

Self-liberate Even the Antidote

The antidote is the realization that our discursive thoughts have no origin... But we need to go beyond that antidote. We should not hang on the so-what-ness of it, the naivete of it.

The idea of the antidote is that everything is empty, so you have nothing to care about...whether anything great or small comes up, nothing really matters very much... so let it go... you can murder, you can meditate, you can perform art, you can do all kinds of things - everything is meditation, whatever you do. But there is something very tricky about the whole approach. That dwelling on emptiness is a misinterpretation, called the 'poison of shunyata'.

Some people say that they do not have to sit and meditate, because they have always 'understood.' But that is very tricky. I have been trying very hard to fight such people. I never trust them at all - unless they actually sit and practice. You cannot split hairs by saying that you might be... driving your Porsche and meditating away; you might be washing dishes (which is more legitimate in some sense) and meditating away. That may be a genuine way of doing things, but it still feels very suspicious.

From Training the Mind & Cultivating Loving-Kindness by Chogyam Trungpa

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In case you thought you understood "Examine the nature of unborn awareness," let go even of that understanding, that poise, that security, that sense of ground. Let go even of the idea of emptiness, of openness, of space...so whenever you come up with a solid conclusion, let the rug be pulled out. You can pull out your own rug, and you can also let life pull it out for you.

So if you think that everything is solid, that's one trap, and if you change that for a different belief system, that's another trap. We have to pull out the rug from under our belief systems altogether. We can do that by letting go of our beliefs, and also our sense of what is right and wrong, by just going back to the simplicity and the immediacy of our present experience, resting in the nature of alaya.

From Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living by Pema Chodron

Even the Remedy is Freed to Subside Naturally

Thoughts about this remedy for the tendency to cling to existence may come up. For example, you may think, "mind and body all are empty" or "nothing is helpful or harmful in emptiness." If this happens, then

Even the remedy is freed to subside naturally

When you look at the presence of the remedy itself, these thoughts about the absence of true existence, there is nothing for mind to refer to and they subside naturally on their own. Relax in this state.

From The Great Path of Awakening : An Easily Accessible Introduction for Ordinary People by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod. Copyright 1993 by Ken McLeod. Published by arrangement

Even the Antidote Itself is Liberated in its own Place

The next verse of the root text continues on the subject of ultimate bodhicitta, or realizing the nature of reality, as a practice during meditation sessions. The direct realization of ultimate truth is the fundamental antidote and ultimate healer of the distortions that afflict the mind. The author is saying that even this realization itself is "liberated in its own place." And here "liberated" means lacking intrinsic existence. Even the notion of ultimate truth is itself devoid of inherent existence.

Sechibuwa has shifted here to a third aspect of reality. After denying first the intrinsic existence of objective reality, and then that of subjective awareness, he now moves on to transcendent awareness. Even this transcendent experience of ultimate reality, in which there is no sense of subject/object, no duality of this as opposed to that, self as opposed to other, no sense of time, no conceptual discrimination - even this fundamental antidote to the fundamental distortion of ignorance has no inherent existence. On what grounds can one make such a statement? The Madhyamaka view proposes the thesis that any dependently related event is devoid of intrinsic existence. Conversely, any entity that is devoid of intrinsic existence is by that very fact a dependently related event. This sums up the ultimate and conventional natures of all phenomena.

Excerpted from: The Seven-Point Mind Training (first published as A Passage from Solitude : Training the Mind in a Life Embracing the World), by B. Alan Wallace

The Remedy Itself is Released in its own Place

After meditating for some time on outer phenomena and also on the consciousness that is meditating, we should attain an insight into emptiness. However, with this limited insight, another wrong concept leading to difficulties will arise, because emptiness itself will then appear to be independently existent. At such a time, we should meditate on emptiness itself in the same way.

Emptiness does not exist by itself, because it is completely dependent on its base. Without this base of emptiness, there can be no emptiness. For example, this page or any other phenomenon is known as the base of emptiness (*stong-gzhi chos-can*). Since the base, or this page, is not independently self-existent, its essential nature is empty. However, emptiness also does not exist independently by itself because it too is dependent on the base and cannot possibly exist by itself. As it is said in the *Heart of Wisdom Discourse*:

O Shariputra, form here is emptiness and emptiness indeed is form. Emptiness is not different from form; form is not different from emptiness. What is form, that is emptiness; what is emptiness, that is form. The same applies to feeling, recognition, karmic formations, and consciousness...

One example traditionally used for non-existence is the horn of a rabbit. Since this base - in this case the horn of a rabbit - is completely non-existent, we can never speak of its emptiness. Both emptiness and the base of emptiness, form and so forth, totally depend on each other in a way similar to two planks of wood leaning together and giving mutual support to each other. Without one, the other will fall down.

The realization of emptiness is the most effective remedy for curing the chronic disease of ignorance. However, holding the remedy to be something exceptional and self-existent is one of the grossest ignorant conceptions. The remedy itself must also dissolve into emptiness and be released in itself.

When we begin to approach meditation on emptiness, we should apply the meditation to our own ego-identity, then later transfer that awareness to the concept of self-existence in relation to outer phenomena, including the mind that is meditating. Finally, we should direct our insight toward emptiness itself. After meditating on these aspects progressively, we should meditate on them collectively, trying to keep the mind stabilized on the negation of our ignorant conceptions for as long as possible. Six examples are traditionally given to assist the meditator in maintaining concentration on emptiness.

1. Like the sunlight that brightly illuminates all the land, the mind should not be dark and dull but bright, clear, and alert; the mind should be illuminated and radiant.
2. Like the stillness of the deep and vast ocean which, unlike a small stream or river, is not easily agitated, the mind should be kept calm and tranquil, far away from any agitation.
3. Just as a young child's reaction on first viewing intricate temple murals is without any discrimination as to good or bad, all our concentration should be unwaveringly maintained on emptiness without discriminating about its depth or profundity. Just as the child stares wide-eyed at the painting, we should view emptiness with the eye of intelligent awareness fully open.
4. In the same way that eagles can soar high in the sky with little exertion, needing to flap their wings only occasionally, we should stay aloft in the space of emptiness, only once in a while applying intense examination to the nature of the self, when our concentration slips into boredom or mental dullness. Having applied analytical meditation (*dpyad-sgom*), we gather the energy to resume meditation placed (*Jog-sgom*) effortlessly on emptiness. If, like small birds that continually flap their wings yet never rise to great heights, we engage only in this analysis

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The Antidote Will Vanish of Itself

People who ask for Dharma teachings do so because they are afraid of what might happen to them after death. They decide that they must take refuge, request the lama for instruction and concentrate unwaveringly on the practice: a hundred thousand prostrations, a hundred thousand mandala offerings, recitations of the refuge formula and so on.

These, of course, are positive thoughts, but thoughts, being without substantial nature, do not stay for very long. When the teacher is no longer present and there is no one to show what should and should not be done, then for most practitioners it is as the saying goes: Old yogis getting rich; old teachers getting married. This only goes to show that thoughts are impermanent, and we should therefore bear in mind that any thought or antidote - even the thought of emptiness is itself by nature empty without substantial existence.

From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.