

the power of appearing to a non-defective mind, the perception and conception of which has not been affected by the power of the conception of true existence. Such a non-defective mind may be non-conceptual or conceptual. Since the object of negation—true existence—does not appear to the non-conceptual sense consciousnesses, a sense consciousness is non-defective if it has not been affected by one of the superficial causes of error (see pp. 67-68). A thought consciousness is non-defective if it is non-mistaken with respect to its determined or referent object (*\*adhyavasāyaviṣaya, zhen yul*), that is, if the thought consciousness is correct regarding the general characteristics of its object. A thought consciousness conceiving of a permanent sound would be considered mistaken. For the Svātantrikas, if the object of negation appeared to the sense consciousnesses, they would not be capable of positing the conventional existence of objects because ultimate existence would be certified by sense experience.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, it can be inferred from Kamalaśīla's statement that true existence or ultimate existence is a mode of subsistence that is established from the object's own side, without being posited through the power of appearing to a non-defective consciousness. What it means to be "posited through the power of appearing to a non-defective awareness" is elucidated with the example of a magician's illusion. [Start here](#)

**In India it is said that a magician** could take an ordinary object such as a pebble or a twig, rub it with a certain salve, and then cast a mantra, thereby causing the pebble or twig to appear as some other object, such as a horse or an elephant. At that time, both the magician and the audience for whom he is performing the trick see a horse where the pebble once was. However, the ways in which the magician and the audience perceive the horse are different. The magician sees the horse but does not believe

it to be a real horse, knowing that he has conjured the appearance of a horse from a pebble with the use of the salve and mantra. The audience sees the horse and believes that it is real. A person who arrives after the show has begun will only see the pebble because his eyes have not been affected by the mantra cast by the magician.

For both the audience and the magician, the appearance of the pebble as a horse comes about through the power of the mind affected by the mantra; the appearance is not produced naturally from the pebble without depending on that mind. The magician understands this, but, for the audience, it appears that a real horse is standing in front of them and that this appearance is not dependent on the power of the mind.

Since the magician actively intends for the pebble to appear as a horse, the way in which the horse appears to him is different from the way in which someone might mistake a coiled rope in a dark corner to be a snake. It is not because the rope is in any way a snake that the rope appears as a snake; it is merely due to the external condition of darkness which causes the rope to appear in that way. The same can be said about a pebble which has not been conjured with mantra and salve; it is the nature of the pebble not to appear as a horse. However, a pebble which has been affected by mantra and salve is said to gain an additional objective status which is its appearance as a horse. At the time of the magic show, it is as if the pebble becomes the entity of the illusory horse.<sup>35</sup>

Jang-gya makes this point when he says that for the magician, the pebble is merely posited as a horse through the power of the mind that was affected by the mantra; the pebble does not appear as a horse from its own side, independent of that mind. Nevertheless, there does exist an objective mode of being of the pebble itself which appears as a horse, a mode of being which is posited in dependence upon the awareness affected by the mantra. The

appearance of the illusory horse must exist in order for it to be mistaken for a real horse by the audience.<sup>36</sup>

For the Svātantrikas, a consciousness innately conceiving true existence conceives of phenomena as existing from the side of their own objective mode of subsistence, without being posited through the force of appearing to a non-defective awareness. In the same way, the audience at the magic show believes that the horse that they see in front of them is a real horse and is not appearing to them through the power of their minds, which have been affected by the magician's spell. Ordinary beings who have not understood emptiness conceive things to be established from their own side without depending at all on being posited through the power of an awareness.

Someone who has understood emptiness, the lack of ultimate existence, understands that phenomena do not exist exclusively from their own side, that an object's mode of being depends on being posited by the non-defective awareness to which it appears. A person who has understood emptiness is like the magician who sees the appearance of the horse but knows that the horse is not real, that it is appearing through the power of the mind that has been affected by the mantra. The appearance of the horse is not merely a mental projection; it is a mode of subsistence of the pebble affected by the mantra and salve. However, the illusory horse does not exist until the magician or the audience have looked at the pebble. Thus, although there is an objective mode of subsistence, it does not exist until it is perceived by the mistaken sense consciousnesses affected by the mantra. In the same way, the Svātantrikas assert that all phenomena are merely posited through the power of appearing to a non-defective mind, but they do not assert that they are merely posited by the mind. There is an objective mode of subsistence of phenomena that exists from the object's own side and that is established by way of the object's own character.

However, just as the illusory horse does not exist until it is perceived by the mistaken sense consciousnesses, the objective mode of subsistence of objects does not exist without appearing to a non-defective awareness.

Thus, for the Svātantrikas, two factors are essential. The first is the objective mode of subsistence of the object which exists from the object's own side but does not exist independently. If it did, it would be an extreme of permanence. This mode of subsistence is posited by appearing to a non-defective consciousness which is either conceptual or non-conceptual. Phenomena gain their entities through the power of the awarenesses to which they appear. However, such consciousnesses do not subjectively impute those phenomena without any objective basis; that would be an extreme of annihilation. They rather, more passively, posit that which appears to them. As Jang-gya says:

According to these Mādhyamikas, the fact that things are posited through the power of an awareness that is not damaged by valid cognition and the fact that there also exists the thing's own mode of subsistence that is posited by the power of that [awareness] is not contradictory, just as a basis of conjuring [that is, a pebble] can be posited as appearing as a horse or elephant by the power of an awareness affected by mantra and salve, and there [also] exists a mode of subsistence which is the appearance of a horse or elephant even from the side of the basis of conjuring and which is posited through the power of that awareness.<sup>37</sup>

This mode of being which is established from the object's own side but which is posited through the power of appearing to a non-defective consciousness is the conventional mode of being of phenomena in the

Svātantrika system. Their final mode of being is their lack of ultimate existence, their emptiness of being established from their own side without depending on being posited by a nondefective awareness. A Superior directly realizing this emptiness perceives only the lack of this ultimate existence; no conventionalities appear to his mind. He is like a latecomer to the magic show who neither sees the illusory horse nor conceives it to be real.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, in the Svātantrika system, when it said that phenomena do not exist ultimately, there are two types of non-ultimate existence. The first, deriving from Bhāvaviveka's *Blaze of Reasoning*, is the inability to bear analysis by an ultimate consciousness—a conceptual consciousness of hearing, thinking, or meditating that analyzes suchness. The second type of non-ultimate existence, described in Kamalaśīla's *Illumination of the Middle Way*, is the non-existence of an objective mode of subsistence that is not merely posited through the force of appearing to a non-defective awareness.<sup>39</sup>

For the Svātantrikas, true existence, ultimate existence, real existence, existence which is not posited by the power of an awareness, and existence which is capable of bearing analysis by a reasoning consciousness engaged in ultimate analysis are all objects of negation and do not exist even conventionally. Existence by way of the object's own character, inherent existence, existence by way of the object's own entityness, existence by way of its own entity, and existence capable of withstanding a search for the object designated are asserted by the Svātantrikas to be conventionally existent.<sup>40</sup> Bhāvaviveka holds that it is a deprecation of phenomena to refute inherent existence without affixing the qualification "ultimately." That is, for Bhāvaviveka phenomena inherently exist conventionally but not ultimately. In the fifteenth chapter of Bhāvaviveka's *Lamp for (Nāgārjuna's) "Wisdom"*, an opponent asks Bhāvaviveka: