**Comparison Between the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika Schools**

(Two Non-Mahayana Schools)

**Sautrantika School**

**Vaibhashika School**

***Key Concept***

There is *conceptual* *knowledge* of a subject (conceptual consciousness) and *direct experience* of a subject (perceptual consciousness).

***Key Concept***

Things are *compounded* (cause and effect; impermanent) or *uncompounded* (no causes and conditions; unchangeable).

***Mind – Valid Cognition***

*Inferential* valid cognition (concepts) → **nonthings** → conceptually constructed → uncompounded → generally characterized phenomena (general properties) → words (linguistic signs that mark objects only approximately) → unreal objects (unable to perform functions) → imputations → permanent → **conventional** truth

*Direct* valid cognition → **things** → compounded → specifically characterized (unique characteristics) → beyond words → real objects (specific time, place, and cause) that can perform functions and have real results → impermanent → **ultimate** truth

***Mind***

*Contaminated* mind (faulty): a mind that has not realized selflessness directly → knows **conventional** truths*.*

*Uncontaminated* mind (correct): has realized selflessness directly → knows **ultimate** truths.

***Conventional Truth***

A whole object is *imputed* onto its parts (form, consciousness, non-associated compounded phenomena) → imputed existence (can be broken down).

***Mind – and Objects***

▪ Real things exist independent of the mind (objects exist "out there").

▪ External things act as a cause for *consciousness* to arise.

▪ *Commonsense objects* (e.g. pen, table, house) are real and *not* mere imputations of a conceptual consciousness – they can be seen as objects of direct perception, free of constructs or interpretations.

***Ultimate Truth***

An object is *not* a collection of substantial parts, but is the *actual substance* → substantial existence (can't be broken down) → aggregates, uncompounded phenomena, substantial particles (matter or mind).

***Conventional Truth (Nonthings)***

▪ unreal ▪ fictional ▪ non-effective ▪ general characteristics ▪ non-functional (unable to perform a function) ▪ concealer truth (conceptual mind obscures the unique entity of a specifically characterized phenomenon) ▪ objects of conceptual valid cognition

Conceptual thoughts are: ▪ selective ▪ eliminative

*Selflessness*, *cessation*, and *space* can be described by words; therefore, they are conventional truths (but not in Vaibhashika school).

***Two Truths Together***

Both conventional truth *and* ultimate truth can co-exist within one object.

Regarding the two truths – one is not "better" than the other. They are different.

***Selflessness***

▪ Refers to the person being empty of a permanent, unitary, and indivisible reality. This is emptiness.

▪ Sense of identity ("I") is a compounded phenomena (due to causes and conditions, and is therefore impermanent).

***Ultimate Truth (Things)***

▪ real ▪ effective ▪ specific characteristics ▪ functional (able to perform a function) ▪ any unique, specifically characterized object

▪ objects of direct valid cognition

***Selflessness***

▪ Is the lack of an intrinsic or inherent self.

▪ Self does *not* exist since it cannot be apprehended by direct or inferential valid cognition.

▪ Only selflessness (emptiness) of persons, not of phenomena.

***Importance of Studying both Schools***

▪ It is valuable to see how much of our "perceived" world may be *imputed* by our deluded minds.

▪ We can focus more on "real" things, and see the danger inherent within unreal expectations and unreal memories.

***Importance of Studying both Schools***

▪ Understanding the Sautrantika view enables us to grasp the higher view of the Madhyamaka school in a deeper and more profound way.

▪ We can better see our *presumptions* and so become more open-minded.

***Meditation***

Differentiate between what exists as only an *imputation* and what exists *substantially* (in and of itself) and is ultimately true – that is, distinguish between what is imputed or mere *appearance*, and what is *reality*.

***Meditation***

Discriminate between mediating through *concepts* and *direct perceptual experience* – that is, be mindful of mistaking conceptions for perceptions. Also, use meditating on the Four Noble Truths as a kind of "background" meditation – do this for both schools.