

# Basic Buddhist Ontology

The Selfless, Existents, Types of Existents and Non-existents

## 1. The Selfless

a. **The definition of the selfless:** “That which is without a self.”

## b. The divisions of the selfless

### i. Existents

a) **The definition of an existent:** “That which is observed by a valid cognizer.”

b) **The phenomena mutually inclusive with existents**, that is, everything that is an existent must be:

(i) **Established bases:** “That which is established by a valid cognizer”

(ii) **Object of comprehension:** “That which is realized by a valid cognizer”

→ “All existent things are characterized as those things that are established, observed and realized by valid cognizers.”

(iii) **An object:** “That which is known by an awareness”

- **Awareness:** “any sort of consciousness, right or wrong, reliable or not”

- **Reliable cognizer:** “A correct, certifying consciousness”

→ Here, “known by” an awareness qualifies that it is an awareness of something correct and reliable—you cannot know something that is not true, not real, not accurate, not existent.

(iv) **Object of knowledge:** “That which is suitable as an object of an awareness”

(v) **Object of comprehension of an omniscient consciousness:** “An object realized [by a valid cognizer] by an omniscient consciousness”

(vi) **Hidden phenomena:** “An object realized in a hidden manner by a thought consciousness apprehending it.”

(vii) **Phenomenon:** “That which holds its own entity.”

## c) Seven divisions of existents

### 1. The division of existents into Impermanent phenomena and permanent phenomena

#### a. Impermanent phenomena

i. **The definition of an impermanent phenomenon:** “A momentary phenomena.”

#### ii. Examples of impermanent phenomena

#### b. Permanent phenomena

i. **The definition of a permanent phenomenon:** “A common locus of a permanent phenomenon and the nonmomentary.”

#### ii. A division of permanent phenomena

#### iii. Examples of permanent phenomena

### 2. The division of existents into functioning things and phenomena that are non-things

#### a. Functioning things

i. **The definition of a functioning thing:** “That which is able to perform a function.”

#### ii. The division of functioning things into three

b. **Phenomena that are non-things [non-functioning things]:** “A phenomenon that is empty of the ability to perform a function.”

### 3. The division of existents into products and nonproduced phenomena

- **A product:** “A created phenomenon” [i.e. that which is produced from causes and conditions]
  - **A cause:** “A producer”
  - **An effect:** “An object produced.”
  - **A nonproduced phenomenon:** “a noncreated phenomenon.” [i.e. an existent not created by causes and conditions.]
- 4. The division of existents into composed phenomena and uncomposed phenomena**
- **A composed phenomena:** “A disintegrating phenomenon.”
  - **An uncomposed phenomena:** “A nondisintegrating phenomenon.”
- 5. The division of existents into ultimate truths and conventional truths**
- **An ultimate truth:** “A phenomenon that is ultimately able to perform a function.” [i.e. impermanent phenomena]  
*\*\*Only this system of the Sutra School Following Reasoning equates ultimate truth with impermanent phenomena.*
  - **A conventional truth:** “A phenomenon that is ultimately unable to perform a function.” [i.e. permanent phenomena].
- 6. The division of existents into specifically characterized phenomena and generally characterized phenomena**
- **A specifically characterized phenomenon:** “A phenomenon that is established by way of its own character without being merely imputed by a term or thought consciousness.”  
 [Impermanent phenomena, in this system asserted to be truly established phenomena]
  - **A generally characterized phenomenon:** “A phenomenon that is merely imputed by a term or thought consciousness and is not established as a specifically characterized phenomenon.”  
 [All permanent phenomena.]
- 7. The division of existents into hidden phenomena and manifest phenomena**
- **A hidden phenomenon:** “An object realized in a hidden manner by a thought consciousness apprehending it.” [MI with all existents]
  - **A manifest phenomena:** “An object explicitly realized by a direct valid cognizer.” [MI with all impermanent phenomena]

- ii. **Non-existents**
  - a. **A proposed definition of the non-existent:** “That which is not observed by valid cognition.”
  - b. **Examples of non-existents**
- c. **Examples of the selfless**

## 1. Functioning Things

- A. **Matter:** “That which is atomically established.” [MI with **Form:** “That which is suitable as form”]
  - 1. **External Matter:** “That which is atomically established and is not included within the continuum of a person.”
    - a. **Visible Forms** [form-source]: “An object apprehended by an eye consciousness.”
      - i. **Color:** “That which is suitable as a hue.”
      - ii. **Shape:** “That which is suitable to be known as a shape.”
    - b. **Sounds:** “An object of hearing.” [MI with **Sound Source:** “An object of hearing of an ear consciousness.”
    - c. **Odors** [odor-source]: “An object experience by a nose consciousness.”
    - d. **Tastes:** “An object experienced by a tongue consciousness.”
    - e. **Tangible Objects:** “An object experienced by a body consciousness,” or “An object felt by a body consciousness.”
  - 2. **Internal Matter:** “That which is atomically established and is included within the continuum of a person.”
    - a. **Eye sense power:** “A clear internal form that is the uncommon empowering condition for its own effect, an eye consciousness.”
    - b. **Ear sense power:** “A clear internal form that is the uncommon empowering condition for its own effect, an ear consciousness.”
    - c. **Nose sense power:** “A clear internal form that is the uncommon empowering condition for its own effect, a nose consciousness.”
    - d. **Tongue sense power:** “A clear internal form that is the uncommon empowering condition of its own effect, a tongue consciousness.”
    - e. **Body sense power:** “A clear internal form that is the uncommon empowering condition of its own effect, a body consciousness.”
- B. **Consciousnesses:** “That which is clear and knowing”
  - 1. **Mental Consciousnesses:** “A knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, a mental sense power.”  
[The mental sense power is “Any of the six [mental or sense] consciousnesses in the immediately preceding moment.]
  - 2. **Sense Consciousnesses:** “A knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, a physical sense power.”
    - a. **Eye consciousness:** “A knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, the eye sense power, and an observed-object-condition, a visible form.”
    - b. **Ear consciousness:** “A knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, the ear sense power, and an observed-object-condition, a sound.”
    - c. **Nose consciousness:** “A knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, the nose sense power, and an observed-object-condition, an odor.”
    - d. **Tongue consciousness:** “A knowing that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, a tongue sense power, and an observed-object-condition, a taste.”
    - e. **Body consciousness:** “A knower that is produced in dependence on its own uncommon empowering condition, a body sense power, and an observed-object-condition, a tangible object.”
- C. **Nonassociated Compositional Factors:** “A functioning thing that is neither a form nor a consciousness.”
  - 1. **Nonassociated Compositional Factors That Are Persons—A person:** “A being who is imputed in dependence upon any of the five aggregates.”
    - a. **Common Beings**
    - b. **Superiors**
  - 2. **Nonassociated Compositional Factors That Are Not Persons**