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I. Please read the following text carefully and answer the following two questions I.1-I.2.

The Madhyamaka school proclaims a middle way that rejects belief in the existence of an eternal self and inherently existent phenomena as well as the belief that such selves and phenomena do not exist at all. This school reinterprets the teaching of Pratītyasamutpāda (dependent origination) to mean that because various causes and conditions produce phenomena, all are empty of any inherent existence. Śūnyatā (emptiness) means that no phenomena and no persons are unoriginated and unrelated. Emptiness itself is empty. Since everything is empty, there is no real difference between good and bad, pure and impure, or Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa. These distinctions exist on the level of conventional truth and serve to introduce people to the ultimate truth that transcends dualistic language and conceptual thought. The liberating experience of meditation uncovers ultimate truth and destroys all attachment to erroneous conceptions of the self and the world. The Madhyamaka school's influential teaching of emptiness endures in Buddhist traditions as diverse as the Tibetan Dge Lugs (Gelug) school and the East Asian Chan School and it continues to inspire debate among Western scholars whose interpretations of Madhyamaka's founder are equally diverse.

From the first century B.C.E. to the second century C.E., debate over the interpretation of the Buddha's teachings contributed to the writing of sūtras and scholastic Abhidharma texts with new analyses of the Buddha's teachings. The authors of abhidharma works believed that the world contains a finite number of mental and physical phenomena (dharma) that have an inherent existence of their own (*svabhāva*) and that Buddhist saints (Arhats) experience nirvāṇa through their insight into the nature of these phenomena. The movement that came to be known as the Mahāyāna criticized the arhats' path as narrowly focused on their self-centered pursuit of nirvāṇa. Bodhisattvas, who aspire to become buddhas, begin their path with the intention of working for the enlightenment of all beings. Mahāyāna supporters claim that the bodhisattva path is superior because it balances the individual pursuit of insight with great compassion for others. Although the origins of the Mahāyāna movement remain obscure, most scholars agree that it developed in monastic circles in India. No canon of Mahāyāna sūtras existed, nor, if statements in early Mahāyāna sūtras are to be taken at face value, would there have been interest in establishing one, since each sūtras proclaimed its own unique authoritative status.

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Nāgārjuna, who composed treatises that incorporated the teachings of these diverse sūtras into a philosophical system, lived in a monastic community in southern India from about 150 to 250 C.E. The Madhyamaka (Middle Way) school of Buddhist philosophy takes its name from Nāgārjuna's belief that *śūnyatā* (emptiness) is the middle way between the extreme positions of nihilism and eternalism. Nihilism rejects belief in a transmigrating self that experiences the results of actions; eternalism believes in the eternal existence of such a self. Nāgārjuna explains that the eternalist view, which motivates people to do good in hope of a heavenly reward, is better than the nihilist view, but better still is the liberating insight into emptiness that repudiates both views. Nāgārjuna and his disciple, Āryadeva (ca. 170–270 C.E.), were convinced that they were preserving the true middle way of the Buddha's teachings, while other Buddhists had strayed from it and adopted extreme positions.

Nāgārjuna's writings encompass several genres: letters, philosophical works, and hymns. His *Suhrllekha* (*Letter to a Friend*), addressed to a South Indian Śātavāhana dynasty king, advises the king that since the world from the highest heavens down to worst hells is impermanent and painful, he should follow the eightfold path. Nāgārjuna encourages the king to develop insight into dependent origination and the four noble truths and to pursue meritorious actions with the intention of attaining buddhahood and creating his own buddha field, just as Amitābha Buddha had. In the *Ratnāvalī*, Nāgārjuna discusses the bodhisattva's path and the goal of buddhahood in more detail. Through the cultivation of compassion and the six perfections, a bodhisattva advances on the ten stages that culminate in the inconceivable state of buddhahood. Although some people ridicule Mahāyāna beliefs, intelligent people use reason to accept the teaching of emptiness and achieve perfect enlightenment.

I.1 Please write a summary with 200-300 words in Chinese. (30%)

I.2 According to the above text, how does Mahāyāna philosophy differ from the doctrines of early Buddhism? What is Nāgārjuna's contribution to the formation of Mahāyāna Buddhism in terms of his Madhyamaka thinking? (20%)

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II. Please read the following text carefully and answer the following two questions II.1-II.3.

In common usage, the word *meditation* approaches the meanings of the Indian Buddhist term DHYĀNA (TRANCE STATE): a shift in awareness typically carried out intentionally, in silence, and while holding the body in a static position (most characteristically sitting with legs crossed). Various practices of dhyāna are associated with notions of sainthood, wisdom, serenity, and extraordinary mental powers, such as the ABHIJÑĀ (HIGHER KNOWLEDGES). Additionally, the term suggests mental and bodily discipline, and is associated with systematic methods of self-cultivation, and with monastic or eremitical lifestyles.

Generally, Buddhist theories of meditation propose that the core of these practices consists in achieving a state of deep calm and concentration, called *samādhi*, which in turn can give rise to, or serve as the foundation for, a clear and accurate view (*vipaśyanā*) that discerns the real from the unreal. Furthermore, perfect calm and concentration can give rise as well to extraordinary visions and marvelous powers.

Wondrous powers arise when the mind is “concentrated, pure, translucent, spotless, free of trouble and confusion, supple.” For instance, “from [one’s] own body arises another body that has the constituents and shape of a material body but is made of mind. [And one] applies and directs this mind to the acquisition of wondrous powers. . . . Although [this person is] one, he becomes many, or having become many becomes one again; he becomes invisible, and then visible again” (*Dīghanikāya* 1, 77 – 78).

And, the perfect calm of a concentrated mind leads to extraordinary levels of knowing—especially an insight into reality that liberates the meditator from the bonds of DUḤKHA (SUFFERING). “He applies and directs this mind to that insight that comes from knowledge. He discerns clearly: ‘my body is made of matter, . . . produced by a father and a mother, and continually renewed by boiled rice and juicy foods, . . . it is subject to decay, wear, dissolution, and disintegration. This consciousness of mine too depends on that body, is bound up in that body’ ” (*Dīghanikāya* 1, 76). With this, the meditator knows the reality of the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS: This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; and this is the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*Dīghanikāya* 1, 83).

The literate elites generally regard as more estimable this second fruit of meditation: insight into the nature of reality and liberation from the bonds of suffering and REBIRTH. Nonetheless, meditation remains a practice for embodied beings, and is also valued for its putative transformative power on the world of embodiment.

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Meditation in Mahāyāna

Most Buddhist currents and religious groups in India—whether they were identified as *nikāya* (so-called MAINSTREAM BUDDHIST SCHOOLS) or MAHĀYĀNA communities—tended to model meditation on elements found in a common pool of practices. These corresponded in their rough outlines to the techniques summarized in the formula of the forty *kammaṭṭhāna*, and they are also found in practice manuals (so-called *yogācāra* or *yogāvacāra* manuals). Sometimes these recommendations were incorporated into larger treatises on doctrine and practice, like the encyclopedic *Yogācārabhūmi* attributed to ASAṄGA.

Thus, Mahāyāna meditation in India followed some variants of the common background of practices found in non-Mahāyāna traditions. Mahāyāna texts recommend, for example, the practice of the boundless states, the meditation on the corpse (*aśubhabhāvanā*), and mindfulness practices. Many of these practices were transported to Mahāyāna regions outside India in versions that seldom differed significantly from the accounts found in the Indian texts we possess.

Nevertheless, a number of innovations occurred in Mahāyāna, in India and beyond. Emphasis on ŚŪNYATĀ (EMPTINESS) led some Mahāyāna authors to criticize the notion that the corpse was impure or foul (*aśubha*), arguing that it was better to conceive of it as empty of both substance and characteristics. In the same vein, the classical meditation on mental states (*citta*), which had earlier focused on a clear distinction between mental states that are good or healthy (*kuśala*) and those that are noxious or unhealthy (*akuśala*), shifted according to Mahāyāna dialectic, and the meditator asked himself whether his own thoughts, good or bad, could be located anywhere: “Where did they come from, where will they go, where are they located, inside of me, outside, or somewhere in between?”

Śāntideva describes in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra* a psychologically complex meditation on no-self and compassion that became a classic in Tibet and has been admired in the West for almost a century. The meditation has two parts: identification of self with others, and reversing roles between self and others. In the first part, the meditator explores the boundaries of the self and the preconceptions that make us set such boundaries. For instance, one is to reflect on the fact that suffering is the same in all beings, so that our natural impulse to avoid suffering makes more sense as a desire to protect all living things from suffering than in any selfish desire to protect ourselves at the expense of others.

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In the second part of the meditation, Śāntideva imagines another person, one who is less fortunate than he is. Then he assumes the role of this other person and imagines this person looking back at Śāntideva first with envy, then reproaching him for his pride and for his insensitivity in regarding the less fortunate as inferiors, instead of as the only reason for his existence, for only those in pain justify one's existence since service to others is the only meaning of the Buddhist's life.

II.1 Please write a summary with 200-300 words in Chinese. (20%)

II.2 Please explain the difference between *samādhi* and *vipaśyanā*. (15%)

II.3 Did Mahāyāna have a revolution in meditation? (15%)