

11. Dependent Arising and Emptiness

Q: How is that all of cyclic existence and nirvana are possible in a system that asserts emptiness?

A: It's possible because things are dependently arisen, arising from causes and conditions.

So, since dependent arising is tenable in emptiness, and when dependent arising is tenable, so is suffering.

Suffering can only be attributed to what arises in dependence on causes and conditions, it cannot be attributed to what is not dependently arisen.

So when true suffering exists, then the origin from which it arises, the cessations and paths leading to those cessations are tenable; thus all 4 truths exist.

So when all 4 truths exist, and it is possible to cultivate the true paths, then everything, the 3 jewels and so forth are tenable.

Only what arises dependently can be suffering, not what does not arise dependently. Since what arises dependently lacks intrinsic nature, it is empty.

Chandrakirti

So We should look at how in the view of dependent-arising as the meaning of emptiness, all things start making sense and are tenable in this view. If emptiness did not make sense, then dependent-arising would not exist, and so nothing would make sense.

Proper and improper conduct and their result make sense.

Objection: Well if all things are without intrinsic nature, then your words also lack intrinsic nature, so they cannot refute intrinsic nature.

Reply: Nagarjuna answers that just because something lacks intrinsic nature, doesn't mean it cannot function.

Just like how a pot is empty of intrinsic nature, but can perform a function and hold water, my words are empty, but can function.

Dependent arising is the best reason to use in order to know the absence of intrinsic existence. **You should be aware that only the Madhyamika experts have this unique approach.**

So what will help us find the Madhyamika view?

1. As a basis, uphold your ethical discipline
2. Then strive in many ways to accumulate the collections of merit and wisdom, and clear away obscurations
3. Rely upon the learned and make efforts to study and reflect on their instructions

Since certainty about appearance and certainty about emptiness almost never develop together, it is extremely difficult to find the Madhyamika view.

Therefore, the intelligent should develop an unshakeable certainty that the very meaning of emptiness is dependent arising. This is the distinguishing feature of the Madhyamika experts

This is how dependent arising bestows certain knowledge of the absence of intrinsic existence; this is how it dawns on you that it is things that are devoid of intrinsic existence, that are causes and conditions

C. How A Madhyamika responds to those who negate the distinguishing feature of the Madhyamika.

The essentialists think that whenever things exist, there is essence. As they see it, without essence, these things would be completely non-existent, like the horns of a donkey, therefore, these essentialists cannot avoid being proponents of both extremes of nihilism and annihilation.

-Chandrakirti

So there is a difference between existence and lacking inherent existence. **Unless you know this, you will no doubt fall into one of the extremes and thus you will not know the meaning of the middle way which is without extremes**

- **To avoid falling into the extreme of existence** - you must realize from the outset that all phenomena lack even a particle of essential existence
- **To avoid falling into the extreme of non-existence** - you must develop the definite knowledge that things such as seedlings nevertheless have the power to perform their functions. That is, they do not turn into non-things that are empty of the capacity to perform functions.

So, refuting intrinsic existence does not refute cause and effect.

We are proponents of dependent arising. What is dependent arising? It means the absence of intrinsic existence; It means no intrinsically existent production; It means the arising of effects whose nature is similar to a magician's illusion, a mirage, a reflection, a phantom city, an emanation, or a dream, it means emptiness and selflessness

—Chandrakirti

So, there is a universal limitation that things either exist, or things don't exist... there is not a third option.

It is a similar limitation that what exists must be singular or plural. So it would be nonsense to assert a phenomenon that is neither of the two.

Madhyamikas accept conventionally karma and its effects. Nihilists say they don't exist at all. So they are different.

Madhyamika's point is that karma and such lack intrinsic existence, they cite dependent arising as the reason for that lack of intrinsic nature. So they do accept teachings on karma in conventional terms.

So, do not take emptiness to mean being empty of the capacity to perform a function

In that case, regard any object;

When it is produced it does not come;

Likewise when it ceases, it does not go.

It definitely does not intrinsically exist. If it does not intrinsically exist, then what is there? Dependent arising entities caused by the afflicted and the pure -- do exist.

Thus, you will overcome countless wrong ideas if you distinguish intrinsic existence, from existence & non-existence

The main answers that madhyamikas give to scholars who are essentialists proceed from this set of distinctions

So in conclusion, this chapter mainly defines dependent-arising as the meaning of emptiness and shows how karma, appearance, and functional entities are tenable with this correct view of emptiness. It also replies to the essentialists' objections mainly because the essentials are falling into a nihilistic or eternalistic view in regard to the madhyamika view.