

they truly exist because the designation "they exist truly" is applied.

The commentary clarifies our view, 'According to your system merely because the designations "they are" and "exist" are ascribed to things, you say things do not lack true existence. With that same line of reasoning, neither could things be truly existent merely because the designation "they exist truly" is applied. So, if you claim that things could not lack true existence merely because the designation that "they exist" is ascribed, then likewise when you say things are truly existent: just because you ascribe the term "truly existent", it does not mean that they become truly existent either. Things cannot exist truly'.

In our system, when we say that things 'lack true existence', we are not denying the actual existence of things. In fact by proving that things 'lack true existence', it establishes the real mode of existence of things, so rather than negating the existence of phenomena, it actually establishes the true nature of things. Whereas when you ascribe 'true existence' to something, it is not as if just designating 'true existence' actually makes things to truly existent'.

The commentary gives this analogy:

Calling someone with good eyesight blind or someone with a short life long-lived does not make them so.

The analogy explains that when someone actually has good eyesight, just giving the designation 'they are blind' does not make them blind. Likewise just giving someone the designation 'long-lived' does not make them live long. Similarly, when you designated things as 'truly existent', that does not establish things as truly existent.

The commentary further reads:

Besides, if things could be accomplished by words alone, it would be just as reasonable to accept that they lack true existence as to think they are truly existent.

The main point being made here is that mere designation will not make something to be so. Thus mere designation of true existence upon phenomena, will not establish things to be truly existent. It is similar to describing a person with good sight as being blind: mere designation will not establish that person as blind.

Furthermore, as it explains in the commentary, 'if things could be accomplished just by giving the term or by words alone' then 'it would be just as reasonable to accept that they lack true existence as to think they are truly existent'. So if you establish true existence merely because the term 'things are truly existent' is given, then you would have to also accept the 'lack of true existence' because that can also be established as a term. In that case you would have to face the absurdity of accepting that things are both 'truly existent' as well as 'lacking true existence'.

1.2.3.3. IF THERE WERE TRUE EXISTENCE BECAUSE ORDINARY PEOPLE USE THE VERBAL CONVENTION THAT THINGS ARE TRULY EXISTENT, THEN BEING CONVENTIONALLY EXISTENT THEY COULD NOT EXIST AS THEIR OWN SUCHNESS

The main point of the outline, which is in the meaning of the next verse, is that if things were truly existent because ordinary people use that verbal convention, then that would imply that even ordinary beings would be able to see the true nature of things, which has to be the lack of inherent existence. But that, of course, cannot be the case.

Another's assertion: Words do not reveal an object's entity. If they did, one's mouth would burn when saying "fire" or be full when saying "pot." Therefore we assert that

ordinary people all have means of expression and terms for that which is being expressed which do not touch an object's own entity.

This is an assertion that is established by a different opponent. What this opponent is establishing is that words themselves do not actually reveal the actual entity of the objects. If they did, then saying the word 'fire', for example, would cause your mouth to burn. Likewise if you said that a pot was round and big, then your mouth would be full when you say those words.

That opponent concludes, 'Therefore we assert that ordinary people all have means of expression and terms for that which is being expressed which do not touch an object's own entity'.

Answer:

*If everything is a convention
Because expressed by ordinary people,
How can anything which exists
As [its own] suchness be a convention?*

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The commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Supposedly things all exist inherently and as conventions because ordinary people speak of them by means of words which do not touch their entity. But how can anything that exists inherently, existing as its own suchness, be a convention? It could only be ultimately existent.

The main point being made here is that if, because of convention, things actually existed inherently, i.e. exist as their own suchness, then that would imply that ordinary beings could actually perceive the reality, suchness, or emptiness of things.

If phenomena were to be ultimately existent, then by seeing the ultimate existence of the phenomena an ordinary person would attain liberation. If an ordinary person actually saw the ultimate reality of things, then in fact they would not be an ordinary person. The way to achieve liberation is by realising the ultimate reality of phenomena, and it is only a yogic perception that sees the ultimate reality of phenomena. 'So according to you if ordinary beings were to touch the reality, or see the suchness of phenomena by mere convention then that would imply that ordinary beings have yogic perception, and therefore they could not be ordinary beings.'

Therefore, as it mentions here in the commentary, 'how can anything that exists inherently, existing as its own suchness, be a convention?' A convention is that which is seen or perceived by ordinary beings. This rhetorical question implies that 'anything that exists inherently as its own suchness, could not be a convention'.

1.2.4. Refuting non-existence as the thesis

That is subdivided into two:

1.2.4.1. Refuting that negation of truly existent things makes things utterly non-existent

1.2.4.2. As there are no truly existent things that which is non-functional cannot be truly existent either

1.2.4.1. REFUTING THAT NEGATION OF TRULY EXISTENT THINGS MAKES THINGS UTTERLY NON-EXISTENT

In their counter arguments the opponents have asserted that our system negates 'existence' because we claim that things 'lack true existence'. Therefore what is being established here is that the negation of 'truly existent things' does not make things 'non-existent'.

Assertion: Since you deny that things have true existence, things are non-existent.

That is the opponent's counter argument to the Madhyamika point of view.

Answer:

*If things are non-existent because
Things all do not exist,
In that case it is incorrect that all theses
Concern the non-existence of things.* 394

The first two lines of the verse are the opponent's assertion. The commentary explains their meaning in this way:

If even the slightest thing is non-existent because things are not truly existent...

The commentary then explains the last two lines:

...it is incorrect that all Mādhyamika theses concern the non existence of things through refutation of previously existent truly established things...

What is being established here is that when the Madhyamika thesis establishes the non-inherent existence of things it is not 'through the refutation of previously existent or truly established things'. That is, it is not as if truly existent phenomena which once existed are now being negated. That is not how our system establishes the lack of true existence.

...for there has never been any true existence."

In relation to the opponents' assertion or counter argument about our system establishing the lack of true existence, or things lacking true existence, the opponents are saying that if you establish or claim things lack true existence then, in fact, you are implying that things do not exist.

In negating the opponents' point of view, what our Madhyamika system is saying is that when our system establishes the lack of true existence it is not as if an earlier existing truly existent phenomena is being negated. That is not the case. This will become clearer in the next verse, which explains this point with an analogy—it is not like the non-existence of a vase after it has disintegrated. The way that the non-existence of a vase is established, is by the disintegration of an earlier existing vase. But this is not the case when the lack of true existence of phenomena is established. It is not as if an earlier truly existent phenomenon is negated to establish the lack of true existence of that phenomenon.

The commentary concludes by saying 'for there never has been any true existence'. To rephrase this point, when the Madhyamika system establishes the lack of true existence of phenomena by negating truly existent things, it sounds to the opponents as if our system is saying that things do not exist. That is because, they see and believe in things as existing truly. What our system basically is pointing out is, that in establishing the lack of true existence we are not negating existing phenomena.

1.2.4.2. AS THERE ARE NO TRULY EXISTENT THINGS THAT WHICH IS NON-FUNCTIONAL CANNOT BE TRULY EXISTENT EITHER

*Since a thing does not exist
A non-thing cannot exist.
Without a thing's existence,
How can a non-thing be established?* 395

Earlier assertions by the opponent say that if you establish a thing then the opposite of that, a non-thing, has to be also established. A thing and a non-thing are opposites, so when you establish one the other has to be also established. What our system is pointing out is that this is not the case. It is not

as if establishing the lack of true existence of things establishes a non-functional thing as being truly existent.

As the commentary explains the verse:

Since truly existent functional things, the object of negation, do not exist their non-functional negation cannot be truly existent.

We can relate this to the syllogism, 'A vase is not truly existent, because it is an interdependent origination'. What this establishes is the lack of inherent existence of a vase. The opposite of the thesis is a truly existent vase, and this is what needs to be negated. If we relate this to, for example, a thing, then a thing's lack of inherent existence is established with a similar syllogism. Although the thesis establishes the lack of inherent existence of a thing, the opposite is not established, i.e. the true existence of a thing is not established to be existent. In fact true existence is what is being negated. Our system says, 'When a thing is established as lacking inherent existence or true existence, the opposite is also implied, i.e. a non-thing is also implied to lack inherent or true existence'.

With the syllogism 'a vase does not have true existence, because it is an interdependent origination' the subject is the vase; the predicate is the lack of inherent existence; and the reason is because it is an interdependent origination. So the thesis that is being established is the lack of inherent existence of a vase, and the opposite of that, the inherent existence of a vase, is what is to be negated. Thus establishing that the vase lacks inherent existence does not imply that a non-vase or an opposite of that is something that is truly existent.

In the world a completely disintegrating thing is said to be non-functional. In keeping with this, a completely disintegrated pot would not be feasible if the pot had never existed.

It was explained earlier that when a disintegrated pot is established, the pot would have had to exist earlier. Without the pot or vase having existed earlier you cannot talk about its disintegration. Likewise how could the non-functional be truly existent when there are no truly existent functional things?'

What is being established in relation to this analogy is:

Thus how could the non functional be truly existent when there are no truly existent functional things? The existence of a dependent thing is not feasible without that on which it depends.

If there are no truly functional things to begin with, then how could the non-functional exist? Here 'non-functional' relates to actual truly existent things. How can truly existent things be existent, if truly existent phenomena didn't exist in the first place?

The main point in relation to the analogy is that if a pot has never existed previously, then a disintegrated pot could not exist. Likewise if there are no truly existent functional things, then non-functional or truly existent things could not be truly existent, since there have never been any truly existent functional things.

1.2.5. Refuting that things are not empty because analogies and reasons to establish emptiness exist

That is subdivided into two:

1.2.5.1. Showing the invalidity in the form of absurd consequences [of asserting that] there is true existence because there are reasons

This is basically saying that it is absurd to establish true existence on the basis of the reasons that establish emptiness.

1.2.5.2. Showing the invalidity in the form of absurd consequences [of asserting that] things are not empty because there are analogies

This relates to the absurdity of saying that there is true existence because there are analogies that show that things are empty.

1.2.5.1. SHOWING THE INVALIDITY IN THE FORM OF ABSURD CONSEQUENCES [OF ASSERTING THAT] THERE IS TRUE EXISTENCE BECAUSE THERE ARE REASONS

Assertion: In order to prove emptiness you must adduce reasons. Thus since the reasons exist, things are not empty, for like the reasons everything else is also truly existent.

Answer:

If things are not empty because 396
They are empty by virtue of reasons,
The thesis would not be distinct from the reasons,
And thus the reasons would not exist.

The opponents actually use the same syllogism formula to establish their assertions as our system does. A syllogism has a subject, a predicate and a reason, and these three modes establish the syllogism. Although the opponents accept the use of a syllogism to establish something, they differ from us in that the subject, and the predicate, as well as the reason, are all accepted as being truly existent. As all three modes are truly existent for them, then whatever reason they establish has to be established on the basis of things being truly existent. Thus, as they say in the assertion above, 'for like the reasons everything else is also truly existent'.

To rephrase the main point of the opponents' counter-argument in the above assertion, they are basically saying to the Madhyamika system, 'The very fact that you say that there is a reason to establish the lack of inherent existence is proof that there is true existence'. This is because for them the subject, the predicate and the reasons of any syllogism they use to establish something are established as being truly existent. 'So', they say, 'the very fact that you assert that there is a reason to establish emptiness shows the fact that things cannot be empty, and that things are actually truly existent'.

The verse refutes that argument, and its meaning is explained thus:

If things were not empty because emptiness of true existence is established through reasons, and the thesis and reasons were inherently distinct, they would be unrelated.

What our system is establishing is that if the reasons were truly existent then they would be unrelated to the subject and the predicate. In other words the thesis that is the combination of the subject, the predicate, and the reason, would be unrelated. So, as the commentary continues:

If the thesis were not inherently distinct from the reason but inherently one with it, they would have to be one and therefore what is to be proved could not be understood by depending on the reason.

If they were inherently distinct then they would be unrelated, which means that the reason could not serve as a sound reason to establish the thesis. If the thesis and the reasons were one then 'what is to be proved could not be understood by depending on the reason'. That is because they are one.

Then it follows that there are no correct reasons, since the fallacy of there being no reasons arises when one asserts truly existent things.

'Therefore according to your assertions there could not be any valid reasons. The syllogism cannot be used to prove anything. The fallacy is that no reasons can arise when one asserts truly existent things.'

Our system is actually throwing back their own argument, saying, 'If the three modes—the subject, the predicate and the reasons—were actually truly existent, there would be the fault of being either inherently one or inherently separate, and so therefore there could not actually be a sound reason to establish truly existent things. So according to your own assertions you cannot establish truly existent things'. The conclusion, as the commentary reads is:

Therefore all phenomena are established as lacking inherent existence.

1.2.5.2. SHOWING THE INVALIDITY IN THE FORM OF ABSURD CONSEQUENCES [OF ASSERTING THAT] THINGS ARE NOT EMPTY BECAUSE THERE ARE ANALOGIES

Assertion: Since there are analogies for emptiness of inherent existence, such as the reflection and so forth, everything else, like those analogies, exists and is not empty.

Answer:

397. If things are not empty because 397
There are analogies for emptiness,
Can one say, "Just like the crow,
So too the self is black"?

In refuting the assertion the commentary gives this explanation of the verse.

Is the analogy related or unrelated to the reason's meaning?

There are two questions here: is the analogy related or unrelated to the meaning of the reason?

The first has already been precluded by the reasoning which refutes truly existent reasons. In the second case, if the meaning is established through an analogy unrelated to the reason, is one able to say, "Just as the crow is black, so too is the self," because they are alike in being functional things?

What is being explained here is that an analogy is always given to back up any syllogism. So our system is asking the opponent, 'is the analogy related or unrelated to the reasons? If it is related, then the reasoning that refutes truly existent reasons has already precluded it'.

In the second case, one could not establish an analogy that is totally unrelated to the reason. If that were to be the case, then as mentioned here, can one say, 'Just as the crow is black so too is the self'? That is, could one use the analogy that because the crow is black, one is also black? In this analogy the crow and oneself have the commonality of being functional things, but just using that reason cannot establish that 'because the crow is black I am black too'. That does not serve as a sound analogy, because it is totally unrelated to the reason.

One should be able to do so. Yet an analogy, merely by virtue of its existence, is not suitable as an analogy for true existence.

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