen automatically, regardless of effort. An action of generosity will result in future wealth, whether one strives for it or not. “Results that are in accord with their cause” are similar to their cause; unvirtuous or virtuous causes produce compatible results. For instance, killing will cause one to be born with a short life, and/or one will have a predilection for killing. The interlinear note here likely means that one can determine a karmic cause by observing the result.
8. The translator was unable to find the source for this quote.
9. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 1.2.
10. Here, the word “dharma” refers to mental objects. Of the eighteen elements classified in Abhidharma literature, the element of visual forms corresponds to the elements of visual consciousness and eye faculty. Likewise, there are mental forms (*dharma*s) that correspond to mental consciousness.

11. It is unclear where this quotation is from. The seven divisions of the element of dharmas can be found in *Abhidharmakośa* 1.15bcd. These seven are enumerated as feeling, perception, and formations, as well as the three types of unconditioned phenomena and imperceptible forms.
12. Cf. Nāgārjuna's *Pratītyasamutpādayakārikā*. This division is also found in *Abhidharmakośa* 3.26ab.

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GLOSSARY

co-arising

ལྷན་ཅིག་འབྱུང་བ། • *lhan cig 'byung ba*

One of the six types of causes, co-arising causes are phenomena that are simultaneous while being different substances but also part of the same collection. An example of this would be the taste and appearance of a food item—they are said to be in the same collection of causes that cause taste consciousness and eye consciousness to arise.

conditioned phenomena

འདུས་བྱས། • *'dus byas* • saṃskṛta

Refers to all phenomena produced by causes and conditions.

congruent cause

མཚུངས་ལྷན་གྱི་རྒྱ། • *mtshungs ldan gyi rgyu*

One of the six types of causes. Primary minds and mental factors are “congruent” causes in that they arise from the same faculty, and do not obstruct one another. There are five ways in which primary minds and mental factors are congruent: they have the same observed object, mental image, time, support, and substance.

dominant condition

བདག་རྒྱུན། • *bdag rkyen*

The dominant cause of a phenomenon, such as an eye sense faculty’s role in producing eye consciousness.

dominant result

བདག་པོ་འབྲས་བུ། • *bdag po'i 'bras bu*

The result of a cause that produced it by its own power.

element

ཁམས། • *kham*

The six consciousnesses, the six faculties, and six objects.

element of dharma

ཚོས་ཀྱི་ཁམས། • *chos kyi kham*

Mental objects, one of the eighteen elements.

immediately preceding condition

དེས་ཐག་པའི་རྒྱུ། • *de ma thag pa'i rkyen*

The previous moment of consciousness, which acts as the substantial cause for the next moment of consciousness to arise.

Khenpo Zhenga

མཁན་པོ་གཞན་དགའ། • *mkhan po gzhan dga'*

A famous Nyingma commentator (1871–1927), also referred to as Zhenpen Chökyi Nangwa.

mental factor

སེམས་བྱུང་། • *sems byung*

These are aspects of mind that are like emotions or mental actions: attention, hate, and so on. There are fifty-one of them in the Abhidharma system followed in Tibet. They are said to be aware of particular characteristics of objects, while primary minds (the six or eight consciousnesses) are aware of the essence of an object.

mental image

རྣམ་པ། • *rnam pa* • *ākāra*

A mental image that appears within the mind, caused by and resembling an outer object.

objective condition

དམིགས་པའི་རྒྱུ། • *dmigs pa'i rkyen*

The outer object that causes a sense consciousness to arise.

observed object

དམིགས་པ། • *dmigs pa*

The outer object that causes a consciousness to arise, which the sense consciousness perceives.

omnipresent cause

ཀུན་དུ་འགྲོ་བའི་རྒྱ། • *kun du 'gro ba'i rgyu*

Omnipresent causes are those phenomena that involve afflictions, are present in all three realms of existence, and prevent liberation.

perception

འདྲ་ཤེས། • *'du shes*

The process of identifying an object of perception by grasping its signs.

primary mind

གཙོ་བོ་སེམས། • *gtso bo sems*

These are the six or eight consciousnesses; they are in contrast to mental factors.

productive cause

བྱེད་རྒྱ། • *byed rgyu*

One of the six types of causes. It is a phenomenon that produces something that is not of its own continuum as its result.

result of maturation

རྣམ་སྒྲིན་གྱི་འབྲས་བུ། • *rnam smin gyi 'bras bu*

The body and mind of a sentient being in cyclic existence, which have a positive or negative karmic cause that is tainted by the afflictions, are referred to as the result of (karmic) maturation.

similar lot

སྐལ་མཉམ། • *skal mnyam*

One of the six types of causes, “cause of a similar lot.” It produces something of its own type, or a later moment in its own continuum—a chair in moment one causes a chair in moment two to arise, for instance.

sources of perception

སྒྱི་མཆེད། • *skye mched* • āyatana

Twelve sources for (or spheres of) the consciousnesses: the six faculties and the six objects.

the possible and the impossible

གནས་དང་གནས་མིན། • *gnas dang gnas min*

This refers to the idea that results will only come about due to their corresponding causes and conditions. Non-virtue will not result in pleasant circumstances, for instance. Thus, an autonomous self does not have absolute control over what happens to it—things do not always happen as we wish.

unknowables

རིག་མིན། • *rig min*

In the context of the Abhidharma, these refer to three types of phenomena: vows (individual liberation, those produced by meditative cultivation, and the undefiled), non-vows, and neither.