ETHICS AS A PATH: KANTIAN DIMENSIONS OF EARLY BUDDHIST

ETHICS

by

Justin Sloan Whitaker MA

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Goldsmiths   2017

University of London

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this PhD thesis entitled "ETHICS AS A PATH: KANTIAN DIMENSIONS OF EARLY BUDDHIST ETHICS" was carried out by me for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Damien Keown, Goldsmiths, University of London. The interpretations put forth are based on my reading and understanding of the original texts and they are not published anywhere in the form of books, monographs, or articles. All material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged at the respective place in the text according to Modern Language Association rules for citation.
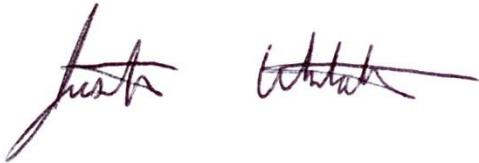
Justin Whitaker

26 August 2015

<u>Abstract</u>

In recent decades Buddhist scholars have begun serious exploration into the theoretical dimensions of Buddhist ethics. However, due to the diversity of moral proclamations found in traditional texts and commentaries, it has been difficult to formulate a widely acceptable theory of Buddhist ethics. Working with the textual analyses of the Buddhist Pāli Canon and recent scholars of Buddhism, I present arguments for viewing early Buddhist ethics as broadly Kantian (deontological) in nature. The methodology follows that of previous authors in Buddhist ethics and in Comparative Religious Ethics with a focus on philosophical ethics and historical and textual studies.

In constructing a framework of Buddhist ethics, this work draws from the ancient sources, primarily the Buddhist Pāli Canon, as well as the philological and historical work of previous Buddhist commentators and scholars. A similar construction of the ethics of Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) is based primarily on the recent writings on both the philosophy and life of Kant, and for source material critical English editions of Kant's primary works. The uniqueness of this work is found in the discussion of Buddhist ethics in the context of its theories of human nature and cosmology and secondarily in its revaluation of Kantian thought as a legitimate interlocutor for scholars of Buddhist ethics. This Kantian perspective, when combined with the insights gained from virtue ethics and consequentialist perspectives, provides a fuller understanding of Buddhist ethics. The findings suggest that Buddhist ethics may claim not only many of the same strengths, but also suffer the same weaknesses, as Kantian deontological moral theory.

CONTENTS

Preface

Buddhism, originating in current-day India approximately 2500 years ago, has spread across the world, adapting to numerous cultural, political, and linguistic contexts as it has done so. Throughout that time, each new adaptation was mixed with a certain degree of conservatism: certain ancient texts and figures were appealed to to justify changes. This is part of what makes Buddhism a unitary religious tradition, or, better, a family of traditions. This thesis does not and cannot account for the ethical concepts developed and employed by the various Buddhist traditions throughout history. It does, however, focus on materials thought to be traceable to the historical Buddha, the Pāli Canon.

All Pāli Canon translations are my own unless otherwise noted. The Pāli Canon used was that of the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana CD published by the Vipassana Research Institute, available online at http://www.tipitaka.org/romn/. Foreign terms except names and titles are italicised. Certain Buddhist words such as karma and dharma/Dharma have entered into the English language and thus are not italicised. The Buddhist terms used herein are Pāli unless otherwise stated and will be rendered either exactly as used in the particular text or in their singular stem-form (and with an added 's' if plural). When terms are drawn from the Brahmanic context or are of particular relevance to Mahāyāna thought, the Sanskrit equivalent will be given, e.g. the ultimate self (Skt.: *ātman*, Pāli: *attā*).

For Kant's work I rely on the numerous English language translations of his work, noting particular German or Latin terms only when a simple translation might lose certain important aspects of the original term's meaning. Kant regularly used emphasis in his works, which have been variously replicated with either italics, bold font, or the use of angle brackets: <. . . >, depending on the translator(s). I have preserved these as they are

found in the English translations given in the bibliography. Further, for the major works

frequently used here, I give the Academy edition page number, but not the volume,

whereas for less used works I use a full Academy edition citation (e.g. Ak 7: 381).

1 Introduction, Methodology, and Literature Review

Is Buddhist ethics Kantian?[1] At first glance, this question may seem strange;

Buddhism arose nearly 2500 years ago in present-day India while Immanuel Kant (1724

– 1804) was a German (Prussian) philosopher writing in the late eighteenth century. On

the other hand, it is a question that deserves to be asked now for several reasons. Both the

Buddha and Kant put forth teachings meant to be universal in character, addressing the

roots of human nature and the problems faced by humanity.[2] In the last century or so

Buddhism has become a global religion as Buddhists have immigrated to Western

countries as labourers, pioneers, missionaries, refugees and more. Similarly, Buddhism

has attracted millions of converts in the West. Furthermore, it has been well argued that

aspects of human reason are universal enough to allow for fruitful comparisons of

philosophies, separated by great spans in space and time, thus giving rise to the

subdiscipline of Comparative Religious Ethics (Green *Religious Reason*; Hindery

Comparative Ethics; Little and Twiss *Comparative Religious Ethics*).[3]

Buddhism offers the range of moral guidance, rules, goals and ideals that can be

assembled into a system of ethics. Damien Keown states, 'Buddhism is a response to

---

[1] Here we use 'ethics' and 'morals/morality' interchangeably. Early Buddhist languages (we deal primarily with Pāli here) do not have a word corresponding directly to either of these English terms. Kant primarily used *Sitten* (customs) and *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life, morality) to discuss ethics. It is from context that one must decide whether he is discussing *Sittlichkeit* in terms of customary mores or genuine morality (*Moralität*, rarely used) grounded in autonomy. Cf. (Sedgwick 6 fn.11; Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* 239-240).

[2] We speak of 'the Buddha' here in relatively uncritical terms, despite concerns raised by some that we cannot accurately date or trace any of the early Buddhist teaching to a single historical person. Therefore we may wish to qualify our use, referring instead to 'the Buddha according to Theravādin Buddhist tradition.' This will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

[3] It is worth noting that while some theories of ethics have been deeply historical, such as that of Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738 – 1801) or G.F.W. Hegel (1770 – 1831), both Kant and the Buddha held that the key aspects of morality are the same even in vastly different historical periods. Each taught in a manner that, at the most abstract level, denied what Gadamer would call our 'horizon' (302), at least that of an awakened being (Thurman). Adherents to historicist theories will find both the universalist claims of Kant and the Buddha as well as a comparison of the two to be fraught with theoretical difficulties. Historical writing didn't arise in early Buddhism until the 4th-5th centuries CE in Sri Lanka (Bechert).

what is fundamentally an ethical problem – the perennial problem of the best kind of life for man to lead' (*The Nature* 1). As Matthew Kapstein notes in discussing later Buddhist philosophical issues in the context of Western thought, 'there is a limit to what the historian of philosophy can reasonably hold on the basis of . . . isolated fragments. It is also essential . . . to demonstrate that the problem in question was the object of *sustained* philosophical interest' (36). To do this, he offers an approach of 'isolating a few important and paradigmatic texts for consideration as representative of some of the main phases of the historical development of the debate' at hand (Ibid.). We similarly must step beyond detailed analysis of isolated fragments to pick out and evaluate a body of texts, concepts, and ideas that can be said to constitute Buddhist ethics.

As Buddhism made its way into the West, scholars classified its ethics variously as consequentialist, Aristotelian, teleological (but not Aristotelian), mystical, amoral, beyond Western categories, particularist and, a few times, Kantian in nature. Yet, while extensive work has been done to explore and argue for several of these designations, there is yet to be a sustained examination of the similarities and dissimilarities in Buddhist and Kantian ethics. This work seeks to fill that void.

In doing so this work expands upon Keown's quest to 'map the ethical contours of two apparently very different approaches to the fundamental moral question of how we should lead our lives if we wish to find happiness and fulfilment as human beings' (*The Nature* ix). In fulfilling that purpose, the parallels (not equivalencies) between early Buddhist ethics, as found in the Theravādin Pāli Canon, and certain aspects of Kantian philosophy are examined.[4] By comparing Buddhist and Kantian ethics, I further follow

---

[4] As developed primarily in the works of two contemporary Kantians: Allen W. Wood and Onora O'Neill. Some philosophers distinguish between Kant's ethics and Kantian ethics, noting that Kantian ethics is based on work done by later scholars who find significant problems with certain ideas of Kant, usually his metaphysics, cf. (O'Neill ix-xi and 165-234).

Keown's effort to put forth a 'detailed hypothesis as to the formal structure of Buddhist ethics' (11).

This work is deeply indebted to Keown's thought in several areas, including in seeing the necessity of placing Buddhist ethics in the context of Buddhist soteriology and 'understanding the architectonic structure of the system' of Buddhist thought (*The Nature* 18). However, while Keown focuses on the Buddhist teaching of *sīla* as 'a range of more or less interchangeable English words such as 'morality', 'virtue', 'ethics' and 'good conduct' as the context demands' (*The Nature* 19) and Aristotle as 'one of the most promising and fruitful candidates for an analogue to Buddhist ethics' (231), I draw on the centrality of *Dhamma* (Skt. Dharma, a term perhaps best translated as Law, either natural or moral, with further connotations that are discussed later) in Buddhist cosmology and soteriology and several other key terms such as *kamma* (karma, which can mean action in the basic sense, but with an emphasis on intention in the Buddha's teaching) to illuminate the Kantian dimensions of early Buddhist ethics. I seek to combine both emic and etic approaches, showing 'on the one hand, sympathetic understanding of what is internally coherent and linguistically precise in the language of the Asian texts studied, and, on the other hand, attention to Asian thought from a critical philosophical point of view' (Hoffman 7).

Comparative Religious Ethics

The study of Buddhist ethics presents several challenges. The first of these is that Buddhists did not develop a tradition of ethical analysis similar to that found in the West. Thus as we shall see in our review of previous literature, it has been difficult to present a description of Buddhist ethics that commands wide assent. Lacking a holistic

understanding of Buddhist ethics as an object of study, ' . . . earlier students of Buddhist thought often made comparative overtures, [but] they themselves did not articulate a new field' (Heim 'Toward' 108). This began to change in 1978 with the publication of *Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Approach* by David Little and Sumner B. Twiss. Little and Twiss proposed a tripartite system for classifying religious ethics: (1) situational application, (2) validation, and (3) vindication, or metaethics.[5] This system, they proposed, could serve as a 'descriptive universal', applicable to all religious systems in the service of understanding and comparing their distinctive features (119, 225). This framework, though foreign to Buddhism, could be used to import Buddhist teachings and concepts in order to compare them with different forms of ethics.[6]

The system, in brief, created a hierarchy, beginning at the most basic level of an agent's situational application of norms. The second level of analysis comes at the validation of those norms; which for Little and Twiss would either be in the form of natural laws or duties (deontological) or ultimate goals (teleological). Finally, they suggested a category of vindication, looking at metaethical concepts and discussions, or the reasons given for accepting or rejecting certain validations. One problem in mapping Buddhism onto this schema is that, as Keown suggests, the Buddha eschewed speculation in ethics, instead laying out a soteriological path (Pāli: *magga*) leading to awakening (*bodhi*) or the cessation of suffering: *nibbāna*. While the Buddha and later Buddhist thinkers did produce many statements and discourses on how to live well that suggest a coherent and holistic worldview, none employed meta-ethical analysis, connecting those action-guides to broader philosophical concepts within the tradition.

---

[5] Used in Keown as (1) descriptive ethics, (2) normative ethics, and (3) metaethics (*The Nature* 3).

[6] Little and Twiss use the tripartite system of ethics to compare the ethics of the Navajo, the Gospel of Matthew, and Theravādin Buddhism.

With this system of disparate concepts in hand and the recognition that the Buddhist tradition itself contains no formal treatises on ethics,[7] we must begin the work of constructing Buddhist ethics. In doing so, scholars may go beyond a description of distinct ethical teachings and the analysis of metaethical concepts to construct or create a clear way of viewing and understanding Buddhist ethics as a whole. In his work introducing meditation as an ethical activity, Georges Dreyfus writes:

> Instead of delineating and translating the structures of an articulated system, scholars must pull together the often scattered elements of substantive ethics found within the tradition, and construct the logic of the tradition's ethical system, without getting much assistance from the tradition itself. This situation creates obvious problems of validation and risks the imposition of an alien scheme of thought. (29)

Similarly, in an introduction to a series of papers on Buddhist ethics in the 1979 Journal of the American Academy of Religion, James Childress and Frank Reynolds suggest that:

> The debate is not whether the conceptual frameworks can and should be used, but their degree of precision and specification, their source, and their illuminative power. Hardened conceptual tools may break as much as they dig out, and inappropriate tools may damage the terrain. (4)

D.S. Ruegg likewise writes, 'It is surely no exaggeration to say that philosophical thinking constitutes a major component in Buddhism' (145). However, he later cautions us that with important features of Buddhist thought we must clearly demarcate

---

[7] One could argue that *Abhidhamma/dharma* literature represents a system of ethics as Carolyn Rhys Davids did, indeed naming her translation of the first book of the Theravādin *Abhidhamma*, *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics, the Dhamma-saṅgaṇi*, 1900. Buddhagosa's *Visuddhimagga* or numerous Mahāyāna treatises represent a structured form of Buddhist ethics. However, the meta-ethical considerations herein are constructed from both the Buddhist tradition and the work of Western scholars.

Buddhism's own meaning, the emic, 'from what we sometimes import into Buddhism with our own conceptual baggage when we superimpose on it either our culture-bound categories, interpretive grids and terminologies or, alternatively, our comparatively arrived at "etic" categories' (175). Writing specifically on earlier Buddhism, Johannes Bronkhorst has more recently echoed these concerns in differentiating 'Buddhist teaching' from 'Buddhist philosophy', stating that, 'anyone undertaking a description of *Buddhist philosophy* will primarily be interested in "philosophically interesting" teachings and in this way will apply an outside criterion' (*Buddhist Teachings in India* ix), while presumably an exploration of 'teachings' can be done with internal criteria.

The problem of validation and the risk of imposing an alien scheme can be reduced through close attention to primary sources, drawing out the meanings of terms and teachings in their original context as much as possible. The use of a Kantian framework, like others that have been employed previously, will only be helpful insofar as it illuminates the implicit conceptual frameworks or logic of the Buddhist tradition's ethical system. As I.B. Horner stated half a century ago:

> Parallels such as these are sometimes even more conducive to an understanding of the content of Buddhism than are the direct citations from the Buddhist Canon; for they enable the reader to proceed from a known to a lesser-known phraseology. It need hardly be said that for a European reader or scholar who proposes to study any Oriental religion seriously a considerable knowledge of Christian doctrine and history, and of its Greek background, is almost indispensable (1950 29, quoted in Keown, *The Nature* 21).

An Abstract and Holistic Approach

As it seeks to describe the whole of Buddhist ethics, rather than, for example, the ethics of monks during the life of the Buddha or contemporary Japanese Buddhist ethics, this work will be abstract and holistic. It is abstract in the sense of focusing on general normative terms, showing how they fit into a broad ethical framework, and using particular stories and historical data only to illuminate that framework. It is holistic in using teachings and concepts that can be applied to the entire path of Buddhism, noting that particular teachings and concepts are always placed in a broader Buddhist ethical/soteriological context. This approach has been developed not only in the aforementioned work of Damien Keown, but also in two prominent field-researchers turned philosophical historians of Buddhism, Donald Swearer and Richard Gombrich.

Swearer, after years of fieldwork in Thailand with the 20th century forest monk Buddhadāsa, wrote that:

> Buddhadāsa has developed a complete system of thought which has consistently integrated ontology, epistemology, and ethics. In short, Buddhadāsa has construed a holistic view of reality, the way it is to be known or realized, and how one acts in the world having achieved that end. (56)

Our approach here assumes that an anthropologist, if she were to study with the historical Buddha, likewise would have found in his behaviours and ideas a 'complete system of thought' and a 'holistic view of reality'. Richard Gombrich, after a long career including fieldwork in Sri Lanka and extensive study of early Buddhist texts, notes:

> On the one hand, I do not think the Buddha was interested in *presenting* a philosophically coherent doctrine: the evidence that his concern was pragmatic, to guide his audience's actions, is overwhelming. On the other

hand, I have also concluded that the evidence that he had evolved such a structure of thought and that it underpinned his pragmatic advice is no less compelling. (164)

Our discussion of concepts in Buddhist ethics must always be in the context of the overall soteriology of the religion. To attempt to discuss Buddhist ethics from the standpoint of a particular concept or text without showing its relationship to this context seems misguided at best.

The holistic character of this work requires that we acknowledge that all aspects of the Buddha's pragmatic teaching may potentially relate to one or more of our contemporary categories of ethics. It has already been mentioned that Buddhism did not develop a system of ethics that would lend itself to easy comparison with Western systems. However, it has also been noted that the Buddha divided some of his teachings into delineated lists (e.g. the four 'Noble Truths'). Another important division in early Buddhist thought is the three-fold path, often translated as ethics, meditation, and wisdom (Pāli: *sīla, samādhi, paññā,* as found in the *Subha Sutta*, DN 10). The path is discussed elsewhere in similar terms, covered thoroughly in Keown, *The Nature* Chapter 2. However, these divisions are not meant to clearly demarcate areas of inquiry as one might find, for example, in the works of Aristotle or Kant.[8] There is also some fluidity in the terminology used to denote these three categories of the soteriological path. At one time, ethics (*sīla*) is replaced with *caraṇa*, behaviour (DN III), and in another text *caraṇa* is used in the place of meditation (*samādhi*). Furthermore, the category of meditation,

---

[8] The *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (DN 4), also discussed in Keown *The Nature*, suggests the important interrelationship of the parts of the path, with the Buddha agreeing with the Brahman Soṇadaṇḍa's proclamation that 'wisdom is washed with ethics, and ethics is washed with wisdom. Where there is ethics, there is wisdom; where there is wisdom, there is ethics. The ethical person is wise, the wise person is ethical.' … *sīlaparidhotā paññā, paññāparidhotaṃ sīlaṃ. Yattha sīlaṃ tattha paññā, yattha paññā tattha sīlaṃ. Sīlavato paññā, paññāvato sīlaṃ.*

which includes such practices as the cultivation of loving-kindness (*mettā bhāvanā*), clearly cannot be completely excluded from our discussion of Buddhist ethics.[9] Thus, again, it makes little sense to attempt to describe Buddhist ethics by isolating particular terms or teachings without showing their connection to the whole of the Buddhist path or soteriology.

The Challenge of Particularism

Whether this constructive and holistic enterprise is profitable, or indeed possible, is debated within the field of Buddhist ethics. Contrary to this approach, Charles Hallisey argues that our 'already answered' question: 'Is there a moral theory in Theravāda Buddhism?' has 'distorted our perceptions of Theravādin ethics' (*Ethical Particularism* 34). Instead, Hallisey suggests that Buddhists have debated and appealed to a *variety of different theories* with no single unifying theory underlying them. As such, Hallisey suggests that Buddhist ethics be approached with the method of *particularism*. Quoting Scottish philosopher W.D. Ross (1877 – 1971), he states:

> . . . we have learned to expect that "in ethics everything is pretty messy, and there is not much room for the sort of moral theory" that would meet the standards of those who look to theory to provide a list of basic moral principles, a justification of what is on the list, and an account of how to derive more specific attributes or actions from the basic principles. (38)

Such an approach, starting with a presupposition of messiness in ethics, makes any form of systematic ethics difficult, whether it is a system based on ideal types such as virtue

---

[9] This has been discussed by Spiro 93; Dreyfus; Keown *The Nature* 76-82; and Gombrich *What the Buddha Thought*, among others.

ethics, or on principles such as deontology and consequentialism. But Hallisey gives no further justification for why ethics is 'messy' in this way or why 'basic principles' of morality set forth in early Buddhism such as *kusala* and *akusala* (skilful and unskilful) fail to guide the development of a moral theory. Hallisey further comments that this approach to Buddhist ethics 'eschews any attempt to discover any consistency in the things which we take to matter morally' and concludes the paper by showing evidence of this apparent lack of consistency and messiness in ethics (38-39). However, this inconsistency in the first level of ethics, discussed above as 'situational' (Little and Twiss) or 'descriptive' (Keown) does not eschew consistency at the further levels of validation and metaethics.

Maria Heim furthers Hallisey's criticism of systematic and holistic analysis in two recent articles. In the first she writes, 'When the broad generalizations become too broad, as they invariably must when the entirety of the vast historical tradition of Buddhism is taken into account, the much vaunted careful attention to historical and empirical particularity slips away' ('Toward' 109). Discussing Keown in particular, Heim states:

> For Keown the first task of Buddhist ethics is to determine which family of moral theory it belongs, and to classify it accordingly; he argues that "the Buddhist moral system" bears close affinities to Aristotelian virtue theory (21). But the holistic move that makes this comparison possible is particularly regrettable. It forces Keown to omit entire schools of Buddhism that do not easily conform to an Aristotelian model (we find no mention of East Asian forms of Buddhism in his book, for example). It also assumes, rather than argues, that the huge range of historically diverse Buddhist traditions articulated a single moral system. Finally, such holism elides attention to Buddhists' own distinctive systems and styles of moral discourse, which may

not easily fold into Western systems and categories (see Hallisey 1996, 1997). (110)

It is true that Keown avoids direct discussion of East Asian Buddhism, though we do find a mention of it in his book in a footnote where Aristotle is discussed favourably in reference to Chinese Buddhism (233). Keown also does assume a sort of coherency in the Buddhist tradition at least in its most basic framework, seeing humanity as caught in the three fires that perpetuate *saṃsāra* and seeking freedom from these in *nibbāna* via the Buddha's path through right/wholesome/virtuous activities. However, this assumption of 'a single moral system' is warranted insofar as we understand that the progression and development of Buddhism over time in terms of Wittgensteinian family resemblances wherein some members of the family will maintain certain aspects of the early Buddhist framework while adopting new ideas and practices from their unique geographical and temporal settings.

Similarly, in a recent review essay on recent anthropological works that help further the progress of Buddhist ethics, Heim concludes, 'The intersubjective and conditioned reality of human experience is a—or perhaps *the*—chief problematic that ordinary people in Buddhist contexts, as well as intellectuals like Ind [a modernist intellectual active in Cambodia in the 1920s], grapple with as they figure out how to act morally in the messy contexts of human life' (*Buddhist Ethics* 583). In calling human life 'messy', Heim reiterates Hallisey's use of Ross in his 'Ethical Particularism' article. This again points to the variety and true particularity of ethical decisions at the situational level, but like Hallisey, it does not show any failure of concepts used for validation and metaethical thought. This is not to say that there is no value in the particularist approach of Hallisey and Heim, merely that taking such an approach at the expense of all others

seems premature given the paucity of work in the field thus far and the benefits that come about from these differing interpretations of Buddhist ethics.

Charles Goodman, in the first book-length analysis of Buddhist ethics as consequentialist in nature, challenges Keown's Aristotelian analogy, writing:

> During the past few decades, there has been great progress in our understanding of Buddhist ethics, and numerous writers have investigated how the different forms of this tradition respond to various particular ethical issues. But to bring the insights of the Buddhist tradition effectively to bear on the concerns of contemporary ethics, we need some kind of grasp on the theoretical structure of Buddhist ethical thought. (3)

My approach here follows the assumption made by Goodman and Keown (among others) that there is a 'theoretical structure of Buddhist ethical thought' to be grasped. For Keown the moral universal is found in the person of the Buddha as an exemplar of the virtues a Buddhist hopes to develop. For Goodman it is in the consequences (namely awakening) that are universally sought after by Buddhists. In my case the universal will be found in the moral law of Buddhism, in its impersonal form as the *Dhamma* and in the personal form as kamma. Each of these approaches offers a consistent and universal approach to Buddhist ethics.

While particularist approaches will continue to contribute to our understanding of certain aspects of Buddhist ethics, Hallisey and Heim's arguments for a 'particularist only' approach to Buddhist ethics seem unfounded in light of the work of scholars, including Swearer and Gombrich, noted above, who have spent time both working within the particularities of lived Buddhist traditions in Asia and reading their texts. This both/and, rather than either/or approach is supported by Kevin Schilbrack, whose article

responding to Hallisey demonstrates the narrowness of the particularist approach and the

need for both a historical-empiricist (particularist) understanding and a theoretical-formal

(philosophical) one ('The General and the Particular'106-7). Further countering

Hallisey's claim to a moral particularism in the Buddhist tradition, Damien Keown notes

that adherents to a particular moral theory, be it deontology or Christian Natural Law

ethics, can appeal to elements of other theories and moral principles in their moral

deliberations (451-2). Kant, for instance, appealed to a vision of a Kingdom of Ends as a

consequence of moral acts and to the importance of developing virtues, yet he

nonetheless held a unifying theory of morality based on principles and duty.

The Approach of this Thesis

This work approaches Buddhist ethics from within the field of Comparative

Religious Ethics. It is a hypothesis, not an 'absolute or unchanging' claim, and thus

enters the conversation which is philosophy itself (Schilbrack 104). This field

presupposes that reason is not alien or opposed to religion, but in fact intrinsic to it

(Green 4-6). Likewise, we begin with the view that the questions in ethics and methods

in the West are not so unique as to preclude meaningful dialogue with traditions of the

East or *vice versa*. As Goodman suggests:

> Suppose the great thinkers of the Buddhist tradition, such as the historical
>
> Buddha himself, or Buddhaghosa, or Asaṅga, or Śāntideva, were somehow to
>
> learn about and come to understand the debates in Western philosophy about
>
> free will, ethical theory, justice, virtue, the demands of morality or the
>
> justifications of punishment. How would they respond to these debates? (4)

Of course doing this, bringing together these great scholars from very distant
traditions, both temporally and geographically, requires that we first understand the
thought of each within its own context. Only then can we 'lift' them from that context to
become conversation partners with us today. In this work, the context on the Buddhist
side is intentionally limited to the historical Buddha as preserved in the Pāli Canon, and
to some degree we also need to do the same with Kant, namely to situate his ideas in the
18th century Prussian context in which they were formulated before attempting a
constructive comparison. In this way, through understanding both the abstract structure
and the internally 'dynamic nature' of traditions, we can seek to overcome discrepancies
in time and space and foster a form of dialogue that helps illuminate the position of both
parties.[10] As William Schweiker explains:

> . . . religious ethics labors between and among traditions rather than focuses
> on the incommensurability of language-games, distinct action guides, or even
> moral worldviews. "Religious ethics," . . . is defined in terms of critical,
> comparative, and constructive tasks of moral inquiry into religious resources
> undertaken from a hermeneutical standpoint and with respect to interlocking
> dimensions of reflection. (3)

Our hermeneutical standpoint will be primarily philosophical, using early
Buddhist texts to construct, describe, and critically compare the underlying logical
structures that connect the ethical injunctions found in Buddhism with those of Immanuel

---

[10] John Cobb Jr. writes, 'The idea that comparative religious ethics might be a bridge [between traditions]
suggests that the propounders of the question do not take the incommensurability as absolute. They think
we may live in a common world and face common problems. By seeing how different traditions respond
to common problems, we may be able to find points of contact with our own that will enable us to
understand some features of an otherwise incommensurable way of thinking and being. The point, I
think, is that action more obviously relates us to a common world than do ideas' (Cobb).

Kant. In this approach, we follow the Principle of Interpretive Charity, articulated by John Rawls, by suggesting that when we:

> . . . try to think ourselves into each writer's scheme of thought, so far as we can, and try to understand their problem and their solution from their point of view and not from ours . . . it often happens that their answers to their questions strike us as much better than we might otherwise have supposed. (Herman 103)

We restrict ourselves to the 'early' teachings, as preserved in the Pāli Canon, and the Theravādin tradition for several reasons. The first is because Buddhist traditions in general rely on the authority of the historical Buddha, Siddhattha Gotama (Skt. Siddhartha Gautama). However much a tradition has changed over the centuries, any alterations to practices or philosophical teachings can be seen as an outgrowth of the early tradition. As Keown argues, 'there was no Copernican revolution in Buddhist ethics with the advent of the Mahāyāna and that its innovations in this field are best understood as a supplement to the morality of its predecessor rather than a rejection of it' (129-130). This is not to suggest that the early teachings are homogenous or easily classifiable: the Buddha did, after all, teach for forty-five years and to a variety of audiences, so it is not surprising that he taught a variety of methods and practices for understanding his teaching (Pāli: *Dhamma*).

The authenticity of thought and personality of the historical Buddha can be discerned from reading the Pāli Canon. The French Classicist Pierre Hadot's characterisation of understanding Heraclitus via later philosophers is instructive:

> There can therefore be no question of relying on the interpretations that the ancients gave of this obscure text, all the more so because, since they are later

than Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, they are situated in a mental world wholly

different from that of the thinker from Ephesus. Language evolves, thought

adopts other channels, and the authors of the time—like modern authors—

were not even aware of the mistakes they committed. In order to try to

understand, we must rather compare Heraclitus with Heraclitus, or at least

with authors not too distant from him in time. As far as Heraclitus himself is

concerned, the possibilities for comparison are unfortunately very limited: we

now possess only 126 fragments of his work, or a dozen pages at the very

most. (Hadot 2-3)

Similarly, the Pāli Canon as we have it is the product of at least three hundred years of

memorization, recitation, and redaction by the Buddha's increasingly divisive disciples.

Much of the linguistic and philosophical context of the Buddha's time was lost by the

time that the Canon was first put to paper in the first century BCE. And although

conservatism and faithfulness are to be assumed in the early recording and preservation

of the texts, recent scholarship has shown that interpolations and deletions did occur.

However, unlike the case of Heraclitus, the texts attributed to the Buddha are

voluminous, so we may make use of internal comparison and speculate about

development not only after his passing, but within his lifetime as well. For instance, the

Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta (SN 56.11), said to be the first teaching of the Buddha to

five fellow ascetics, contains elements of systemization reminiscent of the later

Abhidhamma literature, raising suspicion that the text was perhaps compiled and afforded

primary status amongst the teachings during the period of systemization after the

Buddha's death. On the other hand, the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (DN 16), the final

teaching of the Buddha, contains nothing that one would not expect to be said by a dying

religious founder in terms of content, literary style, or language used. An obvious caveat

to this is the fact that in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* the Buddha is described as ascending

the various stages of meditative absorption (*jhāna*) just previous to his death. This fact is

not recounted by the Buddha, leaving one to wonder how or why it is given in the

account of the Buddha's death. The traditional explanation, of little help to contemporary

critical readers, is that the Buddha's meditation could be seen by those possessing the

'divine eye'(*dibbacakku*). Yet this does not preclude the importance of 'authors not too

distant from him in time,' as the Buddha's teachings are filled with terms and ideas

borrowed from his culture (and many of which would later be borrowed back by the

broader culture). Mathieu Boisvert similarly warns:

> . . . it is impossible to state with conviction that any particular texts were
>
> spoken by the Buddha himself. Although many scholars have attempted to
>
> offer a chronological classification of various canonical texts, a consensus has
>
> not been reached . . . My concern here is not so much with what the Buddha
>
> said, but rather with the position that the Theravada tradition supports . . .
>
> Since "original" Buddhism is a tradition that we have not yet discovered, we
>
> cannot prove whether the exegetical literature is or is not consistent with the
>
> primeval tradition' (2-3).

Secondly, the term commonly applied to his teachings, *Dhamma*, means not only

those teachings or doctrine, but also the truth or nature of reality itself, toward which the

teachings were claimed to be pointing. This truth is thought to exist prior to and apart

from the Buddha's own discovery and exposition of it. As a well-known early text

demonstrates:

> Whether the Tathāgatas [Buddhas] arise or the Tathāgatas do not arise, that
>
> condition stands, the groundedness of the Dhamma, the lawfulness of the

Dhamma, this causality. A Tathāgata gains highest awakening to this and understands it. Having attained highest awakening and understanding, he explains it, teaches it, declares it, establishes it, reveals it, analyses it, clarifies it; and says, 'look'. (*Paccaya Sutta*, SN 12.20)[11]

As Buddhist soteriology is based on understanding or awakening to the *Dhamma*, or nature of reality, and our moral actions (*kamma*), are the foundation for developing that understanding, both of these terms must be understood in their various uses and contexts in early Buddhism.

It follows that as well as being historical in examining the contexts of the Buddha's and Kant's teaching, the methodology adopted here is also philological in analysing modes of ethical discourse and the nuances in critical early Buddhist terms. Keown's work highlighted key Buddhist terms such as *cetanā*, will or volition, to show similarities in Buddhist and Aristotelian thought. In the decades following that work, several scholars have turned their attention to better understanding how this and associated terms are used in Buddhist ethics (Cousins; Vélez de Cea; Evans). It is hoped that a similar contribution can be made in terms of the concepts employed in this work. For example, the role of *Dhamma* as a moral law tends to be overlooked in studies of Buddhist ethics. This is likely due to the multiplicity of meanings that *Dhamma* takes in the Pāli Canon and later (Carter), but the Buddha's use of this metaphysical concept should be understood in any discussion of Buddhist ethics. Palmquist and Palomo-Lamarca come closest to our understanding of a Moral Law in Buddhism:

---

[11] …*uppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ ṭhitāva sā dhātu dhammaṭṭhitatā dhammaniyāmatā idapaccayatā. Taṃ tathāgato abhisambujjhati, abhisameti. Abhisambujjhitvā abhisametvā ācikkhati deseti paññapeti [paññāpeti] paṭṭhapeti vivarati vibhajati uttānīkaroti. Passathā'ti cāha*. In this case he is speaking specifically of dependent origination, *paṭiccasamuppāda*, sometimes said to be equivalent to the Dhamma (MN 28, *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta*).

Nevertheless, we must clarify that people should not do certain actions just for the sake of securing a good future, but should do them only out of an awareness that any virtuous person must act in that way, to wit, for the sake of the moral law: indeed, our actions must be a means and an end at the same time. This "for the sake of the moral law" is not merely a legalistic "obligation" that has nothing whatsoever to do with one's appetites. The Buddhist acts out of an awareness of how his or her karma is being affected by the action(s) in question. This is called *mindfulness* when directed to thought and actions and *awareness* when directed to the physical state of a person's own body. (91)

This mindfulness or awareness of karma is essential to Buddhist ethics, so much so that right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*), the first factor (*pubbaṇgamā*) of the Buddhist path, is defined in terms of affirming that there are fruits and results (*phala* and *vipāka*) of our actions (MN 117), and understanding what is skilful and unskilful (MN 9). Wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi*), on the other hand, involves explicitly denying that there are fruits or results to one's actions (MN 117).

Olson suggests a similar equation of Kant's noumenal world of Moral Law with the freedom of consciousness of emptiness (Japanese: *Ri*; Skt. *śunyatā*) in Buddhism. (36). Likewise, Cokolet provides a strong case for the analogy between Kant's *practical* justification for belief in the supernatural to safeguard the connection between virtue and happiness and Buddhist understanding of karma and rebirth (5-8).

The sustained comparison with Kantian ethics presents a novel approach to Buddhist ethics. Scholars have occasionally discussed Kant's work, but they have generally dismissed it in favour of either consequentialism or virtue ethics as a Western

analogue to Buddhist ethics. This work will address past comparisons with Kant and rectify many of the misunderstandings found in those comparisons. By focusing on key Buddhist concepts such as Dharma (*Dhamma*) and karma (*kamma*) and reintroducing Kantian deontology as a Western analogue for Buddhist thought, several key contributions are made to the fields of Comparative and Buddhist ethics.

Limitations of the Work

A work of this sort naturally faces several limitations. As the work aims primarily to illuminate aspects of Buddhist ethics through comparing it with Kantian ethics, it does not attempt to offer either a detailed critique of Kant or a new interpretation of Kantian ethics. Nor does it attempt to show that Kantian ethics offers a perfect analogue to Buddhist ethics in all respects. Instead, it limits itself to two key tasks: first, exploring what appear to be intriguing similarities and areas of conceptual overlap in the broad contours of both systems. This follows the above-mentioned methodology in Comparative Religious Ethics and our attempt to approach both forms of ethics in an abstract and holistic manner. Second, while outlining the broad similarities, the thesis goes further to offer an analysis of a central cluster of shared concepts which I believe identifies both Buddhist and Kantian ethics as deontological in their ultimate framework, while sensitive to and incorporating key aspects of virtue ethics and consequentialist thought.

Kantian ethics, while systematic, is still highly complex and can be misunderstood and mischaracterised. Kant's ethics are intimately related to his epistemology and metaphysics, presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A1781/

B1787), a work which was a matter of intense debate even during Kant's lifetime.[12] Over time, the reception of Kant has tended to simplify his ethical thought, often narrowing it down to one or two formulations of the Categorical Imperative as found in the *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), thus allowing accusations that his ethics are merely formulaic and rigorous. As an example of this, we read from Alasdair MacIntyre:

> In Kant's moral writings . . . we have reached a point at which the notion that morality is anything other than obedience to rules has almost, if not quite, disappeared from sight (p. 219; cf. pp. 42 and 112). (*After Virtue* in O'Neill 148)

More recently, a number of philosophers and comparative ethicists have worked to resuscitate the complexity of Kant's ethical thought, drawing from his other key works on ethics, the *Critique of Practical Reason* (*CPrR* 1788) and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). However, as Buddhist ethics has emerged as its own sub-discipline within Comparative Religious Ethics, the discussions of Kantian ethics in relation to early Buddhism have often been from a perspective that unfairly characterizes Kant.[13] Thus there is a certain degree of construction to be done with this Western philosopher as we adapt his work for contemporary use in Buddhist ethics and Comparative Religious Ethics. It is hoped that even if the reconstruction does not convince all readers, it will nonetheless serve as a foundation for further comparisons between the two.

Finally, as noted above, the Buddhist source material for this work will be limited almost entirely to the Theravādin Pāli Canon and to some degree on the commentarial work of Buddhaghosa (5th Cent. C.E.), along with anthropological work in Theravādin

---

[12] Aspects of this debate, along with Kant's attempts to move beyond it, are described in Chapter 2.
[13] These include (Keown *The Nature*; Harvey; Goodman), discussed in the Literature Review.

societies, which have helped comparative ethicists to see how many of these doctrines are understood in the lived tradition. Other works, and in particular Mahāyāna literature, will be mentioned only in footnotes. This is because while it is important to examine later Buddhist interpretations and innovations of central ethical ideals, the space permitted does not allow a thorough presentation of later historical developments in Buddhist ethics (cf. Gowans 5). The resulting foundation, however, should be broad enough and the framework developed clear enough to embrace later Buddhist developments, while at the same time drawing on enough particular material to be of relevance to those interested in Buddhism and ethics today.

Literature Review

In 1979 Frank Reynolds published 'Buddhist Ethics: A Bibliographical Essay' in the *Religious Studies Review*. His review begins, 'Unfortunately, modern scholars have devoted relatively little attention to the study of Buddhist ethics. The works on the topic are neither extensive nor, for the most part, impressive' (40). Remarking on Reynolds' bibliographic essay, Charles Prebish notes that it is 'revealing that over one hundred years of publications on Buddhist ethics could be condensed into eight journal pages despite Reynolds' exhaustive and comprehensive search' (*Ambiguity and Conflict* 297). Over a decade later, Charles Hallisey correctly noted that, 'We are still unable to produce convincing large-scale accounts that adequately frame and connect these more limited discussions and that also connect the study of Buddhist ethics to ethical reflections elsewhere' (*Recent Works* 284). This was in his review of 'Recent Works on Buddhist Ethics', which covered works from 1979 to 1992 and showed that while a wide range of topics had begun to be discussed, the overall number and quality was still low. With the

introduction of two book-length studies, Keown's *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* and Goodman's *Consequences of Compassion*, comparing Buddhist ethics with Aristotelian virtue ethics and consequentialism respectively, along with dozens of journal articles over the past twenty years, this has been greatly alleviated. Sympathetic and systematic comparisons of Buddhist ethics and Kant, however, are still lacking.

As scholars turned their attentions to Buddhist ethics over the last century, several themes appeared in their analyses. These themes break down first into two categories: scholars who believe that comparisons with Western forms of ethics are helpful and those who do not. Secondly, each of these groups further subdivides. Amongst those who see value in comparing Buddhist ethics with Western ethics, there are representatives of versions of utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and deontology. And amongst those who see Buddhist ethics as *sui generis*, there are those who hold it to be a holistic system of its own and there are Particularists, those who argue (as Hallisey and Heim, discussed above) that Buddhist ethics avails itself to different theories at different times without any overall reasoning or structure.

Traditionalist and Particularist

Those who have approached Buddhist ethics holistically, yet not comparatively, I will call Traditionalists. Early scholarly works on Buddhist ethics, as descriptive accounts that attempt to provide a comprehensive description of Buddhist ethics, generally fall into this category. Two such descriptive accounts came out in the 1920s with Tachibana's *The Ethics of Buddhism* (1926), focused on Theravādin ethics, and La Vallée Poussin's *La*

Morale Bouddhique (1927), based on Mahāyāna texts.[14] Tachibana, setting a precedent

for Particularists, suggests that:

> In classifying Buddhist morality we feel ourselves facing a great difficulty,
>
> because Buddhism as a moral system has an infinite variety of names and
>
> ideas in morality, which sometimes, though included in the same categories,
>
> are regarded as moral from entirely different points of view, so that there
>
> classifications in many cases cross one another . . . It is rather wearisome, and
>
> on other occasions an irritating task to arrange them in unified or systematic
>
> classes. (57)

Regarding La Vallée Poussin's work, Keown describes it as 'in large part a summary of

the theories of karma held by the schools of the Sanskrit scholastic (*Abhidharma*)

tradition' noting that 'according to N.N. Law writing in the [La Vallée] Poussin

Memorial Volume, ethics was not a field to which the great scholar felt particularly

drawn' (4). This close focus on the mechanism of karma, though helpful as we will see in

the work of Thomas T. Love, was not accompanied by a broader discussion of the

structure of Buddhist ethics or how karma specifically might be compared with Western

theories.

An important early text-based work on Buddhist ethics came from the Sri Lankan

scholar/monk Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics: Essence of Buddhism*. Saddhatissa's work

---

[14] Tachibana noted Paul Dahlke's *Buddhismus als Religion und Moral* (1914) and Wolfgang Bohn's *Die Psychologie und Ethik des Buddhismus* (1921) as 'the only works dealing, not wholly but specifically, with the ethical aspects of the Buddha's teaching' (x). Roger Farrington also suggested (Rhys Davids, 1877), (R.S. Copleston, *Buddhism: Primitive and Present*), (Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*), (Thomas, *The History of Buddhist Thought*), and (Humphreys, *Buddhism*) as helpful early texts, though none of these were dedicated specifically to Buddhist ethics (26). Paul Carus' *Karma: A Story of Buddhist Ethics* (1894) was the earliest English language book to focus on this topic, however not as an explanatory tract but rather as a series of parables often blending a basic understanding of karma with Western ideas of evolution and salvation.

focussed on the Buddhist texts most clearly devoted to the behaviour of both monastics and the laity. In his discussion of the work, Keown noted that it, 'makes the Buddha's basic moral teachings available in a clear and comprehensible form and is faithful to the traditional categories and classifications' (4). Aside from describing the state of the awakened being as 'beyond good and evil' and thus hinting at the Transcendency Thesis discussed below, Saddhatissa's work still focused on a descriptive overview of traditional norms, foregoing any attempt at a systematic analysis of those norms.

Winston King, in his 1964 *In the Hope of Nibbāna*, observes that at that time there was an 'almost total lack of contemporary material on Buddhist ethics in English' (5). Attempting to overcome this, King introduced the 'nibbāna-kamma tension', a crude but useful framework by which Westerners could grasp early Buddhist ethics (69). According to King's theory, Buddhist laypeople exemplified the *kammic* dimension through practices such as generosity (*dāna*), while the final or *nibbanic* goal was reserved for monastics. King also developed (alongside Melford Spiro) what Keown later termed the 'Transcendency Thesis', which suggested that these two goals, 1) of developing good *kamma* toward better future circumstances and 2) of eliminating *kamma*, thus gaining *nibbāna,* were incommensurable (83-105). While King's valuable anthropological observations of Buddhism in Burma showed how living Theravādin Buddhists understood the many complexities of their tradition, Keown is right to note that the framework is neither supported by the Theravādin tradition nor by the majority of the Buddha's teachings (94). While an awakened one is no longer subject to the laws of *kamma*, they in fact cannot be stirred by the same immoral impulses to which others fall prey (MN 92, MN 105, DN 33), (cf. Gethin, *Killing a Living Being* 198 n35). As such, free from all negative mental states, the arahat acts spontaneously for the good, a notion to which we will return in Chapter 6.

Thomas T. Love (1965) presented one of the early post-WWII introductions to early Buddhist ethical theory, helpfully introducing Western ethical concepts and arguing rightly that Buddhism must be understood in its context of Brahmanism (early or proto-Hinduism). Owing to the earlier work of La Vallée Poussin and Tachibana, the presentation centres on four key concepts and their relation to Brahmanic thought: impermanence, *anattā* (no-self), *kamma*, and *nibbāna* (303). While his analysis is at times problematic, for instance in stating, without giving reasons, that the doctrine of *anattā* causes a crumbling of Western ethical categories, the isolation of these key concepts before discussion of the broader notion of Buddhist ethics is instructive. In his analysis of *kamma* in particular, we find it understood as a middle road between determinism and libertarian freedom wherein the agent is both heavily conditioned by one's past actions (*kamma*) and also free to choose or intend (*cetanā*) a skilful path for the future (306). As such, he reasons, Buddhist morality is 'characterized as an autonomous system of morality in which man stands in no relation of dependence to any being outside himself' (306-307). While this might suggest the sort of Kantian transcendence (toward autonomy) that we develop in Chapter 2, it is not entirely clear. Nor does Love make it clear in Western terms just how this moral independence is developed.

The recent influential work on Buddhist ethics from Peter Harvey calls into question the very possibility of comparison between Western and Buddhist ethics, claiming that:

> A key aspect of Western ethical systems is that moral prescriptions should be universally applicable to all people who can understand them. Buddhism, though, is generally gradualist in approach, so while it has ethical norms which all should follow from a sense of sympathy with fellow beings (such as

not killing living beings), others only apply to those who are ready for them,

as their commitment to moral and spiritual training deepens. (51)

Harvey draws in part from Lance Cousins, who suggests three levels of Buddhist ethics: one for the person on the street, one for the person in search of meditative peace, and finally a highest goal for yet another person (100). Jay Garfield agrees, writing that, 'from a Buddhist perspective there are simply too many dimensions of moral life and moral assessment to admit a clean moral theory' (1). Yet he continues, 'Buddhist ethical thought has instead been concerned with understanding how the actions of sentient beings are located and locate those beings within the web of dependent origination, or *pratītya-sammutpāda*' (1). If dependent origination is a universal factor of Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist ethics can be derived from understanding it, this is a universal claim about Buddhist ethics. Garfield concedes as much, later stating that Buddhist ethics, 'represents a distinct moral framework addressed to problem-solving that takes action not to issue from a free will bound by laws, but from a dependently originated, conditioned continuum of causally interdependent psychophysical processes' (9). Thus Garfield, while hinting toward Particularism, still takes a Traditionalist approach admitting that a moral framework can be found in Buddhist ethics.

The first scholar to go beyond Traditionalism, which eschews comparisons with Western ethical theories, to Particularism, which claims that Buddhist ethics has no ethical theory, was Charles Hallisey. While Keown and Dreyfus, discussed above in the methodology section, stated that Buddhism has no explicit ethical theory, but that one could be constructed, Hallisey denies even this. In 'Ethical Particularism in Theravāda Buddhism', Hallisey draws from canonical texts, commentarial literature, and a story about a medieval Sri Lankan king to argue that, 'It is certainly not obvious that we should think that all of Buddhist ethics belongs to a single family of ethical theory, especially

when we take the question in a manner which encourages us to conceptualize Buddhism as analogous to consequentialism or any other family of ethical theory' (35). Furthermore, [we should] 'realize that there can be no answer to a question that asks us to discover which family of ethical theory underlies Buddhist ethics in general, simply because Buddhists availed themselves of and argued over a variety of moral theories' (37). Given the apparent multiplicity of ethical resources in Buddhist ethics, Hallisey concludes that, 'I think we should ask whether it is possible that Buddhists approached their ethical concerns without any ethical theory at all, but instead adopted a kind of ethical particularism' (37). However, the argument that there is no universal ethical theory in Buddhism because many ethical theories are employed at different times and in different circumstances is poorly founded here. Specifically, Hallisey suggests that the reasoning employed in an early episode in the story of the Sri Lankan king, Siri Sanga Bo, may be considered either deontological or consequentialist in nature. In the episode, the king refuses to take the throne, recounting the case of the Buddha, who in a previous lifetime refused the throne because he saw that it would lead him to do harmful deeds that could lead him to hell. It is true that without further discussion, it is impossible to know the underlying moral theory at work. But Hallisey continues with a further episode in Siri Sanga Bo's life, wherein some Buddhist monks seek to persuade him to take the throne, arguing that an ignorant man in as king would indeed commit immoral acts, but that a wise man, such as himself, in that position would do great good. As it appeals to the character of the agent, Hallisey sees in this a variant of virtue-ethics. In the story, Siri Sanga Bo is successfully persuaded and becomes king. Yet, despite his righteousness—or likely due to it, as he refuses to uphold laws with force—he fails as king and his 'kingdom is racked by pestilence and crime' (37). This, Hallisey claims, shows a rejection of virtue ethics. However, it's not clear that it does, nor that the story provides a

rejection of consequentialism or deontology either. In fact, the story seems stay at the

levels of situation and vindication (or descriptive and normative ethics), presenting raw

data for a further discussion about how it is that actions can lead one to hell, or the at

least potential conflict between the moral requirements of Buddhism and those of being a

king. Even though the stories do not convey this kind of discussion, it is exactly the kind

we would imagine happening amongst learned people who knew them.

As mentioned in our methodology discussion, the particularist approach may

allow fruitful examinations of certain ethical concepts, time periods, stories, or

individuals. Perhaps most Buddhists historically have not spent the necessary time

analysing meta-ethical concepts such as not-self (*anattā*), dependent origination (*patīcca-*

samuppāda), and so on in a way that would lead to truly consistent and systematic modes

of thought. And indeed, due to the practical nature of Buddhism, many texts present

differing rationales for their moral prescriptions. However, this is often misconstrued

when discussing the general thought of the Buddha himself or later Buddhist

intellectuals. When examining Buddhist ethics, most scholars have suggested at least

some similarity to a Western ethical tradition, be it consequentialist, virtue ethics, or

Kantian/deontological.

Consequentialist

For many scholars examining Buddhist ethics, Utilitarianism (or consequentialism

more broadly) has been seen as an ideal analogue. The first systematic comparisons of

Buddhist ethics to Western theories suggested this comparison. These were made by

C.A.F. Rhys Davids in *A Buddhist Manuel of Psychological Ethics* (1974) and I.B.

Horner in *The Basic Position of Sīla* (1950). Rhys Davids and Horner found the goal of

Buddhist practice, the overcoming of suffering (*dukkha*), to be clearly analogous to the goal of maximizing happiness (and its corollary, the minimization of suffering) set forth in classical Utilitarian doctrines. Rhys Davids described the Buddhist as 'a hedonist' and claimed that 'his morality was dependent or, in the phrase of British ethics, utilitarian, and not intuitionist' (xci). Horner claimed that in Buddhism, 'Morality is to be left behind . . . like a raft once crossing over has been safely accomplished. In other words, the *arahat* is above good and evil, and has transcended both' (25).[15] This is a version of the Transcendency Thesis convincingly rejected by Keown, and it seems to be a problem that plagues many Utilitarian readings of Buddhist ethics. After all, if ethics exists only as a preliminary on the road to awakening once one has attained the highest good, what is left for ethics to dictate? However, despite the suggestion of a comparison, neither author provides further analysis to support these claims.

Meanwhile, the suggestion of a Utilitarian interpretation also had adherents outside of England. Paul Dahlke, an early German popularizer of Buddhism, somewhat flipped the two-part ethics suggested by Horner, making the *arahat* (an awakened follower of the Buddha, literally a 'worthy one') the truly ethical one, thus avoiding the pitfalls of the Transcendency Thesis. The one striving for awakening, however, does so based on 'a purely egoistical impulse' (130). 'Virtue', Dahlke wrote, 'is not something to be striven after for its own sake; it is merely the ladder to the highest [referring to one's own well-being]' (135-6). Dahlke wrote in his discussion of morality in Buddhism that only after awakening 'do we see love emerge in the shape of the compassion that comprehends [suggesting the two Buddhist ideals said to be embodied by the Buddha of compassion and wisdom (*karuṇā* and *paññā*)]' (131). Turning to the question of how

---

[15] This view is restated by Gudmunsen, 'Ethics Get in the Way' and Gudmunsen *Buddhist Metaethics*, cf. Keown *The Nature* 12.

one's egoistical striving could lead to the eventual awakening of these traits, Dahlke suggests that 'The whole moral scheme in Buddhism is nothing but a sum in arithmetic set down by a clear, cold egoism; as much as I give to others, as much will come again to me. Kamma is the most exact arithmetician in the world' (132).

A nearly identical assessment came some years later by the Indian anarchist Har Dayal, who wrote that 'Buddhists have developed a precise quantitative view of *puñña* [merit], which seems to controvert their much-vaunted ethics into a sordid system of commercial arithmetic' and, further, that 'Pure hedonism thus seems to be the ruling theory of Buddhist ethics' (189 and 205 quoted in Keown *The Nature* 13-15). A final early Utilitarian suggestion came from J.B. Pratt, who described Buddhist ethics as Stoic in nature, and 'the principle underlying and justifying [the Buddha's] Stoicism, to which he makes appeal when argument is needed, is his fundamental utilitarian or (altruistic) hedonism' (32). Nevertheless, Pratt considered this to be just one side of Buddhist ethics, the 'Negative' side, to be complimented by the 'Positive' development of 'the two cardinal virtues of Buddhism . . . wisdom and love' (36). For Pratt, Christianity was used as a convenient foil. Simplified to wishful superstition, it supplied a useful contrast to the apparent 'arithmetic' he saw in the Buddhist doctrine of karma. This arithmetic also corresponded well with Utilitarian ethics, which was seen as an alternative to Christian ethics.[16]

---

[16] The relationship between Christian ethics and Utilitarianism has been complex and is beyond the scope of this work. The British Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham 'saw himself as offering a coherent alternative to Christianity, he deployed a twofold strategy in relation to it. In his early religious writings, he attacked it frontally and sought to discredit it. In his later writings… he subtly used it to legitimize his own doctrine… Bentham's associates and friends too saw his moral theory as a rival and an alternative to Christianity' (Parekh xxx). The main successor to Bentham, John Stuart Mill's 'principal strategy in *Utilitarianism*… is to reduce traditional Christian moral beliefs to the status of subjective feeling and questions of ontology to mere "opinion." The implication is that the objective reality of the Christian God is more or less irrelevant to the issue of moral obligation' (Raeder 271). Meanwhile, Henry Sidgwick, a successor to Mill, 'attempted to incorporate both Christianity and utilitarianism', while Joseph Fletcher did so quite successfully in his book *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster

Mark Siderits and Charles Goodman have recently resurrected the consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics. Each relies on the doctrine of non-self (*anattā*) as a key element for restating the consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics. Siderits begins an article in *Indian Ethics* quite clearly tying ethics to the concept of non-self: 'Buddhism teaches that there is no self, and that the person is not ultimately real. Buddhists also hold that the highest good for humans, *nirvāṇa*, is a state that is attained through abandoning belief in a self' ('Buddhist Reductionism' 283). In his book on Buddhist philosophy the same year, the chapter on Buddhist ethics follows the chapter titled 'Non-Self: Empty Persons' and discussed first the 'consequences of non-self for the part of ethics concerned with how we should live our own lives' and second 'how the doctrine of non-self affects our obligations toward others' (*Buddhism as Philosophy* 78). His reasoning is ingenious: that understanding our lack of self deepens our commitment to other beings because we see that we are connected to them in much the same way that we are connected to our future self, which we take care of through actions such as brushing our teeth (Buddhism as Philosophy 82-83). However, while this is true and draws on later Mahāyāna philosophy, it doesn't follow that this is the reasoning of the Buddha. Furthermore, it doesn't eliminate the possibility that virtues and/or *Dhamma* as a Moral Law must be drawn upon under further philosophical analysis.

More recently, in 2009 Charles Goodman presented an excellent book-length survey of Buddhist ethics, arguing for a consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics. While he discusses *anattā* (109-121) as well as the Mahāyāna expansion on emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*), Goodman focused on the reasoning found in several Pāli *suttas*, as well as sources such as the Mahāsattva Jātaka, to argue that Theravādin Buddhism displays a

---

Press, 1966), see (Camosy 192-3) as well as (D. Keown 185-189) and Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (140-141).

version of rule-consequentialism, while Mahāyāna Buddhism slides toward act-consequentialism, culminating in the work of Śāntideva. Just as Hallisey was able to draw on varied sources to suggest a Particularist reading of Buddhist ethics, Goodman is able to draw from *suttas* that provide a consequentialist principle (cf the *Rahula Sutta*, MN 61 on 48, *Metta Sutta*, Sn 1.8 on 51, and the *Mahāsattva Jātaka* on 52).

For example, in the case of the *Mahāsattva Jātaka*, in which the Bodhisatta, out of great compassion, gives his life to a hungry tigress and her cubs, Goodman claims that 'only consequentialism shares both the noble altruism and the frightening extremism of Buddhist ethics' (52). However, in his interpretation of the story as an act of extreme self-sacrifice for the greater good, Goodman misses the tradition's own emphasis on the fact that the act derived from the Bodhisatta's great virtue, and that karma guaranteed both his own favourable rebirth and the connection between himself and those he served. In the Buddhist context, such extreme acts are not seen as so extreme, but instead are natural acts flowing from (1) the virtue of the agent in virtue ethics interpretations, or (2) the respect for the moral law in others in the Kantian.

Virtue Ethics

In 1992 Damien Keown published *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, where he (like Hallisey above) notes that, 'the total number of books on Buddhist ethics . . . can be counted on the fingers of one hand' (ix). Assessing past work in Buddhist ethics, Keown wrote, 'Much of the work on Buddhism . . . is in the form of tentative forays into the field and there has yet been no systematic study which provides a characterization of the formal structure of the Buddhist ethical system using the typology of philosophical ethics' (3).

His work compares Buddhist ethics to that of Aristotle, noting both psychological and teleological similarities between the two. While the arguments are excellent and have given rise to derivative works form other authors who have extended Buddhist virtue ethics to the environment and other areas, there are at least two points worth raising here. One is that Keown has to drop the substantive nature of *nibbāna* when he compares it to Aristotelian *eudaemonia*. He states that '*eudaemonia* and nirvana are functionally and conceptually related in that both constitute the final goal, end and *summum bonum* of human endeavour' (195), and later that 'the formal characterisation of *eudaemonia* provided by Aristotle can be applied to nirvana' (199). However, the substance of *nibbāna*, is a thoroughly beyond *eudaemonia*. As Collins states, 'nirvana is "wholly other" than all conditioned Existents' and yet is still some *thing* (*dhamma*) (52). He continues, '[Nirvana] *is*, ontologically, but it is not the origin of things, the ground of being. For Buddhists, . . . the appropriate response is to accept on faith – better, with confidence or trust, *saddhā* – that nirvana exists as described, and to aspire to achieve it, in the shorter or longer term.' (58). Our second objection concerns the placement of the Buddha as the *phronimos* (or wise person) which, for Aristotle, is the ultimate arbiter of morality, for it is only he who can judge where the mean lies. In our reading, the Buddha points beyond himself to the *Dhamma* as the final judge of ethics (DN 16). This will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

While he ultimately pursues the Aristotelian comparison with Buddhist ethics, in several places Keown argues for a deontological (Kantian) understanding of Buddhist ethical terms.[17] He agrees with Misra (1984) that Buddhist ethics are more proximate to Kantian principles than Utilitarian (16) and argues that *sīla* (morality) is deontic because

---

[17] Deontology, the study of duty, is the term used to describe Kantian and other ethics that stress objective duty and rights as the basis of morality. See (Honderich 187-8).

through it, 'one participates in nibbānic values, in what is good and right' (125). Keown further suggests that *kusala* (moral excellence) refers to the goodness of an action as intrinsic, regardless of secondary consequences of the act such as satisfaction and praise (179). These secondary consequences would have to be incorporated into, and in fact would be central to, the Utilitarian's felicific calculus (or other consequentialist method of decision making), making a praised act more moral than one which is shunned.

Keown's book represents the first systematic coverage of Buddhist ethics and book-length comparison with a Western ethical theory, that of Aristotle. Charles Prebish suggests that at least part of the rapid growth of studies in Buddhist ethics that followed Keown's book was because it 'offered researchers a creative paradigm shift, useful for understanding the *whole* of the Buddhist ethical tradition' (*Buddhist Ethics Comes of Age* 107-108). While hesitant to place Buddhist ethics within any particular Western framework, as discussed above, Peter Harvey also follows Keown's suggestion that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a form of virtue ethics (50).

Another teleological and eudaimonia based (but not Aristotelian) approach comes from Georges Dreyfus, a scholar of the Tibetan tradition. While agreeing with Keown that Buddhist ethics is virtue and character based, Dreyfus finds Aristotle's positive valuations of sense-objects and community as well as his claim that human desires are basically good at odds with fundamental Buddhist presuppositions (36). Instead Dreyfus points to later Hellenistic thinkers who 'emphasize a more ascetic and individual practice' akin to that of Buddhism (ibid). He also broadens the picture of ethics to include the whole of Buddhist practice (not just *sīla* in the common three-fold path of *sīla, samādhi, paññā*). Based on the Bengali scholar Atiśa's model of three levels of ethical practice, Dreyfus suggests both the superiority of the other-oriented activity of the Mahāyāna bodhisattva, and, at the same time, that this does not 'entail a commitment to

different ethical models' for the two traditions (41). The path as a whole, he argues, is unified and it is not the place of the average moral agent to attempt to judge the results of his or her actions. In moving beyond the consequentialist approach to Buddhist ethics, Dreyfus remarks:

> For, how are we supposed to evaluate the result of a given action? In many cases, recognized Buddhist virtues fail to bring immediate positive results, and the result described concerns the long term. But in this case, how do we know which result is produced by which action? The short answer to this complicated epistemological problem is that we do not know. To decide which action produces positive effects, we must rely on the testimony of an enlightened person as found in a scripture. Thus, in final analysis, it is the scriptural tradition that decides what counts as virtuous. (42)

Meanwhile the Aristotelian or virtue ethics approach has also been taken up by numerous authors, including James Whitehill, Simon James and David E. Cooper, and others. Whitehill, for instance, suggests an understanding of Buddhist ethics as a, 'virtue-oriented, character-based, community-focused ethics, commensurate with the Western "ethics of virtue" tradition' (1). Eschewing textual analysis in favour of a broad philosophical approach, Whitehill argued against what he calls 'the transcendence trap' as found in Zen Buddhists Robert Aitken, Gerta Ital, and to a lesser extent, Ken Jones. These authors, while at times extolling moral life, each fall into the 'trap' of negating its worth at the point of awakening (5-7).

Also arguing for an understanding of Buddhist ethics as a system of virtue ethics is Abraham Vélez de Cea. While applauding Keown's refutation of consequentialist readings of Buddhist ethics, Vélez de Cea sought to incorporate actions that Keown

dismissed as non-moral but meritorious (*puñña*), such as the following of precepts out of craving or fear. For Vélez de Cea, these actions, 'participate in the good because they are instrumental for attaining the highest good of nirvana' (129). Rather than seeing a divergence in *puñña* and *kusala* activities as Keown does, Vélez de Cea proposed a 'heuristic distinction' in which both types of action are moral, but in different ways. *Puñña* is instrumental and *kusala* is teleological and plays a central role in the Buddhist normative system. This distinction is, we shall see, very important to Buddhist ethics.

Kantian

David Bastow suggests a (Kantian) teleological framework for Buddhist ethics, relying on the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* ('*Discourse on the Fruits of the Recluse*' D.I.2), as his source for Buddhist ethics. Bastow's analysis follows the *sutta's* teaching of moral development, beginning with the state of a householder who has heard the Buddha's teachings and thus sets out on the holy life and culminating in the new disciple's own awakening. Bastow suggested that the *sutta* presents a progression from self-restraint to emancipation (197). Self-restraint is given in terms of abandoning craving based on external impulses: 'external in the sense of being foreign to a man's real nature' (203). Emancipation then is based on complete disregard for materiality, feeling, etc. (the five aggregates, *khandhas*) and dispassion, factors that Bastow suggested are similar to (and in fact go beyond) Kantian thought (204).

In discussing the importance of a justification for the goal (of emancipation/awakening), Bastow rejected the utilitarian interpretation that Buddhist practice is aimed at the elimination of suffering. Instead, he suggestes that the justification would include, 'not allowing oneself to be controlled by psychological forces

which are in some sense external to one's real nature . . .' (205). While he does not provide a great deal of argument to support his claims, Bastow does suggest a key similarity between Kant's ideas and Buddhism on the moral level that we shall return to later in the present work.

David Kalupahana develops a sophisticated analysis of Buddhist ethics, primarily arguing that Buddhism represents an ethics of pragmatism. However, he does helpfully orient the Buddhist notion of happiness, noting that it does not align with the utilitarian theory, but instead emphasises a 'superior' sense of happiness:

> The emphasis on happiness as the goal of ethical conduct seems to give Buddhist theory a utilitarian character. But a major difference between the early Buddhist and the utilitarian analysis of happiness is that according to the latter, happiness includes pleasures derived from the senses, while according to Buddhists, sense pleasures lead finally to suffering rather than to happiness . . . . [In Buddhism] the quality of happiness that one achieves through renunciation is certainly superior to that achieved through attachment or craving. (61)

However, the charge could be made that this does note fairly represent more mature versions of utilitarianism, such as that of J.S. Mill (1806 – 1873), who recognized a hierarchy of pleasures.

A stronger endorsement for a Kantian analysis of Buddhist ethics comes from Keown's work, following a similar examination of the relationship between virtue and happiness. He writes, 'The relationship between *kusala* and *puñña* constitutes the *summum bonum* of Buddhism in a manner similar to the way in which the conjunction of virtue and happiness is understood by Kant' (126). Keown goes on to note that 'In

Buddhism *karma* is the mechanism that ensures the connection between virtue and happiness, while for Kant it is a supreme being' (Ibid.). Keown does not explore this further. In fact, later in the work he appears to contradict the above endorsement of Kant's virtue/happiness connection in quoting the Aristotelian philosopher J.M. Cooper who writes, 'Aristotle . . . does not think of moral constraints themselves as imposed on persons without regard for (and even despite) their own good, as Kant . . . tends to do' (202). However, as Keown's prior insight made clear, Kantian ethics *do* consider the good of the moral agent in a supernatural manner (relying upon a supreme being) just as Buddhism does (relying on karma). Compounding the confusion over Kant, Peter Harvey simply repeats J.M. Cooper's criticism in his dismissal of a Kantian analogue to Buddhist ethics (51).

The only book-length comparison of Buddhist ethics with Kant comes from Phillip Olson's *The Discipline of Freedom: A Kantian View of the Role of Moral Precepts in Zen Practice*. The work focuses narrowly on the ethics of Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind Beginners Mind* and other lectures delivered by Suzuki (1904 – 1971) to Western students. This narrow focus on a non-systematic portion of Buddhist ethics makes for difficult comparison with Kant, who was both a very broad and systematic thinker. However, as Olson makes clear from the beginning, the work is not an attempt at side-by-side analysis of two systems of thought, but rather, 'an attempt to interpret the practice of Zen Buddhist meditation from the perspective of Kant's critical philosophy' (xiii).

While the focus of Olson's work is on a Mahāyāna school of Buddhism, the fact that it is the only book-length study of Buddhism and Kant and the structural similarities Olson points out make it worthy of our attention. These similarities include the equation of Kant's *noumena* (wherein Moral Law lies) with the freedom or emptiness (Japanese:

Ri; Skt. *śunyatā*) which is the basis for Zen practice (1, 43-68). This is structurally

opposed, in a two-fold system of reality, with Kant's phenomenal realm of appearances

and the Buddhist concept of form (Japanese: *Ji*, Skt. *rūpa*).

While esoteric in its initial formulation and in need of great explanation (perhaps

more than is found in the book itself), such a basis is important in comparing Kant to

Buddhist ethics. In terms of ethics, Olson extends the above phenomena/noumena

parallel to state that:

> Suzuki's approach . . . reveals his close kinship with Kant in respect to the
>
> *unconditioned* nature of moral duties . . .. The command of our true nature,
>
> Suzuki says, is categorical: whether or not an action is possible "is not the
>
> point." Similarly, Kant, at the very start of the *Critique of Practical Reason*,
>
> distinguishes between a hypothetical and a categorical imperative . . .. It thus
>
> seems clear that Suzuki, like Kant, speaks of the commands of duty as
>
> categorical, rather than hypothetical... (111-112)

Olson also suggests that the Kantian reading of Zen ethics holds an advantage over a

virtue ethics reading because it makes greater sense in the context of sudden awakening,

or the notion that awakening occurs as a sudden and spontaneous event, 'Insofar as the

moral law is fully instantiated in every situation calling for a moral decision, the all-at-

once character of Kant's deontological ethics makes for a better fit with Suzuki's

emphasis on each moment of practice as a moment of enlightenment' (520). While it is

perhaps awkward to characterise Kant's ethics as all-at-once, the universality of Kant's

Moral Law does lend itself to comparison with the universality of the Buddha's *Dhamma*.

Olson's work drew mostly silence in the years after its publication.[18] The work was given a critical reading by Mark Unno. Unno raised the issue that was discussed in the 1979 collection of papers, namely the value of using Western interpretive frameworks at all. This was not only an issue for Olson, but also with Keown (reviewed in the same article): 'As with Keown, we must ask to what extent Olson's Kantian Zen is his own construction and to what extent it provides a fair representation of Kant and, in particular, Suzuki.' (522).

In 2005, Bradford Cokelet published an excellent article comparing aspects of Buddhist and Kantian ethics, using Kantian arguments for belief in God and an afterlife (discussed in the Two Standpoints and Three Postulates section in Chapter 2) to suggest a parallel rationale for Buddhist belief in karma and rebirth. Noting the Buddhist assessment of our human condition, Cokelet argues that '*if* our situation is as bad as [the Buddhist] description suggests, and we are ethically committed to escaping the burning house, then it appears we should adopt [karma and rebirth] or some other supernatural belief' (11). This argument is in response to Dale Wright, who argues for a 'naturalized' account of karma, free of rebirth. Wright suggests, following Alasdair MacIntyre's division of external and internal goods in moral acts, that the character transformation through ethical actions claimed in Buddhism could account for 'dimensions of our human situation' without the metaphysical doctrine of rebirth (82, 91). While a naturalized account of karma could work well with virtue ethics, either that of MacIntyre or another, Cokolet is correct that this simply does not reflect the Buddhist, or Kantian, conception of

---

[18] In the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, for instance, we find only two mentions in over 15 years. Jon Wetlesen notes in passing, 'There are even some who have attempted to interpret Buddhist ethics along the lines of a deontological ethics of a Kantian type.[32] [fn mentioning Olson] I do not think that this is very plausible, however.' (72) And Whitehill places Olson's book in a lengthy footnote about past comparisons, stating, 'While I do not find these proposals sufficiently developed to be compelling to Western ethicists, they are thought-experiments that address some issues of interest to Western philosophical and theological ethics, while taking interpretive risks for the sake of Buddhist relevance' (4).

ethics and the human situation. Addressing the status of scholarship on Kant amongst Buddhist ethicists specifically, Cokolet writes:

> I would argue that, given the recent popularity of claiming that Buddhist Ethics is a type of virtue ethics, Buddhist ethicists should respond to criticisms that Kant and Kantians have made of western versions of virtue ethics and to claims that most virtue-ethical criticisms of Kantianism rest on misunderstandings of Kant and Kantianism. (13 fn.20)

Two of these misunderstandings, found in Keown and Harvey's use of J.M. Cooper's assessment of Kant, have been noted above.

A third misunderstanding comes in the more recent work of Charles Goodman, discussed above for his consequentialist understanding of Buddhist ethics. In this work, Goodman includes a final chapter, formulating 'A Buddhist Response to Kant' (197-214). Goodman correctly notes that most critics of Kant 'have concentrated their attention to the first formulation of the categorical imperative, the formula of universal law' and as such he instead focuses on the second formulation, the formulation of humanity (197-8). However, both strategies fail insofar as they do not see that Kant saw all formulations as merely three ways of saying the same thing. As Kant states, 'The aforementioned three ways of representing the principle of morality are at bottom only so many formulas of the very same law: one of them by itself contains a combination of the other two' (*G* 436). Kant writes that the difference between the three is subjective and meant to bring the Moral Law closer to the intuition and thus to feeling.[19] To examine just one formulation in isolation from the other two (including the two additional

---

[19] Kant listed them as three in number. Wood follows this but notes that the 'first and third of these have variants which are intended to bring the law "closer to intuition" and make it easier to apply' thus extending the list to five, three with two variants (*Kant's Ethical Thought* xx).

'variants') can easily create an indefensible straw man. Drawing from his table of judgments in Critique of Pure Reason (A 80/B 106), Kant states, 'There is a progression here through the categories of the *unity* of the form of the will (its universality), the *plurality* of its matter (its objects, i.e., its ends), and the *totality* or completeness of its system of ends' (*G* 436). That is to say that the Moral Law is universal, concerned with all (rational) beings, and is holistic in its conception of morality as a guarantor to a just realm of ends (supported by the moral argument for belief in God).

Based on this, Goodman argues that Kant holds the premise that 'it is bad for the wicked to be happy and good for them to suffer' whereas Buddhists are 'committed to the idea that genuine great compassion motivates those who have it to relieve the suffering, and promote the happiness, of the virtuous and the wicked alike' (199). While this is an acceptable assessment of Kant, it seems to conflate the Buddhist ideal of wishing happiness for all beings (Kant may well have wished the same), with the Buddhist philosophical reality of karma. For, as Keown recognised, both karma (with rebirth) and Kant's God as judge of deeds in the afterlife guarantee the happiness of the good and the punishment of the wicked.

The remainder of Goodman's treatment of Kant is an attack on his metaphysics and his notion of a 'noumenal self' (226-30), which is necessary as the force unifying our perceptions and as that which goes on after death. Goodman writes that Kant's position requires that his readers '*identify* with this noumenal self' (226). However, Kant makes no such argument. His understanding of the I (Ger. *Ich*) divides along the lines of the Two Standpoints (discussed below) with an 'empirical' / 'I as object' and a 'transcendental' / 'I as subject' (Caygill 233). However, as with all else in the noumenal standpoint, the 'transcendental' I or 'I as subject' cannot be known. Caygill (233) continues, Kant 'insists that I is an 'entirely empty expression' which designates nothing

more than 'the thought of an absolute, but logical unity of the subject' (*CPR* A 356); it does not of itself exist as an ultimate substance or ground underlying knowledge and experience, but is simply a necessary logical function which accompanies it' (see section on Decentering and Desubstantializing the Self in Chapter 5). Interesting as these are, they mostly draw our attention to the need of more nuanced understandings of Kant in the discussion of Buddhist ethics. And certain Buddhist concepts too are open to similar criticism. In discussing the doctrine of karma with rebirth, Cokolet notes that there 'is no conclusive argument for [it]' and, lacking 'philosophic or empirical reasons for or against adopting a belief . . . one should hold back from belief.' (10-11).

Conclusion

In 1994 Damien Keown and Charles Prebish co-founded of the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, an entirely online and free resource for the discussion of Buddhist ethics. In 1995 an American Academy of Religion panel was devoted to 'Revisioning Buddhist Ethics,' further casting the spotlight on this newly emerging subdiscipline of Buddhist studies. From then on the number of articles with sophisticated analyses of Buddhist ethics grew rapidly. If we mark 1995 as a starting point, we can say that the past twenty years have provided an unprecedented rate and quality of work in Buddhist ethics.

The debate over the meaning and ethical importance of canonical terms suggests that creative philology will certainly lead to yet more understandings of Buddhist ethics. As the preceding review makes clear, fundamental debates continue in the study of Buddhist ethics. Not only are scholars unsure which Western ethical tradition best serves as an analogue for Buddhism, but many consider Buddhist ethics to lack a systematic

foundation altogether. This work falls on the side of those believing Buddhist thinkers did indeed present holistic, coherent theories.

While several scholars have drawn out consistent and coherent meta-ethical concepts and arguments in their work in Buddhist ethics, others, such as Hallisey and Heim have focused more on the level of individuals' particular norms and justifications. The importance of examining the more basic aspects of Buddhists' lives, which seems to be the driving focus of Hallisey and Heim's works, cannot be overstated. Without these works, the ethical and meta-ethical concepts become detached from their lived reality leading to wild and bizarre interpretations. But to think that the Buddha or later Buddhist scholars lacked altogether an ethical theory puts Buddhism outside of, or at least in odd relationship with, other moral and religious traditions and conversations.

Ultimately, Buddhist ethics may be *sui generis*, but the use of familiar Western categories to shed light on its different aspects is an invaluable exercise. The few attempts at Kantian comparisons with Buddhist ethics thus far have been of varying depth and quality. Scholars have focussed instead on Utilitarianism (consequentialism) or virtue ethics. Relying on the many excellent frameworks offered in these areas, this work thus represents the first comprehensive scholarly comparison of Buddhist ethics (necessarily focusing on early Buddhism) and the work of Immanuel Kant.

2 Kant and Deontology

> What Kantian ethics takes as basic is volition, the self-regulated action of
>
> rational beings under laws of reason. Volition is expressed in maxims – an
>
> agent's general intentions or policies. (Wood, *Kantian Ethics* 143)

Surprising as it may be to readers, Kantian ethics are today 'constructed' in much
the same sense that Buddhist ethics are (cf. Dreyfus). Unlike the case with early
Buddhism, Kant did leave us with major treatises on the topic of ethics. However, his
works in ethics were based heavily in his other studies, primarily metaphysics,
epistemology, and anthropology. Furthermore, his thoughts on ethics and other aspects of
philosophy matured and thus changed in his later years. As such, writers on Kant's or
Kantian ethics today must pick and choose amongst Kant's works to piece together a
survey of his beliefs on ethics. This is most surprising to those who have studied at least a
bit of Western philosophy and thought that Kant's key insights in ethics are contained in
his very brief work, the *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). This is indeed
an important work, and in many ways the most important, but, as the title suggests, it is
only the *Groundwork* (Ger. *Grundelung*). That said, as a Groundwork, it presents what
Kant saw as a single Moral Law in three formulations (see fn.19 above). However, critics
of Kant quite often ignore the latter formulations in favour of the first. Meanwhile,
defenders sometimes disagree with Kant's claim to a unity of the formulations in favour
of one of the latter two.[20] As we will see, there are several distinct approaches to Kantian
ethics, some of which will depict the work in a more positive, comprehensive, and useful

---

[20] Joel Marks, speaking strictly of the three formulations of the Moral Law given by Kant in the
Groundwork, similarly notes '. . . there are several versions of Kantianism. Kant himself presented at
least three, which he claimed to be equivalent. Critics disagree. Perhaps the most widely cited of the
three is the *formulation of universal law*, which I shall refute forthwith' (*Ought Implies Kant* 61). Marks
goes on to defend Kant against consequentialism by drawing from the *formula of humanity*, which he
claims is not 'equivalent to the formulation that I favor' (Ibid.).

manner. However, as Allen Wood notes, a more sinister vision of Kant has a firm hold on the world's imagination:

> In the course of presenting my reading of Kantian ethics, I have noticed one source of opposition to it that is especially worthy of mention. Many accept my view that Kant is a more appealing moral philosopher on my reading than on the traditional one. They may even reluctantly admit that it is better supported by the texts than they thought it could be. But they still resist, because they feel their philosophical world deprived of a significant inhabitant – namely, the stiff, inhuman, moralistic Prussian ogre everyone knows by the name Immanuel Kant. They may not like him, but he plays an important role in their moral world – if not as the villain in a cautionary tale, then at least as the personification of a one-sided truth that becomes dangerous if we go that far. Without him, they feel disoriented. If this Kant did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him. They therefore think it might be better to keep the traditional interpretation of his writings even if it is wrong – and even if the position it represents is unappealing – not despite, but even precisely because of that fact. (Wood, *Kantian Ethics* xii)[21]

In my reconstruction of Kant, I will focus on eliminating the 'one-sided truth' that many writers wish to project onto Kant. In the place of this truth, we find a complexity of a great philosopher whose work has spawned numerous diverging interpretations.[22] In this chapter we examine Kantian ethics in order to create a foundation for further

---

[21] Similarly, in a more recent review '. . . Louden argues against the stereotype (still too common, even amongst philosophers who should know better) of Kant as a stern imposer of exceptionless moral rules, the very paradigm of a rigid deontologist who ignores the rich heritage of the ethics of virtue bequeathed to us by the classical philosophers and their Christian successors' (Stevenson).

[22] The difficulty of grasping Kant's philosophy is not new to the 20th century. 'From the first commentators on Kant in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to the present day, philosophers have disagreed radically about the nature and value of his work' (Bird 1-2).

comparison with Buddhist ethics. In doing so, I hope to include enough compelling secondary scholarship along with primary material to provide a convincing account of Kantian ethics. As we see, perhaps the greatest obstacle to previous comparisons has been that Kant and his philosophy have been presented more in caricature than in their true form. This has been an aspect of much mainstream Western philosophy as well as Comparative ethics and those working in Buddhist ethics specifically.

A fairer judgment of Kant shows him to be well aware of the difficulties of morality in everyday life and the necessity of developing one's virtues. Indeed, we can favourably and coherently read Kant as arguing for an ethics which is objective (*a priori*) and yet able to be understood and enacted by each individual toward an end (*telos*) involving the complete development of reason. Such understanding and moral action depends on the development of virtues and results for Kant in an unqualifiedly happy state. The concepts discussed herein have been chosen both for their relevance to Buddhist ethics, as will be illustrated in subsequent chapters.

But first the question might be posed: was Kant a deontologist? A standard definition of deontology reads:

> Moral theories according to which certain acts must or must not be done, regardless to some extent of the consequences of their performance or non-performance (the Greek *dei* = one must). According to teleology or consequentialism, as commonly understood, the rightness or wrongness of any act depends entirely upon its consequences. Deontology is seen in opposition to consequentialism in various ways. (Honderich 187)

Wood in particular denies that Kant's ethical work can be clearly categorised *merely* deontological in this way. One reason for this is Kant's formulation of the categorical

imperative: 'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means' (*G* 429). Kant writes that 'This principle of humanity and of every rational nature generally as an end in itself is the supreme limiting condition of every man's freedom of action' (*G* 430-431). Treating every human (indeed every rational being) as an end arises out of recognition of their nature as free beings, discussed below, and as such as fellow legislators of the universal moral law. This understanding, 'leads to another fruitful concept. . . that of a kingdom of ends' (*G* 433). It is in the kingdom of ends that 'everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity' (*G* 434). This emphasis on the the place of dignity in humanity as an end leads Wood to remark, 'In fact, if a "deontological" ethical theory is one that *precludes* grounding a moral principle on substantive values or ends, then the aim of Kant's argument at *G* 4:427—432 is to show that no deontological theory is possible' (*Kant's Ethical Thought* 114). So, to the extent that we accept that Kantian ethics is deontological, we must see that it is not so in the narrow (rigid) manner often assumed.

Of course, Kant knew that placing humanity itself as an end is difficult. How does one show that humanity has dignity apart from all drives, desires and inclinations (onto which a price may be placed)? Wood writes:

> In the *Groundwork*, Kant rejects the appeal to feeling as an alternative to demonstration, but he still has the same reasons as before for thinking that the goodness of the end he is seeking is *indemonstrable*. Hence the argument that humanity is such an end must proceed in a manner analogous to an appeal to feeling, such as by showing that humanity is something we already (perhaps

tacitly or implicitly) acknowledge to be an objective end or end in itself. (*Kant's Ethical Thought* 114)

The appeal Kant uses draws on three distinct attributes as drawn out by Wood: (1) that the rational being is an *end in itself*, independent of desires (2) it's *existence is as an end*, 'as Kant also calls it, a *self-sufficient end* (*selbständiger Zweck*) (G 4:437)' (Wood *Kant's Ethical Thought* 115), and (3) it holds absolute worth, or dignity. The second of these is contrasted to an *end to be effected*, something of value to be brought about in the world (Ibid). Wood labours to clarify that an *end* can be 'anything *for the sake of which* we act (or refrain from acting)' (*Kant's Ethical Thought* 116). As such the *end* is not a future consequence, but a value in itself worthy of preserving.

Wood accepts that Kantian ethics, as expressed solely in the Formulation of Universal Law of the Categorical Imperative, *is* deontological. However, Kant provided three formulations:

(1) The Formula of Universal Law (*G* 421), with its variant

  (1b) The Formula of the Law of Nature (*G* 421),

(2) The Formula of Humanity (*G* 429), and

(3) The Formula of Autonomy (*G* 439), with its variant

  (3b) The Formula of the Realm of Ends (*G* 439).[23]

Kant thought that each of the variants was another way of saying the original formulation, and that all three express the same underlying Moral Law. Thus, Wood says that the Formula of Humanity contrasts to obligatory rules or commandments by turning us instead to duties based 'on the *absolute worth* of rational nature as an end in itself'

---

[23] See Wood for further discussion of this description of the formulations (*Kant's Ethical Thought* xx, 17-18, 187-190).

(*Kant's Ethical Thought* 141). In pressing this idea of a kingdom of ends, which Kant calls 'certainly only an ideal' in the *Groundwork* (*G* 433), we move away from the strict duty ordered in other formulations of the Categorical Imperative toward something more aligned with Aristotelian *teleology*. However, it is a teleology toward reason, not happiness, as Kant thought that reason and morality do not lead us toward happiness (*G* 395), but only toward being 'worthy of happiness' (*G* 393). Indeed, Wood notes that Kant's use of terms such as 'realm' and 'kingdom of ends' evokes the goal of a Christian heaven. Wood draws from Kant's first Critique:

> "The idea of a moral world [conceived as] a *corpus mysticum* of the rational beings in it, insofar as the free will of each, under moral laws, is in complete systemic unity with itself and with the freedom of every other" (KrV A808/B836). The system is teleological, or composed of ends, because it resembles an "organized being," a plant or animal organism, whose parts or organs combine into a whole. (*Kant's Ethical Thought* 376-7)

Kant's ethics thus might be considered deontological. But it is also deeply teleological. The system promotes a rational teleology for humankind, aimed not at the individual's flourishing or happiness (as in Aristotle and others) but at a union of moral equals in the kingdom of ends. Kant writes, 'Now, from this it follows that *morality* in itself must never be treated as a *doctrine of happiness*, i.e., as an instruction for coming to partake of happiness; for it deals solely with the rational condition (*conditio sine qua non*) of happiness and not with the means of acquiring it' (*CPrR* 5:130). The notion of this development of one's rational capacity *en route* toward and as the *sine qua non* of such a goal should dispel criticisms (c.f. MacIntyre above, 25) that look only at selected passages in the *Groundwork* for Kant's ethical thought and accuse it of formalism and mere rigor. The great challenge for us in coming to terms with Kant's ethics is in seeing

his deontological formulations of the Categorical Imperative and his teleological ones as both pointing to one and the same Moral Law.

> The demands of Kantian morality are radical. They ground morality solely on the idea of one's own rational will. Kantian principles require treating all human beings as ends in themselves with absolute, hence equal worth. They demand that human beings unite their ends into a single, reciprocally supporting teleological system, or "realm." The ideals of Kantian ethics are *autonomy, equality, and community*. Or, to put these ideals in the political language of his own time: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*! (Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* 335)

The Two Standpoints

To see how Kant arrives at this deontological and teleological view of ethics, we begin with an important aspect of Kant's ethical philosophy, the notion of the 'Two Standpoints'. The Two Standpoints are needed as a starting point for Kant's ethics because Kant believed that everything, including human beings, follow causal rules – from one standpoint (the theoretical or empirical or *phenomenal*). From another standpoint (the moral, intelligible, or *noumenal*), however, human beings must be regarded as free to choose and thus be responsible for actions. Kant writes:

> . . . the same objects can be considered from two different sides, **on the one side** as objects of the senses and the understanding for experience, and **on the other side** as objects that are merely thought at most for isolated reason striving beyond the bounds of experience. (*CPR* B xviii–xix, 111)

This distinction, on the one side the world of our experience and on the other side a realm 'merely thought' and 'beyond the bounds of experience' is, to the contemporary reader,

an epistemological distinction.[24] As Caygill clarifies, noumena are 'problems "unavoidably bound up with the limitation of our sensibility", namely "whether there may not be objects" for a "quite different intuition and a quite different understanding from ours" (*CPR* A 287/ B 344)' (302). Henry Allison reads it in this way, emphasising the normative importance of the distinction:

> As one would expect, the empirical point of view is governed by epistemic norms, that is, by what have here been termed epistemic conditions. Conversely, since the opposing point of view is concerned with evaluation and imputation, it is governed by practical norms, which stem ultimately from the nature of practical reason. And what allows the latter a place at the table is precisely the distinction between epistemic and ontological conditions. Given this distinction, which is essential to transcendental idealism, these two standpoints each retain their normative force, though neither is ontologically privileged. (122)

Allison concludes that Kant is providing a normative epistemology to be understood 'as an alternative to *ontology*, rather than, as it usually is, as an alternative *ontology*' (124). This is Kant's 'transcendental idealism', defined as the doctrine that, 'all objects of an experience possible for us, are nothing but appearances, i.e., mere representations, which as they are represented, as extended beings or series of alterations, have outside our thoughts no existence grounded in itself' (*CPR* in Allison 111). This is epistemological in nature, Allison argues, 'because it is grounded in a reflection on the conditions and limits of discursive cognition rather than one on the contents of consciousness or the nature of ultimate reality' (111-112). This is Kant's 'Copernican revolution' wherein it is not our

---

[24] Epistemology, in both its Greek and German (*Erkenntnistheorie*) forms is not found in Kant's writing. As Caygill points out, it is then paradoxical that 'although Kant's philosophy has since come to epitomize the theory of knowledge, or epistemology, he did not himself use the word or any synonym for it' (176).

cognition which conforms to objects, but rather the objects conform to our cognition (*CPR* B xvi). Objects are given to us in what Kant calls 'sensible intuition' and known through concepts; both being necessary, and neither alone sufficient, conditions of cognition (Allison 117). Kant's Copernican Revolution in epistemology was in arguing that we, as thinking beings, shape our understanding of the world, as opposed to being mere passive recipients of it. However, in our act of creation, what comes to us as knowable is necessarily separate from the world in itself. Kant called this the *noumenal* world, borrowing from the ancient Greek distinction between the world as it is known to our senses, the *phenomenal*, and the true, intelligible world beyond them. While the noumenal world exists as a necessary foundation or ground of our experience, because it is beyond our faculties of sensibility and understanding, its function in our philosophy is that 'of an unknown something' (*CPR* A 256/B 312, 351).

This is a particularly thorny point, one which remains unresolved in modern interpretations of Kant. According to Caygill (176), this distinction between epistemology and ontology is undermined by Kant's own words in the *CPR* (A 158/B 197), wherein he writes that 'the conditions of the *possibility of experience* in general are likewise conditions of the *possibility of the objects of experience*.' However, this is to interpret the 'objects of experience' as belonging to the *noumenal* standpoint, which is not necessarily the case. We can read Kant here following the interpretation of Allison if we note that Kant is silent here about things in themselves (Ger. *Ding an sich*) and instead simply stating that the *objects of experience* are coterminous with *experience* or appearance itself. O'Neill grapples with this topic in much the same way, noting that

> These passages are highly controversial. Kant himself concedes that reason is in a
> tight corner. One tempting reading suggests that in talking of "intelligible" and

"sensible" worlds Kant assumes the very transcendent metaphysics that he

otherwise repudiates, and so lapses into rationalism. (60)

Indeed, the term 'world' itself gives rise to the idea that Kant might be making an

ontological point. Thus O'Neill stresses that the 'worlds' here refer to the 'naturalistic'

and 'practical' (i.e. empirical and moral) standpoints, and it is the metaphor of

standpoints which is primary (61). We, as finite rational beings, are always and

indispensably in both standpoints.

The *noumenal* standpoint is by definition beyond experience and thus beyond

knowledge. Our human knowledge is limited to *objects of experience*. It is the purpose of

the Analytic of Concepts in the *CPR* to demonstrate 'that our finite understanding is

discursive and therefore incapable of intellectual intuition, i.e., some kind of direct,

unmediated insight into the things themselves' (Laywine 65). With this interpretation,

Kant's *noumenal* standpoint is that which lies beyond knowable experience, a 'behind the

scenes' or 'further' truth arising alongside all phenomena. It is tempting to think this

refers to a sort of Platonic realm of *Ideas*, but for Kant this would be to wrongly project

notions of our knowable world (that of phenomena). What positive can be said about

aspects of the *noumenal* standpoint will be discussed in the next section on the three

postulates. However, for Kant, the project of philosophy in his first Critique was to

'guard [reason] against extravagance and error' of this sort, this philosophy in fact

serving a 'strictly negative utility.' (*CPR* A 711/B 740 in O'Neill 13). The alternative to

this 'extremely influential current of interpretation [wherein] Kant marks the moved in

history of philosophy from ontology to epistemology' (Caygill 95) comes in the twentieth

century with Husserl and Heidegger in particular, who emphasised the ontological importance of Kant's work in their development of phenomenology (Gorner 504).[25]

One may be tempted to discover an ontology in the Two Standpoints. This ontology is one wherein the *noumenal* standpoint of things in themselves provides for the possibility of the *phenomenal*. However, a *phenomenon* cannot arise without an intellect. Put another way, an experience requires an experiencer. To further belabour the point and to reconnect it to Kant's words above the (CPR A 158/B 197), the experiencer *is* the *possibility of experience* that creates the *objects of experience*. Citing the Groundwork (450), Sullivan writes, 'Once we become aware of how radically our own perceptual and mental operations affect the way we know the world, Kant wrote, we find it is rationally necessary to assume that appearances do not exhaust reality. There must be something that is not appearance but the ground or cause of the world that appears to us' (167). This ground or cause is the *noumenal* or 'intelligible' world, the things in themselves. This realm or standpoint can be *thought*, but not known in the way that *phenomena* can be, for knowledge is a function of cognition and concepts.

It is essential that Kant's case for the Two Standpoints be understood in order for his arguments about ethics to convey any force. As a man of science (under the title of Natural Philosophy in his time), Kant was convinced of the lawfulness, and thus determinism, of the world as we experience it (*phenomena*). He writes in the *CPR*:

All actions of human beings in the domain of appearance are determined in conformity with the order of nature, . . . and if we could exhaustively investigate

---

[25] Profitable as this direction may be, particularly in recent Continental philosophy, Heidegger acknowledges that 'his interpretation did some violence to Kant's text' (Gorner 500). Gorner further states that Heidegger 'overstates his case by suggesting that the *Critique* [*of Pure Reason*] has *nothing* to do with epistemology' (512). As such, we follow Allison and others outside of the phenomenological tradition in seeing the strongly epistemological significance of Kant's Two Standpoints.

all the appearances of the wills of human beings, there would not be found a

single human action we could not predict with certainty and recognize as

proceeding necessarily from antecedent conditions. So far, then . . . there is no

freedom. (A550 / B578 in Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* 180)

And similarly in the *CPrR*:

Since the past is no longer in my power, every action I perform is necessary from

determining grounds which are not in my power; that means that at the time I act I

am never free. (5:94) If it were possible for us to have so deep an insight into a

human being's character . . . that every, even the least incentive . . . were known

to us, then his future conduct would be predicted with as great a certainty as the

occurrence of a solar or lunar eclipse. (5: 99 in Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*

180)

Yet equally as a man of conscience, raised by admirably moral parents, Kant was

convinced that we must conceive of ourselves as free agents. Concerning a metaphysical

'foundation', Kant can only be described as agnostic: that while we can know the world

of appearances, we cannot know the things in themselves which must give rise to them,

and that while we must conceive of ourselves as free and thus capable of perfect

goodness, we cannot know this aspect of ourselves any more than we can know God

(Allison 121). Udo Theil agrees, writing, that 'Kant consistently remains committed to an

agnostic position about the nature of the soul or mind *in itself*, that is, as a noumenon'

(214).

As Wood argues, freedom is in fact primary in Kant's thought about humanity

and this is not to be seen as 'radically incommensurable' with the viewpoint of humans as

deterministically driven (*Kant's Ethical Thought* 181). Given the primacy of human

freedom, no predictive study of a human being or humanity in general can be conducted.

O'Neill, on the other hand, does see the two standpoints as incommensurate, 'Kant does

not and cannot offer a single model of human action that can both serve for empirical

explanation and guide choice' (70). For Wood, Kant's argument for the 'primacy of pure

practical reason' (*CPrR* 5. 119) means that Kant's model takes human freedom as a

foundation upon which further study can be done; study which is of the deterministic

(*phenomenal*) aspects of the human being. So rather than radical incommensurability of

standpoints, Wood posits a 'stack' of one on top of the other; conceptually separable but

never in our experience as finite rational beings (cf. O'Neill 61). Indeed, Kant's own

words sometimes hint at an 'other-worldly' nature to noumena, as when he states, 'we

must admit and assume that behind the appearances there is something else which is not

appearance, namely, things in themselves' (*G* 451). Wood continues, 'The interpretation

may even be largely correct as an account of Kant's solution to the metaphysical problem

of free will . . . [but it] goes wrong whenever it projects metaphysical hypotheses used

only problematically in this highly abstruse part of Kantian doctrine onto Kant's theory

of our empirical knowledge of human nature' (*Kant's Ethical Thought* 382). Kant

explains his ordering of practical (moral) reason by saying that 'all interest is ultimately

practical and even the interest of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in

practical use alone' (*CPrR* 5. 122).

To summarise, Kant's ethical thought is grounded in an epistemological

'Copernican revolution' wherein both input of things in themselves in the form of

'sensible intuition' and subjective categorisation together form our world of experience.

Given our limited and finite nature as humans, we cannot *know* beyond this world of

experience. And yet, 'a place remains open for other and different objects; and

consequently that these latter must not be absolutely denied (*CPR* A 288/B 344)' (Caygill

302). These different objects, 'open the option of conceiving of noumenal objects or extensions. . . [to] causality in its intelligible character – *causa noumenon* – of freedom' (Caygill 302-3). We follow Allison in emphasising the moral and epistemological importance of transcendental idealism, saying that 1) it opens up the possibility for morality in an otherwise deterministic world and indeed the concept of moral perfection, and 2) it limits the pretentions of theoretical reasoning toward knowing either morality or its perfection. These both will be taken up in the next section. However, this is by no means the definitive interpretation. As noted, the rise of phenomenology traces itself, in part at least, to a different interpretation, and a closely related interpretation, termed 'the cognitive-semantic approach', takes the discussion in the direction of a humanistic theory of the sciences (Hanna 5-7).

The Three Postulates (Freedom, Immortality, and God)

If the only standpoint we can know is that of appearances, and morality demands that we look beyond them, how are we to do this? For this, Kant offered three postulates of pure practical reason: freedom, immortality, and God. 'For our necessary moral purposes, he held, we may have a rational hope and a practical faith in the reality of the conditions necessary for the human race to achieve its moral destiny in the final kingdom of ends' (Sullivan 91). It is important to note that these are *postulates*, assumptions or suggestions for the basis of further thought. As they are aspects of the noumenal standpoint, they lie outside of knowledge and thus outside of the possibility of proof (Kant rejected all previous 'proofs' of God's existence in the *CPR* beginning at A 590/B 619).

Kant's argument for the freedom of the will arises in *CPrR* (5: 28) after a discussion of the arising of moral laws with universal application. If such a law exists, it can arise only through reason, as 'distinct from all determining bases of events [occurring] in nature according to the law of causality' and the will which might follow that law 'must be thought as entirely independent of the natural law governing appearances in reference to one another, viz., the law of causality' (5: 28-29). Kant continues, saying that this will must 'nonetheless find a determining basis in the law' (5: 29). The moral law is experientially prior to freedom; and it 'offers itself to us' (to consciousness) in the same way that the pure theoretical principles (i.e. space and time) did, 'by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us, and to the separating [from them] of all empirical conditions, to which that necessity points us' (5: 29-30). Kant offers two examples to illustrate this. The first is of a man who believes that his lustful urges force him to act in some way. If we were to tell him that he would be put to death for following those urges, he would quickly discover the freedom to overcome that urge. Second, to assure us that this isn't simply due to a higher-order desire to live, he asks us to imagine a scenario where a prince demands false testimony of him under penalty of death, testimony which would result in the ruin of an honest man. Here, Kant assures us that it might be *possible* that the man would refuse, and that very realisation of the possibility of acting such is the realisation of one's freedom to act according the moral law (5: 30).

Regarding the second, an immortal soul (already discussed above with regard to Charles Goodman, chapter 1), Theil tells us, 'Kant emphasizes that by arguing for the postulate of immortality he does not thereby claim that we can acquire a priori theoretical or speculative knowledge about the nature of the soul. The postulate is not a theoretical dogma but merely a presupposition of practical reason (*CPrR*, 5.134ff)' (218). He goes

on, citing the *CPR*, 'Thus, the critique of speculative or rational psychology leaves room "for the assumption of a future life in accordance with principles of the practical use of reason" (B 424; cf. B 425)' (219). Kant's argument in the *CPrR*, starting at 5: 122, is that if a moral law and freedom of the will are possible, then 'complete adequacy of the will to the moral law' must also be possible. This he terms *holiness*, a state of perfection which cannot be achieved by any 'rational being in the world of sense. . . at any point of time in his existence' (*CPrR* 5: 122).[26] He goes on to argue that the necessity of the possibility of holiness thus requires 'a progression proceeding ad infinitum' which requires 'an existence and personality—of the same rational being—continuing ad infinitum (which is called the immortality of the soul)' (*CPrR* 5: 122).

The third postulate, God, is needed as that which is both the 'supreme cause of nature' and the guarantor of the 'possibility of [realizing] this highest good' (ibid., 5: 125). However, for Kant, God cannot be known as an object of the senses but must be an object of thought or [rationally established] belief (*Glaube*). Kant makes this distinction clear with the example of the physician who knows only the symptoms of an ill patient and must prescribe treatment based on what he believes the illness of the patient to be (*CPR* A 814/B 852). God, like the illness, is unknowable. But each must be presupposed in practical matters. Each may be denied objective reality, but not validity. Their reality may be denied because they cannot be known, but their validity must be upheld because they serve a vital purpose in our lives. If God or an illness is present as an object of belief, then one is moved to certain practical actions. If we deny the existence of God

---

[26] Here we see Kant's pessimism regarding how moral we might become in this life. This is in contrast to the possibility in Buddhism to become awakened in this life; yet it is in harmony with the common Buddhist sentiment that awakening, or in Kantian terms, 'holiness', is a very distant goal.

based on the fact that God cannot be known, then we ought likewise deny the existence of the illness. For us, each may be thought of as a fiction, but not as *mere* fiction.

We simply cannot think or know beyond the constraints of our own faculties. These faculties in a sense *bring* us the world as we know it, the phenomenal world. In this world, with a nod to Hume, Kant agrees that we can have no knowledge of God, freedom, or the immortality of the soul. And yet, just as we can think of totalities beyond our experience such as 'all humans', through reason we can reach all three of these concepts:

> For that which necessarily drives us to go beyond the boundaries of experience and all appearances is the **unconditioned,** which reason necessarily and with every right demands in things in themselves for everything that is conditioned, thereby demanding the series of conditions as something. (*CPR* B xx, 112)

While knowledge is constrained to the conditioned world of appearances, reason takes us a step further, as it were. It is with this line of argument that he suggested God as the unconditioned which completes the conditioned world of our experience in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (discussed above).

Another way Kant discusses this unconditioned nature of things in themselves is in terms of practical, by which he means moral, ideals. Kant states of the ideals of reason that, 'we have to admit that human reason contains not only ideas also ideals, which do not, to be sure, have a creative power like the **Platonic** idea, but still have **practical** power (as regulative principles) grounding the possibility of the perfection of certain **actions**' (*CPR* A569 / B597, 552). He further argues,

These ideals, even though one may never concede them objective reality (existence), are nevertheless not to be regarded as mere figments of the brain; rather, they provide an indispensable standard for reason, which needs the concept of that which is entirely complete in its kind, in order to assess and measure the degree and the defects of what is incomplete. (*CPR* A569-570 / B597-598, 552)

In our thinking about goodness, for instance, reason provides us with the idea of complete goodness, some being absolutely free of moral defects, and hence God. Yet this does not *prove* that such a being exists outside the realm of reason. Despite God's place in reason, we cannot claim *knowledge* of God, as one can only have knowledge of things in the realm of experience, the phenomenal world. The problem of freedom follows similar logic:

In the antinomy of pure speculative reason we find a similar conflict between natural necessity and freedom in the causality of events in the world. It was annulled by proving that the conflict is not a true one if the events and even the world in which they occur are regarded (as indeed they ought to be) only as appearances. For, one and the same acting being *as appearance* (even to his own inner sense) has a causality in the world of sense which always conforms to the mechanism of nature; but, with regard to the same event, insofar as the acting person regards himself simultaneously as *noumenon* (as pure intelligence, in his existence that is not determinable in terms of time), he can contain a determining basis—of that causality according to natural laws—which is itself free from any natural law. (*CPrR* 5: 114, cf. *CPR* A 444-51/B 472-79, 484-488)

Kant continues from this, arguing that there both is a highest good conceivable to reason as well as human moral agency (freedom) to achieve it. However, he states that his highest good, which he terms 'holiness', cannot be achieved by a rational being in his existence (or being, *Dasein*). Kant doesn't explain here exactly why he doubts the possibility of achieving holiness in this lifetime, but he takes this as justifying the belief in an afterlife in which to fulfil one's moral perfection:

> This infinite progression, however, is possible only on the presupposition of an *existence* and personality—of the same rational being—continuing *ad infinitum* (which is called the immortality of the soul). Therefore the highest good is practically possible only on the presupposition of the immortality of the soul, and hence this immortality, as linked inseparably with the moral law, is a postulate of pure practical reason (by which I mean a *theoretical* proposition, though one not provable as such, insofar as it attaches inseparably to a *practical* law that holds a priori [and] unconditionally).
> (*CPrR* 5: 122)

And while God is not knowable, He must be postulated as a guarantor of our happiness (as this is not guaranteed in this life). 'For, nothing glorifies God more than what is the most estimable thing in the world, viz., respect for his command, observance of the holy duty that his law imposes on us, when this is supplemented by his splendid provision to crown such a beautiful order with commensurate happiness' (*CPrR* 5:131).

Kant's Ethics

Thus by utilizing the Two Standpoints approach, first developed in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant has given rational arguments for God, freedom, and the

immortality of the soul. And he stresses throughout that these are not proofs, nor indeed, as above, provable as such. The very notion of Two Standpoints has given rise to much consternation, both amongst traditional Kantians and scholars beginning to look at his work in the light of Buddhist ethics. Charles Goodman (above, chapter 1) follows a long tradition of Western philosophers in criticizing this approach. Discussing Kant's theory of freedom, he remarks that it, 'evidently requires an ambitious metaphysical substructure [the Two Standpoints], and which, looked at with deeper insight and clearer vision, [it] is absurd, incoherent, and impossible' (209).

However, not all Kantians abandon this approach into Kant's ethics. By privileging the epistemological nature of the framework over any potential metaphysical outcomes, one can see the fundamentally ethical goal in which Kant was most interested. 'The two standpoints are to be thought of not as ontologically distinct realms between which human agents must switch, but as distinct, indispensable, yet mutually irreducible frameworks of thought' (O'Neill 68). Christine Korsgaard, in tracing the development of morality in Freud and Nietzsche comes to the conclusion that they too follow Kant's lead in linking the development of reflective distancing – the ability to detach oneself from one's current circumstances so as to gain control over one's feelings – and morality. As she jokes, 'this does not result in making oneself a superman, which you may see as a gain or loss as you like' (158-160). In practice, for each of these thinkers, it is our rational faculty which gives us reflective distance from our (deterministic) natural circumstances, and thus gives us freedom. Collapsing this distinction into a single standpoint would entail either introducing human freedom into the natural world, thus drawing causality into question, or abandoning freedom –and all thoughts of morality with it– altogether. Kant acknowledges that we must see ourselves as part of the deterministic world, yet stresses the moral nature of freedom, transferring us beyond mere causality:

Through this consciousness of its freedom the will of a rational being that, as

belonging to the world of sense, cognizes itself as necessarily subject to the

laws of causality like other efficient causes, is yet in the practical [sphere] at

the same time conscious—on another side, viz., as a being in itself—of its

existence [as] determinable in an intelligible order of things. It is conscious of

this not, indeed, in conformity with a special intuition of itself, but in

conformity with certain dynamical laws that can determine its causality in the

world of sense. For, [my assertion] that freedom, if it is attributed to us,

transfers us into an intelligible order of things has been proved sufficiently

elsewhere. (*CPrR* 5:42)

Having established that intelligible order of things, Kant hopes to return to morality and

move us in our thought away from determination by objects of the sensible world toward

states of virtue, holiness, and dignity.

Despite the complexity and development of Kant's ethics, his system can be

stated in a complete, coherent, and defensible manner. In doing this, we can see some of

the various contortions his thought has been put through in the last two centuries. We

begin with the question, What *kind* of ethics is Kant's ethics? The most common answer

is 'deontological', meaning that it is an ethics of duty (Gr. *Deontos*). As we discussed

above, this is a fair but crude starting point, as there is much more to Kant's ethics than

just his work on duty and the moral law. There are also aspects teleology – particularly

the goal of developing reason – in his ethics, and his later works on applied ethics,

particularly *Perpetual Peace* (1795) and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) cover a wide

range of practical issues, from our responsibility to cultivate our talents to family life and

international law. However, as the above quote indicates, Kant sought a clear

differentiation between items in the world that may be bought and sold and the inherent

and invaluable moral worth found in each rational being. Kant's conceptions of dignity and the duty that springs forth from it are intimately linked to his understanding of human nature. As O'Neill points out:

> Kant writes *explicitly* at the beginning of his most read work on ethics that "the concept of duty . . . includes that of a good will (*G*, IV, 397) and, it seems, sees our duties as in the first place duties to act out of certain maxims — that is, to structure our moral lives along certain fundamental lines, or to have certain virtues. Kantian moral duties cannot be exacted. Kant's conception of duty is Christian or Stoic rather than that of an ethic of rules of action; this has been said before, but (I think) more often rejected in favor of a pharisaical reading. (153)

Kant thought of these duties as categorical and springing from our shared human nature and not to be confused with the duties one can be assigned arbitrarily by superiors in church or government or according to her profession.

The examination of Kant's ethics undertaken here will begin with his doctrine of two standpoints, or two worlds. It is only with a firm grasp of this unique understanding of epistemology provided by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781a/1787b) that we can understand his conceptions of freedom, morality, reason, and so on. From this view of reality and our relationship with it (metaphysics and epistemology), Kant sought to explicate the force that morality could exert in our lives in the *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). Yet that force, in the form of the various formulations of the Categorical Imperative, remained necessarily abstract due to its universal nature. In order to find Kant's ethics *in concreta* we also look to several of his other works, including his essay 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797).

The Noumenal Standpoint, Natural Right, and Respect

It is in the theory of Two Standpoints, and in particular the practical standpoint, in which Kant grounds his moral philosophy. And while the fine tuning of his arguments remain contested, they form the basis for a great deal of contemporary Western ethics. As such, it is necessary to defend the arising of moral obligations from the noumenal standpoint against critics of that standpoint. It is with the sense of *dignity*, or value beyond any price, that we most often conceive of natural right. As Caygill (297) elucidate natural rights theory replaces natural law theory's 'divinely founded justice or proportionality [with] an individual in possession of certain rights with respect to things, other individuals, and the state. Kant defines natural right as 'nonstatutory Right, hence simply right that can be known a priori by everyone's reason' (*MM* 297, 113)'.

In order to further elucidate the development of natural right, and its connection to the noumenal standpoint, we might look at a criticism of the very notion of rights. The best known critique comes from Alasdair MacIntyre, who asserts in his celebrated revival of virtue ethics, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*:

> [T]he truth is plain: there are no such rights, [i.e., human rights, natural rights, rights of man,] and belief in them is one with belief in witches and in unicorns. The best reason for asserting so bluntly that there are no such rights is indeed of precisely the same type as the best reason which we possess for asserting that there are no witches and the best reason which we possess for asserting that there are no unicorns: every attempt to give good reasons for believing that there **are** such rights has failed. (69)

In short, this seems to be an example of a Category Mistake (Ryle).[27] The famous illustration given by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900 – 76) was of a foreigner touring Oxford University, seeing various colleges, libraries, and halls, only to pose the question, 'But where is the *University*?' (Ryle 16). To surmise that the University does not really exist is a category mistake; it certainly does exist, just not in the way that the person had presumed. Similarly, 'good reason for believing' in *rights* cannot be compared with good reasons for believing in witches or unicorns. To put it most succinctly, witches and unicorns belong to the category which, if given the predicate 'existing', would exist for us in the phenomenal world (in our experience). As Kant put it, these are matters of *a posteriori* knowledge. If they did exist, we would *know* them by our experience of them. However, *rights*, like any other concept from the rational mind, follow an altogether opposite conceptual direction. That is, rights exist *a priori*, that is universally and necessarily, from the *noumenal*, rational standpoint only to make themselves 'felt' – a term with which Kant himself had a difficult time – in our experience, that is, the phenomenal or empirical world (*CPR* A 1-2 and B 1-3, 127). It is this status which allows them to be both universal, applying to all rational beings despite differing empirical circumstances, and cross-culturally discernible, even in cultures such as the Buddha's that did not have the terminology of rights (Keown, "Human Rights").

Kant's 'respect' is an irreducible moral feeling, similar to natural sentiments for Adam Smith (1723 – 90)[28] or humankind's 'two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*'

---

[27] Onora O'Neill uses the same term in her explanation of the two standpoints (the empirical and the intelligible) in *Constructions of Reason* (69-70), quoting Kant:
To explain why in the given circumstances the intelligible character should give just these appearances and this empirical character transcends all the powers of our reason, indeed all its rights of questioning, just as if we were to ask why the transcendental object of our outer sensible intuition gives intuition in space only and not some other mode of intuition. (*CPR* A551/B585)

[28] Smith, Adam, (1853). *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Harrison and Sons, London, p.66.

for Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832).[29] The way Kant discusses moral feeling is not in such lofty terms as rights or autonomy, but instead in terms of respect. His defence of the mechanism of respect comes in a footnote in the *Groundwork*:

> There might be brought against me here an objection that I take refuge behind the word "respect" in an obscure feeling, instead of giving a clear answer to the question by means of a concept of reason. But even though respect is a feeling, it is not one received through any outside influence but is, rather, one that is self-produced by means of a rational concept; hence it is specifically different from all feelings of the first kind, which can all be reduced to inclination or fear. What I recognize immediately as a law for me, I recognize with respect; this means merely the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences upon my sense. (*G* 402 fn. 14)

This shows, quite importantly, *how* the moral law makes itself felt upon us. Recall the examples of the man above, first threatened with death if he could not overcome a powerful urge and second, again threatened with death if he did not bear false witness against an innocent man. Respect, as it arises here, is always *for* a particular kind of being, one which is capable of reason.

I suppose that for MacIntyre, 'respect' might fall into the same category as witches and unicorns. But, as with rights, autonomy, reason, morality itself, freedom of the will and numerous other concepts, this is clearly a mistake. One could still doubt the

---

[29] Bentham, Jeremy. (1798). *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. in *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues, Second Edition*. Steven M. Cahn, Peter Markie, eds. 2002. (New York: Oxford University Press). 1.

existence of the the noumenal standpoint or believe that all we can know or have reasons to believe in must come to us by our senses. But without some new theory grounding knowledge, one could quickly slip into extreme scepticism, doubting not only aspects of Kantian morality, but space, time, and an objective world entirely. This would be a return to the Humean scepticism that Kant called 'nomadic', suggesting that it led to unsettled wandering (as opposed to the 'despotic' dogmatism of the rationalists, principally Wolff). Speaking on the history of metaphysics, Kant writes:

> Initially her [metaphysics'] reign, administered by the *dogmatists*, was *despotic*. But since the legislation still bore the traces of ancient barbarism, her reign was beset by civil wars and thus gradually degenerated to complete anarchy; and the *skeptics*, a kind of nomads who loathe all steady cultivation of the soil, tore up from time to time the civil society (*CPR* A ix).

In fact, Kant employed Ryle's concept of a Category Mistake to some degree when he wrote (regarding Hume's denial of causation): 'When Hume, taking objects of experience to be *things in themselves* (as, indeed, is done almost everywhere), declared the concept of cause to be deceptive and a false illusion, he acted quite rightly' (*CPrR* 53). For Kant, as we have seen, the objects of experience, phenomena, most emphatically are *not* the things in themselves, which necessarily extend beyond our sense faculties. Things in themselves are not in the same category as the objects of our experience. As Wood summarises, 'Kantian ethics. . . requires not only respect for individual rights and the equal worth of human beings, but also the idea of a cosmopolitan community in which the ends of all rational beings must form a unity to be pursued collectively' (*Kant's Ethical Thought* 2).

Heteronomy and Autonomy

Kant believed that rationality in humans is not only innate, but fundamental to who we are. Kant saw our moral development as coming to realize our own true nature, as opposed to living under the shackles of outside influences. Kant's most attractive description of what is meant by this development, or moving from heteronomy to autonomy, comes in the 1784 essay 'What is Enlightenment?' which begins:

> *Enlightenment is the human being's emancipation from its self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity* is the inability to make use of one's intellect without the direction of another. This immaturity is *self-incurred* when its cause does not lie in a lack of intellect, but rather in a lack of resolve and courage to make use of one's intellect without the direction of another. '*Sapere aude*! Have the courage to make use of your own intellect!' is hence the motto of enlightenment.

And Kant continues:

> Idleness and cowardice are the reasons why such a large segment of humankind, even after nature has long since set it free from foreign direction (*naturaliter maiorennes*), is nonetheless content to remain immature for life; and these are also the reasons why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so comfortable to be immature. If I have a book that reasons for me, a pastor who acts as my conscience, a physician who determines my diet for me, etc., then I need not make any effort myself. It is

not necessary that I think if I can just pay; others will take such irksome

business upon themselves for me. [30]

Here Kant displays optimism concerning humanity's ability to grow out of its self-incurred immaturity. However, he notes the difficulty with which this would be done by a single heroic individual. Instead, he suggests, 'It is much more likely that an entire public should enlighten itself; indeed, it is nearly unavoidable if one allows it the freedom to do so' (Ak 8:36). That freedom, he suggests, must come from the King and be exercised by all members of society, led, as it were, by 'some independent thinkers'. Kant here distinguishes between private duties: those relating to one's office or relationship as a citizen under a government, and public duties: those which are restricted by no duty or office other than reason itself.[31] One's private duties play an essentially conservative role and maintain the function of the church, state, and other institutions. However, one's public duty is toward progressing human knowledge through open enquiry and debate. It is progress in just this way that Kant believed we might recover the goodness at the heart of human nature itself. Discussing this in the context of religious conceptions of history and humankind, Kant in 1793 wrote:

> The restoration of the original predisposition to good in us is not therefore
>
> the acquisition of a *lost* incentive for the good, since we were never able to
>
> lose the incentive that consists in the respect for the moral law, and were
>
> we ever to lose it, we would also never be able to regain it. The restoration
>
> is therefore only the recovery of the *purity* of the law, as the supreme
>
> ground of all our maxims, according to which the law itself is to be

---

[30] Ak 8:33-42, reprinted in (*Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Essays* 17-23).

[31] He states, 'By the public use of one's reason I mean the kind of use that one makes thereof as a *scholar* before the *reading world*. I understand the private use of one's reason to be the use that one may make of it in a *civil* post or office with which one is entrusted' (Ak 8:37).

incorporated into the power of choice, not merely bound to other

incentives, nor indeed subordinated to them (to inclinations) as conditions,

but rather in its full purity, as the self-*sufficient* incentive of that power.[32]

Autonomy, our original disposition, is therefore ever with us, as a potential. Indeed, it is

intimately connected with, or perhaps none other than, our very ability to reason. As

such, all that is required of us is the recovery of the purity of our own reason. And for

that purpose, Kant set out the formulations of the Categorical Imperative in his 1785

Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals.

Kant clarified and further sharpened his critique of heteronomy in the

Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals. There he criticizes 'all previous efforts that

have ever been undertaken to bring to light the principle of morality' as failing because

they all located morality outside of the will of the individual and thus had to strain to

argue why one should become follow morality at all (*G* 432-3). Thus inevitably their

ethical systems did not rest on duty, but 'only necessity of action from a certain interest'

(*G* 433). Interests can change or conflict with one another. Morality, if nothing else, must

be binding in a way that does not depend on our interests. In placing morality as a 'slave

to the passions'[33] previous philosophers could elicit, 'only hypothetical imperatives are

possible: 'I ought to do something *because I will something else*'. By contrast, the moral,

hence categorical, imperative says: 'I ought to act thus-and-so even if I did not will

anything else' (*G* 441). The 'something else' that Kant writes about here can range from

moral sense (sympathy, pleasure, etc.) to seeking perfection (which Kant dismisses as

---

[32] Ak 6:46, reprinted in (Kant, Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason and Other Essays 67).

[33] Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) 2.3.3.4. The full quote is, 'Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.' Kant, in placing morality strictly in the realm of reason, argued that reason can and should operate free of the passions.

empty because it is indeterminate, yet still more favourable than moral sense theory because it moves the determining grounds of morality away from sensuality into pure reason) to following God's will. Kant would later divide theories of heteronomy into four kinds as follows (*CPrR* 40):

Subjective		Objective	
External	*Internal*	*External*	*Internal*
Of *education* (according to Montaigne) Of the civil *constitution* (according to *Mandeville*)	Of *physical feeling* (according to *Epicurus*) Of *moral feeling* (according to *Hutcheson*)	Of *perfection* (according to *Wolff* and the *Stoics*)	Of the *will of God* (according to *Crusius* and other *theological* moralists)

Human Nature is Moral

The distinction between heteronomy and autonomy is based in Kant's particular understanding of human nature. It is here that Kant diverges from classical systems of ethics. In order to understand Kant's conception of human nature, we turn to his work on anthropology. [34] The importance of anthropology to Kant, or the understanding of humanity qua humanity, is often overlooked by his critics. However, in his *Lectures on Logic* (published in 1800), he added a fourth question to the three mentioned above in his first critique, stating:

> The field of philosophy in the cosmopolitan sense can be brought down to the
>
> following questions:

---

[34] Anthropology here is the proper study of humankind as a rational enterprise, only supplemented by 'empirical' or 'local' anthropology, because it is limited in scope to the study of particular peoples in particular times: 'Anthropology, is not a description of human beings but of human nature' (*Ak* 25:471), quoted in Wood, *Kant and the Problem* 38.

1. What can I know?

2. What ought I to do?

3. What may I hope?

4. What is the human being?

Metaphysics answers the first question, *morals* the second, *religion* the third, and *anthropology* the fourth. Fundamentally, however, we could reckon all of this to anthropology, because the first three questions refer to the last one. (Ak 9:25)

As with his previous work, however, his anthropology is based in the Two Standpoints distinction already discussed. With the two standpoints distinction in hand, Kant finds time and again that previous thinkers have made the mistake of collapsing one into the other. As such, his lectures on anthropology, spanning nearly three decades, were in many ways a response to what Kant refers to as Ernst Platner's 'eternally futile inquiries as to the manner in which bodily organs are connected with thought' (Kant to Herz, late 1773, Ak 10:145). From the Kantian view, this is simply the wrong way of approaching the subject of human thoughts, because humans, as rational, free beings, cannot be meaningfully understood in purely physical/empirical terms. What makes us *human* is our freedom and our ability to choose independently (autonomously) of the drives, desires, and inclinations that arise on the basis of our embodiment.

Yet our freedom is not self-generated. It develops both historically in the case of society and by way of education in the case of the individual. In both of these respects, development is a collective, not merely an individual process. As Allen Wood notes, 'Our only hope for human moral improvement lies in an ethical community with shared or collective moral ends. (On all these points, the common characterization of Kant as a moral "individualist" could not be more mistaken.)' (41). 'A human being can become

human only through education. He is nothing but what education makes of him' (Ak 9: 443).[35] Education and thus society are essential to our being human and thus our morality. Without these, we would be mere animals; our rational faculties never advancing beyond its use for satisfying physical desires and needs. As Wood suggests, this development is what separates humans from animals for Kant:

> Thus what remains to us for indicating the human being's class in the system of living nature and thus characterizing him is nothing but this: he has a character that he himself makes, in that he has the faculty of perfecting himself in accordance with ends he takes for himself; whereby he can make himself, from an animal endowed with a *capacity for reason* (*animal rationabilis*), into a rational animal (*animal rationale*); and as such he first, *preserves* himself and his species; second; exercises, instructs and *brings up* his species for domestic society; and third, *governs* it as a whole that is systematic (ordered in accordance with rational principles) and fitted for society (Ak 7:321-322).[36]

Humanity's capacity for reason is described as having three functions: 1) self-preservation, 2) Education, and 3) self-determination in society, or 'personality' (Wood, *Kant and the Problem* 51-52). And yet, as physical beings, humans still struggle with an animal nature, leading to Kant's pessimism (noted above) regarding our ability to be fully rational *in this life*, or in this corporeal body.

Kant describes the development of humanity's capacity for reason in these three stages as follows. First, reason is utilized in the service of basic needs, such as food and

---

[35] Quoted in Wood *Kant and the Problem* 41.
[36] *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, quoted in Wood, *Kant and the Problem* 51.

shelter. Kant recognized that the historical shift from hunter-gatherers to pastoralists played a key role in moving humanity beyond this stage. Wood suggests, 'His views on this matter strikingly anticipate Karl Marx's materialist conception of history' (*Kant and the Problem*).[37] Nature, as the mechanical empirical world, has driven the development of reason in humanity through the conflicts caused by our animal nature (dominated by unlimited drives, desires, and inclinations).

Second, humanity, now freed from many of the toils of hunter-gatherer life, set out to create and develop culture by way of education. Through culture, developing societies could hold themselves together despite persistent forces of destruction both from within and without. Culture also promises continuity from one generation to the next, thus stability which in turn allowed for greater resources to be devoted to education. This dialectic, or growth process of mutually reinforcing conditions and advancements, eventually led to the third stage in the development of humanity's capacity for reason.

The third stage of Kant's scheme describes the emergence of individuality, of free agency in perhaps its first real form. Here individuals' capacity, developed through education, is great enough to question all aspects of society, allowing individuals to freely associate and determine their future. Naturally, this third and final stage coincides closely with the conditions in Kant's lifetime, wherein a growing number of people from lower working classes (including Kant) were newly able to enter into the halls of higher learning and in turn to shape society instead of remaining a mere passive member of it. It is in this stage that morality can actually become a determining force for a person's actions, and thus the moral law might shine forth.

---

[37] See also Wood, 'Kant's Historical Materialism' and *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Chapter 7.

>The summation of pragmatic anthropology in regard to the vocation
>(*Bestimmung*) of the human being and the characteristic of his education
>(*Ausbildung*) is the following. The human being is destined (*bestimmt*)
>through reason to be in a society with human beings, and in it through art and
>sciences to *cultivate*, *civilize* and *moralize* himself (Ak 7:324).[38]

To *moralize*, or become moral, is for Kant the culmination of humanity's capacity for reason. Kant saw this as an ongoing process, something that could not be completed within this lifetime. And while cultivation and civilization may partake in the goal of happiness (which lies in the phenomenal standpoint), for Kant, morality is our contact with the noumenal, and thus cannot aim at happiness itself. Instead, morality is what makes humanity *worthy of* happiness. Kant writes, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, '. . . morality is properly the doctrine not of how we are to make ourselves happy but of how we are to become *worthy* of happiness' (130). And, returning to the question 'What may I hope' in its two instantiations above, Kant continues, 'Only if religion is added to it does there also enter the hope of some day coming to partake of happiness to the degree to which we have taken care not to be unworthy of it' (ibid.).

Allen Wood argues that the efforts to show that human nature is rational, and rationality is morality are the core of Kant's ethics (*Kant and the Problem*). Thus humanity is, in a qualified sense, innately moral. This is the 'moral law in all its purity' mentioned above, and to exercise the moral law in our actions is 'autonomy'. Contrary to our autonomy, most beings act upon motivations derived from non-rational drives, desires, and inclinations. The drives, desires, and inclinations can range from bodily pleasures such as food and sex to political or religious motivations, such as seeking

---

[38] *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Quoted in (Wood, *Problem of Human Nature* 53).

despotic power or a heavenly (pleasurable) afterlife. Any such motivation, for Kant, in failing to arise from reason, from the individual's 'pure' nature, is heteronomous and thus fails to be moral. This separates Kant from ethical theories that start with feelings (such as Bentham's 'pain and pleasure) as well as those who seek to merely to unite emotional and rational aspects of the human (such as in ancient theories).

The Categorical Imperative

Kant's most famous attempt to formulate the universally binding nature of morality was in the Categorical Imperative (*G* 413 – 463). In order for us to realize our own moral nature, Kant felt we must derive pure principles of morality, set apart from empirical ends that may corrupt them (*G* 389). While Kant is at pains to demonstrate that this purity is found in intention and that this is the most important aspect of any particular moral decision, consequences both in terms of the individual agent and humanity as a whole do play an important role in his thought. In fact, his ethics, as exemplified in the 2nd formulation of the Categorical Imperative (CI), the formula of *humanity*, suggests a *telos*, or end, for all human beings. The 3rd formulation of the CI, the formula of *the kingdom of ends*, more clearly elaborates this notion.

1. Formula 1 - the Formula of Autonomy or of Universal Law: 'I should never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law' (*G* 402).

2. Formula 2 - the Formula of Respect for the Dignity of Persons: 'Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means' (*G* 429).

3. Formula 3 - the Formula of Autonomy or Legislation for a Kingdom of Ends: 'Act in accordance with the maxims of a member legislating universal laws for a merely possible realm of ends' (*G* 439; cf. 433, 437, 438).

The first formulation Kant deems to hold unity or universality (*G* 436). It is, as critics point out, empty of content. However, the next two formulations fill in the content, yet still an abstract enough way to be universal. The goal of the first formulation is the creation of a sort of touch-stone, not unlike the golden rule, for the individual to contemplate the implications of her motivations. It is necessary to deduce the motivation behind the action in order to make this work. If a woman were contemplating celibate monastic life, she would not ask, 'can I will that my action (to become celibate) become a universal law?' Instead, as a good Kantian, she would look into her motives. If her motives are simply to become celibate, or to escape family duties, she might decide that this is an immoral deed. However, if her motivation to be ordained is to pursue her highest ideal as a human being, then she may feel confident that Kant would deem her action praiseworthy (*G* 398). If further pressed on 'why' she feels this is the way to pursue her highest ideal she were to answer that she is compelled simply 'solely by duty', then her actions would have 'genuine moral worth' (ibid.).

The second formulation is meant to provide the moral law with the '*plurality* of its matter (its objects, i.e., its ends)' (*G* 436). The formulation clearly demands that we think of other people, not merely abstractly, but in the flesh as we encounter them in our lives. These are the many individual people and interactions in which we are given the opportunity to treat another person as a human being instead of as a mere object in the pursuit of our goals. This means that we see that person as a rational agent with goals of

her own. This 'seeing' the other as an equal moral being gives rise to the 'respect' discussed above.

In the third formulation, Kant invokes the teleology of ancient thinkers in having us imagine a 'merely possible kingdom of ends', by which is meant that we should see all fellow humans in their purely rational, moral nature. Here Kant perhaps invokes the ideal of a heavenly realm, wherein we are free from our animal natures (those driven by drives, desires, and inclinations) and thus seeing nothing but the fully rational goodness in one another. Such a being would be one 'whose maxims are necessarily in accord with the laws of autonomy is a holy, or absolutely good, will' (*G* 439).

Kant believed these to be merely three different ways of saying the same thing, as he put it, subjectively different, but objectively the same and progressing toward the (teleological) finality of the third (*G* 436-437). How reasonable this is has been debated, but for our purposes we shall take Kant's word. One can readily see the common thread of universality and teleology (end or goal based reasoning) in all three formulations. Just as with staring out into the 'starry heavens above', looking within at one's own moral nature should bring a sense of awe in the grandeur of the natural world. And just as scientists can, through careful observation and analytical rigor, produce principles such as gravity that can be thought to stand universally in both space and time, Kant believes he has produced moral principles of the same stature (cf. *CPrR* 7:161-3).

> If we now dissect these examples but, lacking *mathematics*, take up in
> repeated experiments on common human understanding a procedure—similar
> to *chemistry*—of *separation* of the empirical from the rational that may be
> found in them, this can allow us to cognize both of them *pure* and, with
> certainty, what each can accomplish by itself; thus it can forestall in part the

straying of a still *crude*, unpracticed judging, and in part; (what is needed far

more) the soarings of genius through which—as usually happens with the

adepts of the philosopher's stone —without any methodical investigation and

cognition of nature, dreamed-up treasures are promised and true ones

dissipated. (*CPrR* 7:163)

'Morals themselves are liable to all kinds of corruption' if we do not understand

'the moral law in all its purity' (*G* 390, 3). And as such, his project in the Groundwork

turns toward understanding the moral law *in all its purity.* Once this is fully grasped and

one could begin the effort of turning from the satisfaction of desires or societal

(heteronomous) demands, the path of morality would begin.

Conclusion

Kant thought moral principles were akin to mathematics, wherein lies both an

abstract and 'pure' logical structure and an empirical or applied aspect. Once the basic

elements were discovered, such as the principles of geometry with Euclid or laws of

motion with Newton, they could be applied to our everyday lives. With these principles

and laws, complex activities such as grand construction projects or space travel become

possible. Similarly, morality needs to proceed through principles to avoid 'unpracticed

judging' and the 'dreamed-up treasures' presented by previous moral philosophers (*CPrR*

7:163). Yet Kant was interested not only in discussing the objective moral law as a

formula, but also in our application of it.

By adopting the two standpoint approach and arguing for its necessity in our

understanding both ourselves and the world around us, Kant clearly broke away from

previous moral philosophers. Kant based this approach in his epistemological work in the

Critique of Pure Reason, where he argued that just as certain basic attributes of the physical world, such as causality, could not be established empirically (but are given by reason), so too are aspects of the moral realm. As Wood writes,

> . . . our only coherent conception of ourselves, as moral agents or even as subjects of theoretical judgment, is one which presupposes from a practical standpoint that we are free (KrV A546-547/B574-575, A801-802/B829-830; Ak 4:447-448, 5:3-4, 50-57, 6:475, 8:13-14, 17). Although Kant never pretends to seek or find empirical *proofs* of human freedom, his empirical anthropology always proceeds on the fundamental presupposition that human beings are free, and throughout it interprets the empirical observations it makes on the basis of this presupposition. (Wood, *Kant and the Problem* 44)

It is through our freedom that we are able to manifest morality in the world, to act morally. Having set forth the Categorical Imperative as an ideal before us and argued that it is reasonable to believe in both God and the immortal soul, Kant suggests three principles to guide our moral deliberation. These come in his third Critique, the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), where Kant addresses the third question given above, vis. 'What may I hope?' The first of these is 'to think for oneself' (Ak. 5: 294). Reminiscent of his argument in 'What is Enlightenment?', Kant thought that taking responsibility for one's own thought was essential in one's moral development. Kant goes on to call this the 'maxim of a reason that is never **passive**'. Second, 'think in the position of everyone else' which Kant called the '**broad-minded way of thinking**' (Ak. 5: 295). By this Kant envisioned the individual 'shifting his ground to the standpoint of others' (O'Neill 26). Through this one takes not only his/her own empirical circumstances in mind along with the moral ideal (i.e. acting according to duty) when undergoing moral deliberation, but also considers all other persons. Third, one undertakes the maxim 'Always to think in

accord with oneself'. This is the most difficult maxim and 'only attainable by the union of both the former' (O'Neill 26). The moral law is objective, steady, and constant. Yet our empirical circumstances are always changing. The task is to cultivate a strong enough understanding of and habituation toward the moral law that one can maintain moral consistency despite shifting empirical circumstances.

Despite the need to deepen our understanding of the principles of morality, Kant believed that knowing the moral course of action in any particular situation is not terribly difficult. What causes us to fail to act morally is not our inability to see the right thing to do, but rather the overriding power of our drives, desires and inclinations.

> We commonly face two problems in our moral life: deciding what are the right moral policies and having the moral strength to observe them. Today we might debate which is the harder task, but Kant was convinced that it was the cultivation of a sufficiently good character. "What duty is," he wrote, "is plain of itself to everyone," even to those of the "commonest intelligence."
> (Sullivan 29)

Despite the plainness of duty, it does still require the cultivation of our moral character to carry it out. In that regard Kant is similar to ancient theorists such as Aristotle. He also follows ancient notions of a *telos*, a goal toward which humanity is directed, as he exhorts in the second and third versions of the Categorical Imperative that we treat others as ends and then that we act as if we ourselves are members of the kingdom of ends or fully autonomous beings. To achieve this autonomy, Kant thought it necessary to break completely with the 'animal side' of our nature, as opposed to the ancients who thought that the two natures should be brought in to harmony. The path

Kant suggested for making this possible in an individual's life will be examined in further chapters where we compare the particular aspects of Kant's and Buddhist ethics.

3 Early Buddhism and its Ethics

In this chapter we explore the basic teachings of early Buddhism, its soteriological orientation, and the framework for its ethical system. The more complex and important of these, such as the role of cosmology in Buddhist soteriology, the nature of karma, and the meaning of awakening will be further developed in future chapters. To avoid the concern of imposing an alien scheme and then choosing Buddhist teachings that validate it, we draw heavily from canonical material and secondary traditional sources. The framework of the chapter follows the Buddhist categories of the 'Three Jewels' (Pāli: *tiratana*): the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Saṇgha* (Community). These are also known as the 'Three Refuges' (*tisarana*) and the taking of these as one's refuge is a widely-held traditional way of defining a Buddhist. As our interest is primarily philosophical, our emphasis will be on the *Dhamma*. The *Dhamma*, as the moral law and as the teachings provided for understanding and living according to it, will be the key point of the framework for our understanding of Buddhist ethics. This framework will consist of three other necessary components. First is *kamma*, the intentional activity according to the Buddha by which one moves from an immoral life toward one in accordance with the *Dhamma*. Second is the understanding of a criterion for morally good and bad actions (*kusala/akusala*) in relation to other criteria discussed in the early Buddhist *suttas*. Finally there is the taxonomy, or classification of beings (primarily humans at various stages of moral development) in the Buddhist cosmos and soteriology (as these are not fundamentally separable in early Buddhism).

Drawing from the widely used Buddhist concept of a path (*magga*), these four aspects create a goal (life in accordance with the *Dhamma*: *nibbāna*), a means of moving forward or back (*kamma*), a criterion for judging whether actions will take one toward or away from the goal (*kusala/akusala*), and guideposts along the way. The image of

Buddhist ethics as a path concedes a certain teleological structure similar to that of

Aristotle as Keown suggests, other Hellenistic ethical systems (G. Dreyfus), or perhaps

even consequentialism (Goodman). However, the presence of the Dhamma as a

fundamental moral law should draw our attention to Kant's ethics. As we have seen, Kant

suggested a similar teleological structure, made explicit in his second and third

formulations of the Categorical Imperative (*G* 438), but held that this structure could only

exist with the grounding in a universal (*G* 387-393), non-empirical (*G* 442) and *a priori*

moral law. However, the Buddha's life and teachings can only be fully understood in

their proper context.

Context: the Brahmanas and Samaṇas

The practices and beliefs the time of the Buddha are described be the early

Buddhist texts in two opposing categories, the *brahmanas* (Anglicised as *brahmins*) and

the *samaṇas*, 'wanderers'. The dominant of the two during the Buddha's lifetime was the

Brahmins. The Brahmins traced their history to the Aryans, a migrant race which spoke

an Indo-European language. The Aryans brought with them the Vedas, a core set of texts

for a religion still under development at the time of the Buddha. Like other

religious/philosophical movements at the time, the Buddha set himself apart from the

Brahmins through his rejections of some ideas and reforms of others.

One of the most prominent Brahmanic texts is the Puruṣa Sukta ('Hymn to the

Cosmic Man', Ṛg Veda 10:90), wherein humankind is divided into four classes (Skt.

varṇa, Pāli: *vaṇṇa*), with the Brahmins (the priestly class) representing the head or

mouth, warriors as the arms, merchants as the legs, and servants as the feet. Each person

was held to be born into a class, remaining in it for life, and each was assigned specific

duties (Skt. dharma). Dharma comes from the verbal root √dhr, meaning to uphold or

sustain and one's duties thus sustained the cosmos. Thus, according to Brahmanism,

one's religion involved properly following his/her particular duty (Skt. *svadharma*). The

system supported the priestly class, which in turn was supposed to support society

through the correct performance of rituals.

> The vision of the moral life that emerges from the large and complex body of
>
> the Vedas is thus highly performative, tied to the structured ritual actions of
>
> the sacrifices that fashion and maintain the world . . . To be moral, to act
>
> rightly, is to realize actively one's place in the ritually constituted cosmos.
>
> (Monius 331)

The importance of the Brahmins was such that, according to one of the ritual manuals in

the Vedas, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 'the sun would not rise if the priest did not sacrifice.'

(Van Voorst 64). The sacrificial action undertaken was known as karma. This was, as

Gombrich calls it, 'extrinsic' religious activity, meaning that outward performance of

one's duty was held as most important (46). The proper following of one's religious

duties (dharma) generated good karma, thus keeping society orderly. The ethics

prescribed in this time, in large part made explicit in the *Manusmṛti* ('*Laws of Manu*')

around the turn of the Common Era, were based on one's place in society, and the 'good

life' required living one's own duties to their fullest: 'One has only to read Manu after a

bit of Kant to be struck by the former's extraordinary lack of universality . . . . To be

moral, for Manu, is to particularize . . .' while for Kant – and the Buddha – morality is

universal (Ramunujan 45-7, quoted in Perret 324).

However, even before the time of the Buddha and other teachers below, this

performative vision of ethics was already under scrutiny from within. The Upaniṣads,

dated to roughly 8th-6th centuries BCE, while upholding the authority of the earlier Vedas, shifted moral/soteriological focus away from ritually upholding the cosmos, and toward meditative release (Skt.: *mokṣa*) from the cycle of rebirth and re-death (Skt.: *saṃsāra*). The meaning of karma thus also changed, from ritual activity in the communal context to individualized actions propelling one either toward release or further rebirths (Monius 332-3). The way to escape was 'gnosis, a realization of one's true nature', and that nature was the identity of one's self (Skt. *ātman*) and the cosmic principle (Skt.: *Brahmā*) (R. F. Gombrich 43). In this philosophy, to be moral is to engage in practices that could lead to a correct understanding of oneself and the universe.

This shift in Brahmanic ethics, from early Vedic ritual and rigid communal stratification to the Upaniṣadic meditation and the emphasis on proper knowledge of reality had a profound influence on the Buddha. Furthermore, six other philosophies (Pāli: *añña-titthiya*, often translated as 'other sects') are discussed in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* ('*Discourse on the Fruits of the Homeless Life'*, DN 2), each presenting worldviews that are discussed and debated variously throughout the Buddhist Canon. In this discourse King Ajāsattu asks the Buddha about the value of the religious life. First he reviews the responses of six other wanderers.

Pūraṇa Kassapa, the first discussed, claimed that in harming others, even killing them, no evil (*pāpa*) would accrue, and likewise through virtuous actions, no merit (*puñña*) would accrue. This denial of both reward and punishment for deeds represented a form of amoralism. Next, Makkhali Gosāla, denied the existence of causes (*hetu*) and conditions (*paccaya*) for the purity (*visuddhi*) and impurity (*saṃkilesa*) of beings. He thus denies the efficacy of morality, ascribing to a doctrine of fatalism wherein beings achieve an end to suffering (*dukkhassanta*) whenever our karma runs out, just 'like a ball

of string runs until unravelled.'[39] Third, Ajita Kesakambala, taught a form of materialism, denying the teaching of survival (*atthikavāda*, literally the view that 'is') and stating outright that 'there is no good or bad result from one's deeds.'[40] Pakudha Kaccāyana, suggested a form of physicalist reductionism. For him, the basic components of existence are physical and eternal, so no harm can be done to them, thus, even apparent murder, cutting off someone's head, is not murder, just a rearrangement of the physical world. Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (also known as Mahāvira, the founder of Jainism) taught the King his practice of four-fold restraint. Lastly, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, offered only equivocation or senseless talk (*vikkhepa*). While this may have been 'a kind of scepticism that refuses to commit to any position' (Gethin, *Sayings of the Buddha* 6), a better understanding is that his position was simply one of not knowing, or agnosticism (Bhaskar 14).

Throughout the Pāli Canon, the Buddha's teachings are placed in contrast to one or more of these philosophies. The compound *samaṇabrāhmaṇā* is virtually ubiquitous, even serving as the title of one short *sutta* (SN 17.25). As such, it is important to see that the Buddha emerged in a time of lively philosophical and moral discussion in which various paths were possible.

The Buddha

As with any major religious or philosophical figure, the life of the historical Buddha, Siddhattha Gotama (Skt.: Siddhārtha Gautama), plays an important role in our understanding of his teachings. In his introduction to the *Philosophy of the Buddha*, Christopher Gowans notes:

---

[39] *Seyyathāpi nāma suttaguḷe khitte nibbeṭhiyamānameva paḷeti.*
[40] *Natthi sukaṭadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko.*

. . . it is natural to compare the Buddha with other primordial figures such as Socrates and Jesus, teachers who conveyed their beliefs with the whole of their lives, but wrote nothing. In all three cases, there was much oral communication that was preserved by memory and subsequently recorded by enthusiastic followers. But these three personages intended to teach with their actions as well as their words, and we cannot properly understand these words, in the canonical texts of their adherents, without placing them in the context of the lives of those who expressed them. (17)

Paul Williams suggests just the opposite, likewise discussing the potential parallel with Jesus:

Yet the role of the Buddha for Buddhists is quite unlike the role of Jesus for Christians. The Buddha, as we have seen, attained liberation himself and re-established the *sasana*, the Teaching. If it could be shown for certain by some clever scholar that the Buddha never existed that need not, as such, have dramatic repercussions for Buddhists. For patently the *sasana* exists, and the *sasana* is the *sasana*, it articulates objective truth 'whether Buddhas occur or do not occur' . . . The role of the Buddha for Buddhists therefore is, as a Buddhist formula has it, simply to show the way, a way which has to be followed by each person themselves in order for its salvific function to be fulfilled. What follows from all this is that the corresponding absolutely central role of Jesus for Christians is performed for Buddhists *not* by the Buddha, but by the *Dharma*. (22)

This is an excellent point. The Buddha may even have urged his followers not to create images of him after his death.[41] Such 'letting go' of the Buddha as person and guide is certainly in harmony with the teachings of non-clinging (*anupādāna*) in Buddhism. Ultimately, the *Dhamma* belongs at the centre of Buddhist religious and moral life. However, perhaps as a simple fact of humanity, Buddhists do generally give foremost veneration to the Buddha (and somewhat even to later *arahants*)[42] and evidence suggests that image veneration expanded quickly after his death if not earlier (Krishnan 20-22). The centrality of the Buddha as moral exemplar also supports Keown's Aristotelian reading of Buddhist ethics, which places the wise person as the final arbiter of ethics. Keown suggests, 'As the conduct of Christ provides the foundation for Christian ethics, so the conduct of the Buddha becomes the paradigm of ethical action for Buddhists.' (*The Nature* 31). Showing the necessity of the *Dhamma*, in its fullest sense beyond the world of experience, as moral foundation in Buddhist ethics is thus needed to move beyond this argument for Buddhist ethics being Aristotelian. But while the *Dhamma* holds the place as final moral arbiter, the Buddha remains vastly important as a role model for the cultivation of the virtues (discussed in Chapter 6) that help one 'wake up' to the *Dhamma*.

As Williams writes, 'The life-story of the Buddha becomes important subsequently as a teaching aid, for showing how it is that the teachings have the validity they do possess—that is, for engendering confidence in the effectiveness of the teachings—and for illustrating themes of the teachings themselves' (23). It is for this

---

[41] Scholars suggest that early Buddhist art was aniconic, pointing to the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (DN 1) where the Buddha said, 'The link to becoming cut, oh monks, the Tathāgata's body remains. As long as the body remains, it is seen by gods and humans. At the body's breaking up at the end of life it is not seen by gods and humans.' *Ucchinnabhavanettiko bhikkhave tathāgatassa kāyo tiṭṭhati. Yāvassa kāyo ṭhassati, tāva naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā. Kāyassa bhedā uddhaṃ jīvitapariyādānā na naṃ dakkhinti devamanussā* (cf. Ch'en 236-7).

[42] In the Mahāyāna, this veneration extended to various ahistorical Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

purpose that we introduce the Buddha's life-story here, as well as to stress that the Buddha was a historical figure and his *Dhamma*, while Buddhists claim it to be eternal, is shaped by the historical forces of his time.

A second argument for the inclusion of the story of the Buddha's life comes from the work of Charles Hallisey, discussed in the literature review, and Anne Hansen. In their article, 'Narrative, Sub-ethics, and the Moral Life: Some Evidence from Theravāda Buddhism' Hallisey and Hansen draw on the writings of Martha Nussbaum and Paul Ricoeur, among others, to highlight the moral nature of Buddhist stories. There, they examine popular Buddhist stories and the power these stories have in shaping the moral lives of practitioners. While maintaining our philosophical approach, examining 'the general relationships among religion, morality, and reason' (Sizemore, 'Comparative Religious Ethics' 91, quoted in Hallisey and Hansen, 'Narrative, Sub-ethics' 307), we agree that the stories used to exemplify Buddhist ethics can help 'transfer in the imagination . . . my "here" to your "there"' (Ricoeur, 'Imagination in Discourse' 128, quoted in Hallisey and Hansen 'Narrative, Sub-ethics' 315). Furthermore, contra Hallisey's denial of a holistic approach to Buddhist ethics, he and Hansen here correctly note that stories 'can help us to perceive the generic nature of persons, such that we are better able to perceive universal obligations and rights in a world characterized by social diversity' (316). The role of stories, and Hallisey and Hansen's work in particular, will be discussed further in Chapter 6, as the practical teachings of both Buddhism and Kant often include illustrative tales, and Chapter 7, as the accumulation and 'unfolding' or 'ripening/fruit' (*vipāka* or *phāla*) of karma over time naturally lends itself to narratives.

While it is important to note that parts of the traditional account of the Buddha's life depart from what is strictly historically accurate, it is this traditional account that matters to Buddhists and thus to Buddhist ethics. The aspect that is most important

historically is the proper placement of the Buddha in the philosophical and religious discussions of 5th century Magadha (the region of present-day northeast India where the Buddha lived and taught). The traditional story, on the other hand, eloquently mirrors the Buddha's teaching on the suffering of human life, his journey through the extremes of hedonism and severe asceticism, and his discovery, teaching, and embodiment of the middle way.

Portions of the life story of the Buddha are given in the *Sutta Tipiṭaka* (*Basket of Discourses*), most notably the *Majjhima Nikāya* (*Middle-Length Collection*) and *Khuddaka Nikaya* (*Smaller Collection*), while the first attempts at a full account of his life can be traced to several centuries later, in the Sanskrit poem, the Mahāvastu (Great Account) of the 2nd Century BCE, and the prose account from Aśvaghoṣa, the *Buddhacarita* (*Deeds of the Buddha*), in the 2nd century CE. We focus here on the earlier accounts, as embellishment and imagination seem to creep into these later biographies (or hagiographies, as they are often called, drawing comparison to the stories of the lives of Western saints).

The early life

It is widely accepted that the Buddha was born near present-day Lumbini, Nepal, just across the Nepal/India border, with recent scholarship placing the date of his birth to approximately 484 BCE, though it may have been as late as 448 BCE (Prebish, *Cooking the Buddhist Books*). According to the *Nalaka Sutta* (Sn 3.11), the Buddha's birth was occasioned by a great celebration of the gods (*devā*), witnessed by an ascetic named Asita. When Asita asked them why they were so happy, they replied:

> Him, the Bodhisatta,[43] the supreme jewel, without equal
>
> In the human world, for welfare & ease, is born
>
> in a town in the province of Sakya, Lumbini.
>
> For this [we are] so exceedingly satisfied [and] pleased.[44]

Atisa went on to convey this message to the Bodhisatta's parents, breaking into tears when he realized that he would be dead long before the Bodhisatta would attain awakening. This story, like many others in the *suttas*, reflects the early Buddhist elevation of the Buddha's status above that of the gods. Various gods of the Brahmanic culture are used to show his 'unequalled' status, here celebrating his birth, elsewhere taking refuge in him (MN 95.9) and going to him with questions of their own (DN 21), gaining the epithet 'teacher of gods and men' (*satthā devamanussānaṃ*).

Little is said about his childhood, other than that he lived in great refinement, with three palaces, one for each of India's seasons (*Sukhamāla Sutta*, AN 3.38). In the same story, the Buddha recounts having had the vivid realization that despite this, he too would face aging, illness, and death. A similar story is found in the *Mahāpadāna Sutta* (DN 14). There the story is told of a previous Buddha, Vipassi,[45] who ventured out of his palace with his charioteer on four trips, each time encountering one of the 'Four Sites': an aged man, a man besought by sickness, a dead man, and a wanderer (*samaṇa*).[46] It was after

---

[43] Buddha-to-be, used to refer to the Buddha prior to his awakening, both in his final life and in previous lives. His traditional family name was Gotama and given name was Siddhattha, meaning 'He whose goal is accomplished'. The given name is likely a later addition, as it does not appear in the Pāli Canon (R. F. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began* 75). In general, when discussing the historical Buddha before his awakening we will refer to him as the Bodhisatta.

[44] *So bodhisatto ratanavaro atulyo | Manusseloke hitasukhatāya- jāto, | Sakyāna game janapade lumbineyye | Tenambha tuṭṭhā atiriva kalyarūpā.*

[45] The 'current' or historical Buddha, Siddhattha Gotama, is seen as only the most recent of a long line of Buddhas, those who have gained awakening in a world where the Dharma, or true nature of things, is unknown. One day his teaching too will fall away and eventually a future Buddha, prophesized as Metteya (Skt. Maitreya) will arise.

[46] This story of Vipassi from the early Canon is conflated with the story of the current historical Buddha in Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*.

seeing these, or in having the realization, that the Buddha-to-be decided to renounce his luxurious life, which by then included a wife and newly born son, in search of liberation.

As with many of the early Buddhist *suttas*, the story of the early life of the Buddha serves two purposes. First, it draws the reader (or as was the case and often still is, the hearer) into both sympathy with and awe of the Buddha for having given up so much to pursue the path to awakening that he would then pass on to his followers (cf. Hallisey and Hansen, 'Narrative, Sub-ethics' discussed above). The centrality and importance of the Buddha as a person cannot be overstated, even though the Buddha stressed the importance of his teachings and discipline (*Dhamma-Vinaya*) as reflections of himself for followers to live by after his death (cf. the *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta*, DN 14, discussed below). Second, it serves as inspiration to the follower to persevere, to strive diligently in his/her practice. As the limitations of worldly pleasure (*kāma*) and the necessity of developing the moral virtue of renunciation (*nekkhamma*) play such an important role in Buddhist soteriology, the notion that one could 'have it all' and still be so dissatisfied as to give it up in search of awakening serves as great inspiration.

The Bodhisatta as ascetic

The second part of the Buddha's life involves his six years of struggle to find a way of overcoming old age, sickness and death. In this period, he abandoned his roles as husband, father, and future ruler, calling this life 'crowded [and] dirty' (*sambādho gharāvāso*) while claiming 'wide open is the life gone forth' (*abbhokāso pabbajjā*) (MN 26). This rejection of his social role carried heavy consequences in the Brahmanic society (the forerunner to Hinduism), wherein Dharma meant not only Law or Nature of Reality, but also corresponded to one's Duty. To leave one's family was seen as clearly cutting

oneself off from society. And yet the Buddha's time was one of change in ancient India, wherein the dominance of Brahmanism and their central texts, the Vedas, was under scrutiny. This process likely occurred both due to greater contact with societies with different philosophies, and to changes within the society as it moved from a primarily village and agrarian social system to one in which small cities were growing, giving rise to trade and a new wealthy, merchant class (for discussions emphasising the former, see (Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha* 1-13), and for the later see (Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism* 50-56). This is significant because with this change brought a number of competing philosophies, and the Buddha's *Dhamma*, discussed below, will be seen in the context of a philosophically pluralistic society.

Having renounced his family life and duties, the Buddha entered the homeless life of the *samaṇa*. There he studied under two wandering teachers, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. Though little is said about these two teachers in the Pāli texts, and they are unmentioned outside of this literature, Alexander Wynne's recent *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation* () helps to establish their historicity and relation to their Brahmanic and Jain contemporaries. There he suggests, with great attention to the texts, that each of these teachers gave alternate routes to what they thought was the highest attainment (17). These attainments were the meditative experience of the spheres of 'nothingness' (*ākiñcaññāyatana*) and 'neither perception nor non-perception' (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*) respectively, which the teachers believed to provide liberation from *saṃsāra* (21-23). However, the Bodhisatta, having experienced these attainments for himself in each case declared, 'this teaching (*Dhamma*) does not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calm, direct knowledge, [or] awakening.'[47]

---

[47] *nāyaṃ dhammo nibbidāya na virāgāya na nirodhāya na upasamāya na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

According to MN 26, the Bodhisatta then wandered alone for a while before sitting in a grove (in present-day Bodhgaya), setting his mind to awakening. A similar account, at MN 36 extends the period of his austerities to include extreme accounts of severe breathless meditation (*appāṇakaṃ jhānaṃ*) and self-starvation to the extent that, as the Buddha later recalled to the wanderer Saccaka Niganthāputta:[48]

> Then, Aggivessa,[49] people seeing me said, 'the wanderer Gotama is black.' Other people said, 'the wanderer Gotama is not black, the wander Gotama is brown.' Other people said, 'the wanderer Gotama is not black, the wanderer Gotama is not brown, the wanderer Gotama is golden coloured. So much, Aggivessa, had my pure natural beauty disappeared, spoiled by eating [so little] in this way.[50]

The point, we are told, is that the Bodhisatta had practiced the most extreme austerities possible, and yet he was not awakened. Having discovered the fruitlessness of such austerities, the Buddha took food and sat in meditation until, after some time, he gained awakening.

The Buddha as teacher

At the time of his awakening, the Buddha thought that his realization was too subtle and profound to be taught. So the Brahmā Sahampati, a being somewhat analogous

---

[48] Niganthāputta means 'son of the Niganthā', an epithet for followers of Jainism.

[49] Aggivessa is a title, probably referring to a Brahman clan name, which the Buddha used when addressing Saccaka.

[50] *Apissu maṃ aggivessana manussā disvā evamāhaṃsu: kāḷo samaṇo gotamoti. Ekacce manussā evamāhaṃsu: na kāḷo samaṇo gotamo, sāmo samaṇo gotamoti. Ekacce manussā evamāhaṃsu: na kāḷo samaṇo gotamo napi sāmo, maṅguracchavī samaṇo gotamoti. Yāvassu me aggivessana tāva parisuddho chavivaṇṇo pariyodāto upahato hoti tāyevappāhāratāya.*

to Zeus in the Greek pantheon,[51] descended to earth to implore the Buddha to teach (MN 26). Assenting, the Buddha began what would become a forty-five year teaching career. According to tradition, what the Buddha had gained in his awakening was a perfect 'knowledge of things as they truly are' (*yathābhutā passātha*). Thus his teaching career was a period of explaining this understanding and, more importantly, the practices by which others could attain it as well. He spent this time wandering over an area of many thousands of square kilometres, sleeping at times in dense jungle, in clearings, and at times as a guest in the homes of lay patrons. The most important aspects of his life from this point onward are contained in his teachings, his *Dhamma*. However, one important aspect of just who or what is a Buddha is worth exploring, as it creates points of contact in terms of both ethics and metaphysics that we will elaborate upon in later chapters.

Buddha: the noumenal within the phenomena

Here we follow Williams' advice above, and transition from the Buddha as person to the Buddha as a teaching story or representation of the *Dhamma*. One of the fundamental assumptions of this work is that the Buddha was not merely the 'wise man' that his followers looked up to as an example for how to live a good life. If he had been such a figure, then the Aristotelian virtue ethics analogy to Buddhist ethics would seem most appropriate. However, as the Buddhist tradition has it, his awakening was not only the culmination of many lifetimes of practice of certain virtues, but also a 'breaking through' to the *Dhamma*, a significantly different state of being from what an ordinary person experiences. As one recent writer put it: 'a Buddha is *sui generis*, covered by no

---

[51] Malalasekere notes, 'Brahmā Sahampati is very probably connected with Brahmi Svayambhū of brahmanical literature' (*Dictonary of Pāli*). The relationship between the Buddha and the gods is discussed below.

familiar category, and - beyond this - that he represents the noumenal within the world of phenomena, admitting of none of the predication applicable only to phenomena' (Farrington 33). The introduction of the terms noumenal and phenomenal lends itself immediately to thought of Immanuel Kant, for whom these terms played a central epistemological/moral role.

But, as Farrington well states, the Buddha represents the noumenal within the world of phenomena. It is not the case that the Buddha has, in his lifetime of teaching or with his death, entered a transcendent reality apart from that which we know. However, he has, in a sense, transcended our ordinary categories. This notion of the Buddha as beyond categories yet still within our world comes from one of the early *suttas*. Once, when the Buddha was traveling between towns, a *brahmin* named Doṇa noticed that in his footprints were amazing thousand-spoked wheels. In wonder, the *brahmin* asked the Buddha first if he is not a god (*deva*), to which the Buddha replied in the negative. Then Dona asked if he is not a heavenly musician (*gandhabba*) and again the Buddha replied in the negative . . . a spirit (*yakkha*) . . . a human being (*manussa*).[52] The Buddha denied each of these in turn and when asked what then, he was, he provided the well-known analogy of a lotus arisen from the mud and muck and blossoming pure and unstained. He concluded, 'You may know me, *brahmin*, as awakened.'[53] He has awakened to or fully stepped into the moral, noumenal standpoint, while never leaving behind the phenomenal.

This image is important, as it suggests that the goal of the holy life in Buddhism is not mere worldly happiness, success, or gain. In fact, these are among the 'worldly

---

[52] Doṇa Sutta (AN.4.36) *Devo no bhavaṃ bhavissatī ti? Na kho ahaṃ, brāhmaṇa, devo bhavissāmī ti.* 'Would you not be a god?' 'Indeed not, brahmin, I would not be a god.' The future tense here is used to express wonder or surprise, cf. Thanissaro Bhikkhu fn.1 at http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an04/an04.036.than.html.

[53] *Buddhoti maṃ, brāhmaṇa, dhārehī''ti.*

goods' that 'obsess' (*anuparivattati*) normal people mentioned in the Pāli Canon and further elaborated upon by the 5ᵗʰ century Sri Lankan commentator, Buddhaghosa.[54] Instead the goal that the Buddha attained is *bodhi*, a term that literally means 'awakening' but is commonly translated as 'enlightenment'. *Bodhi* represents a form of going beyond, as the lotus goes beyond the muck and mud to form a pristine flower. One could speak of the lotus transcending the mud, but the term transcendence has fallen out of favour amongst most scholars of Buddhism today. This is because many of those who embraced a notion of Buddhist transcendence believed that the awakened one could then 'sever the stem' as it were, of the lotus, and float off in some detached blissful state where 'morality is left behind' as in the Transcendency Thesis discussed in the Literature Review (Horner 1, quoted in Keown, *The Nature* 93).

The image of transcendence here is quite different from that suggested by the parable of the raft in which the good teachings or beneficial things (*kusalā dhammā*) are supposed to be left behind by one who has reached the other shore, or awakening.[55] That teaching, coupled with a select few others, led many early scholars to believe that the teachings, including those setting out ethical conduct, could be left behind with awakening. This 'Transcendency Thesis' has been clearly outlined and rejected by Keown (83-106).

The transcendence we propose is a Kantian or noumenal transcendence, in which the phenomenal world – the world of our experience, mediated by categories with its rules and ethics – is not left behind. In fact, the differentiation between these two worlds or two standpoints dissolves as the ignorance that separates them is overcome. In

---

[54] Vism XXII., AN VIII.I.5. The eight conditions are gain and loss, fame and obscurity, censure and praise, and happiness and suffering: *lābho ca, alābho ca, yaso ca, ayaso ca, nindā ca, pasaṃsā ca, sukhañca, dukkhañca.*

[55] This is the second simile in the water-snake simile sutta, Alagaddūpama Sutta (MN 22).

ignorance, one's mind is restricted to the phenomenal world and its categories. A noumenal perspective beyond these can only be believed, or taken upon faith (Ger.: *Glaube*, Pāli: *saddhā*). But even though it cannot be experienced immediately, both the Buddha and Kant argued that this state beyond our normal experience must exist for our moral intuitions to hold true.[56] In Buddhism this state is the *Dhamma*.

The *Dhamma*

At the outset we must note that '*Dhamma*' carries many meanings in Buddhism. As early as 1920 it was recognized that a number of meanings could be derived from the term, notably 'four sets of meanings: (1) 'law' (Gesetz); (2) 'teaching' (Lehre); (3) 'truth' (Wahrheit); and (4) 'thing' (Ding, Sache)'.[57] John Ross Carter has given a broad survey of the 'Traditional definitions of the term *dhamma*', noting that 'Among the technical terms in the Theravada Buddhist vocabulary perhaps none is so puzzling and comprehensive as the term *dhamma*' (329). In his conclusion, drawing from just six major sources, Carter notes 34 different meanings given for *dhamma*. As Rupert Gethin has recently stated, *dhamma* is 'used in the Pali texts in a number of distinct senses which at the same time refer to and assume each other' (*Sayings of the Buddha* xlvii), and Abraham Vélez de Cea suggests that a 'hermeneutical priority' can be given to 'usages of dhamma as truth' as this meaning may act as an umbrella to include other usages (*Buddha and Religious Diversity* 128). We will begin by noting the three most common uses of the term and then explore each in detail as needed for our understanding of Buddhist ethics. These three meanings for '*Dhamma*' are (1) The Truth or Law, either

---

[56] Indeed, while Kant denied the efficacy of theoretical metaphysics (e.g. attempted proofs of the existence of God or Free Will), he nonetheless argued for the practical, or moral, necessity of metaphysics. This will be further discussed in chapter 3.

[57] Magdalene and Wilhel Geiger, *Pāli Dhamma vornehmlich in der kanonischen Literatur.* Munich: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1920. Reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Indologie und Buddhismuskunde.* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1973: 102-228, quoted in (J. A. Vélez de Cea 128).

Natural or Moral, (2) the teachings of the Buddha, and (3) any phenomenon, thing, or moment of experience analysed to its most basic element. When the first two of these are meant, the capital 'D' is typically used, while a lowercase 'd' is used for the third. Likewise, the first two are used only in the singular, while *dhamma*/*dhammas* correspond to phenomenon/phenomena.

Dhamma as a Law is the *way of things*; it has always been and always will be. It is the true nature of reality and is in this sense '*a priori*' and objective. This is the truth that the Buddha woke up to, realized, and taught. As Vélez de Cea writes (using 'Dharma' in the place of '*Dhamma*' because it is already in English usage):

> It is true that the Dharma could be interpreted as a transcendent reality with respect to Buddhas because it can exist even when there are no Buddhas in the universe (S.II.25). The Dharma could also be interpreted as a transcendent reality with respect to propositional logic and language. That is, the Dharma is said to be *atakkāvacaro*, beyond the range of reasoning or unattainable through mere logic and words (M.I.167). However, it is also true that the Dharma cannot be said to transcend reason and language, at least totally, because it is described in terms of specific conditionality and dependent origination (M.I.167). Similarly, the Dharma cannot be said to transcend human experience in its entirety because it can be realized by the wise, and because it can be seeing when there is insight into dependent origination: "Whoever sees dependent origination, sees the Dharma; whoever sees the Dharma, sees dependent origination." (217)

While agreeing with the first part of Vélez de Cea's assessment here, I do wish to clarify the latter points. The *Dhamma* does transcend language and reason, but it can be gestured

or pointed at, in the way that one cannot encompass the experience of the moon with words, but one can point to it so others may see it for themselves (Thanissaro 65). Vélez de Cea captures this point earlier in the book when he writes, 'The Buddha did not claim to know everything about the Dharma, he did not claim to teach everything he knew about the Dharma, and the Dharma is ultimately to be realized within oneself because it is beyond the range of language and concepts' (204). And as just noted from the *Doṇa Sutta* (AN.4.36), those who have experienced the *Dhamma* are in a way beyond 'human experience'.

This understanding of *Dhamma* is not unique to Buddhism; it is a common metaphysical principle across Indian religious traditions (discussed above). Just as Kant's break with prior tradition was his conception of human nature which engendered his unique ethical theory, so too in India it was the relationship between the moral agent and this metaphysical foundation that led to often stark differences in prescribed behaviour. The point at which early Buddhism, and others, separated from the Brahmanic conception of *Dhamma* was in the denial of the particularism in human nature created by the class system (Skt. *varṇa*, Pāli: *vaṇṇa*) and resulting particularism in ethics (cf. Ramunujan op. cit.).

As Noa Ronkin writes:

Although early Buddhism cannot be reduced to a systematic philosophy, what lies at its heart, according to its own understanding of the matter, is Dharma (Pali Dhamma). In Indian thought, Dharma is the truth about the world: the underlying nature of things, the way things are in reality. One might say, therefore, that at the heart of Buddhism lies a metaphysical Truth. (13)

The understanding of *Dhamma* as a cosmic principle common to all people (in fact all beings) forms the foundation of Buddhist metaphysics.[58] The possibility of *nibbāna*, the endpoint or goal on the path to salvation in Buddhism is likewise predicated on the existence of an eternal *Dhamma*. Thus an understanding of Buddhist ethics must account for the practitioner's understanding of and relationship to the *Dhamma*. Since the *Dhamma* is, by definition, beyond our unawakened understanding, not much can be said about it directly. However, this is the perspective to which the Buddha 'awoke' and much is said about it by way of pointing, as in this '*Third Nibbāna Sutta*' (*Tatiyanibbāna Sutta* Ud 8.3) in the *Udāna*.[59] As the Buddha told his monks of *nibbāna*:

> There is, oh monks, an unborn, un-become, unmade, an unconditioned. If, oh monks, there were no unborn, un-become, unmade, an unconditioned, no escape from what is born, become, made, conditioned would be known. But since there is an unborn, un-become, unmade, an unconditioned, therefore an escape from what is born, become, made, conditioned is known.[60]

In this section we focus on the *Dhamma* as the Buddha's teachings, specifically those related to ethics. Just as the Buddha's life is meant to mirror the teachings, the teachings are meant as a mirror of reality itself. It is the teachings that are responsible for the survival and spread of Buddhism over the last two thousand years, and it was these teachings that the Buddha implored his followers to turn to as their guide at his passing:

---

[58] In Buddhism, like Brahmanism, cosmology and metaphysics are virtually inseparable. This aspect of the Dhamma is discussed at length in chapter 5.

[59] Nibbāna is one of the definitions of Dhamma found by Carter (334), here the parallel, transcendent qualities are obvious.

[60] "*atthi bhikkhave, ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhataṃ. No ce taṃ bhikkhave, abhavissā ajātaṃ abūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhataṃ, nayidha jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṅkhatassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyetha. yasmā ca kho bhikkhave, atthi ajātaṃ abhūtaṃ akataṃ asaṅkhataṃ, tasmā jātassa bhūtassa katassa saṅkhatassa nissaraṇaṃ paññāyatī"ti.*

Ānanda, it may occur to you thus: 'Gone is the teacher's word, now there is no teacher.' This should not be regarded as such, Ānanda. Indeed, Ānanda, I have taught and made known to you the *Dhamma* and discipline, this at my passing, will be your teacher.[61]

With the Buddha's death, the Buddhist *sāsana* (Buddhism as an institution), had only the teachings to guide them. In examining the broad outline of the Buddha's ethical teachings, we begin with two pithy statements from the Pāli Canon. The first occurs in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (MN 22), in the context of clarifying misrepresentations of the teaching. There, the Buddha states, 'Previously, and now, monks, I make known suffering and the end of suffering.'[62] This summary draws out the practical nature of the Buddha's teaching – whatever theoretical or abstruse characteristics it may take on. The second teaching said to summarise the core of the Buddha's teaching is found in the story of the conversion of Sariputta, who would go on to become one of the Buddha's chief disciples, the one said to be foremost in wisdom:[63]

Those things arising from a cause,

The Tathāgata[64] spoke of the cause,

And their cessation,

Thus is the doctrine of the great wanderer [the Buddha].[65]

---

[61] *Siyā kho panānanda tumhākaṃ evamassa, atītasatthukaṃ pāvacanaṃ, natthi no satthāti. Na kho panetaṃ ānanda evaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ. Yo kho ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo mamaccayena satthā ti* (Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta, DN 14).

[62] *Pubbe cāhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ.*

[63] *etadaggam mahāpaññānam* (AN.1.14).

[64] A common epithet of the Buddha, meaning 'Thus-gone-one' or perhaps the 'Thus-come-one', playing on an ambiguity in the *sandhi* (combination) of either Tathā (thus) and gata (gone) or Tathā and agata (come).

[65] *Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesaṃ hetuṃ Tathāgato āha, Tesañ ca yo nirodho - evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo* (Vin.i.39ff.).

This teaching highlights the centrality of the arising and falling away of conditions (*dhammā*), or cause and effect. Seen together, the two suggest that while the Buddha saw life as suffering, it was not seen as a capricious or inevitable suffering. The suffering that the Buddha saw and taught was a suffering to be understood, its roots eradicated, and its ending realised.

The two extremes and the Four Noble Truths

The traditional starting point for the Buddha's teachings is the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariya saccāni*), put forth by the Buddha in what is traditionally held to be his first teaching, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (*Setting the Wheel of Dhamma into Motion* SN 56.11).[66] The first of these truths is *dukkha*, suffering, as mentioned above. However, before addressing the Four Noble Truths, it is worth mentioning their context. The teaching, occurring soon after his awaking, was delivered by the Buddha to the five ascetics (*samaṇa*). These five, who practiced with the Bodhisatta prior to his awakening, had abandoned him when he gave up his severe fasting and breathless meditations. So the Buddha's return to them was at first taken with some scepticism.

In the teaching, however, the Buddha disarmed them by identifying two extreme paths that should not be followed. The first was the path of hedonism, pursuit of sensual happiness (*kāma sukhallikānuyoga*) and the second was the severe austerity, literally 'devotion to self-harm' (*attakilamathānuyoga*), which the Buddha had been practicing. These two extremes can be seen as oblique references to Brahmanism and Jainism or to the two previous phases of the Buddha's own life, though other practices and schools of

---

[66] Whether this sutta can reliably represent the Buddha's own words has been called into question by several recent scholars (Anderson 1-27). The translation of 'Noble Truth' has also been debated, though with no conclusive outcome (c.f. Norman 16).

thought would also be placed as falling to one or the other of these extremes. The Buddha then described his practice as a middle way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) leading to awakening (*bodhi*, *nibbāna*). The middle way, he says, is the Eightfold Path: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.[67] These eight are then restated as the fourth of the Noble Truths, after 1) *dukkha*, 2) thirst or craving (*taṇhā*), which is the origination (*samudaya*) of *dukkha*, and 3) the [possibility of the] cessation (*nirodha*), of *dukkha*.

This first discourse from the Buddha provides an explanation of his position on the problem of human life: *dukkha*, caused by thirst or craving (*taṇhā*). It also gives his prognosis and his soteriology in brief. Finally, it places his doctrine in the context of other teachings of his time. With this in mind, we turn to the second aspect of the framework for Buddhist ethics presented above, to karma.

Karma: the heart of Buddhist ethics

Having argued that the Buddha as moral exemplar is secondary in Buddhist ethics to the *Dhamma*, or moral law, we must discuss the way that moral agents may come to understand and live in harmony with the *Dhamma*. As discussed above, the Buddha inherited much of his philosophical and ethical system from Brahmanism. One key concept that he inherited, yet radically reinterpreted, was karma (Pāli: *kamma*). Concerning karma in its broader Indian context, Jonardon Ganeri has argued that it 'is both a statement of the freedom of human agency and an explanation of how it can be that moral considerations can motivate those who grasp them' (1). However, these considerations are not to be grasped intellectually, at least by the unawakened. The

---

[67] *sammādiṭṭhi, sammāsaṅkappo, sammāvācā, sammākammanto, sammāājīvo, sammāvāyāmo, sammāsati, sammāsamādhi.*

workings of *kamma* (*kammavipāka*) were listed by the Buddha as one of the four imponderables (*cattārimāni acinteyyāni*), intellectually unknowable (AN 4.77). Instead, for the unawakened, *kamma* can be understood only as it is felt or experienced. Just as Kant thought of respect for the autonomy of others as a feeling uniquely arising from the noumenal, moral perspective, the *kamma* theory of early Buddhism represents a connection between the physical world and the *Dhamma*.

As Gombrich has written, of all of the aspects of Brahmanism that the Buddha challenged or changed:

> . . . the most important step that the Buddha took was to turn the doctrine of *karman* on its head. He ethicized it completely, made morality intrinsic, and so denied all soteriological value to ritual and all ultimate value to social distinctions. In place of a highly particularistic view of duty he propounded a simple and universal ethical dualism of right and wrong. (68)

The Buddha did this through equating *kamma*, which had previously meant either 'ritual action' or simply 'action', with intention (Pāli: *cetanā*).[68] Just as in Brahmanism, *kamma* is the force that connects one with the *Dhamma*. Karma is from the root kṛ, 'to do'; which also forms saṇkhāra (Skt.: saṃskāra, saṃ-s-kṛ), both standard terminology for the sequence of rebirths, 'as a process of conditioning brought about by action and its inevitable results' (Collins 32). Likewise, as Siderits states, 'Karma is key to the whole process of becoming (*bhavā*); as laid out in the *bhavacakka*, or 'wheel of becoming': On ignorance arises saṅkhārā (karmic formations) . . .' (494). Through karma, one both

---

[68] *Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi...* (AN III, 415).

creates one's own world, and one experiences the positive or negative effects of that world, constituting what Reynolds and Schofer call A 'cosmology of ethical order':

> The samsaric cosmology of Theravāda teaching affirms that all phenomenal realities arise from the co-dependent interaction of a set of twelve different components (ignorance, dispositions, consciousness, name and form, the six gateways, contact, craving, grasping, becoming, birth, old age, and death) . . . . However, Theravādins have also affirmed the reality of another, closely correlated cosmology. It includes the samsaric cosmo-ethical order but also recognizes the availability of a higher level of religio-ethical practice. Ignorance is overcome by wisdom, craving is replaced by compassion, and the ongoing experience of impermanence and suffering gives way to liberation. (121)

It is *kamma* that drives this cosmos forward. As the Buddha stated, 'by *kamma* the world revolves, by *kamma* humankind continues on.'[69] To understand *kamma,* Buddhist commentators distinguished five levels of causality, or lawfulness (*niyāma*).[70] These were the *utuniyāma* (law of physical cycles or seasons, or physical law more generally)[71], *bījaniyāma* (organic, literally 'seed', law), *cittaniyāma* (law of mind), *dhammaniyāma* (cosmic or natural law), and *kammaniyāma* (law of moral activity). Although tradition doesn't explicitly 'nest' these (place the levels of causation in one another in ascending order), our understanding of *kamma* and *Dhamma* would suggest that this is possible. The result is a nearly exact opposite from Western materialist ontology, wherein inorganic matter gives rise to organic, which in turn supports basic mental activity which eventually

---

[69] *Kammanā vattati loko kammanā vattati pajā* … Sn 120, 654.
[70] *Digha Nikāya Aṭṭakatha*, 272 on (DN II).
[71] Cf. Rhys Davids and Stede 130.

evolved into beings capable of moral reflection. In the Buddhist nesting, it is *kamma* which acts as foundation for everything, even *Dhamma*. This may appear to contradict our earlier analysis of *Dhamma* as an '*a priori*' foundation. However, the placement of *kamma* as the foundation here is not a metaphysical teaching, but a practical one. Placing a person's intentional actions as the source of one's entire reality is both empowering and daunting. Just as for Kant, the Moral Law is both objective and intrinsic to human nature, the Buddha here makes moral lawfulness the heart of his conception of human nature and of reality itself. One is a human precisely because of past actions (*kamma*), and could be reborn 'higher' in the Buddhist cosmos as a *deva*, or lower, as an animal (or worse), depending on the *kamma* of this life (Dhp 17-18). When asked why people are of different classes, appearance, intelligence, etc., the Buddha replied:

> Beings are owners of *kamma*, young man, heir to *kamma*, born of *kamma*, related (to one another, 'kin') through *kamma*, and have *kamma* as their refuge. *Kamma* gives rise to distinctions in beings such as lower and higher.[72]

One often-cited *sutta* may appear to strongly limit the role of *kamma*. In the *Moḷiyasīvaka Sutta* (SN 36.21), the wanderer Moḷiyasīvaka tells the Buddha that there are some *samaṇabrāhmaṇas* who teach that everything one experiences is 'caused by previous acts' (*pubbekatahetu*).[73] The Buddha repudiates this teaching, saying that there are some feelings caused by bile (*pitta*), and should be known as arising from bile. The Buddha thus says that these teachers are wrong (*micchāti*). The *sutta* goes on to list several other causes of feelings: phlegm (*vāta*), bodily humours (*sannipātikā*), and so on, with *kamma* simply listed alongside them as another possible cause. As the 'world

---

[72]*Kammasakkā māṇava, sattā kammadāyādā kammayoni kammabandhu kammapaṭisaraṇā. Kammaṃ satte vibhajati yadidaṃ hīnappaṇītatāyāti.* (*Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta*, MN 135).
[73] Cf. McMahan 173; Goodwin 272-3; Repetti 298; Harvey 261 n2.

accepts this as true'[74] so too should we. The teachers who claim that *kamma* is the cause of all 'go beyond' (*atidhāvanti*) this truth of the world.

However, this can also be read as a caution against claims that go beyond one's experience and knowledge and against speaking a way that is unhelpful. Clearly, as above, the Buddha had claimed that all things arise from *kamma*. But the Buddha could only say this because he *knew* it, as one aspect of his awakening was the 'divine eye' (*iddhividha*), allowing him to see the arising and falling of other beings throughout existence (Cf. MN 4). Likewise, to attribute every feeling, for instance a stomach illness, to past deeds in general is wrong because it is unhelpful. If the pain has a more proximate and resolvable cause, then it is wiser to attribute the pain to that cause and treat it. So the attention to causes other than *kamma* can best be seen as epistemic or pragmatic in nature. As Richard Gombrich insightfully notes, *kamma* serves as 'the cause behind causes. In that sense the Buddha's answer to Moliya Sīvaka is misleading, for karma and the other causes are not on the same level' (21).

Kamma, together with rebirth, solves the problem of evil in the world, or in the Buddha's case, suffering (*dukkha*): the *dukkha* one experiences is a result of one's past actions and current relation to present circumstances. This process is inviolable and yet our life is a constant opportunity to act rightly and thus reap positive rewards (SN 42.6). A Buddha, as one who has transcended the world, experiences no *dukkha*. The nature of the Buddha's transcend experience, *nibbāna*, will be fully examined in chapter 8. For the rest of humankind, still caught up in *saṃsāra* driven by *kamma*, the Buddha believed that our natural, human inclination would be toward overcoming *dukkha* (Dhp 130). For this

---

[74] *lokassapi kho etaṃ … saccasammataṃ.*

reason, the Buddha taught the criterion for understanding beneficial, good, or right actions and it is to this criterion that we turn to next.

Kusala: wholesome, good, and skilful

As Gombrich rightly stated, Buddhist *kamma* provides a 'universal ethical dualism of right and wrong'. The criterion for right and wrong lies in intention (*cetanā*), whether that intention is *kusala* (translated as 'good' or 'virtuous' in Keown *The Nature*, and 'skilful' in Cousins 'Good or Skilful?') or its opposite, *akusala*. Like Kant's discussion of heteronomy, the ways which one can be reliant or ruled over by others, the range of unwholesome unwholesome intentions is most easily and frequently discussed in the Pāli Canon. And like Kant's concept of autonomy, freedom from these unskilful states is our natural disposition. Unawakened (heteronomous) beings do not realising this due to ignorance (*avijja*) or delusion (*moha*), driven by greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*); these are known as the roots (*mula*) of the unskilful (AN 3.69). Their opposites constitute the 'three skilful roots': generosity (*dāna*), friendliness (*mettā*), and wisdom (*paññā*). As Adam states, 'Thus it is the quality of the underlying state of mind characterizing one's intention that is the key determinant' (68).

Focusing on the underlying mental state of the agent, Adam insightfully suggests that 'Buddhist discourse presupposes different kinds of moral agency, distinguishable on the basis of the spiritual status of the agent' (62). This differentiation of teachings based on the moral status of the agent is critical to a Kantian understanding of Buddhist ethics, as certain teachings suggest a consequentialist morality, while others extol the cultivation of virtues. Perhaps stretching the limits of the Buddha's ability to expand his teachings in order to draw others to his basic ethical guidance, in the *Tevijja Sutta* (The Three

Knowledges, DN 13), the Buddha even co-opts Brahmanic language to teach two young

Brahmins his path to awakening. He has here not rejected the goal of *gnosis* given in the

Upaniṣads but instead moved the emphasis to the more basic activity of ethical

behaviour. In other words, he does not reject the Brahmins' goal of union with Brahmā,

and indeed elsewhere the Buddhist *nibbāna* is described in the gnostic terms of seeing

things 'as they truly are' (*yathā-bhūtaṃ* or *yathā-dhammaṃ*), but instead the Buddha here

emphasizes ethical perfection (*sīlasampanno*) as a foundation for such knowing.[75]

In his study of early Buddhist origins, Richard Gombrich, writes:

> Good and bad *kamma* in contexts, where the 'dogmatic' sense is uppermost
>
> tend to be called 'skilful' (*kusala*) and 'unskilful'(*akusala*) in that they show
>
> mastery, or lack of it, of the spiritual technology. Moreover, at the higher
>
> stages of progress, when one is normally a monk or nun, 'typical' karma tends
>
> to be phased out, since one is not moving in society but mainly living the life
>
> of the mind in meditation. The Enlightened person has not expunged karma,
>
> like a Jain saint, but no longer has any bad intentions and has rendered karma
>
> irrelevant, in that he or she is now beyond the stage where he/she could
>
> benefit from the maturation of good acts. (*How Buddhism Began* 52)

This shift is often and well-described as a move away from Brahmanic metaphysics – the

search for the ultimate nature of reality in the self and universe – toward a form of

process or pragmatic philosophy.[76] Much of the language describing the problem of life:

unsatisfactoriness (Skt.: *duḥkha*, Pāli: *dukkha*), and the cycle of rebirth and re-death

(*samsara*), remained the same, but the Buddha saw the fundamental problem to be the

---

[75] Buddhaghosa defines *sīla* as a basis or foundation for profitable/virtuous states, *kusalānaṃ dhammānaṃ* (Vism. I,19).

[76] See also (Ronkin 14).

failure to realize the non-existence of the ultimate self (Skt.: *ātman*, Pāli: *attā*). His teaching focused not on 'what' could be found and known in reality, but 'how' our condition came to be. What is to be discovered is not one's essential self (*attā*, often written with the capital S to denote its metaphysical rather than conventional use) but rather to see the processes that are falsely mistaken as a self. Seeing these processes is not merely an intellectual exercise, but instead what is skilful, *kusala*, is what is experienced for oneself in the context of analytic meditation (*vipassanā*).[77]

The *Dhamma* as philosophy

Before closing our introduction to the *Dhamma* of the Buddha, we can ask in what sense the *Dhamma* constitutes a philosophy that can be compared with a major Western thinker. The teachings of the Buddha do not form a coherent philosophy in the sense found in Aristotle or perhaps Plato. Yet the teachings do still form a broad, coherent, universalist, and holistic religious soteriology. The point at which this structure emerges is a debated matter amongst contemporary scholars. As Dan Arnold writes:

> . . . in introducing Buddhist and Brahmanic epistemology into the contemporary Western discussion of ways of knowing, the character of Sanskritic philosophical discourse changed significantly around the middle of the millennium. It was then that there emerged concerted efforts to systematize and formalize the conceptual vocabulary of the discourse, facilitating a largely shared sense of what, at least in principle, constituted

---

[77] *Vipassanā* is drawn from the verbal root *pas*, meaning 'to see', and the prefix *vi*, which can have an intensifying effect, e.g. 'to see clearly', or it may denote division, e.g. 'to see x as opposed to y.'

valid arguments . . . Indeed, some would say that only at this period is there finally what can properly be called Indian philosophy. (1-2)

Noa Ronkin places the development of Buddhist philosophy several centuries earlier in the development of the *Abhidhamma*:

Although the Buddha's message does contain doctrinal concepts and theoretical statements on the nature of dukkha, its cause, its cessation and the way to its cessation, these statements function as guidelines for comprehending Buddhist thought and do not amount to a systematic theory. The attempt to ground the Buddha's scattered teachings in an inclusive theory was introduced later on with the advance of the subsequent Abhidharma/Abhidhamma tradition . . . While the Nikayas present the Buddha's teachings as addressed to specific audiences at specific times and locations, the Abhidhamma seeks to describe the structure underlying the Buddha's Dhamma fully, in ultimate terms that apply in all circumstances. In this sense it marks the attempt to establish Buddhist thought as a comprehensive philosophy. (*Early Buddhist Metaphysics* 1)

Christopher Gowans, like Richard Gombrich, mentioned in the introduction, suggests that, 'much in the Buddha's teaching that is philosophical in nature – for example, his ideas concerning the self, impermanence, and dependent origination' (Gowans 6). He goes on to suggest that, 'the practice taught by the Buddha does have theoretical dimensions, and there is much to be learned by focusing on these, so long as we do not lose sight of their practical context' (Ibid.). The primacy of the practical nature of the teachings has been discussed in Kant as well (Chapter 2). For both Buddhism and Kant

then, the metaphysics that give structure and coherence to the practical teachings must be understood as they are: in service of the practices toward liberation or autonomy.

The Sangha

The Sangha, or Community, deserves mention for its role in the cultivation of individual Buddhists. It is, after all, in relation with others that ethics are developed. For early Buddhism we can speak of the Sangha in two senses: as the 'ideal Sangha', comprised of those who have attained at least the state of stream-enterer, and the 'conventional Sangha', comprised of all those who had taken refuge in the Buddha and *Dhamma* (Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism* 2).

In the *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta* (*Discourse on the Rhinoceros*, Sn 1.3), the Buddha delivered a poetic exhortation to his followers to set aside communal life and wander freely, 'like a rhinoceros':

> Undertaking the obligation of setting down the stick,
>
> Not harming any other thing,
>
> Not wishing for children, clan, or companion
>
> Alone, travel like a rhinoceros. (Sn 1.3 verse 35)[78]

There the Buddha denounced the various dangers of communal life: family, allurements, conflicts, wasteful pleasures, likening even most noble companionship to golden bracelets clanking with one another on an arm (verse 48). Torkel Brekke writes:

> The idea of detachment is also part of some of the most important symbols
>
> and metaphors of Buddhahood and Arahantship. The lotus is often used as a

---

[78] *Abbesu bhūtesu nidhaya daṇaḍaṃ | Aviheṭhayaṃ aññatarampi tesaṃ, | Na puttamiccheyya kuto sahāyaṃ | Eko care khaggavisāṇakappo.*

symbol because it grows in muddy water without getting tainted by its dirty surroundings. Animals like the elephant and the rhinoceros also symbolize loneliness and detachment from the world. The Buddha or the Arahant is often called a lion. This is because the lion symbolizes strength and royal power, but also, I think, because the lion lives alone, away from the other animals – it is aloof, separate and completely detached. (81)

Yet the Buddha did, in two verses (45 and 58), recommend companionship with those who are equal or better in their cultivation of the virtues.

However, the necessity of communal life for monastics also required an understanding of good friendship. In the *Upaḍḍha Sutta*: (*Half of the Holy Life*, SN 45.2), when the Buddha's attendant, Ānanda, claims that half of the holy life is good friendship (*kalyāṇamittatā*), good companionship (*kalyāṇasahāyatā*), good connectedness (*kalyāṇasampavaṅkatā*), the Buddha responds that these are actually the whole of the holy life (*brahmacariya*). The Buddha then points to the path (*magga*), as through good friendship, etc, one enters upon this path toward transcendence. The image of the path is ubiquitous throughout early Buddhism.[79] This path takes one from the ordinary life, through a process of ethical development (*bhāvanā*), to this state of awakening. This awakening was also thought of as a release or escape, as Rhys Davids and Stede noted (fn.5), from the ills of life. Indeed, an apt translation of the Pāli terms *mutti* or the more common *vimutti*: release, freedom. And *vimutti* is at times synonymous with the most frequently stated goal of the path, *nibbāna*.[80] To recap, we have here three important

---

[79] As we find in the Rhys Davds' and Stede's *Pāli-English Dictionary*, 'The name of this table of ethical injunctions is given as "maggam uttamaṃ" at Sn 1130, i. e. the Highest Path. And perhaps most importantly, '…the "ariya aṭṭhangika magga" or the "Noble Eightfold Path"… the cornerstone of the Buddha's teaching as to the means of escaping "dukkha" or the ills of life (*Magga*, 512).

[80] See (Ergardt 81-87) for an analysis of this equation in suttas 4, 36, and 112 of the MN.

spheres that will be variously taken into account in our picture of Buddhist ethics as a path:

1. The world of ordinary people, plagued with the 'three fires'[81] of greed (*lobha* or *rāga*), aversion (*dosa*), and ignorance (*moha* or *avijjā*). This sphere is to be analyzed in chapter 4 and understood as our moral starting point.

2. The path, comprised of the eight factors mentioned above and in other formulations. This is the sphere of moral development, a development that is explicitly stated as moving one from a mundane (*lokiya*) outlook and practice to a supramundane (*lokuttara*). And finally,

3. The goal, freedom (*vimutti*) from or the extinguishing (*nibbāna*) of the 'fires' of greed, aversion, and ignorance.

This framework of the human condition and goal in Buddhism is our starting point for a discussion of Buddhist ethics and ultimately a comparison with Kantian ethics. Peter Harvey is quite right to state that 'the rich field of Buddhist ethics would be narrowed by wholly collapsing it into any single one of the Kantian, Aristotelian, or Utilitarian models' (51). As he notes on the same page, the Buddhist approach is generally gradualist, while the Western ethical theories tend to be universalist in nature. While we agree fully with the first statement,[82] we shall demonstrate that Kantian ethics, too, demonstrates a gradualist approach that is not in any conflict with its universal

---

[81] The fire analogy is made most famously in the *Āditta Sutta* (*Discourse on Fire* SN 35.28).
[82] As a caveat we shall note that there do appear to be moral absolutes in Buddhist ethics, cf. (D. Keown 17). I would also add that the image of the Dhamma as an underlying moral law that I shall draw in later chapters will strongly suggest a universalistic character to Buddhist, and indeed Pan-Indian, ethics.

claims. Moreover, the Kantian approach can be stated in roughly the same three stages, from:

1. 'Pre-moral' human individuals who possess reason but fail to use it.

2. Rational beings caught in the struggle of overcoming empirical inclinations, and finally,

3. Holy beings, free from empirical (limited, selfish) inclinations.

Buddhist Scheme:[83]	Kantian Scheme:
0) Animals: little awareness, unfree.	0) Non-rational beings: unfree.
1) Ordinary persons: some awareness, free but diluted by the notion of self.	1) Pre-moral humans: have reason but use it to dominate others.
2) Disciples in higher training: stream enterers, once returners, and non-returners.	2) Rational beings: engaged in the dialectic of overcoming empirical inclinations.
3) *Arahants*: Full awareness and free of the delusion of self.	3) Holy beings: those whose will is free of all empirical inclinations.

Summary

In closing, we suggest seven areas of contact between Buddhist and Kantian ethics. While metaphysics is secondary to the pragmatic project in both, each does set forth metaphysical claims that serve as a foundation for ethics. For Buddhism, it is the *Dhamma* that allows for the possibility of practicing toward and attaining the 'unconditioned' state of nibbāna. The Buddha could have denied the existence of a supramundane (*lokuttara*) and corresponding ethics, as some of his contemporaries offered philosophies amounting to this, but he didn't. Similarly, Kant's ethics is predicated on a distinction between the deterministic phenomenal world and the free,

---

[83] The Buddhist side is adopted from (Adam 19-20), adding stream enterer (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returner (*anāgāmi*). For now the question of animals will be set aside, to be discussed further in Chapter 5.

rational, and moral noumenal standpoint. For Kant, this unknowable noumenal perspective was the *sine qua non* of the very possibility of ethics.

In early Buddhism, *kamma* was ethicized and universalized. The entirety of one's experience is, in some way, related to one's intentional actions. While this is not immediately apparent for those at the beginning of the path, it becomes ever clearer as one progresses toward awakening, a state of spontaneity beyond the creation of new *kamma*. For Kant, the feeling of respect that one has for other rational beings similarly both suggests a realm or standpoint beyond the mere phenomenal and commands us to act from its imperative. Understanding just how one is to do this is not easy, and Kant was doubtful that anyone could actually be truly moral in this life. Kant even quotes Christian scripture to suggest that we look beyond Jesus to what is truly moral:

> Even the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with the ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize Him as such; and so He says of Himself, "Why call ye Me [whom you see] good; none is good [the model of good] but God only [whom ye do not see]?" (*G* 408-409, 25)

Each form of ethics also suggests a simple dualism of good and bad. What is good and bad for both is readily apparent and felt, but must be cultivated and habituated so as to overcome our 'lower', selfish inclinations. The goal of each is a shift in perspective and moral transformation, wherein one may still be said to be 'in the world, though not *of* it.' This idea of a radical break from conventional reality continues to perplex, or simply fail to convince, interpreters of both. Finally, both provide guidance, ways of thinking primarily in Kant as opposed to a variety of meditative practices in Buddhism, and for both the cultivation of virtues along the way is important, but these virtues are not to be taken to be the end in itself.

	Epistemology [84]	Foundation of Morality	Connection to that Ground	Mode of Evaluation	Goal	Guidance	Virtues
Kant	Two Standpoints	Noumenal	Respect	Autonomy vs heteronomy	Kingdom of Ends (CI #3)	Categorical Imperative (1-3, etc.)	Yes
Buddhism	5 *niyamas*, the lower three being *lokiya*, mundane	*Dhamma*	*kamma*	*Kusala* vs *akusala*	Bodhi or *nibbāna*	Path (*magga*)	Yes

[84] Bearing in mind John Ross Carter's reflection that 'One of the problems in comparative studies or cross-cultural studies, but also one of the most exhilarating dimensions of the ongoing enterprise is the difficulty of matching concepts' (Dhammapala et al., 41).

4 Suffering and Heteronomy: Assessing our Condition

> . . . human nature, in which the laws of politics have their roots, has not changed since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavoured to discover these laws.[85]

> Since human nature is everywhere the same the moral teachings of Buddhism are of universal extent and will hold good at all times and in all places. The corollary of this is that Buddhist ethics cannot be a self-contained system which is intelligible only in its own terms or within its own frame of reference.[86]

What is human nature? Both Kant and early Buddhism present varied answers to this question, all of which revolve around humanity's dual nature as at once pure, rational, free, and moral, and at the same time defiled, heteronomous, unfree, and immoral. Is it as if a being has two parts side-by-side, one emotional and one rational? Or is there rather a hierarchy, in which the deeper (or higher, if you wish) and truer nature is the rational, moral nature? I will argue that the the best understanding of both Kant and early Buddhism suggest the latter is the case. Not only do Kant and the Buddha agree on human nature, which may be superficially true if a number of traditions, but they also arrive at it from comparable metaphysical theories (in framework though not in detail), discussed in the next chapter, and both prescribe comparable methods or paths for the realization or telos sought, discussed in chapter six.

---

[85] Hans Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations,* fifth edition. New York: Afred Knoph. 1973, 4.
[86] Keown, *The Nature* 64.

Kantian Human Nature

It will help to begin by briefly situating Kantian and Buddhist positions within broader discussions of human nature in Western and Indian philosophical history. Kant inherited two major traditions of thought on human nature: the Judeo-Christian and the rationalist Greco-Roman philosophical view. While it is impossible to fully separate these from one another given the many influences that each has played on one another, it is nonetheless useful to understand the often contradicting views of human nature expressed in each. Kant also predated several other prominent Western views of human nature, such as Darwinian and Existentialist views, but his philosophy can still be understood in light of them.

In examining Kant's understanding of human nature, we see him grappling with the Christian tradition, which stated that humankind is fundamentally fallen or sinful, redeemed, in the view of Martin Luther, by 'faith alone' (*sola fide*). David Loy sums up Luther thus:

> Martin Luther (1483–1546) had been a model Augustinian monk, but his efforts within the Catholic framework of prayer, penance, charity, etc., brought no relief from his deep sense of sinfulness—i.e., did not allay his sense of lack—and the extraordinary success of his alternative suggests that many others felt the same way. His solution postulated a wider gap between weak, corrupt humanity and the righteousness of God. Left to itself, human nature is all falsehood and impurity, a condition hopeless without the intercession of God himself, the source of all goodness and truth. Since humans by themselves can do virtually nothing, the solution is through faith

alone in his mercy. It is a free acquittal of the guilty that has nothing to do

with sacraments or any other mediation by church or clergy; one can rely only

on the Bible, the sole infallible source of religious truth. This was an attempt

to return to the original Christianity of Biblical times as Luther understood it.

(92)

This emphasis on human frailty assigns too much power to the empirical side of

human nature for Kant, the side dominated by drives, desires, and inclinations. For

Luther, and the Pietists of Kant's day, the faculty of reason in humanity was mistrusted

so much so that our only hope of accessing what Kant would call our rational nature is

through faith in God. To borrow Loy's language, Kant sought to narrow the 'gap

between weak, corrupt humanity and the righteousness of God' by the cultivation and use

of the faculty of reason so much so that one could metaphorically place one's left foot in

the empirical standpoint of debased humanity and one's right foot in the rational, moral,

and righteous standpoint shared by all holy beings.

Diagram 2: The Kantian account places human nature at the intersection of our animality and rationality. Kant's philosophical project sought to alert people to their capacity for rationality from their slumber of self-incurred immaturity (*Unmündigkeit*).
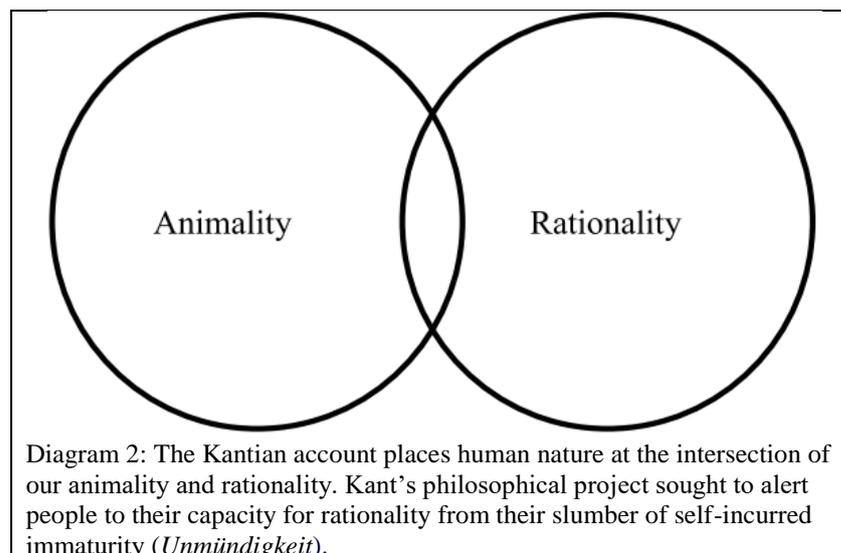
To begin this process, we must examine humankind from the Two Standpoints

discussed in Chapter 2: the empirical and the rational or moral. Humans, like all objects

in the world, can and should be examined empirically. We, like animals, are finite and dependent on the world around us and thus our will, 'is not of itself always in conformity with reason' (*G* 413n). On the other hand, in the *Critique of Judgment* Kant speaks of humanity as a being with formative power which goes beyond what can be understood in terms of mechanics alone (*CJ* 5:374 and 398). It is in this formative power, elsewhere described as our capacity for reason and self-legislation (autonomy), that Kant places our human nature. However, he does not dismiss our animality, which he sees as an important part of who we are as moral agents. Instead, Kant endeavours to help us distinguish our animal drives, desires, and inclinations from our pure, rational, indeed even 'holy' nature. The process of developing our moral nature is through culture and education, indeed 'the human being can only become human through education' (*Lectures on Pedagogy*, Ak 9:441).

Kant's insistence on a moral or rational standpoint along with the physiological was, as noted, inherited from both the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman philosophical traditions to which Kant was an heir. It was, however, under attack in Kant's day, most pointedly for Kant by the physician Ernst Platner who suggested a sort of physiological reductivism similar to reductive materialism in contemporary philosophy of mind. Contrasting the two standpoints, he states that 'Physiological knowledge of the human being concerns the investigation of what nature makes of the human being; pragmatic, the investigation of what he as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of himself.' (Preface to *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*, Ak 7:19). Referring to Descartes in particular (who is famous for linking the non-physical mind to the body at the pineal gland), and anyone else interested in understanding humanity via the brain in general, he points out that no matter how much knowledge of the physical nature of the brain is attained, it is still attained by 'representations [of which] he is a

mere observer' (thus reasserting the first-person standpoint over and above the physiological/third-person standpoint once and for all, concluding that thus 'all theoretical speculation about this is a pure waste of time' (Ak 7.19).

Kant does, however, believe that there is a consistent nature at the core of humanity throughout space and time. He did not subscribe to a sort of historicism developed by Hegel and promulgated by thinkers including Gadamer and Foucault.[87] Human nature, 2500 years ago and today, Kant would argue, is to be found in our unique capacity for reason (we are, in his words '*animal rationabilis*,' as discussed in Chapter 2). This is also a necessary starting point for comparative religious and philosophical work today. This is not to say that differences in culture, language, scientific knowledge and history are not important (and Kant wrote widely on these differences), but only that there is a common thread that unites humanity through space and time. The Buddha, we will see, did not say this in quite the same terms, but much of what he taught supports a similar ahistorical view of human nature.

This belief in a human nature and the focus on reason shows Kant's debt to Greco-Roman philosophy dating from Plato and Aristotle. Socrates, in the Republic (book 4) surmises that:

> It will be a reasonable inference, then . . . that they are two completely
>
> different things. The part of the soul with which we think rationally we can
>
> call the rational element. The part with which we feel sexual desire, hunger,

---

[87] James Luchte writes, 'In light of this essay ['What is Enlightenment?'], it becomes immediately apparent that a merely historical approach to the philosophy of Kant would be insufficient, if not wholly misleading.' He continues, 'To think for oneself would be to raise oneself above these factical, empirical conditions to a transcendental, autonomous standpoint from which one can express the truth of existence within a situation in which the full ethical ramifications fall to the one who has taken the step beyond (contra Maurice Blanchot) into questioning' (29-30).

thirst, and the turmoil of the other desires can be called the irrational and desiring element, the companion of indulgence and pleasure. (Griffith 135-6)

Kant also follows Socrates' ordering of goodness and religion found in the Euthyphro: that the Gods approve of goodness because it is good; it is not the case that it is good simply because it is approved by the Gods. Kant draws his Christian sympathisers toward this position when he writes that 'Even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before he is cognized as such' (*G* 408). Thus Kant follows the Rationalist argument away from particulars toward universal ideals.

From Christianity, Kant adopted the importance of love in his insistence on practical reason, over and above mere knowledge, or theoretical reason. As Saint Paul writes, 'If I understand all mysteries and all knowledge . . . but have not love, I am nothing' (1 Corinthians 13:2). For Christians, love is exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ and as such, the path to uniting with God after death is the imitation of Christ's example. However, as mentioned, Kant was weary of mere imitation, which would consist on relying on the 'other' and hence be heteronomous. Instead he urged that we look beyond Jesus and try to understand the goodness of which he was an example, relying on Jesus' own words 'Why call ye Me [whom you see] good; none is good [the model of good] but God only [whom ye do not see]?' (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, in *G* 408-409).

To conclude our introduction to Kant's theory of human nature, let us examine three prominent challenges to both the rationalist and Judeo-Christian views of humanity: the Darwinian (or evolutionary), existentialist, and historicist. The evolutionary criticism suggests that humanity is just one species along a vast spectrum of development and that

any attempt to specify unique aspects of human nature will be a case of 'speciesism'.[88]

While Kant does privilege humanity over animals in our possession of the capacity for

reason, he does not claim that reason is unique to humans alone, citing the possibility of

extra-terrestrial rational beings (cf. his *Universal Natural History and Theory of the*

Heavens (1755) 1: 354-9). He also does not claim any supernatural or sudden endowment

of reason in humanity, instead, he writes in the essay *On the Use of Teleological*

Principles in Philosophy (1788), 'I myself derive all organization from **organic beings**

(through generation) and all later forms (of this kind of natural things) from laws of the

gradual development of **original predispositions**, which were to be found in the

organization of its phylum' (Ak 8: 179). Even rationality, the hallmark of human nature

and telos to be achieved, is a gradual development. It begins as merely instrumental

reason, that is, reason used for the purpose of satisfying heteronomous drives, desires,

and inclinations. This form of reason, we assume, is not unique to humans, but can be

found in any number of non-human animals. At some point in human history, however,

and Kant does not put forth a detailed theory as to when, humans became capable of what

Robert Louden terms 'substantive rationality (deliberating about and freely determining

one's ends)' (*Kant's Human Being* xxi). Louden continues, 'An animal that strategizes

about how to satisfy its hunger exhibits instrumental rationality; an animal that reflects on

and then renounces its hunger (say, in protest over an injustice) exhibits substantive

rationality' (*Kant's Human Being* xxi). In supporting the claim that Kant believed

animals have instrumental reason Louden cites Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790),

where he writes, 'animals also act in accordance with representations (and are not, as

Descartes would have it, machines)' (5: 464n). Thus the only remaining argument against

---

[88] Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek and Peter Singer continue this discussion, arguing in favour of universal and objective ethics, particularly Henry Sedgwick's axiom of universal benevolence but also including deontological principles and respect for human rights, against Sharon Street's introduction of a 'Darwinian Dilemma' facing moral realists ('The Objectivity of Ethics').

Kant by Darwinians would be that there is no telos or purpose in human—or any other form of—life. However, just as Kant must accept that there is no evidence for purpose in human life, a Kantian argument could be made that there is no evidence to the contrary either. As with God, Free will, and the immortality of the soul (discussed in chapter 2), the fact is that our theoretical understanding, limited by empirical data, is incapable of knowing one way or the other. As such, he writes in the Preface to the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason, 'Thus I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **faith**.' (*CPR* B xxx). We cannot know whether or not there is a telos or moral development of humanity over time, yet we can have faith in it and it was a fashionable, though not universal, view of the Enlightenment period that humanity was in fact morally progressing.[89]

Regarding existentialism, Louden presents Jean Paul Sartre (1905 – 80) as a paradigmatic figure, drawing from the quotation, 'there is no human nature. . ... Man is nothing but that which he makes of himself' ('Existentialism Is a Humanism' 290–91). Yet Kant is not so distant from 20th century Existentialism as it might seem on first glance, as he refers to the person's moral character as what 'the human being as a rational being endowed with freedom . . . is prepared to make of himself' (Ak 7: 285). Louden describes this as a 'quasi-existentialist dimension' in Kant's ethical thought (*Kant's Human Being* 199 n17). Sartre's opposition to a human nature is aimed more at those who claim that certain moral, emotional, or character traits exist in humans, including rationality in the instrumental sense. However, if rationality is understood as the very

---

[89]The contemporary evolutionary psychologist and cognitive scientist Steven Pinker argues that humanity *is* becoming more peaceful in *The Better Angels of our Nature: the decline of violence in history and its causes*, Allen Lane, 2011. There he compiles various points of data over history (records of violent crime, murder, child abuse, death rates in war, etc.), showing that, *per capita*, these have been decreasing year on year and decade on decade for as long as records have been kept. He suggests that this is a consequence of our violent impulses being socialized (via trade, literacy, and so on) and thus decreasing.

ability for humanity to make more of itself than nature alone has made of it, then Kant

and Sartre appear to be in agreement that this is human nature. Another prominent 20th

century Existentialist, Martin Heidegger (1889 – 1976), is also in agreement on this point.

Terence Irwin summarizes him thus:

> First, he [Heidegger] infers that, since Being is an issue for every human
>
> being, the essence of a human being must consist in his existence (g42 /
>
> mr67). This means that we must take the essence of a human being to consist
>
> in his being open to possibilities. Though human beings are essentially open
>
> to different possibilities, they may not recognize that they are open to them.
>
> The ones who recognize their essential openness to different possibilities are
>
> the ones who live authentically (g42–3 / mr68), but many human beings live
>
> inauthentically without being any less open to possibilities in fact.[90] (791)

This openness is the capacity for free, rational (to use Kant's term) choices in the

face of our drives, desires, and inclinations. The connection of this openness with the

concreteness of the world is in the faculty of judgment, which Kant felt unified the world

about which we could hold theoretical knowledge, i.e. the empirical world, and the world

of inner freedom and rationality (Caygill 267).[91] This was discussed in chapter 2 with the

introduction of Kant's three (and later four) questions, 1) What can I know? 2) What

ought I to do? and 3) What may I hope? Hope, for Kant, is what allows our rational

capacity to extend out into abstract and yet-unrealized worlds, opening the individual to

possibilities of his/her own creation. Caygill notes two interrelated ways hope does this:

---

[90] 'g' and 'mr' refer to versions of *Being and Time* (1925): the German edn. (g) and the Macquarrie and Robinson's trans. (mr). See (Irwin 787 fn7).

[91] Kant defines the faculty or power of judgment [Urteilskraft] as 'the faculty of subsuming under rules, i.e., of determining whether something stands under a given rule (*casus datae legis*) or not' (*CPR* A 132/B 171).

first in the political sphere where hope of peace is necessary for the task of actually

carrying it out (*Toward Perpetual Peace*, Ak 8:386) and in personal moral lives, where

the hope for a good afterlife shapes actions taken in this one (Caygill 229).

This movement toward hope or ultimate aims points to a further clarification of

the faculty of judgment, proposed by Hannah Ginsborg: its 'purposiveness' as

'essentially tied to the notion of normativity' (464). That is, the nature of judgment itself

leads to our seeing particular things in nature as purposive. And this is necessary even for

empirical cognition 'and more specifically experience' (465), as she writes, 'in order for

empirical cognition to be possible, we must be able to regard the relation between our

cognitive faculties on the one hand, and the objects presented to our senses on the other,

not only as natural, but also as normative' (464). Though we still cannot ascribe

purposiveness or normativity to things in themselves, it is 'permissible for us to apply

such a special concept as that of purposiveness to nature and its lawfulness' . . . 'because

we already have a ground for ascribing to nature in its particular laws a principle of

purposiveness' (*CJ* 20.218 in Ginsborg 465). It is in our very nature, in the faculty of

judgment, to ascribe normative, teleological (purposive), properties to the world. Not

only does the faculty of judgment allow for a 'bridge [over] the gulf between the

legislations and domains of theoretical knowledge on the one hand and freedom on the

other' (Guyer, 'Introduction' in *CJ* xxvii), it grounds the very possibility of experience

(theoretical knowledge) in normativity (freedom).[92]

This by no means exhausts the range of approaches to the question of human

nature – even within Existentialism and Evolutionary theory there are disagreements

about human nature. However, it places Kant in the historical and philosophical context

necessary to assess his views. As we have seen, he is sympathetic to the gradual

---

[92] This is discussed further in chapter 5 (c.f. Longuenesse).

development and environmental determination emphasized by Darwinians as well as the necessity of moral freedom stressed by existentialists and yet he does not fall into determinism or radical freedom generally associated with these positions.[93] The picture we get of Kant is that for him the human being is *both* determined *and* radically free, a position today called 'compatibilism'.[94] Restating Kant's phrase from his *Lectures on Education* quoted above, 'the human being can only become human through education' (Ak 9:441), we can see Kant trying to balance what Sartre later termed our 'facticity' as human beings with our freedom to *become human* by developing our reason, a process brought about by socializing and education. Being human in this sense was for Kant just a stage in the gradual development of a being, from his/her animality and *en route* toward the highest ideal: holiness.

Buddhist Human Nature

> The poor Buddhist can certainly have no very high conception of the dignity of human nature. Today, indeed, he is a man but tomorrow he may be a poor whining dog, or mewing cat. – Michael Culbertson, 1857[95]

Mistaken as this quote may be, it points to the heart of the problem of a conception of 'human nature' in Buddhism. Just as Kant inherited two chief traditions of

---

[93] See Onora O'Neill's *Constructions of Reason* (esp. 66-80) for clarification of where Kant's conception of autonomy resides vis-à-vis more recent philosophers.

[94] Cf. Langsam, Harold (2000) "Kant's Compatibilism and His Two Conceptions of Truth" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol.81, Issue 2, 164-188. Karl Ameriks works through the various views in the development of Kant's work in *Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason*, Oxford University Press, 2000, including noting that Kant's denial of our possibly knowing *things-in-themselves* and yet insisting on the reality of representation in *CPR* A 387 lead P.F. Strawson to suggest that Kant, in that work at least, presents of a 'strong and immature strand of phenomenalism' (Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, p.258). However, Andrew Brook, citing R.C.S. Walker, correctly points out that Kant was not a phenomenalist because he did not believe that knowledge or beliefs 'could be *reduced* to sensible representations' (*Kant and the Mind* 16).

[95] Culbertson, *Darkness in the Flowery Land.* New York: Charles Scribner, p.86, quoted in (Almond 85).

Western thought, Buddhism can similarly be understood as emerging from the Brahmanism of the Vedas and the various *samaṇa* (renunciant) traditions of his time. The place of human nature in Buddhism is more difficult to establish. Here we must restate John Ross Carter's reflection that 'One of the problems in comparative studies or cross-cultural studies, but also one of the most exhilarating dimensions of the ongoing enterprise is the difficulty of matching concepts' (Dhammapala et al. 41). On the one hand, scholars might rightly argue that for early Buddhism there is no human nature, because there is no essence to any particular being. Human nature, if it requires such an essence, runs contrary to key Buddhist concepts such as not-self and impermanence. Charles Goodman takes up this argument when he writes:

> For the Theravāda, humans have no essence. At the level of ultimate truth, there are no humans; the word "human" is just a convenient designation for an extremely complex process. Virtue cannot be the realization of human nature because there is no human nature to realize. (77)

Because humanity lies on the spectrum of possible rebirths, ranging from various hells, ghostly, and animal realms to humans, titans, and gods, there is no particular 'nature' for a human. Furthermore, as Lily De Silva points out, a human is 'a complex organism of five aggregates or groups of phenomena (khandha) enumerated as *rūpa* 'material form', *vedanā* 'feeling', *saññā* 'ideation', *saṅkhāra* 'activity' and *viññāṇa* 'consciousness'' (G. R. Dhammapala 69). Buddhist analysis of the human breaks down the human into non-exclusively-human parts and processes. There is no core beyond these as might be found in Hinduism or Jainism.

However, a doctrine of human nature could be founded in the human capacity for awakening, which itself is possible only due to the lawful (Dharmic) nature of reality

itself. Even Goodman, mentioned above, falls back into the language of human nature when discussing Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics:

> The text [*Upāsaka-śīla-sutra*] seems sometimes to bend over backward in opposition to the selfish tendencies of human nature: "When friends and foes are suffering, he first benefits his foes." By counteracting natural tendencies to partiality, the bodhisattva can move closer to the ideal of impartial great compassion for all beings. (80)

Also:

> But a skillful act-consequentialist with correct information can prevent great disasters, and achieve great goods, in cases where other kinds of agents would be too scrupulous to act. Doing so requires overcoming our moral squeamishness, our attachment to our own integrity — indeed, all the inhibitions in human nature — precisely what the Vajrayāna path is designed to eliminate. (133)

Goodman seems to be aware of the duality of human nature in moral decision making and development even while denying it on arguably irrelevant (at this level at least) metaphysical grounds. As Keown rightly pointed out:

> The discipline of ethics requires only that one individual can be distinguished from another: to pursue the issue of the ultimate ontological constitution of individual natures in this context is to confuse ethics with metaphysics, and does not make for a fruitful enquiry. (19)

Just as Kant saw humans as *capable of reason* in a universe that might contain other beings capable of reason, early Buddhism places humanity in a cosmology of other

beings, all nearer or further from the goal of awakening. Humanity is roughly in the middle, but this is nevertheless a privileged position as it affords the right balance of suffering (to make one take up the religious life with earnest) and the leisure necessary to move forward in that pursuit. Animals, hungry ghosts, and hell denizens all have too much of the former and too little of the latter while titans and devas have too little of the former and an abundance of the latter.

Diagram 3: humanity in the 'Goldilocks zone' for moral improvement.
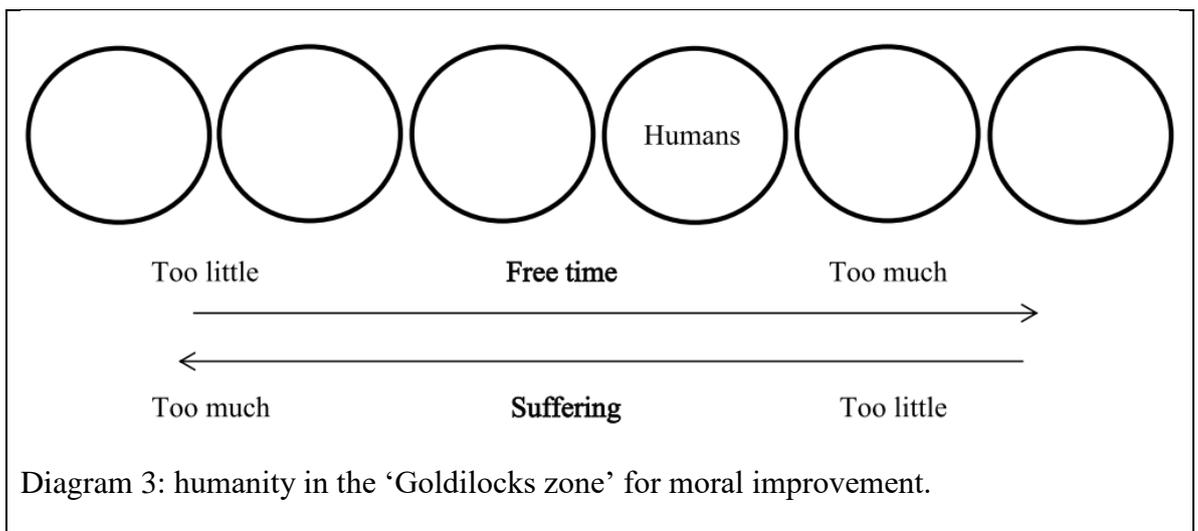
This connection is made explicitly by Keown when he states that 'the source of human dignity in Buddhism lies nowhere else than the literally infinite capacity of human nature for participation in goodness' (29-30). He states that a more familiar Buddhist formulation for this is the notion that all beings are potential Buddhas or possess 'Buddha-nature' (a teaching absent from the Pāli Canon but elaborated later). Christopher Gowans similarly states that, 'The Buddha believed every human being could achieve enlightenment because he thought human nature and the universe have certain objective features we can know' (29).

A complete understanding of the Buddhist conception of human nature, however, should not leave out the biological, heteronomous side of humanity. As with Kant, our

rights and dignity lie in the 'capacity for goodness' side, while the other side must be acknowledged as what we have to work with in order to realize our highest ideal. It is in recognition of these two opposing forces in the life of every human being that a Buddhist conception of human nature becomes clear.

Aggañña Sutta as a metaphor of human nature

Understanding this, the process described in the '*Discourse on What's Primary*' (*Aggañña Sutta* DN 27) can be re-evaluated. It is not simply a genesis account, but a moral reordering of the society of the Buddha's time, showing the evolution, or rather devolution, of beings based on their growing desires and aversions. The tale colourfully illustrates the importance of overcoming desire and aversion (*lobha* and *dosa*) and, as Steven Collins has shown, it is in fact 'permeated by references to the Monastic Code, the Vinaya' (302, 326-331).

The story begins with the Buddha meeting two young monks who have been 'abused' by Brahmins who accuse them of having left their higher place of status in society to live among lower classes (*vaṇṇa*). The Buddha rebukes such Brahmins, stating that moral qualities are spread throughout the classes; thus, as noted above, morality is moved from particularity toward universality. Furthermore, those who have left home from any of the classes to become followers of the Buddha and his *Dhamma* automatically take up a place even higher than the king because the Buddha represents, 'the body of *Dhamma*, the body of Brahmā, becoming *Dhamma*, becoming Brahmā.'[96] Richard Gombrich has made extensive study of the co-optation of the Brahmanic ideal joining or dwelling with Brahmā (as a god and Brahman, the impersonal, neuter form) as

---

[96] *'dhammakāyo' itipi, 'brahmakāyo' itipi, 'dhammabhūto' itipi, 'brahmabhūto' itipi* (DN 27.9).

it occurs elsewhere in the Buddha's teachings (*How Buddhism Began*). Historically, the notion of the God Brahmā developed into an impersonal force, Brahman in the Upaniṣads, around the time of the Buddha. In the Buddha's teachings, the God Brahmā is always given either an inferior status to that of the Buddha or is equated with the *Dhamma*, thus eliminating his unique status.

The *Aggañña Sutta* continues with the Buddha expounding on what tradition has taken to be a cosmogony, or story of the origin of the universe, beginning at verse 10. Gombrich has also shown that the cosmogony here is not to be taken literally—as it was by later traditions—but instead as a satire of existing Brahmanic stories.[97] The story includes aspects such as the contraction and expansion of the world (*loka*, not just our planet, but all that may be experienced), and a time in which there was nothing but a watery, dark mass. The development and differentiation of beings progresses coincides with the development and differentiation of the world, through stages of initial solidification and coinciding craving:

World-contraction	Ābhassara Brahmā realm, beings are mind-made, feeding on joy, self-radiant, walking on air, and grounded in fortune[98]
Expansion begins	Beings pass into our world (same features)
Watery, dark mass, no moon or sun (v.10)	No gender
Sweet earth (*rasapathavī*) encases the water	Beings taste the substance, and thirst (*taṇhā*) arises, self-radiance is lost
Sun and Moon, day and night, the seasons and years appear (time)	Eating more, their bodies become coarser (*kharatta*), differentiation in looks, beauty and ugliness, arises and with it pride and arrogance (*mānā-atimāna*)
The sweet earth disappears	They lament, 'oh the taste!' (*aho rasaṃ*)[99]

---

[97] See Gombrich 'The Buddha's Book' as well as Collins, *The Discourse*.
[98] *manomayā pītibhakkhā sayaṃpabhā antalikkhacarā subhaṭṭhāyino* (DN 27.10).
[99] See Gombrich 131 in Williams ed. 129-146.

Fungus (*bhūmipappaṭaka*) appears (sweet like honey)	They dive in to eat that as well, differentiation increases, as does the pride and arrogance
The fungus disappears and creepers (*padālatā*) appear	These too are eaten, and the coarseness, differentiation, et cetera continue on
Fine rice appears	They eat this and the genders and sex organs appeared,[100] and with that lust appears; with this came infatuation (*sārāgo*) to arise and burning fever fell into their bodies[101] and, due to this, sexual activity began.
	Others, looking upon the act, threw dung and dust at the couple;
those copulating then begin to build dwellings	Laziness (*alasa*) leads to food storage
Excessive consumption leads to crop failure	The beings create fields with boundaries, and soon one being steals from another, and next comes reproach, lying, and punishment[102]
Government is created (first king appointed), four classes names given;	
the origin of asceticism, first a Khattiya, then one from each of the other classes	

The Buddha then brings the story back to his usual moral teaching:

> Indeed a Khattiya, Vasettha, having done bad deeds in body . . . in speech . . .
>
> in mind, being one with wrong view, taking up action out of wrong view, due
>
> to this action based in wrong view when the body breaks up after death he/she
>
> will be reborn in a state of loss, a miserable place, a place of suffering.[103]

---

[100] …*itthiyā ca itthiliṅgaṃ pāturahosi purisassa ca purisaliṅgaṃ* (DN 27.16).

[101] …*pariḷāho kāyasmiṃ okkami* (DN 27.16).

[102] …*adinnādānaṃ paññāyati, garahā paññāyati, musāvādo paññāyati, daṇḍādānaṃ paññāyati* (DN 27.19).

[103] *Khattiyopi kho, vāseṭṭha, kāyena duccaritaṃ caritvā vācāya duccaritaṃ caritvā manasā duccaritaṃ caritvā micchādiṭṭhiko micchādiṭṭhikammasamādāno micchādiṭṭhikammasamādānahetu kāyassa bhedā paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nirayaṃ upapajjati* (DN 27.26).

The same goes for those of the other classes, and those of all classes who act with right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) are reborn in a happy, heavenly world (*sugatiṃ saggaṃ lokaṃ upapajjati*). One who does both (*dvayakārī*) with mixed views (*vimissadiṭṭhi*) experiences pleasure and pain (*sukhadukkhappaṭisaṃvedī*) with the breakup of the body after death. Lastly are those who are restrained (*saṃvuta*) and develop the seven aspects of awakening, who gain complete nirvana in this very existence (or lifetime).[104] The Buddha continues, giving a string of synonyms for one who is fully awakened: worthy, obstructions removed, dwelling in perfection, done what ought to be done, laid down the burden, attained the ideal, exhausted the fetters of becoming, released through perfect understanding, foremost in worth in the *dhamma*.[105]

The implications one could take from this are many. The *sutta* is a morality tale wrapped in a cosmogony. It also places the law and duty (Dharma) of Buddhist soteriology above the duty of the temporal ruler, important as he is in maintaining social order. As Stanley Tambiah explains:

> The *dharma* of cosmic law and its transcendence (*nibbana*) are larger in scope and superior to the *dharma* of righteousness as practiced by the ruler; this hierarchical arrangement parallels the gradient from spirituality to gross materiality in the cosmogonic emergence story of the *Aggañña sutta*, as well as the dichotomy between the super-mundane (*lokuttara*) and mundane (*laukika*) in cosmology. (41)

---

[104] …*sattannaṃ bodhipakkhiyānaṃ dhammānaṃ bhāvanamanvāya diṭṭheva dhamme parinibbāyati* (DN 27.28). Nota Bene: the PED gives 'already or even in this present existence… in the same sense as *diṭṭhadhammika* (adj.) belonging or referring to this world or the present existence, always contrasted with *samparāyika* belonging to a future state' (320).

[105] …*arahaṃ khīṇāsavo vusitavā katakaraṇīyo ohitabhāro anuppattasadattho parikkhīṇabhavasaṃyojan sammadaññā vimutto… aggamakkhāyati dhamme…* (DN 27.29).

As such it may seem better suited in the next chapter (on Cosmology). However, the moral focus of the story tells us more about the early Buddhist vision of human nature than it does about the broader cosmos inhabited by humanity. Moral decline led beings to first abandon their 'participation in goodness' in favour of greed, arrogance, avarice, and laziness, thus leading to the necessity of political systems. As Keown states, 'According to the Aggaññasutta, the evolution of political societies is the consequence of depravity and decline, which makes them a dubious testament to human dignity' (21). However, the initiation of politics does mark a reversal, so to speak, in the direction of the moral narrative from one of decline toward civilization wherein beings (e.g. the Buddha) could develop and propagate further moral teachings.

The political leader, he who 'rightly would show anger where there ought to be anger, rightly would censure those who ought to be censured, and banish those who ought to be banished'[106] is clearly not a moral exemplar, but rather a remedial necessity allowing for others to attain a higher morality. In this the Buddha is subtly critical of doctrines extolling political leaders as highest among men. Politics thus play an important, perhaps essential, role in preventing moral decline in society. However, as was made clear earlier in the *sutta* (DN 27.8), the highest politician is still inferior to the Buddha, the one who has realized the *Dhamma* in full. This also suggests a place of divergence between Buddhist morality and that of Aristotle, as it is not the moderate in anger that is sought in Buddhism, but rather an extreme (the complete elimination of anger).[107]

---

[106] …*sammā khīyitabbaṃ khīyeyya, sammā garahitabbaṃ garaheyya, sammā pabbājetabbaṃ pabbājeyya* (DN 27.20).

[107] As Aristotle identified the good life as that of virtuous practical activity, including that of the politician alongside the philosopher, *Nichomachaen Ethics, Book 1*. For Aristotle, we are not only rational beings, but also social beings. Both Kant and early Buddhism suggest that the social aspect of humanity, while essential in our formation historically and individually, is not as essential as our rational/moral aspect. This claim will be further examined in chapter 6 on the virtues.

With a political leader bringing stability, the Buddha describes the development of the four classes. Importantly here as elsewhere, the formation of the classes is determined by behaviour, not by being different parts of the original 'Cosmic Man' (Paruṣa) as taught in Ṛg Veda 10.90. Thus the nature of class structure is conventional and changeable, not essential and eternal. The *sutta* concludes with a teaching of egalitarianism that cuts through class structures: whoever, regardless of class, lives a good moral life will be rewarded, whoever lives a bad life will suffer, and those who attain awakening all do so in the same way. The *sutta* concludes with the Buddha quoting and approving the words of the Mahā Brahma (one of the highest gods in the Buddhist cosmology) Sanankumāra as stating:

> The Khattiya (class) is highest among people, those whose trust is in clan.
> He who is endowed with special knowledge and virtue, he is highest among
> gods and men.[108]

The view of human nature thus rests on two things: potential and behaviour. All beings are equal in potential, but it is behaviour that separates out the classes and, as it were, the whole of the Buddhist cosmos. Our capacity is rooted in the *dhamma* as Truth and Cosmic Law which acts in our lives though it is unseen by the non-awakened, the non-Buddhas. As John Ross Carter put it, 'without dhamma we are confronted with "our ineradicable incapacity to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps"' (162). It is *Dhamma* which makes supramundane (*lokuttara*) morality, that which is essential to Buddhist soteriology, possible.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the world of ordinary people is described as plagued with the 'three fires' of greed (*lobha* or *rāga*), aversion (*dosa*), and ignorance (*moha* or

---

[108] *Khattiyo seṭṭho janetasmiṃ, ye gottapaṭisārino. Vijjācaraṇasampanno, so seṭṭho devamānuse'ti.*

avijjā). This, according to early Buddhism, is our moral starting point. This condition is analogous to Kant's heteronomy, a condition in which one is literally ruled over by external forces. Heteronomous forces, made into principles of action, could be of two forms, either empirical or rational:

> The first kind, drawn from the principle of happiness, are based upon either physical or moral feeling', while the latter, drawn from the principle of perfection, are 'based upon either the rational concept of perfection as a possible effect of our will or else upon the concept of an independent perfection (the will of God) as a determining cause of our will' (*G* 442, 46).

In this and the following passage of the Groundwork, Kant provides a hierarchy of supposed moral goals within the purview of heteronomy. These begin with (1) 'the principle of one's own happiness' which Kant objects to because it 'bases morality upon incentives that undermine it rather than establish it . . . inasmuch as motives to virtue are put in the same class as motives to vice and inasmuch as such incentives merely teach one to become better at calculation . . . ' (*G* 442, 46) For Kant, principles based on one's own happiness (note this is different from the duty to ensure the happiness of others, for which Kant is an advocate, see chapter 6) tells virtue 'to her face that our attachment to her rests not on her beauty but only on our advantage (*G* 443, 46). The next level of motivation is (2) moral feeling, an 'alleged special sense' which is 'closer to morality' yet still relies on feelings that 'naturally differ from one another by an infinity of degrees, so that feelings are not capable of providing a uniform measure of good and evil' and cannot be judged or determined valid by others (*G* 442, 46). These are the two empirical principles of motivation known to Kant as attempted grounds of morality. The next principles are (3) the rational principle of the independent perfection of God and (4) the (also rational) principle of the self-perfection of the will. The problem with the first of

these, the 'theological concept' is that we 1) 'cannot intuit divine perfection' because it is wholly beyond us and we therefore can only conceptualize it based on abstraction from our own moral will. Kant also rejects this for worry that 2) lacking a clear intuition of God's perfection, we might rely morally instead on our understanding of God's 'characteristics [such] as desire for glory and dominion combined with such frightful representations as those of might and vengeance' saying that any system of morals based on these would 'be directly opposed to morality' (*G* 443, 47). Writing of the system of moral self-perfection, Kant issues a short refutation, saying simply that it is 'empty, indeterminate, and hence of no use for finding in the immeasurable field of possible reality the maximum sum suitable for us' and that in this emptiness it turns in a circle 'tacitly presupposing the morality that it has to explain' (*G* 443, 47). The latter (rational) principles are superior as they at least get us beyond fleeting sensations and yet even these, reliant as they are on concepts and abstractions, fall short of true morality.

Emotions and our highest Nature

Both for Kant and the Buddha, our emotions (a rather broad term which will take on greater specificity as the chapter unfolds) are not part of our highest potential nature. Therefore, to be ruled over by them is to be ruled over by a force external to this highest nature. For Kant, this highest potential nature (elaborated upon in the next chapter) is the *pure will* about which he states: 'The will is a kind of causality belonging to living beings insofar as they are rational; freedom would be the property of this causality that makes it effective independent of any determination by alien causes' (*G* 446, 49). This is freedom in the negative sense, freedom from alien causes (heteronomy), and freedom in the positive sense is given as the power of the will to self-legislate: 'What else, then, can freedom of the will be but autonomy, i.e. the property that the will has of being a law

unto itself?' (*G* 447, 49). Kant also writes eloquently of some of the specific external forces that might rule over us in the essay 'What is Enlightenment,' people such as government and religious officials. There he writes that the 'public use of one's reason must be free at all times.' Public in this case refers to the people as free citizens, whereas in their private duties (as a tax collector or pastor or in other employment), Kant saw that it was acceptable to limit their freedom in the service of a well-maintained society. However, one's public reason must not collapse completely into one's private duties, for this would be to surrender completely to heteronomy.

Buddhist Heteronomy

In early Buddhism we find a similar complexity of understanding of human nature – of what it means to be a human – as something beyond or greater than the greed, aversion, and ignorance that dominate daily life for the untrained, ordinary person (*puthujjana*). This 'something beyond' will form the core around which adventitious elements accrue, although one must be careful with language here, as the Buddha specifically repudiated the doctrine of the *attā* or 'self' of Brahmanism. 'Most people (not being *Arahants*) are familiar with only this sensory realm, so to try and imagine the full experience of *nibbāna* would be to superimpose it with qualities that do not apply to it, both confusing and defeating the goal of Buddhist practice' (Albahari 32). The core and *nibbāna*, both of which take on cosmological and metaphysical natures, will be discussed in the next chapter, while it is to the adventitious elements of the sensory realm that we now turn.

We have already mentioned the fires of greed, aversion, and ignorance. To these we should add a few additional phrases of Buddhist terminology, namely thirsting (*taṇhā*,

often translated as craving or desire), the five aggregates (*pañca khandha*), and

extinguishing (*nibbāna*). In order to develop these in their context, we return to the

Buddhist teaching of the Four Noble Truths (*ariya saccāni*).[109] Buddhism, one could say,

begins and ends with the Four Noble Truths.

By unpacking this teaching, found succinctly stated in the

Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta (SN 56.11), we find an entire system of thought, often

described in medical terms as diagnosis, aetiology, prognosis, and treatment. In the first

Noble Truth, the truth of suffering (*dukkha*), we get a Buddhist description of the

individual's problem in the 'continuous wandering' of human existence, or *saṃsāra*. This

realm actually encompasses more than humanity, as we shall cover in the next chapter

(Cosmology), but for now we limit it to what we might call the 'human condition'. The

second Noble Truth holds that our suffering has a cause (*samudaya*), craving or thirst.

That this thirst can be eliminated or brought to cessation (*nirodha*) is the third Noble

Truth. It is this truth that elevates Buddhism out of mere pessimism regarding the human

condition and provides Buddhists a telos or soteriology. Along with the cause and

possibility of a cure for suffering, the fourth Noble Truth contains a prescriptive path to

liberation, the Noble Eightfold Path (Pāli: *ariya atthaṇgika magga*):

    1. Right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*)

    2. Right intention (*sammā-sankappa*)

    3. Right speech (*sammā-*vācā)

    4. Right action (*sammā-kammanta*)

---

[109] We work under the common translation of *ariya-sacca* as 'noble truth', keeping in mind that alternative translations such as 'truth of the noble ones', 'truth for the noble', and so on are also possible (Cf. Norman 1994, p.13).

5. Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)

6. Right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*)

7. Right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*)

8. Right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*)

In the current chapter, we will focus only on the first two Noble Truths of the Buddha, those that assess our condition in the world today, along with other central images and metaphors the Buddha used to describe our current situation.

The First Noble Truth: Suffering

According to tradition, the Buddha's life and teachings can be summed up as a response to one thing: suffering. The translation of the Pāli term *dukkha* as suffering presents some problems for modern scholars, but for the present work it will suffice, and where it is problematic will be discussed. Suggested translations such as *dis*-ease, dissatisfactoriness, angst, stress, and others all carry their own difficulties, and many scholars simply prefer to leave the term untranslated. The Buddha's first teaching says this about suffering:

> Now this, Oh monks, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, death is suffering; association with the unbeloved is suffering, separation from the beloved is suffering, not getting what is wanted is suffering. In short, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering.[110]

---

[110] From the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dhamma (SN V 420): *Idaṃ kho pana bhikkhave, dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ: jātipi dukkhā jarāpi dukkhā vyādhipi dukkho maraṇampi dukkhaṃ appiyehi sampayogo dukkho piyehi vippayogo dukkho yampicchaṃ na labhati tampi dukkhaṃ saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā.*

Suffering so much constitutes the heart of the Buddha's teaching that in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* (*The Snake Simile*, MN 22) the Buddha tells his monks, 'Previously, oh Bhikkhus, and now, what I make known is suffering and the cessation of suffering.'[111] Suffering furthermore constitutes one of the 'three marks' (*tilakkhaṇa*) of existence alongside impermanence (*anicca*) and not-self (*anattā*), given in the formula:

> 'All conditioned things are impermanent' when one sees this with wisdom, then one turns away from suffering; this is the path to purification.

> 'All conditioned things are suffering' when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering; this is the path to purification.

> 'All things are not-self' when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering; this is the path to purification.[112]

In defining suffering more clearly, the commentator Buddhaghosa gives us: 'here *du* thus appears [like] the word contemptible/bad (*kucchita*); as one calls a [bad] child a *du-putta*. The word *kham*, however, is [like] empty/deserted (*tuccha*), as one calls empty/deserted space '*kham*' (*Vissudhimagga* 494).[113] Thus *dukkha* is explained as comprising the qualities of vileness and emptiness, empty of (*virahitato*) the stability (*dhuva*), beauty (*subha*), happiness (*sukha*), and personality (*attabhāva*) conceived [to be in it] by fools (*bālajana parikappita*).[114]

---

[111] *Pubbe cāhaṃ bhikkave, etarahi ca dukkhañceva paññāpemi, dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ.*

[112] Dhammapada, verses 277, 278, and 279: *277: Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā'ti yadā paññāya passati |Atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā. 278: Sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā'ti yadā paññāya passati | Atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā. 279: Sabbe dhammā anattā'ti yadā paññāya passati | Atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā.*

[113] *...idha* du *iti ayaṃ saddo kucchite dissati; kucchitaṃ hi puttaṃ dupputto ti vadanti.* Khaṃ-*saddo pana tucche; tucchaṃ hi ākāsaṃ khan ti vuccati.*

[114] *Bālajanaparikappitadhuvasubhasukhattabhāvavirahitato.*

Returning to the canonical works, *dukkha* is further divided into three categories by Sariputta in the *Dukkha Sutta* (*Discourse on Suffering*, SN 38.14): suffering of pain (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), the suffering of compounded existence (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*) and the suffering of change (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*). In a contemporary attempt to demonstrate the range of English terms that could be used to capture *dukkha*, Francis Story gives twenty-five different single terms for *dukkha* (from worry and anguish to senility and friendlessness) along with thirteen pairs of opposites (pain/pleasure, hope/hopelessness, aversion/attraction, etc.) as well as 'decay of body and faculties' (Story). Such is the nature of not only human beings, but all beings in *saṃsāra*, that is, all who have not gained awakening.

On one reading, Kant is not seen as nearly so descriptive of the causes or range of our suffering, as he sees it as a matter of physiology and the realm of heteronomy, as opposed to morality. In terms of the Two Standpoints (Chapter 2), Kant was far more interested in the standpoint of autonomy and how we were to attain it. However, Kant did take human happiness (and thus naturally its contrary) into account in his description of morality and autonomy. As we shall see, it is in the second Noble Truth that a connection to Kant is better made, for, as with the Buddha's philosophy: 'To Kant, morality is the key to genuine happiness. That is, if we seek happiness through the immediate fulfilling of our inclinations, then we are bound to lose the very thing we seek' (Palmquist and Palomo-Lamarca 81). For both, our unhappiness or suffering is rooted in acting from heteronomy (for Kant) or based on motives based in thirsting (for Buddha).

The Second Noble Truth: Thirsting

Our inclinations, as Kant calls them, are to the Buddha our thirsting (*taṇhā*), the second Noble Truth. At the root of our suffering is *taṇhā*. Like so many terms, the Buddha took this word from the general milieu and transformed it into a technical philosophical statement. It is up to the pupil to draw out the connections between the concrete feeling of bodily thirsting and the abstract, we might say 'existential', thirsting that the Buddha claims is at the root of all suffering. Comparing this mode of teaching with that of Socrates, Rhys Davids and Stede elaborate thus:

> Neither the Greek nor the Indian thinker has thought it necessary to explain how this effect is produced. In the Chain of Causation (D II. 34) we are told how Taṇhā arises--when the sense organs come into contact with the outside world there follow sensation and feeling, & these (if, as elsewhere stated, there is no mastery over them) result in Taṇhā. In the First Proclamation (S V.420 ff.; Vin I.10) it is said that Taṇhā, the source of sorrow, must be rooted out by the way there laid down, that is by the Aryan Path. Only then can the ideal life be lived. Just as physical thirst arises of itself, and must be assuaged, got rid of, or the body dies; so the mental "thirst," arising from without, becomes a craving that must be rooted out, quite got rid of, or there can be no Nibbāna. (PED, 294)

The Buddha presents a novel and technical image of *taṇhā* as a state of mind gripping all beings in *saṃsāra*. While 'thirsting' falls a bit awkwardly on contemporary English ears, it fits the Buddha's own apparent meaning much better than the more commonly used term, 'desire'. Not only is desire too broad a term in modern usage, but also it was pointed out by C.A.F. Rhys Davids over a century ago that it could be used to

translate 'no less than seventeen Pāli words' (Keown *The Nature* 223; cf Rhys Davids 'on the Will' 54). David Webster writes of the 'Varieties of Desire' covering *taṇhā*, *chanda*, *icchā*, *paṇidhi, paṇihita, padhāna, apekkhā, āsā, upādāna, abhijjhā*, and numerous other terms in the Pāli Canon (135-194). This suggests that the early Buddhist understanding and categorization of mental states was subtle and sophisticated. Many of these terms are used approvingly by the Buddha, especially when directed at a wholesome object, such as *nibbāna*. Suffice to say, then, that the type of desire, if we are to use that term, that the Buddha condemned and sought to uproot was a very specific type of desire, and not simply desire *per se*. This type of desire would be specifically unwholesome or unskilful (*akusala*), tending toward ignorance and further suffering, as opposed to *kusala*, which 'in early Buddhist literature would be "produced by wisdom"' (Cousins 136).

Kant on our heteronomy

Kant, too, was subtler in his appreciation of human inclinations than he is often credited for. In discussing the duties of love and respect in Kantian ethics, Wood remarks that the very opposite of these 'would be cold indifference, detachment, and unconcern – in other words, the very attitude that invidious caricatures of Kantian ethics typically ascribe to the emotionally repressed Kantian moral agent' (Wood, *Kantian Ethics* 177). While Kantian ethics are devoted ultimately toward the perfection of the human being, which entails a complete turning away from heteronomy in the form of selfish drives, desires, and inclinations, Kant was well aware that this could not be done all at once, and that, in fact, many of our inclinations tended not simply toward ephemeral sensual satisfaction, but toward a fuller, universal (moral) happiness.

>The human being insofar as he belongs to the world of sense is a needy being, and to this extent his reason does indeed have a mandate from the side of sensibility which he cannot reject, to attend to its interest and to frame practical maxims also with a view to happiness in this life and, if possible, in a future life as well. (*CPrR* 61)

In Kant, our inclinations are connected with our animality or animal nature, which is set in opposition to our highest capacity as humans: rationality. 'Whatever else we do (learning foreign languages, learning to be excellent potters, striving to be better hockey players), we have a duty to diminish our ignorance and correct our errors' (Baron 339).

>A human being has a duty to raise himself from the crude state of his nature, from his animality . . . more and more toward humanity, by which he alone is capable of setting himself ends; he has a duty to diminish his ignorance by instruction and to correct his errors. (*MM* 6.387 in Baron 339)

Kant discusses the development of humankind from a savage phase of animality toward rationality in which authentic humanity was at least possible in his essay 'Idea for a Universal History' (1784). The natural teleology described there suggests that reason, while *a priori*, had to develop and be developed in particular beings and species in history in order to find its concrete expression. There, and in his 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History' (1786), Kant describes the development of reason in human history as a gradual process, borne of instrumental use (in the service of satisfying basic needs), growing into antagonistic tensions, what Kant calls unsocial-sociability, in which people further developed their reason in competition with one another, and steadily toward the development of reason in which one might find it possible to follow the dictates of the Categorical Imperative. In the 'Conjectural Beginning . . .' Kant concludes with an

'argument that his account of human history satisfies the demands of philosophical theodicy, by showing that the ills we suffer are our own fault, and that nature (or providence) nevertheless uses human misdeeds to further the development of human nature's rational powers' (Wood, *Introduction* 161-162).

A lengthy comment in Kant's handwritten manuscript for *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Viewpoint* (first published in 1798, 2nd edition 1800) further describes the division between human animality and rationality:

> The human being is conscious of himself not merely as an animal that can reason (*animal rationabile*), but he is also conscious, irrespective of his animality, of being a rational being (*animal rationale*); and in this quality he does not cognize himself through experience, for it <would> can never teach him the <objective> unconditional necessity <of the determination of his will> of what he is supposed to be. Rather, experience can only teach him empirically what he is or should be under empirical conditions, but with respect to himself the human being cognizes from pure reason (*a priori*) <the humanity also as a>; namely, the ideal of humanity which, in comparison to him <with which he> as a human being through the frailties of his nature as limitations of this archetype, makes the character of his species recognizable and describable <and thus can show the pure character of his species>. However, in order to appreciate this character of his species, the comparison with a standard that can <not> be found anywhere else but in perfect humanity is necessary. (416)

He goes on to describe a three step progression from mere capacity for reason (*rationabile*) to rational animal (*animal rationale*), beginning with self-preservation,

moving on to education of the species for domestic society, and culminating with governance as a systematic whole. It is through the *discord*, Kant tells us, which is inherent in our animality, that we cultivate and develop our reason toward the end of *concord*. He ties these three steps to humankind's three unique predispositions: the technical (the ability to manipulate the world around him), the pragmatic (to work with others to serve one's own ends), and finally the moral (to abide by the Categorical Imperative). Kant's conclusion to *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) is that humankind should be seen 'not as evil, but as a species of rational being that strives among obstacles to rise out of evil in constant progress toward the good' (Kant 428). This division was made even stronger in his earlier pronouncement, concluding the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that while our engagement with the awe-inspiring quest of science (the starry heavens above) must end with the realization that we are but mortal and thus will physically return to the earth, our engagement with the moral law within elevates us to the state 'in which the moral law reveals to [us] a life independent of animality and even of the entire world of sense,' one which 'is not restricted to conditions and boundaries of this life but proceeds to infinity' (*CPrR* 162).

The basis of our condition: social conflict

In Kant's philosophy, social progress is based in social conflict. It is through conflict that our human capacity for reason develops. This conflict is described in four related ways. The first of these is as 'unsociable sociability' in the *Idea for a Universal History* (1784). Second, he described humankind as beset by 'self-conceit' in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). Third, turning to religion, he described our social conflict as arising from the 'radical propensity to evil in human nature' in *Religion Within the*

Bounds of Reason Alone (1793). Finally, he described humanity as prone to ultimately destructive 'passions' in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798).

In the *Idea for a Universal History*, Kant's fourth proposition begins:

> *The means nature employs in order to bring about the development of all their predispositions is their* **antagonism** *in society, insofar as the latter is in the end the cause of their lawful order*. Here I understand by 'antagonism' the unsociable sociability of human beings, i.e. their propensity to enter into society, which, however, is combined with a thoroughgoing resistance that constantly threatens to break up this society. (13).

Kant places this predisposition squarely in human nature, which despite being ultimately moral, has with it an 'outer shell' of the animality discussed above. Only through socialization can we develop our morality, to feels oneself as 'more a human being' in Kant's words (Ibid.). In this process of socialization, our rationality (synonymous with morality) is necessarily honed and our talents are developed in pursuit of satisfaction of desires. Yet as we do so, we come to realize the importance of our fellow humans in ever-widening circles. The final propositions (seven through nine) suggest an eventual league of nations wherein entire societies work to overcome their conflict, leading ultimately to cosmopolitan world citizenship for individuals.

The discussion of 'self-conceit', which draws immediate comparison to Buddhism's *asmi-mana* (the conceit I am), was first introduced in the second of Kant's critiques, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where it is mentioned over twenty times. There the moral law is introduced as a causal force in our lives (before 'respect' as a causal force had been only mentioned in the *Groundwork*, Ak 400 and 402n14, as a feeling arising from morality):

Now, the propensity to self-esteem, insofar as it rests merely on sensibility,

also belongs to the inclinations that the moral law impairs. Therefore the

moral law strikes down self-conceit. But this law is, after all, something in

itself positive, viz., the form of an intellectual causality, i.e., of freedom.

Hence inasmuch as—in contrast to its subjective opposite, viz., the

inclinations in us—it weakens self-conceit, the moral law is at the same time

an object of respect; and inasmuch as it even strikes down self-conceit, i.e.,

humbles it, the moral law is an object of the greatest respect and thus also the

basis of a positive feeling that is not of empirical origin and is cognized a

priori. Therefore respect for the moral law is a feeling that is brought about by

an intellectual basis, and this feeling is the only one that we cognize

completely a priori and the necessity of which we can have insight into.

(*CPrR* 97)

Defining self-conceit, Kant continues, 'This propensity to make oneself . . . an

objective determining basis of the will as such can be called *self-love*, which, when it

makes itself legislative and an unconditional practical principle, can be called *self-

conceit*' (97-98). Thus the rise of self-conceit follows two steps: 1) a turning inward and

objectifying one's 'self' as a basis for one's will and 2) acting from motives based on this

gross misunderstanding of oneself and the world. The only truly objective basis for

motivation is the moral law; so the mistaken propensity to turn instead toward one's 'self'

is, for Kant, merely a matter of habituated ignorance to be overcome with proper

education and cultivation. The moral law, in impairing our self-conceit both draws our

respect and humbles us.

In *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone* unsociable sociability is discussed

in theological terms as 'a natural propensity of the human being to evil' (Ak 6.29). There

he subdivides evil, which can only be understood as the maxims (motivations) for actions, into three degrees:[115] first being mere human frailty – knowing the good and yet still being overwhelmed by one's inclinations; the second degree being the case of one who acts morally, that is, from moral motives, but only with the help of external incentives, and thus 'not done purely from duty' (Ak 6.30); and lastly the state of complete corruption in which a person acts purely out of selfish inclinations. In this last case, Kant admits that the conduct may still be lawfully good (legal), and yet the actions are nonetheless 'corrupted at [their] root' (Ak 6.30).

All three of these again point to conditions in which an agent's underlying maxim (motivation for acting) is heteronomous and thus immoral, despite the possibility of good outcomes or consequences.

> For whenever incentives other than the law itself (e. g. ambition, self-love in general, yes, even a kindly instinct such as sympathy) are necessary to determine the power of choice to lawful actions, it is purely accidental that these actions agree with the law, for the incentives might equally well incite its violation. (Ak 6.31)

This is not to say that sympathy is in opposition to morality (note again Wood's assessment above); only that sympathy is no sure motivation or pathway to moral rectitude.

Lastly, in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant presents the most dangerous degree of heteronomy, that of passions. A passion is there defined as an inclination, i.e. a sensible desire that has become a habit for the subject, which 'prevents

---

[115] Kant names them in Latin as *fragilitas, impuritas* or *improbitas*, and *vitiositas* or *pravitas* (Ak 6.29-30).

reason from comparing it [the passion] with the sum of all inclinations in respect to a certain choice' (Ak 7:265). He goes on to say that passions can co-exist with rationalizing, but 'take root' in such a way as to become incredibly difficult to overcome: 'if affect is *drunkenness,* then passion is an *illness* that abhors all medicine, and it is therefore far worse than all those transitory emotions that at least stir up the resolution to be better . . . ' (Ak.7:265-6). It is so because it involves its own maxim developed through reason and uses it toward its own purposes. Thus it is a uniquely human (rational) capacity: beyond desires and inclinations that may be shared with non-rational animals.

Kant elucidates this description of the passions with the example of an ambitious person. On the one hand, a person may align one's ambitions with reason, follow the Categorical Imperative, and thus live a life *worthy of happiness*. This is because we are inclined through nature toward the ends of developing a community and being loved by others. On the other hand, Kant suggests, if one 'is a *passionately* ambitious person, then he is blind to these ends . . . . and he overlooks completely the risk he is running that he will be hated by others, or avoided in social intercourse . . . ' thus running contrary to reason and the possibility of happiness (Ak 7:266). Thus passions are not 'merely *unfortunate*' but are 'without exception *evil* as well,' as they pull what might be inclinations toward virtue instead toward self-destructive fanaticism (Ak 7:267).

We are as if on fire

As stated in the introduction, the Buddhist description of our situation is similar to that of a house on fire, and thus we should act with earnest to extricate ourselves. But what exactly is the nature of this fire? In what is likely the earliest version of the Chain of Causation (Pāli: *paṭiccasamuppāda*), it is *taṇhā* that begins the cycle leading through

clinging, development, birth, old age and death, and back on to *taṇhā*.[116] Clinging,

upādāna, here takes us back to the Buddha's statement on suffering above, that 'in short,

the five *upādāna-khandha* are suffering' (SN 56.11). Richard Gombrich, drawing from

the work of Sue Hamilton, has shown that this is another case in which the Buddha is

taking concrete terms and using them to draw an analogy in line with his own

soteriological purposes. And just as 'desire' is a very imprecise rendering of *taṇhā*, the

term *upādāna-khandha* is only very inadequately translated as 'aggregates of clinging'.

While this translation may be literally correct, it clearly loses the thread of the Buddha's

teaching. Instead, Gombrich suggests that we take the concrete meaning for *upādāna*

given in the PED: fuel, and take it as replacing the word *aggi* (fire) in the common Pāli

compound, *aggi-kkhandha* (a blazing fire).[117] The result is an aggregate, or better, a mass

of fuel. It is this 'blazing mass of fuel' that is to be extinguished (Pāli: *nibbāti*)[118] in the

final stage of the Buddhist path.[119]

Thus the Buddha's analysis of our condition was deeply connected with the

analogy of fire, quite likely as a repudiation of the Brahmanic ritual practice of

maintaining three fires (sometimes seven). Against the stream of prevailing tradition, the

Buddha taught that the goal of the religious life was not to maintain fires externally, but

rather to put out one's own internal fires. These fires are generally given as three in

number: anger, attachment, and delusion (*dosa*, *lobha*, and *moha*).[120] This presents a clear

---

[116] (R. Gombrich 138-141)

[117] The PED, under '*aggi*', gives M I.501; A V.234, 250. --*khandha* a great mass of fire, a huge fire, fire--brand S II.85; A IV. 128; Th 2, 351 (°*samākāmā*).

[118] For '*nibbāti*' the PED gives '[see *nibbuta* etym.; influenced in meaning by Sk. nirvāti, nis+vāti to blow, i. e. to make cool, see vāyati & nibbāpeti] (instr.) to cool off (lit. & fig.), to get cold, to become passionless Sn 235…'

[119] Cf Gombrich 2009, pp.111-128, 'Everything is Burning'.

[120] *Rāga* (lusting) is sometimes used in the place of *lobha*, such as at A I.112; Dh 10; Vbh 368; S V.57, often here in longer lists of impurities or faults of character. *Avijjā*, ignorance, is a synonym of *moha*, and is later used to describe the ignorance at the root of *saṃsāric* existence. The three fires are mentioned at Itivuttaka 92; D III.217; S IV.19, cf. PED p.797.

break from Brahmanic fire ritual which was believed to be an external maintenance of cosmic order and it is with this move, from external observances to inward mental states, that the Buddha is said to have 'ethicized' all action (*kamma*):

> . . . the most important step that the Buddha took was to turn the doctrine of *karman* on its head. He ethicized it completely, made morality intrinsic, and so denied all soteriological value to ritual and all ultimate value to social distinctions. In place of a highly particularistic view of duty he propounded a simple and universal ethical dualism of right and wrong. (R. Gombrich 68) [121]

Further passages in the Pāli canon show that the Buddha, while often ambivalent about the natural world, held generally that life as we know it is an unwelcome result of some past mistakes (cf. the *Aggañña Sutta*, DN 27, discussed above) and we should actively and diligently try to escape it. For instance, in the *Discourse with Caṇkī* (*Caṇkī Sutta* MN 95) and elsewhere, the Buddha repeatedly states that the householder's life is dusty and cooped up and that the wanderer's life is one of freedom: 'Household life is confining, a dusty path. The life gone forth is like the open air. It is not easy living at home to practice the holy life totally perfect, totally pure, like a polished shell.' (DN 2, 11, 12, 16, MN 36, 195, etc.).[122] Other discussions, such as the stages of progress of the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions) and the trainings on Dwelling with Brahmā (*Brahma-vihāra*) suggest increasing valuation of a life quite 'other' than that of the ordinary householder or lay person. While the passages often use examples of ways of life contemporaneous to the Buddha, the reasoning always rests not simply in the external manifestation of that way of life, but rather in the internal mental states fostered therein.

---

[121] More will be said about this in chapter 6, on Assessing Virtue and the Goal.

[122] Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans. `*sambādho gharāvāso rajopatho, abbhokāso pabbajjā. nayidaṃ sukaraṃ agāraṃ ajjhāvasatā ekantaparipuṇṇaṃ ekantaparisuddhaṃ saṅkhalikhitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ carituṃ.*

As suggested, the emphasis isn't on the world as an external place or reality to be abandoned. The Buddha instead emphasizes the states of mind that arise under certain conditions. The conditions of the householder are quite busy, with many duties. The Buddha does not disapprove of the duties *per se*, and in fact even suggests that the householder uphold them to the best of his/her abilities (cf. the *Sīgālovada Sutta* DN 31). The praising of the proper upholding of householder duties in this context is in contrast to mere ritual observances prescribed by one's elders, and it is also in contrast to more obvious ways of wasting one's time such as gambling and heavy drug and alcohol use. So a moral householder is better than an immoral one, and a monk's life is better yet. As we will see, this hierarchical structure does not end there, but can be used to place animals below humans and gods (in a limited sense) above humans. But the most important aspect of the hierarchy follows the progress of beings on the Noble Path to awakening. The guiding principles seem always to return to the three fires of greed, hatred, and ignorance along with activities rooted in these states of mind.

In closing this section, let us recap. The first two of the Four Noble Truths, the truths of suffering and its arising (i.e. thirsting), present the Buddha's assessment of humankind. We are beings with a fundamental sense of dis-ease, discomfort, and unhappiness, which is driven by a psychological or existential form of thirsting. Just as physical thirst cannot be said to have arisen out of anywhere in particular – it just happens – the psychological thirsting the Buddha describes is a basic aspect of humanity, and indeed all *saṃsāric* beings. Taking Gombrich's insight that fire forms the central metaphor for the Buddha, we can see that here spiritual progress has a cooling and quenching effect. This is not only a complete reversal of Brahmanic ideals, but also a critique of the *tapas* (lit. 'heat', but more broadly referring to any mortification of the flesh) practices espoused by the Jain tradition and others. Fire for the Buddha is neither a

cosmic duty nor a tool for 'burning off' one's karma in a quest for liberation, but rather fire itself became the central metaphor for our unpleasant human condition. Ethics for the Buddha are presented as a path toward the extinguishing of the flames of that fire.

Conclusion: toward a moral spectrum of being

As mentioned in the introduction, there are three important spheres of existence in Buddhism and Kantian ethics. At the beginning of the Buddhist scheme there are ordinary beings, plagued with the three fires as described above. The second level is comprised of those who are on the path, transforming themselves through enacting the Forth Noble Truth, the Eightfold Noble Path, in their daily lives. And finally there are the state of being fully awakened, the possibility of which gives Buddhism its soteriology. The corresponding Kantian framework places beings first in a pre-moral state: that of animality or complete heteronomy. Second are the rational beings who struggle against desires and inclinations in the creation of their maxims. And finally are those who have attained autonomy, a state Kant doubted could be possible while still in the human flesh. Yet for both it is this higher concern that is foremost. As Paul Williams writes:

> The gods concern only the worldly (Sanskrit: *laukika*). The Buddhas are
> beyond the world (*lokottara*), both in terms of their own status and also in
> terms of their final concerns in helping others. Thus whereas one would not
> expect to see an orthodox Christian making offerings to Hindu gods,
> prostrating to them, making requests of them, or going into trance and being
> possessed by them, there is no contradiction to Buddhism in Buddhists doing
> this. To be a Buddhist for Buddhists is not the same sort of phenomenon as
> being a Christian is for Christians. (Williams, Tribe, and Wynne 5)

Similarly, for Kant being a Christian meant something different from what his contemporaries commonly took it to mean. For him, Jesus was not merely God incarnate, but he was also and more importantly a messenger pointing his followers to look beyond the sensual, empirical realm. Kant writes of him approvingly:

> Even the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with the ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize Him as such; and so He says of Himself, 'Why call ye Me [whom you see] good; none is good [the model of good] but God only [whom ye do not see]?' (*G* 408-409)[123]

And it is to this 'ideal of moral perfection', alongside the other beings in the moral cosmology of both Buddhism and Kantian thought, that we turn next.

Here I have argued that both Buddhist and Kantian ethics share a common starting point in their re-evaluation of human nature. Kant is quite explicit about this – dismissing previous attempts to ground ethics in either the wrong aspects of human nature (e.g. in the passions) or for holding a mistaken account of human nature in the first place (e.g. as ultimately both emotional and rational). Buddhism is likewise clear in its rejection of the Brahmanic ātman (Pāli: *attā*), instead focusing on the human being's potential for ethical action and resulting awakening. While Buddhism adopts the worldview of samsara and shares the quest for liberation (*mokha*) with its Brahmanic and Jain contemporaries, the differing understanding of human nature leads to a unique soteriology and ethical path.

---

[123] The quote from Jesus can be found at Mark 10:18 and Luke 18:19.

5 Cosmology: Mapping the Path

> It has long been known that the first systems of representation that man made
> of the world and of himself were of religious origin. There is no religion that
> is not both a cosmology and a speculation about the divine.[124]

All ethics begin with orientation:[125] who, what, and where am I? What do I (we) come from? Where am I going? The first two of these questions were addressed in chapter 4: as human beings our nature is one of tension between drives, desires, and inclinations – the three fires of thirsting, aversion, and delusion. The final question is discussed in the next chapter, but first we expand our understanding of ourselves as embedded in the cosmos. This deepens our orientation as we dive into questions of mind, body, time, and personal identity. The purpose of this chapter will be to compare the broader cosmologies found in Kant and early Buddhism. As we saw in discussing human nature, both Kant and the Buddha conceived of humanity as containing aspects of both animality or corruptness alongside a purer nature. The goal of each system of thought is to recognize and move beyond our lower dispositions, our heteronomy and unskilful motivations, toward a fully skilful, awakened and autonomous state of living. The cosmologies of each system, while differing in important aspects, provide common frameworks for these views of human nature and soteriology.

Today, cosmology is dominated almost entirely by the hard sciences, notably physics and astronomy. However, philosophers still play an active role in interpreting

---

[124] (Durkheim 8).

[125] This can be either explicit, as in the case of well-made systems of ethics, or implicit, as in commands (which imply the authority and thus orientating capacity of the 'other').

theories, and alternative cosmologies such as that employed by contemporary Wiccans around Stonehenge continue to impact society. In the time of the Buddha, as with his Greek counterparts, things were quite different. Fields of cosmology, ethics, medicine, logic, politics, and more interacted in fundamental and inseparable ways. Even at the time of Kant, writing in Prussia in the late eighteenth century, the split of the disciplines had arguably not yet begun: 'It remains important to keep in mind that the separation between the sciences and the humanities is a recent (nineteenth century) academic idea, which epistemologically is still under debate' (Bolle 1991). However, inasmuch as he predated the division, Kant both celebrated and fought against it. He celebrated the ability of different academic disciplines to energetically pursue relatively autonomous areas, but he both showed a sweeping scope of interests and firmly subsumed all pursuits to the one which mattered first and foremost: ethics. Nevertheless, his interests in the moral nature of humanity never precluded an equal interest in the world around us. As 'one of the last philosophers who studied the stars' (Couprie xxi), Kant provides a bridge to a time before the conceptual split in our outer and inner worlds.

In this chapter I will discuss the moral cosmologies propounded in both Kantian and early Buddhist thought. Each moral cosmology rests within, and thus must be differentiated from, vastly different geographical and scientific understandings of the world. But first, we must define what specifically cosmology is. Cosmology is the study of the universe as an ordered whole. In the words of a contemporary historian of cosmology, it is:

> the science, theory or study of the universe as an orderly system, and of the laws that govern it; in particular, a branch of astronomy that deals with the structure and evolution of the universe. (Hetherington 116)

This represents cosmology as we think of it today. However, the term originates in ancient Greek thought wherein the cosmos was intimately linked to every aspect of one's lived-world. Writing on the Gnostic notion of cosmos, Hans Jonas writes:

> By a long tradition this term [cosmos] had to the Greek mind become invested with the highest religious dignity. The very word by its literal meaning expresses a positive evaluation of the object — any object — to which it is accorded as a descriptive term. For *cosmos* means 'order' in general, whether of the world or a household, of a commonwealth, of a life: it is a term of praise and even admiration. (241)

In the realm of religion more broadly, a twofold meaning to cosmology may be given, first the study of the cosmic views of the religion, and second the body of views and images concerning the universe found in a tradition (Bolle 1991). Their cosmic views may not always appear consistent, but in both Kantianism and early Buddhism we can see underlying moral concerns flowing through the varied attempts to describe the world.

Why Cosmology?

One might wonder what relevance cosmology has to the study of ethics. Ethics is, after all, often reduced to rules or codes of interpersonal conduct. However, as we have seen, both Buddhist and Kantian ethics embrace a far more inclusive meaning of ethics, one that relies on both a clear conception of a *telos* (to be examined in the conclusion) and an understanding of the order of the world we inhabit. As noted above, both the Buddha and to a lesser extent Kant, lived in times when there was no clear philosophical line between the moral and natural world. This is in contradistinction to one commonly held belief, that many great thinkers, including the Buddha, eschewed both metaphysics

and with it cosmology for purely pragmatic concerns, as if the two could be separated. Such a belief is expressed by Nicolas Gier:

> Confucius, the Buddha, and Socrates turned from cosmology and metaphysics to the important problems of human action and conduct. A central imperative for both of them was to establish correct human relationships with the goal of peace, harmony, and justice. (177)

However, as Gier also notes, 'Both Asian and Greek humanists focused on this-worldly concerns but without giving up the idea of a transcendent realm altogether' (Ibid.). This 'transcendent realm' can be expressed both cosmologically in terms of the realms of saṃsāra and that which goes beyond them and morally as the state of one who has gone beyond the afflictions of greed, hatred, and delusion. This is, however, not an other-worldly fascination, as Gier's wording might suggest (see discussions of *Dhamma* and the Two Standpoints above). The Buddhist goal of awakening is regularly stated in terms of seeing things as they truly are in the here and now (*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti sandiṭṭhikaṃ*); it is a shift in perspective and moral transformation, not a move to a different world.

It is true that the majority of the teachings of Socrates and the Buddha focus on correct human activity. However, the Buddha and Socrates did not abandon cosmology and metaphysics completely. In the case of the Buddha, the Western enthusiasm for a fully secular and humanistic Buddha, one aspect of 'Buddhist Modernism', has largely been abandoned as a scholarly perspective in recent decades.[126] Setting aside Confucius for now, we can likewise note that metaphysics and cosmology are not absent from the ideas of Socrates, who, in the writings of Plato at least, developed a theory of forms (Gr.

---

[126] McMahan, esp. chapter 4: 'Modernity and the Discourse of Scientific Buddhism.'

eidos), was informed throughout his life by questions of the gods, and was perhaps even prompted to begin his career as a philosopher by the pronouncement by the oracle of Delphi that he was the wisest of men.[127] All of these men had, no doubt, some metaphysical and cosmological views, views which were in ways borrowed from surrounding cultures and yet unique to their philosophies.

As Christopher Key Chappel reminds us, 'Cosmology orients us. It provides us a place within the universe, a home where our story can be told in such a way that it makes sense to ourselves and the people with whom we live' (147). This need not always be explicit or unique and opposed to one's surrounding culture. However, in great thinkers it often is the case that at least certain points of conflict with the cosmological orientation of society will occur, and indeed Socrates was tried in part for impiety (Gr. *asebeia*), suggesting that questions of human orientation in respect to the gods played a key part in his philosophy. However, just how his thoughts, like the Buddha's, fit together is a matter of dispute.

Again following Keown and other key influential recent scholars of Buddhist ethics:

It is only by understanding the architectonic structure of the system that answers to specific question swill be possible or even meaningful' and thus we follow 'those who maintain that the study of Buddhist ethics must proceed along holistic lines (Swearer, 1979: 63f.; Childress, 1979: 4ff.; Reynolds, 1980: 130). (*The Nature* 18)

---

[127] McPherran, 'Socratic Religion' in (Morrison 111-137) and 'Socratic Theology and Piety' in (Bussanich 257-275) and Nicholas D. Smith, 'Socratic Metaphysics' in (Bussanich 68-93).

The search for an 'architectonic structure' of Kant's thought, including an understanding on his thought on cosmology and its connection with morality, is likewise the best possible way to understand his ethics. Cosmology itself was an often-used metaphor in Kant's own lectures, as he implored students to understand both nature and the human being 'cosmologically, namely, not with respect to the noteworthy details that their objects contain (physics and empirical psychology) but with respect to what we can note of the relation as a whole in which they stand and in which everyone takes his place' (2: 443, see also Geo 9: 157).[128] A 'cosmological' framework thus presents a necessary orientation in the world setting the stage for further investigation. Just as the issue of human nature (chapter 4) answers the question 'who are we?', cosmology answers the question of 'where are we?'.

Kant's Cosmology

Discussions of Kant's cosmology tend, rightly, to focus on his materialistic cosmology, that is, his defence of the truths propounded by science against the scepticism of figures such as Hume.

> In the so-called pre-critical period, Kant dealt especially with two problem areas. Initially, he was interested primarily in the basic concepts and methods of physics and astronomy. In his *General History and the Theory of Heavens* of 1755, he propounded, as the first person ever, a theory of the development of our planetary system in accordance with Isaac Newton's principles; Kant generalized the theory into an all encompassing cosmogony and cosmology. Later, he concentrated more strongly on metaphysical topics such as the

---

[128] From Kant's 1775 *Announcement* [of course offerings], quoted in Louden, *Kant's Human Being* 124.

principles of cognition, proofs of the existence of God, or a metaphysical

method in general. (Holzhey and Mudroch 2)

However, Kant had a second cosmological question that related directly to

morality, that of freedom versus determinism. As he wrote in the *Prolegomena to any*

future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science (1783):

Who can satisfy himself with mere cognition through experience in all the

cosmological questions, of the duration and size of the world, of freedom or

natural necessity, since, wherever we may begin, any answer given according

to principles of experience always begets a new question which also requires

an answer, and for that reason clearly proves the insufficiency of all physical

modes of explanation for the satisfaction of reason? (Ak 4: 352)

Thus, as before, we trace two often distinct lines of reasoning in Kant's philosophy. The

one flows from his first Critique and associated works on epistemology and the physical

world. The other leads us to his second Critique and works on morality and religion. In

this section we will cover three key aspects of Kant's cosmology: the move from physical

and empirical cosmology toward reason and thus ethics, the decentering effect this has on

the self, and Kant's ultimately antispectulative approach to metaphysical questions

arising from the study of cosmology.

When discussing Kant's cosmology, commentators tend to focus strictly on the

development of Kant's thought regarding the beginning, development, and nature of the

physical cosmos. However, in every stage we find a correlative moral interest in Kant's

writing. Kant's early writings focused on the natural sciences, yet even there he

commented on the ethical issues raised by the cosmological thought of the day. As noted

above, in his *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755), Kant

formulated a nebular theory of the solar system.[129] But even in this piece of scientific writings, Kant mused about the intellects and morality of beings on other planets, proposing that Humans on earth (and possibly the inhabitants of Mars) enjoy a sort of middle ground of virtue and vice, while those on planets nearer the sun would have lower intellects and more vicious dispositions and those further would be wiser and more virtuous. Beginning with a quote from the poet von Haller (1708 – 1777), he writes:

> The stars perhaps enthrone the exalted soul
>
> As here vice rules, there virtue has control.

> Does not a certain middle position between wisdom and irrationality belong to the unfortunate capacity to sin? Who knows whether the inhabitants of those distant celestial bodies are not too refined and too wise to allow themselves to fall into the foolishness inherent in sin; whereas, the others who live in the lower planets adhere too firmly to material stuff and are provided with far too little spiritual capacity to have to drag the responsibility for their actions before the judgment seat of justice? With this in mind, would the Earth and perhaps even Mars (so that the painful consolation of having fellow sufferers in misfortune would not be taken from us) be alone in the dangerous middle path, where the experience of sensual charms has a powerful ability to divert from the ruling mastery of the spirit? (158)

Here we see just how intimately connected Kant's ruminations on the 'starry heavens' and the 'moral law' were in his earliest works. Within his nascent deontological framework of a possible sinless morality Kant proposes a gradation of beings Kant notes

---

[129] See (Schönfeld) for recent scientific praise of Kant's cosmological theory and developments from it.

that this is all as yet unprovable, but still permissible and appropriate speculation if done by one who knows and respects the bounds of humanity's reason and knowledge. Kant presages his later 'two standpoints' here, distinguishing between the 'vanity' of the lesser side of human nature as opposed to a 'lofty nature, which in itself contains the source of blissful happiness' (159). Freed from grasping to such vanity, humans will find themselves no longer 'scattered among external objects in order to seek out a calming effect among them' (159-160). Kant concludes:

> In fact, when we have completely filled our dispositions with such observations and with what has been brought out previously, then the sight of a starry heaven on a clear night gives a kind of pleasure which only noble souls experience. In the universal stillness of nature and the tranquillity of the mind, the immortal soul's hidden capacity to know speaks an unnamable language and provides inchoate ideas which are certainly felt but are incapable of being described . . . how lucky this sphere is that a way lies open, under conditions which are the worthiest of all to accept, to reach a blissful happiness and nobility, something infinitely far above the advantages which the most beneficial of all nature's arrangements in all planetary bodies can attain! (160)

Such speculations, however rare, persist in Kant's thought about the most sublime aspects of the phenomenal world. In the conclusion of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), Kant again suggested a close affinity between cosmology and morality, commenting (as noted in chapter 2) that, 'Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more frequently and persistently one's meditation deals with them: *the starry sky above me and the moral law within me*' (161). And while it might be thought that these were two separate realms for Kant: the physical

world above (and around) us and the moral world within, a recognition of the moral priority of Kant's work from its earliest period makes it clear that this is not the case. No such sharp division exists for Kant. In fact, the two –object and consciousness– are united in the faculty of judgment (Longuenesse 38, 60 fn.3, 69). As discussed, the faculty of judgment posits a purposiveness, not in objects in themselves, but in our very experience of them, naturally ascribing normative, teleological properties to the world. Every 'looking out' in awe at the cosmos carries with it an inner activity of reason.

As Gary Banham describes in his work on Kantian cosmology, the two realms are united in their being 'sublime' in nature (14). Both, as sublime, direct us toward our highest capacities in both understanding the phenomenal world and cultivating our inner (moral) world. This sublime includes 'the feeling aroused by the failure of the imagination to comprehend the "absolutely great" . . . ' (Caygill 378). Both the expansive heavens brought to us necessarily by the senses and the moral law, itself only intuited or felt in the vague feeling of 'respect' for fellow rational beings open up beyond all imagination. However, again emphasising the priority of the moral/rational side, the phenomenal side (that of the starry skies) is subsumed under the intelligible in the very process of our contemplation:

> Thus, for instance, if at first our imperfect experience leads us to regard the orbits of the planets as circular, and if we subsequently detect deviations therefrom, we trace the deviations to that which can change the circle, in accordance with a fixed law, through all the infinite intermediate degrees, into one of these divergent orbits. That is to say, we assume that the movements of the planets which are not circular will more or less approximate to the properties of a circle; and thus we come upon the idea of an ellipse. Since the comets do not, so far as observation reaches, return in any such courses, their

paths exhibit still greater deviations. What we then do is to suppose that they proceed in a parabolic course, which is akin to the ellipse, and which in all our observations is indistinguishable from an ellipse that has its major axis indefinitely extended. Then, under the guidance of these principles, we discover a unity in the generic forms of the orbits, and thereby a unity in the cause of all the laws of planetary motion, namely, gravitation. And we then extend our conquests still further, endeavouring to explain by the same principle all variations and seeming departures from these rules; finally, we go on to make additions such as experience can never confirm, namely, to conceive, in accordance with the rules of affinity, hyperbolic paths of comets, in the course of which these bodies entirely leave our solar system, and passing from sun to sun, unite the most distant parts of the universe—a universe which, though for us unlimited, is throughout held together by one and the same moving force. (*CPR* A 662-3/B 690-1)

It is this principle of 'affinity', a principle that cannot be proved through any amount of empirical evidence, through which Kant supposes ever further connections in our cosmos, each growing out of ever-deeper mathematical understanding. As Banham points out, 'The principle of affinity is thus a regulative idea and, as such an idea, it involves moving beyond all data that could possibly be given to us and operates also by a series of approximations, each of which is only partially right' (12).

All of this shows that while Kant was keenly interested in the origin and nature of the cosmos, his exploration of the topics continually led him to abstract principles and humanity's capacity for reason. This capacity, as discussed in chapter 2, must be developed through society and education; and it is in this capacity wherein morality lies.

Decentering and Desubstantialising the Self

As discussed previously, Kant's philosophy initially seems to categorically separate the external, physical world from the inner, moral one and yet reunites them in the act of judgment. The treatment of these three steps in Kant's thought can be traced in his three critiques, the first laying down foundations for the sciences, arguing against both scepticism and the mistaken pretensions of dogmatic rationalism, the second elucidating the 'Postulates of Pure Reason': immortality, freedom of the will, and God, and the final critique connecting these two worlds or realms in what Howard Caygill identifies as the 'aesthetic and teleological' mode: 'Judgement provides the matrix of Kant's entire philosophy. Each of the three critiques is directed towards the analysis of a particular class of judgement: theoretical judgements in *CPR*, practical judgements in *CPrR*, and aesthetic and teleological judgements in *CJ'* (267).

After establishing his *transcendental idealism* in the Transcendental Logic of the *CPR*, Kant turns to the soul or self (Ger. *Gemüt*) (A 381).[130] As Caygill notes, *Gemüt* 'does not mean "mind" or "soul" in the Cartesian sense of a thinking substance, but denotes instead a corporeal awareness of sensation and self-affection. . . Gemüt does not designate a substance (whether material or ideal) but is the position or place of the *Gemütskräfte* (the *Gemüt's* powers) of sensibility, imagination, understanding and reason' (210).[131] Kant writes of the soul thus, 'For in that which we call the soul, everything is in

---

[130] Kant most likely did not read Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738), as it had not been translated into German in Kant's lifetime, which helps us understand why he never confronted Hume's 'bundle theory' of the self. Kant was, however, strongly influenced by Descartes' argument in the *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) that from hyperbolic doubt one could reach only one undoubtable truth: *cogito, ergo sum*. Kant thus opens up a new line of enquiry into the *cogito* based on his attempt to mediate the rationalist Descartes with empiricists, including Hume, but also Locke, Aristotle, and Hutcheson.

[131] Herein I use *Gemüt*, Self, and immortal soul interchangeably in reference to Kant's philosophy.

continual flux, and it has nothing abiding, except perhaps (if one insists) the I, which is simple only because this representation has no content, and hence no manifold, on account of which it seems to represent a simple object, or better put, it seems to designate one.' (*CPR* A 381). The attempt to give 'the I' content is precisely the mistake made by Descartes and those who followed him in believing that thought itself presupposed a mental substance. It is this same mistake supposed by Goodman (above 47) in his consequentialist critique of Kantian ethics. Kant later writes that 'the I' can be thought of by abstracting the locus of all 'possible experience' from 'all actual experience', leading to the conclusion that 'I could become conscious of my existence even outside experience and of its empirical conditions' (*CPR* B 426). However, he continues, 'Consequently, I confuse the possible **abstraction** from my empirically determined existence with the supposed consciousness of a **separate** possible existence of my thinking Self . . .' (B 427). Thus, all that is truly found is an abstraction, not an immaterial Self or Soul beyond experience; and, since experience precedes this abstraction and no Self is found within such experience, the theoretical search for such an entity is at an end.

Kant clarifies and concludes his thinking on the soul in his 'General remark concerning the transition from rational psychology to cosmology', stating that the attempt to ground the Self in the empirical realm reduces the Self to an appearance, an object of thought. But this appearance or object is not and cannot be the Self as thinking thing that is sought after (B 429-431). Kant's move from a Cartesian dualism of mind and body to a dualism of appearance and reality (phenomena and noumena) throws into question any pretensions of knowing either the mind (as a Self or Soul) or the physical world in its totality (cosmology). This acceptance of the limits of our knowledge ties Self or psychology and the world or cosmology together intimately in Kant's philosophy. As

Guyer and Wood write, this new dualism opens 'up the possibility that both mind and body are different appearances of some single though unknown kind of substance' (16).

That 'unknown' is for Kant unknowable, because it logically precedes the mind's activity of conceptualising, which begins with the subjective intuition of space and time and continues with the categories, in terms of which all empirical knowledge is held. However, Kant is not finished with the notion of a Self with his first critique. He takes up the topic again in his second, the *Critique of Practical Reason*. There he turns to morality as a source beyond theoretical reason – recall the quote from the *CPR*, 'I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **faith**.' (*CPR* B xxx) – wherein the Self might be found, not as an object of knowledge, but as a postulate of pure practical reason. This is a shift from the empirical standpoint to the moral (see Two Standpoints and the Three Postulates, chapter 2). Here the Self moves from an activity of unifying apperceptions, a necessary (yet empty) locus of experience, to the necessary 'postulate of pure practical reason' (*CPrR* 11, fn 93).

In 'The Immortality of the Soul, as a Postulate of Pure Practical Reason' (*CPrR* 122-124) Kant elucidates what he means in considering the immortal soul to be a 'postulate of pure practical reason'. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (under The Categorical Imperative) the 2nd formulation of the Categorical Imperative (CI), the formula of *humanity*, presents a *telos* for humanity. This is, in the words of the CPrR, a 'highest good' . . . 'determinable by the moral law' (122). Since morality determines such a state, providing us an 'ought', Kant reasons that such a state must be possible. However, Kant believes that the *holiness* or perfection of virtue of such a state is impossible for humans. He does not explain this pessimism regarding human nature here, but later writes of it in his *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view* where he says of the human race 'in

comparison with rational beings on other planets' provides 'not much to boast about it' (Ak 7: 332). He continues by writing that 'foolishness combined with a lineament of malice (which is then called folly) is not to be underestimated in the moral physiognomy of our species' and 'in our race everyone finds it advisable to be on his guard and not to allow other to view *completely* how he is' (Ak 7: 332). However, Kant finds in the recognition of this moral failing the very seed of his deontological moral system. As he writes:

> This would then result in a caricature of our species that would warrant not mere good-natured *laughter* at it but *contempt* for what constitutes its character, and the admission that this race of terrestrial rational beings deserves no honorable place among the (to us unknown) other rational beings - except that precisely this condemning judgment reveals a moral predisposition in us, an innate demand of reason, to also work against this propensity. So it presents the human species not as evil, but as a species of rational being that strives among obstacles to rise out of evil in constant progress toward the good. In this its volition is generally good, but achievement is difficult because one cannot expect to reach the goal by the free agreement of *individuals*, but only by a progressive organization of citizens of the earth into and toward the species as a system" that is cosmopolitically united.

While making clear that Kant sees an almost inescapable propensity toward immorality in humanity historically and in his society, he holds that humanity is not evil, but rather 'generally good' and capable of advancement not by 'free arrangement of *individuals*' but by 'a progressive organization . . . . that is cosmopolitically united.' Not only has

Kant decentred the self theoretically, placing our knowledge of in mere abstraction based on experiences gathered from the world, but also he has morally decentred the self, placing its progress toward holiness/wisdom in the hands of the cosmopolitical society rather than in the individual alone.

Returning to the *CPrR*, Kant remarks that since holiness, as demanded by the moral law, *can* be achieved, yet is so distant considering the current progress of humanity, we must think of 'a progression proceeding *ad infinitum* toward that' end (122). And this progression is only possible 'on the presupposition of an *existence* an personality—of the same rational being—continuing *ad infinitum* (which is called the immortality of the soul)' (122). Taking a theological turn, Kant writes that 'For a rational but finite being [that is, a human] only the progression *ad infinitum* from lower to the higher levels of moral perfection is possible,' however:

> The *infinite one* [that is, God], to whom the time condition is nothing, sees in this series—which for us is endless—the whole of adequacy to the moral law; and the holiness, which his command unremittingly demands in order [for one] to conform to his justice in the share that he determines for each in the highest good, is to be found whole in a single intellectual intuition of the existence of rational beings. (123)

For the finite being all that can be hoped for is that his/her moral progress may be granted 'further uninterrupted continuation . . . however far his[/her] existence may extend, even beyond this life . . .' (123). Kant uses this to make a case for the existence of God, a being who could survey the extended activities of a being and ensure that his/her moral virtue leads impartially to the '**happiness** commensurate to that morality' (124). Thus, the second critique, while not attempting to prove the existence of a Self, suggests a

practical (or moral) foundation for believing in one, as a locus and a vehicle for the person's accumulation of moral worth to ensure that all those who are worthy of happiness attain it.

Finally, in the third critique, the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant returns to the idea of a Self as activity, here placing it in the action of forming judgments. As Béatrice Longuenesse writes, tying Kant's discussion in the third critique back to the first:

> The transcendental unity of apperception was first introduced in the A Deduction, in the exposition of the "synthesis of recognition in the concept." There Kant argued that we could not recognize singular representations under common concepts unless they were taken up in one and the same act of combination and comparison, and unless we were (however dimly) conscious of the *numerical identity* of this act of combining our representations. This consciousness is what confers "logical form" upon our representations. And it "presupposes" or "includes" a synthesis of imagination. In the B Deduction, Kant specified that the "logical form" thus given to our representations is that of *judgment*. The synthesis of imagination it presupposes is figurative synthesis (*synthesis speciosa*) or "affection of inner sense" by the understanding. I argued that this meant affection of inner sense not by categorial understanding (i.e., understanding already equipped with categories as full-fledged *concepts*), but by understanding as the mere *capacity to form judgments*, *Vermögen zu urteilen*. Thus, the "I think," or "transcendental unity of self-consciousness," has no other meaning or status than that of being the unified activity of combination and reflection on the sensible given. *There is no* unity of self-consciousness or "transcendental unity of apperception" apart

> from this effort, or *conatus* toward judgment, ceaselessly affirmed and
> ceaselessly threatened with dissolution in the "welter of appearances
> [*Gewühle der Erscheinungen*]." (394)

Put more simply, there is no 'self' in the Cartesian sense of an absolute substance separated from the material world. There is thus no problem of uniting the two. For Kant the 'self' is simply the activity of consciousness rising and falling in dependence of objects of sensation ('the sensible given'). Its reality is that of a 'numerical identity', that is, of one locus or centre for this rising and falling away. Its existence is not empirically given, but is rather a logical requirement for our ability to 'recognize singular representations under common concepts'. Despite the vast geographic and temporal differences between them, we find a parallel break from previous conceptions of the self (Pāli: *attā*) in early Buddhist thought. This will be discussed below with in the section on Buddhist Cosmology and the Self.

Kantian Cosmology and Morality

Kant explains his famous 'Two things fill the mind . . .' in the lines that follow it. These are long but worth quoting in full:

> Neither of them do I need to seek or merely suspect outside my purview, as
> veiled in obscurities or [as lying] in the extravagant: I see them before me and
> connect them directly with the consciousness of my existence. The first thing
> starts from the place that I occupy in the external world of sense and expands
> the connection in which I stand into the immensely large, with worlds upon
> worlds and systems of systems, and also into boundless times of their periodic
> motion, the beginning and continuance thereof. The second thing starts from

my invisible self, my personality, and exhibits me in a world that has true infinity but that is discernible only to the understanding, and with that world (but thereby simultaneously also with all those visible worlds) I cognize myself not, as in the first case, in a merely contingent connection, but in a universal and necessary one. The first sight, of a countless multitude of worlds, annihilates, as it were, my importance as an animal creature that, after having for a short time been provided (one knows not how) with vital force, must give back again to the planet (a mere dot in the universe) the matter from which it came. The second sight, on the contrary, elevates infinitely my worth as that of an intelligence by my personality, in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent of animality and even of the entire world of sense, at least as far as can be gleaned from the purposive determination of my existence by this law, a determination that is not restricted to conditions and boundaries of this life but proceeds to infinity. (*CPrR* 161-2)

Several key points may be taken from this passage. The grandeur of neither the phenomenal nor noumenal standpoint is to be wrapped in mystery, superstition, or religion. Our fullest understanding of each can be ascertained through experience and reason. Yet Kant does recognize a limit to reason, and at that limit, some room for faith enters. This 'room for faith' is very thin though, insofar as Kant allows and exhorts the extraordinary depth and breadth or knowledge available to us through experience and reason. Left out are only the postulates of pure practical reason: God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul, all necessarily unknowable to us as finite, embodied beings.

This act of leaving God, freedom, and immortality in a sort of dark corner would set Kant apart from all those, including Isaac Newton and René Descartes, who in the end returned to God as a necessary force in the universe. More importantly, it set Kant apart

from fundamentalist Pietists and the mystical writings, popular at the time, of the Swedish philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688 – 1722).[132] Despite his saying of our being 'an animal creature that, after having for a short time been provided (one knows not how) with vital force' it is important that he does not say one *cannot* know how life itself arose in the cosmos. It is also worth pairing this recognition of our ignorance to his famous dictum in the essay 'What is Enlightenment?': '*Sapere aude*! Have the courage to make use of your own intellect!' (Ak 8:35). *Sapere aude*, dare to know; with this, Kant turns us necessarily inward (while the content of our knowledge is often external, the fact of knowing it reveals to us the greater power of understanding), to that apprehension of ourselves as rational, moral beings, which 'elevates infinitely my worth as that of an intelligence'.

The progressive connection between the two continues, as the 'unfathomable immensity' of the phenomenal world is contrasted with the 'true infinity' found in the moral, noumenal standpoint. The relation also points to the earlier division of our nature (described in chapter 4) as both animal and human (rational) beings:

> The animality of the viewer of the stars is reminded by their vision of their finitude whereas the one who gazes upon the majesty of the moral law finds instead a sense of their independence of all animal conditions, including that of finitude which is why there is here a procession to infinity that is presented now as "true" in a way that the cosmos is not. (Banham 14)

---

[132] Kant satirizes Swedenborg in his pre-critical *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* (1768). In his entry on 'God' in the *Kant Dictionary*, Howard Caygill describes Kant as 'opposing the pretensions to direct intuitive experience of God maintained by such fanatics of faith as Swedenborg, Hamann and Jacobi. While philosophers believed that their demonstrative proofs yielded them knowledge of God, the fanatics believed that their crude anthropomorphic analogies gave them a mystical experience of divinity' (215).

We are undoubtedly animal beings, but animals capable of reason (*animal rationabilis*), and in this furthest expansion of our rational capacities through observations of the stars above, we see that even that expanse is limited in a way that reason is not. That is, the 'true infinity' of our rational capacity (the moral realm) is able to encompass the 'unfathomable immensity' of the phenomenal world. Thus the starry skies are not only connected with our rationality in judgment, the wonder they inspire in us also leads inevitably to our rational, moral nature.

Recalling that many of Kant's earliest writings focus on understanding the natural world and yet necessarily discussed issues of God and morality, we see that his cosmology, as a broad understanding of the physical universe, was never in practice separate from his moral thought. His 'Copernican revolution' in epistemology ensured the regularity of appearances—the phenomenal world—so that science could proceed unhindered by extreme sceptics. Yet it also brought the human mind into the world as an active participant in constituting knowledge, rather than as a passive viewer. This meant that certain 'things in themselves'—things outside the process of coming to be known— simply could not be known. As Wesley Wildman writes of seeking to know the Self, the cosmos, and God:

> contradictions result when reason extends beyond its domain of proper operation to questions of psychology, metaphysics, and theology: "the antinomy of pure reason will exhibit to us the transcendental principles of a pure rational cosmology. But it will not do so in order to show this science to be valid and to adopt it. . . . [T]his pretended science can be exhibited only in its bedazzling but false illusoriness, as an idea which can never be reconciled with appearances." Calling this the antinomy of pure reason, Kant presents strong arguments in favor of opposite metaphysical claims, drawing the

conclusion that such metaphysical topics are beyond the reach of pure reason

altogether. For him, arguing endlessly over such metaphysical themes is the

sort of illusory trap into which human reason falls instinctively. (9)

The cosmos, in its infinitude or finitude, lies beyond what can be known. Furthermore, Kant brought the Self out of dogmatic certainty (as with Descartes) or mysticism (as with Swedenborg) to a purely moral realm, along with God and freedom, which may be rationally believed in while lying 'completely beyond the reach of human knowledge' (Willaschek 169).

Kant's cosmology thus brings him, in wonder, out into the world in its greatest grandeur, only to return him, in reason, to the tremendous power of understanding, which can grasp not only the vastness of the heavens but also the depths of our moral potential. His cosmological orientation, then, is one which relies on at once looking out into the world and into ourselves and discovering the 'limits of knowledge' that give way to faith (*Glaübe*) in a realm in which our morality, our worthiness of happiness, is rewarded justly. Rational beings—or, more specifically, beings capable of reason—are those engaged in the dialectic of overcoming enchantment with the empirical world and its ability to fulfil fleeting desires. Holy beings are those who have accomplished full rationality and non-attachment to the world, who are thus free from all selfish inclinations (*G* 447). In his stages of development (see Chapter 3), as we have seen, Kant is pessimistic about humans attaining this level of morality in this lifetime (chapter 2, 59 fn 28). Instead he turns to Jesus as a moral exemplar as well as to the God of Christianity, as C.A.F. Rhys Davids writes in her Introduction to Kant's writings on education, '. . . God is the most holy being,

and wills only what is good, and desires that we may love virtue for its own sake, and not merely because He requires it (21).[133]

Buddhism's Cosmological Context

To the ancient Indians, a similar connection between order and cosmology is clear in the term *ṛta*, which predates Dharma as a metaphysical principle in the Vedas. Ṛta, and later Dharma, was the controlling force of the universe, to be praised, honoured, and offered sacrifices. It lay always at the edge of and beyond the religious understanding, yet was believed to control everything from daily sunrises to the seasons, and eventually to decide the fate of the dead. 'It was the expression of a religious Mystery, based on an urgently felt need to get into right relationship with the sacred world as source of cosmic order, upon which early man felt his existence and survival to depend' (Irwin, John 1). As Kuiper writes:

> The key to an insight into this [Vedic] religion is, I think, to be found in its cosmogony, that is, the myth which tells us how, in primordial time, this world came into existence. This myth owed its fundamental importance to the fact that every decisive moment in life was considered a repetition of the primeval process. Therefore the myth was not merely a tale of things that had happened long ago, nor was it a rational explanation of how this world had become what it is now. The origin of the world constituted the sacred

---

[133] Kant, in his usage of the quote 'Why call ye Me [whom you see] good; none is good [the model of good] but God only [whom ye do not see]?' (*G* 408-409) seems to place a moral wedge between God the Son, who is embodied and thus perhaps incapable of perfect goodness, and God the Father who is beyond the empirical realm—beyond perception—and thus capable of perfect goodness.

> prototype of how, in an endlessly repeated process, life and this world
>
> renewed themselves again and again. (9-10)

This renewal took place in often elaborate systems of ritual and sacrifice, dominated by the priestly (*brahmin*) class of the society. These rituals and sacrifices both maintained the cosmic order and promised a superior path after death. The cosmology that developed has been called a 'correlative cosmology' in which the outer universe was believed to be replicated and manipulated in rituals by way of 'magical thought' (Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha* 256, 270). However, there was not yet a clear system of thought pertaining to life, death, and the cosmos. As Steven Collins notes, 'Although existence after death is spoken of in the Vedas, it is never with any clearly delineated system of cosmology and soteriology' (44). Replacing 'soteriology' with 'eschatology', Collins goes on to discuss the connection between the sacrificial movement from this world to the next and the 'structures of thought and imagination' in Brahmanic cosmology, mirrored later in Buddhism, 'where the sacred reality of ritual is replaced by states of consciousness attained temporarily in meditation' (48).

Developing out of and countering the prevailing Brahmanic ideology at the time of the Buddha were several different philosophies. Along with the materialist group, the Cārvākas or Lokāyatas, who denied the existence of the soul (*attā/ātman*), rebirth, an ethical order, and gods, the most dominant philosophies were those of the Jains and Ājīvikas. Both of these can be found, along with four others, in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (*Discourse on the Fruits of the Homeless Life* DN 2), discussed briefly in chapter 3. The two philosophies are found in the teachings of Makkhali Gosāla (Ājīvika) and Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (a.k.a. Mahāvīra, the founder of Jainism).

The Ājīvikas adopted the Brahmanic notion of rebirth, but added to it a principle of *niyati*, or fate; and were hence sometimes known as Niyativādins. Thus they believed that one's path in life (and lives to come) was firmly set, a course said to take 84 – or 84,000 – great aeons before deliverance could be achieved. No personal effort could alter this path. This is in fact the most unique characteristic of the Ājīvikas, given our interests. They also, like both Jains and Buddhists, likely subscribed to a theory of cosmic progress and decline (Basham). Paul Dundas suggests some of the difficulty we have with saying more about Ājīvikism:

> While there is evidence that an Ājīvika community was still in existence in south India as late as the thirteenth century, the precise nature of Makkhali Gosāla's doctrine remains unclear. The account of it found in early Buddhist literature credits him with propounding an elaborate if obscure cosmology and of arguing that fate or destiny (*niyati*) was the central motive force in the universe against which no human effort could have any effect. All later accounts of Ājīvika doctrine echo this description. In the absence of any Ājīvika writings, conclusions must remain speculative, but it seems doubtful whether a doctrine which genuinely advocated the lack of efficacy of individual effort could have formed the basis of a renunciatory path to spiritual liberation. An examination of the 'Sayings of the Seers', which counts Makkhali Gosāla among the authoritative teachers, suggests that he was in fact simply arguing for the virtue of imperturbability in the face of the continued change and modification which were to be seen in the world (IBh 11). (29)

However, as Dundas further cautions, 'The suspicion must be that the Jains and Buddhists deliberately distorted Ājīvika doctrine for their own polemical purposes' (30).

Distortions or not, it is clear that a doctrine of fatalism within the pan-Indian cosmology of samsara was an option available to the Buddha and his followers and one which they rejected.

Jainism has a much richer relationship with Buddhism, and, as a living religion, a more complicated doctrinal and social history than Ājīvikism. However, the heart of Jain cosmology can be found in the concept of the *loka*, which carries with it a range of meanings. The term can mean 'open space', and 'Jain teachers generally preferred to derive it from the verbal root lok 'see' and explain the term as 'that which is seen by the omniscient ones' (Abhayadeva on Sth 5–6) or, occasionally, 'that which is seen by the soul' (TSRV p. 455)' (Dundas 90). Further, *loka* can refer to the basic ontological categories of the world or the entirety of the world as we know it with heavens above and hells below. The *loka* is neither created nor can it be destroyed; and the Brahmanic gods themselves were seen to be subject to the same laws of karma and rebirth that govern human life.

In the Jain picture of the cosmos humanity resides in a middle position, weighed down by karma (which Jains described as like a dust on the otherwise pure, eternal *jīva*, or soul). The *jīva* is held to have the qualities of expansiveness – so long as it is caught within *saṃsāra* it fills the body it is reborn into just as the light of a lamp expands out to or contracts due to the size of the room it is in – and every *jīva* in its pure state is identical with all others, 'fully and equally endowed with the qualities of bliss, energy and omniscience' (Dundas 94-95). Free of its accumulated karma, the *jīva* rises to the top of the universe, disembodied in a perfect state of joy. These two systems of philosophy and cosmology, alongside the dominant Brahmanism and the less influential Cārvāka school of thought helped form the context for the Buddha's own cosmology.

Buddhist Cosmology

> [Early Buddhist cosmology] 'says figuratively and in terms of metaphorical
> images the same kind of thing which is stated in abstract terms in the doctrine.
> The basic doctrinal concepts of Buddhism . . . which are alleged to explain
> man's predicament and to direct his religious action, are also embedded in the
> cosmology . . . (Tambiah *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults* 34-35, quoted in Gethin
> *Cosmology and Meditation* 186)

While Buddhist soteriology rests on the belief in a grounded and unchanging
cosmic law, or Dharma (cf. *Paccaya Sutta* SN 12.20, mentioned in chapter 1), the
universe itself—all matter and all beings—is caught in oscillating cycles of expansion
and contraction. As the Buddha recounted of his awakening:

> When thus the mind settled, pure, clean, without impurity, free of obstruction,
> malleable, prepared, standing imperturbably, I turned it toward the knowledge
> of remembering my past lives. I remembered various past lives. As such, one
> birth, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred, a
> thousand, a hundred thousand births, many eons of [cosmic] evolution, many
> eons of [cosmic] dissolution, many eons of evolution and dissolution [of the
> cosmos] . . . (Dvedhāvitakka Sutta, MN 19)[134]

Within the all-embracing realm of the unchanging cosmic Dharma, a universe unfolds
and collapses, again and again over time. Rupert Gethin presents this in detail in an

---

[134] *So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte anaṅgaṇe vigatūpakkilese mudubhūte kammaniye ṭhite
āneñjappatte pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇāya cittaṃ abhininnāmesiṃ. So anekavihitaṃ pubbenivāsaṃ
anussarāmi. Seyyathīdaṃ: ekampi jātiṃ dvepi jātiyo tissopi jātiyo catassopi jātiyo pañcapi jātiyo dasapi
jātiyo vīsatimpi jātiyo tiṃsampi jātiyo cattārīsampi jātiyo paññāsampi jātiyo jātisatampi jātisahassampi
jātisatasahassampi, anekepi saṃvaṭṭakappe anekepi vivaṭṭakappe anekepi saṃvaṭṭavivaṭṭakappe . . .*

attempt to breathe life into textual scholarship on the 'traditional mythic context' and the 'imagery employed in early Buddhist texts' (*Cosmology and Meditation* 185). Within the expanding and contracting universe beings, including the Buddha, live (or lived) lifetimes in a similar, yet shorter, cycle of rising and falling away. So far the cosmic vision is very similar to the Vedic view.

However, as Stanley Tambiah points out, in Brahmanism the creation of the world and divine beings, humanity and human society within it, are all of one process, 'There is no separation between the laws of nature and the laws of man' (22). The resulting morality of Brahmanism, most notably in the class (Skt.: *varṇa*, Pāli: *vaṇṇa*) system and its specific prescriptive duties, provides a moral order that at times requires 'unquestioning obedience', as in the *Bhagavad Gītā's* tale of Prince Arjuna and his chariot driver—who turns out to be Viṣṇu—the god of creation and destruction—on the battlefield (Fasching 67). Tambiah continues, writing of the *Aggañña Sutta*, 'Contrary to the divine creative process, the Buddhist myth gives a picture of a creative differentiating process, which essentially moves forward not by divine energy but by the kammic energy produced by the degenerative and immoral acts of human beings themselves' (22).

The cosmology of the *Aggañña Sutta*, in which the 'immoral acts of human beings' actually form the world in which they live, reminds us of Gombrich's insight that the Buddha ethicized *kamma* completely. Not only do ones' actions (*kamma*) affect one's present and future lives, separate from an orderly world around them, they actually change the world (cosmos) itself. This is a powerful claim about human agency, and the fundamental importance of proper or skilful (*kusala*) acts. Within the oscillation of the cosmos, itself a diachronic description, early Buddhism has several synchronic descriptions of the cosmos with its various lower, middling, and higher realms of existence. Sara McClintock writes:

It is well known that the Buddhist tradition universally rejects the notion of a creator- god. Yet this fact alone does not imply that Buddhists have been uninterested in cosmology. On the contrary, the student of Buddhism inevitably finds that complex theories concerning the structure and evolution of the universe are ubiquitous throughout the tradition, and that an understanding of these theories is indispensable to the understanding of other aspects of Buddhist philosophy, however unrelated they at first appear. (209)

The relation, we find, is moral in nature. While an elaboration on the specific nature of Buddhist cosmologies—the most elaborate found in the *Abhidhamma/Abhidharma* literature—is not necessary here, the underlying moral message is important.

When asked to speculate on the nature of the cosmos, the Buddha defers. The most famous account of this is in the *Discourse to Vacchagotta on Fire* (*Aggivacchagotta Sutta* MN 72), in which the wanderer Vacchagotta asks a series of ten questions, first about the cosmos (*loka*), whether it is eternal (*sassata*) or not eternal (*asassata*), finite (*antavā*) or infinite (*anantavā*), and then about the connection between the self (*jīva*) and body (*sarīra*) and finally about the existence of the Buddha (Tathāgata) after death. The Buddha responds to each of these that 'this is not my view' (*na kho ahaṃ . . . evaṃdiṭṭhi*), that any of these views leads only to further suffering. Asked what then his view is, the Buddha answers that he has removed all views, instead seeing form, its arising, and its disappearance, and so on for the other four aggregates. Thus he shifts away from any fixed views on the nature toward seeing the activity (arising and disappearance) of the experiences which make up our world.

When asked in the *Discourse with a Cosmologist* (*Lokāyatika Sutta*, SN 12.48) whether everything exists (*sabbamatthī*), the Buddha simply responds that this is the

'foremost worldly view' (*jeṭṭhametaṃ lokāyataṃ*[135]). When asked if everything does not

exist, or 'all is nothing' (*sabbaṃ natthi*), he responds that this is the 'second worldly

view' (*dutiyametaṃ lokāyataṃ*). And when asked if 'all is oneness' (*sabbamekatta*) or if

'all is diverseness' (*sabbaṃ puthutta*), the Buddha likewise replies that these are the third

and fourth worldly views. The Buddha continues, 'not approaching either of these

extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the *Dhamma* with the middle [way]' (*ubho ante*

anupagamma majjhena tathāgato dhammaṃ deseti) and then elucidates the twelve links

of conditioned co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).

This away from set views on the nature of the cosmos and toward the process of

conditioned co-arising brings early Buddhism away from speculation and toward lived

experience. As we saw with Kant, the existence of speculative, dogmatic views are used

here by the Buddha as a foil (set up as 'extremes') wherein his philosophy might

represent the most reasonable way forward.

Buddhist Cosmology and the Self

In the *Aggivacchagota Sutta* discussed above, the Buddha says that in abandoning

views and attending to the rising and passing away of individual aggregates he has

released all I-making, mine-making, and conceited obsessions.[136] A term from this long

compound, conceit (*māna*), is employed with the first person singular of 'to be' (*atthi*),

creating the compound 'the conceit I am' (*asmimāna*) in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, where a

section is dedicated to the perception of impermanence (SN 22.10). There the Buddha

states how, in various metaphors, the perception of impermanence abolishes 'all of the

---

[135] See (Bodhi 763-4 fn 128-9) for an extended discussion of *lokāyata* as a branch of Brahmanical learning associated with nature or the cosmos.
[136] *sabbāhaṃkāramamaṃkāramānānusayānaṃ.*

conceit I am' (*sabbaṃ asmimānaṃ samūhanati*). This overcoming of the conception of self is central to the Buddhist path of awakening, as it represents the last misconception overcome by the noble disciple on the path to becoming an *arahant* (SN 22.89).

The purpose of Buddhist cosmology then, as with that of other doctrines, is to dislodge the sense of a fixed 'I am' concept, one which ever-present and active in the lives of all practitioners who are yet unawakened. The Buddha's teachings turn us toward the world of experience, what Reynolds and Schofer call the 'samsaric cosmology', in order to turn back toward 'another, closely related cosmology' wherein 'Ignorance is overcome by wisdom, craving is replaced by compassion, and the ongoing experience of impermanence and suffering gives way to liberation' (121).

6 Virtue and the *Summum Bonum*

In this chapter we examine the ways that Buddhist and Kantian ethics assess virtue and its development. For Kant, virtue is secondary in importance to the development of a good will, yet he nonetheless devotes a book to it later in his life, *The Doctrine of Virtue* (which forms half of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, 1797). As we will see, Kant's conception of human nature, as covered in chapter 4, leads him to develop a different understanding of virtue than that developed by classical authors, principally Aristotle. And the term virtue is, of course, foreign to Buddhism, but various attempts to discover like concepts in Buddhist thought have been made, most importantly by Damien Keown in *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. We will look at this work and other discussions of virtue in Buddhism after first elucidating a Kantian understanding of virtue.

While both Kant and early Buddhism value the cultivation of virtues, two key distinctions set them apart. The first is the universalisation of morality as a trait common to all of humanity (with limited qualifications) beyond community and societal standards. The second distinction is that no living being should be emulated simply for their outward behaviour, but rather for the universal ethical traits they embody. Concerning the first of these, for the Buddha it was the Brahmanic system which was seen as most dominant, a system which placed virtues in clearly defined categories based on the caste (Skt.: *varna,* Pāli: *vaṇṇa*) of the individual. For Kant, as we saw in Chapter 2, the societal system to be transcended foremost was Christianity, and he moves us beyond a Christ-centred virtue ethics using Jesus' own words "Why call ye Me [whom you see] good; none is good [the model of good] but God only [whom ye do not see]?" (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19, in *G* 408-409). We find the Buddha likewise implored his followers to look beyond him. As Étienne Lamotte writes of the Buddha:

> . . . even if he found it indispensable to expound the Saddharma to mankind,
> he never asked that he be taken at his word. After a particularly important
> discourse, he addressed his monks with these words: "And now, monks, that
> you know and think thus, are you going to say: We honour the Master and,
> through respect for the Master, we say this or that? We will not do so, Lord.
> What will you assert, O monks, is it not what you yourselves have realised
> (*ñātaṃ*), seen (*diṭṭhaṃ*) and grasped (*viditaṃ*)? It is just so, Lord." (M I, p.
> 265; T 26, ch.54, p. 769*b*). (195)

Even though the Buddha was in many ways central to the moral lives of his followers, he did not wish to place himself as a fixed guide or exemplar of morality. Instead he moved to replace himself with the direct experience of his disciples as well as the teachings as in the *Discourse with Vakkali* (*Vakkali Sutta* SN 22.87) wherein he exhorts an ill monk, who is sad to have not been able to see the Buddha in person before: '. . . he who sees Dhamma, sees me; he who sees me, sees the Dhamma.'[137]

Defining Virtue

Historically, there is no single account of virtue but instead several, often widely varying accounts. Surveying criticisms of modern ethics by proponents of virtue ethics following G.E.M. Anscomb's 1958 essay 'Modern Moral Philosophy', Marcia Baron notes that the field is extraordinarily vast, stating, 'it is not just that there are cases on the border that are hard to classify, but that it is hard to know what to regard as the core of

---

[137] *. . . dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati, yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati . . .*

virtue ethics' (14).[138] The most commonly incited historical foundation for virtue ethics comes from Aristotle. However, Socrates and Plato likewise propounded accounts of virtue and later thinkers, most importantly from within the Christian tradition, but also some outside of it (e.g. Nietzsche), have developed differing lists of virtues and advice on their cultivation. The term itself derives from the Latin *vir*, 'man', and *virtus*, meaning 'valour, merit, moral perfection' (Oxford English Dictionary). Damien Keown, whose work on Buddhist Virtues we will turn to shortly draws on John MacQuarrie's definition of a virtue:

> In ethics, virtue is moral excellence, a settled attitude which to habitually good action in some respect. The virtues been variously classified. The intellectual virtues (e.g. wisdom) are distinguished from the practical virtues (e.g. courage), the former being associated with the life of contemplation, the latter with the life of action.[139] (63)

Returning now to Aristotle, we find that the question of morality was one of the quest for the highest good and happiness, which he thought were one in the same (Aristotle x). The two are linked in the term *eudaimonia*, often translated as 'happiness', but more literally 'having a good soul'. *Eudaimonia*, 'signifies more than mere sentiment or feeling, more than the pleasure of the moment or even of a series of satisfied desires. *Eudaimonia*, we can say for now, encompasses the excellence specific to human beings as human beings-what Aristotle calls "virtue" (*aretē*)' (Aristotle xi). Virtue, for Aristotle, is thus intimately linked with the activity of living well, performing the function(s) which best suit our nature as human beings.

---

[138] She continues that most of the criticisms leveled at modern philosophy (including Kant) were not apt criticisms of his ethics but were rather properly aimed at, 'the way a lot of moral philosophy was being done at the time' (15).

[139] From Macquarrie, J. (1967) *A Dictionary of Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press).

This functional argument is based in Aristotle's understanding of the human soul (*psuchē*).[140] Aristotle makes three key claims about the soul. First is that the soul is divided into a rational and a non-rational part, the latter itself divided into the vegetative (or nutritive) and the desirous elements. Second, the rational part is the most unique aspect of the human and is thus the proper function of a human being. And finally, the desirous side may either do 'battle with and strain against reason' or be brought 'in all respects in harmony with reason' (*NE*, book 1, chapter 13; 1102b). For Aristotle, the virtues are defined as traits of character that exhibit a harmony of desire and reason. The exercise of reason, humanity's unique function, he argues, will bring desires between the extremes of excess and deficiency.

Concerning Aristotle's doctrine of virtue there are likewise three things we can broadly claim. First is that virtue is an activity and the virtuous person is the one who consistently acts virtuously, that is, in the mean between extremes. Second, while reason is what guides the agent into that mean, it is up to the wise or serious (*spoudaios*) man to determine just where that is (*NE* X.5 1176a 15-20). This is important because it places the final criterion for goodness in a societal structure. It also places moral judgment and experiences within the realm of experience, as moral principles cannot be arrived at by reason alone (*NE* II9 1109b 14-23, IV.5 1126a 31-b4). Third, happiness consists in 'activities that accord with virtue' (*NE* X.7 1177a 10-12) and the highest happiness consists in the highest activity of virtue, which arises out of the intellect: the contemplative life (*NE* X.7 1177a 28-29). And yet he earlier admits that someone may possess virtue 'while suffering badly and undergoing the greatest misfortunes' and thus be unhappy (*NE* 1.5 1095b 33-1096a 2) and that happiness 'seems to require some such

---

[140] For a full account of *psuchē* in all its forms, see Ackrill, J.L., 'Aristotle's Definitions of "Psuche"', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, Vol. 73 (1972 - 1973), 119-133.

external prosperity [e.g. good birth, good children, or beauty] in addition [to virtue]' (*NE* I.8 1099b 7-8). So virtue is no guarantee of happiness, either now or in the future.

Furthermore, as Rosalind Hursthouse points out, 'The virtues and vices, and hence concepts of them and the corresponding v-rules [principles or rules meant to underly an agent's decisions], are fairly culturally specific' (Hursthouse 48). For Aristotle, the moral wisdom (*phronesis*) of the wise man (*phronemos*) is necessarily embedded in a society and culture and indeed in a life of habitual cultivation such that it could not be written out and codified in the way that natural sciences or natural laws can be (Ibid. 52). 'There is no short cut to what the phronimos knows. Nothing but the acquisition of personal virtue will yield it (Ibid. 53). Hursthouse elucidates this in an example of medical students and 'informed concent', the rule or virtue of adequate disclosure to patients. For the Aristotelian, 'informed concent' is simply the term used for the mean between extremes of non-disclosure and excess, to be learned by the medical student and doctor over time. A term might be invented or discovered to aid in such learning, but it is still dependent on the society or context of its discovery or invention. It is not, as some would say, an eternal law/rule or universal principle.

Kant

This is where Kant most importantly distinguishes his ethics from that of Aristotle. Kant's is an ethics of principle as opposed to (mere) ideals. According to Kant, basing ethics on principles is a hallmark of modern ethical theory, while ancient ethical theories all rely on ideals (Wood, *Kantian Ethics* 154). This does not mean that ideals of virtue are unimportant to Kant, only that they cannot be the final source of guidance in

search of the moral life. This final source of moral judgment is, instead, to be found in reason itself.

However, for both Buddhism and Kant, the ultimate assessment is internal to each agent. 'We commonly face two problems in our moral life: deciding what are the right moral policies and having the moral strength to observe them. Today we might debate which is the harder task, but Kant was convinced that it was the cultivation of a sufficiently good character. 'What duty is,' he wrote, 'is plain of itself to everyone,' even to those of the 'commonest intelligence' (Sullivan 29). The qualities of the good person come in the ability to consistently act morally, the habituation of virtue. However, for Buddhism and Kant the goal is not merely a virtuous character but complete abandonment of the lower sphere of life through the attainment of awakening or 'holiness', respectively.

In chapter 4 we looked at the conceptions of the human being found in early Buddhism and the works of Immanuel Kant. There we found that the human being does not hold any fixed and unchanging moral status, but instead reside along a spectrum of goodness, seeing that human nature is one of tension between forces that would move us toward holiness or awakening on the one side, and evil or continued suffering on the other. In chapter 5 we looked more broadly at the cosmology envisioned in that spectrum, revising Kant's speculations about beings on other planets as well as the realms of being in the Buddhist cosmology. In this chapter we examine the nature of virtue and the goal expounded in both systems of ethics, that of holiness or autonomy for Kant and *nibbāna* or *bodhi* for early Buddhism.

He [the Buddha] asks each of us to consider the possibility that, though I think I am really a self, there is, it might be said, much more to being a human being than

that. The Buddha believes dissolving the illusion of selfhood enables us to realize

we are already in touch with an indescribable reality he tries to gesture toward

with the word 'Nibbāna.' (Gowans 199)

This chapter examines the *summum bonum*, the very nature of awakening and 'holiness'.

For Buddhism the sort of spontaneous moral action of the enlightened being can be found

advocated in the *Kālāma Sutta* (AN I.186-187), wherein the individual's knowledge of

good and bad actions are stressed. The awakened being knows the good and does the

good without mediating factors or guides such as tradition, holy texts, and so on. The

Buddhist teachings advocate the possibility of a pure moral being in this lifetime.

Kant here diverges slightly from Buddhism, in that he is sceptical about the

possibility of being truly moral whilst alive. This is because the body is itself a source of

selfish needs and aversions that Kant believed would prevent even the holiest human

being from attaining the highest ideal in this life. Kant does, however, provide a

compelling case for what such a being would be like, similarly invoking the idea of a

spontaneous morality.

7 Conclusion

In this work I have presented evidence for viewing Buddhist ethics as broadly Kantian (deontological) in nature, based primarily on the centrality and law-like nature of the *Dhamma* in Buddhism, a feature of the tradition that has been too often overlooked in scholarship on Buddhist ethics. Setting *Dhamma* as a central anchor, we explored the way that cosmological thought in early Buddhism either (1) mirrored the theoretical work (Tambiah *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults* 34-35), (2) redirected the interlocutor toward his own experience of change or conditioned co-arising as in the *Discourse to Vacchagotta on Fire* (*Aggivacchagotta Sutta* MN 72) and the *Discourse with a Cosmologist* (*Lokāyatika Sutta*, SN 12.48), or (3) recast the cosmological—or cosmogonic—story in cloak of a morality tale, as in the *Discourse on What's Primary* (*Aggañña Sutta* DN 27).

All of this, we saw, follows Kant's concerns with limiting the pretentions of what can be known, about both the cosmos and the Self, in order to redirect focus on morality, particularly on the freedom of individual and the possibility that morality developed in this life might continue *ad infinitum* so as to reach its highest potential: holiness (*CPrR* 122).

This movement from speculation toward morality was again mirrored in our explorations of human nature in early Buddhism, notably the just mentioned *Discourse on What's Primary* (*Aggañña Sutta* DN 27), and Kant's insistence that we are animals capable of reason—*animal rationabilis*—caught in a clear spectrum of moral development between our base drives, desires, and inclinations and our moral capacity seated in reason.

This methodology of digging amongst and reconstructing the ideas of disparate thinkers belongs in the discipline of Buddhist ethics and in Comparative Religious Ethics

more broadly with its focus on philosophical ethics and historical and textual studies. With respect to history, a full understanding of the structure of the ethical thought found in early Buddhism requires an understanding of the modes of thought and discourse prevalent during the Buddha's life and the development of the early Buddhist community (Pāli: Sangha), and I have endeavoured at times to draw out this context in order to show both where the Buddha derived some of his ideas and terminology as well as how he innovated them. Many of the teachings found in the Pāli Canon were in direct response to the prevailing ideas of the time and were thus shaped by other philosophies in India, most importantly Brahmanism and Jainism. In presenting Buddhism, the work has therefore drawn from the ancient sources, primarily the Buddhist Pāli Canon, as well as the philological and historical work of previous Buddhist commentators and scholars.

To present Kant, analysis is based primarily on the recent writings on both the philosophy and life of Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), along with a wide selection of Kant's own works. Primarily, the work has focused on an epistemological understanding of Kant's Transcendental Idealism as a foundation for his normative work, drawing from Wood, Allison, O'Neill, and others. It is hoped that from this selection and presentation of Kant's thought, further work can be done in the realm of Buddhist ethics to discuss areas of convergence and divergence, beyond the simple caricatures often repeated in existing literature (an illustration of such is briefly offered below).

To restate why we compare Buddhist ethics with Kant, and do Comparative Ethics in general, we might begin with this: To help further the development of our understanding of Buddhism's own unique theory and practice of ethics. Whenever we encounter something new, as Western academics have with Buddhism over the past 200 or so years, we cannot help but experience it and then explain it in terms of something we already know. When a botanist encounters a new flower, for instance, she might say it

has red petals, like a rose, but they are larger, like a poppy, and the stem is short, like a tulip. The botanist would also produce objective data, free of analogies: the exact height and dimensions of the plant, for example. But this analogous thinking comes naturally to the scientist and the student of ethics alike. In fact, the very idea of the botanist observing the plant is an act of analogous thinking, the plant is importantly *not* a small mammal or a reptile or a fungus. Similarly, when we encounter Buddhist ethics for the first time, we see immediately that this is not Christian ethics or Taoist ethics, and so on. Thenceforth the student of ethics can begin to discuss Buddhist ethics by saying *what it is like*. Of course the final description and attribution will be that it is a unique system of ethics, to be studied and appreciated in its own right. But it may have similarities with Western forms of ethics such that it is worth provisionally classifying it under similar broad categories. And that is just what many scholars of Buddhist ethics have done: calling Buddhist ethics a form of virtue ethics or consequentialism. This is not, as some assume or accuse, an act of imperialism or an attempt to simply dismiss Buddhist ethics as a subset of some greater Western form of ethics. Instead it is an exploration of claims to universality found in both Western *and* Buddhist thought. These categories: virtue ethics, consequentialism, and deontology, while developed in the West, are not unique to the West. This work on non-Western, and specifically non-European philosophies can thus humble the philosophers who tend to only think in Eurocentric terms. As stated above, we *begin* by asking if Buddhist ethics might be deontological, but then, after discussing the analogous features of Buddhist and (other) deontological forms of ethics, we might choose a non-Western label such as *Dharmic*. Is Kantian ethics Dharmic? This is the shift in perspective that Comparative Ethics, at its best, helps to facilitate. Now we can read Western philosophy with its Eastern counterpart in mind (c.f. Keown *The Nature* 58-9 on

Winston King thinking that the *Abhidharma* is too foreign for a Western mind to comprehend).

A Buddhist deontological path

The Buddhism I have constructed will doubtless be somewhat unfamiliar to readers, just as a virtue-centred Buddhism was to readers first encountering Keown's work. The Buddhism I construct speaks of *bodhi* as an alignment of one's own nature with the wholesome and the good (*kusala*) as well as 'seeing things as they truly are' (*yatha-bhutan passati*). The notion of 'alignment' is not explicit in the early texts, but there is a clear idea of a Truth (*Dhamma*) which coincides with goodness and exists regardless of the teachings (*sāsana*). The exhortation of the Buddha to move – the Pāli canon is replete with metaphors of movement, such as the path (*magga*) and crossing over (*taraṇa*), etc. – toward that *Dhamma* can easily be seen. The Kantian interpretation of Buddhist ethics focuses not on the goal or consequence (*bodhi*, *nibbāna*) in isolation, as if getting there by any means will do, but rather on the fact that the goal is part of who we are, our very nature, and that coming to realize and embody this is both a moral and cognitive process.

The deontological interpretation of Buddhist ethics here is the particularly *Kantian* deontology, which, as described in chapter 2, does not abandon teleology. The goal is not consequentialist, however, as it is not a desired set of circumstances. It is, instead, a realisation of one's true nature and of reality itself. This realisation is built upon the deontological foundations found in uncovering the necessity of the Moral Law within or the firm ground of the Dhamma (*Dhammadīpa*). Taking this starting point seriously, we follow Kant's emphasis on understanding the limits of our knowing and seeing the world. As discussed below, the empirical world is fraught with uncertainty.

Just as Kant pushes us to see a moral/practical lawfulness outside of this world (or from another standpoint), the Buddha teaches his disciples to see in particular the non-self and impermanent nature of worldly conditions.

This examination of Buddhist ethics is a particularly *heady* one and no doubt will not suit many Buddhists. It should, however, direct curiosity toward the deepest workings of the *dhamma*, 'that element which persists, stable, and fixed' (SN 12). Given the rich and complex discussions of the *dhamma* (see above, ch 3), this approach should not be altogether foreign. When taken alongside Kant's thoughts on cosmology, which act to enlarge and desubstantialise one's sense of self (ch 5), the process leads toward the Buddhist goal.

Kant's ethics as deontological

I likewise construct a Kantian ethics for this work, but one which should be readily recognizable to those familiar with leading contemporary scholars such as Henry Allison, Christine Korsgaard, Onora O'Neill, and Allen W. Wood. This Kant begins with the epistemological Copernican Revolution of Transcendental Idealism and ends with the 'moral law within', made famous in the poetic phrase in his *Critique of Practical Reason* and his thorough defence of the notion in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. However, following contemporary scholars, I hope to get beyond the often one-dimensional version of Kant presented by both critics and general surveys of his ethics. Kant was, we shall see, acutely aware of the need for good consequences as part of the human condition, as well as the necessity of cultivating virtues and a good character. Also, as argued throughout, his work represents a teleology of reason, culminating at an ideal 'kingdom of ends'.

A Buddhist Contribution to Kantian Ethics

While Kant's epistemological and ethical frameworks present a rich and rich and compelling field of thought for discussing Buddhist ethics, they are deficient vis-à-vis Buddhism in providing tools for moral development. This is not to say that Kant altogether lacked what he termed the 'empirical part' of ethics (*G* 387) or 'practical anthropology' (*G* 388). While it was essential for Kant to understand the framework itself, he was always cognizant that 'different types of rational being stand in different relationships to this moral principle (see *G*, 4.389)' (Louden 355), thus the need to both understand human nature (ch 4) and to situate ourselves in a greater moral cosmology (ch 5). As Louden points out, 'As befits a philosopher who often doubts "whether any true virtue is to be found in the world" (G, 4.407), Kant devotes more attention to human hindrances to morality than he does to helps or aids' (356).

However, in Kant's less studied lectures on ethics and anthropology, there is perhaps material to be drawn forth by contemporary scholars in order to construct a positive regime for moral development. Louden notes politeness and the civilizing impact of life in a society under rule of law as 'just two examples of the many cultural and institutional practices discussed by Kant in his anthropology lectures that can serve as aids to humanity's moral transformation' (357). In searching, a scholar would benefit from examining Buddhism's 'gradual training' (*anupubbasikkhā*) as found in texts such as the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (DN 2). There, and elsewhere in the Pāli Canon, a path is repeatedly put forth, one which guides the individual from the life of the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) through stages of generosity, ethical cultivation, meditation, and wisdom toward awakening (*bodhi*). Of particular interest would be examining how practices such as meditation (*samādhi*) would benefit the Kantian in her moral development.

A particular developmental framework found in Kant's work that might serve as a starting point comes from the *Critique of Judgment*.[141] There we are given three principles to guide our assimilation of positive content from our life into our moral deliberation. The first of these is '*to think for oneself*' by which a person takes responsibility for his own ability to reason and employ the CI (O'Neill 25). Here one could interject Buddhist contemplation on being the 'owner of one's own *kamma*, heir to one's own *kamma*' and so on in the *Ṭhāna Sutta* (AN 5.57). Kant also calls this the 'maxim of never-*passive* reason.' Second, '*think from the standpoint of everyone else*,' which may also be called the 'maxim… of *enlarged* thought.' By this Kant envisions the individual 'shifting his ground to the standpoint of others.' Now one takes not only one's own circumstances and the moral law in mind when undergoing moral deliberation, but also considers all other persons. Two suttas could be drawn into conversation here. First, the *Mallikā Sutta* (SN 3.8), where in King Pasenadi is shocked to discover that his wife holds no one, not even him, more dear than herself. Reporting this to the Buddha, the King is told:

> Though in thought we search in all directions,
>
> Nowhere will we find something more dear than self.
>
> So, as others hold the self dear,
>
> Thus, one who loves himself should not injure another.[142]

Second, moving beyond this prohibitive norm arising out of seeing things from the standpoint of all others, the Buddha provided the *Metta Sutta* (Sn 1.8), wherein the practitioner is implored:

---

[141] Introduced above, p.88.

[142] *Sabbā disā anuparigamma cetasā Nevajjhagā piyataramattanā kvaci, Evaṃ piyo puthu attā paresaṃ Tasmā na hiṃse paraṃ attakāmoti.*

> Just as a mother would protect her child, her only child,
>
> Even so, toward all beings one should cultivate a limitless heart.[143]

Third, one undertakes the maxim '*always to think consistently*' (O'Neill 26). The moral law, much like the *Dhamma*, remains constant. Yet our empirical standpoint is constantly shifting. The task is to develop a strong enough understanding of the moral law that one can maintain moral consistency despite changing empirical circumstances. This is the most difficult maxim and 'only attainable by the union of both the former.' Here, the Kantian would benefit from, among other teachings, the *Lokavipatti Sutta* (AN 8.6), wherein the eight worldly conditions (gain, loss, fame, disgrace, praise, blame, pleasure, and pain) are said to consume the minds of the uninstructed. The well-instructed disciple, however, remains calm, always seeing the impermanence of gain, loss, and so on. In this way, the frameworks set forth by Kant might be filled in, drawing (as mentioned) further details from his own less systematic works and lectures.

The works and thought of both the Buddha, as preserved in the Pāli Canon and elsewhere, as well as Kant, preserved in his own works as well as in lecture notes from students, are are great and varied. As a great British scholar once said of the Buddha, 'Who can teach for 45 years and not once contradict himself?' So too Kant wrote and lectured for a period of over 45 years, developing complex, and not always consistent, systems of thought across a number of disciplines. Just as followers of the Buddha have constructed many Buddhism*s* over the past 2500 years, interpreters of Kant have differed, at times drastically, on both the importance and interpretation of many of his ideas and works. As a comparativist, I have sought to construct both philosophies here in a sympathetic manner that should be recognisable to adherents and scholars of either

---

[143] *Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttaṃ āyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe Evampi sabbabhūtesū mānasaṃ bhāvaye aparimānaṃ.*

tradition, pointing out problems only where they seem intractable and dwelling only when necessary. As both are 'living traditions', one philosophical and one religious, it is hoped that this process of reconstructing each and bringing them into dialogue will both add clarity in certain areas and open new avenues for development.

Abbreviations

Buddhist Texts

AN	Aṅguttara Nikāya
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada/Dharmapada
Iti	Itivuttaka
Kvu	Kathāvatthu
Khp	Khuddakapatha
Miln	Milindapañha
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
Mv	Mahavagga
PED	Pāli-English Dictionary
PTS	Pāli Text Society
SN	Saṃyutta Nikāya
Sn	Sutta Nipata
Vbh	Vibhanga
Vin	Vinaya Piṭaka
Vim	Vimuttimagga
Vism	Vissudhimagga

Immanuel Kant and Western Philosophy

AP	Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View
Ak	The Academy edition (the *Akademie Ausgabe*) of Kant's writings
CJ	Critique of Judgment
CPrR	Critique of Practical Reason
CPR	Critique of Pure Reason
G	The Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals
LL	Lectures on Logic
LE	Lectures on Ethics
MM	The Metaphysics of Morals
NE	Nicomachean Ethics
RMR	Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason
WE	An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?

<u>Works Cited</u>

Adam, Martin T. 'Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Buddhist Morals: A New Analysis of *puñña* and *kusala*, in Light of *sukka.' Journal of Buddhist Ethics 12*. 2005, pp. 61-85.

Aitken, Robert. *The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics*. San Fransisco: North Point Press, 1984.

Allison, Henry E. 'Kant's Transcendental Idealism' Ed. Graham Bird. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, pp. 111-124.

Almond, Philip C. *The British discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Anderson, Carol. *Pain and Its Ending: The Four Noble Truths in the Theravāda Buddhist Canon*. Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999.

Anderson, Pamela Sue, and Jordan Bell. *Kant and Theology*. London: T & T Clark, 2010.

Anuruddha, K. *Studies in Buddhist Social Thought as Documented in the Pali Nikāyas*. PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 1972.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Bartlet, R.C. and Collins, S.D. Trans. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Arnold, Dan. *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief: Epistemology in South Asian Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Banham, Gary. 'Kantian Cosmology: The Very Idea.' *Kant Studies online*. 2011, pp. 1-26.

Baron, Marcia. 'Moral Paragons and the Metaphysics of Morals.' Bird, Graham. *A Companion To Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, pp. 335-349.

Baron, Marcia. 'Virtue ethics in relation to Kantian ethics.' Jost, Lawrence and Julian Wuerth. *Perfecting Virtue*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2011, pp. 8-37.

Basham, A.L. 'Ājīvikas.' Malalasekera, G.P. *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*. Colombo: Government Press. 1961, pp. 331-333.

Bastow, David. 'Buddhist Ethics.' *Religious Studies* 5.2. 1969, pp. 195-206.

Bechert, Heinz. 'Theravada Buddhist Sangha: Some general observations on historical and political factors in its development.' *Journal of Asian Studies* 29. 1970, pp. 761-78.

Beck, Lewis White. *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.

Bentham, Jeremy. 'An Introduction to the Principles of Morality and Legislation.' Cahn, Steven M., Markie, Peter (eds.). *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues, Second Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Berman, Michael. 'A Metaphysics of Morality: Kant and Buddhism.' *100 Years of Buddhism in Canada*. Nalanda College, Toronto, 2005.

Betzler, Monika ed. *Kant's Ethics of Virtue*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008.

Bhaskar, Bhagchandra Jain. *Jainism in Buddhist Literature*. Nagpur: Alok Prakashan, 1972.

Bird, Graham. 'General Introduction.' Bird, Graham. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford:
Blackwell. 2006, pp. 1-9.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the
Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000.

Boisvert, Mathieu. *The Five Aggregates: Understanding Theravāda Psychology and
Soteriology*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 1995.

Bolle, Kees W. 'Cosmology: an Overview.' *Encyclopedia of Religion* 2nd Ed. Vol. 3
(1987 and 2005): 1991-1998.

Brekke, Torkel. *Religious Motivation and the origins of Buddhism*. New York:
RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.

Bronkhorst, Johannes. *Buddhist Teaching in India*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom
Publications, 2009.

—. *Greater Magadha*. Boston: Brill, 2007.

Buddhaghosa. *The Path of Purification*. Trans. B. Ñāṇamoli. Boulder: Shambala, 1976.

Bush, R.C. *Foundations for Ethics in the Sacred Scriptures of Hinduism and Early
Buddhism*. PhD thesis, University of Chicago, 1960.

Bussanich, John and Nicholas D. Smith eds. *The Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*.
London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

Camosy, Charles C. *Peter Singer and Christian Ethics: Beyond Polarization*. Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Carter, John Ross. 'Traditional definitsions of the term dhamma.' *Philosophy East and West* 26.3. 1976, pp. 329-337.

Carus, Paul. *Karma: A Story of Buddhist Ethics*. Chicago: Open Court, 1894.

Caygill, Howard. *A Kant Dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Chapple, Christopher Key. 'Thomas Berry, Buddhism, and the New Cosmology.' *Buddhist-Christian Studies*. 1998, pp. 147-154.

Ch'en, Kenneth S. *Buddhism: The Light of Asia*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc, 1968.

Childress and Reynolds. 'Methodological Issues in Comparative Religious Ethics.' *Jounal of Religious Ethics* 7.1. 1979, pp. 1-10.

Cobb, John B. Jr. 'Incommensurability: Can Comparative Religious Ethics Help?' *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 16. 1996, pp. 39-45.

Cokelet, Bradford. 'Reflections on Kant and Karma.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* (2005).

Collins, Steven. *Nirvana: Concept, Imagery, Narrative*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

—. *Selfless persons: Imagery and thought in Theravāda Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

—. 'The Discourse on What is Primary (Aggañña Sutta).' *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 21. 1993, pp. 301-393.

Cooper, David E and Simon James. *Buddhism, Virtue and Environment*. London: Ashgate, 2005.

Cooper, John M. *Reason and Human Good in Aristotle*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard
University Press, 1975.

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy: Volume 6, Wolff to Kant*. New York:
Paulist Press, 1977.

Copleston, R.S. *Buddhism: Primitive and Present in Magadha and Ceylon*. London and
New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892.

Couprie, Dirk L. *Heaven and Earth in Ancient Greek Cosmology: From Thales to
Heraclides Ponticus*. New York: Springer, 2011.

Cousins, L.S. 'Ethical Standards in World Religions: III. Buddhism.' *The Expository
Times* 85. 1974, pp. 100-104.

—. 'Good or Skilful? *Kusala* in Canon and Commentary.' *Jounal of Buddhist Ethics* 3.
1996, pp. 136-164.

—. 'Review of The Nature of Buddhist Ethics by Damien Keown.' *Religious Studies*
30.2. 1994, pp. 252-254.

Dahlke, P. *Buddhist Essays*. Trans. Bhikkhu Sīlācāra. London: Macmillan, 1908.

Dalton, Jacob. 'BSAM YAS DEBATE.' Ed. Buswell, Robert E. *Encyclopedia of
Buddhism*. New York: Macmillan. 2004, pp. 69-71.

Dayal, H. *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*. London: Routledge
& Kegan Paul, 1932.

Descartes, René. *Discours on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy (fourth
edition)*. Trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis, 1998.

Dhammapala, Gatare, Richard Gombrich and K. R. Norman, eds. *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalawa Saddhatissa*. Nugegoda, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Research Library Trust, 1984.

Dharmasiri, Gunapala. *Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics*. Antioch, California: Golden Leaves, 1989.

Dreyfus, George. 'Meditation as Ethical Activity.*' Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 2. 1995, pp. 28-54.

Dundas, Paul. *The Jains, 2nd Ed.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. Karen E. Fields. New York: The Free Press, 1912/1995.

Engstrom, Stephen. 'Introduction.' Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002.

Ergardt, Jan. *Faith and knowledge in early Buddhism : an analysis of the contextual structures of an arahant-formula in the Majjhima-Nikāya*. Vols. Studies in the history of religions, 37. Leiden: Brill, 1977.

Evans, Stephen A. 'Ethical Confusion: Possible Misunderstandings in Buddhist Ethics.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 19. 2013, pp. 513-544.

Farrington, Roger W. *The Identity Problem in Buddhist Ethics: An Examination of Buddhist and Parfitian Conceptions of the Subject*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 2007.

Fasching, Darrell J. 'Authority and Religious Experience.' *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*. Ed. William Schweiker. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2005, pp. 61-68.

Ferrari, G.R.F., ed., Tom Griffith, trans. *Plato: The Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Flikschuh, Katrin. 'Reason and Nature: Kant's Teleological Argument in Perpetual Peace.' Bird, Graham. *Blackwell Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, pp. 383-396.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. New York: Continuum, 1997.

Ganeri, Jonardon. 'Kant, Karma, and the Rewards of Virtue.' *Hindi: Language, Discourse, Writing, A Quarterly Journal of the Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University* 2.2. 2001, pp. 205-212.

Garfield, Jay L. 'Buddhist Ethics.' 2012. www2.sunysuffolk.edu/fellenm/Classes/PHL215_files/Garfield.pdf.

—. 'Hey, Buddha! Don't Think! Just Act!—A Response to Bronwyn Finnigan.' *Philosophy East and West*. 2011, pp. 174-183.

Gethin, Rupert. 'Can Killing a Living Being Ever Be an Act of Compassion? The analysis of the act of killing in the Abhidhamma and Pali Commentaries.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11. 2004, pp. 166-202.

—. 'Cosmology.' Buswell, Robert E. (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. New York: Thompson Gale. 2004, pp. 183-187.

—. 'Cosmology and Meditation: From the Aggañña Sutta to the Mahāyāna.' *History of Religions* 36.3. 1997, pp. 183-217.

—. 'Mythology as Meditation: From the Mahāsudassana Sutta to the Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra.' *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* 28. 2006, pp. 63-112.

—. *Sayings of the Buddha: New translations from the Pali Nikayas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Gier, Nicholas F. 'The Virtues of Asian Humanism.' *The Journal of Oriental Studies*. 2002, pp. 174-188.

Ginsborg, Hanna. 'Kant's Biological Teleology.' Graham Bird, ed. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2006, pp. 455-470.

Giustarini, Giuliano. 'Faith and Renunciation in Early Buddhism: Saddhā and Nekkhamma.' *Rivista di Studi Sudasiatici* 1. 2006, pp. 161-179.

Gombrich, Richard. '"Merit Transference" in Sinhalese Buddhism: A Case Study of the Interaction between Doctrine and Practice.' *History of Religions* 11.2. 1971, pp. 203-219.

—. 'The Buddha's Book of Genesis?' *Indo-Iranian Journal*. 1992, pp. 159-78.

—. *How Buddhism Began: The conditioned genesis of the early teachings, Second edition*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

—. *Theravāda Buddhism: A social history from ancient Benares to modern Colombo, Second edition*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

—. *What the Buddha Thought*. London: Equinox, 2009.

Goodman, Charles. *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defese of Buddhist Ethics*. New York: Oxford, 2009.

Goodwin, Allison A. 'Right View, Red Rust, and White Bones: A Reexamination of Buddhist Teachings on Female Inferiority.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 19. 2012, pp. 197-343.

Gowans, Christopher W. *Philosophy of the Buddha*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Gorner, Paul. 'Phenomenological Interpretations of Kant in Husserl and Heidegger.' Graham Bird, ed. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2006, pp. 500-512.

Green, Ronald. *Religious Reason: The Rational and Moral Basis of Religious Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Gudmunsen, Chris. *Buddhist Metaethics*. M. Phil Thesis, University of London, 1973.

—. 'Ethics Get in the Way: A Reply to David Bastow.' *Religious Studies* 8. 1972, pp. 311-318.

Guyer, Paul and Allen W. Wood. 'Introduction.' *Critique of Pure Reason*. Immanuel Kant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Guyer, Paul. *Kant*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

—. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Hadot, Pierre. *The Veil of Isis*. Trans. Michael Chase. London: Belknap Press, 2006.

Hallisey, Charles and Hansen, Anne. 'Narrative, Sub-ethics, and the Moral Life: Some Evidence from Theravāda Buddhism.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24.2. 1996, pp. 305-327.

—. 'Ethical Particularism in Theravāda Buddhism.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 3. 1996, pp. 32-43.

—. 'Recent Works on Buddhist Ethics.' *Religious Studies Review* 18.4. 1992, pp. 276-285.

Hanna, Robert. *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

—. *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness, and Nirvana in Early Buddhism*. Abingdon, Oxon: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.

Heim, Maria. 'Buddhist Ethics: A Review Essay.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 39.3, 2011 pp. 571-584.

—. 'Toward a "Wider and Juster Initiative": Recent Comparative Work in Buddhist Ethics.' *Religion Compass* 1.1. 2007, pp. 107-119.

Herman, Barbara (ed.). *Lecturs on the History of Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Hetherington, Norris D. *The Encyclopaedia of Cosmology: Historical, Philosophical and Scientific Foundations of Modern Cosmology*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1993.

Hill, Thomas E. Jr. 'Kantian Virtue and 'Virtue Ethics'.' Betzler, Monika, ed. *Kant's Ethics of Virtue*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 2008, pp. 29-60.

Hindery, Roderick. *Comparative Ethics in Hindu and Buddhist Traditions*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978.

Hoffman, Frank J. *Rationality and the Mind in Early Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987.

The Holy Bible. Wheaton: Crossway-Good News, 2003. Eng. Standard Version.

Holzhey, Helmut and Vilem Mudroch. *Historical Dictionary of Kant and Kantianism*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005.

Honderich, Ted, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Horner, I.B. *The Basic Position of Sila*. London: Williams & Northgate, 1950.

Humphreys, C. *Buddhism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951.

Hursthouse, Rosalind. 'What does the Aristotelian phronimos know?' Jost, Lawrence and Julian Wuerth. *Perfecting Virtue: New Essays on Kantian and Virtue Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2011, pp. 38-57.

Irwin, Terence. *The Development of Ethics: A Historical and Critical Study; Vol.III From Kant to Rawls*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Irwin, John. Editor's Introduction. *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, by Kuiper, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House. 1983, pp. 1-8.

Ital, Gerta. *On the Way to Satori: A Women's Experience of Enlightenment*. Trans. Timothy Green. Dorset, England: Element Books, Ltd., 1990.

Jonas, Hans. *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, 2nd ed.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.

Jones, Ken. *The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism.* London: Wisdom Publications, 1989.

Kalupahana, D. *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis.* Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976.

Kalupahana, David J. *Ethics in Early Buddhism*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995.

Kant, Immanuel. *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens.* Ed. Ian Johnston trans. Arlington, VA: Richer Resources Publications, 2008.

—. *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*. Eds. Zöller, Günter and Robert Louden. *Anthropology, History, and Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007, pp. 227-429.

—. 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim.' Eds. Rorty, Amelie and James Schmidt. *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: A Critical Guide.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2009, pp. 9-23.

—. *Lectures on Logic*. Ed. Michael Young. Trans. Michael Young. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

—. *Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason and Other Essays.* Eds. Allen W. Wood and George de Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

—. *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*. Ed. Pauline Kleingeld and Trans. David L. Colclasure. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

—. *Prolegomena to any future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science*, Trans. Gary Hatfield, in *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Eds. Henry Allison and Peter Heath. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

—. 'Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?' Trans. David L. Colclasure. *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History*. Ed. Pauline Kleingeld. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006.

—. *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. J.W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 1993.

—. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hacket Publishing Company, 2002.

—. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. and Ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

—. *Critique of Judgement*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Kapstein, Matthew. *Reason's Traces: Identity and Interpretation in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Thought*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2001.

Keown, Damien. 'Are there "Human Rights" in Buddhism?' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 2. 1995, pp. 3-27.

—. *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

—. 'Karma, Character, and Consequentialism.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24. 1996, pp. 329-350.

—. 'Some Problems with Particularism.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 19 (2013): 443-460.

—. *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. London: Palgrave, 1992/2001.

Keown, Damien, Charles S. Prebish, and Wayne R. Husted eds. *Buddhism and Human Rights*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998.

King, Winston L. *In The Hope of Nibbāna: An Essay on Theravada Buddhist Ethics*. LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1964.

Korsgaard, Christine. *The Sourses of Normativity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Krishnan, Yuvraj. *The Buddha Image: Its Origin and Development*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996.

Kuehn, Manfred. *Kant: A Biography*. New York: Cambridge, 2001.

Kuiper, F.B.J. *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983.

Lake, Philip Stratton. 'Being Virtuous and the Virtues: Two Aspects of Kant's *Doctrine of Virtue*.' Ed. Monika Betzler. *Kant's Ethics of Virtue*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 2008, pp. 101-122.

Lamotte, Étienne. 'The Assessment of Textual Authenticity in Buddhism,' from *Buddhist Studies Review* 1.1, 4-15, in Ed. Williams, *Buddhism: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, Vol. 1. 1984, pp. 188-198.

Laywine, Alison. 'Kant's Laboratory of Ideas.' Bird, Graham. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, pp. 63-78.

Lazari-Radek, Katarzyna de and Peter Singer. 'The Objectivity of Ethics and the Unity of Practical Reason.' *Ethics* 123.1. October 2012, pp. 9-31.

Little, David and Sumner Twiss. *Comparative Religiuos Ethics: A New Method*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

Longuenesse, Beatrice. *Kant and the Capacity to Judge: Sensibility and Discursivity in The Transcendental Analytic of The Critique of Pure Reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Louden, Robert B. *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings*. New York: Oxford, 2000.

—. 'Applying Kant's Ethics: Anthropology.' Graham Bird, ed. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2006, pp. 350-363.

—. *Kant's Human Being: Essays on his Theory of Human Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Love, Thomas T. 'Theravāda Buddhism: Ethical Theory and Practice.' *Journal of Bible and Religion* 33.4. 1965, pp. 303-313.

Loy, David R. *A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack*. Albany: State University of New York, 2002.

Luchte, James. *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Continuum, 2007.

MacIntyre, Alisdaire. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory, Third Edition*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.

Malalasekere, G.P. *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names.* New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 2003.

——. ''Transference of Merit' in Ceylonese Buddhism.' *Philosophy East and West* 17.1-4. 1967, pp. 85-90.

Malter, Rudolf and Hamilton H.H. Beck. 'Main Currents in the German Interpretation of the Critique of Pure Reason Since the Beginnings of Neo-Kantianism.' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42.3. 1981, pp. 531-551.

Marks, Joel. *Ought Implies Kant: A Reply to the Consequentialist Critique*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009.

McClintock, Sara. 'A Review of Myriad Worlds: Buddhist Cosmology in Abhidharma, Kālacakra and Dzog-chen by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé; International Translation Committee.' *Philosophy East and West* 49.2. 1999, pp. 209-212.

McMahan, David L. *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Melnick, Arthur. *Kant's Theory of the Self*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Mill, John S. *Utilitarianism*. London: Dent, 1957.

Misra, G.S.P. *Development of Buddhist Ethics*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984.

Mohanty, J.N. *Classical Indian Philosophy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

Monius, Anne E. 'Origins of Hindu Ethics.' Schweiker, William. *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2005, pp. 330-340.

Morrison, Donald R. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Ñāṇamoli, Bhikkhu. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*. Ed. Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995.

Norman, K.R. *A Philological Approach to Buddhism*. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1997.

Olson, Phillip. *The Discipline of Freedom: A Kantian View of the Role of Moral Precepts in Zen Practice*. Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1993.

O'Neill, Onora. *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Palmquist, Stephen and Adrian Palomo-Lamarca. 'Kant, Buddhism, and the Moral Metaphysics of Medicine.' *Journal of Indian Philosophy & Religion* 7. 2002, pp. 79-97.

Palmquist, Stephen and Antonio Palomo-Lamarca. 'Kant, Buddhism and the Moral Metaphysics of Medicine.' *Journal of Indian Philosophy & Religion*. 2002, pp. 79-97.

Parekh, Bhikhu. 'Introduction: Bentham's Moral Vision.' Bhikhu, Parekh. *Jeremy Bentham: Critical Assessments*. Ed. Bhikhu Parekh. New York: Routledge, 1993. xvii - lii.

Perera, L.P.N. *Buddhism and Human Rights. A Buddhist Commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Colombo: Karunaratne and Sons, 1991.

Perret, R. 'Egoism, Altruism, and Intentionalism in Buddhist Ethics.' *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 15. 1987, pp. 71-85.

Perret, Roy W. 'Hindu Ethics?' Schweiker, William (ed.). *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2005, pp. 323-329.

Poussin, L. de la Vallée. *La Morale Bouddhique*. Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1927.

—. *The Way to Nirvāna: six lectures on ancient buddhism as a disciple of salvation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917.

Powers, John. *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*. Ithica, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1995.

Pratt, J.B. *The Pilgrimage of Buddhism*. New York: Macmillan, 1928.

Prebish, Charles. 'Ambiguity and Conflict in the Study of Buddhist Ethics.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 24.2, 1996, pp. 295-303.

—. 'Buddhist Ethics Comes of Age: Damien Keown and The Nature of Buddhist Ethics.' *Buddhist Studies Review* 10.1. 1993, pp. 95-108.

—. 'Cooking the Buddhist Books: The Implications of the New Dating of the Buddha for the History of Early Indian Buddhism.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 15. 2008, pp. 1-21.

Pye, Michael. *Skilful Means*. London: Duckworth, 1978.

Raeder, Linda C. *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002.

Ramunujan, A.K. 'Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay.' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*. 1989, pp. 41-58.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Repetti, Riccardo. 'Earlier Buddhist Theories of Free Will: Compatibilism.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 17. 2010, pp. 279-310.

Rescher, Nickolas. *Kant and the Reach of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Reynolds, Frank E. and Schover, Jonathan W. 'Cosmology.' Schweiker, William. *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2005, pp. 120-128.

Reynolds, Frank E. 'Buddhist Ethics: A Bibliographical Essay.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 5.1. 1979, pp. 40-48.

Rhys Davids, C.A.F. trans. *A Buddhist Manuel of Psychological Ethics*. Ed. Muller, E., London: PTS, 1974.

—. 'On the Will in Buddhism.' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1. 1898, pp. 47-59.

—. 'Introduction'. *Kant on Education*. Trans. Annette Churton. Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., Publishers. 1900.

Rhys Davids, T.W. and Henry Stede. *The Pali-English Dictionary.* Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass, 1921.

Rhys Davids, T.W. *Buddhism*. London, 1877.

Ricoeur, Paul. 'Imagination in Discourse and in Action.' In *Rethinking Imagination: Culture and Creativity*. Eds. Robinson, Gillian and John Rundell. London: Routledge, 1994. pp. 118-35.

Ronkin, Noa. *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The making of a philosophical tradition*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005.

—. 'Theravāda Metaphysics and Ontology: Kaccānagotta (Saṃyutta-nikāya) and Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha.' *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings*. Eds. Edelglass, William and Jay L. Garfield. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. pp.13-25.

Ruegg, D.S. 'Some Reflections on the Place of Philosophy in the Study of Buddhism.' *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 18.2. 1995. pp. 145-181.

Ryle, Gilbert. *The Concept of Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949.

Saddhatissa. *Buddhist Ethics*. Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1970, reprinted in 2003.

Sahni, Pragati. *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism: A virtues approach*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Sartre, Jean Paul. 'Existentialism Is a Humanism.' In *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre,* ed. Walter Kaufmann, 287-311. Cleveland, OH: Meridian, 1956.

Schilbrack, Kevin. 'The General and the Particular in Theravāda Ethics: A Response to Charles Hallisey.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4. 1997, pp. 98-111.

Schönfeld, Martin. 'Kant's Early Cosmology.' Graham Bird, ed. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2006, pp. 47-62.

Schweiker, William. 'On Religious Ethics.' (ed.), William Schweiker. *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 2005, pp. 1-17.

Sedgwick, Sally. *Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2008.

Siderits, Mark. 'A Note on the Early Buddhist Theory of Truth.' *Philosophy East and West* 29.4. 1979, pp. 491-499.

—. *Buddhism as Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007.

—. 'Buddhist Reductionism and the Structure of Buddhist Ethics.' Bilimoria, P., J. Prabhu and R. Sharma. *Indian Ethics: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Challenges*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 2007, pp. 283-296.

Silva, Padmasiri de. 'Buddhist Ethics.' Ed. Singer, P. *A Companion to Ethics: Blackwell's Companions to Philosophy*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1991, pp. 58-68.

Sizemore, Russell. 'Comparative Religious Ethics as a Field: Faith, Culture, and Reason in Ethics.' Eds. Sizemore, Russell and Donald K. Swearer. *Ethics, Wealth, and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics.* Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. 1990.

Snellgrove, David. 'Buddhist Morality.' Ed. J.M. Todd. *The Springs of Morality: A Catholic Symposium*. London: Burns & Oats, 1956.

Spiro, Milford E. *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.

238

Stcherbatsky, Th. The Central Conception of Buddhism and the Meaning of the Word
    'Dharma'. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1923.

Stevenson, Leslie. 'Kant's Human Being: Essays on His Theory of Human Nature.' *Notre
    Dame Philosophical Reviews.* http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/kant-s-human-being-
    essays-on-his-theory-of-human-nature/. 2011.

Story, Francis. 'Dukkha: Dukkha is . . .' *The Three Basic Facts of Existence Vol. II*.
    Buddhist Publication Society Online Edition, 1983/2006.

Sullivan, Roger J. *An Introduction to Kant's Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University
    Press, 1994.

Swearer, Donald K. 'Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa on Ethics and Society.' *Journal of Religious
    Ethics* 7.1. 1979, pp. 54-64.

—. 'Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa on Ethics and Society.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7.1. 1979,
    pp. 54-64.

Tachibana, S. *The Ethics of Buddhism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1926.

Tambiah, Stanley J. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer, A Study of Buddhism and
    Polity against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
    1976.

—. *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge
    University Press, 1970.

Thanissaro, Bhikkhu. *Head & Heart Together: Essays on the Buddhist Path*. 2010.

Thiel, Udo. 'The Critique of Rational Psychology.' Bird, Graham. *A Companion to Kant*.
    Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, pp. 207-221.

Thomas, E.J. *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*. London and New York: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1927.

—. 'The Basis of Buddhist Ethics.' *The Quest* 6. 1914, pp. 339-47.

—. *The History of Buddhist Thought*. London and New York: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1933.

Thurman, Robert. 'Buddhist Hermeneutics.' *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 46.1. 1978, pp.19-39.

Unno, Mark. 'QUESTIONS IN THE MAKING: A Review Essay on Zen Buddhist Ethics in the Context of Buddhist and Comparative Ethics.' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27.3. 1999, pp. 509-536.

Van Voorst, Robert E. *World RELG*. Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012.

Vélez de Cea, Abraham. 'The Criteria of Goodness in the Pāli Nikāyas and the Nature of Buddhist Ethics.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11. 2004, pp.123-142.

—. *The Buddha and Religious Diversity*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Warder, A.K. *Introduction to Pali*. London: Pali Text Society, 1991.

Weber, M. *The Sociology of Religion*. Trans. E. Fischoff. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Webster, David. *The Philosophy of Desire in the Buddhist Pali Canon*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Weerasinghe, S.G.M. *A Comparative Study of Early Buddhism and Kantian Philosophy*. Colombo: S. Godage & Borthers, 1993.

Wetlesen, Jon. 'Did Śāntideva Destroy the Bodhisattva Path?' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 9. 2002, pp. 34-88.

Whitehill, James. 'Buddhist Ethics in Western Context: The Virtues Approach.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*. 1994, pp. 1-22.

Wijesekera, O. 'Buddhist Ethics.' Ed. Ñāṇaponika. *Pathways of Buddhist Thought*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971.

Wildman, Wesley J. *Religious Philosophy as Multidisciplinary Comparative Inquiry: Envisioning a Future for the Philosophy of Religion*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.

Willaschek, Marcus. 'The primacy of practical reason and the idea of a practical postulate.' Eds. Reath, Andrews, and Jens Timmerman. *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason: A Critical Guide*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2010, pp. 168-196.

Williams, Paul, Ed. *Buddhism: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Williams, Paul and Tribe, Anthony. *Buddhist Thought: A complete introduction to the Indian tradition*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Wood, Allen W. 'Kant's Historical Materialism,' in Eds. Jane Kneller and Sidney Axinn, *Autonomy and Community: Readings in Contemporary Kantian Social Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY Press. 1998.

—. *Kant's Ethical Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

—. 'Kant and the Problem of Human Nature.' *Essays on Kant's Anthropology*. Ed. Brian Jacobs and Patrick Kain. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2003, pp. 38-59.

—. *Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

—. 'Kant's Formulation of the Moral Law,' Ed. Graham Bird. *A Companion to Kant*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, pp. 291-307.

—. 'Translator's Introduction.' Eds. Zöller, Günter and Robert Louden. *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007, pp. 160-162.

—. *Kantian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

—. 'Kant and agent-oriented ethics.' Jost, Lawrence and Julian Wuerth. *Perfecting Virtue: New Essays on Kantian and Virtue Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2011, pp. 58-91.

Wright, Dale S. 'Critical Questions Towards a Naturalized Concept of Karma.' *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11. 2004, pp. 77-93.

Wynne, Alexander. *The Origin of Buddhist Meditation*. New York: Routledge, 2007.