



Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

MEDITATIONS ON EMPTINESS

ANSWER KEY FOR CLASS SIX

1. By way of review, state the three characteristics that are supposed to describe the “self” we believe in innately:

We are born believing in a self that is unitary, unchanging, and independent.

2. What sort of self or “me” do we learn to believe in?

We learn the tendency to see the person and his parts as being like a master and his servants; this would correspond to the idea of a "soul" or a "me" which is totally distinct from the parts of the person.

3. When we think about it, we know that the self we ordinarily believe exists is not the body. But why isn't it the mind, or specifically the consciousness?

First off, there could be no *unitary* self that was equated with consciousness since consciousness is multiple (there are separable consciousnesses tied to the five senses as well as a mental consciousness). Secondly, there could not be an *unchanging* self that was identified with any of the six consciousnesses, because every time the consciousness was conscious of something else, the self would also change. Thirdly, there could be no *independent* self that was one or all of the consciousnesses since every consciousness exists only *dependently* on an object of consciousness.

4. The simple reasoning on why there cannot be a self like we think exists is to argue that if there were such a self it should be found within the body or mind or independent and apart from the body and mind. Since it can't be found either within the body and mind or apart from them, it doesn't exist. But there is an even more comprehensive proof, in seven parts. Recount it.

The self we are trying to find is 1) not identical to or one with my parts; nor is the self 2) something other than my parts; nor is it 3) something that depends on the parts; and 4) the parts are not dependent on the self; 5) there is not a self who possesses parts; and the self is not 6) the collection or sum of its parts; and finally, 7) the self is not the shape of its parts.

5. Arya Nagarjuna in the ninth chapter of his *Root Verses on the Middle Way* imagines that someone might argue for the existence of an independently existing self on the basis of the experience of sounds, sights, and other sense objects.



The argument would entail the previous existence of an experiencer of such sounds and sights who exists before the hearing and seeing. This would be a self-existent or independently existing person or self.

6. What is another implication of this same line of thought?

We might equally argue that objects exist before being perceived. These objects too would then exist independently and self-existently.

7. What is Arya Nagarjuna's refutation of such an argument?

He says it makes no sense to say that an object exists before it is perceived. First of all, how could anyone know that something exists unless it were perceived? And secondly, if there were, for example, a visible object that existed before it was seen by a seer, we would have to conclude that a visible object need not be seen in order to be visible. We could have an invisible visible object!

The same argument holds true for a seer who could exist before – and therefore independent of – something that is seen. In that case, we would have a seer who need not see anything to be a seer!

8. What implication would there be for sense powers if there were objects of the senses that existed before and independent of those sense powers?

Sense powers would also exist independently; that is, they would exist without sensing anything. There would be the power of seeing without such a power seeing anything, and so on.

9. What general point can be drawn from Arya Nagarjuna's proof that there is no sensory awareness that doesn't depend on an object of the senses (and vice versa).

Subjects ("me") and objects ("mine") in general exist only in a mutually dependent way. There is no subject without an object, and vice versa. There is no previously existing me that then perceives the world around me, nor is there a previously existing world waiting around for me to come and perceive it.