

Reading Response 8

The part in the reading about the two truths doctrine gave the impression that by leveraging the Buddhist distinction between ultimate and conventional truth, one can argue the assumption that determinism and moral responsibility must always be in conflict. This further raises the question that some of our philosophical disputes are based on misconceptions in language or concepts rather than actual disagreements.

Going beyond just linguistic or conceptual disagreements, a section in the reading also discusses the idea of a self and how its existence relates to moral responsibility. In the reading it was taught that the self exists only conceptually and not ultimately. This fact does not fully eliminate moral responsibility, rather it contains it to existing only conceptually, just as the self responsible does. While moral responsibility isn't ultimately true, it is still practical and useful for society and will remain conventionally true and important.

The reading also questions whether we really need a deep, ultimate sense of control to be responsible for our actions. It looks at agent-causal theories, which say that actions come from agents rather than prior events, but then points out a problem—if agents cause actions, does that causation itself count as an event? If it does, then what caused that event? If not, then how does it work? This makes it seem like responsibility can still make sense even if we don't have some absolute, ultimate control over our choices.