

Siderits, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* - Kārikā 1-X
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I. AN ANALYSIS OF CONDITIONS

1. Not from itself, not from another, not from both, nor without cause,
Never in any way is there any existing thing that has arisen.

This is the overall conclusion for which Nāgārjuna will argue in this chapter: that existents do not come into existence as the result of causes and conditions. There are four possible ways in which this might be thought to happen, and he rejects all of them. The argument against the first is given in v.3, while the argument against the second takes up the rest of the chapter. There is no separate argument against the third or fourth possibilities. But since the third (that an existing thing arises from both itself and something else) combines the first and second, it must be rejected if each of those is. As for the fourth, the commentators explain that existents do not arise without cause, since then it would follow that anything could be produced from anything at any time.

2. There are four conditions: the primary cause, the objective support,
and the proximate condition,
And of course the dominant condition; there is no fifth condition.

This classification of four kinds of condition represents the view of the *Ābhidharmika* opponent. (See *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* II.64a.) (1) The primary cause is that from which the effect is thought to have been produced, e.g., the seed in the case of a sprout. (2) Only a cognition has an objective support, namely its intentional object, that of which it is conscious. A visual cognition has a color-and-shape as its objective support, an auditory cognition has a sound, etc. (3) The proximate condition is that entity or event that immediately precedes the effect and that cedes its place to the effect. (4) The dominant condition is that without which the effect would not arise. After criticizing the basic notion of causation, Nāgārjuna will take up each of these four types in turn: primary cause in v.7, objective support in v.8, proximate condition in v.9, and dominant condition in v.10.

3. The intrinsic nature [*svabhāva*] of existents is not found in the
conditions etc.
The intrinsic nature not occurring, neither is the extrinsic nature
[*parabhāva*] found.

3ab gives the basic argument against production from itself, the first of the four possibilities mentioned in v.1. If the effect is produced from itself (the view known as *satkāryavāda*), then its intrinsic nature is already present in its cause (perhaps in unmanifest form). As Candrakīrti explains the argument, ‘It would not be possible [for the effect to exist] before that arising in this way. If it were, then it would be grasped, and arising would be pointless. Thus the intrinsic nature of existents is not in the conditions, etc.’ (V p.78) We want to know the cause of fire because we want something with its intrinsic nature, heat. If that nature were already present among its causes, then it would be pointless to produce fire.

3cd begins the argument against production from another (the view known as *asatkāryavāda*, which is the Abhidharma view). To say that the effect is produced from another is to say that it derives its nature from something else. We just saw that the natures of cause and effect must be distinct. So on this view cause and effect are distinct things with distinct natures, such as milk (liquid) and curds (solid). But now the question is why it should be milk and not clay or a seed that gives rise to curds. For clay and seeds are equally distinct from curds, with equally distinct natures.

Candrakīrti sets the stage for v.4 by having the opponent answer 3cd as follows: ‘Then, they having been refuted who claim that origination is by means of conditions, it is said that origination is by means of an action (*kriyā*). The conditions such as vision and color-and-shape do not directly cause consciousness [as effect]. But conditions are so-called because they result in a consciousness-producing action. And this action produces consciousness. Thus consciousness is produced by a condition-possessing, consciousness-producing action, not by conditions, as rice [is produced] by the action of cooking.’ (V p.79)

4. An action does not possess conditions, nor is it devoid of conditions. Conditions are not devoid of an action, neither are they provided with an action.

This ‘action’ is supposed to be the causal power that makes the causes and conditions produce the right kind of effect. It is supposed to explain why only when a seed is planted in warm moist soil does a sprout appear (and why a sprout doesn’t arise from a stone). But why does just this kind of

action result from the seed in warm moist soil? What explains the production of the right kind of action from the causes? By the logic of the opponent's response to 3cd, the only possible answer is that there is another action that comes between the causes and conditions and this action. And this leads to an infinite regress.

5. They are said to be conditions when something arises dependent on them.
When something has not originated, why then are they not non-conditions?
6. Something cannot be called a condition whether the object [which is supposedly the effect] is [already] existent or not [yet] existent.
If non-existent, what is it the condition of? And if existent, what is the point of the condition?

Here is a new problem for those who maintain that the effect arises from distinct causes and conditions. Why are these said to be the causal conditions of the effect? Presumably this is because they produce the effect. But now it is asked just when this production takes place: after the effect has already come into existence, before it has come into existence, or at some third time? Obviously not the first, since production then would be superfluous. Nor the second, since if the effect were produced before it came into existence then it would exist before it came into existence, which is absurd. And there is no third time between the time before the effect exists and the time when it does exist; if the effect is ultimately real (if it is a *dharma*), then either it does exist or it does not. This pattern of argumentation, which we might call the 'argument of the three times', will figure prominently in Chapter II.

7. Since a *dharma* does not operate when existent, non-existent, both existent and non-existent,
How in that case can there be an operative cause?

The argument here is the same as in v.6-7. A *dharma* is an ultimately real entity, something with intrinsic nature. Candrakīrti explains that by 'operative cause' is meant primary cause, the first of the four kinds of conditions identified in v.2.

Is recognized; if the product does not exist, how can there be a condition or non-condition?

Summarizing the results of v.11-13, the effect cannot be said to be something already existing in the causes and conditions, nor something utterly distinct from the causes and conditions. Since there is no remaining way to explain how something could be an effect, it follows that nothing could be said to be a condition either.

II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE GONE OVER, THE NOT YET GONE OVER, AND THE PRESENTLY BEING GONE OVER

1. In the first place the [path] gone over is not [now] being gone over; neither is the [path] not yet gone over being gone over. The [path] presently being gone over that is distinct from the [portions of path] gone over and not yet gone over is not being gone over.

If motion is possible, then it should be possible to say where the activity of going is taking place. It is not taking place in that portion of the path that is already traversed, since the activity of going has already occurred there. Nor is it taking place in the portion not yet traversed, since such activity still lies in the future. And there is no third place, the presently being gone over, where it could take place. As *Akutobhayā* explains, there is no present going apart from the gone over and the not yet gone over, just like the flame of a lamp. At *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* IX (Pradhan p.404), the example of the moving lamp is explained as follows. When we say that a lamp moves, it is actually a continuous series of flames we are referring to, each flame lasting just an instant and so none moving. But because each flame arises in a different place from where its predecessor was, it appears as if one enduring thing is moving. Since only the momentary flames are real, strictly speaking there is no motion. It is only when we run together past, present and future flames that there is the illusion of motion. It is important to keep this example in mind throughout the rest of the chapter. Many of the arguments depend on the assumption that nothing lasts longer than an instant.

This is an instance of the argument of the three times, in this case to the effect that going cannot take place in past, future or present. Similar

reasoning was also used in I.5-6. The argument here is the same as that of Zeno's paradox of the arrow. Like that paradox, it relies on the assumption that space and time are both infinitely divisible.

2. [The opponent:] Where there is movement there is the act of going.
And since movement occurs in the [path] presently being gone over,
Not in the gone over nor the not yet gone over, the act of going occurs in the presently being gone over [path].
3. [Response:] How could it be right to say that the act of going is in the [path] being gone over,
When it is not at all right to say there is presently being gone over without the act of going?

For something to be the locus of present going there has to be an act of going. And something x can't be the locus of something else y unless x and y are distinct things. In the ensuing v.4-6 Nāgārjuna will use this point to show that it cannot be correct to locate going in the present.

4. If you say the act of going is in the [path] presently being gone over, it follows
That the [path] being gone over is without the act of going, since [for you] the [path] presently being gone over is being gone over.

Since the locus of present going and the going are distinct (v.3), the locus itself must be devoid of any activity of going.

5. If the act of going is in the [path] presently being gone over, then two acts of going will follow:
That by which the [path] presently being gone over [is said to be such], and moreover that which [supposedly exists] in the act of going.

For the locus to serve as locus of the act, it must itself be something whose nature is to be presently being gone over. But this requires an act of going, since something can't be being gone over without there being an act of going. So we now have two acts of going: the one for which we are

seeking a locus, and the one that makes this the right locus for the first.

6. If two acts of going are supplied, then it will follow that there are two goers,
For there cannot be an act of going without a goer.

Since this is an absurd consequence, the opponent's hypothesis of v.2 that led to it must be rejected. Note that there is no reason to stop at two goers; the logic of the argument leads to an infinite regress of goers. (See v.3 for another example of this.)

7. If it is true that there is no act of going without a goer,
How will there be a goer when the act of going does not exist?

The hypothesis that there is an act of going having been refuted, it follows that there can be no goer. Notice, though, that for this to follow what is required is that there be no goer without an act of going, and not (as is said here) that there can be no act of going without a goer.

8. Just as a goer does not go, neither does a non-goer go,
And what third person is there, apart from the goer and the non-goer, who goes?

The reasoning here is parallel to that in v.1.

9. How will it be right to say that a goer goes
When it is not at all correct to say that there is a goer in the absence of the act of going?
10. If you hold the thesis that a goer goes, it follows that
The goer is without the act of going, [for] you wish to ascribe the act of going to the goer.

Candrakīrti sees the reasoning here as parallel to that of v.5. He comments, 'As for the thesis that someone is a goer precisely because they are provided with an act of going, since such a theorist wishes to say that the goer goes, it would have to be said that the goer goes without the going, because they designated the goer by means of going. For there is no second act of going. Hence it would not be correct to say that the goer

goes.' (V p.99)

11. If a goer does indeed go, then it will follow that there are two acts of going:
That by which the goer is said to be a goer, and that by which the goer really goes.
12. A goer does not begin [the act of going] in [the path] gone over, neither does a goer begin [the act of going] in [the path] not yet gone over;
A goer does not begin [the act of going] in [the path] presently being gone over. Then where does the goer begin [to go]?

A new problem is raised for those who think there is such a thing as a goer: when does that going whereby someone comes to be a goer commence? The reasoning is spelled out in the next two verses.

13. Before the act of going begins, there is no [path] presently being gone over, nor one [already] gone over
Where the act of going could begin. [And] how could the act of going [begin] in the [path] not yet gone over?
14. How can [the path] already gone over, presently being gone over, or not yet gone over be imagined
When the beginning of the act of going is not in any way to be found?

At this point we can imagine an opponent objecting that since there is such a thing as standing still, there must be such a thing as going. For, they would claim, standing still happens when going stops, so there must first be going for there to be standing still. Nāgārjuna replies in v.15-17.

15. It is not, first, a goer who stops, nor indeed is it a non-goer who stops,
And who could be the third person distinct from goer and non-goer who stops?
16. How could it ever be right to say that a goer stops,
When no goer obtains without an act of going?

It could not be the goer who stops, since the goer is defined as the agent of the act of going, and that act is incompatible with stopping, which is its cessation. But neither can it be the non-goer who stops. Since the non-goer is not characterized by the act of going, the non-goer cannot be characterized by its cessation. And there is no third possibility, since something could not be both a goer and a non-goer.

17. [The goer] is not [said to] stop when [on the path] presently being gone over, the already gone over, or the not yet gone over. The same [analysis] that applies to the case of the act of going also [applies] to the commencing and ceasing of the act of going.

Nāgārjuna points out that the same reasoning that refuted the act of going (v.3-6) also refutes the beginning (v.12-14) and the ending (v.15-17) of going.

18. It is not right to say that the goer is identical with the act of going, Nor, again, can goer and act of going be said to be distinct.

A new question for the opponent is now brought up: is the goer identical with the act of going, or are these two distinct things? Nāgārjuna will give arguments against each possibility in the next two verses.

19. If act of going and goer were to be identical
Then it would also follow that agent and action were one.

The commentators use the example of a cutter and the action of cutting: it is considered obvious to all that an agent such as a cutter cannot be identical with the action of cutting that they perform. By the same token, then, the goer and the act of going cannot be identical.

20. If, on the other hand, the goer were thought to be distinct from the act of going,
Then there would be the act of going without a goer, and a goer without an act of going.

If they are not identical, must they not then be distinct? Not according to Nāgārjuna. For to say that they are distinct is to say that each has its nature

independently of the other. And then the act of going would exist without its being the act of any goer, and the goer would be a goer without an act of going. The underlying logic of this argument is spelled out more carefully in V.1-4.

21. If two things are not found to be established as either identical or distinct, then how will they be established at all?

To say something is not established is to say there is no reason to believe it exists. The claim here is that if goer and going were real then they would have to be either identical or distinct. Since they can be neither, there is no reason to think they are real.

22. A goer does not obtain that going through which it is called a goer, Since the goer does not exist before the going; [indeed] someone goes somewhere.

The argument here is similar to that of v.10. It spells out in more detail the reasoning behind the denial in v.20 that goer and going are distinct. The idea is that in order to obtain going as an attribute, and thereby become a goer, the goer must exist distinct from the going. But something that existed distinct from going would not be a goer; to be a goer is to go somewhere, which requires the act of going.

23. A goer does not obtain going by means of something other than that going through which it is called a goer; There cannot be two goings when [just] one goes.

The second going is the one that would be needed to make the goer be a goer before it obtains the act of going. Once again there is an infinite regress threatening.

24. One who is [already] a real goer does not perform a going of [any of] the three kinds [i.e., past, future, or present]; Neither does one who is not [yet] a real goer perform a going of [any of] the three kinds.
25. One who is a both-real-and-unreal goer does not perform a going of [any of] the three kinds.

Thus there is no going, no goer, and no destination.

The reasoning here is another instance of the argument from the three times. The question concerns the relation between goer and going, each of which might be thought of as occurring in past, future, or present. The same considerations that were brought up in v.1, v.8, v.12, and v.17 will apply here as well. The upshot is that a goer cannot be said to go.

III. AN ANALYSIS OF THE *ĀYATANAS*

1. Vision, hearing, taste, smell, touch and the inner sense (*manas*)
Are the six faculties; the visible etc. are their fields.

This is the doctrine of the twelve *āyatanas*, which divides reality up into six sense faculties and their respective fields. Abhidharma takes these to be ultimately real. Nāgārjuna will examine the sense faculty of vision and try to show that it cannot be ultimately real. In v.11 he will claim that the same argument can be used to refute the rest of the *āyatanas*.

2. Not at all does vision see itself.
If vision does not see itself, how will it see what is other?

It is generally acknowledged that an entity cannot operate on itself: a knife cannot cut itself, a finger cannot point at itself, etc. Hence vision does not see itself. The argument here is that because this is true, it follows that vision does not see things other than itself either (i.e., vision does not see anything at all). This argument seems puzzling. Why should it follow from the fact that vision does not see itself that it sees nothing else? There are two possible ways of interpreting the argument. The first represents how Bhāvaviveka and Candrakīrti understand it. The second is not attested to by any commentator, but seems plausible nonetheless.

(1) The scent of jasmine first pervades the flower, and then pervades what comes in contact with the flower. The general principle to be inferred from this is that a property of something can come to pervade something else only if that property first pervades the thing itself. For an object to be seen is for it to be pervaded by the property of being seen. By the general principle just mentioned, this can be so only if vision itself is first pervaded by the property of being seen. But since vision does not see itself, this is not so. It