



Treatise on the Middle Doctrine Nagarjuna

Dedication

The Perfect Buddha,
The foremost of all Teachers I salute.
He has proclaimed
The principle of universal relativity,
It is like blissful nirvana,
Quiescence of plurality.
There is nothing disappears,
Nor anything that appears;
Nothing has an end,
Nor is there anything eternal;
Nothing is identical with itself,
Nor is there anything differentiated;
Nothing moves,
Neither here nor there.

Chapter One Examination of Causality

1. There are absolutely no things,
Nowhere and none, that arise anew,
Neither out of themselves, nor out of non-self,
Nor out of both, nor at random.
2. Four can be the conditions
Of everything produced,
Its cause, its object, its foregoing moment,
Its most decisive factor.
3. In these conditions we can find
No self-existence of the entities.
Where self-existence is deficient,
Relational existence also lacks.
4. No energies in causes,
Nor energies outside them.
No causes without energies,
Nor causes that possess them.
5. Let those facts be causes

With whom coordinated other facts arise.
Non-causes will they be,
So far the other facts have not arisen.

6. Neither a non-existent nor existent thing
Can have a cause.
If a thing is non-existent, what is the cause?
If a thing is existent, what does it need a cause?

7. Neither an existent nor a non-existent
Nor existent-non-existent,
No element is really turned out.
How can we then assume
The possibility of a producing cause?

8. A mental existent is reckoned as an element,
Separately from its objective counterpart,
How can it get one afterwards?

9. If separate elements do not exist,
Nor is it possible for them to disappear.
The moment which immediately precedes
Is thus impossible. And if it is gone,
How can it be a cause?

10. If entities are relative,
They have no real existence.
The formula, "this being that appears,"
Then loses every meaning.

11. Neither in any of the single causes
Nor in all of them together
Does the supposed result reside.
How can you extract out of them
What in them never did exist.

12. Suppose from these causes something appears
That never did exist in them.
Out of non-causes, then,
Why does it not appear?

13. The result is cause,
But causes are not even self-possessors.
How can the result be cause-possessor,
If of non-self-possessor it is a result?

14. There is, therefore, no cause-possessor,
Nor is there an effect without a cause.
If altogether no effect arises,
How can we then distinguish?
Between the causes and non-causes.

Chapter Twenty-Five Examination of Nirvāna

1. If every thing is relative,
No real origination, no real annihilation,
How is nirvana, then conceived?
Through what deliverance, through what annihilation?

2. Should every thing be real in substance,
No new creation, no new destruction,
How would nirvana, then, be reached?
Through what deliverance, through what annihilation?

3. What neither is released, nor is it ever reached,
What neither is annihilation, nor is it eternity,
What neither disappears, nor has it been created,
This is nirvana. It escapes precision.

4. Nirvana, first of all, is not a kind of existent,
It would then have decay and death.
There is no existent thing
Which is not subject to decay and death.

5. If nirvana were existent,
It would be produced by causes.
Nowhere and none the entity exists
Which would not be produced by causes.

6. If nirvana were existent,
How could it lack substratum?
There can be no existent
Without substratum.

7. If nirvana were not existent,
Would it be, then, a non-existent?
Wherever there is found no existent,
There neither is a corresponding non-existent.

8. Now if nirvana is a non-existent,
How, then, can it be independent?
For sure, an independent non-existent
Is nowhere to be found.

9. Coordinated here or caused are separate things,
We call this world phenomenal;
But just the same is called nirvana,
When from causality abstracted.

10. The Buddha has declared
That existent and non-existent should both be rejected.
Neither as an existent nor as a non-existent
Nirvana therefore is conceived.

13. If nirvana we both existent and non-existent,
Final deliverance would be also both
Reality and unreality together.
This could never be possible!
14. If nirvana were both existent and non-existent,
Nirvana could not be uncaused.
Indeed, the existent and the non-existent
Are both dependent on causation.
15. How can nirvana represent
An existent and a non-existent together?
Nirvana is, indeed, uncaused;
Both existents and non-existents are productions
16. How can nirvana represent
The place of existence and non-existence together,
As light and darkness in one spot
They cannot simultaneously be present.
17. If it were clear, indeed,
What an existent means, and what a non-existent,
We could then understand the doctrine
About nirvana being neither existent nor non-existent.
18. If nirvana is neither existent nor non-existent,
No one could really understand
This doctrine which proclaims at once
Negation of them both together.
19. What is the Buddha after in his nirvana?
Does he exist or does he not exist,
Or both, or neither?
We never will conceive it!
20. There is no difference at all
between nirvana and samsara
There is no difference at all
Between samsara and nirvana.
21. What makes the limit of nirvana
Is also then the limit of samsara.
Between the two we cannot find
The slightest shade of difference.
22. Insoluble are contradictory views
Regarding what exists beyond nirvana,
Regarding what the end of this world is,
Regarding its beginning.
23. Since everything is relative, we do not know
What is finite and what is infinite.
What means finite and infinite at once?

What means negation of both issues?

24. What is identity, what is difference?
What is eternity, what is non-eternity?
What means eternity and non-eternity together?
What means negation of both issues?

25. The bliss consists on the cessation of all thought,
In the quiescence of plurality.
No separate reality was preached at all,
Nowhere and none by Buddha!

Th. Stcherbatsky, trans. "The Madhyamika-sastra." *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāna*. Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1927. Translation updated by A. J. Grunthaler.

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