

This sourcebook is published as part of the Nītārtha Institute study program directed by The Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche.

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#### **Other:**

*Bodhi Magazine*, volume 7, issue 4.

Second Draft Edition

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

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#### **Acknowledgments:**

This sourcebook was sponsored by the Tsadra Foundation.

Edited & designed by Stephanie Johnston and Tashi Wangmo.

Cover design by Stephanie Johnston.

On behalf of Nītārtha Institute, we wish to express our deep appreciation to the many transcribers, editors, designers, and translators who helped in the production of the transcripts that provided the material for this sourcebook: Karl Brunnhölzl, Elizabeth M. Callahan, Migme Chödrön, June Crow, Tyler Dewar, Oona Edmands, Michelle Grissom, Lisa Hilliard, Brian Hilliard, Bill Karelis, Z.D. Labinger, Kalden Lhamo, Susan Neumeier, Sherab Norbu, Rafael Ortet, Tingdzin Ötrö, Steve Seely, Susan Spilman, Cara Thornley, Greg Torvik, Scott Wellenbach, Gabrielle Yakoushkin, Nyendrak Zangpo, Chryssoula Zerbini, and those whose work remains unnamed. Thank you!

## SCIENCE OF VALID COGNITION

THE DZOGCHEN PONLOP RINPOCHE

### THE BUDDHIST EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM & THE FIVE SCIENCES

According to the ancient Buddhist educational systems, there are five major sciences, or five major aspects of knowledge, and five minor sciences. These sciences, particularly the major ones, formed the focus of the traditional study programs in the great Buddhist universities, such as Nālandā in ancient India and the Samyé and Dzogchen monasteries in Tibet.

The first major science is creativity, the second is healing, and the third is sound—which is quite interesting. Sound is sometimes translated as “grammar” or “philosophy.” The fourth one is logic (including syllogism) and the fifth one is metaphysics, or inner science, the science of insight. Mastery of these five sciences was emphasized in all the ancient Hindu and Buddhist institutions, especially the Buddhist ones. That is why Maitreya, the Buddha Maitreya, said in his scriptures that if you do not master these five sciences, there is no way that you can attain the omniscient wisdom of the Buddha.

#### *Science of Creativity*

The first science, or field of knowledge, is creativity—the science of sculpture, art, creativity, and creation. It begins with synchronizing mind and body, making fundamental contact between the raw elements and our physical existence. If you are a potter, you are dealing with the raw element of the clay with your raw hands and your raw, fresh mind. There is basic communication between the inner state of your physical body and the outer physical existence of the universe. At the same time, there is great *prajñā* involved in synchronizing mind and body. Through such synchronization, we can create a beautiful image, a beautiful world. Therefore the first science is translated as “creativity.”

#### *Science of Healing*

Once you have studied and mastered how to create something, you have to know how to maintain that object—exactly how to fix that creation if anything goes wrong. This is the second aspect of knowledge, the science of healing, or medicine. Within Buddhist fields of knowledge, medicine is related not just to chemicals and herbs outside. The healing process is one of synchronizing mind and body as well. You have to heal the mind in order to heal the body, and you have to heal the body in order to heal the mind. There is a great sense of interdependent link between the two.

Without the knowledge and experience of creativity, there will be no complete understanding or realization of the second science: you cannot have the power to heal. That is pretty simple. If you are a potter and have made a beautiful clay vase, you know how it has been created and strengthened. If something goes wrong with the vase, it is not that complicated—you know exactly how to fix it. Once you have mastered creativity, healing is much easier and simpler.

Student: You said that you heal the body in order to heal the mind, and you heal the mind in order to heal the body. It sounds like the chicken and the egg, but it isn't really, is it? Isn't healing the mind primary?

DPR: That is right, according to Buddhist healing.

### **Science of Sound**

The next science is the science of sound. In its grossest aspect, the science of sound is the study and mastery of grammar and philosophy. However, according to the Buddhist tradition, the third science goes much deeper than that superficial level, beyond conceptual study. That is why it is called “the science of sound,” rather than grammar and philosophy, which is some kind of later translation. It deals with our fundamental relation to sound, to phenomena outside our consciousness: basic communication, such as with the sound of waves, a waterfall, or a pebble falling down the rocky slopes.

Returning to a waterfall and hearing its sound, you usually say, “I have heard the sound of the waterfall before.” Every day it is the same. No matter how many times you have been there, you think you have heard the same sound. But in fact, each time you go there and listen to that waterfall, you hear a different sound, a different tone, in a different manner. Each fragment of the sound has its own character and message. It has its own presence in that very moment of sound. Listening to the waves, or to the birds chirping or chatting with each other, we are able to hear different sounds each time. We usually never relate to that in our everyday life; we always relate to the superficial level of sound—which is generalized as the waterfall sound, the sound of a wave, or the sound of birds chirping. We usually never have the opportunity or *prajñā* to experience such subtlety of sound. We never relate to the sound itself.

Therefore according to the Buddhist teachings, the third science of sound goes beyond concepts and thoughts, labels, and grammar. It deals with the fundamental state of our being—our basic naked state of communication. There exist biographies of many yogis of the past who have mastered this science. Many of the predictions of Buddhist yogis come from just listening to sound. Listening to the waves and other sounds from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, you can tell what kind of weather is coming. Many yogis in the past have related with this raw energy of sound of the external universe. They communicated even with the sound of a pebble falling down the rocky slopes—it meant something by the way it fell. The way it touched a certain point, making a specific sound, had its own significance or message. The yogis who have mastered this science have a complete sense of communication with nature, whether it is natural sound or sound created by human or other beings. One can tell even from the sound of breathing, from the message of the breath, how healthy or unhealthy a person may be. That is why the science of sound goes far beyond grammar and philosophy and makes a very interesting study.

Student: Rinpoche, would you say something about the third science of sound and mantra?

DPR: There are different aspects of mantra. It is hard to generalize all the mantras. Many of the Vajrayāna mantras are the sounds of basic awareness, or *dharmatā*. They are more like natural sound, the fundamental sound of the nature of mind—they are more like the sound of the mind than the sound of a sound or the sound of a body. There are different sounds, such as when a pebble falls down the Flatirons (a rock formation outside Boulder, Colorado). You can hear the sound of a pebble falling down, but that is the physical body of a rock. On the physical body of a rock falls a small physical body of a pebble rolling down, and you can hear the sound. It is the sound of a body, so to speak.

There is also the sound of a sound, and it is connected to our speech or to instruments. Obviously it relies on a body, but it is more like the manifestation of speech. There is also the sound of the mind, which is basically the mantras. They are the sound of awareness, the basic space, or *dharmatā*. You make a deeper connection at that point, a

raw, naked connection to the sound of the mind, to the sound of the awareness, rather than to the sound of a body.

The sound of the mind is more profound. I do not mean that the others are not very profound, but that there are different layers and depths.

Student: I'm interested in the idea that phenomena are all the books one needs. You were talking about the messages of the phenomenal world. How do we reconcile that with the imputation of meaning onto the world? Is the suggestion that if we are sensitive enough, and if our *prajñā* is sharp enough, we can read the sound? Can we read reality as a guru?

DPR: There is no meaning without a conceptual framework. Let us say that we impute that a certain sound is a bad sound. It is bad only in a particular conceptual or cultural framework. Whatever you regard as bad in one conceptual or cultural framework may be good in another one. The imputations we make are very relative and do not have much meaning in a certain sense. At the same time, if you can really relate with the sound and with a certain, limited level of imputation, it is the basic way to communicate in the conventional sense. As long as you live in the conceptual world, you need that imputation to communicate. To understand the imputation, you need labels. Right now if you had no labels, it would be very hard for you to understand what I would like to say about sound. There is no way I could talk with you about it.

Student: It seems like we are talking about different levels of meaning, and that the meaning you are referring to is a nonconceptual knowing when the world speaks to us in that regard.

DPR: No, the meaning is connected to the conceptual framework. On the Buddhist path, we rely on the conceptual path to go beyond concept. There is no way you can go beyond concept without a conceptual path. That is why you have *utpatti-krama*.<sup>1</sup> To go beyond the conceptual world into *sampannakrama*,<sup>2</sup> you need the *utpattikrama* path. That is why you have *shamatha* before you reach the *vipashyanā* stage of the mind. Through relying on these different paths, you have bridges into nonconceptuality.

Student: There are common, new age notions that reality is always speaking to us, and you are saying that if we are open to it, reality is in fact speaking to us. But how do we know?

DPR: In the Buddhist way of thinking, you appreciate the raw energy of the nakedness of your communication with sound and with all the sensory perceptions in the most fundamental basic state. Then when you come out of that, you have to go into conventional labeling, the process of handling the imputation, rather than into a more dreamy state. Sometimes when you say, "Reality is speaking to me," it is more like a fantasy; you are creating more things. Maybe nothing is out there telling you this and that; maybe you just want to hear it subconsciously: so you hear it. That is a very unhealthy way of imputing. As long as you impute, it should be a conventional imputation. That is the healthy way. Does that make sense?

Student: Yes, that really makes sense.

DPR: Either you are in a fundamental state of nakedness, which is like an ultimate experience in some sense, or you come out of that into a relative experience of the conventional world. When you are in the conventional world, you have to go with the conventional norm. Though it is not authoritative in the ultimate sense, it does have

1 (San. "completion stage"). One of the two stages of *sādhana* practice, in which the practitioner dissolves the visualization and meditates formlessly.

2 (San. "developing stage"). One of the two stages of *sādhana* practice, in which the practitioner creates and meditates with a visualization.

some sense of validity in the relative sense. Upcoming chapters in the *Lorik* text will deal with valid cognition. Your experience needs to have validity, rather than fantasy. At a certain point, it can become like hallucination—you hear sounds, see different images melting, rainbow bodies, and so on.

Student: I'm wondering why the third science is about sound as opposed to visual image or anything else. To me visual image is more powerful in communication than sound. It is more prevalent in my experience. Ultimately, is there really any difference between visual communication and the communication of sounds?

DPR: No, there is not much difference. The first science of creativity deals more with the visual and with texture, with the body and physical senses of communication. In the third stage, there is sound, which is more like synchronizing mind and body. In a sense, body and mind have already synchronized in the science of creativity. Then there is a progression. Working with conceptual mind is more connected to sound than to form. Even though there is no sound, we have a concept of sound. The label comes up very clearly. That is why there is a stronger link between the conceptual mind and sound. Does that make sense?

Student: Yes it does, in terms of the raw communication that you have been talking about, though it seems that ultimately, we are trying to get to direct perception through logic and metaphysics. It seems that there would not be any difference between sound and appearances.

DPR: In many ways, sound is more connected to conceptual mind, and it is easier for us to communicate through sound than through the body. Looking at basic habitual tendencies, sound and the labeling process deal more closely with our mind and mental imputations. Most of the self-created fetters are connected with the sound and labeling process. That is the main thing that we have to cut through to go beyond the conceptual world into the real, naked world of phenomena. To do that, we have to cut through the labeling processes of speech, sound, and conceptual mind. Therefore it is easier to begin with the sound.

### ***Science of Logic***

The fourth science is the science of logic. You can see the progression: From the basic communication of sound, we develop a conceptual knowledge of grammar and philosophy. From the superficial level of understanding sound, grammar, and philosophy, we go into the depth of conceptual analysis. The fourth science of logic eliminates our basic confusion. It is the remedy which cuts through our doubts and conceptual ignorance.

By mastering the science of logic, we master clear thinking. We see clearly how *prajñā* can manifest in our conceptual world. This science is very important because most of the time, we live in the world of conceptions; the conceptual world is the real world, so to speak, that we live in. The science of logic plays a great role in this conceptual world. It communicates and enhances our *prajñā* and understanding of the ultimate truth. Therefore it is the fourth science among the five major sciences.

Student: I do not understand the difference between philosophy and logic. Isn't philosophy a system of how things work, how things are organized, and how they relate to each other? It seems that logic is quite similar. Would you clarify the difference between logic and philosophy?

DPR: I think it is a translation problem. I think the term "grammar and philosophy" means the philosophy of language, rather than metaphysical philosophy or anything else—the way in which language is treated or worked with. The third aspect of sound

is more connected to basic sound, as we talked about before, the more superficial level, grammar and philosophy of language and the whole process of how language works. It is a complex issue. Many western scholars have written on this, like Wittgenstein. Logic is simply syllogism, a method of analyzing things.

### **Science of Metaphysics**

The fifth science is the inner science, the science of insight, or metaphysics. It is the major science, the real science that Buddhism has developed—in which we can include the Buddhist practice of meditation, Buddhist prajñā, the insight of the realization of selflessness, and the discovery of buddha nature. The fundamental aspects of the teachings that Buddha gave are included in the fifth science.

In basic Buddhist education, the science of logic is separate from metaphysics, which is very interesting. Logic is not regarded as part of metaphysics here, although it can be; it is separately classified because of its methods. The methodology used in this particular science is common to many other schools of philosophical thought, with strong emphasis on logic and syllogism. It is classified as the fourth science, and the text that we are going to study is part of the fourth science—mastering the fourth science—of logic.

Logic in Buddhism was actually taught in many different sūtras, scattered throughout the Mahāyāna sūtras and some of the Hinayāna. There is no one clearly identifiable sūtra—no one Mahāyāna sūtra—where the Buddha taught it. We have three piṭakas, which are very clearly classified. If we look into the sources, the sūtras where the Buddha taught logic, there is no clear classification for it—no separate, fourth piṭaka for the logic.

### **The Five Sciences**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Science</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Creative Arts	sculpture, art, crafts, and the creation of physical things	Synchronizes mind and body through basic communication between the inner state of the physical body and the outer physical existence of the universe
Healing	medicine	Maintains the synchronization of body and mind as an expression of health and healing
Sound	grammar and the philosophy of language	Explores the subtleties of one's relationship with the phenomenal world through the raw energy of sound and communication
Logic	syllogism and the logical relations of conceptual categories	Explores the depth of conceptual analysis as a remedy for confusion
Inner Science	insight or metaphysics	Includes the insights and realizations of the practice of meditation, the recognition of selflessness, and the discovery of buddha nature

**Student:** The progression of the five aspects of knowledge seem to go from gross to subtle. The first science of creativity always involves some combination or synchrony of body and mind, so the body aspect is always present. There is always some kind of discipline or learning involved with the body. Is that correct? Would you always be talking about some kind of discipline, in the sense that a child always begins learning by doing something?

**DPR:** Yes. In a way, the five sciences are like five topics, and you could master any one of them, according to the original educational system. You could master any one to which you feel more connected, but that does not mean you would not study the rest. You would touch base with all of them. The most important thing to realize is that all five are present in every science. All five are present in every aspect of our