



Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

MEDITATIONS ON EMPTINESS

ANSWER KEY FOR CLASS EIGHT

1. Give a general description of the object which the Middle Way denies—that is, describe what it is that emptiness is empty of—and give a metaphor for it.

The object denied by Middle Way (*gakja*) is a self-existent thing: a thing which could exist without being a group of parts that we are forced by our past karma to conceptualize in a certain way. We grasp to this object continually, but it does not exist, never did exist, and could not exist: it is like a full-sized, twoheaded, purple elephant in our room.

2. State the famous lines from the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* which express the importance of understanding the object which we deny.

**One would never be able to
Grasp how something was
Devoid of being a thing
Without encountering that
Thing it was which one
Imagined it to be.**

3. The object which the Middle Way denies can be described as an impossible something which has occurred outside of the law of dependent origination: something which has occurred in a way which is the opposite of dependent origination. State the formal proof called the "Proof based upon Dependent Origination."

**Consider all inner and outer working things.
None of them exists truly,
Because they occur in dependence upon other things.
They are, for example, like a reflection in a mirror.**

4. Describe the three different interpretations of what "dependent origination" means; state the Buddhist school or schools that believe in each; and explain why each interpretation is preferable to the preceding one.

a) The "Functionalist Group," meaning those of the Mind-Only School on down,



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hold that things are dependently originating when they depend upon causes and conditions.

b) The "Independent Group" of the Middle-Way School holds that things are dependently originating when they depend upon their parts. This explanation is more comprehensive than the preceding, since it also covers unchanging objects, which have no causes; for example, empty space, which depends on its directions.

c) The "Necessity Group" of the Middle-Way School holds that things are dependently originating when they depend on a projection, forced upon us by our past karma, and causing us to interpret a collection of parts or "raw data" in a certain way. This explanation is immediately applicable to understanding how to reach nirvana and enlightenment, since we understand the exact method for changing our future reality.

5. What would be a good way to describe the object we deny in the case of the proof of the emptiness of causes?

It would be anything that caused another thing to happen, or anything that did anything at all, because it had caused it to do so in an external, self-existent way, rather than due to a shift in our projections forced upon us by our karma.

6. Why is it more difficult to understand the emptiness of causation than the general emptiness of ourselves and our parts, which was already presented?

It would require us to understand that the very way in which things work in the world is completely different than what we have always thought: all events and objects are caused only by a shift in our projections, and not by some external, self-existent causes.

7. Give the name of the proof used to examine the true nature of causes; explain the meaning of the name; and then describe the reasoning by giving the relevant four lines from the *Root Wisdom* of Arya Nagarjuna.

a) The proof is called the "Sliver of Diamond"

b) One of the qualities of emptiness is that it resembles the diamond, in that it is an ultimate, as a diamond almost is (in hardness). All emptinesses share exactly the same nature, as do all cases of the smallest bit of diamond: they are all pure diamond, no more and no less, and all cases of emptiness are pure emptiness, no more and no less.

c) The first chapter of the *Root Wisdom* describes the proof as follows:

**Things grow neither from themselves, nor from something else,
Nor do they grow from both, nor also without any cause at all.
There is no working thing at all, in any place at all,
Which ever grew in any way at all.**

8. Give the "proof based on refuting that neither a thing which does nor does not exist could ever grow," which is meant to prove that results cannot grow self-existently.



Consider those things which are results.

Then do not grow in an ultimate way, because:

- (1) Results which exist at the time of their causes do not grow in an ultimate way;**
- (2) Results which do not exist at the time of their causes do not grow in an ultimate way;**
- (3) Results which both do and do not exist at the time of their causes do not grow in an ultimate way; and**
- (4) Results which are neither of the above do not grow in an ultimate way.**

9. Explain the best method for truly understanding the classical proofs of emptiness.

The best method for truly understanding the classical proofs of emptiness is to request the blessing of your root and lineage Lamas, which is also not self-existent.