
Study Group - *Madhyamakavatanama*

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Generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to accomplish that aim I'm now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I'm going to put it into practice as much as possible.'

3.5.1.1.2.2. Refuting Generation from Other (cont)

We have started with the refutation of generation from other. It is very important to consider the object of negation because the reason the different fallacies occur has to do with the faults of the object of negation.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1. Refutation from Other in General

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1. Actual Refutation from Other

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.1. General Refutation

Therefore it is important to first identify very clearly the object of negation. Here, without getting into any specifics, this outline refutes in general terms that an inherently existent cause gives rise to an inherently existent result.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.1.1. Refutation by Impossible Consequence

The refutation is done by explaining the impossible consequence that would arise if an inherently existent effect were to arise from an inherently existent cause. If an inherently existent effect were to arise from an inherently existent cause, then it would have to arise from a cause that exists from its own side and independently of parts and conditions. Such a cause would then give rise to its effect independently of parts and conditions from its own side. If a cause were to give rise to an effect in such a way then there would be no definiteness anymore with regard to which cause gives rise to what effect. If this were the case then any cause could give rise to any effect.

These contemplations are to increase our understanding of the correct view. We all know that cause and effect exists, that happiness is generated from virtue, and that suffering is generated from non-virtue. That we all know. What is being negated here is that inherently existent happiness is generated from inherently existent virtue, or that inherently existent suffering is generated from inherently existent non-virtue. If that were the case, and the effect was generated from an inherently existent other cause, then it would be generated independently. If something is generated totally independently then it can arise from everything. That's how we get this impossible consequence. We know that the seed gives rise to the sprout. That is not what is being negated, but what is being refuted is that a sprout is generated from an inherently existent seed.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.2. Rejecting Objections to That

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.2.1. Positing the Objection

In this outline the Realists (all the Buddhist tenets apart from the Prasangika Madhyamika) objections are posited. The root text reads,

It can be completely generated; therefore it is definitely called effect,

Whatever can generate that, even though other, is its cause.

*Of the same continuum and born from a generator
Therefore the rice seedling doesn't grow from
barley and so forth.*

The Realists reply to the impossible consequence posited by the Prasangika is that:

Mirror:

Because it can be completely generated by a cause, it is definitely called an effect, and whatever can generate that effect is, even though inherently other, the effect's cause.

What it is saying is that even though cause and effect are inherently different from each other, or in other words, even though the cause is inherently other from the effect, it is definitely called a cause because it gives rise to an effect. Put the other way round, because it can be completely generated it is therefore definitely called an effect, even though it arises from an inherently other cause. 'So', say the Realists, 'your impossible consequence doesn't apply because:

The rice seedling doesn't grow from barley and so forth because it is born from a generator of preceding similar type that is also of the same continuum.'

The Realists say that because it is completely generated it is therefore definitely called an effect. So because the sprout is completely generated it is therefore definitely called an effect. Because it can be completely generated the sprout is definitely called an effect, and the cause of the sprout is whatever can generate that effect, even though it is inherently other from the sprout. This refutes the impossible consequence of the Prasangika by saying that even though it is inherently other from the effect, it is its cause because it gives definitely rise to an effect.

When it says it can be completely generated, it talks about the potential of generation, and because the potential of generation lies within the seed, it is therefore called a cause. For example a rice seed has the potential to generate a rice sprout, so therefore it is called a cause.

The rice seedling doesn't grow from barley and so forth because it is born from a generator, from a cause of the preceding similar type that is also of the same continuum. This refutes the impossible consequence that everything would arise from everything if cause and effect were to exist inherently. Here the Realists say, 'No, even though cause and effect exist inherently not everything generates everything. For example the rice seedling doesn't grow from a barley seed. Why? Because the rice seedling grows from a cause that is of preceding similar type, and also of the same continuum. Therefore the rice seedling doesn't grow from barley, but it only grows from something that is of preceding similar type, and of the same continuum.'

In summary the Realists say that the rice seedling doesn't grow from barley and any other types of causes, because it is born from a cause that is of the preceding similar type, and which has the potential to generate it and which is also of the same continuum.

Four Characteristics of Unrelatedness

This verse from the root text shows four characteristics of unrelatedness.

1. The first two lines deal with the potential for generation. They say that in order to be a cause for a certain effect it has to have the potential to generate that effect. If it is a cause of an effect then it has to have the potential to generate that effect, and if it is an effect then it has to be that which has been generated by the cause.
2. 'Of the same continuum' show the substantial cause of the effect.
3. 'Born from a generator' shows that the cause has to be that which benefits the effect, and that the effect is that which is the beneficiary of the cause.
4. If the cause and effect are of a different substantial continuum then they cannot be cause and effect. They have to be of the same continuum.

That is the answer of the Realists to the consequence of the Prasangika.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.2.2. Rejecting the Refutation

Now comes the rejection by the Prasangika of the Realists' answer. In the next four lines the root text says:

*Just as barley stamens, 'keng-shu-ga', and so forth,
Aren't asserted to generate the rice seedling, lack the potential,
Aren't of the same continuum and just aren't similar,
Likewise the rice seed also isn't because of otherness.*

Just as barley, stamens, 'keng-shu-ga' and so forth aren't asserted to generate the rice seedling, lack the potential for generation, aren't of the same continuum and just aren't of similar preceding type because of being intrinsically other from it, it follows that likewise the subject rice seed also isn't the generator and so forth of the rice seedling because of being inherently other from it.

The **Realists** accept that the rice seedling is, as just stated, not generated from barley and so forth. Here it says that, 'Barley, stamens, *keng-shu-ga*, and so forth, are not asserted to generate the rice seedling, as you just said'. Why? Because first of all they lack the potential to generate the rice seedling, then they are not of the same continuum so they are not a substantial cause for the rice seedling, and also they are not the preceding similar type of the rice seedling. Because of those reasons they don't generate the rice seedling. Likewise the rice seed also is not asserted to generate the rice seedling. Why? Because it is inherently other from the rice seedling'.

Here what is being implicitly presented is this syllogism:

Take the subject 'rice seed', - it follows that it also lacks the potential to generate the rice seedling, it follows that it isn't also of the same continuum as the rice seedling, and it follows that it isn't of similar type with the rice seedling - because it is an inherently existing other from the rice seedling.

The point that the **Prasangika** are making is, 'Likewise the rice seed is not the cause of the rice seedling because it is an inherently existent other'. Where does the 'likewise' come from? It comes from what the Realists just said in the previous verse, where they said that, for example, 'The barley seed is not the cause for a rice seedling. Why? Because it doesn't benefit the rice seedling, it doesn't have the potential to generate the rice seedling, it is not of the same continuum with the rice seedling, and it is not the preceding similar type of the rice seedling. For of all those reasons the barley seed doesn't give rise to a rice seedling.' So basically what it is saying here is that the barley seed and the rice seedling are two unrelated phenomena, and because they are two unrelated phenomena then one doesn't give rise to the other.

The Prasangika then say, 'Well, likewise take the subject the rice seed, it follows that it also doesn't give rise to the rice seedling. Why? Because the rice seed and the rice seedling are two unrelated phenomena as well. Why? Because they are inherently existing other.'

Did you get that? The **Realists** say that barley seeds, stamens, the plant called *keng-shu-ga*, and so forth, aren't causes for the rice seedling, because they lack the potential to generate the rice seedling, they are not the same continuum with the rice seedling, and they are not the preceding similar type of the rice seedling. So therefore they don't give rise to a rice seedling.

From a **Prasangika** point of view if cause and effect were to be inherently existent others then the same faults would apply. If the rice seed is an inherently other from the rice seedling, then it could not also generate the rice seedling, it could not benefit the rice seedling, it would lack the potential to generate the rice seedling, it would not be of the same continuum with the rice seedling, and it also would not be of a similar preceding similar type. Why? Because it is an inherently existent other. Why is there a pervasion? If it is an inherently existent other from a rice seedling then it can't give rise to the rice seedling, because then the rice seedling and the rice seed have to be totally unrelated phenomena.

So one has to look at it from the Prasangika point of view, which is that if the rice seed is an inherently existent other from the rice seedling, then the rice seedling and the rice seed would be totally unrelated phenomena, and all those reasons that the Realists gave as why the barley seed doesn't give rise to a rice seedling would also apply to the rice seed. So did you get that point? If you get that point then you can also apply it to other situations.

The **Realists** say that the barley seed doesn't give rise to the rice seedling because it is not the cause of the rice seedling, it's not of the same continuum as the rice seedling, it's not the preceding similar type, it's not the substantial cause of the rice seedling, and therefore it doesn't give rise to the rice seedling.

¹ A medicinal plant

Then the **Prasangika** say, 'Well if the rice seed is inherently other from the rice seedling then the same faults would apply. Why? Because if the rice seed is inherently other from the rice seedling then they would be totally unrelated phenomena.' The significance of this is that if two things are totally unrelated phenomena then they cannot have a cause and effect relationship. That's what both schools agree on.

The Prasangika say that if the cause is inherently other from the effect then the cause and effect would be totally unrelated. That's the main point.

The last line of the above verse actually states this syllogism: Take the subject 'rice seed', - it follows that it also isn't the generator of the rice seedling, it lacks the potential to generate the rice seedling, it is not of the same continuum with the rice seedling, and it is not the preceding similar type of the rice seedling - because of being inherently other from the rice seedling.

How does it come about that if the effect is inherently other from the cause then cause and effect would be totally unrelated? If you understand that point then it will help you to understand dependent arising.

Student: It's independent.

How is it independent?

Student: By not being dependent on causes and conditions.

Why would the two become unrelated? We say that those four characteristics of unrelatedness apply to the barley seed and the rice seedling because they're unrelated others. Because they're unrelated others, then those four characteristics of unrelatedness apply. Then the Prasangika pick up on that, and they say those four features of unrelatedness also apply to the rice seed and the rice seedling, because they are also unrelated others.

One needs to carefully think about and contemplate this point. How does this benefit our mind and our understanding of emptiness?

Student: Because we normally take the Realist view and see things as inherently existent, saying that cause and effect occur inherently. When you analyse it that's what we do every day.

So you are saying that it's helpful! [laughter]

By refuting the inherently existent cause then one implicitly establishes the generation from nominal cause. It also benefits our understanding of cause and effect. Put the other way round, by using our understanding of cause and effect then we refute the generation from inherently existent cause.

All appearances to our mind are tainted by the appearance of inherent existence. If inherent existence appears to the mind and the mind grasps at that inherent existence then by reflecting upon, for example, the lack of inherent existence of the cause, this will implicitly also generate an appreciation of the potential of the cause to generate a result. Reflecting upon the lack of inherent existence will also lessen anger and attachment.

One can apply this meditation on emptiness in various situations. For example when one sees a beautiful person

in the far distance and thinks, 'Oh, there's a beautiful person' and attachment is generated. Then as one gets closer one realises that actually the beauty that was apprehended was a mere projection of one's own mind. Then the attachment becomes less. Understanding that what one apprehends is a projection of one's own mind, and that it doesn't come from the side of the object lessens the various afflictions.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.2. Particular Refutation

We have just completed the general refutation, which didn't differentiate between cause and effect.

The particular refutation has two outlines: refuting generation from other in relation to consecutive cause and effect, which looks at the situation of consecutive cause and effect and then refutes generation from other in relation to that; and refuting generation from other in relation to simultaneous cause and effect, which refutes generation of other in relation to simultaneous cause and effect.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.2.1. Refuting Generation from Other in Relation to Consecutive Cause and Effect

Here there is a similar structure of outlines to the general refutation: the actual refutation; and rejecting the objections to the refutation.

3.5.1.1.2.2.1.1.2.1.1. The Actual Refutation

The next four lines of the root text are:

Sprout and seed aren't simultaneous; without otherness

How could the seed be other? Hence since the sprout's

Generation from the seed isn't established,

Give up the position pronouncing generation from other.

The position pronouncing the sprout to be generated from other should be given up since the sprout's inherent generation from the seed isn't established.

That is so because how could the sprout be inherently other from the seed? It isn't, because the sprout and seed aren't simultaneous since at the time of seed the otherness, sprout, is non-existent.

The Prasangika say to the Realists, 'You should give up the position of asserting generation from other'. Why should the Realists give up that position? Because the sprout and the seed are not simultaneous. Why are the sprout and seed not simultaneous? Because the sprout is without otherness from the seed. The sprout doesn't possess inherently existent otherness from the seed because of not being simultaneous with the seed, and therefore the sprout's inherent generation from the seed is not established.

If the sprout were to be generated from an inherently existent other then the sprout would also be an inherently existent other from seed. Then it would follow that the sprout would have to exist at the time of the seed, since it would have to be inherently other at the time of the seed.

Here it is saying that the sprout is not generated from an inherently existent other seed, because sprout and seed aren't simultaneous.

Sprout and seed are not simultaneous and they're not

inherently other. So how does that work? How does saying that they're not simultaneous refute that they're inherently other from each other?

Student: The sprout doesn't exist at the time of the seed.

Here we are talking about an inherently existent other. So if the sprout is inherently other from the seed, then it has to be completely other from the seed, and totally unrelated to the seed. If the sprout is inherently other from the seed then it has to be inherently other from the seed at the time of the seed, and if that were the case then the sprout and seed would become simultaneous. So did you understand that?

If your mind goes in the right direction then you get some taste and some understanding. Then slowly, slowly the understanding becomes deeper and deeper. If the sprout is generated from an inherently other seed then the sprout would also become inherently other. If the sprout is inherently other from the seed then it has to exist at the time of the seed, and then the seed and sprout would become simultaneous.

Of course the Realists again have an objection to the Prasangikas' statement. Then the Prasangika in return refute the Realists' objections. This comes in the next two verses, but we will go into that next time.

I think next Tuesday is discussion group. Have harmonious friendly discussions. If it happens that way then it benefits human happiness. By engaging in conversation some sufferings are alleviated. Some people say that they feel too shy and don't say anything, and that brings a certain suffering with it. Laughter clears away many sufferings, as does drinking tea. I'm serious! There are many methods to clear away unhappiness.

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