



The Wisdom of Arya Nagarjuna  
Course One: The Eight Invisibles  
Class 5—Canceling Four Definitions  
Homework Master

1) Having discussed how there are problems with the way things start—from the result side of things (not from self or other etc); Arya Nagarjuna moves on to discussing how there's a problem with way things start, from the side of the conditions. Give the 5 steps to his strategy here.

**[In verse 3 of his *Wisdom*, the Arya (1) outlined the four different types of conditions that Lord Buddha taught, since others believe that these are proof that things do come from other things. His strategy in pointing out problems from the side of the conditions (as opposed to the results, already covered) begins with (2) lumping all four of these conditions together, to show how they cannot be conditions that have any nature of their own.**

**Proving that all four conditions—if they are natural—have problems begins with (3) denying the idea that something is a condition as it produces a result. This is covered in two steps: (3a) looking at the process of growing they're involved with; and continues to (3b) how they can lead into their results.**

**Next we (4) deny the idea that something is a condition when it first functions to create. (We have already earlier denied that things are conditions from the point of view of results that have come out from them.)**

**(5) After treating all four conditions together, Nagarjuna examines each one individually.]**

\*2) With all the four kinds of conditions, Arya Nagarjuna has a problem, for example, with saying “The tree is growing from the tree seed,” or “The awareness of blue is growing from the blue, or the eye.” Explain what he is referring to when he says, “As the result approaches growing, the cause approaches ending—these are simultaneous. And the completion of the growth of the result and the completion of the stopping of the cause are also simultaneous.”

**[If we think carefully, we can see that it's not really correct to say “The tree is growing up.” During the growing, there is not yet a tree: it is the result of the growing, and comes *after* the growing. And if the tree is what comes *after* the growing, then we can never say that “a tree grows,” since by the time we have a tree, the growing has stopped. We cannot be**

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seeing what we think we see; and the tree must actually be coming from something *other* than the tree seed.]

\*3) Someone responds to this train of thought by saying, “Why talk so much, Arya Nagarjuna? We know that when we see an apple, there must be an eyeball working as a cause there to help create this perception. When we see the result, we know the cause must have been causing the result to grow.” How does Nagarjuna counter their argument?

[Nagarjuna says that it’s not enough to say that the growing (of an awareness of an coffee cup, for example) is going on so long as we can eventually see a result, at the end of the process. That is, we can’t say “a tree is growing” so long as, by the end of the process, there is a finished tree.

With a direct cause (such as our eye sense power detecting shape and color of what turns out to be a cup), this confirmation comes only towards the end of the growing of visual awareness of the cup, and not during this growing.

And we may never get any such confirmation in the case of an indirect cause (a potter who made the cup, and who died before the we first came and saw the finished cup). Therefore, waiting until we can see a finished result is not an acceptable test of whether or not the process of growing depends on conditions.]

4) In denying the idea of a condition which first functions to create something, Arya Nagarjuna points out two problems with this concept. What are they?

[The Arya points out that—if the result were *absent* at the time of its seed, then the seed could never be called “a cause.” And if the result were *present* at the time of its seed, then the seed would have nothing to do, since the result had already come out.]

\*5) Now, having denied the four kinds of conditions (that have their own nature) as a group, Arya Nagarjuna turns to denying them individually, one by one. He goes in the same order that he first presented them, in a previous verse—which means that he starts with a “causal condition”; basically, anything that has a result. What problem does the Arya point out with this definition of a causal condition: “Anything that has a result”?

[Again, Nagarjuna has a problem with this expression—“Anything that has a result”—being used to define any kind of cause. When you say *have*, are you saying that the cause *has* a result while the cause is present? In that case, the cause would either have nothing to do, or it would just keep spitting out extra versions of the same result forever—since its first result is already there in the first place. But if you say the result is *not* there during the time of the cause, then how can the cause and the result have any kind of relationship, where one comes from the other?]

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6) It is said about the second kind of condition—the “object” condition—that when we turn our perceptions to a thing, that thing triggers in us an awareness of the thing. For example, when we look at a painting, the painting is out there first, and then the image of that painting flies to the eye; goes through; and triggers an awareness of the painting. But what is the internal contradiction here? And how does that disprove a common misperception about the direct perception of emptiness?

**[If the perception of a painting exists before we look at a painting, then the painting cannot trigger that perception. If the perception of the painting is triggered by the object of a painting, then there can exist an object without a subject (which is impossible; since for example the Buddhist word for “subject” is “object-holder,” and objects are defined by being perceived by subjects).**

**By the way, there is a description of the direct perception of emptiness which compares this experience to “water being poured into water.” Some people have taken this to mean that subject and object melt into one—and they further make the mistake of calling this “a state beyond all duality: beyond all difference between me and what I’m looking at”—a kind of “Everything Is One.”**

**But in fact the only meaning of the water/water analogy is that, during the direct perception of emptiness, we can no longer be aware of our own mind seeing emptiness, since that mind is not emptiness—and our senses at that moment are restricted to the realm of emptiness, or ultimate reality: far above this everyday level of reality.]**

7) We now turn to the third kind of condition mentioned by Lord Buddha: the “condition for what immediately follows”—often described as a state of mind that leads into another state of mind. Nagarjuna says, “It would be wrong to say that the seed for a thing stopped before the thing had been produced.” And why is that true?

**[It would be wrong to say that the seed for a thing stopped before the thing had been produced, because the end of a seed and the birth of what it produces happen at the very same instant—we learned that above.]**

8) The fourth and final type of condition mentioned by Lord Buddha is the “self-sufficient condition,” meaning that it has the power to create a result. Actually, this description applies to anything produced by causes and conditions. Why though, according to Arya Nagarjuna, do these conditions *not* have this power to create a result, through some inherent nature of their own?

**[The Arya says simply, “They don’t have any inherent power to create a result, because Lord Buddha himself made that famous statement that ‘This can only happen when that**

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**happens.’ Which is to say, because Lord Buddha taught the idea of dependence in the first place.]**

*Meditation assignment:*

Twice a day, do all 5 rounds 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?		
<b>Total</b>		