

November 14, 2010
Sunday class with Geshe Thabke (Joshua translating)
Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanza's on the Middle Way
Verses 259 ff.

We are starting on p. 230 with verse 259:

*If a thing which will be produced
Later exists beforehand,
The contention of Niyativadins
Is not erroneous.* (vs. 259, p. 230)

It's saying that the thing that is going to be produced, this future thing produced by causes and conditions, they say it exists before it is produced—and if you assert that, then the contention of the Niyativadins, those who say that things come into existence naturally/they don't have a cause, then what they say would be correct—i.e., things would be causeless.

So, you have to keep in mind how we were talking about the three times previously, which is...if you take, for example a sprout—a future sprout is when the seed is in the ground. That is the sprout to be. So we are talking relative to the object. Then, when it is produced, that is the present sprout. It's second moment of existence, that's the past sprout. Here, there are some non-Buddhist positions that say that the sprout has to exist at the time of the cause. In order to be produced, it has to exist there as a sprout with the seed/at the time of the seed. There is also the assertion of the Buddhist Vaibhasika position that says that there is some kind of existence of the sprout at the time as well. It hasn't taken on the form of the present sprout (but it is there).

Here, we are showing that the existence of future is absurd. If you look at the outline on 322, it says for vs. 259 that this vs. shows that the existence of future functional things is absurd.

If we read the commentary, it says:

If a thing to be produced later is substantially existent—that means exists in its own right/has its own existence—prior to its production, the contention that things are inherently established as causeless held by Niyativadins and those asserting that things are not created by peoples' activity and are without cause is not erroneous—that means, it would be correct, that things arise without case. Yet their assertions are wrong for they contradict everything that is both seen—seen means our own direct perception of them—and unseen. “Unseen” means it contradicts reason

So what is the Buddhist position here, the position of Aryadeva? It's that, at the time when we have [oops, sorry, skype cut me off...]

What is the significance of us understanding impermanence in this way. If we understand that things are constantly going in and out of existence—they are in a state of flux, then what we develop is a disenchantment with things. We understand the Buddhist concept of suffering. Through understanding suffering, that we are under the power of something other than ourselves, then we understand that there is no.... We tend to think of our selves as having and other objects as having self-existence –we understand this idea of selflessness, which means that things do not exist in and of themselves or in their own right. So, from the idea of suffering, we understand the idea of selflessness. So, impermanence is a very important thing for us to understand.

The next verse, if you look at the outline on 322, this verse is addressing, the “consequence that things already produced would be produced again.”

*To say something which will be made to occur
Already exists is unreasonable.
If that which exists is produced,
What has been produced will arise again. (vs. 260, p. 231)*

“Will be made to occur” means that the causes and conditions are assembled. To say that that has already been produced is totally unreasonable, because it is going to be produced when these causes and conditions bring it into existence. If it were already produced, it would have to be produced again. It would be repetitive production.

Moreover even if the future were substantially existent,--if it were already there--it would be unreasonable to say that a thing which will be made to occur later is substantially existent prior to its production.

So it’s basically saying that a sprout exists at the time of its causes would be unreasonable. If the future were substantially existence means that they have some kind of existence now.

If that which already exists is produced later, what has already been produced will come into existence again, which is purposeless—Why would there be a production of something already produced? There is a redundancy. If you say, no that’s what happens, then the seed would be a seed again and again, it would never give rise to a sprout. It would repetitively be [the causes and conditions.] As a consequence the effect would find no opportunity for production, since the cause must reproduce itself until the end. “Until the end” means endless, forever, eternally. There’d always be this production of the cause and things would never take effect.

Then, the idea in this next verse is where non Buddhists are asserting that, because yogis can see into the future...

*If future things are seen,
Why is the non-existent not seen? (vs 261ab, p. 231)*

So if you look at the outline it is
“Refuting that yogic perception of wished for objects directly perceives future things.”

So their idea is that, because yogis can see into the future, then the future must already be there. They have a direct view of the future so the future must already be there. “wished for objects” means they have a direct perception of future things, so they must have some existence now.

Again the outline, there are three parts to this refutation that yogic perception of wished for objects directly perceives future things:

1. Actual meaning
2. Consequence that fresh restraint from non-virtue are unnecessary if the future is substantially existent—i.e., why would we have to restrain ourselves if we already have?
3. If impermanent it is contradictory for something to exist prior to its production.

So, if you are talking about impermanence, then Aryadeva’s way makes sense, but if you are saying that the future present and past already exist, there wouldn’t be any movement of impermanence. There wouldn’t be any movement between those three. So we are going to go through those three.

This is the opponents assertion on 231. They are saying that the future exists because [those with yogic perception can see it.] These meditators are known to see things in the future and predictions turn out as prediction. They see these things, make prophesies, and the prophesies come true, so it must be that the future exists there. This would be impossible if the future didn't exist at all, like a son of a barren woman. They are saying that this couldn't happen in relation to something that doesn't happen at all.

Here is the reply or the refutation of that: If future things are seen—i.e, if you are having a direct perception of them—then why is the non-existent not seen? Usually we think of the future as not existent yet. So you'd be able to see any non-existent.

In the commentary it says, *if future things are directly perceived by way of their own entity*—i.e., they have existence already, they exist in their own right right now—in the period before their production—at the time of their causes and conditions—*then why are non-existent things not seen?* Like a horns of a rabbit or a sky-flower—you should be able to see these too, even though they don't exist. If the future has some self-existence right now.

It follows that they would be seen,

Things existing in their own right. They are self-contained and do not need anything else. That is what the opponents are saying, that the future has this self-existence.

It is not feasible to make distinctions between what is seen and not seen with regard to the non-existent. Such fallacies arise for those who assert that the past and future exist by way of their own entity, .but no fallacies accrue to us (i.e. position of Aryadeva) who assert the three times as arising dependently/ without inherent existence.

In our own system, future are dependent arisings. At the time of c and c coming together, we impute to that or designate that as the future sprout. That is the sprout-to-be. It has this imputed or dependent existence. It is not already a sprout at that time. When suddenly it comes into existence, then right there—we call that the sprout. And in the second moment it has already passed out of existence. Causes and conditions come together and form another moment of the sprout. That second moment, we call that the past sprout. It came into existence and no longer exists in the second moment. So it works fine, the idea of the three times, for someone like us who is asserting dependent arising. There is no problem there.

Buddhas directly perceive in the present even those things which will occur after ten million aeons.

In that way, then, the three times can work, but not with the idea that they have their own existence. Then you get into all sorts of problems. That is what is being said.

If you continue with this idea of the Buddhas seeing future things: *Though they are future*—you have to think of buddhas or meditators, at that time—*they are future relative to the consciousness perceiving them*—not future somewhere existing on their own.

They are neither non-functional nor permanent for they will not remain for a second moment after their formation.

Functional means causal, they do perceive effects. Also, when you say permanent ...when those future things are produced, based upon causes and conditions they come into existence, exist just for a moment

and don't exist in the second moment. That means they are constantly in flux—they don't stay for even a fraction of a second. So it is not a question of them being permanent, not being able to produce effects.

There is no need for Buddha to cognize the present explicitly and the past and future implicitly—this is a discussion of how the mind perceives things. It's not like the mind is perceiving something directly in the present and understanding it implicitly in the future. So what they are seeing don't exist at the time. And “they are in general directly perceived” means that the Buddha can directly perceive them because they will exist. A Buddha has a direct understanding of what will exist in the future.

Similarly, it is not contradictory for objects of aspiration—future things—like you are aspiring to do something in the future. At the time of the aspiration, though they don't exist, they appear clearly to a yogic perception of that what is wished for, just like a dream. You can see into the future—those things that appear are like a dream, they appear very real. So the meditators can see them in the present like we see a dream—it doesn't exist now but they appear like that, just like a dream does. Even though the barley seed exists, the sprout that has yet to come into existence may be called future but the sprout cannot be called future.

When things are in a causal state, we call that the sprout-to-be, but it is not like the sprout is there and we are calling it the future. The sprout is what comes in the present—the green shoot. We call it the sprout-to-be, but in no way are we implying that the sprout is there. The understanding should be applied to the future and past. Although the second moment is the “past sprout” we are not saying that the sprout is there somehow. The sprout is in the present. We are saying that this is the past of the sprout, but we aren't saying the past sprout is somehow there.

In our own system, this is that next line....we accept that Buddhas perceive all three times directly and do not at all assert to trainees that they merely appear to do so. So it is not like, there is this other idea that everything that appears is false. The interpretation of our system is that Buddhas see all three times directly and do not at all assert to trainees that they merely appear to do so.

[Some assert that..] Seeing that there is something false about them, buddhas would merely appear to see them for the sake of their students, they can't really see them. But they are saying, no..the buddhas really *do* see them.

*For one for whom the future exists
There can be no distant [time].*

Moreover, there cannot be a distant time for a protagonist for whom the future exists by way of its own entity because the future exists in terms of its own entity. This means that if the future already exists in its own right, which is the opponents' view, then there won't be any past. Nothing can ever go away because it will always be here, the future will always be here and the past could never be relative to any change into the future. The future would always be.

*If virtue exists though nothing is done,
Resolute restraint is meaningless.
If even a little is done
The effect cannot exist.*

So, if we are saying that the future already exists now inherently, then there wouldn't be any...restraining ourselves from harmful actions and doing what we could do helpful things, because our ethical conduct would already be pure because the future already exists. So it is saying in this verse,

that restraint is meaningless. We wouldn't have to restrain from non-virtue and cultivate virtue, because we have already accomplished it.

If, because the future is substantially existent—has its own self-existence—then virtue exists without actions (that means virtue that we have already achieved/pure ethical conduct) such as safeguarding one's ethical conduct once one's faculties have become mature through meeting a spiritual friend and listening to teaching.... For instance, we are thinking we have to achieve the altruistic spirit of enlightenment. We think we need to make effort to achieve it, but actually, we are done! *Resolute restraint from unethical conduct and so forth for the sake of future results is meaningless, for virtue will exist even if that has not been done.*

We wouldn't have to make an effort. Why would we have to restrain ourselves, it's already been done.

Say we didn't have all these virtues, like the spirit of enlightenment, then if the future already exists, we are never going to get it, so effort to achieve it would be meaningless. *If even the slightest thing is done to enhance one's capability, future effects cannot be substantially existent. It is impossible!* Even you made the slightest effort, it wouldn't make any sense. you would never be able to attain or develop some kind of pure ethical conduct if you don't have it now.

Page 322: If impermanent, it is contradictory for something to exist prior to its production.

So, here in accordance with the assertion that all composite things are impermanent, all functional things are impermanent.

*If they are impermanent
How can it be said effects exist?
That which has a beginning and end
Is called impermanent in the world.*

How...are contradictory. Here impermanence means a process of transformation. Things are constantly undergoing change. Causes and conditions going in and out of existence. it is a constant process we call impermanence. Why would their be any action of causes and conditions if the effect had already been produced. There would be no impermanence and the effect would be eternal, static. That's what is being said here.

Anything that has a beginning in that it is newly produced, and an end, in that it is newly produced, and an end, in that it does not last for a second moment after the time of its formation, is called impermanent in the world. Another way of thinking of impermanent is non-static, it doesn't ever stay. When c and c come together and there is this adventitious effect—it immediately ...[sorry, too fast]

then it has this beginning and it has an end. Something which is newly produced but doesn't last, suddenly goes out of existence. That is what we call impermanent.

A functional thing is not something that is static. It's future, past, and present... Anything that has a beginning in that it comes into existence based on causes and conditions—it is newly produced at that time. Then it comes into existence suddenly or adventitiously...

There is nothing in the nature of things there. It doesn't have some kind of independent existence. It is there based upon causes and conditions and then it doesn't last for a second moment, after the time of its

formation. Once it is established, it doesn't say that it lasts. Non-static is maybe more familiar than impermanent. It doesn't stay.

One thing I wanted to say is that, we do have this perception that things are non-static, that they somehow are not dynamic, that they are not undergoing a constant process of change. We think "I am the same person" when in fact our bodies and mind are constantly in flux. So we aren't the same person now that we were a second ago, but we are insisting that we are. There is a similarity of type and then we sort of..insist. We lump them together and say I'm still here, it's all me—its'a a static entity. This comes about because things are in a constant state of flux, from one moment to the next. It will come into existence dependent upon c and c and go out of existence dep. on c and c. It's like a continuum, and each moment of that continuum seems to be of a similar type. But it's not the same. Because it is similar, we lump it together and say this is me and that was me a few moments ago. And that's just the way we insist things are.

QUESTIONS

Nancy: My question is about the ability to know about the future. Geshe-la said that a buddha can understand something about the future like a dream. In our culture there are such people...sometimes they use cards or different tools, and sometimes we pay them money...My question is, is it possible for those other than yogis and buddhas to know something about the future and if so, how?

GYT: For just your ordinary person, it is possible. Like its saying here, like a dream...people have these premonitions, dreams. The future can be predicted in dreams—sometimes you can have an accurate view of the future through dreams. This can happen for an ordinary person.

I have an ex. to tell you. It actually happened to me about a year before we fled Tibet. I had this dream about beautiful green bushes with red flowers on them...and I thought that this was some kind of new country. When you dream red flowers, you are going to die. So he thought it was a premonition of his own death. But a year later, when he was fleeing into Bhutan, he saw all these red flowers that he had dreamt about and he was like "Oh! this must have been what I was dreaming about."

And then also, one of my companions, he said, "Wait a second, I think I dreamt about this monastery." In the dream, he remembered the different buddha images that were inside. And he enumerated what was there before they went into the temple and sure enough, he had dreamed each figure before they went inside the temple.

I have another story, too. There was this one ?? and he had been 20 or 30 years in retreat and no one would go near his hut, but one day he came out of his retreat hut (this was shortly before they had to leave Tibet). He went around giving people the Buddha's teachings. Don't do harmful actions, don't use rifles or weapons. And he said that he had a clear sight of monks filing into Bhutan and now, the teachings are going to disappear form this country. And someone came up to him and gave him a horse and he said, "very good. Just what I need." and he decorated the horse with 8 auspicious symbols—its basically a cloth he draped on the horse. And the horse, when that was put on him, whinnied. And he said please take this horse to the DL in Norbulingka. And they took the horse to the Norbulingka and HHDL was very pleased to receive it. It was shortly before he left the country. Then, His Holiness...basically, he was saying "it's time for you to go" to His Holiness and He was very happy to receive this. And he took his monks' shawl and sent it to this retreatant. HH mentioned this during the teachings at Lehigh, that he was wearing some robe that he wore...He actually got that shawl back from the retreatant and wore it as a good omen in the beginning of the teachings. Not sure if it made it into the transcriptions, but he remembers HH holding this...

I got it wrong at the end there...it wasn't anything to do with Lehigh. Geshe-la said, You are misrepresenting me...laughs

Actually, what happened is that the hermit spoke. This is in the area where Geshe-la is from, just outside of Lhasa. He gave a teaching wearing the shawl that HH had given him. And he said now in two months we will need to go...and you need to prepare. At that time, Geshe-la thought What is he talking about? but it turned out that 2 months later the uprising broke out and they had to flee.

Karen: Thank you for this story. I wonder if Geshe-la would give us an ex. of a meditation that would see more clearly how we as persons have changed from moment to moment ...and to dissolve this feeling that we are the same as we were a moment ago.

GYT: Yes, there is a type of meditation, based on the reasoning that our body and mind are produced—

For instance, we have to breathe. We need water, food air. So it is a constant process of our body being sustained—actually being produced by causes and conditions. So we can think about our body that way. Because it is produced, it is impermanent. So that is the reason and we can see that easily through what we need to sustain our bodies every moment. Mind is constantly changing in terms of our feeling... they are constantly changing from one moment to the next. When we use this kind of reasoning and understand I am impermanent. you focus on your insight until it begins to fade and then you think over the reasons again for our body and minds being impermanent. In that way, you can understand our momentariness, how we are in a constant state of flux.

It's just like the chapter on impermanence that Aryadeva talks about how actually our minds and bodies are constantly undergoing change, in a constant state of flux, changing from one moment to the next. We say we are living, but life itself depends upon all these causes and conditions—breathing, eating. There are all these [??] and our bodies are constantly trying to stay alive and our

but we don't think of this. We have this idea/belief in being static and that is like someone who lost a cloth or shoe in the river and came back to the same spot to look for it again.