Introduction to Consciousness-only

Bhikṣu Changtzu
Yinshun Foundation
2023 July Dharma Retreat

0

Introduction

- **Three major systems of teaching in Mahāyāna Buddhism**
  - Where do the Consciousness-only doctrines fit into the Mahāyāna teachings.
  - Historical timeline
  - VERY brief summary of Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, Tathāgatagarbha
- **Consciousness-only school in more detail**
  - Key audience
  - Main doctrines
  - Practice method

1

Three Major Systems Of Teaching In Mahāyāna

- Venerable Yinshun classifies Mahāyāna teachings into three major schools.
  - Madhyamaka or Middle Way school
  - Yogācāra or Consciousness-only school, and
  - Tathāgatagarbha school.
- Venerable Yinshun places Esoteric Buddhism on its own.

2

Three Periods of Indian Buddhism	Five Periods	Comments
Early Buddhism 5th - 1st century BCE Śrāvakayāna practice was popular	Original Buddhism	From Buddha's enlightenment to around 100 years after Buddha's parinirvāṇa.
	Sectarian Buddhism	Various Buddhist schools emerged as views on the precepts and doctrines diverge.
Mahāyāna Buddhism 1st century BCE - 7th century CE Bodhisattva practice was popular	Early Mahāyāna	Emergency of Mahāyāna teachings that emphasized emptiness
	Later Mahāyāna (Middle Mahāyāna)	Mahāyāna teachings that emphasized consciousness-only
Esoteric Bud<u>d</u>dhism 7th – 12th century CE Vajrayana practice was popular	Esoteric Buddhism (Later Mahāyāna)	Merger with Brahmanic practices

3

Madhyamaka School

- **Founder:** Nāgārjuna
- **Key Doctrines:** Emptiness, conditional existence, no inherent nature
  - No explanation on where cause and conditions originate from.
  - Yogācāra/Tathāgatagarbha aims to explain this origin.
- **Representative sutras:** *Prajñā sūtras* and treatises, Nāgārjuna's commentaries on the *Prajñā sūtras* such as *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*
- **Key practices:** Observe conditional existence in everything we experience

4

Yogācāra School

- **Founder:** Asaṅga and Vasubandhu
- **Key Doctrines:** Consciousness-only (vijñapti-mātra) therefore "external objects do not exist"
  - Three intrinsic natures:
    (1) Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment,
    (2) Phenomena dependent on causes and conditions,
    (3) State of accomplishment of perfection,
  - Eight consciousnesses, ālaya-vijñāna (warehouse consciousness),
  - Seeds are the origins of cause and effect

5

Yogācāra School

- **Representative sutras:**
  - *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* (Elucidating the Hidden Connections)
  - *Yogācārabhūmi* (Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice)
  - *The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only*
  - *The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only*
- **Key practices:** Practices aim to correct erroneous perceptions
  - Like a chemical reaction to change the substance of defiled consciousness into pure wisdom.

6

Tathāgatagarbha School

- **Founder:** ??
- **Key Doctrines:** Beings innately posses Buddha-nature
  - Buddha-nature is wholesome and pure vs Yogācāra concept of ālaya which is defiled
- **Representative sutras:** *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*
- **Key practices:** Practices aim to remove defilements that shroud our Buddha-nature
  - Like washing away dirt.

7

Three Major Systems Of Teaching In Mahāyāna

- Important to understand the key differences of each system.
- Each system has its target audience and their method of practice helps that audience to move towards purity and enlightenment.
- Madhyamaka, Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha schools share common terms but often have different interpretation attached to these terms.

8

Consciousness-only In Detail

法性本無二，隨機說成異。
了義不了義，智者善抉擇。

Essentially the nature of dharmas is nondual,
Differences are introduced due to different capacities.
Whether the teaching is provisional or ultimate
The wise should skillfully discern the difference.

9

True Nature of Dharmas

- The *Diamond Sūtra* teaches that on account of unconditioned dharma, differences of sages can arise.
- Unconditioned dharma is referring to the true nature of dharmas
- Nature of dharmas has no differences
  - Any differences we read about arise due to different degrees of awakening. Just like space cannot be differentiated, but we talk about square or round spaces etc.
- Buddha awakened to the nature of dharmas through contemplating dependent co-arising and so he basically used the doctrine of dependent co-arising to explain the nature of dharmas to us.

10

Ven. Yinshun's Three Systems

- To cater to audiences of different spiritual capacity, Buddha employed different teaching methods to help different people approach the Dharma and understand the nature of dharmas.
- The Madhyamaka school corresponds to the system of **dependent designations that is empty in nature**,
- The Consciousness-only school corresponds to the system of **mere consciousness that is illusional**,
- The Tathāgatagarbha school corresponds to the system of **mere mind that is true and permanent**.

11

Ven. Taixu's Three Systems

- The Madhyamaka school corresponds to the system of **attaining wisdom of emptiness through insight into nature of dharmas**,
- The Consciousness-only school corresponds to the system of **realizing mere consciousness through insight into characteristics of dharmas,**
- The Tathāgatagarbha school corresponds to the system of **attaining perfect realization through insight into realm of dharmas**.

12

Xianshou's Three Schools

- The Madhyamaka school corresponds to the system of **School of Contemplating Emptiness of Characteristics**,
- The Consciousness-only school corresponds to the system of **School of Contemplating Dharma Characteristics,**
- The Tathāgatagarbha school corresponds to the system of **School of Contemplating Dharma Nature**.

13

	Ven. Yinshun	Ven. Taixu	Xianshou school
Madhyamaka Middle Way	Dependent designations that are empty in nature	Attaining wisdom of emptiness through insight into nature of dharmas	School of Contemplating Emptiness of Characteristics
Yogācāra Consciousness-only	Mere consciousness that is illusional	Realizing mere consciousness through insight into characteristics of dharmas	School of Contemplating Dharma Characteristics
Tathāgatagarbha	Mere mind that is true and permanent	Attaining perfect realization through insight into realm of dharmas	School of Contemplating Dharma Nature

14

	Ven. Yinshun	Ven. Taixu	Xianshou school
Madhyamaka Middle Way	Great Vehicle of Non-attachment		
Yogācāra Consciousness-only	School of Teachings that Accord with the Ultimate Truth		
Tathāgatagarbha	Mere mind that is true and permanent	Attaining perfect realization through insight into realm of dharmas	School of Contemplating Dharma Nature

15

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Conflicts between the various schools arise as they regard their system and doctrines as ultimate teachings and all others as provisional.
- What exactly is the meaning of ultimate and provisional teachings?
- Venerable Yinshun answers this question using evidence from the sūtras and treatises that each school adopts as their basis. This provides an objective approach to assessing this question.

16

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Mahāyāna and Śrāvakayāna teachings all aim to provide an explanation for all dharmas, explain karma and cyclic existence.
- The practices of the three vehicles are established based on how one thoroughly awakens to the true nature of dharmas, how one ends defilements and realizes the truth.
- Two main gateways to achieve nirvana and Buddhahood
  - Suffering and cause of suffering
  - Cessation of suffering (nirvana) and path to cessation

17

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Differences in the three systems of Mahāyāna teachings is due to different approaches to establishing all dharmas and explaining karma or cause and effect.
- *Akṣayamati Sūtra* says,
  - Provisional teachings explain worldly phenomena
    - Sūtras that explain worldly dharmas, existence of intrinsic self etc…
  - Ultimate teachings explain transcendental phenomena
    - Sūtras that explain emptiness, non-arising, no self etc…

18

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- *Akṣayamati Sūtra* definition is based on the doctrinal contents
  - *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* and other such scriptural texts are all ultimate teachings.
  - Teachings about cyclic existence arising from karma and its results, and the fruition of the three vehicles etc are merely dependent designations and conventional constructs based on language so that we can communicate these ideas.

19

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra,

Because there is worldly language, therefore there exists srotāpannas and all the way up to the arhats, pratyekabuddhas, and all buddhas. In the ultimate truth there is no knowing or attainment, no srotāpanna and all the way up to all buddhas…The differences among the six realms are also due to worldly language and these are not taught based on the ultimate truth…Within the ultimate truth there is no karma and no results.

20

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra,

The notion of "I" is like an illusion or dream,…
the buddha path is like an illusion or dream…
I say that even nirvana is like an illusion or dream.
If there is a dharma superior to nirvana,
I also say that is like an illusion or dream.

21

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- ***Sutra on the Emptiness of the Ultimate Truth***
  - Anything that arises from causes and conditions only exists as notional constructs.
- When one applies transcendental insight to investigate phenomena, one will realize that everything has no intrinsic nature and so is empty.
- There is no dharma or phenomena that can be considered as really existent.
- This does not mean the doctrine of no intrinsic nature destroys everything and no dharma can be established.

22

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Intrinsic nature implies a truly existent thing that does not rely on causes and conditions, and such things are permanent.
  - That which has not come to be will never arise.
  - That which has not ceased will never cease.
  - This means ordinary beings are destined to be ordinary beings and can never attain liberation or become buddhas!
- Because of emptiness, there is absolutely no intrinsic nature and so things must arise from causes and conditions.
- Dependent on causes and condition, all dharmas can be established.

23

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- In terms of spiritual practice:
  - Those who undertake wholesome deeds will receive pleasant results.
  - Those who undertake unwholesome deeds will bear unpleasant results.
  - Those who are ignorant of the truth will remain caught in cyclic existence.
  - Those who awaken to the truth will gain liberation.
- Through contemplating the nature of emptiness, dependent co-arising, to investigate all phenomena allows us to let go of attachment to life and death, and we can extensively undertake the bodhisattva practices and attain Buddhahood.

24

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Without emptiness, nothing can be established.
- Two truths of the Middle Way is regarded as an ultimate teaching in the School of Emptiness.
  - **In terms of worldly dependent designations**, all dharmas or phenomena can manifest just like an illusion.
  - **In terms of the ultimate truth of no intrinsic nature**, everything is empty.
- *Akṣayamati Sūtra* and *Sūtra on the King of Samādhi* definition of provisional and ultimate teaching is based on the doctrinal content.

25

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

一切法無性，善入者能入。
或五事不具，佛復解深密。

All dharmas are without intrinsic nature,
Those with skills can penetrate this teaching.
For those not equipped with the five requisites,
The Buddha then taught the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra

26

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* it says Buddha presented three rounds of Dharma teachings.
  - Śrāvakayāna teachings are regarded as the first round.
  - *Prajñā Sūtra* and other such teachings are regarded as the second round.
  - The *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* is the third round.
- *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra,* the third round, is regarded as the most clear and easy to understand.

27

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Asaṅga appeared after Nāgārjuna's time
  - *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* was revealed and promoted by Asaṅga
- Scriptural texts of the illusions with consciousness only system have a later date than the *prajñā* scriptural texts.
- *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* translates to mean the *Sūtra on Revealing the Profound*.
  - This sūtra aims to reveal that which is profound but uses a method that helps people understand this profound Truth better.

28

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Do you remember how the practitioners of the Mādhyamaka school, using the *Prajñā Sūtra* and *Akṣayamati Sūtra,* define ultimate and provisional teachings?
- Transcendental truth is the ultimate and true nature of all dharmas, therefore teachings on the transcendental truth are ultimate teachings.

29

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Consciousness-only school's definition of ultimate and provisional
- *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:
  - that which is explained clearly and easily understood is explicit (ultimate),
  - that which is explained unclearly and hard to comprehend is implicit (provisional).
  - Accordingly, within the transcendental truth there is a distinction between implicit and explicit teachings.
- Can you see the difference between the two definitions?

30

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Mādhyamaka school
  - All dharmas = worldly and transcendental, conditioned and unconditioned
  - Emptiness applies to everything
- Consciousness-only school
  - First they split all dharmas into three categories and say some have intrinsic nature and some do not.
  - Then they define intrinsic nature.

31

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Mādhyamaka school
  - Provisional and ultimate distinguishes worldly dharmas and transcendental dharmas
- Consciousness-only school's
  - Explicit (ultimate) and implicit (provisional) teachings focus on transcendental dharmas based on what is easy to understand and what is not.
  - Prajñā teachings on the truth are not as good as the Consciousness-only teachings because they are easier to understand.

32

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Consciousness-only school adopts *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*
  - Nature of emptiness is a transcendental truth
  - Among the teachings about emptiness, some are implicit (hard to understand) while some are explicit (easier to understand)
  - Teachings on emptiness can be provisional or ultimate depending on how well it explains things.
    - Focus here in on spiritual practitioners

33

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

All dharmas have no intrinsic nature, they do not arise nor cease,
they are originally still and calm, their true nature is nirvana.
Concerning this doctrine, those sentient beings who have
(1)already planted roots of superior wholesomeness,
(2) purified their karmic obstructions,
(3) matured in body and mind,
(4) cultivated confidence in the Dharma teachings, and
(5) accumulated sufficient stores of superior merit and wisdom,

34

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

When they hear this teaching they will understand properly the profound implicit meaning. Toward this dharma they will develop strong conviction and understanding. Toward this meaning they truly penetrate it with a wisdom that is infallible. Relying on such penetrating understanding to skilfully continue their practice, such sentient beings will soon realize the ultimate truth.

35

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

All dharmas have no intrinsic nature, they do not arise nor cease, they are originally still and calm, their true nature is nirvana.

- "Nirvana" is referring to the truth, the innate nature of dharmas that is always present and always as such, this nature is neither created or destroyed.

36

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

*Concerning this doctrine, those sentient beings who have (1) **already planted** roots of **superior** wholesomeness,*

- Wholesome roots is not just basic no greed, no hatred, no ignorance. This has to be SUPERIOR wholesome roots.

37

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

*(2) **purified** their karmic obstructions,*
*(3) **matured** in body and mind,*

- Karmic obstructions relate to defilements, so one must have purified their defilements to some degree
- Body and mind must be at a state or level of accomplishment where it can easily receive or accept the profound doctrines.

38

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

*(4) **cultivated** confidence in the Dharma teachings,*

- Cultivation of confidence refers to extensive study and practice of the Dharma teachings to the point where one has both deep understanding and experience of the profound doctrines and teachings.

39

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

*(5) **accumulated** sufficient stores of **superior** merit and wisdom,*

- This quality includes some overlap with the previous qualities, but in essence it stresses the importance of both merits and wisdom as the prerequisite for the learning and accomplishment of awakening.
- Ven. Yinshun first built **Fu**yan Vihara 福嚴精舍 (福 = merits)
- Then built **Hui**ri Dharma Hall 慧日講堂舍 (慧 = wisdom)

40

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

When they hear this teaching they will understand properly the profound implicit meaning. Toward this dharma they will develop strong conviction and understanding. Toward this meaning they truly penetrate it with a wisdom that is infallible. Relying on such penetrating understanding to skilfully continue their practice, such sentient beings will soon realize the ultimate state.

41

Five superior qualities	Can understand prajñā emptiness	Believe but don't understand emptiness	Believe and misunderstand emptiness	Don't believe and don't understand emptiness
(1) planted roots of superior wholesomeness	✓	✓	Possess some but not all five. Nāgārjuna calls them "heretical Mahayanist"	✗
(2) purified their karmic obstructions	✓	✓		✗
(3) matured in body and mind	✓	✓		✗
(4) cultivated confidence in the Dharma teachings	✓	✓		✗
(5) accumulated sufficient stores of superior merit and wisdom	✓	✗		✗

42

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Exegesis on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*:**

Some time after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa, Śrāvakayāna practitioners who have attachments to the Śrāvakayāna teachings,…upon hearing the prajñāpāramitā [teachings] that all dharmas are ultimately empty, felt as though a knife was stabbed through their heart. … and claim this is not the Buddha's teachings.

43

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Spectrum of practitioners based on how many of the five superior qualities one possesses.
- Weak spiritual foundation without all five qualities
  - Believe but do not understand emptiness
  - Believe and misunderstand emptiness
  - Do not believe and do not understand emptiness at all
- Buddha expounded the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra* for those with weak spiritual foundation.

44

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

***Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*:**

I rely on three types of no intrinsic nature to implicitly teach how all dharmas are without an intrinsic nature.

- Three types of no intrinsic nature essentially approaches emptiness via three aspects.
- Each type of no intrinsic nature relates to a certain type of dharma or phenomena.

45

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- This is where the Yogācāra school splits all phenomena into the categories of:
  (1) Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment
  (2) Phenomena dependent on causes and conditions
  (3) State of accomplishment of perfection
- Note this diverges from the meaning of emptiness underlying the prajñā sūtras.

46

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

Non-existent (1)Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment
- These dharmas have no intrinsic nature
- Need to overcome attachment to these dharmas as real things

Existent (2) Phenomena dependent on causes and conditions

Existent (3) State of accomplishment of perfection
- (2) and (3) are existent as (2) is the basis of existence and (3) is the truth of existence.

- This method of teaching implies not everything is non-existent.

47

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Weak spiritual foundation without all five qualities
  - Believe but do not understand emptiness
    - Rely on three types of no intrinsic nature to progress
  - Believe and misunderstand emptiness
    - Addresses misunderstanding that nothing exists
  - Do not believe and do not understand emptiness at all
    - Remedies opposition to the teaching all dharmas are empty

48

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra

- Those with all five superior characteristics regard the doctrine on emptiness as ultimate/explicit teachings.
- Those without all five superior characteristics regard the doctrine on emptiness as implicit (hard to understand) and need explicit teachings.
- Nothing wrong with the prajñāpāramitā teachings, it all depends on each person's ability to understand it.

49

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

- Simile of the ocean
  - Extremely deep to humans, but shallow to the Asura king.
- Simile of salt
  - Mountain tribe who does not know what salt is cannot understand how it improves flavour.
- *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra's* definition of explicit and implicit is based on the listener, not the doctrinal content.
  - The same teaching can be both explicit and implicit.

50

Provisional and Ultimate Teachings

	Definition 1 *Akṣayamati Sūtra*	Definition 2 *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*
Basis of definition	Doctrinal content	Spiritual foundation of listener
了義 liǎoyì： Ultimate / Explicit	• Teachings explaining transcendental dharmas • Doctrines on emptiness, four noble truths… • Prajñā sutras …	• Teachings that are easy to understand • Yogacara texts …
不了義 bùliǎoyì： Provisional / Implicit	Teachings explaining worldly dharmas • Doctrine on karma, cause and effect etc	Teachings that are profound and not easy to understand • Prajñā sutras …

51

Types of Intrinsic Nature

或是無自性，或是自相有。

[All dharmas] either exist without intrinsic nature

Or exist with intrinsic nature.

52

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- The Yogācāra practice transmitted by Asaṅga is based on the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*'s definition of explicit and implicit teachings.
- Teachings about the truth are expounded from the aspect of those whose spiritual foundations are not complete with all five superior characteristics.
- "All dharmas are without an intrinsic nature" and "All dharmas are dependent designations"
  - Imply that there is nothing at all
  - Hard to understand and can be misunderstood

53

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Asaṅga's teachings present two kinds of intrinsic nature.
  - True intrinsic nature
  - False intrinsic nature

***Yogācārabhūmi*:**

For example, the dependent designation called a person is possible only when the five aggregates are present. When the five aggregates are not present then the designation of a person cannot manifest.

54

Types of Intrinsic Nature

***Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*:**

Likewise, that which is established dependent on certain elements is only existent when those causal elements are present. When the causal elements are missing, the things that are established dependent on these causal elements cannot exist.

If there are only dependent constructs and no causal elements, then there is no basis of reliance for the dependent constructs, and as a result, dependent constructs cannot be established. This is what is called destroying all dharmas.

55

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Now the challenge begins!
- Real source of reliance
  - Real dharma here is NOT the same meaning as real dharma by Madhyamaka school.
- Consciousness-only: Real dharmas relate to the concept of seeds in the ālaya consciousness.
  - These seeds are impermanent.
  - "Real" because the seeds maintain the same characteristics, that is they produce the same dharma.

56

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Real means to maintain the same characteristic
- Based on "real" dharmas notional dharmas can arise.
- E.g: real aggregates create the false pudgala (human). So there are real aggregate seeds but no real pudgala seeds.
  - Aggregate seeds are real as they have fixed characteristics.
  - Pudgala seeds are not real because each of us are different.
  - Aggregates have intrinsic nature, pudgala has no intrinsic nature

57

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Consciousness-only teachings
  - Both real and false dharmas are impermanent
  - Real dharmas maintain the same characteristics (intrinsic nature)
  - False dharmas do not maintain the same characteristics

58

Types of Intrinsic Nature

Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra:

*What is **the delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment** found in all dharmas? This is the notionally established different identities for each dharma in order to subsequently communicate in a conventional way with others.*

*What is the **phenomena dependent on causes and conditions** found in all dharmas? This is the dependent co-arising nature of each dharma.*

59

Types of Intrinsic Nature

Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment

- Our normal mode of operation
- Attachment to external objects as real and independent of the mind
- Both Madhyamaka and Consciousness-only schools aim to correct this erroneous attachment to external objects
  - Madhyakama says these objects are empty
  - Consciousness-only says these objects are manifestations of the mind

60

Types of Intrinsic Nature

Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra:

[Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment] *are notionally established and this is their characteristic. They do not come to be because of an intrinsic identity. Therefore, delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment are said to have no nature of intrinsic identity.*

61

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Intrinsic identity refers to seeds in the ālaya consciousness
- Simile of mistaking a piece of string for a snake in a dark room
- Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment = snake (non-existent)
- Phenomena dependent on causes and conditions = string (existent)

62

Types of Intrinsic Nature

Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra:

[Phenomena dependent on causes and conditions] *these dharmas arise through the force of other conditions, and not by themselves. Therefore, in terms of production this type of dharmas are said to have no intrinsic identity.*

63

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Fundamental tenet of the system of mere consciousness that are illusional
  - Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment = false existence with no intrinsic nature
  - Phenomena dependent on causes and conditions = real dharmas that have intrinsic nature
    - Nature of eighteen elements
    - Elements = stable, fixed characteristic that cannot be lost
    - EG: melon seed will not give you tomatoes
- Intrinsic nature/seeds with stable characteristics explain how things are established in an orderly way.

64

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Consciousness-only definition of intrinsic nature
  - Does NOT refer to attachment to truly existent intrinsic self.
  - Means dharmas with stable characteristics arising from causes and conditions.
- Madhyamaka and Consciousness-only schools say that dharmas arise and cease, objects are impermanent.
  - Madhyamaka: impermanent = emptiness = no intrinsic nature
  - Consciousness-only: impermanent + stable characteristic (intrinsic nature)

65

Types of Intrinsic Nature

- Madhyamaka and Consciousness-only schools say delusional attachment to dharmas have no intrinsic nature.
- Not need for debate between schools
  - **Practitioners with five superior qualities** can understand emptiness, no intrinsic nature, notional designation. Can comprehend how emptiness can establish all dharmas, believe the doctrine of emptiness and practice it.
  - **Practitioners without all five superior qualities** misunderstand emptiness to mean nothing exists at all. These people need alternate teachings to help them develop faith in the doctrine of emptiness.

66

Later Yogācārin Position

- Simile of different medicine for different illnesses
- Later Yogācāra practitioners have the following position.
  - *Prajñā Sūtra's* teaching on all dharmas are empty is a doctrine that only the Buddha fully understands.
  - It is a necessity for all to rely on the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra's* new explanation on the doctrine of emptiness.
  - Claim Nāgārjuna's teachings have the same meaning as the *Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra's* teachings and oppose the Madhyamaka practitioners' ultimate teaching that all dharmas have emptiness as their nature.

67

Later Yogācārin Position

- Lessons from later Yogācārin's mistakes
  - Be open and respectful to various methods of practices
  - Be mindful that different people have different spiritual foundations
  - There is no one method fits all
  - Remember to practice tolerance and equality
  - In terms of our own practice, we should be clear about what our spiritual foundation is and therefore what practices are most effective to us now.

68

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

緣起自相有，即虛妄分別。
依識立緣起，因果善成立。

Whatever is dependent co-arisen, it has an intrinsic nature,
[These phenomena's] essence is delusional discrimination.
Relying on [ālaya] consciousness to establish dependent co-arisen [dharmas].
[The system of] cause and effect can skillfully be established.

69

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Three types of phenomena
  (1) Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment (false; no intrinsic nature)
  (2) Phenomena dependent on causes and conditions (the way/how things exist)
  (3) State of accomplishment of perfection (truth)
- The term "dependent co-arising" has two references
  - Nature of dependent co-arising = Principle of dependent co-arising
  - Phenomena dependent on causes and condition = objects that arise from causes and conditions

70

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Mahāyāna Consciousness-only school has consciousness only as its fundamental tenet.
- Phenomena dependent on causes and condition has delusional discrimination as its nature.
  - This means the consciousness is defiled and ordinary sentient beings have never had undefiled manifested activities.

71

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Eight types of consciousnesses
  1st Eyes, 2nd Ears, 3rd Nose, 4th Tongue, 5th Body, 6th Mind consciousnesses
  7th consciousness is called the manas
  8th consciousness is called the ālaya
- *Compendium of the Great Vehicle* 《攝大乘論》
  - First seven consciousnesses rely on the ālaya.
  - The "fundamental discrimination『根本分別』" or what all dharmas are built upon, is the ālaya consciousness.
  - Ālaya consciousness is "that on which all dharmas depends."

72

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Consciousness-only teachings establish how all dharmas that arise from causes and conditions can exist by relying on the alaya.
  - When the seeds/potentials (cause) become active, the corresponding object (effect) arises
- Ālaya is very subtle
- Ālaya also called warehouse consciousness because it stores countless karmic seeds/potentials.

73

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- When a seed becomes active
  - Produces the object
  - Object produces a new seed of the same character
- What does it mean practically?
  - Allowing unwholesome thoughts to arise and become actions/speech will create more unwholesome seeds.
  - Learning/practicing the Dharma creates new wholesome seeds.
  - Create more wholesome seeds to out number unwholesome seeds.

74

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- E.g. practice of metta/loving kindness
  - Try to tackle aversion to people we do not like.
  - Objectively reflect on their good and bad points and our own good and bad points.
  - We may have the same bad points as them.
  - Remind ourselves to not develop their bad points.
  - This person has actually helped us to improve ourselves.
  - Develop gratitude

75

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Some actions are not a serious breach of the precepts, but can lead to serious karmic retribution.
- E.g. Annoying others in a Dharma retreat
  - In the precepts, annoying others is a minor offense and punishment is light.
  - BUT karmically if you disturb someone from practicing the Dharma the karmic result is severe.
- Be aware of the action and the situation.

76

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Seeds in the alaya have two major aspects

(1) Quality or essence
  - E.g. seeds that give rise to an eye

(2) Combination
  - E.g. type of eye (human, dog, fish etc)

- Alaya's characteristic is seed (intrinsic nature)
- Seeds are potentials that give rise to all sorts of dharmas (cause and effect)

77

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- The alaya consciousness has the characteristic of seeds and is also called "dependent co-arising based on different intrinsic identities."
  - Seeds of the eye consciousness only give rise to eye consciousness
  - Seeds of greed give rise to greed
  - Seeds of the colour green give rise to green colour
  - Seeds have the potential to manifest their corresponding dharmas and these dharmas produce new seeds with the same potential.

78

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Characteristic of seeds = "individual abilities producing results of the same intrinsic nature."
- View of cause and result where intrinsic nature means producing the same characteristics.
- Seeds need supporting conditions to manifest
- Objects arising from seeds and their supporting conditions are called **phenomena dependent on causes and condition**.

79

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- Yogācāra school: consciousness is the source of life
- Sentient beings = body + consciousness
- Innate seeds in the ālaya are defiled and create further errors.
- Listening and learning the Buddha's teachings is how we introduce undefiled seeds into the ālaya.
  - These seeds are blessed with buddha's awakening and can help us correct erroneous perceptions from defiled seeds.

80

Explaining Dependent Co-arising

- View of cause and result
  - Consciousness-only school: Seeds with intrinsic nature give rise to dharmas
  - Madhyamaka school: dharmas arise from causes and conditions and have no intrinsic nature
- Venerable Yinshun considers the Madhyamaka view more thorough
  - E.g. Science proves that form can be changed into energy so form can lose its characteristics.
  - Yogācāra's concept of a seed is easier for most people to understand.

81

Insight Method of Practice

心外法非有，心識理非無。
達無境唯識，能入於真實。

Dharmas external to the consciousness are non-existent.
The consciousness in principle is existent.
Upon understanding that external phenomena do not exist but only consciousness,
Then one can realize the Truth.

82

Insight Method of Practice

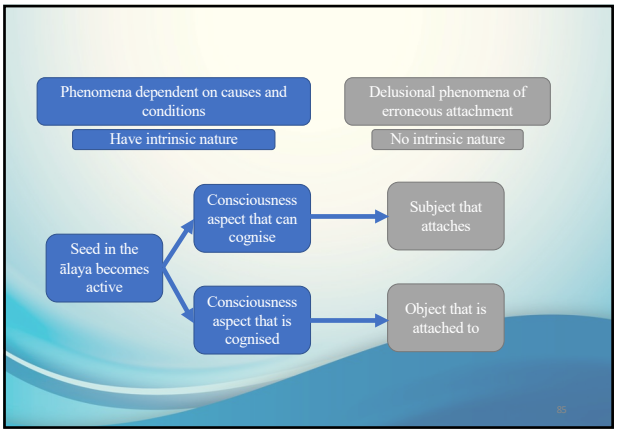
- Yogācāra doctrine of cause and effect
  - Dharmas external to the mind are not real
  - Everything originates from the mind so there is no separate existing external thing.
  - Reason: cause and effect is based on the ālaya and how seeds manifest dharmas
- Sentient beings instinctively think that external objects are real, even mental objects (emotions etc) seem separate from consciousness.
- Mind/Consciousness not only cognizes things, it can also be cognized.

83

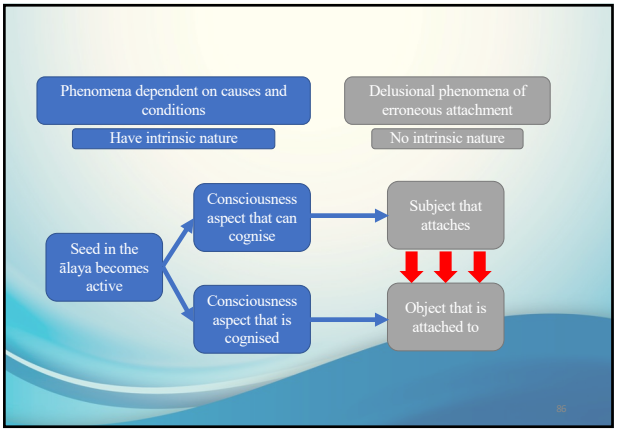
Insight Method of Practice

- Yogācāra doctrine's definition of external objects
  - Dharmas external to and completely separate from the consciousness do not exist and are mere illusions.
- Illusions have something real as their source of reliance.
- Consciousness contains aspects of delusion/erroneous understanding but also has intrinsic nature (seeds).

84



85



86

Insight Method of Practice

- Yogācāra doctrine uses consciousness to explain cause and results
- Consciousness also explains delusion and awakening
- Delusion: erroneous perception of external objects
  - Delusion ➔ attachment ➔ defilements ➔ creation of karma ➔ produce more defiled seeds of the same characteristic
  - Ālaya is also called retribution consciousness
  - Normal mode of operation, we cannot comprehend how external objects are produced by the mind.

87

Insight Method of Practice

- Yogācāra doctrines aim to tell us what we see, experience and perceive is generally erroneous.
  - E.g. When someone scolds us
    - We should practice to set aside our subjective emotions.
    - Objectively address the matter with a calm attitude.
    - Is there truth in the scolding? If yes, then improve ourselves. If no, then ignore it.
    - This approach stops the creation of defiled seeds.

88

Insight Method of Practice

- To understand how the mind manifests all things, we need to practice meditation.
- In meditation we can experience how the mind can alter objects.
  - E.g. Meditation on color
  - Mastery of this meditation practice allows one to turn everything into a certain color.
  - Such experience will help one to slowly comprehend the Consciousness-only teachings.
  - Experience in meditation is a core basis for the Consciousness-only teachings.

89

Insight Method of Practice

- Insight meditation
  - ➜ Correct perception that external objects have no intrinsic nature
  - ➜ Delusional phenomena of erroneous attachment are empty
  - ➜ Let go of attachments and consequent defilements

Story of a bhikṣuṇī who had an admirer.

- Bhikṣuṇī: What do you like about me?
- Admirer: You have beautiful eyes.
- Bhikṣuṇī: Here you go. (she gave him her eyes)

90

Summary

- Madhyamaka and Consciousness-only doctrines aim to teach us that external objects are empty, non-existent, without intrinsic nature.
- Madhyamaka: objects arise due to causes and conditions and so are empty.
  - Change in conditions will change the object
  - Objects are not fixed and hence no intrinsic nature

91

Summary

- Consciousness-only: objects are delusional because of our erroneous attachment and perception of it ➜ delusional phenomena are empty.
- Understanding external objects are unobtainable, i.e. phenomena dependent on causes and conditions are free from erroneous attachments
  - ➜ Consciousness of erroneous cognition loses its object and will not manifest
  - ➜ Without object the consciousness of cognition becomes to have no attachment
  - ➜ One can then realize the Consciousness-only doctrine concerning ultimate Truth or emptiness.

92

Summary

- Main tenet of the system of mere consciousness that is illusional
  - Consciousness exists with an intrinsic nature of cause and result
  - Basis of explaining delusion and awakening
  - Skilful teaching to cater to those not equipped with all five superior characteristics
- Illusions based on something real is a fundamental position of the Sarvāstivāda school that belongs to the Śrāvakayāna.
  - Skillful teaching by Buddha to help Śrāvakayāna practitioners move to the Mahāyāna.

93

Summary

- Yogācāra school has many branches with slightly different teachings.
- Venerable Yinshun chose the teachings that align with the Agama teachings to show the link to Buddha's earlier teachings.

94

Consciousness-only's Target Audience

一切法無性，善入者能入。
或五事不具，佛復解深密。

All dharmas are without intrinsic nature,
Those with skills can penetrate this teaching.
For those not equipped with the five requisites,
The Buddha then taught the Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra

95

Consciousness-only's Key Doctrines

或是無自性，或是自相有。
緣起自相有，即虛妄分別。
依識立緣起，因果善成立。

[All dharmas] either exist without intrinsic nature
Or exist with intrinsic nature..
Whatever is dependent co-arisen, it has an intrinsic nature,
[These phenomena's] essence is delusional discrimination.
Relying on [ālaya] consciousness to establish dependent co-arisen [dharmas].
[The system of] cause and effect can skillfully be established.

96

Consciousness-only's Insight Practice

心外法非有，心識理非無。
達無境唯識，能入於真實。

Dharmas external to the consciousness are non-existent.
The consciousness in principle is existent.
Upon understanding that external phenomena do not exist but only consciousness,
One can realize the Truth.

97

Is everything clear as mud?

98