

This summarizes the argument against suffering's being either self-made or other-made. As Candrakīrti points out, it is contradictory to suppose that something could produce itself. But without something that is self-caused, how will we ever find that which produces something else?

9. Suffering might be made by both [self and other] if it were made by one or the other.

And how can there be a suffering not caused by self or other, that is causeless?

The third hypothesis, that suffering is made both by the sufferer themselves and by someone else, inherits the defects of the first and second hypotheses. It also has the difficulty that the terms 'self' and 'other' are mutually incompatible. The fourth hypothesis would have us believe that suffering arises for no reason whatever.. As *Akutobhayā* comments laconically, this would be 'a big mistake'.

10. Not only can suffering not be found under any of the four possibilities.

External objects also cannot be found under any of the four possibilities.

According to Buddhapālita the argument against external objects would go as follows: Matter is either caused by itself, or by something distinct, or by both, or else it is uncaused. But matter cannot be self-caused, since nothing is. Etc., etc.

XIII. AN ANALYSIS OF THE COMPOSITE

The subject of this chapter is what is *samskrta*. Literally this word means 'made through a coming together', i.e., composite or compounded, but there is an ambiguity here. This could mean something that is composite in the sense of being made of parts, like a chariot. Or it could mean something that is produced through the coming together of a set of causes and conditions. Buddhists all agree that anything that is composite in the first sense is not ultimately real, that it lacks intrinsic nature. But Ābhidharmikas hold that while *dharma*s are composite in the second sense, they are not composite in the first sense. And so, they claim, there is no difficulty holding that *dharma*s are ultimately real. Mādhyamikas disagree. They claim that anything that is composite in the second sense is just as empty as something composite in the first sense. And since everything thought of as real is the product of causes and conditions, this means that everything is without intrinsic nature. This dispute is examined here through the lens of competing interpretations of a remark of the Buddha's.

1. The Blessed One said that whatever is deceptive in nature is vain.

And since all composite things are deceptive in nature, they are vain.

The full quotation from the sūtra is: 'Indeed the ultimate truth, O monks, is that nirvāṇa is not deceptive in nature. Whatever things are composite, those are deceptive in nature and vain.' The Buddha's point seems to have been that since anything composite is impermanent, to hanker after it would be vain. Composite things are deceptive in that they falsely appear as if they might endure. Only nirvāṇa, the one non-composite thing, is truly worth striving after.

2. If [the Buddha's statement,] 'Whatever is deceptive in nature is vain' is true, then what
 • • is there about which one is deceived?

This was said by the Blessed One for the illumination of emptiness.

According to the commentary *Akutobhayā*, the question in 2ab is triggered by the fact that to say all composite things are deceptive in nature and vain is to say that they are not ultimately real. But in that case there is nothing that is genuinely deceptive, nothing about which we are genuinely mistaken. So the Buddha must have been getting at some deeper point in saying this. And according to the *Mādhyamika* this deeper point is that all composite things are empty or devoid of intrinsic nature.

• • *Akutobhayā* has the opponent then object that in this sūtra the Buddha is not teaching the emptiness of all *dharmas*, but rather just the emptiness of the person: the person is not ultimately real, something with intrinsic nature, because it is 'composite' in the first sense of being a whole made of parts. It is then vain because, being composite in this sense, it must be impermanent. This is an instance of a characteristic dispute between Abhidharma and Mahāyāna: both agree that things are empty, but they disagree as to what it is that things are empty of. The former teaches that all things are empty of the nature of the person (*pudgalanairātmya*), the latter teaches that all things are empty of intrinsic nature (*dharmanairātmya*). And as Candrakīrti points out, the opponent rejects the latter interpretation on the grounds that it leads to nihilism, the clearly false view that nothing whatever exists. The opponent gives an argument for their own interpretation of the sūtra in v.3-4ab.

3. For beings there is lack of intrinsic nature, as we see from alteration.

There is no [ultimately real] being that is without intrinsic nature, due to the emptiness
 • • of beings.

Akutobhayā explains that in 3ab and 3d the 'beings' are the person and other things that are composite in the first sense, while the 'beings' in 3c are *dharmas*, things that are only composite in the second sense. In 3ab the opponent is explaining why persons and other composite things must be said to be empty, while in 3c the opponent claims *dharmas* could

from one state to another.

6. If alteration pertained to it, then milk itself would be curds.

[If it pertained to something other than milk,] then the nature of curds would belong to
• • something other than milk.

Suppose that milk and curds were ultimately real. Milk is liquid, while curds are solid. So if it were milk that underwent the alteration into curds, the solidity of curds would already be in milk. Since this is false, we can reject the hypothesis that it is milk that undergoes the alteration. But the alternative is to suppose that it is something other than milk that undergoes alteration. This is contrary to our experience: we can't produce curds from water, for instance.

• • •The opponent now repeats the objection they first lodged in v.3, to the effect that denying intrinsic nature is tantamount to nihilism. But the objection is put in a new way. It is now put as the claim that it would be incoherent to claim that all things are empty. As Candrakīrti puts it, 'And there is said to be no existent that is without intrinsic nature, but you claim there is the emptiness of existents. Therefore there is intrinsic nature of existents that is the locus of emptiness.' (V p.245)

7. If the non-empty existed, then something that could be called the empty might somehow
• • come to be.

Nothing whatever exists that is non-empty; then how will there be the empty?

While both sides agree that some things, such as chariots and persons, are empty of intrinsic nature, the opponent holds that for there to be emptiness there must be ultimately real things to serve as the ground or locus of emptiness. Here Nāgārjuna agrees with the opponent that emptiness could not ultimately exist without ultimately real things for it to characterize. But he does not withdraw his claim that all things are empty—that nothing whatever has intrinsic nature. How is this possible? As he hints in v.8, and says explicitly in xviii.11 and xxiv.18, the Mādhyamika does not claim that the emptiness of things is ultimately real.

8. Emptiness is taught by the Conquerors as the expedient to get rid of all [metaphysical]
• • views.

But those for whom emptiness is a [metaphysical] view have been called incurable.

The 'views' in question concern the ultimate nature of reality, or metaphysical theories. The word translated here as 'expedient' literally means something that expels or purges. So emptiness is here being called a sort of purgative or physic. Candrakīrti quotes the following

Candrakīrti explains that 'that on which he depends' is the five *skandhas*, that which the Tathāgata is said to be dependent on. These do not exist by virtue of intrinsic nature because, being dependently originated, they lack intrinsic nature. From this it is said to follow that the *skandhas* likewise do not exist extrinsically. The argument is the same as that given in v.2-3.

10. Thus both that on which he depends and the one who is dependent are altogether empty.
And how is an empty Tathāgata to be conceptualized by means of something empty?

Both the Tathāgata and that on which he supposedly depends for his being conceptualized (the *skandhas*) are empty or devoid of the nature required to be real. Thus the claim that the Tathāgata is named and conceptualized in dependence on the *skandhas* turns out to be utterly without meaning.

11. 'It is empty' is not to be said, nor 'It is non-empty',
Nor that it is both, nor that it is neither; ('empty') is said only for the sake of instruction.

When a Mādhyamika says that things are empty, this is not to be understood as stating the ultimate truth about the ultimate nature of reality. Instead this is just a useful pedagogical device, a way of instructing others who happen to believe there is such a thing as the ultimate truth about the ultimate nature of reality. So the claim made here is in effect the same as the claim Nāgārjuna will make at XXIV.18, that emptiness is itself empty.

Here as elsewhere, Nāgārjuna employs the device known as the tetralemma (*catuṣkoti*) to express his point. He considers all four possible views concerning emptiness, only to reject them all. But as Bhāvaviveka reminds us, and as Candrakīrti pointed out in his comments on XVIII.6, when the Buddha rejects all four possibilities with respect to such questions as whether the world is eternal (e.g., at *Majjhima Nikāya* I.484-5, 431), this is because while each may prove useful for certain purposes under certain circumstances, all share a presupposition that is false (see *Majjhima Nikāya* I.486-7). Candrakīrti suggests that what we have here is another instance of a 'graded teaching', with each of the four possibilities representing a view held by certain philosophers. (See XVII.8.) Interestingly, he identifies the view that there are both empty and non-empty things with Sautrāntika (since they hold that only present things are ultimately real), and the view that things are neither empty nor non-empty with Yogācāra (since they hold that reality is inexpressible—cf. *Madhyanta Vibhāga Kārikā* I.3, which Candrakīrti quotes).
na śūnyam nāpi cāśūnyam tasmāt sarvam vidhīyate /

Bhāvaviveka considers the following objection: when Mādhyamikas assert that we should not make any of these four possible claims about the ultimate nature of reality, they are guilty of an inconsistency. For they appear to be saying that the ultimate nature of reality cannot be described in any of the four possible ways, and yet this would seem to be a claim about the ultimate nature of reality. Bhāvaviveka responds that there is no more fault here than there is in the case of someone who, wishing to prevent sound, utters