The Wisdom of Arya Nagarjuna
Course One: The Eight Invisibles
Class 3—The Four Choices
Homework Master

1) Please fill in the blanks in the following section of Choney Lama's *Ship,* using your notes from the class to do so. This part of the homework will not be on the quiz, so don't worry!

> The very first thing we have to do is to prove that what **our misunderstanding which holds to some me and mine** thinks it sees cannot even exist; this is the job of Chapter 18: **"An Examination of the Person and Things."**
>
> But once we prove that the person has absolutely no nature of their own, you might start to think that the ideas of **good & bad karma, and of a person who comes to this life from the last—and who goes to the next one from this one**— must be wrong. To stop this thought, the Arya presents Chapter 2, "An Examination of Coming & Going"; and Chapter 8, **"An Examination of Doers and What They Do."**
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> Having heard that doers have no nature of their own, people might start to think that there is nothing to perceive an object; to stop this idea, we have Chapter 9: **"An Examination of Whether Things Are There Before They Are Perceived."**
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> The tenth chapter then is devoted to denying an example which is meant to prove that this perceiver must have some nature of their own. This chapter is named, **"An Examination of Fire and Firewood."**
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> In relating this example, others present a certain reason to prove it. Denying this reason is the job of Chapter 11, called **"An Examination of Whether There Is a Beginning or An End";** and Chapter 12, which is **"An Examination of Whether Pain Was Created by Ourselves, or by Someone Else."**
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> The first chapter, "An Examination of Conditions," is meant to show that—in denying that things could be themselves—we deny that **the starting of things could exist through some nature of its own.**
>
> Someone might think to themselves, **"But the fact that the heaps and so on had their own nature was taught in the scriptures"**; to deal with these questions,

Arya Nagarjuna gives us three chapters: Chapter 5, "An Examination of the Categories"; Chapter 3, "An Examination of the Powers of Sense"; and Chapter 4, "An Examination of the Heaps."

Others might think that, because emotions like attachment—and the starting, staying, and stopping of things—have their own cause (karma, and the person that does something), then they must have some nature of their own. To prevent this idea, the Arya presents Chapter 6, **"An Examination of Desire & Attachment"**; Chapter 7, **"An Examination of How Things Start, Stay, and Stop";** and Chapter 13, "An Examination of Factors."

Some people have asserted that the person, and things, must have some nature of their own. As proof of this, they talk about three things: **how things make contact with each other; or how they have causes and conditions which give them birth; or how we take rebirths, one after the other, in a cycle.** These ideas are disproven in Chapter 14, "An Examination of Whether Things Ever Touch"; Chapter 15, "An Examination of a Nature to Things"; and Chapter 16, "An Examination of Bondage, and Liberation."

Others have said that the cycle of pain has some nature of its own; and to support this idea, they talk about some foundation of things provided by **the connection between karma and its consequences.** To disprove this idea, we see Chapter 17: "An Examination of Karma and Its Consequences."

Some say that there must be a nature to things, because that nature is what we refer to when we speak of the past, present, and future. To refute this idea, we present Chapter 19: **"An Examination of Time."**

To prove that the times have some nature of their own, other people point to conditions which create results; and to the causes of things occurring and disappearing. These ideas are disproven in Chapter 20, **"An Examination of the Coming Together of Causes & Conditions";** and Chapter 21, "An Examination of Things Occurring and Disappearing."

When we say that the flow of the cycle of pain has no nature of its own, then some people have doubts, thinking that it can't be the case then that relative to this flow there exist **Buddhas, and also negative emotions**. To prevent such uncertainty, the Arya presents Chapter 22, "An Examination of Buddhas"; and Chapter 23, "An Examination of the Mistakes."

Others might think that—in a world where **everything is empty of any nature of its own**—then things like the four higher truths would have to be mistaken. For them, we present Chapter 24: "An Examination of the Higher Truths."

In such a world too, they might think, there can be no **nirvana.** To end this thought, we have Chapter 25: "An Examination of Nirvana."

The Buddha said that—if we see that things happen in dependence—then we have seen **the path of the middle way.** Chapter 26, "An Examination of the Twelve Links of the Cycle of Pain," is taught to clarify this point.

If we come to a realization of the true nature of dependence, then we stop **all the mistaken views we've ever had.** To demonstrate this fact, we see the final chapter, Chapter 27, called "An Examination of Views."]

*2) What are three reasons for making all these "examinations" of other people's viewpoints, and what is one thing which is *not* such a reason?

[We make these 27 examinations in order to (1) first give birth to the path to freedom, inside of us; and (2) to make our practice of this path more and more firm; and (3) to keep this practice growing stronger and stronger. We do *not* undertake these examinations simply to engage in arguments against other people's positions.]

*3) The very famous second verse of *Wisdom* focuses on how things first start. State the four options that are given, and then give the astounding traditional name of this proof of emptiness, explaining the name's deeper meaning.

[If things start from their own side, then they must start either (1) from themselves; (2) from something else; (3) from both; or (4) without any cause at all.

The traditional name of this proof of emptiness is "The Sliver of Diamond." This is an amazing reference to the fact that—like a diamond—we can divide emptiness up into different kinds, depending on the object that has it: We can speak of the "emptiness of a chair," or the "emptiness of my thoughts." But in every case, the emptiness itself is exactly the same; in the same way that if we smash a diamond into small slivers, each one in itself is perfect diamond.]

*4) What are two problems we would see, if things started from themselves?

[Since things then would have to already exist within their causes, then for those causes to open into a result which was identical to those things that were already there would be pointless. And if things did grow that were already pre-existing in the cause, then more and more such things would just keep growing infinitely: Since something unnecessary had grown once, there would be nothing to stop it from doing so countless times.]

Meditation assignment:
Twice a day, do rounds 1, 2 & 3 of the Lion's Dance in a careful, enjoyable way spending as long as you have time to at each level—but still staying comfortable and inspired.

Meditation dates and times:

Please note that homeworks submitted without dates & times will not be accepted.

RealApp Assignment

Create a RealApp to accompany the material taught in this class. This is a principle derived from the material that relates to people's *real life* and is easily *applicable* to that life—a concept they might usefully meditate on, or utilize at work or in their family life.

1) Catchy title for your RealApp:

2) Description of the RealApp, in one or two sentences:

3) Description of the IDIM for your RealApp which you will look for on the internet, after the silent retreat period:

For grader's use only

Quality	Grade	Comments
Important?		
Creative?		
Authoritative?		
Use in real life?		
Total		