

### 13 The True Entity of All Phenomena Is the Wisdom To Grasp the Truth of Life

WE now come to the most important passage of the “Expedient Means” chapter, the section dealing with the true entity of all phenomena and the ten factors.

Just what exactly is the wisdom of the Buddha that Shakyamuni has been praising from the start of the chapter as “infinitely profound” and “difficult to understand”? Here, he tries to explain.

The true entity of all phenomena is the wisdom of the Buddhas that can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. Shakyamuni clarifies that the true entity specifically consists of the ten factors—appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.

“All phenomena” indicates life in the Ten Worlds (*shoho*) and its environment (*eho*), or all living beings and the realms in which they dwell. In other words, it refers to all nature, to all things and phenomena.

Also, “true entity,” just as it sounds, means the true reality just as it is. The true entity of all phenomena might be thought of as the undisguised truth of all things.

The ten factors that follow indicate the contents of the true entity. For this reason, this passage is termed the “true entity of the ten factors.”

*Yui butsu yo butsu. Nai no kujin. Shoho jisso. Sho-i shoho. Nyo ze so. Nyo ze sho. Nyo ze tai. Nyo ze riki. Nyo ze sa. Nyo ze in. Nyo ze en. Nyo ze ka. Nyo ze ho. Nyo ze honmak<sup>^</sup>kukyo to.*

**The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect and their consistency from beginning to end.” (LS2, 24)**

#### What Are the Ten Factors?

THE meaning of the ten factors might be summarized as follows:

(1) appearance (*nyo ze so*): the external manifestation of life. (2) nature (*nyo ze sho*): the spiritual or mental aspect of life. (3) entity (*nyo ze tai*): the totality of life consisting of appearance and nature. (4) power (*nyo ze riki*): inherent energy. (5) influence (*nyo ze sa*): externally directed action. (6) internal cause (*nyo ze in*): the direct cause for things to occur. (7) relation (*nyo ze en*): the causes or conditions that activate the internal cause. (8) latent effect (*nyo ze ka*): the result produced [in the depths of life] by internal cause and relation. (9) manifest effect (*nyo ze ho*): the concrete, perceptible manifestation of the latent effect. (10) consistency from beginning to end (*nyo ze honmatsu kukyoto*): the perfect integration of these nine factors in every moment of life.

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The three factors of appearance, nature and entity explain the essential composition of all phenomena. The six factors of power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect and manifest effect analyze the functions and workings of all phenomena. And consistency from beginning to end indicates the coherency of the nine factors from appearance to manifest effect.

In the passage, each factor is prefixed by the term *nyo ze* (literally, “it is like”). Shakyamuni is saying in effect: although the Buddha wisdom fundamentally cannot be articulated in words, if one were to venture to describe it, this is how it might be expressed.

Let me try to explain the ten factors through an example. Your own existence is a “phenomenon.” Your features, posture and so on comprise the “appearance” of the “phenomenon” of your life.

Again, while invisible to the eye, such traits as shortness of temper, magnanimity, kindness or reticence, or the various aspects of your personality or temperament, make up your “nature.” Your physical and spiritual totality—that is, your “appearance” and “nature” together—make up your “entity,” the person you are.

Also, your life has various energies (“power”), and these produce various external functions (“influence”). Your life thus becomes a cause (“internal cause”) and, activated by conditions internal and external (“relation”), changes arise in your life (“latent effect”), and these eventually appear externally (“manifest effect”).

Moreover, these nine factors interweave your life and your environment without any inconsistency or omission (“consistency from beginning to end”). This is the true aspect of the ten factors of your life.

Each of us lives within the framework of the ten factors. No one could say that he or she has no “appearance.” Such a person would be invisible. Similarly, no one could truly claim not to have a personality, not to have any energy, or not to carry out any activity. Nor could there be a situation where the appearance was one person, the nature someone else and the entity another person still. There is consistency among all factors, and together they make up the irreplaceable totality of your being.

People in each of the Ten Worlds are endowed with the ten factors according to their state of life. For example, people in the world of Hell have the dark and depressed appearance of those overwhelmed by suffering. Since their nature is filled with suffering and anger, their power and influence tend to mire those around them in darkness, too.

Those in the world of Heaven are typically bright and smiling in their appearance. In their nature, since they feel uplifted—as though “ascending into the sky,” as it were—anything they see makes them happy. Their power and influence tend to make those around them feel buoyant and cheerful, too.

Similarly, each of the ten worlds has its own factors of appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect and manifest effect, and there is consistency from beginning to end. This is the true nature of all phenomena.

President Toda explained this as follows: “Suppose there is a thief in front of

us. He is a thief from appearance to manifest effect. That's consistency from beginning to end in a thief's life. There is no discontinuity."

Rather than simply looking at surface appearances, understanding the true entity of all phenomena means to grasp the vastness and profundity of life in its entirety.

The ten factors are not limited only to human beings. Flowers blooming on the roadside, for example, have the appearance, nature and entity of beauty. And they also possess power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect and manifest effect, without any omission. And in their totality, all of these factors are coherently integrated with the life of the flower.

The same is also true of inorganic things. A pebble, the sky, the moon, stars, the sun, the sea with its salty scent, rugged mountains, skyscrapers overlooking noisy streets, houses and cars and every piece of furniture or utensil—the ten factors describe the existence of all things.

This is the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena that the Buddha has attained. In other words, when observing any phenomenon, the Buddha understands its true entity. When looking at people, the Buddha understands their state of life and sees their Buddha nature within. When looking at something in nature, the Buddha can sense its noble brilliance. And, considering social phenomena, the Buddha can deftly discern their underlying significance.

It might be said that the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena is the ability to discern the true nature of all things.

### **The Importance of Seeing the Truth**

BUDDHISM explains that there are five types of vision people may possess depending on their state of life: the eye of common mortals, the divine eye, the eye of wisdom (of people of the two vehicles), the eye of the Law (of bodhisattvas), and the eye of the Buddha. The wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena is to view everything with the eye of the Law and the eye of the Buddha.

Seeing is of course an example, but there is also hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling and sensing. Through all our faculties we should strive to perceive the true entity of all phenomena.

The French poet Comte de Lautréamont writes: "Amid passing phenomena, I search for the truth."

What is important is the vision to profoundly and deftly perceive the true nature of shifting phenomena. The Buddha is one who has mastered this vision.

Often people experience failure or loss in even simple, everyday affairs due to misunderstandings or misperceptions, prejudice or speculation. It is all the more difficult to see the truth when it comes to fundamental problems of human life or society. When observing the same phenomena, the Buddha succeeds in seeing the true entity while others fail.

To take one example, the scientist Isaac Newton is said to have discovered the law of universal gravitation from observing an apple fall from a tree. In the

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falling apple (the phenomenon), he discerned the truth (the true entity) that the force of gravity acts upon all things. This could be thought of as a part of the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena.

No matter how many apples someone sees fall, if the person lacks insight, he or she will not be able to discern the true entity. Newton's discovery resulted in the opening of a new world and has greatly benefited humankind.

Similarly, and on an even grander scale, the Buddha wisdom to discern the true entity of all phenomena is inestimably important for people's happiness in life, for the advancement of humanity.

To speak of discovering the true entity "behind" phenomena might give the impression that the Law exists somewhere apart from the phenomena. This is definitely not the case. Phenomena and their true entity are always inseparable. The Buddha observes the true entity as it manifests through phenomena and correctly perceives that the true entity exists only as the phenomena. They certainly do not exist separately.

To illustrate, if phenomena, which are constantly changing, are likened to waves, then the true entity is comparable to the ocean. Waves are produced by the ocean, and wave crests consist of sea water. Conversely, there is no ocean that does not manifest as waves. The two are one in essence.

Again, if the true entity is likened to the surface of a mirror, then phenomena would be comparable to the images appearing therein. The mirror reproduces all things as images. There is no mirror that does not reflect images as long as there is light. Conversely, there can be no reflected images without the mirror.

From the standpoint of life, "all phenomena" means individual lives, and "true entity" refers to the truth of life—which pervades the universe—that the Buddha perceives. The Buddha perceives the universal life in even the smallest living manifestation.

To put it another way, all living beings are entities of the Mystic Law to which the Buddha is enlightened, and the Buddha perceives that they are inherently endowed with the Buddha nature. This is the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena.

The vision that enables the Buddha to perceive the true entity that manifests in all phenomena is also the eye of compassion to save all people and enable them to become Buddhas.

The Daishonin says: "Life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life" (MW-1, 267). The life of one person, an individual, he says, is more precious even than all the treasures of the universe. This is the wonderful Buddhist view of life, which is based on the perception of the true entity in all phenomena.

Life is mysterious. It is the wisdom of the Buddha to perfectly and fully understand the truth of life. What a vast and infinitely profound wisdom this is!

As seen with the eye of the Buddha, this world, this universe is shining with life, resounding with the chorus of all things. The Buddha perceives the irreplaceable uniqueness and value of all things in the world. The Buddha's wisdom is a state of life filled with boundless exhilaration and joy in living.

As I will discuss later, from the standpoint of the Daishonin's Buddhism, the true entity of all phenomena means the Gohonzon. For us who embrace the Gohonzon, the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena means to view everything with the eye of Buddhism and the eye of faith. □

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