

In the phrase “selflessness of the self,” “self” refers to the conventionally existent self. This self is empty of inherent existence. In other words, the conventional self or person has the attribute “selflessness.” The egotistic view grasps the conventional self as inherently existent. More specifically, it grasps “me” as inherently existent. We get rid of that wrong way of holding the conventional self by means of the wisdom seeing the selflessness of the self. This correct view is the complete opposite of the egotistic view. The wisdom realizing selflessness or emptiness contradicts the way that the self is held by the egotistic view, hence the selflessness of the self.

We can understand the view of the perishable collection grasping at “mine” in this way too. However, there is some debate about how we classify this object. Is the object of the egotistic view holding “me” different from the object of the egotistic view holding “mine”? The former observes “me” and holds it to inherently exist. The second observes “mine” and grasps that to be inherently existent. So if you look at your own hand and think “mine,” holding it to be inherently existent, is this grasping at phenomena as inherently existent? If not, how can “mine” be a person? If it is not a person, then since it exists must it be a phenomenon? Holding a phenomenon as inherently existent is not grasping at a self of persons because the basic object is not a person; it is grasping at a self of phenomena. So even though the egotistic view is divided into these two aspects — grasping “me” and grasping “mine” as inherently existent — you should understand that they both observe the self and they both grasp at a self of persons. You should not consider that either of them observes phenomena or grasps at a self of phenomena. The object of this egotistic view does not concern the self of phenomena.

Different scholars present different interpretations of this point. Most scholars agree that the egotistic view holding “me” observes the person. Some scholars say that the egotistic view holding “mine” also observes the person — because if it does not, then it would be grasping at a self of phenomena. Certain other scholars, while accepting that “me” refers to the person, try to avoid the problem regarding “mine” by appealing to the notions of “generality” and “particularity.” They say that “mine” as a generality is the person, but particular instances of “mine” are not; they are

things such as my hand and my cup. But, we may ask, if “mine” is the generality of the person, then how can a hand be a particular instance of it? That is impossible. If the subject is a person, how can a hand or a face be included among its instances?

Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen says that “mine” itself is not the person, but when we grasp something as “mine,” then grasping the person as inherently existent must be present in the mindstream. When we think “this is my hand,” first there is the thought “hand” and then the thought “mine,” which is that hand in connection with “me.” However, here we are not grasping “hand” as inherently existent. What we are grasping finally is “mine” itself. Without “me,” “mine” cannot appear. So when we grasp “mine” as inherently existent, we are also grasping “me” as inherently existent. Therefore the main object of the grasping at “mine” is “me”; so grasping at “mine” is the grasping at a self of persons. According to Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltzen’s view, we can say that “mine” is a phenomenon in general because everything that exists is a phenomenon. However, we cannot say that it is a phenomenon within the context of the division between phenomena and persons. When this division is made, it is not counted as a phenomenon; however, it is not a person either. But since you cannot hold “mine” without holding “me,” it arises in connection with the egotistic view grasping at “me.” **Therefore both aspects of the view of the perishable collection — grasping at me and grasping at mine — observe the self and grasp at the self of persons. We should not regard either one as observing phenomena or grasping at a self of phenomena.** Moreover, although grasping at a substantially existent person without the thought of “me” or “mine” is not the egotistic view, this grasping is still a mental affliction — it is ignorance grasping at the self of persons.

In conclusion, the word “self” can refer to two different things — one that exists and one that does not. The conventionally existent self actually exists; the mere “I” or “me” is an ordinary object of awareness and is not negated. The inherently existent self does not exist at all; it is the object wrongly held by the egotistic view, and it is negated by the wisdom understanding selflessness. In other words, the former is the basic object of the innate egotistic view and should not be negated. The latter is the held object of the innate egotistic view and should be negated. There is no