

November 21, 2010
Sunday class with Geshe Thabke (Joshua translating)
Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanza's on the Middle Way
Verses 264 ff.

We are starting on page 233 with verse 264:

*Liberation will occur without exertion.
For the liberated there is no future,
Or otherwise, if this were so,
Desire would arise without attachment. [264]*

Verse 264, according to the outline on 322, is about "Refuting the assertions of Sautrantikas and so forth." It's basically talking about those who say that...there are no future functional things. The future does not exist. They also say the past doesn't truly exist, only the present does. But here we are just

As for the first two lines, to read the commentary:

According to Sautrantikas and so forth who assert that future functional things do not have the slightest existence, liberation will occur without any exertion to generate the paths of the Exalted in order to prevent future disturbing emotions and suffering, because future things do not exist. That means that your disturbing emotions and suffering would already not exist, so to make any exertion for it wouldn't make any sense, so you'd have to be liberated already. This would be like liberated Foe Destroyers—means people that are completely liberated from cyclic existence—for whom there are no future disturbing emotions and so forth and who thus do not need to exert themselves because of them. Foe Destroyer means someone who has achieved freedom from disturbing emotions, suffering and cyclic existence.

Regarding the next two lines:

In general, we have to remember that for desire to arise, we need a basis—a person or consciousness and predispositions. So then in the commentary it says:

If the future were non-existent and desire were to arise without there being a person, consciousness and so forth or predispositions for attachment as a basis, it follows that desire would arise in a Foe destroyer too. The words "or otherwise" imply "or otherwise the future is not non-existent."

If consciousness and so forth don't exist then there is nothing..[to act as a basis or cause]...then desire is causeless. Foe Destroyers no longer have the causes for attachment. So, [absurdly] desire would arise for Foe Destroyers, too. If these other things...if it is such that everything is causeless, it has to be that there is a future. They are saying the future is not non-existent...in other words, it is existent. Because of these faults in their position... [Sorry guys...I had trouble typing out this paragraph!!]

In the next verse, what is being examined here is "Refutation by examining whether the effect exists or not" So, the first two lines:

*For those who assert that effects exist (Vaibhasikas)
For those who assert they do not exist (Sautrantikas)*

Samkhyas say that since what is non-existent cannot be produced, and since the effect is present in the cause in a potential form, the fallacy that anything arises from anything does not occur. So they say that..this is the Samkhyas who have the idea of a permanent cause. We call it...the principal.. something

that always exists there as a cause, kind of like a [couldn't hear the word!]. Then the effect exists there in a potential form, that you are going to be able to get out of milk, some butter, or curds or whatever. So then here the fact that they assert this means there is the fallacy that anything from anything does not occur.

Some Vaibhasikas assert that the three times are substantially existent and that effects exist prior to their production—they have this idea that, just like we have been discussing previously, that the future exists now, here, and so do the present and past, because of existing in their own right. So the three of them substantially exist and effects exist prior to their production.

Now we are talking about Sautrantikas:

Sautrantikas and so forth assert that although things are truly existent—that means at the time of the cause—*future effects are non-existent*.—Means that there is completely no effect at the time of the cause.

So then, you have the first two lines, the Samhkya and Vaibasika and the next line you have the Sautrantika. one asserts effects exist, and one asserts that they do not exist.

It follows that for all of these, adornments such as pillars for a resultant home are purposeless—it follows for all of these that adornments would be purposeless —*since according to some it exists from the outset*—because it exists at the time of the cause—*while according to others, the future home is non-existent, like a barren woman's child—or the wife of a bachelor*. There is no home so what would be the point of making any adornments for it.

Now, these faults are for:

For proponents of dependent arising free from inherent existence, there is no possibility of error and thus everything is properly established. Here, when we are talking about the three times in terms of dependent arising that they are relative to each other or dependent on each other for their existence and therefore they are dependent arisings in that sense, then there is no true existence or e. in their own right to any of them. They are conventions, conventionally existent. But they do not exist in their own right and are dependent arisings. So there is no possibility of error when you establish them in this way and thus everything is properly established.

If we take an example of what this is talking about—for ex. the farmer puts a seed in the ground and adds some water, fertilizer, etc. so the causes are there for it to grow. The sprout doesn't exist there, there is no sprout at all. The causes of the sprout are there. Then, when all those causes come together and produce a sprout, then we call that the “sprout.” The sprout-to-be relative to the sprout itself...when we say “future sprout”—we are not saying that the sprout is there. We are saying that the sprout that comes...that is the sprout that is going to come, but it isn't there. There isn't any mention of any kind of sprout existing in its own right there and then becoming a sprout in its own right.

When those cause and conditions are there, it is being produced at that time—there is an active process of production of the sprout at that time. I think we say in English that it is being produced. When the sprout comes out then that is the sprout and we say it has been produced. If the sprout somehow existed in its own right at the time of being produced. There would never be any process of production. It goes through a rapid process of production before becomes a sprout, but if it was already substantially existent, it wouldn't go through such a process. It would already be produced. So that first part is the future sprout/ the sprout-to-be...and then once it is a sprout, that is the present sprout. It is just at the end of that process, then we call it the present sprout. Before, it was the future sprout/the sprout-to-be.

So then... the sprout, at that time, does not exist in its own right. It's a dependent arising, it doesn't have it's own self-existence.

When we say the "past sprout." we are saying it relative to the present sprout. This means the second moment of the sprout. We are looking back at the present sprout and saying that in the second moment

It didn't have any existence in its own right as the present sprout and it didn't have any existence in its own right as the past sprout, and in this sense, it is a dependent arising.

When you examine time, you can understand momentariness/momentary impermanence, because at the time of causes and conditions coming together that's the future sprout; at the time it becomes the sprout that is the present sprout; and in the second moment, when it is no longer that present sprout, it is the past sprout. And all of these don't have any existence in their own right. They exist both dependently or relatively.

When we are talking about the past, present, and future sprout, we are talking about the sprout-to-be in its causal state, then when it becomes what it is, and then the second moment. So the past, present, and future are established relative to the sprout. From our perspective, the sprout as it is right now is the present and the future is how it is going to be ...but we are not talking in terms of [our perspective.] We are talking about this relative to the sprout.

Here, we are talking about—in the first sentence:

In meditative equipoise the Exalted who are still learning do not perceive dependently arising phenomena as existent. What this means is that, well you have a person who is meditating on selflessness and they are thinking about whether their self exists the way it appears to—in its own right. And so they are examining this and they are establish everything as not existing in its own right, but as dependent arising, whether it is the body or mind or whatever. And they become familiar with this reasoning over and over again, thinking about it and meditating on the conclusion of their examination. And they get to the point where they are just focused on this lack of any kind of existence in its own right. If anything at that time appeared to them, then that thing would have to exist in its own right, because this is what they are searching for. When they are in that focus on this lack of self-existence, if it appeared it would be a self-existent thing. It would hold up under their analysis. So, at that time no dependent arising. appears to them because they are only seeing things as lacking any kind of intrinsic existent. So that it why they say...all they see is emptiness, this lack of self-existence. It says "meditative equipoise" because they are focused on it. A lot of people say that then, conventional things don't exist at all because "exalted" beings don't see them...so they must not exist. But it is not that. There is a failure to dist. between this non-perception, because they are focused on the lack of non-existence, they are in a trance state and totally absorbed in that non-existence of something existing in its own right. Totally absorbed in that. In that time there is no perception of anything existing in its own right. There is a distinction between this non-perception, where they are not seeing anything in its own right, and not seeing anything exist at all.

The rest of this then is: *as well as inability to posit conventional valid cognition in one's own system, seem to give rise to numerous errors. One must therefore master the meaning of the establishment of the two truths by valid cognition in our own system.*

How do you then posit the existence of trees, houses, cars, people, etc.? How do you establish their existence? Well then, they are...The meditator does not examine as to whether they have any self-existence or not. They appear always to have some sort of self-existence. The m at that point does not examine do they have it or not, they just observe it. They go, "oh, a house." Just based upon the minimal

components of a house, you see a house there. The minute you begin to examine...and start looking amongst the atoms of the window ledge or whatever, you are not going to find the house. Or with this table, the best...

Although they appear to have this self-existence, falsely in that sense, they continue to work fine, as long as you don't start analyzing is their a self-existent house there as it appears to be. That is called a conventional valid cognition, where you are not doing any ultimate analysis at all, for its nature or ontological status—you aren't asking how it exists at all. It has existence, it works. you can get in your car and drive home. There is no problem at that level. Those things are called conventional truths. Every object where you are accepting—not the way they appear, because that it is mistaken—you are accepting that they do function. So those are conventional truths. But then the moment you try to find it—you can't come up with the house, table, Tom, Trashi, whatever. Then, you are understanding their ultimate truth—that they lack this self-existence that you are looking for. So that is their ultimate truth. This is where things get mixed up, because there are many scholars who feel that since noble beings don't see a table or house at that time it must not exist at all. They are taking that they have some ultimate authority and if it doesn't exist for them, it must not exist at all. But that is not the way this system establishes the two truths.

So now we are refuting a truly existing present, the Samkhyas here:

Assertion: Although existence of the past and future are being refuted, the present exists. Since it does, the future exists too, for the principal—this could be with a capital P—giving up its state of futurity, assumes the state of present curd. Thus the present exists.

The principal is like a numenon [sp?].a permanent cause, it is always there. It gives up its state of futurity, it is in a present state; therefore the present exists. That is their assertion.

*The transformation of things also
Is not perceived even by the mind.
Those who lack wisdom nevertheless
Think that the present exists. 266*

The mind here is talking about the mental consciousness. Here we are talking about “the principal”..basically they believe it exists first and then undergoes a transformation...and at the time it makes a transformation it no longer occurs, it only exists as what it transforms into:

It is not feasible for the principal, which is matte—they say it has some kind of physical property—and permanent by nature, also to undergo temporary changes into things like milk and curd. It is permanent and stays that way, and then undergoes some change...It is occasional change and they call that impermanence. Such transformations are not perceived even by mental consciousness that engages with extremely subtle objects, let alone observed by the five kinds of sense consciousness. The 5 sense consciousness: the eye sense consciousness sees sight, the nose sense consciousness perceives odors; ear—sounds; tongue—taste; physical consciousness perceives tangible objects/has a sense of touch. So then none of those perceive this. It's the mental consciousness that is seeing something more subtle than what the five senses can sense. Our mental consciousness doesn't see this kind of transformation either, so why mention the five senses—they don't perceive it. Although transformation with respect to the present and its causes is not observed—these are something that is not observed by any of our mental capacity—those who lack wisdom and are ignorant about the meaning of suchness consider the present truly existent.

If we look at those last two lines again, then: *Although transformation with respect to the present and its causes is not observed*—that means that this kind of transformation of the principal cannot be observed with our senses or mental consciousness. What that means is we have no direct perception and we cannot understand its existence through thinking about it/through thought-- *those who lack wisdom and are ignorant about the meaning of suchness*—i.e., they don't understand the lack of true existence—*consider the present truly existent*. So this is how one refutes the position of the Samkhyas.

The assertion in this next verse:

Assertion: Time exists because functional things which act as the basis for imputing time exist. For ex., when the sun comes up we call it daytime, when the sun goes down, we call it night time, when we gather for class we call it class time. So it is based on these functional things that we are imputing time to exist. *Since time may be investigated by considering functional things but not on its own, time is truly existent*. It really does exist.

If we look at the verse and join it together.

I forgot to point out that in the outline, we are “Refuting existence of substantially established functional things as a basis for time.” And the subheading would be... “Refutation by examining whether or not things have duration.” So we are looking at duration.

Answer:

How can there be things with no duration?

Being impermanent, how can they endure?

If they had duration first,

The would not grow old in the end. 267

How can there be things with no duration? means how can there be truly existent things because there is no inherent existence. How can anything have inherent duration if they are constantly changing.

How can functional things, the basis for time, be truly existent? It follows that they are not because of not having inherent duration. How could they have inherent duration, since they are continually consumed by impermanence? Moreover, if they had inherent duration at the start—if they had some inherent duration right from the beginning—they would not grow old in the end, because that which is inherently existent cannot cease. Nothing would ever change, could ever go through any process of disintegration or grow old.

So that is the end of reading the verses up to 267.

Questions

Question: How do we use this information to effect positive change in ourselves?

GYT: What you take from this is impermanence. You have to understand that the basic point is impermanence. Usually, we just sort of hear a word impermanence and think oh that is interesting...but you have to connect your mind with it to go through some kind of inner transformation. Interpreting your question is, what is the benefit of thinking about the three times...and that is you understand impermanence, that everything is an aggregation of different causes and conditions coming together and undergoing a constant process of transformation, with causes and conditions joining together...a constant process of transformation. When you see that you are thinking everything is so great and wonderful, and you have a lot of involvement in the world, and then you see it as this constant process of transformation, you become disenchanted and realize, well, it's got some kind of a nature of

suffering. And it becomes rather unattractive to you. So then, from imp. comes suffering. and then from suffering comes selflessness. Like with your body, we are very attached to our bodies, and so forth. But everything is undergoing this constant process of t, so you become disenchanted with your body. You lose that strong feeling of MY body and ME. These things start getting less. But it is not a case that the body, you just sort of become...what is the word...that you neglect your body. You understand that your body and mind are the framework within which you can cultivate virtue. So then, in cultivating virtue, you can make good use of your life. Virtue means doing constructive things and thinking in constructive ways. That's the connection...you are using your life in a constructive way. There is a verse there in the beginning of chapter 2, he was saying even though body is like this it is the basis for virtue.

On page 83, vs. 26"

Although the body is seen like a foe,

Nevertheless it should be protected.

By long sustaining a disciplined [body]

Great merit is created.

So Aryadeva addresses that very question with that first verse.

Karen: Could you say a bit more about this “second moment”—like of a sprout. What starts the second moment, is it just decay? Could you give an example?

There are two ways to think about a moment. One is very coarse and the other is very subtle. So it makes the difference bet. coarse and subtle impermanence. For instance, with our own life, suppose we live to be 70 or 80 and then you die. So you are when you are born—That is a coarse impermanence we can grasp.

The subtle is if you take the sprout. Once you consider it the sprout, it is getting bigger, it is undergoing change. It is no longer the same sprout in the first moment of being considered the sprout. Because all these conditions are coming together, it undergoes constant change so it isn't the same from moment to moment. If it did stay, it would never grow. So it has to undergo a constant process of change in order to grow.

So there is coarse and subtle. Until the plant dies, that would be a coarse understanding of impermanence.

The problem comes about in our ability of perception. One we can have a direct perception about, the other requires thinking about with our inferential consciousness. For instance, when we came out of Tibet we were very young. And then [much later] when we meet up with others who came at that time, we can't even recognize them. They say, “Don't you recognize me. It's Tashi.” And then we can look at the bone structure...and we can eventually recognize the person. So we have this kind of perception of impermanence and change over time, but the problem lies that from one moment to the next, it is a very similar type. So when you see the person the next day, you see them and say “oh there's so and so”..[or, if you see them in a second moment] you just assume its the same person. You don't understand the change. That's why it's hard to have a direct perception of some subtle change.