**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).

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

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| **Divisions of Phenomena (Existent Things)**  (Includes all existent things, both within and without cyclic existence)  (Know *what* exists in the universe, before knowing *how* it exists) | |
| **Compounded** Phenomena  (Impermanent) | **Uncompounded** Phenomena |
| ▪ All things and events that come into being or existence due to *causes* and *conditions* – within or without samsara, external phenomena or internal mental events, whether they should be abandoned or adopted.  ▪ "An object that has arisen in dependence of the aggregation of causes and conditions" (Vasubandhu).  ▪ Main sub-divisions are:  ~ ***Form***: material things; any object of the sensory consciousness (e.g. shape, color, pen, book, odor, sound)  ~ ***Consciousness***: 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.])  ~ ***Non-associated compositional factors***: 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” | ▪ Something *not* created by causes and conditions.  ▪ Something *not* changing moment by moment during its existence.  ▪ Something that cannot perform a function.  Examples  ▪ Space: Absence of obstruction; not the result of causes and conditions.  ▪ *Non-analytical cessation*: Temporary ceasing of negativities, misperceptions, etc. in meditative concentration that interrupts attachment to sensory objects – when concentration stops, attachment returns.  ▪ *Analytical cessation*: Ceasing occurring through meditation analyzing reality of things and events; a complete cessation due to no reversal. A full cessation borne of realization. |

**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:

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| **Two Truths** | |
| ***Conventional Truth*** | ***Ultimate Truth*** |
| Conventional – generally refers to something that is not true as it appears. | Ultimate |
| Contaminated consciousness | Uncontaminated consciousness |
| Objects that appear to a *contaminated* consciousness are the objects of a conventional mind. | Objects of an *uncontaminated* 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, uncontaminated consciousness – one that has realized selflessness directly – knows ultimate truths.  It is called *ultimate truth* because it is the object of superior wisdom. It is the ultimate and it is also true, and therefore, it is called *ultimate truth*. |
| 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. |
| In sum, a mundane, contaminated consciousness – one that has not realized emptiness or selflessness – knows conventional truths. |

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| **Conventional Truth Equals Imputed Existence** | |
| If the awareness of something does not operate after that thing is destroyed or mentally separated into other things, then that thing exists *conventionally*, like a pot of water. Others exist *ultimately*. | |
| When an object is destroyed or mentally separated into parts, the mind can no longer hold on to that object; therefore, it is a *conventional* truth.  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.  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. | |
| For mental events, although the object cannot be destroyed, it can be separated into parts.    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 *conventional truths*. | |
| 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 *imputed existent objects*. | |
| The above are examples of imputed existent objects – *imputed existence and conventional truth are synonyms*. | |
| 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 *substantially existent object* – *substantial existence and ultimate truth are synonyms*. | |
| *Conventional truth* fits with the *three types of compounded phenomena*: form (can be destroyed), consciousness (can be mentally separated), and non-associated compounded phenomena (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. | |
| Gross forms (vase, mountain, house) and continuities (year, month, week) are imputed objects = conventional truths because they are purely imputed onto other things. | |
| Other terms: collective convention (e.g. house); conventional dependence on others (e.g. year); conventional truth dependent on other substances (e.g. water molecules) | |
| 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.)