

## 11 *Does a Plant Grow?*

*Refutation of production from other.* "Other" in "production from other" is not merely other; it is other that is established by way of its own character.

This "other" is not a conventionally existent other. It is an other that exists by way of its own character, that exists inherently, an outflow of which is that it would be an analytically findable other.

There are many unwanted consequences stemming from an assertion that effects are produced from causes that are inherently existent others; for instance, a correlation of certain effects with certain causes would be impossible, since all things, including those usually considered not to be causes of a certain thing, would equally be inherently existent others.

You may feel here that a quality of inherent existence is being imposed on this other that is not in your usual conception of causation. The Consequentialists agree; they say that we do not innately conceive cause and effect to be inherently existent others. We innately conceive them to inherently exist, to exist by way of their own character, but we do not innately enter into any thought of whether they are same or other, at least when considering substantial

causes and their effects.

When we think about an oak tree's having grown from an acorn, it might seem that we are considering the tree and the acorn to be other. However, Chandrakīrti appears to dispute this, pointing out that we say, "I planted this tree," when we only planted its seed, "I engendered this child," when a male merely planted his seed in the womb.<sup>235</sup>

Worldly beings, from planting only seeds,  
Say, "I engendered this child," And think, "I planted [this]  
tree.'

Therefore, production from other does not exist even in the  
world.

In this statement, Chandrakīrti is, most likely, referring to those times when we consider the *production* of this from that, since within this context, an otherness would suggest that cause and effect are unrelated.

However, once cause and effect exist, they must be either the same or other, and sometimes we do indeed emphasize the difference of things that are cause and effect — for instance, when we perceive an apple and imagine the apple seed that produces it. If you asked for an apple at a fruit stand and the seller gave you an apple seed, you would certainly know that an apple seed differs from, is other than, an apple. Dzong-ka-ba says that we do not innately conceive cause and effect to be *inherently existent* others and that indeed an otherness of entity of cause and effect is not established in a worldly perspective.<sup>236</sup> Still, I wonder if we actually do conceive them to be inherently existent others in this type of context.

In any case, the Consequentialists' claim is not that we innately perceive cause and effect to be inherently existent others and thus unrelatedly other. Rather, they claim that *if* cause and effect existed the way they appear to (that is, as inherently existent), they would be unrelatedly other.

Moreover, those who propound production from other assert that in the same way that a rice seed is

established by way of its own character as other than the sprout of rice that is its own effect, so such things as fire and charcoal also are established by way of their own character as other than the sprout of rice.

If we limit ourselves at this point to considering merely the part of their assertion regarding "other", then, in just the same way that the causes of a book — the trees from which the paper was made, the ink, the printer, and so on — are established by way of their own character as other than the book, so the book and the chair you are sitting on are established by way of their own character as other. With respect to their status of otherness, they are exactly the same.

A clue to this analysis is to zero in on something without considering the other thing to which you usually relate it. For example, here you have an apple seed and an apple. They are other. You could not eat the seed and get the taste of an apple; it is clearly other than an apple. It even seems, from its own side, to be other. Once you have considered the seed, zero in on the apple; it also seems, from its own side, to be just other; that seems to be its nature.

If those two modes of being other are asserted to be similar, then thick darkness which [is supposed to be] cleared away [by light] would [absurdly] arise even from a blazing flame that [is supposed to] clear away [darkness], and anything would come from anything else, whether they are cause and effect or not. For, they would all equally have otherness that is established by way of its own character.

Anything could arise from anything else, whether or not they are usually considered to be cause and effect. For, you have lost all criteria for specifying what is a cause and what is its effect. If you can have cause and effect between two naturally established others, then, since everything is equal-

ly other, you can have cause and effect between *any* two others.

In the end, it is a question of what a relation is. Two things are cause and effect; they have to be either the same or different. In which category are you going to put the relation of cause and effect? The Sāṃkhya wants to put the relation in the category of sameness; the Buddhist wants to put the relation into that of otherness. Even for Consequentialists, at least as interpreted by Dzong-ka-ba and his followers, cause and effect are other entities, but they are not inherently existent others, for a relation of causation cannot be sustained within what are inherently existent others.

This is the reasoning taught in the twentieth chapter of Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way*.<sup>237</sup>

If cause and effect had otherness,  
Cause and non-cause would become equal.

This reasoning is also taught in Buddhapālita's commentary on this point and by the glorious Chandrakīrti who says:<sup>238</sup>

If, depending on others, another were to  
arise,  
Then thick darkness would arise even from  
a tongue of flame  
And all would be produced from all  
Because even all non-producers would  
equally have otherness. ...

*Objection:* Things are not posited as cause and effect merely because they are others that are established by way of their own character. Things are posited as cause and effect only because they are a special kind of others — [the cause] having the ability to bring about the effect and so forth. Thus, the determination of causes and non-causes [with respect to a particular effect] is feasible.

Jang-gya said previously that the “others” in the refutation of production from other are not merely “others” but others that are established by way of their own character as others. Here, an objector says that things are not posited as causes and effects *merely* because they are such others; the objector is seeking to eliminate *unrelated* others. For, we do indeed call things “causes” and “effects” not just because they are different from each other, but because they have a certain relationship. In other words, being inherently existent others is acceptable as one criterion for cause and effect, but there is an additional criterion of being related — in the sense that the cause has the ability to produce the effect. That which is other and assists in producing an effect is its cause; that which is other and does not help to produce this particular effect is not its cause. The cause has to help produce the effect; it has to precede the effect, and it has to be other than the effect.

*Answer:* That also is incorrect, for once things are established by way of their own character as other, being other must be their mode of subsistence. Once that is the case, they must be other factualities that are utterly devoid of any relation with each other. Thus, it would be utterly impossible for a rice seed and a barley seed to differ with regard to having or not having the ability to produce a rice sprout and so forth.

Since naturally existent others are unrelated others, we cannot posit a relationship that ties together a seed and the sprout that is its effect. Therefore, we cannot say that a rice seed has a special ability to produce a rice sprout and that a barley seed is without this special ability. Since they are both equally other than the rice sprout and since this otherness is in their nature, the one cannot somehow be less other than the other. We can at least say that this reasoning will attack the way we sometimes feel when we see a totally distinct other, even if this feeling is artificial and not innate.

Furthermore, if production from other existed by way of its own entity, the effect would have to exist before it was produced. For once production is asserted, the two — the ceasing of the cause and the nearing to production of the effect — must be simultaneous, and in that case the two actions of production and cessation also would have to be simultaneous, whereby cause and effect would also have to be simultaneous.

The sprout that will be a foot high is growing even when you are putting water on the seed. When I grow corn, the cornstalk is growing. No matter how small we make the thing that is in the process of growing, we still have a problem, for the thing that is growing has not quite grown there yet.

When a sprout is growing, an action of growing is present, and this action needs an agent, a grower. The grower is the sprout, the plant; the action of growing depends on it. This may seem very technical; yet, we talk about “growing” as if it existed right there in and of itself, and we should examine whether this thing to which we give the name “growing” is as substantially existent as it seems to be or is only posited by the mind.

The reason for [the consequent simultaneity of cause and effect] is that an action of nearing production has to depend on something, such as a sprout, that is the agent in the expression, “This effect is growing.” Therefore, they are supporter and supported.

The supporter is the effect, the sprout, the grower. That which is supported is its activity, growing. The agent, the sprout, is the base of the activity.

If such a supporter and supported were established by way of their own character, then whenever the activity of growing existed, the sprout would have

to exist. For, its nature could not possibly change. Therefore, Chandrakīrti's *Supplement to (Nāgārjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle Way"* says,<sup>239</sup> "Without an agent, this growing is also not a feasible entity."

If the supporter, the sprout, and the supported, its growing, exist from their own side, they must exist at the same time. The sprout that is the agent performing the activity of growing must exist at the same time as its growing. For, it is senseless to have an activity without an agent. Once the sprout is inherently established as the agent that is the support of the activity of growth, it is unchangeable. Once something is inherently established, its nature is locked into one thing.

It is important to qualify this refutation as referring to others that are established by way of their own character because in the Consequentialist system conventional production is asserted — dependently arisen production that is analytically unfindable.

In terms of nominally existent production, if things become supporter and supported at some time, it is not necessary that they be so at all times. Therefore, [mere, conventional production] does not have these fallacies. The Foremost Omniscient [Dzongka-ba] maintains that this is a subtle<sup>240</sup> and very meaningful reasoning in this system that refutes production from other.

In conventionally existent growing, you do not make this sort of investigation into growing. Something grows without a grower present; we say that a cornstalk is growing, but it is not there yet. The analysis of whether the grower is there now or not — the same thought that many children have and that bothers us now and then — is ultimate analysis. Moreover, the validity of conventionally existent production does not affirm how we now feel about growing and so forth. The growing that we know now is so utterly

mixed with inherent existence and a sense of findability that it is impossible to identify conventionally existent production in our own experience. If you passed by a field and noticed only that the corn was growing without putting strong attention into it, your sense of growing might accord with the fact in the sense that you are not actively superimposing inherent establishment on it. However, such knowledge of growing, even if not wrong about the status of growing, does not provide an understanding of its actual nature. In other words, in order to understand something as only conventionally existent, we must first cognize its emptiness.

Not only is production from other not asserted even conventionally by this system, but also it is asserted that no innate consciousness conceives causes and effects as others that are different by way of their own character.

Consequentialists do not assert production from other, even conventionally. They do assert conventional production; cause and effect are still other, but they are not analytically findable others.

Innate consciousnesses include both inborn forms of ignorance and also some valid cognitions; the one being discussed here is ignorance. It apprehends cause, effect, and production as established by way of their own character. However, it does not apprehend effects to be *others that are established by way of their own character*. We conceive cause and effect to be inherently existent or findable, but we do not innately, naturally enter into investigation of whether they are one or other.

Chandrakīrti's *Supplement* says,<sup>241</sup> "There is no production from other even in the world."

The world does not enter into thoughts about whether something is produced from itself or from another. As Nāgārjuna says,<sup>242</sup> "When this is, that arises." When you



have a seed, sun, water, and other favorable conditions, a sprout arises. In terms of the nominality, "When this is, that arises," the world is right. However, the world has a very strong feeling in addition that these things inherently exist, even though the ordinary world does not construct false philosophies to reaffirm this innate misapprehension.

Are people who study philosophies such as Sāṃkhya and so forth worse off than others? From the viewpoint of the Consequence School, they are indeed fortifying their innate problems with intellectually acquired encrustation, but, as the tantric abbot Kensur Lekden said, to understand the Middle Way School you need a good mind, and studying a system like Sāṃkhya trains the mind and serves as a good preparation for the study of the Middle Way School. For example, according to certain current popular philosophies, you must have your own individual substantial being. When you create a sense of this, you fortify the problem; however, by setting yourself into this problem even more strongly, an awareness is fostered that makes recognition of the middle way more possible.

*Refutation of production from both self and other.* That part which is production from self is refuted by the reasoning refuting production from self; that part which is production from other is refuted by the reasoning refuting production from other. Chandrakīrti's *Supplement* says:<sup>243</sup>

Production from both is also not an  
admissible entity  
Because the fallacies already explained are  
incurred.

Some think that they can take the good parts of production from self and production from other and rescue findable production in that way. They want to have their feet in both camps in order to get the good fruit that is in each. However, they also get the bad parts of each: they get eaten by lice in this camp and rats in that camp. Though they might

want to make use of the virtues of both positions, they also have to accept the fallacies endemic to both; if you can negate production from self and production from other, you can negate production from both self and other.

*Refutation of causeless production*

One of the non-Buddhist Indian philosophical groups, the Nihilists or Hedonists,<sup>244</sup> says that at least some things are produced without cause. They propound that since no one sees anyone paint the colors on flowers or carve peas to make them round, these things are without cause; they are just produced this way due to their own nature. I remember having such thoughts as a child. Where did the sharpness of a thorn come from? No one sharpened it. One possible answer is that this is merely its nature, the way it is, that it is not caused.

The Nihilists take a very concrete thing, like the point of a thorn which appears as if established in its own right, and fortify this appearance by saying that it is produced without cause. This is a type of production; for, they are talking about impermanent things that were not here yesterday but are here today. They say that such things arise from their own nature.

If [things] were produced causelessly, there would be no causes for production at a certain place and time and of a certain nature. Therefore, something produced from one thing would be produced from all things, and all work would be just senseless.

If you plant corn seeds in that field over there, they are not going to grow in this field over here. Moreover, they will grow in the summer, not in the winter. Finally, when you plant corn seeds, you can expect production of a specific nature — corn, not apples. Such limitations would be impossible in causeless production.

Again, because there would be no causes to make production specific to a certain time, place, and nature, anything

that is produced could be produced from anything else. Therefore, it would be senseless to initiate any undertakings or make effort at anything.

Think about these reasons in relation to the things you do every day. It is no good just to think about them superficially, as if you had a blackboard in front of you. How would your life change if anything could be produced from anything else? If production were causeless and there were no certainty about anything, what would this mean for you?

[Chandrakīrti] says:<sup>245</sup>

If it is viewed that [things] are only  
produced causelessly,  
Then everything would always be produced  
from even everything,  
And this world also would not gather in so  
many ways  
Such things as seeds for the sake of their  
effects.

We do many, many things in anticipation of their future effects. We make sure to buy toothpaste at the store so that it will be there when we want to brush our teeth that night at home.

Through refuting production of the four extreme types in this way, production that is established by way of its own character is negated.

This reasoning is an analysis of causes. It investigates whether effects are produced from causes that are the same as the effect, other than the effect, both, or causelessly. Things, the subject, do not have inherently existent production because (1) they are not produced from themselves, (2) they are not produced from inherently existent others, (3) they are not produced from both, and (4) they are not produced causelessly. These four reasons are non-affirming negatives. Together they prove that there is no inherently existent production.

Once you have eliminated these four modes of production, then, since there are no more ways in which inherently existent production could take place, you come to the decision that there is no inherently existing production. Seeing that there is no inherently existing production, you can see that there is no inherent existence. For, if these things are going to inherently exist, then since they are products, they must be inherently produced. Once they are not inherently produced, they do not inherently exist. You have to make all these steps, follow out all these implications; they will not go into your mind by themselves, you have to make them. It is like a treasure hunt: you must have a map and follow that map, but when you get to the end, the treasure is there, not the map. At that point it has real force; you have reached a place where you are not trying to convince yourself of something. We are now, however, at the stage where we have to convince ourselves. This means that we have to sit down and actually do it; merely hearing about it is not enough.

The whole point of refuting other systems is to get at our own innate sense of the inherent existence of production and so forth. This is the hard point. For, Jang-gya has just said that although we have no innate sense of same, other, both, or neither about cause and effect, we should refute systems that propound these. Even though innately we do not analyze cause and effect to be inherently the same or different, this type of analysis covers all possibilities of inherently existent production; so, if these can be refuted, there is no place left for inherently existent production.

This analytical refutation of production will break down and destroy our sense of production that is established from its own side. Since, roughly speaking, inherently existing production is the only production that we now know, it may seem that once this has been destroyed there will be no production, resulting in nihilism. Thus, at this point when you are doing the analysis, you have to keep in mind that you are not denying all production but will, after under-

standing emptiness, gain a different sense of what a seed is, what a sprout is, and of what growing is.

However, the refutation of production of the four extreme types does not refute merely conventional production. For, merely conventional production does not have to be any of the four extreme types of production. Not only that, but also dependent production itself establishes that things are not produced from the four extremes. Dzong-ka-ba's *Great Commentary on (Nāgārjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle Way"* says:

Therefore, that, by the very necessity of accepting that a sprout is produced in dependence on a seed, one is able to refute these four [extreme types of production] is a distinguishing feature of the reasoning of dependent-arising, the king of reasonings.

Earlier we talked about proving emptiness with non-affirming negatives. Here, something positive — that a sprout is produced in dependence on a seed — is used. Dependent production itself is able to refute production from self, other, both and neither. This suggests the way in which all the reasonings that prove emptiness meet back to the reasoning of dependent-arising.

Furthermore, the master Buddhapālita, who attained yogic feats, says:

Here [an objector] says, "Show how this which is called production is only a convention."

*Answer:* This is shown initially [in the first stanza of the first chapter of Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way*]:<sup>246</sup>

There is never production  
Anywhere of any thing

From itself, from others,  
From both, or causelessly.

According to Jam-yang-shay-ba,<sup>247</sup> this introduction by Buddhapālita to Nāgārjuna's first stanza is the source of a great deal of the debate between Bhāvaviveka (the founder of the Autonomy School) and Buddhapālita and Chandra-kīrti (both Consequentialists). In the first chapter of the *Treatise on the Middle Way*, Nāgārjuna sets forth a non-affirming negative, the emptiness of phenomena in general. How is this proven? Through the emptiness of impermanent phenomena. How is that proven? Through a proof that things are not produced from self, from other, from both, or causelessly. Thus, there are four non-affirming negatives, realization of which leads to realizing one non-affirming negative. Four non-affirming negatives, that phenomena are not produced from themselves, from others, from both, or without cause, imply one non-affirming negative, that impermanent phenomena are not inherently produced. This non-affirming negative implies another non-affirming negative in its turn, that impermanent phenomena do not inherently exist. This implies still another non-affirming negative, that all phenomena do not inherently exist. Once impermanent phenomena do not inherently exist, permanent phenomena also do not inherently exist. For, permanent phenomena all have some relation to impermanent phenomena, such as the space of a pot and a pot.

Buddhapālita, however, seems to be saying that the first chapter of the *Treatise* was written in order to show how production is only a convention. Conventionally existent production is a positive phenomenon, not a non-affirming negative. Nāgārjuna would then be proving an affirming negative when he negated production from self, from other, from both, or without cause — that is, the four negations would negate inherently existent production but imply conventionally existent production. However, this was not Nāgārjuna's intention, for when you cognize emptiness you realize a mere elimination of all elaborations of inherent

existence. If you come up with something in place of the object of negation, you would not be cognizing emptiness, but an affirming negative that implies a positive phenomenon. Thus, Bhāvaviveka very rightly rejected this. The question is whether Buddhapālita really meant what he seems to say.

Jam-yang-shay-ba defends Buddhapālita by pointing out that Buddhapālita's statement is not really a specific introduction to this reasoning, but a general statement that production does not exist ultimately but exists conventionally. However, Buddhapālita's statement does seem to have been given to clarify why this chapter was written. Chandrakīrti's defense of Buddhapālita is that even if Buddhapālita did seem to say that, he did not mean to say it. According to the conventions of discourse, one cannot be held to account for something one did not mean to say.

Also, the *Buddhapālita Commentary* says, "Hence, because there is no [inherently existent] production, this which is called production is only a convention."

This appears at the end of Buddhapālita's proof that things are not produced from themselves, from others, from both, or causelessly. Again, Buddhapālita speaks of this negation as if it were affirming conventionally existent production. He is drawing a positive conclusion from the fact that there is no inherently existent production.

The issue here is not just formal but has a great deal to do with how you meditate. Are you trying, through the reasoning, to come up with the conclusion that production is only conventionally existent? No, upon searching for production, you are not able to come up with anything that you can identify as production. What you are looking for in meditation is the vacuity that is the absence of analytically findable production. You are not at that time looking for a positive replacement. All that will be in your mind is that there is no such production, or that production as presently so boldly appears to your mind does not exist.