

Dependent Relationship & Dependent-related Phenomena

	Produced Phenomena (Impermanent)	Unproduced Phenomena (Permanent)
Gross (‘Dependent arising’)	<i>A rose arising in dependence upon its causes & conditions.</i>	n/a
Subtle	<i>A rose existing in dependence upon its parts.</i>	<i>Emptiness existing in dependence upon its parts.</i>
Very Subtle	<i>A rose existing as a mere imputation by thought.</i>	<i>Emptiness existing as a mere imputation by thought.</i>

A dependent-related phenomenon is a phenomenon that exists in dependence upon its parts. Since all phenomena have parts, and since all phenomena exist in dependence upon their parts, all phenomena are dependent-related phenomena. In *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* Nagarjuna says:

Because there is no phenomenon
That is not a dependent arising,
There is no phenomenon that is not empty.

‘Dependent arising’ sometimes means arising in dependence upon causes and conditions, but here Nagarjuna uses the term to refer to dependent-related phenomena. The definition of dependent related is existing (or established) in dependence upon its parts. Produced (or impermanent) phenomena exist in dependence upon their causes and conditions, and unproduced (or permanent) phenomena exist in dependence upon their parts (such as their aspects, divisions, and directions). Since all phenomena are either produced or unproduced, it follows that every phenomenon is dependent-related.

There are three levels of dependent relationship: gross, subtle, and very subtle. Every functioning thing that we perceive directly is gross dependent-related. For example, a rose arising from its causes is **gross** dependent-related. However, the rose existing in dependence upon its parts is **subtle** dependent-related, and the rose existing as a mere imputation by thought is **very subtle** dependent-related. One single rose arises from its causes, exists in dependence upon its parts, and exists as a mere imputation by conceptual thought. There are not three different roses but one rose existing in three different ways. Because there are three different ways of understanding the way in which the rose exists, there are three kinds of dependent-related rose—gross, subtle, and very subtle. All functioning things exist in these three ways.

To take another example, the dependent relationship between a pot and its cause is a **gross** dependent relationship because it is easily understood. The dependent relationship between a pot and its parts is a **subtle** dependent-relationship because it is more difficult to understand than a gross dependent relationship. The dependent relationship between a pot and the conceptual thought conceiving pot is a **very subtle** dependent relationship because it is the most difficult to understand. We can understand very subtle dependent relationship only after we have realized lack of inherent existence.

(Source: Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Joyful Path of Good Fortune*, pp. 348-349)