

## THE VAIBHASHIKA SCHOOL

The following random notes reflect the understanding reached by the Vaibhashika school. They are based on reading Geshe Tashi Tsering's book, *Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth* (see full citation at end of document).

Standard Template for Explaining Philosophical Schools in Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries:	
<b>Base, Path, and Result</b>	
Base	How a particular school perceives the <i>manner of existence of phenomena</i> .
Path	What should be <i>adopted</i> and what <i>abandoned</i> based on a thorough knowledge of the base.
Result	The goal that a practitioner attains by following such a path.
Source: Tsering, Geshe Tashi. <i>Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth</i> . Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008. (Page 35)	

<b>Divisions of Phenomena (Existent Things)</b> (Includes all existent things, both within and without cyclic existence) (Know <i>what</i> exists in the universe, before knowing <i>how</i> it exists)	
<b>Compounded</b> Phenomena (Impermanent)	<b>Uncompounded</b> Phenomena
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All things and events that come into being or existence due to <i>causes</i> and <i>conditions</i> – within or without samsara, external phenomena or internal mental events, whether they should be abandoned or adopted.</li> <li>▪ "An object that has arisen in dependence of the aggregation of causes and conditions" (Vasubandhu).</li> <li>▪ Main <u>sub-divisions</u> are:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ <b>Form</b>: material things; any object of the sensory consciousness (e.g. shape, color, pen, book, odor, sound)</li> <li>~ <b>Consciousness</b>: all mental events; six main consciousnesses (five related to sense organs: sight [eye], hearing [ear], smell [nose], taste [tongue], and touch [body]; mental consciousness [various mental processes: thoughts, emotions, intelligence, feelings, etc.])</li> <li>~ <b>Non-associated compositional factors</b>: all other phenomena due to causes and conditions (e.g. an image seen in a dream). Included are abstract phenomena, such as time, continuity, aging, birth, and the phenomenon of person – our sense of identity, our "I"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Something <i>not</i> created by causes and conditions.</li> <li>▪ Something <i>not</i> changing moment by moment during its existence.</li> <li>▪ Something that cannot perform a function.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Examples</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Space: Absence of obstruction; not the result of causes and conditions.</li> <li>▪ <i>Non-analytical cessation</i>: Temporary ceasing of negativities, misperceptions, etc. in meditative concentration that interrupts attachment to sensory objects – when concentration stops, attachment returns.</li> <li>▪ <i>Analytical cessation</i>: Ceasing occurring through meditation analyzing reality of things and events; a complete cessation due to no reversal. A full cessation borne of realization.</li> </ul>

## The Vaibhashika View of the Two Truths

The Vaibhashika scholars did consider the Buddha's all-important concept of *selflessness* from the point of view of *how we misconceive reality* – the two truths are present, albeit implicitly.

Here are some key points:

<b>Two Truths</b>	
<b><i>Conventional Truth</i></b>	<b><i>Ultimate Truth</i></b>
Conventional – generally refers to something that is not true as it appears.	Ultimate
Contaminated consciousness	Untamined consciousness
Objects that appear to a <i>contaminated</i> consciousness are the objects of a conventional mind.	Objects of an <i>untamined</i> consciousness – the mind of a being who has realized selflessness directly – must be objects of an ultimate mind.
A contaminated consciousness refers to the mindstream of a being who has not realized selflessness directly.	A supramundane, untamined consciousness – one that has realized selflessness directly – knows ultimate truths.
Contaminated things – vase, cloth, person, male, female, and so on – are objects of contaminated consciousness, because they are conventional objects apprehended by a consciousness that has not realized selflessness directly.	It is called <i>ultimate truth</i> because it is the object of superior wisdom. It is the ultimate and it is also true, and therefore, it is called <i>ultimate truth</i> .
In sum, a mundane, contaminated consciousness – one that has not realized emptiness or selflessness – knows conventional truths.	

<b>Conventional Truth Equals Imputed Existence</b>	
<p>If the awareness of something does not operate after that thing is destroyed or mentally separated into other things, then that thing exists <i>conventionally</i>, like a pot of water. Others exist <i>ultimately</i>.</p>	
<p>When an object is destroyed or mentally separated into parts, the mind can no longer hold on to that object; therefore, it is a <i>conventional</i> truth.</p> <p>E.g. If a glass jar is dropped on the floor, it will shatter and no longer be a glass jar. (At that moment, the mind that apprehended the glass jar can no longer apprehend it, because it no longer exists.</p> <p>E.g. When water is confined by riverbanks, it is a river; but, if the thing that gives the water shape (the banks) is gone, as in a time of flood, we no longer perceive the water as a river, and so "river" is a conventional truth.</p>	
<p>For mental events, although the object cannot be destroyed, it can be separated into parts.</p> <p>E.g. The mind perceiving an hour, can break that hour down into minutes, and the minutes into seconds – time can be "mentally separated". Therefore, the mind no longer apprehends its original object – objects that have this quality are called <i>conventional truths</i>.</p>	
<p>In each of the above examples, the whole object is imputed onto its parts – that is, the complete thing is imposed onto what is nothing more than a collection of substantial parts. These are examples of <i>imputed existent objects</i>.</p>	
<p>The above are examples of imputed existent objects – <i>imputed existence and conventional truth are synonyms</i>.</p>	
<p>Conversely, if the object is not a collection of substantial parts, but is the actual substance that makes up those parts, then it is a <i>substantially existent object</i> – <i>substantial existence and ultimate truth are synonyms</i>.</p>	
<p><i>Conventional truth</i> fits with the <i>three types of compounded phenomena</i>: <u>form</u> (can be destroyed), <u>consciousness</u> (can be mentally separated), and <u>non-associated compounded phenomena</u> (can be mentally separated). Whatever the type of compounded phenomenon, if the mind holding it ceases when the object ceases, it is a conventional truth and an imputed object.</p>	
<p>Gross forms (vase, mountain, house) and continuities (year, month, week) are imputed objects = conventional truths because they are purely imputed onto other things.</p>	
<p>Other terms: collective convention (e.g. house); conventional dependence on others (e.g. year); conventional truth dependent on other substances (e.g. water molecules)</p>	
Imputed existence = conventional truth	Substantial existence = ultimate truth

**Source:** Tsering, Geshe Tashi. *Relative Truth, Ultimate Truth* (The Foundation of Buddhist Thought, Volume 2). Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2008. (Pages 35-45.)