

Chapter 2 *Prajnaparamita* or Nondiscriminative Wisdom

The activity of the noninverted mind is characterized by freedom from the false distinction between self and other, and by the consequent interfusion of seer and seen, subject and object. Because it is established by eradicating false discrimination, it is not mere perception, but also a mode of practice, and the wisdom or awakening that emerges in and through this seeing-practice is called supreme bodhi or enlightenment. The earliest Mahayana concept of such seeing is *prajna* (wisdom), or more fully, *prajnaparamita*, “wisdom that has attained the other shore.” It is described in the *Prajnaparamita* sutras, which begin to appear from about the first century of the common era and which are considered the foundation of all Mahayana thought.

The central theme of the *Prajnaparamita* sutras is practice, that is, how the bodhisattva should perform *prajna*. *Prajna*, then, is at once wisdom *and* practice. The *Heart Sutra* begins:

When Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva was practicing deep *prajnaparamita*, he clearly saw that the five aggregates are all empty.

The five aggregates or *skandhas* refer to the basic elements that make up the self and all things in existence: form or the material world, sensation, thought, feeling, and consciousness. “Empty” means that they do not really exist. The other *Prajnaparamita* sutras similarly speak of practice and include lengthy catalogs of things and concepts to be seen as empty or actually nonexistent. Sometimes the repetitiveness of these sutras is regarded as a stylistic failing, but they are not treatises meant to systematically develop a body of doctrine, but rather guides to practice, and practice is repetitive performance (*bhavana*).

Among the *Prajnaparamita* sutras, the *Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Lines*, the *Diamond Sutra*, and the *Prajnaparamita in Twenty-five Thousand Lines* are considered representative of the earliest strata. The *Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Lines*, perhaps the oldest of these three, employs expressions typical of *prajnaparamita* thought such as “emptiness,” “not seeing,” and “not grasping,” teaching that “all things are empty” or “ungraspable.”² This emptiness is the content of the bodhisattva’s performance of *prajna*, which is the contemplative practice of “not seeing” anything. Not to see any thing means to cut off the dichotomous thinking (*vikalpa*) that distinguishes things and makes them into objects standing apart from the self, and this is for all things that become objects of such thought to be “empty” and nonexistent.

The term “empty” (*sunya*) strongly suggests an ontological dimension, involving the question of existence or nonexistence, but as the content of practice, it also holds clear implications concerning the working of the mind. The bodhisattva practicing *prajna* does not conceive or see or grasp anything, any object of thought or perception. This is because all things discriminated and

² “Not seeing” (*na samanupasyati*); “not grasping” (*na upalabhate*).

identified by the egocentric mind are in reality “empty” or nonexistent. For the bodhisattva there is nothing, whether material existence or mental conception, to become the object of any act of perception, thought, or imagination. “Empty” is used to express the negation of things seen, and “not seeing” the negation of perception of delusive objects.

That things do not exist and that the bodhisattva practicing prajna does not see or discriminate are two facets of a single reality. Emptiness and prajna therefore refer to the same reality or awareness. Thus Nagarjuna (c. 150-250), who expounded Madhyamika thought, the first great school of Indian Mahayana, states that since all things that become objects in the field of mental activity are nonexistent, no “mental function that sees objects” arises.³ This is nondiscrimination (*avikalpa, nirvikalpa*). Vasubandhu (c. 320-400) terms it “no-mind” (*acitta*).⁴

Emptiness signifies the eradication of all objects of thought and perception, and this is at the same time nondiscrimination or not seeing. The simple absence of objects in itself, however, is not wisdom. Rather, when all perception of objects is eliminated, wisdom arises. This is wisdom or awareness that functions when all objects set apart from the subject disappear—when objectifying thought ceases and subject and object, seer and seen, become one. This wisdom is prajna, and the bodhisattva who practices it perceives things as they genuinely are.

The wisdom that functions in emptiness is also termed nondiscriminative wisdom (*nirvikalpa-jnana*); it arises when all mental activity—“discrimination” (*vikalpa*) or “mind” (*citta*)—has been eradicated.⁵ Discriminative thinking and prajna therefore stand in a relation of mutual exclusion. What we perceive by discrimination does not really exist, but is merely conceptualization and abstraction. The awareness that has not seeing any such objects as its fundamental nature, however, is able to touch and know the direct reality of each thing in itself. By practicing such awareness, the bodhisattva reaches true existence just as it is.⁶ Instead of seeing objects upon which to impose his own concepts and values, he is said to see “suchness” or “thusness” (*tathata*), which is each thing and being emerging just “such” as it is, in immediacy and particularity, but at the same time recognized to be nonexistent. It is thus grasped not as some thing to be labeled or judged, but nondiscriminatively, in its nondifference with all other things, including the enlightened seer.

As we have seen, emptiness signifies the nonexistence of all objects of discriminative thinking and, by extension, the cessation of discriminative thought and perception, that is, “not seeing.” This “not seeing” is prajna. Further, emptiness is also the content of awareness of nondiscriminative wisdom (*paramartha*, “highest object” or object of supreme wisdom); hence, it is

³ *Madhyamaka-karika*.

⁴ *Trimsika*, verse 29.

⁵ “Although the term ‘nondiscriminative wisdom’ differs from ‘prajnaparamita,’ the meaning is the same” (Asanga, in *Mahayanasamgraha*).

⁶ Nondiscriminative wisdom “sees the object just as it is” (*yathabhuta-artha-darsana*), Sthiramati, in his commentary on *Trimsika*. Nagarjuna further states, “The knower sees true reality” (*tattva-darsana*), (*Madhyamaka-karika*, XXVI, 10).

synonymous with suchness or true reality. Emptiness, nondiscriminative wisdom, and suchness all signify aspects of a single, nondichotomous true reality.

The mental faculties of an unenlightened person take as objects the self and the things of the world—all that is made up of forms, sensations, thoughts, feelings, and consciousness (the five aggregates). These may be labeled illusory discrimination. The mental faculties of the person of wisdom that arise where all such discrimination has been eradicated and all objects upon which dualistic thinking may be imposed have vanished is called nondiscriminative wisdom or prajna. The object of such wisdom is the emptiness of all things, which is things just as they are.

Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form

Although the terms “emptiness” and “not seeing” express the core of prajnaparamita thought, logical formulations were later evolved that convey with greater lucidity the nature of prajna. A characteristic expression is found in the *Prajnaparamita in Twenty-five Thousand Lines*:

Form is not different from emptiness, emptiness is not different from form. Form is itself emptiness, emptiness is itself form.

In the phrase, “Form is itself emptiness, emptiness is itself form,” “form” signifies all existing things, all objects of thought. A “form” can be grasped through perception or thought and belongs to the realm of existence. “Emptiness”—mathematically, “zero”—means void or nonexistent. “Is” indicates the identity or nondifference of form (existence) and emptiness (voidness, nonexistence), and thus clearly involves a logical self-contradiction.

In order to force this paradoxical expression of prajna into the mode of ordinary discursive reasoning, it is sometimes claimed that what is negated by the term emptiness is not the existence of a form or thing itself, but merely the conception of it as substantial, with an enduring essence existing independently of other things.⁷ Thus, “Form is emptiness” is taken to mean that things conceived as entities do not really exist. Further, the “form” affirmed in “Emptiness is form” is again not the form itself, but form existing only in mutual interrelation and interdependence with other things. By interpreting emptiness to mean “co-dependence” or “interrelatedness,” and by taking the single term “form” to have two different meanings—1) the false conceptualization of things as permanent entities, and 2) things existing relative to and dependent on other things—the self-contradictory character of the phrase is resolved, and it may be rationally understood. Thus, “Form is emptiness” is taken as a denial of the existence of permanent, substantial¹ things as we ordinarily perceive them, and “Emptiness is form” expresses the affirmation of things that are rightly perceived

⁷ Concerning the tendency to assess Buddhist texts by standards of logical consistency, see Yoshifumi Ueda, “Reflections on the Study of Buddhism,” (*Eastern Buddhist*, XVIII, 2 (Autumn 1985), pp. 114-130.

to exist only interrelated with all other things. The first “form” is said to express the perspective of false discrimination, while the second expresses true wisdom.

While such an interpretation may seem logically satisfying, we must bear in mind that emptiness in the Prajnaparamita sutras is not taught to win the assent of our ordinary consciousness; it is inseparable from the meditative *practice* of not seeing. The phrase, “Form is empty . . . sensation, thought, feeling, and consciousness are empty,” describes how the bodhisattva practicing prajna should view the elements that constitute existing things. Thus, it refers not to the illusoriness of our ordinary perceptions, but to the emptiness of form seen by the practicing bodhisattva. Likewise, the form affirmed in “Emptiness is form” must also refer to the form seen by the bodhisattva in practice. Literally understood, then, emptiness-contemplation holds a logically self-contradictory structure in which form is both negated and affirmed. This is one and the same form, seen by the bodhisattva in practice, not by two different people or from different states of awareness.

This idea is expressed in another phrase characteristic of prajnaparamita thought: the formula “A is not-A; therefore it is A,” which appears repeatedly in the *Diamond Sutra*. “The world is no-world and therefore the world is called world.” “Prajnaparamita is not prajnaparamita and therefore is called prajnaparamita.” D. T. Suzuki has termed this the “logic of *soku-hi*” or “identity-mutual negation.”⁸ A and not-A stand in mutual opposition, but through their paradoxical identification, A is indeed A. That is, each thing in the world is negated and at the same time affirmed by emptiness. “A” is dissolved by emptiness, and yet the A pervaded by emptiness, so that it is like a phantasm or mirage, is true reality of suchness or the thing precisely as it is. In this way, a self-contradictory relation in which form and emptiness, existence and nothingness, finite and infinite are one and at the same time different is established. This is the essential structure of nondiscriminative wisdom or prajna.

The phrase, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,” should be understood to mean that, in the practice of prajna, a single form—with a certain coloration and shape—completely dissolves and merges into vast, limitless nothingness and becomes the infinite void. Thus, form becomes one with emptiness. This means that the form seen by false discrimination is eradicated and discriminative thought, ceasing to limit and discriminate form, becomes prajna, or wisdom that has attained the other shore. This is no-mind, or the eradication of both object and subject, or “all things are void.” Here, both object and wisdom are empty or nonexistent.

At the same time, this emptiness reflects itself in finite forms, so that “Emptiness is form.” Here, two aspects are implied. First, in wisdom or no-mind, where false discrimination has vanished, discrimination again functions as

⁸ *Soku-hi no ronri*. In English works, he formulates it as “A is Not-A and Not-A is A.” Further, he states concerning the awakening it expresses: “It is to become Prajna itself where there is no distinction between the subject and the object of intuition, and yet there is a clear perception of the distinction—that is the distinction of non-distinction and the discrimination of non-discrimination” (*The Essence of Buddhism*, Kyoto, 1948, p. 13).

thought and perception, but on the basis of wisdom; hence, delimited forms are seen. This may be termed discrimination of nondiscrimination, or the mind of no-mind. It is wisdom that arises in emptiness, through the practice of not seeing.

Second, emptiness not only implies the eradication of discriminative thinking, or *prajna* as the discrimination of nondiscrimination, but is also, as we have seen, the true object perceived by supreme wisdom—suchness or reality just as it is. The essential character of emptiness is not mere negation, but the nonduality of object and wisdom. Thus, it may be said that emptiness reflects or perceives itself in finite forms. Form is pervaded by emptiness (A is not-A), and it is this form that is true reality in which seer and seen are one. The form that is formless is identical with the mind of no-mind that sees it. Here, both mind and object are none other than emptiness or reality. For the seeing mind of *prajna*, the object perceived is itself.

The delineation of the radically nondualistic reality that emerges with the complete obliteration of egocentric thought and perception is expressed in the *Prajnaparamita* sutras largely in ontological terms centering on emptiness, and Nagarjuna further develops this thought by logically demonstrating the inseparability and interfusion of existence and nonexistence, employing the structure of complete mutual dependence or codependent origination (*pratitya-samutpada*). These teachings, however, are not intended as objective descriptions of reality to be grasped by discriminative thought and discursive reasoning; they express the nature of practice and the awareness of the bodhistva who has awakened nondiscriminative wisdom. In *prajna*, there is no dualism of subject and object; reality is itself wisdom, and wisdom is reality. Thus, although the nature of the subjective or of awareness in emptiness remains obscure in the *Prajnaparamita* sutras and Nagarjuna, reality must be seen to embrace the activity of the awakened mind. The existence and nature of this subjective aspect is one of the central themes of Yogacara thought, the second great stream of Indian Mahayana Buddhism.

Three Aspects of True Reality

The early Yogacara thinkers—Maitreya, Asanga (c.315-390), and Vasubandhu—inherited the fundamentally nondualistic structure of reality taught by the *Prajnaparamita* sutras and Nagarjuna. Thus, at the core of their thought lies the interpenetration of existence and nothingness expressed in the sutras, “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.” They did not, like Nagarjuna, develop this structure in its horizontal framework—in terms of interrelationships among things. (This direction of thought was later to evolve as the mainstream of Chinese Buddhism in the San-lun, T’ien-T’ai, and Hua-yen schools.) Rather, they explored the subjective aspect that “Form is emptiness” implies—the relationship between seer and seen or wisdom and suchness—and thus its vertical dimension of time and the continuity of the subject. Hence, they taught not only the eradication of *samsara* to reach *nirvana* and the resultant nonduality, but further the transformation in which, by passing through an absolute negation, *samsara* or blind passion is completely nullified and at the same time brought

into an identity of opposites with nirvana. In this way, they delineated the structure by which true reality is inseparable from the illusory and unreal, and wisdom from false discrimination.

One of the central concepts developed in the Yogacara school is the “three natures” or dimensions of reality that emerge in the awareness of the bodhisattva who has realized nondiscriminative wisdom. In outline, they correspond to the elements of form and emptiness in prajnaparamita thought. Of the three, “fulfilled nature” (*parinispanna-svabhava*) corresponds to emptiness, thusness, nirvana, or nondiscriminative wisdom.

The remaining two natures correspond to form. Prior to the emergence of Yogacara thought, the basic issues in Buddhism were organized around contrasting terms: form and emptiness, sentient being and Buddha, blind passions and enlightenment, samsara and nirvana, all things (*dharma*) and thusness or dharma-nature (*dharmata*). In order to treat the working of the mind, however, the Yogacara thinkers divided “form” or “samsara” or “all-things” into the seer and the seen.

The seer (discriminative mind) is termed “other-dependent nature” (*paratantra-svabhava*), for it comes into existence through various causes and conditions. That it arises solely from conditions implies that it exists, but is not truly existent.⁹ The bodhisattva recognizes that such mental activity as thinking and perception emerges from the seeds (*bija*) of karma and blind passions; it therefore exists only provisionally and is by nature delusional, taking for objects what does not exist.

The seen is termed “discriminated nature” (*parikalpita-svabhava*), since it is that which is differentiated and conceptualized by the seer as its object. For the unenlightened being, the objects perceived with defiled discrimination are thought to be real. For the bodhisattva who has attained nonobjectifying, nondiscriminative wisdom, however, all things that are the objects of discriminative perception are “always nonexistent” (*nityam asat*) or “not existent” (*na vidyate*).¹⁰ Hence, “discriminated nature”—objects of delusory thought being seen to be false, unreal, and nonexistent—expresses nothingness or true, noninverted reality.

It is important to bear in mind that each of the three natures, like the phrase “Form is emptiness,” expresses the awareness of wisdom and not an abstract doctrine about the world. If they are taken as expressing simply an intellectual understanding, they become another object of discriminative thought. In our ordinary perception, we do not see the subjectivity as arising from blind passions or things as unreal; in other words, other-dependent (subject) and discriminated (object) natures are not part of our awareness. In the experience of the bodhisattva in contemplative practice, however, the three natures express three facets or dimensions of the world as it actually is, and in their interrelationships, they delineate the interpenetration of existence and

⁹ *Sat na ca tattvatah* (*Madhyantavibhaga*, by Maitreya).

¹⁰ “Always nonexistent” (*Madhyantavibhaga*, III, 3); “not existent” (*Trimsika*, 20).

nonexistence, or the nonduality of samsara and nirvana, taking into account the subject-object dichotomy that is harbored in our experience of existence.

True Reality as Subjectivity-Only

The dynamic interrelationships among the three natures revolve around the Yogacara concept of reality as “subjectivity-only” (*vijnapti-matrata*). “Subjectivity” here should be understood broadly as all mental activity of perception, thought, and feeling; it refers to the seeing subject that grasps and knows by discriminating between subject and object and among individual things.

Through contemplative practice in which the bodhisattva becomes aware that discriminated objects are illusory, he eliminates discrimination and realizes suchness or true reality, which is free of the subject-object dichotomy. The reality that is attained, however, is termed subjectivity-only; hence we find that subjectivity-only is identified with suchness and the nonexistence of both grasped object and grasping mind.¹¹ As a term, however, “subjectivity-only” implies discriminative perception. Thus, when subjectivity (discriminative thought and perception) has been eliminated, there is only subjectivity. As in the case of “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,” we encounter here a flatly self-contradictory teaching. Yet, according to Yogacara texts, in nondiscriminative wisdom or suchness, that there is no subjectivity and that there is only subjectivity are both established together.

Subjectivity-only signifies the simultaneous establishment, as a single whole, of absence of discriminative mental activity together with its existence. It is precisely such a structure, articulated in Yogacara thought through the concept of the three natures, that can account for the functioning of wisdom where wisdom and its object, reality, are not differentiated into seer and seen.

The term “subjectivity-only” implies that the bodhisattva perceives objects but recognizes that such objects do not really exist. They do not arise from causes and are falsely perceived and delusional. This does not mean that the objects exist only in the mind. Rather, two contradictory elements are expressed here: 1) the eradication of subject and object and the realization of nondiscrimination, and 2) the functioning of perception and cognition where the subject-object dichotomy has been transcended. This is the mind (perception and knowing) of no-mind (nondiscrimination).

Concerning the first element, when subjectivity-only has been established, there is no object grasped, for all objects have been eradicated as completely illusory and nonexistent. Further, when there is nothing perceived, neither can there be any functioning of the subject. Since it is taught that the seen (discriminative nature) is always nonexistent, the seer must also always be nonexistent.¹² In other words, both the seer and the seen are always empty. Since there is not seer, the term no-mind is used, and since there is no seen, it is

¹¹ Also with “thusness of mind” (*cittadharmata*), *Trimsika*, 25-26, and Sthiramati’s commentary.

¹² “Through [grasped objects being] discriminated nature, other-dependent nature (subjectivity) is empty” (Sthiramati’s commentary on *Trimsika*, 22).

said that there is “no object to be perceived” (*anupalambha*).¹³ The emptiness of all things (both seer and seen) is fulfilled nature. It is the emptiness taught in the Prajnaparamita sutras and corresponds to suchness, nondiscriminative wisdom, or nirvana.

Concerning the second element, although objects (discriminated nature) do not exist, it is taught that mental activity does exist in that it arises through causes and conditions. In fact, without the existence of subjectivity (other-dependent nature) that discriminates objects, the aspect of reality termed discriminated nature—which is the nonexistence of those objects—cannot be established.

Taking these elements together, it is said that the nonexistence of objects (discriminated nature) and the consequent nonexistence of discriminative thinking is fulfilled nature (emptiness, true reality). Thus, while the nonexistence of objects stands relative to the existence of the subject, the emptiness or nonexistence of the subject is absolute voidness or nothingness (*abhava*) that embraces and pervades its existence. Fulfilled nature or emptiness, which is the nonexistence of seer and seen, does not exclude the existence of subjectivity, for it is absolute and harbors other-dependent nature within itself. In our ordinary objectifying thought, existence and nonexistence are utterly distinct, but when the subject-object dichotomy has been eradicated, “Form (existence) is emptiness (nonexistence) and emptiness is form.” Thus, the “subjectivity” of “subjectivity-only” affirms the existence of the perceiving subject (discriminative thinking) precisely where subject and object have been eradicated. Since subjectivity-only signifies the wisdom or suchness realized by the bodhisattva, its two aspects of existence and nonexistence reflect the fundamental nondualistic structure of reality in Mahayana thought.

In relation to mental activity, this means that wisdom or suchness always holds within itself the discriminative mind, which is not true or real. That other-dependent nature exists means that false thinking exists; in other words, what is not true or real exists. In that this subjectivity is also without objects and therefore nonexistent, the existence of false thinking is true reality. “Not in reality” (*abhuta*) existing is itself true reality (*bhuta*). That subjectivity exists through not existing means, on the one hand, that it is false and unreal, and on the other, that it is true reality. Apart from the arising of such delusional thinking, there is no true reality.

Further, there is a temporal aspect. Since only subjectivity exists, this subjectivity (other-dependent nature) is the essence (*atmaka*) of all things of samsara, both seer and seen;¹⁴ they are thus temporal and karma-created (*samskrta*), arising from causes and conditions. Fulfilled nature is true reality; it is the nothingness of all things, including the subject, and thus is timelessness. Since other-dependent and fulfilled natures are both mutually opposed and nondifferent, the time of samsaric existence as perceived by the bodhisattva is not simply linear. It is pervaded by timelessness, and therefore experienced as a succession of discrete instants that is both continuous and discontinuous.

¹³ *Trimsika*, 29, and Sthiramati’s commentary.

¹⁴ Sthiramati’s commentary on *Trimsika*, 25.

Other-dependent nature (seer and all things) exists in the immediate present only and perishes with each instant, for in the following instant it ceases to exist as subjectivity, becoming instead the object (discriminated nature) of the next instant's subjectivity. Thus, all things exist only in the present instant, and when the instant passes, they vanish and become nil. In the following instant, subjectivity and things both newly arise through causation in that instant.

The impermanent existence that is other-dependent nature—perishing with each instant—stands in opposition to the timeless (fulfilled nature), and further, these two interfuse. The single instant of time, in each instant, dissolves and merges with the eternal or timeless, and simultaneously, it is again born as an instant. In this way, the subjectivity—the temporal existence of the impermanent individual—in each instant dissolves and fuses with that which is true and real, and simultaneously, from there it is born. This subjectivity is the wisdom that constitutes the nature of the bodhisattva, the true subject that is never objectified. From the point that this wisdom first arises, the bodhisattva comes to live as time that may be characterized, “Time is itself timelessness, timelessness is itself time.” For the bodhisattva, each present instant of activity—bodily, verbal, and mental—is actual time established where the subjectivity stands, and also possesses the character of the eternal or timeless. That each instant is also eternity is the temporal aspect of “Form is emptiness” or “Samsara is nirvana.”

Subjectivity-Only With No Object

The basic structure of subjectivity-only also has an epistemological aspect, describing the working of the enlightened mind. That other-dependent nature (all things, samsara, the karma-created) and fulfilled nature (nirvana, the uncreated) are both different and nondifferent means that subjectivity and nosubjectivity or nondiscrimination (*avijnapti*) are also so related.

Subjectivity refers basically to the seer in contrast to the seen. Subjectivity-*only*, then, is seeing and knowing without any object. This is subjectivity where both subject and object have been eradicated. In other words, it is discriminative thought and perception that occurs without departing from nondiscrimination, in which subject (wisdom) and object (suchness, emptiness) are nondual. This may be termed the mind of no-mind, or discrimination of nondiscrimination.

Perception without any object presents a paradox; hence, subjectivity-only tends to be understood not literally, but conceptually. Throughout most of the history of Yogacara thought in China and Japan, it has been interpreted to mean that things regarded as existing objectively, independent of the subject, actually exist only within the mind.¹⁵ In this interpretation, Yogacara thought is clearly a kind of idealism. A close reading of basic texts, however, shows that subjectivity-only means not that subjectivity evolves and projects an object from within itself,

¹⁵ Dharmapala's commentary on *Trimsika* (*Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun* as translated by Hsuan-tsang) provides a basis for just such an understanding in its concept of the “evolving of subjectivity” into seeing and seen parts.

but rather that the perceiving subject is without any object that is seen. Other-dependent nature (perceiving subject) and discriminated nature (nonexistent object) therefore stand in an ontological relationship of existence and nonexistence, and also in an epistemological relationship of subject and object. When bodhisattvas establish the three natures through performing meditative practices, thus bringing subject and object into these relationships, they attain subjectivity-only.

It is taught, therefore, that in subjectivity-only, “seen and seer are the same, the same.” “Same” is used twice here. On the one hand, the wisdom that sees is nondiscriminative and does not differentiate things, for it does not stand in dualistic opposition to objects. On the other hand, the suchness that is seen, the object, is nondifferentiated, and there is no discrimination as things. Nondiscriminative wisdom (subject) and suchness (object) are the same from either standpoint, for the seer is not divided from the seen.

Nevertheless, there is subjectivity. It is not our usual perception, but direct knowing, without any mediation of word or conceptualization. Moreover, such awareness is authentic self-knowledge, for since subject and object are not divided, there is knowing without any object, meaning that wisdom sees itself. This is to grasp reality without objectifying it in any way. When wisdom sees a thing or from (*rupa*), in that form, seer and seen are the same.

Because of this nondifference of subject and object, in Yogacara thought, subjectivity (*vijnapti*) is used to signify both the seer and the seen. As the seen, it is called “subjectivity that has appeared as form, etc.” (*rupa-adi-pratibhasa vijnapti*). This seen is not simply an object, but simultaneously is itself subject or seer. However, since seer and seen must also stand in opposition in the activity of perception, it is impossible for either to be both seer and seen simultaneously. Hence, the nondifference of seen and seer is not mere identity, but possesses a self-contradictory structure of mutual negation simultaneous with identity. When “subjectivity that has appeared as form” is the seen, the seer vanishes and, at the same time, is identical with the seen. Here, things are known truly as they are, without conceptualization, through the subject becoming them. Further, when subjectivity as form is established in the standpoint of the seer, the seen vanishes and, at the same time, is identical with the seer. Here for the first time the subject comes to know itself without falsely objectifying itself.

The first aspect—subjectivity knowing things by becoming them—is awareness that arises without mediation, from within the form itself. This is the sameness or nondifference of subject and object in which the subject has become one with things.

In the second aspect—subjectivity knowing itself without objectifying itself—this awareness is further established in the standpoint of the subject; hence, subjectivity knows itself directly, without constructing a false self. Without knowing things by becoming them, it is impossible for the subjectivity to know itself without objectifying itself, just as it is impossible for the finger to point to itself. The realization that is self-knowledge without self-objectification is achieved precisely because, at the same time, one knows things by becoming them. There is only subjectivity without any object, and since this subjectivity

immerses itself in things (form)—becomes empty and the same as no-subjectivity or no-mind—it is seen as things. In “subjectivity appearing as form” in this way, genuinely knowing things and knowing oneself are both established freely and without hindrance, and the bodhisattva carries on a life characterized by both aspects of awareness.