

The idea of dependency in Buddhist ethics through Dynamic system theory

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a comparative view of both the system dynamics and Buddhist ethics. It argues that the theory of dependent origination in Buddhism represents the very foundation of system theory. To elaborate it further, it extends to the line that the idea of dependency that Buddhism talks about contains itself a notion of system. To consider, the paper also talks about the mechanism of causality in both system dynamics and the theory of dependent origination. The paper concludes itself on a note that both the theories, i.e. The theory of dependent origination and the system theory can be seen as completing half of each other.

Keywords: *Dependency, System, Causality, Dynamic, Framework.*

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INTRODUCTION

The central argument emphasises a number of similarities between dynamic system theory and Buddhist literature. For both Buddhism and the system theories, the causality is intrinsically mutual. The approach taken by both of them is entirely holistic. Buddhist ethics, which is naturally grounded in the causal relationship consonant with the stables of system theory, can be taken as both the background and the base of the development of system ethics. The modern sciences must take an integrated approach in order to study cognitions from Buddhism. The ideas and features of scientific theories that see a resemblance in Buddhism argue that science still lacks spirituality and ethics, and these dimensions can be provided by the Buddhist ethics, based on the similarities they share. To suggest, an investigation that looks for similarities between the Buddhist ethics and the system theories is beneficial for both the theoretical developments in the system domains and their practical applications. The paper tries to discover if the two systems, the system theories and Buddhist ethics share any conceptual similarities.

While the dynamic system theory is dedicated to study and understand the complexities of human behaviour, Buddhist studies help us understand the very nature of constantly changing systems. System theory sees its origin in the application of ideas in the feedback control system. System theory systematically approaches the problem and studies something like a system. At times, system theory addresses the very dynamics of the system directly. There are two sides of dynamic system theory. The first side is the theoretical framework and the perspective of thinking. It revolves around the dynamics system and, from a philosophical standpoint, a theory system of behaviour. The dynamics system comes up with a paradigm of assumptions and concepts that deal with issues like the feedback system, system structure etc. Such a correlation provides the rationale to explain the natural phenomenon through the system perspective. Since every use of such a system involves a paradigm, it is called a systematic paradigm. The second part of the dynamic system theory deals with simulation and modelling. It regulates the implementation aspect of the system.

The theories and concepts framed through the first part are implemented through a practical method to read the behaviour system. Buddhism, one of the oldest philosophical traditions, has a lot to offer to the dynamic system theory. By understanding a phenomenon as a system, the system theory assumes that the systems could be studied as such. This assumption relies on the belief that "things" generally are either systems or have systemic properties or can be reduced to the systems. The way Buddhist ethics potentially contribute to strengthening the roots of the philosophical foundation has a significant role in developing system theories. Let us say an ethical aptitude can help develop an aptitude that can develop the very philosophy of system dynamics [1].

Systematizing behavior and Buddhist ethics

Both Buddhism and system theories share some intellectual commonalities. Such commonalities are not based on mere comparison of Buddhism as a philosophy and system dynamics as a theory; it instead takes an application-based approach that integrates them both. The question to be addressed is not, what is involved in system dynamics as a philosophy, somewhat what can be improved in the Philosophy of system dynamics. Every scientific theory bases itself

on some assumptions that cannot be proved and remain as beliefs. System dynamics justified such beliefs by taking a reductionist thinking approach; that is, the system of thinking is reduced to parts. The dilemma can be represented through the following questions, does system dynamics provide an ontological statement? What epistemological tool does it employ to study reality? In system dynamics, the references of 'systems' since system dynamics is a problem driven discipline, the approach it adopts must be solution based. Once we compare the concepts of system dynamics with that of Buddhist philosophy, we can look for the weak points in system dynamics, which can be covered by taking the consonant concepts from Buddhist philosophy. The argument that will be further addressed is that the ethical dimensions remain under elaborated and hidden in system dynamics as the system theories do not propose or promise to go beyond anything practical or pragmatic. The idea is to develop system ethics within its full potential under system dynamics, and such can be borrowed from Buddhist ethics. The ideas from system dynamics and Buddhism can be used in mutual coherence and interpretations. If we establish that the ideas of Buddhism, if applied to DST, will provide a way of communication to the concepts of DST, it can help us look at the similarities from different angles[2].

In general, it will further bind the ideas of Buddhism in science, and to be specific, in system domains. To understand the same functionalities of this integrated system, we need to address these three questions.

- a) How can we interpret the concepts of system domains in Buddhist philosophies?
- b) What can be the relevant concepts of Buddhist Philosophy?
- c) What can be the relevant concepts of system dynamics?

We need to do a comparative study of the available literature concerning both Buddhism and system dynamics.

Buddhism as Philosophy

Buddhism can be seen as all religion, practice and Philosophy. Talking about the three dimensions of Buddhism, it can be viewed as religion as its primary goal is to take people on the path of liberation from the suffering state. This is called the highest state of being in Buddhism. It can also be understood in practice as a tremendous amount of Buddhist literature reflects our way of living and the code of conduct. Therefore, the practice remains inseparable from Buddhism. The third and the most crucial dimension to talk about is 'Buddhism as Philosophy'. The essence of Buddhism lies in its philosophical reasoning. Before understanding the very idea of Buddhist Philosophy, we need to understand what Philosophy does? Philosophy tries to answer the most fundamental question posed to it. For that, it uses the method of analysis and reflection. The enquiry can be divided into three branches, Ethics, metaphysics and epistemology. Ethics deal with how things should be. Metaphysics deals with reality, and Epistemology talks about the nature of knowledge. To consider Buddhism as a philosophy, it answers all the tenants as mentioned above. The method taken by the Buddhist philosophy is of meditation, not only on mind and body but also on its objects. The reflective and creative approach of Buddhism makes it a philosophy unlike other dogmatic aspects of a religion. For Buddhism, meditation is not a prayer but a cognitive process that involves the training of the mind. The Buddhist philosophy can be summed up as the mind with all its objects, let us say, a mental phenomenon that is thinkable at the same time[3].

METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

The 'spiritual quest' saw a shift from freedom from the phenomenal world. The idea was to realise both the unchanging reality and the shift in the panorama of experiences. Meditation not only helps in achieving this flash of realisation but also perceive the unchanging reality. Buddhism cannot be said as a body of knowledge that is abstract. The Buddhist philosophy is not a means towards an end; it instead refers to those experiences that must be taken into consideration by its followers to contemplate reality with the help of their minds. For Buddhism, attaining Nirvāna is not faith-centric but rather a process involving continuous training of the mind. A person who has a mind which is meditatively trained can only experience the true nature of reality. In Buddhism, the ideas that do not concern direct experiences and an active reflection on the meaning of reality are said to be empty as they are not connected to the 'real'. This has been one of the essential aspects of Buddhism that reflects its practical orientation.

Dependent origination: Samsāra and Nirvāna

Buddhism borrows from Vedic culture that all were existing in two-state states simultaneously. One is the standard mode that is Samsāra, and the other is the transcendental mode or Nirvāna. Buddhism believes that everything is in a state of constant flux and hence impermanent in the Samsāra. Samsāra is called the world of dependent origination. In Samsāra, nothing arises and originates on its own. Everything is dependent on one or the other. The theory of dependent origination says that in Samsāra, nothing has an independent existence. All that arises in Samsāra is a subject to birth and death. The sufferings characterise it. In Samsāra, one cannot escape from the sufferings. Karma characterises the impulse of birth and death. The only state where one can escape suffering is Nirvāna. It is also called the cessation of suffering. Both the modes of existence exist in everything and never intersect each other. The worldly state or the Samsāra can neither comprehend nor Nirvāna; however, Nirvāna can comprehend both the Samsāra and itself. Being in Samsāra, one is ignorant, stopping oneself from comprehending the fundamental nature of reality. Here Buddhism has made a distinction between the normal and the transcendental. Only the minds that are yogically trained and transformed can understand the true nature of reality.

Middle path- a self-transformation method

Middle path- is not just the goal of self-transformation and self-realisation but also a means to achieve it. We can distinguish between the two aspects of choosing a middle path.

- 1) To altogether remove the duality. It is done by training a mind so that it no longer operates in the dual-mode.
- 2) To avoid bending towards the extremes both in judgement and way of living.

Dynamic system theory and the middle path approach

Most of our judgement and thoughts swing between the extremes. i.e., good and bad, yes and no, inner and outer. Both our languages and culture contain in themselves such extremes which are reflected in our thoughts and judgements. The Buddhist notion of the middle path represents the very idea of transformation in our thoughts. This does not mean we always have to look for the greyer and neutral side. The middle path only aims at eliminating the extremes, and in the process of doing so, it also eliminates the middle path between the two extremes. The psychological dimensions of Buddhism suggest that there is this primacy of duality in all those things that exist. The duality exists between the 'I' or the self-ego and the rest. To understand this duality, the system dynamics take things like the systems.

The reason lies here is, while doing so, we can emphasise not only things but, on their nature, and properties. The system dynamics thus tries to find out how a phenomenon works. To reflect upon them, SD creates the feedback models that are called the archetypes. A model can be understood as a substitute for an object in a system. System dynamics create many meta models as well; one of such models is the mental model. It is used to understand the nature of knowledge and cohere to its validity. A similar can be drawn in the Buddhist theory of dependent origination. For Buddhism, its theory of causality is its universal law of reality. To understand, both the theories share a similar stance on the functioning of reality and the ontological structure. To reframe "nothing arises out of nothing", one can say, everything arises in a dependence. To put it through a dynamic system perspective, it is "IFTHEN ELSE". System dynamics also consider causality as the mechanism of how things work[4].

CONCLUSION

Both the Buddhist ethics and system dynamics focus on how things change over time rather than how things come into existence. The dynamic causality does not reject the fact that things have no origin but focuses on how things arise or change, as explained in Buddhist philosophy. To say, dynamic system theory sees causality as a process, and this can be constantly interpreted through the tenants of Buddhist philosophy[5]. To sum up, all the knowledge that exists is relative. None of them can exist in the independence of the subject of the knowledge itself.

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