



Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

MEDITATIONS ON EMPTINESS

ANSWER KEY FOR CLASS SEVEN

1. At this point in the text, Master Shantideva moves from a major discussion of one kind of emptiness to another. The distinction between the two is the answer to a natural question raised in our minds when we begin to examine the emptiness of any object, especially our own selves. State the question, and briefly describe the two kinds of emptiness.

When we understand that we are only a concept imposed on a collection of parts by force of our past karma, we begin to wonder whether the "raw data" itself is also a concept imposed on its own parts: that is, we begin to draw the distinction between the emptiness of us and the emptiness of our parts.

2. When you focus upon the whole, such as the body, why do the parts or "raw data," such as the colors and shapes of the body, seem to exist out there, really, independently, on their own?

Because at this level we are only perceiving these parts with a conventional or deceptive perception, without examining their real nature.

3. How does the process of going down in levels through the parts, and the parts of the parts, and so on, work as a method to establish that things are actually empty?

When we look for (self-existent) "raw data" that is the object which we projected on to, we don't find anything, and thereby establish, in yet another way, the truth of emptiness.

4. What do we tend to think of as the ultimate "raw data" for each of the two great divisions of a person? (These are the same as the two things which lower schools of Buddhism believe have some existence from their own side).

**a) The atoms that, at any given moment, make up what we call our physical bodies.
b) The stream of present moments of awareness that, over a lifetime, make up what we call our minds.**

5. Why don't either of these two kinds of raw data exist?



What we imagine as the most basic building blocks of all physical matter—atoms—are only a projection onto smaller parts, each side of the atom, and so on, endlessly. What we imagine as the most basic unit of awareness—the present moment—is only a projection onto its start, its duration, and its end, and so on, endlessly.

6. What really then provides the raw data of all existence, for every level of mental or physical objects?

Projections forced upon us by our past karma, at every level.

7. Are things therefore less real? How can this be confirmed?

Not at all. We can confirm this through our direct experience of pain or pleasure; for example, by standing in front of a fast-moving taxi cab.

8. What is the whole point of looking at the world this way? Why is this the only worldview that works?

We can do good deeds, plant good karmic seeds, and create a Buddha paradise, angel body and perfect mind and compassion: reach the end of suffering births, aging, illness, and death, as promised by Lord Buddha.

9. Why will suffering ultimately be eliminated in every living being?

Because its root is a misperception of the true nature of things; being a misperception, it is totally inferior to and powerless compared to correct view, its ultimately powerful antidote.