

THE NITARThA INSTITUTE SERIES

published by Snow Lion Publications

Nitartha Institute was founded in 1956 by The Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, under the guidance of Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, the leading contemporary teachers of the Karma Kagyü tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The Institute, under the aegis of Nitartha *international*, aims to fully transmit the Buddhist tradition of contemplative inquiry and learning; it offers Western students training in advanced Buddhist view and practice, as taught by the Karma Kagyü and Nyingma lineages of Tibet.

The Institute is pleased to ally with Snow Lion Publications in presenting this series of important works offering a wide range of graded educational materials that include authoritative translations of key texts from the Buddhist tradition, both those unique to the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages and those common to the wider scope of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism; modern commentaries by notable lineage scholar-practitioners; manuals for contemplative practice; and broader studies that deepen understanding of particular aspects of the Buddhist view. The initial releases are from the Kagyü tradition and will be followed by publications from the Nyingma tradition.

This publication is an Intermediate Level Nitartha book.

THE CENTER OF THE SUNLIT SKY
Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition

Karl Brunnhölzl

*Including a Translation of Pawo Rinpoche's Commentary
on the Knowledge Section of Śāntideva's The Entrance
to the Bodhisatva's Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra)*

SNOW LION PUBLICATIONS
ITHACA, NEW YORK ♦ BOULDER, COLORADO

in them at this time. The reasons for this are as follows: The two [kinds of] thoughts about existents and nonexistents include all [possible] thoughts. Also, since [actually] there is nothing that includes anything, there is also nothing to be included. This is the genuine yoga of non-conceptuality. Since in yogic practitioners dwelling in it all thoughts have vanished, they perfectly relinquish afflictive obscurations and cognitive obscurations.⁵⁴⁹

Thus, Karmapa Mikyö Dorje says that there is actually only one single difference between Autonomists and Consequentialists. In general, it is just on the conventional level that both refute wrong ideas through explaining the words of the Buddha, composing treatises on them, and debating with others. In this conventional context, Consequentialists say that the scriptures and reasonings used to refute wrong views do not even conventionally have the nature of valid cognition or the like and thus lack any real nature that could refute their opposite, which is to say nonvalid cognition. Nevertheless, they simply follow and repeat the verbal consensus on valid cognition that is agreed upon by others. Based on this approach, they negate phenomena that are not even established on the level of correct seeming worldly reality, let alone ultimately. Autonomists agree that, ultimately, the arguments and such that refute wrong ideas do not have a nature that is ultimately established as valid cognition. However, they argue that, when refuting wrong ideas on the conventional level, if one does not conventionally accept that arguments and such are established through valid cognition, the wrong ideas of realists cannot be refuted.

The Karmapa emphasizes that it is merely this difference that led to the distinction between Autonomists and Consequentialists. However, this does not mean that there are any differences in terms of one of these views being more profound or better than the other, since both equally accept the complete freedom from discursiveness and reference points. Moreover, not even the omniscience of a Buddha could see any difference in terms of better or worse between the approaches that they employ in order to put an end to discursiveness and reference points. The Karmapa is very explicit that certain other minor divergences between the approaches of Autonomists and Consequentialists are just of expedient meaning. They in no way justify making a difference in terms of the profundity of their view in terms of the ultimate. In particular, there are no grounds for basing elaborate outlines of two distinct Centrist systems—as they are found in some (mostly later) Tibetan doxographies—on such an assumed difference in profundity.⁵⁵⁰

Illusory Lions Killing Illusory Elephants: Empty Reasonings for Liberation

Some Essential Points of Centrist Reasoning

The root of all Centrist arguments is the praise to the Buddha that Nāgārjuna proclaims at the very beginning of his *Fundamental Verses on Centrism*:

I bow down to the perfect Buddha,
The supreme orator, who taught
That dependent origination
Is without ceasing and without arising,
Without extinction and without permanence,
Without coming and without going,
Not different and not one.
It is the peace in which discursiveness is at complete peace.

Accordingly, there are four root arguments:

- 1) Outer and inner entities are without ceasing in the end and without abiding in the middle, because they do not arise in the first place.
- 2) Outer and inner entities are without extinction, because there is no permanence.
- 3) Outer and inner entities are without coming, because going is not established.
- 4) Outer and inner entities are not established as different, because there is no entity that is one.

All other Madhyamaka arguments, such as the five great Centrist reasonings, derive from these four basic arguments. It is said that the negation of the eight reference points—arising, ceasing, permanence, extinction, going, coming, oneness, and difference—in the opening verses of *The Fundamental Verses* represents a brief synopsis of both this treatise and Centrist reasoning in general. For the negation of oneness and difference is nothing other than the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity, while the six other negations of arising and so on primarily depend on the negation of oneness and difference. There are three essential steps in all these reasonings that analyze for the ultimate:

- 1) One picks a certain phenomenon, such as a book, as one's basis of attribution or analysis.
- 2) One searches for a nature of this phenomenon that is not self-contradictory.
- 3) Within this basis of attribution, one looks for something, such as its attributes, that is contradictory to its nature.

Hence, from among all Centrist arguments, the following two are the main reasonings in that they respectively correspond to steps (2) and (3):

- a) the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity in order to analyze a nature
- b) the vajra sliver reasoning in order to analyze the attributes

The many other enumerations of arguments that are explained in Centrist texts are merely branches of these two reasonings. In particular, the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity is the root of all reasonings that negate real existence.

These reasonings are explained in detail below, but to briefly illustrate the above three essential points, we may start, for example, by taking a book as the object of our analysis. When searching for the book's nature, initially, we might think that it really exists and that it is its nature to be a real unity. However, such an assumed nature of being a unity is self-contradictory, since a book can be broken down into infinitely many parts. If we then think that the book must be a real multiplicity, this is also self-contradictory, since we cannot find any real unities in it that could serve as building blocks for a real multiplicity. And since there is no third possibility for the book to really exist, we have to admit that the only nature of this book that is not self-contradictory is that it does not exist either as a real unity or as a real multiplicity. In other words, the book does not really exist altogether. Finally, we look for possible attributes of this book—such as that it really arises—that are contradictory to its nature of lacking real existence. This means that if we were to find some real arising of the book, this would obviously contradict its nature of lacking real existence. However, under analysis, we will find that the book does not really arise from itself, nor from something other, nor from both itself and something other, and also not without any cause. In summary, the book does not really arise at all, which perfectly well accords with its nature of lacking real existence. In this way, the nature of this book (its lack of real existence) and its attribute (its lack of real arising) are found neither to be self-contradictory nor to contradict each other.

Although the actual Centrist reasonings always negate, their point is not to negate away something that really exists, since something really existent cannot be negated anyway. They also do not remove or negate something nonexistent. Since a nonexistent cannot be an object, there is no object to which to refer in the first place. "Negating" just means to demonstrate that things do not exist in the real and solid way that we think they do. Thus, the object of negation of reasoning is not something that does not exist anyway (such as a truly existing nature of things). Technically, the object of negation is merely the mental image that appears for the reifying conceptions of people who mistakenly believe in the exis-

tence of what does not exist. Therefore, as far as Centrists are concerned, "real existence" is just something that occurs in a psychological or subjective sense but certainly does not exist in any ontological or objective sense. Consequently, the force of Centrist negation strikes only the realm of our fixed ideas and not something that would appear on any hypothetical level of real or substantial existence. Moreover, as was elaborated above, the words and concepts in Centrist reasonings are as unreal as the words and concepts that they negate. However, from our mental perspective, they still serve their purpose of making us let go of our rigid ideas. Centrist reasonings do not negate mere seeming arising or existence in a categorical way, nor do they take away the possibility of conventionally experiencing both single and many things in our everyday lives. Instead, these reasonings tackle the wrong notions of real arising, real existence, real unity, and real multiplicity.

As for the actual techniques of reasoned analysis, the standard framework of formulating Centrist reasonings is to present dilemmas or even tetralemmas of mutually exclusive and exhaustive possibilities for something, such as existence or arising, which then are refuted one by one. For example, the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity is presented as a dilemma, that is, really existing things can only exist as a real unity or as a real multiplicity. There is no third possibility, since all existing phenomena are included in these two mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories of existence.

From among the five Centrist reasonings, the three reasonings that negate real arising go even further and investigate four possible ways of arising, such as whether things arise from themselves, from something other, from both, or from neither, which is to say, without any cause. These four possibilities are mutually exclusive and cover all theoretically imaginable ways in which things might arise.³¹ Thus, through the refutation of each one of these possibilities, it is shown that things do not really arise at all. The same principle is applied to other issues, such as whether a cause produces a result that is already existent, nonexistent, both, or neither; whether an object exists before, after, or simultaneously with the consciousness that perceives it; and whether some assumed productive potential in a cause is identical to the cause or different from it. On the not so serious side of things, probably the shortest summary of this approach is to say that the classic Madhyamaka statement to which all others can be reduced is "neither nor, nor neither."

Within this framework of analysis, its actual result—elimination of reification—can be achieved either through using formal probative arguments with the three modes of a correct reason (also called "autonomous reasoning") or through drawing unwanted consequences from other people's positions. Somewhat simplified, one could say that autonomous reasoning in this sense refers to any probative argument with the correct three modes that says "how things are" (either conventionally or ultimately). On the other hand, absurd consequences do not have all three—or even none—of the correct modes, whether they include a rea-

son or not. This means that they are just consequences that follow from another position that is already wrong in the first place. Thus, they are logically correct, but their explicit meaning must be false, since it is just an absurd result of a previous false statement.

For example, if someone holds that a vase is permanent, this wrong notion may be dispelled by stating what is correct and giving a proper reason for it, such as "A vase is *not* permanent, because it arises from causes and conditions and thus must disintegrate at some point (such as now when I let it drop)." Here, the three modes are established. Alternatively, one may draw absurd consequences from the position that a vase is permanent, such as saying, "Then it follows that a vase neither arises in the first place nor ceases to exist later." Obviously, in this consequence, the question of the three modes does not apply, since there is no reason. Sometimes the opponent's position is added as the reason to such a consequence, such as by saying, "It follows that a vase does not arise and cease, because—according to your claim—it is permanent." In that case, from the perspective of the opponent, all three modes are established, since a vase is claimed to be permanent and whatever is permanent necessarily does not arise and cease. Therefore, the opponent must accept this unwanted consequence of his or her position. From the perspective of correct worldly conventions, when regarding a vase as an impermanent phenomenon, only the second and third modes are established (which is precisely the correct but, in relation to such an impermanent phenomenon, absurd consequence that whatever is permanent necessarily does not arise and cease). From the perspective of Centrists, ultimately also this is not established, since neither a vase nor something permanent exists and thus cannot be said either to arise and cease or not to. There are also many consequences in which all three modes are not even conventionally established, for example, the consequence "It follows that things do not arise from themselves, since their arising would be pointless and endless" that is drawn from the assertion that things arise from themselves.⁵²

All Centrists agree and emphasize that their formulations of negations or absurd consequences in no way imply their reverses or anything else, for that matter. Thus, they are all exclusively nonimplicative negations. For example, to state, "Things do not arise from something other, since then everything could arise from everything"⁵³ does not imply that things either arise from themselves, from both themselves and others, or without a cause. This is further evidenced by the fact that Centrists explicitly negate all of these possibilities one by one, and there is no fifth possibility.

Another characteristic feature of Centrist reasonings is that they often analyze things in terms of infinitesimal parts and moments in time. For example, in the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity, one seeks for the final, smallest parts of things that could represent a hypothetical indivisible unity. Most of the arguments and consequences in the context of the three great Centrist rea-

sonings that negate arising are formulated in terms of the individual moments of the process of causality, such as considering the relationship between the last moment of the cause that immediately precedes the first moment of its specific result or whether there exists any simultaneous moment of cause and result during which there is some causal interaction between them.

As for the interaction of this approach of negating mutually exclusive and exhaustive alternatives with the subjective side of our mind that grapples with such reasonings, Centrists just utilize the natural structure of our black-and-white thinking, since this is precisely the way in which dualistic clinging operates. Usually, when we find that something does not exist or is not permanent, we immediately think that it then must be nonexistent or impermanent. On the checkerboard of our dualistic mind that is grounded in really existing things, this may make sense in that the exclusion of one of these possibilities necessarily implies the presence of the other. However, from the perspective of the Centrist view of all appearances' fundamental lack of any real existence, all such possibilities as permanent, impermanent, existent, and nonexistent are just vain attempts by our dualistic fixation to hold on to something within the infinite openness of mind's natural expanse, which cannot be boxed in in any way. In other words, Centrist reasonings beat our fixating mind with its own weapons. When dualistic mind progressively analyzes its own dualistic structure and function, this inevitably leads to its own collapse altogether. When it sees all its reference points dwindle, including itself as that which creates these reference points, it simply goes out of business. Thus, the radical and relentless use of Centrist dilemmas and tetralemmas is a deliberate, systematic, and—in a sense—therapeutic technique to pull each piece of the patchwork of our two-dimensional referential carpet from under our feet and explore the nondimensional, boundless space of mind's true nature.

Disillusionment with Phenomenal Identity

THE FIVE GREAT MADHYAMAKA REASONINGS

In general, various Centrist masters present many different arguments that determine phenomenal identitylessness. In the system of Nāgārjuna and his spiritual heirs, these are mainly "the five great Centrist reasonings":

- 1) the negation through the analysis of an intrinsic nature: the reasoning of freedom from unity and multiplicity
- 2) the negation through the analysis of causes: the vajra sliver reasoning⁵⁴
- 3) the negation through the analysis of results: the reasoning that negates an arising of existents and nonexistent
- 4) the negation through the analysis of both causes and results: the reasoning that negates arising from the four possibilities

5) the analysis of mere appearances: the reasoning of dependent origination

Scriptural Sources for the Five Great Reasonings

As for their scriptural references in the sūtras, the first of these reasonings is, for example, found in *The Sūtra of the Arrival in Lanka*,⁵⁵⁵ the second in *The Rice Seeding Sūtra*,⁵⁵⁶ and the fifth in *The Sūtra Requested by the Nāgā King "The Cool One"*⁵⁵⁷ as well as in *The Sūtra on Dependent Origination*.⁵⁵⁸ The third and fourth reasonings are found in various other sūtras.

In Centrist treatises, the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity is extensively explained in both Śāntarakṣita's *Ornament of Centristism*⁵⁵⁹ and Śrīgupta's (seventh century) *Commentary on Entering True Reality*. It is also used in Nāgārjuna's *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*,⁵⁶⁰ Āryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses*,⁵⁶¹ and the first volume of Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation*.⁵⁶²

The explanation of the vajra sliver reasoning is one of the main themes in Nāgārjuna's *Fundamental Verses* and also forms the major portion of the sixth chapter of Candrakīrti's *Entrance into Centristism*. It is taught in detail in the ninth chapter of Śāntideva's *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*⁵⁶³ and also presented in Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation*.⁵⁶⁴

As for the negation of the arising of existents and nonexistents, it is taught in the three just-mentioned texts by Nāgārjuna,⁵⁶⁵ Candrakīrti,⁵⁶⁶ and Śāntideva.⁵⁶⁷ It is also mentioned in *The Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*.⁵⁶⁸

The negation of arising from the four possibilities is found in Jñānagarbha's *Distinction between the Two Realities*⁶⁸⁹ and explained in detail in its autocommentary⁵⁷⁰ and the subcommentary by Śāntarakṣita⁵⁷¹ as well as in Haribhadra's *Illumination of The Ornament of Clear Realization*.⁵⁷² It is also used in Kamalaśīla's *Illumination of Centristism*⁵⁷³ and his *Establishing that all Phenomena are Without Nature*.⁵⁷⁴

The reasoning of dependent origination is the major theme of Nāgārjuna's *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*. It also appears in his *Rebuttal of Objections*,⁵⁷⁵ in *Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning*,⁵⁷⁶ in several chapters of his *Fundamental Verses*,⁵⁷⁷ and in Candrakīrti's *Entrance into Centristism*.⁵⁷⁸

The first known summary of four of these five reasonings (excepting the fourth) is found in Bhāvaviveka's *Summary of the Meaning of Centristism* (lines 14–17). Later, Atiśa gave a more detailed overview of the same four reasonings in his autocommentary on verses 48–52 of *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*.⁵⁷⁹ Kamalaśīla explains all five in his *Illumination of Centristism*.⁵⁸⁰

The Detailed Explanation of the Five Great Reasonings

Together, these reasonings refute the extremes of existence and nonexistence. Since our clinging to real existence is far stronger than our clinging to nonexistence, the first four reasonings eliminate the imputation that things exist by their

own nature. Therefore, they all serve to relinquish the first extreme of existence. The fifth reasoning simultaneously eliminates the extremes of existence and nonexistence. Moreover, it induces certainty about the unity of emptiness and dependent origination.

In what follows, these five reasonings are explained through a three-part reasoning (inference for oneself) and the three modes of a correct reason that were explained above. To reiterate, each such reasoning has a subject, a predicate, and a reason. Its validity is tested by checking the three modes of subject property, positive entailment, and negative entailment.

I. The analysis of a nature: the reasoning of freedom from unity and multiplicity

A. The formulation of the reasoning

All phenomena—such as sprouts—do not really exist, because they lack unity and multiplicity, just as a reflection in a mirror.

B. The three modes of the reason

The subject of this reasoning is just mere appearances without examination and analysis. The *subject property* that applies to this subject is as follows: These mere appearances are not a real unity, because they possess many parts. Each of these parts can in turn be broken down into many subparts. Since this process can be infinitely repeated, there is not a single smallest particle that is a really existent and indivisible unity. Without even one real building block, how could you put together many so as to create a really existent thing? Consequently, there can be nothing that is a real multiplicity, because there is no real unity to begin with that could build up such a multiplicity. To be sure, this reasoning does not negate the mere conventionality that one thing has many parts. The point here is that neither the thing in question nor its parts really exist by themselves. Thus, what is denied is not the mere appearance of unity and multiplicity on the level of seeming reality but the existence of any unity or multiplicity that is really established and findable as such.

For example, our body consists of its head, torso, and limbs. The legs can be further broken down into the thighs, knees, calves, ankles, and feet. The feet can be divided into the heel, the toes, and so on. The toes are just an assembly of single knuckles consisting of bone, cartilage, blood vessels, and so forth. Examining the microscopic level of each of these constituents, one arrives at their molecular, atomic, and subatomic structures.

At various points in this process, different Buddhists and non-Buddhists claim that there are smallest (sub)atomic particles that cannot be broken down further. Thus, what is particularly refuted through this reasoning is the existence of such infinitesimal particles, which often are regarded as partless and dimensionless,

similar to a mathematical point. In addition, they are said to be the building blocks of all coarse material phenomena. However, if these particles do not have any parts or spatial extensions, they cannot aggregate with others of their kind, since there are no surfaces or sides to contact anything else. Also, even many such dimensionless particles could never add up to some larger phenomenon that is perceptible by our senses, since even a million times zero spatial extension is still zero spatial extension. On the other hand, if these particles could align with others in order to build up larger three-dimensional things, they would have to have at least six sides—front, rear, left, right, top, and bottom—to allow for any form of contact with other particles in order to create a three-dimensional object. This, however, contradicts the claim that these particles are partless and extensionless. Thus, since no indivisible units or smallest possible particles can be found, there are no real multiplicities of phenomena that are built by them.³⁸¹

The *positive entailment* here means that the reason (whatever lacks real unity and multiplicity) may only be found in the homologous set of the predicate (everything that does not really exist). In other words, whatever is neither a real unity nor a real multiplicity must necessarily not really exist. The reverse of this—the *negative entailment*—is that if something really exists,³⁸² then it must necessarily be either a real unity or a real multiplicity, because unity and multiplicity are mutually exclusive and there is no third possibility. This is the law of the excluded middle that is accepted by all realists.

From among the three doors to liberation, this reasoning teaches the door of emptiness.

II. The analysis of causes: the vajra sliver reasoning

The vajra sliver reasoning bears this name because—just as a vajra is indestructible and at the same time capable of destroying everything else—it is able to shatter the huge rock mountain of wrong views that cling to real existence, while being completely unassailable itself. It is explained as it is found in *The Fundamental Verses on Centrism*:

Not from themselves, not from something other,
Not from both, and not without a cause—
At any place and any time,
All entities lack arising.³⁸³

Three of these four possibilities of arising are refuted by all Buddhist texts that deal with Centrism or valid cognition in general.³⁸⁴ These positions are exemplified by the Indian non-Buddhist schools of the Enumerators, who assert that things arise from themselves; the Jains, who assert that things arise from both themselves and something other; and the Mundanely Minded, who assert that

there is no cause. The fourth possibility of things arising from something other—the position of most other Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools—is refuted through Centrist texts alone.

The vajra sliver reasoning analyzes arising by taking the example of a seed (the cause) growing into a sprout (the result) and investigating their exact relationship. For example, we will search for the precise time when the seed is no longer a seed and becomes a sprout instead.

A. The formulation of the reasoning

A sprout is without arising, because it is without arising from itself, from others, from both, and from neither, just like an appearance in a dream.

B. The three modes of the reason

The *positive* and *negative entailment* cannot go beyond these four extremes of arising: Whatever does not arise from itself, from something other, from both, or from neither (that is, without any cause) necessarily does not arise at all. On the other hand, if things were to arise, they necessarily would have to arise either from themselves, from something other, from both, or from neither. There are no other possibilities. This is the case whether one looks at it from the perspective of analyzing for real existence or just in terms of mere arising. It should be clear, however, that this reasoning does not deny the mere appearance of something arising on the bare experiential level, where, because of ignorance, it seems as though things arise.

Here, establishing the *subject property* has four parts, since there are four possibilities of arising to be negated.

1. Establishing the reason that entities do not arise from themselves

The classic example in Centrist texts for people who assert that things arise from themselves are the Enumerators. They claim, "A sprout is merely a manifestation of the sole cosmic cause, which is the permanent primal substance. This really existing primal substance is the sprout's nature. Therefore, this sprout arises from its own nature, which is a permanent entity." By this, they mean that cause and result are one and the same in terms of their nature, substance, and time.

This position, however, leads to absurd consequences. For example, the same thing would be both the phenomenon that is produced and the phenomenon that produces it. This means that the sprout would be identical to both the primal substance and the seed (the latter being just an expression of this primal substance). Furthermore, it would not be justified that the seed from which the sprout has arisen ceases to exist, since this seed is nothing but an expression of the permanent primal substance. Consequently, the seed would either permanently exist or arise all the time. However, if the seed as the cause of the sprout does not

cease, then one would not find its result—the sprout—since results can only appear after their causes. In addition, if cause and result—seed and sprout—are the same and if the one arises from the other, the sprout should look exactly the same as the seed. If the seed, however, loses its own nature and turns into something else—a sprout different in color and shape—it cannot have a real and unchangeable nature of its own.

In general, in the context of causality, the result of a specific cause can only be perceived once this cause has ceased. However, if seed and sprout are not different, once the seed ceases, the sprout should also disappear. Or, once the sprout is visible, the seed too should be visible at the same time. Both possibilities contradict the notion of causality altogether. In addition, if things were to arise from themselves, all the distinct things that are agents and the objects upon which these agents act would be one and the same. Thus, that things arise from themselves is neither reasonable on the ultimate level nor accepted on the level of conventional worldly reality.

The Enumerators also say, "In general, only such things that exist already at the time of their causes arise, whereas previously nonexistent things can never arise. For example, sesame oil comes forth from sesame seeds when they are ground, because it already existed before in the seeds. The reason that sesame oil does not appear from grinding sand is that it does not exist in sand." The basic assumption behind this statement is the impossibility of something arising from nothing. Hence, a result cannot arise later without existing at the time of its specific cause. Moreover, there are no other causes apart from its specific cause either that could transform a result that does not exist in the first place into an existent result later. Thus, the Enumerators say, the result must preexist at the time of the cause.

However, if things—that is to say, results—arise from themselves alone, it implicitly follows that they need no other factors for their arising. So why does one have to struggle to grind sesame seeds or farm, since the harvest already exists when the seeds are present? In addition, if the result is the same as its cause, why should the result arise again, since it exists already? In general, if a thing is not yet present, it does not exist as a result. If it is already present, it is pointless for it to arise again. And if the result would still arise even though it exists already, then it would have to arise endlessly. As Buddhapālita's commentary on *Fundamental Verses* I.1 says:

Entities do not arise from their own intrinsic nature, because their arising would be pointless and because they would arise endlessly. For entities that [already] exist as their own intrinsic nature, there is no need to arise again. If they were to arise despite existing [already], there would be no time when they do not arise; [but] that is also not asserted [by the Enumerators].³⁸⁵

The Enumerators may continue, "There are two different phases in the process of arising. If a vase is made out of clay, it is the unmanifest vase in its state of being a lump of clay—the cause—that arises as a manifest vase—the result—later. Of course, we do not think that the vase that is already clearly manifest as the result arises again. Therefore, there is a difference between these two phases of the vase in that it is either clearly manifest or not."

However, if the vase already existed as an entity, it would be utterly pointless for it to arise again. On the other hand, if "it" arose from its state of not being clearly manifest, then it would be nothing other than a nonexistent that newly arises. Here, the Enumerators do not explicitly assert that the clearly manifest result as such does not exist at the time of the cause, but this is what follows from their claim that it becomes clearly manifest only later. In fact, they deny that the result is entirely nonexistent at the time of the cause and that it arises completely anew. However, implicitly, this is exactly what their position boils down to, because by claiming that the result exists as a potential, they just obscure the distinction between the nonexistence of the result at the time of the cause and its later existence. Saying that it is not manifest at the time of the cause amounts to saying that it does not exist. Through talking about "the unmanifest vase in its state of being a lump of clay," the Enumerators simply blend two different things into one, for a lump of clay is clearly not a vase. For one, a lump of clay cannot be said to be a vase, because it does not manifest as a vase. Nor does an "unmanifest vase" make sense, because then it would equally follow that it is an unmanifest cup, an unmanifest statue, or whatever else could be made from that clay. This would lead to the consequence that not only a vase but all these other unmanifest things too should arise from this one lump of clay.

Moreover, if the result existed at the time of the cause, it would have to be observable at this point. However, from that, it would follow that an apple tree can be perceived in an apple seed or milk in the grass eaten by a cow. One of the classic consequences is that an ant should carry around an elephant, the elephant being the karmic result of the existence as an ant to become manifest in one of the ant's future rebirths. In fact, the entirety of all infinite results of a given cause over time should then be observable at the same time in this cause. On the other hand, if the result is not observable at all at the time of the cause, how can it be said to exist?

There is no third alternative of saying that the result is partially existent, although this is precisely what the Enumerators (and many others) try to do by their formulation of an "unmanifest vase." However, even if there were such a partial existence of a vase, what would it look like? Even a partial existence should be observable at the time of the cause, but this is not the case. And if the result were partially existent at the time of the cause, where would the lacking portions of its complete existence come from? In general, it is impossible to identify a

distinct point in time at which the result turns from nonexistence into existence. It is also impossible to identify distinct points in time that are related to a gradual increase in the result's existence, such as "Up to here it exists at about 30 percent or 50 percent, and from here onward it exists at 100 percent." Nor does it make any sense that the result would leap from some degree of partial existence to full existence in the next moment. In addition, the most fundamental problem in that respect lies in the Enumerators' own claim that the primal substance as the single and final cosmic cause is not something perceptible in the first place.

In a very general sense, when it is said that all manifestations are potentially present in and as the primal substance and just become manifest at certain times, this would lead to the conclusion that all possible future results exist right from the very beginning. Furthermore, since all causes and results are said to be identical, at any given point in time, all possible results within the past, present, and future of the universe as well as all their causes would have to exist simultaneously.

2. Establishing the reason that entities do not arise from something other (the second part of establishing the subject property of the vajra sliver reasoning)

Our usual idea about causes and results is that things arise from something other than themselves. On the level of worldly seeming reality, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist realists³⁸⁶ say, "We agree that entities do not arise from themselves, but their arising from something other is established through valid cognition. There are reasons for this. Factually concordant types of consciousness arise from the four conditions,³⁸⁷ and in general most things arise from causal and dominant conditions. Both causes and results are not just mere mental imputations, but they are established from the object's own side. The fact that they arise withstands analysis. You cannot simply reason them away."

There are many reasonings to negate this position, but they are all contained in two:

- a. Arising from something other is impossible.
- b. In the context of arising, something other is in itself impossible.

a. Arising from something other is impossible.

Much confusion regarding what is "same" or "other" comes from our very loose and vague use of these notions, such as saying, "other but still similar or same" or "a little bit other" as opposed to "completely other." For example, we may think that, compared to ice, fire is "more other" than water. In the context of Centrist reasoning, the notion of "other" is as strict and literal as can be: Things are either the same or different. Either cause and result are assumed to be identical (as the Enumerators state) or they have to be different, that is, other. There

is no third possibility. Thus, being other is not a question of degree: Things are other whether they differ in all or in just one of their many features. Thus, all similar things must necessarily be different from each other, since what is identical is not similar. In other words, the categories of same and different are mutually exclusive and exhaustive.

One of the consequences of this clear delineation is that if things could arise from causes that are other than themselves, it would absurdly follow that anything could arise from anything. For example, deep darkness could originate even from bright light. As *The Entrance into Centristism* says:

If something were to originate in dependence on something other than it,
Well, then utter darkness could spring from flames
And everything could arise from everything,
Because everything that does not produce [a specific result] is the same in
being other [than it].³⁸⁸

The reasons for this consequence are as follows: If we consider a wheat seed and a rose seed, they are equal in that they are both something other than a rose sprout, and, in terms of real things, their being other than the rose sprout is something that is established through their own specific natures. Thus, since a wheat seed and a rose seed are equally other than a rose sprout, either both or neither of them should be able to produce the rose sprout.

We usually think that such phenomena as a rose seed and a rose sprout have a close connection, such as sharing some similarities or being in the same continuum, or that the seed as the specific cause has some causal efficacy or potential to produce the sprout as its specific result. On the other hand, we think that there is no such connection between a wheat seed and a rose sprout and even less so between fire and water or light and darkness. However, none of these notions of a relation between certain phenomena that we consider as causes and results solves the issue of arising from something other. They just perpetuate the mere assumption that things arise from something other: Even if causes and results are similar and in the same continuum, or if there were a certain productive potential in some things—the specific causes—and not in others, this does not change the basic fact that causes are still other than their results. Thus, the same consequences as above apply.

Moreover, when analyzed, there is just as much "causal connection" between a rose seed and a rose sprout as between fire and water: none whatsoever. For there is never any time in the process of arising when the cause actually meets the result so that the cause or its productive potential could have any effect on the result. As long as the cause exists, the result is not yet present, and as soon as the result appears, the cause has necessarily ceased. So when would the cause unfold

its productive potential? The cause can obviously not unfold it when the cause itself does not exist. If it were an existent cause that displays this productive potential, this would still not make the result appear. It cannot appear during the existence of the cause, since cause and result cannot exist simultaneously. Otherwise, they could not function as cause and result in the first place. In order to speak of causality, the cause has to precede the result.⁵⁸⁹ So if the cause must be first and cannot exist simultaneously with the result, there is no connection between cause and result and also no chance for a hypothetical productive potential of the cause to bring about or interact with the result, since they never meet. Therefore, eventually, this position of realists that things arise from something other entails the self-contradictory consequence that a sprout *cannot* arise from a seed, because—according to them—seed and sprout are something other through their respective specific natures.

b. In the context of arising, something other is impossible.

In the context of a result arising from a cause, the notion of “otherness” is altogether inappropriate. The reason for this is that in order to speak of two things as being other, they must exist at the same time. To elaborate, in terms of otherness that is based on really existing and substantial things and does not just refer to a mental image of something that is not present, there have to be two distinct things in the first place that can be contrasted as being “other.” These can only be two phenomena that are simultaneously observable as existing in the present, such as the left and the right horn of a cow or two persons in the same room. This then excludes the possibility of cause and result being other, since they are by definition never simultaneous.

Saying it in reverse, nonsimultaneous things cannot be other. Thus, since the result is not present at the time when the cause exists, at the time of the cause, there is just one phenomenon (the cause itself) and not two, that is, no result that could be identified or perceived as other than this cause. The same principle applies to the time when the result exists and the cause has ceased. Consequently, if cause and result were other, they would have to be simultaneous, but this contradicts the process of causality. The simultaneity of cause and result is also refuted through the examination of whether the result that is produced already exists or does not exist at the time of the cause.⁵⁹⁰ Thus, *The Lucid Words* says:

Entities also do not arise from something other, because there is nothing other.⁵⁹¹

Looking at this issue from the perspective of the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity, if all things do not really exist and even lack an identifiable nature of their own, what in them should determine one thing to be other

than another one? Also, if there is no thing that is really established in itself in any way, how could there be something other whose otherness depends on this first nonexistent thing? As *The Fundamental Verses* says:

If an entity in itself does not exist,

An entity other [than it] does not exist either.⁵⁹²

The refutation of things arising from something other is likewise accomplished by analyzing the four conditions. They include all possibilities of arising from something that is other than the result. The result, however, is found in none of the four. As *The Fundamental Verses* says:

Conditions are fourfold:

Causal, objective,

Immediate, and dominant.

There is no fifth condition.

The nature of entities

Does not exist in conditions and such.⁵⁹³

Thus, the nature of a rice sprout does not exist in any of its conditions. It does not exist in its causal conditions (water and manure), nor in its object condition (the harvest), nor in its immediate condition (the last moment of the rice seed), nor in its dominant condition (the person who planted the seed).

Causal Conditions

If causal conditions, such as water and manure, intrinsically have functions or productive capacities—such as giving rise to a sprout—they would have to produce sprouts all the time. And if they do not have any such functions or capacities, there could never be any production from them. In this case, however, why would they be presented as conditions for a result at all? Moreover, Nāgārjuna says, the relationship between conditions and their assumed functions cannot be settled:

Function is not something that entails conditions.

[Conventionally, however,] there is no function that does not entail conditions.

[Thus,] what does not entail a function is not a condition,

And there is none that entails a function.⁵⁹⁴

Further absurd consequences can be drawn when the result and its conditions are placed on a time line. Most people think that water, manure, and such are

the conditions of a sprout, since the latter arises in dependence on the former. However, in terms of each moment of the sprout's arising, as long as its respective moments have not arisen and thus are nonexistent, any preceding moments of water and so on cannot be its conditions. And once the sprout's respective moments have arisen, there is no more need for any conditions. Hence, when would they be the conditions of the sprout?

This is consensus: "Since something arises in dependence on these, Therefore, they are its conditions."

As long as this [something] does not arise,

How could these not be things that are not its conditions?

For [both] nonexistents and existents,

Conditions are not reasonable:

If something does not exist, the conditions of what would they be?

If something exists [already], what are conditions good for?²⁹⁵

In general, upon analysis, any existing or nonexistent phenomenon disintegrates and thus is not established. If no phenomenon can be established, then how could its causes or conditions be established?

Once phenomena are not established

As existent, nonexistent, or [both] existent and nonexistent,

How could one speak of "productive causes"?

It would be unreasonable, if such applied.²⁹⁶

Object Conditions

Likewise, the object condition is not established either. In the context of perception, an object is regarded as a condition for the arising of the consciousness that perceives this object. But if they are placed on a time line, we can see that this cannot work. If the object existed before the specific consciousness that is supposedly caused by it, what would this later consciousness perceive? The same applies if the object existed after the consciousness that is its perceiver. And if the object existed simultaneously with it, it could not be the cause of this consciousness.

Immediate Conditions

In general Buddhist epistemology, it is consensus that the previous moment of consciousness that has just ceased is the "immediate condition," or the immediately preceding condition of the next moment of consciousness. However, since it has already been refuted that there is anything that arises, something that has ceased cannot be justified. Moreover, since something that has ceased does not

exist anymore, it is also not suitable to serve as a condition. Hence, an immediate condition is also not established.

If phenomena have not arisen,

Cessation is not justified.

Therefore, the immediate condition is not reasonable.

If it has ceased, what would be such a condition?²⁹⁷

Dominant Conditions

The notion of dominant conditions is mostly used in the process of perception. It refers to the respective sense faculties based on which specific consciousnesses arise, such as the eye consciousness arising on the basis of the eye sense faculty. Since all of the above (and the following) refutations equally apply to dominant conditions, Nāgārjuna does not treat them separately.

Sīll, Buddhists might argue, "This contradicts the Buddha's teaching. In terms of dependent origination, he said, 'Since this exists, that originates. Since this has arisen, that arises. Due to the condition of basic unawareness, there is formation and so on.'" *The Lucid Words* states:

These teachings of arising in the sense of dependent origination and so on are not meant in terms of the nature of the object of the unconditioned wisdom of those who are free from the blurred vision of basic ignorance. "To what do they refer then?" They are meant in terms of the objects of the consciousnesses of those whose eyes of insight are impaired by the blurred vision of basic ignorance.²⁹⁸

Hence, a result does not dwell in any of its diverse conditions. Thus, if the result is nonexistent at the time of its causes and conditions, how could such a nonexistent arise as an existent later? If it were to arise despite its nonexistence, then it could arise even from things that are not its causes, or it could arise without any cause at all. As *The Fundamental Verses* says:

The result does not exist at all

In any of its diverse conditions or their assembly.

How could what does not exist in its conditions

Arise from such conditions?

However, if it does not exist

And were still to arise from these conditions,

Why would it not also arise

From what are not its conditions?²⁹⁹

Some people might still argue, "Because the result depends on its conditions, the result is something that has the nature of its conditions." If none of these conditions exists as something that even bears its own nature, how could any of them be the nature of the result? On the other hand, conventionally, there is also no result that does not depend on conditions. Therefore, causes and conditions are nothing but superimpositions.

You might say, "The result is of the nature of its conditions."

[However,] conditions do not have a nature of their own.

What is the result of something that is not an entity in itself?

How could it be of the nature of [such] conditions?

Therefore, it is not of the nature of its conditions.

[However,] there is [also] no result with a nature of what are not its conditions.

Since results do not exist,

How could nonconditions be conditions?⁶⁰⁰

3. Establishing the reason that entities do not arise from both themselves and others (the third part of establishing the subject property of the vajra sliver reasoning)

Some people, such as the followers of Viṣṇu and the Jainas,⁶⁰¹ say, "That a clay vase arises from itself means that it is made out of clay and still has this nature of clay, thus not being something other than it. That the vase arises from something other means that it arises through the activity of a potter, a potter's wheel, water, and so on. Hence, things do not arise exclusively from themselves nor exclusively from others. Rather they arise from a combination of these two ways of arising."

This third possibility of arising from both is already implicitly refuted through the above negations of things arising from themselves or from something other respectively. Therefore, the negation of the combination of the first two possibilities of arising is usually only touched upon very briefly in Centrist texts. For example, *The Lucid Words* explains:

Nor do entities arise from both [themselves and others], because this would entail [all] the flaws that were stated for both of these theses and because none of these [disproved possibilities] have the capacity to produce [entities].⁶⁰²

Thus, if neither things themselves nor something other than these things have the power to give rise to anything, the combination of two such powerless fac-

tors can in no way result in any power that causes things to arise. For example, if a single grain of sand has no power to produce olive oil, many such powerless grains are still equally powerless to produce oil. Or, in mathematical terms, many times zero is still zero.

4. Establishing that entities do not arise without any cause (the fourth part of establishing the subject property of the vajra sliver reasoning)

Most Indian hedonists or materialists claim that things arise without any causes; that is, that they just arise naturally and spontaneously come into being as they are. One of their scriptures says:

The roundness of peas, the long sharp tips of thorns,

The colorful patterns of the feathers of a peacock's wings,

The rising of the sun, and the downhill flow of rivers—

All these were created by nobody. Their cause is their very nature.

However, this position has completely absurd consequences, such as that things in general would either arise all the time or never arise. Furthermore, it clearly contradicts our everyday perception of results appearing at certain times in dependence on certain things or actions that are their causes, such as a harvest appearing only due to farming. We generally see that results do not occur just by accident or without a cause. If things could indeed appear without any causes, anything nonexistent or impossible could manifest, such as a lotus growing in the sky. A further consequence would be that we could not perceive anything in the world, because there would be no objects that could serve as causes for our perceptions. On the level of common worldly experience, if we see a blue flower, this is due to there being a blue flower to be perceived. If there is no such blue flower, a perception of it does not arise. As *The Lucid Words* says:

If these beings were empty of being causes, they could not be apprehended,

Just like the smell and the color of an utpala flower in the sky.⁶⁰³

If things arose without causes, no effort would be required to produce or accomplish anything, since things would either arise anyway or not arise even despite such efforts. For example, meals could appear without any ingredients or cooking, or they would not appear at all no matter how diligently we prepared them. In fact, any goal-oriented activity, such as assembling a car, would be completely pointless, since all these activities would never be the causes of a desired result, such as a car that could actually be driven. If we are lucky, though, it might

pop up out of nowhere and work anyway. Thus, anything could arise at any time in a completely haphazard way, such as a blazing fire in the depths of the ocean or darkness in the middle of a bright lamp. Or, it would follow that an apple tree could arise not only from an apple seed but also from a rose seed, because—according to the position that things arise without a cause—both seeds are equal in not being the cause for the apple tree. Also, any fruits should be fully ripened all the time or never, because their ripeness does not depend on any other factors, such as chemical processes or time. And since a peacock is not the cause of the colors of its feathers, a crow should also have such beautiful feathers.

One might object, "There is a difference in the case of a flower growing in the sky and such things as a harvest, since the former does not have an existent nature, whereas the latter have." However, even such a difference does not remove the above absurd consequences, since—according to the position that things arise without causes—a result that is assumed to have an existent nature would still be something that arises without a cause and thus is equally subject to the same inconsistencies.

Moreover, the very fact of making any statement or even giving a reason contradicts the original thesis that there are no causes, since making a statement or giving a reason is a cause that makes other persons understand something. If things arise without causes, other persons should understand everything without anybody ever saying anything. Or, nobody would ever understand anything, despite being given the most sophisticated explanations and reasons.

Other hedonists say, "The only kind of valid cognition is direct perception. Thus, only those things that can be directly perceived exist. Their causes are the four great material elements—earth, water, fire, and wind—but not such things as positive or negative actions, whether they happen in this lifetime or in any past or future ones that may be assumed. The same goes for the mind: It is merely something that evolves from the four elements in our body. Just as the mixture of barley and yeast gives rise to the force that inebriates the mind, the ripening of the union of sperm and egg gives rise to the mind."⁶⁰⁴

The first counterargument here is that the elements themselves do not exist. The three preceding possibilities for an arising of things—from themselves, something other, or both—have already been refuted through the corresponding parts of the vajra sliver reasoning. Thus, all phenomena—including the four great elements—do not really arise or exist in the first place. Therefore, the question of whether these elements can be the causes of anything does not apply.

Second, even in the relative world, this position makes no sense. There are a number of inconsistencies and counterarguments, even if the above statements on valid cognition, existence, and the body-mind problem are addressed on the mere conventional level. For example, if only directly perceptible things exist and can serve as causes, it would follow that our own inner organs, such as the

heart, do not exist and cannot be the causes for our staying alive, since we never directly perceive them (seeing them in a corpse or on an x-ray can only lead to an inference that we have these organs).

In terms of past and future lives, the hedonists' justification that these do not exist is again that if they existed, they would have to exist in a directly manifest way for our perception. However, since they are not directly perceptible, they are said to be nonexistent. If these people are asked whether their knowledge that such lifetimes are not directly perceptible comes from direct perception or something that is not direct perception, their answer naturally is, "It comes from direct perception." However, then it absurdly follows that the nonexistence of past and future lives as things is something directly perceptible, because they say that the lack of direct perceptibility of these lifetimes is directly perceptible. If this is accepted, it follows that this lack of perceptibility—which is nothing but the nonexistence of things—would nevertheless be an existing thing for the hedonists, since it is directly perceptible, just as existing things are. Then it further follows that also things do not exist, since there is no such thing as the total "lack of things" as a counterpart for things. In other words, "things" cannot be established without "the lack of things" and vice versa. If even this is accepted, it follows that both the elements' existence as things and the nonexistence of past and future lives as things are not justified, because neither things nor the lack of things exist.

At this point, these people might object, "Well, it is very easy to know that something is not directly perceptible, since this is known from the sign or reason that consists in its lack of direct perceptibility." However, from their above position that direct perception is the only kind of valid cognition, it then follows that one is not able to infer the nonexistence of past and future lives, because if the lack of direct perceptibility of these lifetimes is not directly perceived, one is not able to apprehend this lack in any other way at all. If they say, "It is apprehended through inference," this disqualifies their standard statements about inference not being a type of valid cognition, such as, "Since inferring past lives from the sign or reason of varying individual degrees of happiness and suffering in this life is as unjustified as the story of the wolf's footprints,"⁶⁰⁵ inference is impossible" and "All that exists is limited to the spheres of the five senses." Thus, there is no proof that past and future lifetimes do not exist, while there are many reasons that suggest their existence.⁶⁰⁶

As for the claim that the material elements are the causes of mind, this also cannot be justified. In general, phenomena whose characteristics are contradictory cannot function as the cause and result of each other. For example, fire does not arise from water, and permanent things do not arise from impermanent things. Likewise, on the conventional level, the main characteristics of matter are to have certain shapes and colors, to have extensions in space and time, to obstruct other

things, to consist of particles, and to not be conscious. On the other hand, mind has neither shape nor color nor any spatial or durational extension. Mind does not obstruct anything, is not made of particles, and is conscious. Moreover, if the elements in the body were the causes of mind, any changes in these causes would always have to affect the mind as their result in a strictly corresponding way. For example, if the body is healthy or deteriorates, the mind would have to be equally healthy or deteriorating. However, there are numerous counterexamples, such as a very sharp and flexible mind in a frail or handicapped body or a completely deranged mind in a perfectly healthy body. In addition, since outer material things also consist of the four elements, there is no reason that stones and the like should not also exhibit some manifestations of consciousness as well as some other features that are found only in animate bodies, such as respiration, metabolism, movement, and reproduction.⁶⁰⁷

In brief, the appearances of this world do not arise without any causes, because these appearances arise only sometimes. This reason might seem odd at first. However, as was explained above, if things arise without causes, all of them would have to arise all the time or never. Thus, the fact that certain things only arise at certain times and not at others is the most powerful indication that there must be something that accounts for this difference. This "something" is the completeness of all the specific causes and conditions that lead to a certain result. Conversely, if these causes and conditions are incomplete, their specific result does not arise.

To summarize the vajra sliver reasoning, it is clear that there is not the slightest arising through any of the four possibilities described. However, since it is worldly consensus that there is arising, such arising is just presented according to this usual way of thinking. Thus, it is not refuted here that, from the perspective of mere worldly consensus without analysis, it appears as if things arise. Also, the vajra sliver reasoning is definitely not meant to negate the principle of causality altogether. For, when not analyzed, causality clearly performs its function on the level of seeming reality. However, even on this level, people do not claim that results arise from themselves or something other and so on. Rather, they just say that a sprout arises from a seed, but they do not determine whether the seed is identical to or other than the sprout. As *The Entrance into Centrism* says:

After worldly people have merely implanted a seed,
They say, "I engendered this child"
And think, "I planted a tree."

Therefore, even on the worldly level, there is no arising from something other.⁶⁰⁸

Thus, in general, according to Centrists, any attempt to justify everyday experience through something other than just mere conventional consensus must

inevitably lead to logical and—more important—spiritual problems. Thus, in its own terms, seeming reality with all its conventional appearances is not to be analyzed, since then one already moves away from this very seeming reality. It functions as such only as long as it is not questioned.

From among the three doors to liberation, the vajra sliver reasoning teaches the door of signlessness.

III. The analysis of results: the negation of an arising of existents and nonexistents

This reasoning is basically an elaboration of the negation of arising from something other as found in the context of the vajra sliver reasoning.

A. The formulation of the reasoning

Mere appearances do not exist by their nature, because neither existents nor nonexistents arise, just like an illusion.

B. The three modes of the reason

Here, the *subject property* is that mere appearances do not arise either as existents or as nonexistents. So the question is: "If a sprout arises, does it then arise as something that existed already at the time of the seed, or does it arise as something that did not exist at that time? Can it possibly arise as something that is both existent and nonexistent or as something that is neither?"

As explained above, any phenomenon that exists will not arise, since it has already arisen before. Nonexistents will not arise either, because there is nothing that could arise and because there is no cause whatsoever that could turn a non-existent into something existent. In addition, if the sprout were to arise as something that already existed at the time of the seed, then it would have arisen either from something other than the seed or without any cause, but obviously not from this seed itself. Moreover, there would be no need for the seed as the sprout's cause, since the latter is already present without having to arise in dependence on this seed. If the sprout has already arisen in dependence on something other than the seed, what would be the point of a seed as yet another cause? And if it had arisen without any cause, the seed would be equally superfluous. On the other hand, if the sprout arose as something that did not exist at the time of the seed, then there would not be the slightest influence or effect that the cause (the seed) could have on such a nonexistent. That the sprout could arise from the combination of both possibilities—existence and nonexistence—is self-contradictory. It is also implicitly refuted through the negations of the first two possibilities, since their inconsistencies just multiply. As for the fourth possibility, there is nothing that is neither existent nor nonexistent, so what would arise?

The *positive entailment* of the reason here is that whatever does not arise either

as an existent or as a nonexistent does not exist by its nature, since these two possibilities are mutually exclusive and there is no third. The same reason applies to the *negative entailment*, since anything that is assumed to exist by its nature would necessarily have to arise either as an existent or as a nonexistent.

Exemplary proponents of the first possibility—arising as an existent—include the Enumerators, whose position of the arising of a result that exists already at the time of the cause has been refuted in detail above. The Buddhist school of the Followers of The Great Exposition claims the arising of a result that already exists in the future.⁶⁰⁹ This position is refuted as follows: If a thing that has not yet arisen here and now were to exist in some unknown other place at present, it might be reasonable for it to arise here in the future. However, since there is no such place where all future things exist right now, what could arise from this place later? And even if there were such a place with already existing future things, they would have to be perceptible right now. Otherwise, how could one claim that they exist at present? *The Fundamental Verses* says:

If some nonarisen entity
Existed somewhere,
It might arise.

However, since such does not exist, what would arise?⁶¹⁰

As for the second possibility—arising as a nonexistent—there are many Buddhists and non-Buddhists who assert the new arising of a result that previously did not exist. However, it is impossible for nonexistents to depend on any causes. Consequently, if something that has not existed before can still arise, it would follow that just about anything can arise, even impossibilities such as a hairy frog.

If something that lacks arising could arise,
Just about anything could arise in this way.⁶¹¹

From among the doors to complete liberation, this reasoning teaches the door of wishlessness.

IV. The analysis of both causes and results: the negation of arising from the four possibilities

A. The formulation of the reasoning
Mere appearances lack arising, because a single result does not arise from a single cause; many results do not arise from a single cause; a single result does not arise from many causes; and many results also do not arise from many causes.

B. The three modes of the reason

As for the *subject property*, when considered just from the perspective of our mistakeness, the following statements are rather unproblematic: “One sprout arises from one seed,” “One eye consciousness arises from three conditions,” “Many children are born from one mother,” and “Many harvests come from many causes, such as seeds, water, and manure.” However, from the perspective of reasoning, an arising from any of these four possibilities is impossible, since, briefly put, the reasoning at hand is just an elaboration of the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity. As was explained above, there is no phenomenon that is a real unity or a real multiplicity in the first place. From this, it naturally follows that there are no real single or multiple causes that could give rise to any single or multiple results.

A more detailed way to look at these four possibilities is found in Jñānagarbha’s autocommentary on verse 14 of his *Distinction between the Two Realities*:⁶¹²

1. A single result does not arise from a single cause

For example, if the eye sense faculty only produced the single result that is the next moment of its own continuum, it could not also produce a visual consciousness in this next moment. In that case, everybody would be blind. On the other hand, if the eye sense faculty produced the single result that is a visual consciousness, its own continuum as an eye sense faculty would have to stop at that moment. Naturally, the same goes for the remaining sense faculties as well as for other phenomena, such as a candle flame: Either it produces its own next moment, and thus no visual perception of itself, or it causes a visual consciousness in someone but then becomes extinguished in that very moment.

2. Many results do not arise from a single cause

If a single cause all by itself were to produce a second or more results, cause and result would lack a causal relationship, since the cause would be single while the result would be multiple. In other words, the singularity of the cause does not produce a corresponding singularity of the result. However, if a further factor within or in addition to that single cause is assumed to produce the second result, clearly one is no longer speaking about a single cause.

3. A single result does not arise from many causes

This entails the reverse of the problem in (2), that is, that the multiplicity of the cause does not produce a corresponding multiplicity of the result. Conversely, the absence of multiplicity in the cause would not cause the absence of multiplicity in the result either. For, in this case of a single result arising from many causes, the result lacks multiplicity, while the cause does not. Consequently, neither the multiplicity of the result nor its lack thereof would have a cause, since there is no

third category beyond causes and results being either multiple or nonmultiple. Hence, nothing would have a cause. In that case, everything would either exist permanently or not exist at all or would just arise at random.

4. Many results do not arise from many causes. The basic problem of the lack of invariable congruence between cause and result in terms of both being either single or multiple applies here too. Take the example of visual perception: If the cause is multiple (for example, an eye sense faculty, a visual form, and an immediately preceding moment of consciousness), then the result (the single resultant moment of a visual consciousness) should invariably be multiple too, but this is obviously not the case. Likewise, in being a result, a clay vase should be multiple due to the multiplicity of its cause (clay, water, a potter, and a potter's wheel).

As for the *positive entailment* here, it means that whatever does not arise from these four possibilities must necessarily lack arising altogether. The *negative entailment* means that anything that arises must necessarily arise from one of these possibilities.

V. The analysis of mere appearances:
the reasoning of dependent origination

The Precious Garland says:

Due to the existence of this, that comes to be,
Just as something short, when there is something long.
Due to the arising of this, that arises,
Just as light due to the appearance of a butter lamp.⁶¹³

Accordingly, there are two types of dependence:

A. dependence in terms of dependent imputation, such as being short in dependence on being long
B. dependence in terms of dependent origination, such as the arising of smoke due to the arising of fire

A. Dependence in terms of imputation

1. The formulation of the reasoning
For example, it may be said, "All things are neither really big nor small, because being big and small depend on each other."

2. The three modes of the reason

The *subject property* says that all things depend on each other in terms of being big or small. In other words, anything that is big in comparison to something smaller than itself is at the same time small when compared to some third thing that is even bigger and vice versa. The *positive entailment* means that whatever depends on something else in terms of being big or small is necessarily not really or independently big or small. The *negative entailment* means that if there were something intrinsically big or small, it would have to be independent of everything other in terms of being big or small. The same applies for all other mutually dependent characteristics, such as existent and nonexistent, good and bad, or beautiful and ugly.

B. Dependence in terms of origination

1. The formulation of the reasoning

This reasoning is called "the king of reasonings" through which Centrists demonstrate that phenomena are empty of any true reality, since it eliminates the extremes of both permanence and extinction. Since phenomena originate in dependence on various causes and conditions, on the conventional level of seeming reality, they are not as utterly nonexistent as a long-haired turtle.⁶¹⁴ This eliminates the extreme of extinction. At the same time, phenomena do not exist as permanent things that are established through a nature of their own precisely because they depend on other causes and conditions and thus lack any real and independent nature. As *The Sūtra Requested by the Nāgā King "The Cool One"* says:

The learned ones realize phenomena that originate in dependence.
In no way do they rely on views about extremes.

The Fundamental Verses states:

What is dependent origination
Is explained as emptiness.
It is a dependent designation
And in itself the middle path.

Since there is no phenomenon
That is not dependently originating,
There is no phenomenon
That is not empty.⁶¹⁵

In order to explicitly eliminate the two extremes of permanence and extinction, the reasoning of dependent origination can be formulated in two main ways.

a. To exclude the first extreme, the reasoning may be formulated in a negative way: "Mere appearances do not exist by their nature, because they dependently originate, just like a dream."
 b. To eliminate the extreme of extinction and to account for seeming reality, the reasoning may also be stated in an affirmative way: "All phenomena are not non-existent like the horns of a rabbit, because they dependently originate." Another way to say this would be: "Phenomena are illusionlike, because they dependently originate."

2. The three modes of the reason

At first, the reason "dependently originating" may look like an affirming reason. The *subject property* says that all phenomena necessarily originate in dependence. In terms of its phrasing, this appears to be an affirmative statement. The *positive entailment* is that whatever originates in dependence necessarily does not exist by its nature, is illusionlike, and is also not utterly nonexistent. The *negative entailment* means that if there were anything that existed by its nature, was not illusionlike, or was utterly nonexistent, it would necessarily not originate in dependence. In particular, the explicit words of the reasonings under (B) seem to affirm something about phenomena, that is, their "existence" or "illusionlike being." However, the meaning that is pointed out by the reason "dependently originating" is nothing other than that things are empty of real existence or real arising. Thus, in whatever way this reasoning of dependent origination may be formulated, it never becomes a means to ascertain some really existent things, be they seeming or ultimate, nor does it suggest some really existent kind of dependent origination. Since this is clearly a case of relying not on mere words but on the meaning, the reasoning of dependent origination is a negating reasoning in effect, since "arising from dependently originating conditions" means nothing other than "lack of real arising." Obviously, the word "arising" is used here in two different ways: In the first phrase, it refers to the mere illusionlike display of causes and conditions due to ignorance, from which we gain the wrong impression that things really arise. The second phrase means the denial of any real arising in this illusory display, without denying its mere appearance. As the sūtras say:

What arises from conditions does not arise.

It does not have the nature of arising.

What depends on conditions is explained to be empty.

Those who understand emptiness are heedful.

Candrakīrti's *Commentary on The Four Hundred Verses* says:

I do not say that entities do not exist, because I say that they originate in dependence. "So are you a realist then?" I am not, because I am just a proponent of dependent origination. "What sort of nature is it then that you [propound]?" I propound dependent origination. "What is the meaning of dependent origination?" It has the meaning of the lack of a nature and the meaning of nonarising through a nature [of its own]. It has the meaning of the origination of results with a nature similar to that of illusions, mirages, reflections, cities of scent-eaters,⁶⁶ magical creations, and dreams. It has the meaning of emptiness and identitylessness.⁶⁷

Thus, this reasoning shows that, just like the two sides of a single coin, dependent origination and emptiness—or appearance and emptiness—are not at all contradictory but an inseparable unity. This means that although dependently originating phenomena lack any ultimately real existence, on the conventional level they are not just completely nonexistent, since—unlike sky-flowers and such—they represent the experiential consensus of our everyday lives. *The Entrance into Centrism* says:

Just like a vase and such do not exist in true reality

And at the same time exist as common worldly consensus,

All entities originate in this very same way.

Hence, it does not follow that they are the same as the son of a barren woman.

Since both these [causes and results] are illusionlike,

We are not at fault and the entities of the world do exist [as such].⁶⁸

The Fundamental Verses declares:

Whatever might be used to invalidate emptiness,

That is, dependent origination,

Just serves to invalidate

The entirety of worldly conventions.⁶⁹

If things were not empty of independent and real existence, the interdependent origination of causes and results in the world would be impossible, since nothing could be affected by anything. Thus, none of the appearances and conventions that we constantly deal with would ever come about. However, again, this seeming dependent origination is not something that is presented as part of a Centrist system of its own. All that Centrists say is that, just from the perspec-

tive of ordinary worldly experiences, certain appearances seem to appear in dependence on the appearance of certain others, which are called their conditions. Moreover, the presentation of seeming phenomena as dependent origination serves as a proper support to conveniently approach their ultimate reality, which is that causes and results are empty of any nature. All dualistic phenomena (such as cause and result, subject and object, cyclic existence and nirvāṇa, or seeming and ultimate reality) are just set up in mutual dependence, but none of them exists independently through a nature of its own. In this way, the Centrist view is free from the two extremes of permanence and extinction.

The gist of this is as follows: When Centrists present the arising and ceasing of dependently originating causes and results on the level of no analysis, they neither superimpose nor deprecate anything with regard to the seeming worldly reality of mere appearances. Therefore, when Centrists engage in the conventional interactions of adopting certain things and rejecting others, they do not deviate from the ways of seeming reality, since they express things in a way that does not add or remove anything from how people deal with these things in the context of common worldly consensus. While it definitely makes sense to maintain this approach on the level of no analysis, if Centrists were to assert arising and ceasing in terms of dependent origination on the level of analysis, such would only amount to superimposition and deprecation with regard to both realities. Therefore, if Centrists were to approach the ultimate in this way, they would deviate from both realities. From the perspective of analysis, there would be the superimposition of establishing the dependently originating phenomena of seeming reality in some sense, while in fact they are not established. To imagine that these phenomena are somehow established would negate the ultimate freedom from arising and ceasing and thus deprecate ultimate reality.

In a broader sense, the reasoning of mere dependent origination is said to be the king of Centrist reasonings, since it not only dispels the extremes of permanence and extinction but also eradicates all kinds of wrong views. For example, it refutes that things arise without any cause, since this would mean that things do not depend on anything at all, while dependent origination shows the opposite: that things depend on collections of their specific causes and conditions. This reasoning also negates all notions of a permanent, single, and nonconcordant cause, such as a primal substance or a creator god. For, if things arose from a single cause, this would contradict our experience that they in fact depend on vast numbers of conditions. Nor can things depend on a permanent cause, since something permanent is by definition devoid of performing any function or activity, because such already entails a process of change. If things could arise from nonconcordant causes, it would be unreasonable that they have to depend on their own specific causes.

Likewise, the reasoning of dependent origination equally refutes that things arise from themselves, from something other, or from both. In terms of arising

from itself, a thing can neither depend on itself nor act upon itself. Furthermore, if a thing is not established in itself, it can be neither something that depends on something else nor something on which something else depends. On the other hand, if a thing were established in itself, it would not have to depend on anything. As for arising from something other, if things are not established in themselves in the first place, the question of what depends on what as well as the whole notion of "other" is pointless. Even if it is assumed that things are established in themselves, this would mean that they do not have to depend on anything other. However, being established by themselves yet still having to depend on something else (such as causes and conditions) is self-contradictory. As for arising from both themselves and something other, obviously, all these flaws would just multiply.

The Entrance into Centrism summarizes:

Since entities originate in dependence,

All these thoughts cannot withstand examination.

Therefore, this reasoning of dependent origination

Cuts through the entire web of erroneous views.⁶²⁰

Conclusion

Each of the five great Centrist reasonings is in itself fully sufficient to produce an understanding that things lack any real or independent existence. However, as was shown for the vajra sliver reasoning and the reasoning of the freedom from unity and multiplicity, they supplement each other in generating incontrovertible certainty and an all-encompassing realization of this lack of real existence. Moreover, in order to approach such a realization, the various reasonings provide a range of different avenues that may be more or less convenient or convincing for individual people with varying capacities, propensities, or particular misconceptions.

In this context of the five great Centrist reasonings, it should be clear that a real and intrinsic nature of things is impossible among knowable objects. Therefore, strictly speaking, from among the three modes of a correct reason, the negative entailment cannot be established here. As was explained, the negative entailment means that the reason may never apply to the heterologous set. In terms of the above five reasonings, the general meaning of the predicate in all of them is "what lacks a real nature." Thus, "what has a real nature" would be the heterologous set. Since it is precisely such a real nature of things that does not exist, it does not make sense to say that the respective reason—such as "being free from unity and multiplicity" or "originating in dependence"—may not apply to a heterologous set (that is, something that has a real nature) that is nonexistent. In other words, the question as to whether something can apply to, entail, or include a nonexistent or not is *per se* irrelevant.

However, that the third mode cannot be established in no way invalidates the above reasonings. As was explained, there is no doubt that if there were such a thing as a really existing cup, it would necessarily have to be established either as a cup that is a unity or as a cup that is a multiplicity. The same goes for hypothetical, really arising entities. Furthermore, there are many concordant examples for the nonexistence of a real nature—such as illusions, reflections, and dreams—that can be appropriately employed in these reasonings. Finally, what is to be comprehended through the inferential cognitions that are based on such arguments is nothing but the probandum of these arguments—that all things lack a real nature—and never its opposite.

As was explained, there are two types of negating reasons: those that are based on the nonobservation of something connected and those that are based on the observation of something contradictory. The first four Centrist reasonings fall under the first category, and the reason of dependent origination falls under the latter.

In general, there is no disagreement between Autonomists and Consequentialists about either these conventional issues or the essential point of how they understand ultimate reality. Thus, the five great reasonings of Centrism are common to Autonomists and Consequentialists. Both use these arguments to point out phenomenal identitylessness. Their difference is that Consequentialists say that these five reasonings merely follow the conventions of logic as acknowledged by others. On the mere conventional level, Autonomists understand them as autonomous arguments that are acknowledged by both parties.

OTHER REASONINGS

Apart from the five great Centrist reasonings, there are two further major arguments that are used to determine phenomenal identity/lessness.

In the first reasoning, any real existence of the mind as the apprehender is negated through the preceding negation of something apprehended. Thus, through using an appropriate reasoning of one's choice, one starts by refuting the notion of really and independently existent objects. Once no such objects are to be found, there can be no real subject—the apprehending mind—that cognizes them, since the subject has to depend on the existence of its object. If neither subject nor object really exists, all phenomena do not really exist, since phenomena are either subjects or objects. As *The Entrance into Centrism* says:

In brief, understand this meaning:

Just as knowable objects do not exist, mind does not exist either.

The Buddhas said, "If there are no knowable objects,

One easily finds that a knower is excluded."

If knowable objects do not exist, the negation of a knower is established. Therefore, they first negated knowable objects.⁶²¹

The second reasoning inductively applies the realization of the emptiness of one phenomenon to all phenomena. This is described in Āryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses*:

That which is the observer of one single entity
Is explained to be the observer of everything.
That which is the emptiness of one [entity]
Is the emptiness of everything.⁶²²

Here, "the observer" refers to the supreme knowledge that realizes emptiness. All things, such as form, appear in different ways, but they are not different in that they do not arise through a real nature of their own. Therefore, if it is understood that one phenomenon does not arise through a nature of its own, then it is also realized that all other phenomena equally do not arise through a nature of their own. This is like every drop of the ocean having the same taste. The experience of the taste of a single drop of ocean water is the same experience as the taste of every drop of the ocean. Likewise, when a single conditioned phenomenon is realized to be empty, the emptiness of all conditioned phenomena is realized, since all phenomena share this basic feature of being conditioned. As *The Sūtra Requested by Sky Treasure* says:

Those who meditate on a single phenomenon and thus understand
That all phenomena are like an illusion and a mirage,
Ungraspable, hollow, false, and not solid,
Will soon proceed to the heart of enlightenment.

The Sūtra of the King of Meditative Concentration agrees:

Through one, you will know all.
Through one, you will see all.

It is said that, strictly speaking, the latter reasoning is only suitable for people whose minds are not affected by any Buddhist or non-Buddhist philosophical systems, so that they, from their unquestioning worldly perspective, can directly enter the middle path beyond extremes. Thus, this reasoning is not intended for those who already follow certain philosophical systems. Such people may have determined through their systems that such things as coarse outer objects lack real and independent existence, but it is precisely their adherence to these philo-

sophical systems that prevents them from extending their analysis and realization to other, more subtle things that nevertheless bear this same nature of lacking real existence.

Unmasking Personal Identity

In general, all the reasonings that negate phenomenal identity can also be used to negate personal identity and vice versa, since the latter is just a special instance of the former. However, the clinging to a personal identity of our own is singled out to be tackled through additional specific reasonings, since it governs all levels of our thinking and behavior in a very immediate way and is thus directly responsible for the arising of mental afflictions and the ensuing suffering. Moreover, the realization of personal identitylessness that is achieved through these reasonings is the cause for liberation from cyclic existence.

The conceptions of clinging to a personal self focus on the five aggregates that constitute our psychophysical continua. Even if these aggregates themselves are not taken to be our self, any self that is assumed to be something other than the aggregates is always regarded as being related to these aggregates—that is, our immediate personal appearances and experiences—in one way or the other. We think in this way by regarding certain aspects of these aggregates either as being our self or as being connected to or controlled by such a self. Therefore, our grasping at a self constantly engages one or several of the five aggregates. In certain situations, we extend our thoughts of a self even to our friends, relatives, and possessions: If someone else benefits or harms them, we think that this person has helped or harmed us.

Technically speaking, this conceptual object of a “self” that is apprehended through the clinging to the aggregates as being or relating to a self is considered a nonentity;⁶⁵² more specifically, it is a term generality⁶⁵⁴ that does not correspond to any real object. Obviously, from the perspective of reasonings that analyze for the ultimate, there is no need to talk about the existence of a real personal identity. However, even from the perspective of reasonings that analyze conventional expressions, a real personal identity does not exist.⁶⁵³ Still, in adaptation to the perspective of worldly consensus without examination and analysis, the Buddha never denied the mere notions of a person or an individual. However, these notions never correspond to any actual object that exists in a substantial way. They are always understood to exist in a purely nominal way in the context of the mere correct seeming. As the sūtras say:

Just as a collection of [certain] parts
Is described by the name “chariot,”
Likewise, in dependence on the aggregates,
One speaks about “sentient beings” on the seeming level.

The negations of the object of our clinging to a self are usually presented in the framework of the twenty views about a real personality that were explained earlier.⁶⁵⁵ In brief, the sūtras describe these twenty views as follows:

- (1–5) the five notions that one of the five aggregates is the self
- (6–10) the five notions that the self possesses one of the aggregates as a companion or retinue
- (11–15) the five notions that one of the aggregates dwells in or is based on the self in such a way that it is supported by the self
- (16–20) the five notions that the self dwells in or is based on one of the aggregates in such a way that this aggregate is its support

That none of these notions applies is expressed in Nāgārjuna’s *Letter to a Friend*:

It is said that form is not the self,
That the self does not possess form, that the self does not dwell on form,
And that form does not dwell on the self.
Please realize that the remaining four aggregates are empty in the same way.⁶⁵⁷

Accordingly, none of the five aggregates is the self, the self does not possess any of the aggregates, nor do they support each other; that is, neither do the aggregates support the self, nor does the self support the aggregates. Thus, refuting these twenty views excludes that there is a self that exists in any relation to the five aggregates. Kamalaśīla’s second volume of his *Stages of Meditation* summarizes the negation of such a real person or self:

[First,] the person is not observed outside of the aggregates, constituents, and sources. The person is also not the nature of the aggregates and such, because the aggregates and such have the nature of being impermanent and multiple and because the person is that which is imputed by others as a permanent and singular entity. A person that is not suitable to be expressed as either the same as or as something other [than the aggregates] is not suitable as an existent entity, because there are no other possibilities of how entities exist.⁶⁵⁸

Thus, the starting point of analyzing whether this self as the hypothetical referent of our clinging to “I” and “me” really exists is the basic question of whether such a self is the same as or different from the aggregates.

The self is not the same as the aggregates, because their respective characteristics do not match. The aggregates are (1) impermanent, (2) a formation of mul-