

BUDDHIST WELL-BEING

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Buddhism is a religion in some obvious respects, but many of its practices are animated to a surprising extent by a striking philosophical outlook. However, serious philosophical reflection on Buddhism by those trained in Western philosophy has a fairly short history, gaining momentum only in the past fifty years or so. This has produced some very impressive results, yet, I suspect, in many ways philosophical scholarship on Buddhism is probably still at an early stage of its development. Much remains to be done, especially in the area of moral philosophy.¹ There are at least three kinds of questions that such scholarship might address, pertaining respectively to understanding, comparison and criticism. First, what is the proper philosophical elucidation of Buddhist ideas? Second, in what ways, if any, do these ideas relate to ideas in Western philosophy (contemporary as well as historical)? Finally, to what extent might these two domains—Buddhist philosophy and Western philosophy—learn from one another and challenge one another? That is, to what extent might they critically interact so as to advance our philosophical understanding?²

In this paper, I will outline some ways in which these questions might be answered with regard to the concept of well-being, one of the fundamental topics in both Buddhism and contemporary moral philosophy. My focus will be the Buddhism of the Pāli Canon and closely related early texts. There are three primary ways in which Buddhism is committed to an understanding of well-being. First, according to the doctrines of karma and rebirth, there is a sense of well-being in which a person's well-being is proportionate to that person's moral virtue.

Second, there is a higher form of well-being that is unavailable to persons in the cycle of rebirth until they attain enlightenment. Finally, the central Buddhist moral virtues, compassion and loving-kindness, involve the promotion of the well-being of all persons, presumably in both of the aforementioned senses of well-being. Despite its importance, the topic of Buddhist well-being has received limited attention by Western philosophers.³ I hope to show that it deserves more attention. I will begin with some brief observations about theories of well-being in contemporary Western philosophy and will then turn to the Buddhist understanding of well-being.

Contemporary Philosophies of Well-Being

Contemporary philosophies of well-being analyze what it means for a person's life to go well for the person whose life it is. Well-being pertains to what is good for a person, or what has intrinsic value for a person, and it is often supposed that, other things being equal, it is better for a person to have more well-being than less. We presuppose the concept of well-being when we say that an action or event benefits or harms a person: what we mean is that it contributes to or detracts from the person's well-being. We also presuppose the concept when we say that we hope that a new-born child will have a good life or that a person recently deceased had a good life: what we are referring to in speaking of a good life is a life that has a substantial amount of well-being. Sometimes other terms such as welfare, utility, prudential value, self-interest, happiness, flourishing and *eudaimonia* are employed as synonyms or near-synonyms for well-being. But it is a matter of some controversy how these terms relate to well-being, and I will mostly leave them aside.

The concept of well-being plays a central role in everyday prudential and moral reflection. It has also been a fundamental part of ethical theories in the Western philosophical tradition. For

example, passing over terminological differences, Aristotle thought that moral virtue (or goodness) was necessary but not sufficient for well-being, the Stoics believed that virtue was necessary and sufficient for well-being, Kant thought that the complete good consists of virtue and well-being-in-proportion-to-virtue, and classic utilitarians such as Mill believed that virtue requires maximizing well-being among human beings (and other sentient creatures).⁴ However, the concept of well-being is distinct from the concept of moral virtue and, as this brief summary indicates, there are significant disagreements about how these concepts should be related to one another.

Philosophies of well-being are usually divided into those that are subjective and those that are objective. The main kinds of subjective theories are hedonistic theories that state that well-being should be understood solely in terms of the balance of a person's pleasures and pains, and desire-satisfaction theories that declare that well-being should be understood solely in terms of the satisfaction of an individual's desires (where these include both what is sought and what is avoided). The main kinds of objective theories are objective list theories that say that well-being consists of participation in a set of objective goods (such as friendship, knowledge and achievement), and nature-fulfillment theories that maintain that well-being consists of the fulfillment of the most important or distinctive features of human nature. Each of these four types of theory has many variations, and these variations typically involve complications that often mitigate the differences among the four types.⁵

Philosophical debates about these theories of well-being are sometimes informed by the defense of moral theories. For example, utilitarianism needs an account of well-being that could plausibly be said to be something we have an obligation to maximize. But these debates also answer to a variety of intuitions about well-being, some rather philosophical and some more

common-sensical. From this perspective, a criterion of adequacy of a theory of well-being is its capacity to explain our intuitions.⁶ The divide between the subjective and the objective theories is partly based on conflicting philosophical intuitions about the source of value that inform many meta-ethical debates: does value depend on something in the mind of the subject, such as pleasure or desire, or does it depend on something outside the mind of the subject, such as objective facts about things in the world or human nature? However, important as different intuitions about the correct answer to this question are, we should not lose sight of the fact that there is a good deal of common ground in debates about theories of well-being. In particular, it is widely assumed, as common-sense assumes, that there is a set of what may be called *ordinary goods* that are central to at least most people's well-being. These include life, health, pleasure and the absence of pain (physical and psychological), autonomy, friendship, marriage, children, various forms of status (such as honor, respect, and esteem), knowledge, and achievement.

These are, of course, the sorts of goods that typically appear on objective list theories of well-being. But all the theories explicitly or implicitly acknowledge the importance of these goods for most people's well-being. They differ in that, while objective list theories assert this importance as a matter of brute fact that is evident to any reflective person, the other theories offer an analysis of this importance: for the subjective theories, these are considered ordinary goods because people typically find pleasure in them or desire them; and for nature-fulfillment theories, it is on account of human nature that participation in these goods is good for human beings. The qualifications that are commonly made in the subjective theories (for example, that pleasures with worthy objects contribute more to well-being than other pleasures, or that it is rational and informed desires that are the desires relevant to well-being) are designed in part to assure that the theory can accommodate the common-sense intuition about the value of ordinary

goods. Of course, there are other important differences between the subjective and objective theories: the subjective ones usually insist on, and the objective ones typically resist, the possibility that the well-being of *some* persons may diverge in significant ways from participation in the ordinary goods. For example, a hedonist might contend that an ordinary good does not contribute to the well-being of a person who finds no pleasure in it, and that something other than (or contrary to) an ordinary good does contribute to the well-being of a person if the person finds pleasure in it. In general, the subjective theories allow for more variation across individuals in what contributes to well-being than the objective theories do. But these differences should not prevent us from recognizing the fact that virtually all the parties in contemporary philosophical debates about well-being grant the important role that ordinary goods play in most people's lives. As will become clear, this point will be significant in understanding the Buddhist account of well-being, to which I will now turn.

Buddhist Well-Being

The first thing to note about Buddhist dharma is that, while it has much to say about well-being, it does not provide in the first instance a *theory* of well-being either as part of an overall moral theory or as an attempt to explain everyday intuitions about well-being. It is commonly observed that in traditional South Asian Buddhism, while there is a good deal of explicit metaphysical and epistemological reflection, there is little in the way of systematic ethical philosophy. The Buddhist understanding of well-being is implied by what is primarily a practical concern: the diagnosis and cure of the problematic nature of human life as summarized, for example, in the Four Noble Truths. In view of this, we should not expect that this understanding will neatly correspond to one of the contemporary theories nor even that the categories presupposed in the debate about these theories will easily match up with Buddhist categories.⁷

An initial obstacle is presented by the Buddhist no-self teaching that what we ordinarily call a self or person is not a distinct substance with identity through time, but a causally related series of impermanent mental and physical elements or aggregates (the *khandhas/skandhas*). These elements include familiar psychological phenomena such as pleasures and desires. The striking contention is that what we call a self is nothing but such elements: there is no distinct and enduring subject that has these pleasures and desires. Realizing our selflessness is at the heart of Buddhist enlightenment. The difficulty is that most contemporary discussions of well-being presuppose that we are selves in the sense that Buddhism denies. Moreover, part of the controversy about the no-self teaching concerns the extent to which plausible aspects of well-being such as the ordinary goods can intelligibly be ascribed to or correlated with the impersonal elements.

However, it was recognized early on in the development of Buddhism that a distinction needed to be drawn between ultimate truth, the world as it actually is, and conventional truth, ways of speaking about the world that, though incorrect (or not meaningful) from the standpoint of ultimate truth, are nonetheless in some respects useful. In view of this distinction, it could be said that there are selves in conventional truth even though in ultimate truth there are no selves but only impersonal elements.⁸ This allowed Buddhist dharma to be expressed in the language of conventional truth, and in particular it made it possible to discuss well-being in (what were at the time) ordinary terms, as was often done. By following suit, Buddhist views about well-being may be brought into greater proximity to contemporary concerns—though only up to a point.⁹

The Buddhist understanding of well-being presupposes a distinction between what may be called *unenlightened well-being* (UWB) and *enlightened well-being* (EWB).¹⁰ Human beings ordinarily find themselves in an unenlightened state. This is our default condition. Enlightenment

is something we have to attain—and have reason to attain, at least in part because enlightenment involves a superior form of well-being. Unenlightened persons are portrayed as being trapped in a cycle of rebirth: we have lived previous lives and, unless enlightened, we will live future lives, in all cases as animals, human beings or gods. Within this cycle, we have more or less well-being, and each creature's level of well-being corresponds to that creature's level of moral virtue—at least in the long run. This is the Buddhist doctrine of karma. In discussions of karma, virtue is usually regarded, not as part of well-being, but as something distinct to which well-being corresponds on account of some form of natural causality. Though UWB and EWB need to be understood together, I will begin with an analysis of UWB.

Unenlightened Well-Being

The well-being of unenlightened persons is understood largely in terms of participation in at least many of the ordinary goods such as life, health, pleasure and the absence of pain, marriage, children and reputation.¹¹ Sometimes these goods are portrayed as having instrumental value: for example, in some cases they can facilitate a life of virtue or the process of enlightenment (though in many cases they can do opposite). But it seems clear that they are also regarded as having intrinsic value, at least for unenlightened persons. On the karmic scale, greater well-being typically means greater participation in these ordinary goods. This does not imply a commitment to an objective list theory of well-being. The doctrine of karma presupposes what were then common-sense views about the components of well-being, views that did not differ greatly from common-sense views today. Then, as well as now, it was widely supposed that the goods just mentioned were important features of well-being. This supposition is not, as such, a philosophical theory at all.

In any case, for unenlightened creatures, both moral virtue and well-being are imperfect. Their virtue is limited insofar as their compassion and loving-kindness are deficient (among other reasons). Their well-being is limited because every unenlightened creature, no matter how high up on the karmic scale, has some form of suffering (*dukkha*, perhaps better translated as unsatisfactoriness). The analysis of suffering—what it is, what its causes are, what it would mean to overcome it, and how it may be overcome (that is, the Four Noble Truths)—is central to what is distinctive in the Buddhist account of well-being. Suffering sometimes appears to be understood by reference to ordinary goods: it is said to involve their absence, or loss, or the threat of their loss. For example, sickness and death, the absence of the goods of health and life, are commonly cited instances of suffering. But this is not the whole or even the main part of the story: even those who fare well with respect to ordinary goods, those at the top of the karmic scale, are to some extent plagued by suffering. By contrast, those who are enlightened have overcome suffering. This is the primary difference between unenlightened and enlightened well-being.

This analysis brings into sharp relief a fundamental difference between the Buddhist perspective on well-being and a common assumption in the contemporary philosophical debate about well-being. For Buddhism, people may have more or less well-being in terms of participation in ordinary goods, but their lives are always fundamentally problematic until enlightenment is attained, at which point a form of well-being is achieved that is superior to any level of well-being that is available to the unenlightened. In the contemporary debate, there is no such contention and it is tacitly denied. Hence, Buddhism may be seen as implying a critique of contemporary discussions: they fail to recognize both the flawed nature of most people's well-being and the possibility of something better.

The Buddhist understanding of the nature of suffering and what it would mean to overcome suffering requires some interpretation. In addition to depictions of suffering in terms of the absence or loss of ordinary goods, we are given some general characterizations. In one of these characterizations we are told that “what is impermanent is suffering” (*SN IV 1*). A basic teaching of Buddhism is that all things are impermanent, and it is not difficult to see the connection with suffering. On account of impermanence, we may be anxious about losing the good things we possess and about encountering the bad things we have so far managed to avoid. Analyses of this kind are common in Buddhism.¹² If we think that genuine well-being would be permanently possessing the good things and permanently avoiding the bad things, then in a world of impermanence such well-being will be impossible. This might be thought to imply that a form of suffering is inevitable.

However, this argument is not by itself very convincing or illuminating. To a large extent everyone knows about the impermanence of all things, but people are not inevitably so anxious about this that their well-being is significantly diminished. In fact, impermanence is a condition of many things some people enjoy such as the change of the seasons and the growth of their children. Hence, impermanence does not appear to be sufficient for suffering. Nor is it obvious that it is even necessary. Would not permanently possessing the bad things be a form of suffering? Moreover, even if impermanence were a necessary and/or sufficient condition of suffering, this would not, by itself, give us a helpful analysis of what suffering *is*. In addition, since everything is impermanent, it is hard to see how knowing that “what is impermanent is suffering” would enable us to overcome suffering.¹³ The conclusion to be drawn is that, though in Buddhist thought impermanence is an important background condition for suffering, it may be less central to the analysis of suffering than it sometimes appears to be. What is central, I believe,

is that suffering depends, not simply on what happens to us, but on how we mentally respond to what happens to us.

In what is supposed to be the Buddha's original statement of the First Noble Truth, we are told that suffering is "not to get what one wants" and is "union with what is displeasing" (*SN* V 421). Buddhaghosa, a later Theravada commentator, adds that suffering is separation from what is loved or agreeable (see *Vism.* XVI 31-60; cf. *MN* I 463 and III 249-50). These characterizations bring us closer to the Buddhist understanding of suffering, and they might be taken to suggest a subjective theory of suffering, similar to subjective theories of well-being, as dissatisfaction of desires or as displeasure. However, we should be careful about immediately reading a philosophical theory into these characterizations. They are only portions of long enumerations, and it is not directly claimed that they are the proper analysis of all instances of suffering.¹⁴ However, it is not entirely mistaken to suppose that Buddhism is committed to a theory of suffering that has a significant subjective dimension.

In order to see this, let us consider the suffering involved in sickness. We usually regard sickness as a form of suffering because it often involves physical pain and it prevents us from doing things we otherwise could do. But for the Buddha these things by themselves are not suffering since we are told that an enlightened person who has overcome suffering nonetheless "still experiences what is agreeable and disagreeable, still feels pleasure and pain" (*It.* sec. 44). Moreover, the Buddha himself experienced "sharp pains" during an illness just prior to his death (see *DN* II 99). Hence, the suffering of sickness must be something more than, or other than, pain and disability.

It might seem that there is a problem of interpretation in that pain is sometimes listed as a form of suffering, and yet the Buddha and other enlightened persons who are supposed to have

overcome suffering are said to have experienced pain. The Buddha himself addressed this problem. He said that both “the uninstructed worldling” and “the instructed noble disciple” have painful feelings. In the first case:

When the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments; he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings—a bodily one and a mental one....Being contacted by that same painful feeling, he harbours aversion towards it” (*SN IV 208*).

By contrast, the noble disciple who experiences a painful feeling does not sorrow, grieve and the like. “He feels one feeling—a bodily one, not a mental one.” And “he harbours no aversion towards” the painful feeling (*SN IV 209*). There is a distinction, then, between pain and our mental response to it. The unenlightened and enlightened persons both feel bodily pain, but they have different attitudes towards it: the unenlightened persons feel distress and aversion, but the enlightened persons do not.

In the case of sickness, then, the suffering that the Buddha purports to alleviate is not the physical pain or disability of sickness itself. His teaching is analogous to medical treatment; it is not a substitute for it (in fact, the Buddha had a physician and monastics were allowed a form of medicine). Medical treatment might relieve us of the physical pain and disability of sickness. Buddhist teaching promises relief, not from this, but from troublesome reactive attitudes such as being distraught when we are sick and feeling aversion to possible future sickness.

In order to understand this, we need to consider the Second Noble Truth and related texts.¹⁵ These tell us that the proximate cause of suffering involves charged forms of desire such as craving, clinging, attachment, greed, lust, hatred, etc., and that all these forms of desire have

their origin in some kind of delusion or ignorance. In particular, we crave the existence of what we think is pleasing or desirable, and we crave the non-existence of what we think is displeasing or undesirable. Some Buddhist texts give the impression that desire as such is the source of suffering.¹⁶ This has the implausible consequence that overcoming suffering means eliminating desire altogether. Since there is a familiar sense of desire in which human life without desire is virtually impossible (without the desire for food we would not eat), and since people who approach this state are usually thought of as severely depressed, there is reason not to take these texts at face value.¹⁷ Moreover, it is worth noting that following the Eightfold Path requires a form of desire. This is especially true of the category called right effort (and likewise of the perfection called vigor in Mahāyāna Buddhism). Moreover, the commitment to compassion and loving-kindness would also seem to involve a form of desire. In fact, in Buddhist texts there is a neutral term *chanda*—variously translated as desire, zeal, intention, will, motivation—that can be good or bad (for example, when it does and does not promote enlightenment). It is not desire in this sense that is the source of suffering, but forms of desire that are especially urgent or powerful, that are depicted as craving and the like.

Earlier we saw that the suffering involved in sickness was not physical pain and disability in themselves, but a mental attitude towards these. In view of the Second Noble Truth, we can understand this in the following way: the suffering of sickness is a second-order dissatisfaction that accompanies an urgent, powerful and often unfulfilled desire to the effect that *this particular pain and disability must go away*, a dissatisfaction that may dominate and overwhelm one's consciousness. Suffering, we might say, involves a strong form of resistance to, or refusal to accept, some state of affairs. In general, suffering is typically the dissatisfaction that results from craving the existence of what we think is pleasing or desirable, or else the non-existence of what

we think is displeasing or undesirable. For example, suffering is the dissatisfaction that comes with craving health or craving the end of sickness.

Enlightened Well-Being

The presence of suffering is what renders all forms of UWB imperfect. However, in order to fully understand this we need to consider the Buddhist understanding of EWB. This is said to be a superior kind of well-being at least in part because all forms of it are free from suffering. In early Buddhism a distinction is drawn between an enlightened person in this life and an enlightened person after death (what is called the nirvana element with and without residue).¹⁸ Little is said about an enlightened person after death except that the person escapes the cycle of rebirth (often it is suggested that this state is beyond description or comprehension). In any case, I will restrict my attention to an enlightened person in this life. He is characterized as follows:

“His five sense faculties remain unimpaired, by which he still experiences what is agreeable and disagreeable, still feels pleasure and pain. It is the destruction of lust, hatred and delusion in him that is called the nirvana element with residue remaining (*It. sec. 44*).

This depiction is what we would expect given the analysis of suffering above. The enlightened person is not without feelings of pain and experiences of what is disagreeable. But this person does not suffer because he is without craving and related forms of troublesome desires. The enlightened person is also characterized as being dispassionate, mentally unperturbed and free of many emotions such as anger and fear. Just as suffering is a second-order dissatisfaction that accompanies craving, so overcoming suffering may be thought of as a second-order contentment in the face of whatever happens, even if it is painful or disagreeable.¹⁹ Suffering and overcoming suffering both involve mental attitudes that persons have regarding their experiences. However,

enlightened persons are often depicted in much more positive terms than merely overcoming suffering. In fact, the most common portrayal of EWB may be that it is a state of profound peace, calm, tranquility, equanimity and the like.²⁰ It is also said to be a state of “the greatest bliss,” a delight “which surpasses divine bliss.”²¹ This implies that EWB is more than the mere absence of mental turbulence: it has a positive dimension that is at once tranquil and joyful. These depictions of EWB may be summarized with the phrase ‘joyful tranquility’.

In addition to joyful tranquility, enlightened persons are commonly said to have two other features: wisdom and virtue. In brief, wisdom is the correlate of the delusion or ignorance that is said to be the source of craving and hence suffering. It refers primarily to an understanding of Buddhist teaching. In part, this means knowledge of the Four Noble Truths and such things as karma and rebirth. But wisdom primarily means knowledge of the interrelated metaphysical ideas of impermanence, dependent origination and especially no-self (and, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, emptiness). The realization of our selflessness is the heart of Buddhist wisdom. Virtue in this context is a state of ethical perfection. Sometimes this is depicted in negative terms as the absence of such things as greed and hatred. But often it is portrayed in positive terms as the presence of specific virtues such as compassion (striving to eliminate the suffering of all beings) and loving-kindness (striving to promote their well-being).

In view of this account, it might be thought that Buddhism is committed to an objective list theory according to which EWB consists of joyful tranquility, wisdom and virtue.²² However, this would be misleading at least in one respect. Objective list theories usually assume that the goods on the list are to a large extent distinct and independent of one another: well-being is thought to involve a number of separate goods (this is why the word *list* is an apt term for the account). Enlightenment is certainly the highest form of well-being in Buddhism. However, the

three dimensions of enlightenment are best thought of as three aspects of a single, unified state of mind or being. Each aspect requires the other two and cannot be fully understood without them. EWB is not a set of distinct goods. The aspect of enlightenment that looks closest to what we might ordinarily regard as relevant to well-being, joyful tranquility, is of central importance. But it is not the whole of EWB and it cannot be detached from that whole. However, there is something objective about EWB in that it is a good state, indeed the best state, for any human being, and this fact does not depend on what any particular person happens to find desirable or pleasant.

To sum up, the Buddhist understanding of well-being has two parts. The imperfect well-being of unenlightened persons consists of some measure of ordinary goods, the more the better, but it is imperfect because suffering is always present. By contrast, the perfect well-being of enlightened persons precludes suffering and consists of joyful tranquility, wisdom and virtue. In the language of intrinsic value, Buddhism is committed to the following three theses:

1. An unenlightened life has intrinsic value insofar as it participates in ordinary goods, and one unenlightened life is intrinsically better than another unenlightened life insofar as it participates in more ordinary goods.²³
2. An enlightened life—a life of joyful tranquility, wisdom and virtue—also has intrinsic value.
3. Any enlightened life is better than any unenlightened life, irrespective of participation in ordinary goods.

We might summarize the last point by saying that the perfect well-being of enlightened persons is incommensurably better than any level of the imperfect well-being of unenlightened persons.

An obvious question is raised by this account: does participation in ordinary goods affect the level of well-being in an enlightened life? To make the question more specific, recall that enlightened persons sometimes have pain (the absence of which is one of the ordinary goods). Presumably some enlightened persons have more pain than other enlightened persons. Would an enlightened person with less pain have greater well-being than an enlightened person with more pain? More generally, would a world of enlightened persons without pain be better than a world of enlightened persons with pain? Similar questions could be asked with respect to other ordinary goods.

Many Buddhist texts seem to imply a negative answer to these questions. That is, in addition to theses 1-3, it would be claimed that:

4A. Participation in ordinary goods makes no difference to the level of well-being of enlightened persons.

Let us call this *Indifferent Buddhism*. This is a possible position. It might be said that, though ordinary goods are important in an unenlightened life, an enlightened life would be so extraordinarily valuable that the level of participation in ordinary goods would be irrelevant to well-being once enlightenment was attained. There might also be an argument for this position: if EWB is indeed perfect, it cannot admit of degrees and so ordinary goods can make no difference to it.

However, in at least one important respect, enlightenment as understood by Indifferent Buddhism is largely beyond our comprehension. To see this, imagine an Indifferent Buddhist utopia in which all sentient beings are enlightened. These beings are completely indifferent to ordinary goods. It is hard to see that such beings do anything at all or live any kind of life. They have wisdom and joyful tranquility, but these are states of being, not actions. They also have

virtue, which ordinarily issues in actions, but in a world in which all sentient beings are enlightened, it is hard to see that there would be anything for virtuous persons to do (unless enlightenment requires maintenance, something Buddhism does not encourage us to suppose). It might be said that these enlightened beings would engage in the familiar pursuit of ordinary goods, for example by seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, even though their success or failure in this pursuit has no bearing on their well-being. But then why do they engage in this pursuit? The question is especially pressing for Buddhism since it is often interpreted as supposing that all reasons for action must be justified by reference to well-being. Such beings might be thought to be in an attractive state (though this is hardly obvious), but no meaningful content can be attached to the notion that they live any kind of life. Enlightened life on this model is even less comprehensible than Aristotle's contemplative life, which after all is a form of activity that is to some extent intelligible to us.

However, there are strands within Buddhism that might be taken to suggest that participation in ordinary goods does affect the level of well-being of enlightened persons. Let us call this position *Moderate Buddhism*. On this view, theses 1-3 would still be maintained, but instead of 4A it would be claimed that:

4B. One enlightened life is better than another enlightened life insofar as it participates in more ordinary goods.

Moderate Buddhism may be understood as supposing that there are two levels of well-being in the following sense. The first and most important level is the presence or absence of enlightenment. At this level, any enlightened life is better than any unenlightened life (thesis 3). The second and less important level of well-being is participation in ordinary goods, and this comes in degrees. One unenlightened life is better than another unenlightened life insofar as it

participates in more ordinary goods (thesis 1), and one enlightened life is better than another enlightened life insofar as it participates in more ordinary goods (thesis 4A).²⁴ However, to reiterate, no matter how many ordinary goods an unenlightened person participates in, his or her life is still less good than the life of any enlightened person, no matter how few ordinary goods he or she participates in. In this respect, for Moderate Buddhism as for Indifferent Buddhism, enlightened life is incommensurably better than unenlightened life.

The idea that there are incommensurable levels of well-being is not altogether foreign to ordinary experience. For example, some people would say that friendship and achievement are both constitutive features of well-being, but that a life without friendship, no matter how much achievement it has, is less good than a life with friendship, no matter how little achievement it has. (Of course, other people might well deny this and claim that some amount of achievement could make up for the absence of friendship.) The distinctive feature of the Buddhist incommensurability account is that enlightenment is a state of mind impervious to fortune (what is beyond one's control), while ordinary goods typically are dependent on fortune. Hence, the incommensurably higher good in Buddhism is immune to fortune, while the incommensurably higher good in the example above is not. This difference is significant. For Buddhism, on any interpretation, what matters most for well-being is under one's control insofar as each of us has the capacity to attain enlightenment. By contrast, for many accounts of well-being, both commonsensical and philosophical, what matters most for well-being are ordinary goods, and these are partly under one's control and partly not (Stoicism is the best-known counter-example to this the Western tradition).

Moderate Buddhism has a more integrated account of well-being than Indifferent Buddhism since it allows that participation in ordinary goods can affect the level of well-being of any life,

not just unenlightened lives. For the same reason, Moderate Buddhism might be thought to be more plausible than Indifferent Buddhism insofar as it is not beyond our comprehension in the way that Indifferent Buddhism is. However, as will be seen shortly, questions may be raised about the coherence of Moderate Buddhism.

Buddhist Well-Being and the Contemporary Philosophies

Let us now look in more detail at the question how the Buddhist understanding of well-being might relate to the contemporary philosophical theories of well-being. The place to begin is with joyful tranquility, a key element in EWB, and its counterpart suffering, that which renders UWB imperfect. Suffering is a state of mind: the dissatisfaction that comes with craving. The joyful tranquility aspect of enlightenment is also a state of mind: the contentment that comes with not craving. In fact, all aspects of enlightenment, including wisdom and virtue, are states of mind.²⁵ In this respect, what is most important for Buddhist well-being has a subjective dimension.

Suffering and joyful tranquility bear some resemblance to what Fred Feldman calls attitudinal pain and pleasure.²⁶ These attitudinal states are not states of sensory pain and pleasure, but attitudes of being displeased and pleased about something (which may or may not be a sensory state). In Buddhism, we might say, suffering is a form a being displeased about something, while joyful tranquility is a form of being pleased about something.²⁷ However, though suffering and joyful tranquility may be thought of as negative and positive attitudinal mental states, the similarity to Feldman does not go far. He supposes that attitudinal pain and pleasure are responses to particular states of affairs that vary from person to person: I may be displeased by X and pleased by Y, while you may be pleased by X and displeased by Y. Since in his version of hedonism well-being consists of the balance of episodes of being pleased and displeased (attitudinal pleasures and pains), the kinds of states of affairs that enhance my well-

being may well be different than the kinds of states of affairs that enhance your well-being. The theory is thus subjective in the sense that what is needed for well-being varies according to diverse reactions of individuals.²⁸

The Buddhist account is not subjective in this way. Joyful tranquility and suffering are a function, not of the diverse ways in which different persons respond to states of affairs, but of whether or not a person is enlightened. For Buddhism, unenlightened persons as a class are to some extent displeased—that is, dissatisfied—no matter what happens (on account of craving), while enlightened persons as a class are pleased—that is, joyfully tranquil—no matter what happens (on account of the absence of craving). There is no suggestion in Buddhism that a particular state of affairs detracts from or contributes to a person's well-being in the sense of joyful tranquility because the person merely happens to take displeasure or pleasure in it (even if there are qualifications on what pleasures or displeasures count). Rather, for any human being, well-being in the most important sense is precluded by being unenlightened, which renders anyone at least somewhat dissatisfied with whatever happens, and is guaranteed by being enlightened, which renders anyone joyfully tranquil no matter what happens. Being enlightened as opposed to being unenlightened is crucially distinguished by the presence of wisdom—knowledge of the way things really are (in particular, that there are no selves). For any human being, the highest form of well-being is part and parcel of knowledge of the way things really are. The Buddhist theory is thus objective in that what is needed for well-being in this sense does not vary from person to person.

For related reasons, the well-being of enlightenment cannot be understood in terms of a desire-satisfaction theory. This is not because the enlightened person has no desires, but because she is joyfully tranquil irrespective of the satisfaction of her desires. Tranquility is the result of

the general state of not craving, and this has nothing to do with whether or not a person's desires are satisfied. In principle, the well-being that consists in joyful tranquility could obtain even though all of a person's desires were unsatisfied (though for Moderate Buddhism the satisfaction of desires might increase well-being insofar as they are tied to ordinary goods).

The Buddhist account of well-being with regard to enlightenment thus appears to be committed to an objective rather than a subjective approach. Does it resemble either of the contemporary objective theories? I have already suggested that it is misleading to think of it as an objective list theory because, though enlightenment has different aspects, these aspects are not helpfully thought of as distinct and independent goods. Could it be understood as a nature-fulfillment theory? It might be supposed that it could not because the no-self teaching precludes this.²⁹ However, even if this were a valid objection, it would be valid only at the level of ultimate truth. At the level of conventional truth, the level at which Buddhist discussions of well-being are typically conducted, this need not be an obstacle. Moreover, at this level, the Buddhist account rather nicely conforms to a nature-fulfillment theory in the following way: it maintains that the default condition of human beings makes us prone to suffering, but that we have the capacity to attain enlightenment and thereby overcome suffering (later traditions sometimes refer to this capacity as our Buddha-nature).³⁰ The highest form of well-being is thus the fulfillment of a central human capacity. In this respect, the understanding of Buddhist well-being is based on an analysis of human nature and the human condition. This analysis grounds the central narrative of much Buddhist teaching, and such an analysis is a distinguishing feature of a nature-fulfillment theory in contrast to an objective list theory. Of course, for several reasons, the Buddhist account is not an Aristotelian nature-fulfillment theory. For example, the Buddhist account does not emphasize the fulfillment of our nature as rational agents in the way that

Aristotle does. But the Aristotelian theory, though the best-known in contemporary discussions, is only one form that a nature-fulfillment theory can take. The Buddhist account is plausibly interpreted as another form, and it is closer to this theory than any of the other standard theories in the current debate.³¹

As we have seen, in addition to the well-being of enlightenment, Buddhism supposes that there is a lower form of well-being that consists of participation in ordinary goods. This is the well-being that is available to unenlightened persons, and according to what I have called Moderate Buddhism it affects the well-being of enlightened persons as well. That participation in these goods is important to the well-being of at least many persons is an assumption that Buddhism shares with proponents of the various contemporary theories. These theories differ in the philosophical accounts they give of why and to what extent these goods are important. However, it is hard to see that Buddhism has any philosophical commitments to the proper understanding of these goods. In view of the analysis of EWB above, we might naturally suppose that Buddhism is committed to an objective theory according to which the ordinary goods are goods because they are on the objective list or fulfill human nature in some way. Neither of these approaches appears incompatible with Buddhist teaching (at the level of conventional truth). However, a subjective analysis according to which ordinary goods are goods only insofar as people find pleasure in them, or desire them, would also appear to be compatible with Buddhist teaching. After all, Buddhism sometimes employs pleasure and desire as general categories to refer to what people ordinarily regard as goods. In sum, though the Buddhist understanding of the perfect well-being of enlightened persons has some philosophical implications akin to a nature-fulfillment theory of well-being, the Buddhist understanding of the lesser form of well-being associated with participation in ordinary goods has no such implications.³² In this respect,

Buddhism accepted some common-sense assumptions about well-being, assumptions not very different than our own. However, perhaps because of the inferior status assigned to ordinary goods, it was not deemed important to give a philosophical analysis of these assumptions about them.

Challenges and Responses

There are a variety of ways in which Buddhism and the contemporary theories might challenge one another. One of the most important of these concerns the joyful tranquility aspect EWB. In the contemporary debate, a central criterion of success is the capacity of a theory to make sense of everyday intuitions about well-being. A distinctive feature of Buddhism is the suggestion that what most people probably consider a significant level of well-being is in fact flawed, on account of suffering, and that an incommensurably better form of well-being is available to us, characterized especially by joyful tranquility. To a very large extent, that something resembling Buddhist tranquility is an important feature of genuine well-being is simply not an issue in the current philosophical debate. Though the Buddhist claim that tranquility is important was an issue in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy,³³ and occasionally in the modern period, nowadays this claim is not so much denied as it is ignored.

A partial exception to this generalization is Daniel Haybron's emotional state theory of happiness. According to Haybron, happiness is a component of well-being that consists in having an emotional condition that is positive overall in terms of three basic modes of emotional response that he calls endorsement, engagement and attunement. The last of these is most important for happiness, and it centrally involves tranquility as well as (what he calls) confidence and expansiveness of mood. Much that Haybron says about the phenomenology of the tranquility aspect of attunement resonates with depictions of Buddhist tranquility (though Haybron stresses

the similarity to the Stoics). However, there is an important difference. Haybron says that tranquility represents “the fundamental biological condition” in which “an organism is in familiar and safe circumstances” and “has mastery of its environment.” Hence, in order to attain attunement, it is necessary “to establish conditions of safety and security, where the basic needs for functioning are firmly established.”³⁴ As we have seen, in Buddhism, the tranquility of enlightenment is regarded as a stable, long-term psychological state characterized by the absence of certain forms of mental turbulence and the presence of something positive such as bliss. Haybron largely agrees with this depiction of tranquility. However, in contrast to Haybron, for Buddhism this state depends, not on the conditions of the person’s environment, but on the person’s having a proper orientation to the world, as provided by enlightenment.

It is difficult to find explicit arguments in Buddhism for the importance of tranquility to well-being, but it is not difficult to imagine reasons for thinking that this is an attractive idea. For example, a life free of disruptive emotions such as fear, anxiety, anger, and the like seems inherently better than a life plagued by these emotions. Moreover, we admire people who are calm in the face of adversity. For instance, both Socrates and the Buddha are often admired for the serenity they exhibited as their death approached.³⁵ Surely such considerations are an important part of the explanation of the appeal that Buddhism has had for many people.

Hence, one significant way in which Buddhism would challenge the contemporary philosophies of well-being is by urging the distinctive importance of tranquility for well-being. However, many proponents of these philosophies, in turn, might well question whether tranquility really is important and indeed whether the overall Buddhist ideal of enlightenment, as including both tranquility and virtue, is psychologically coherent. On the first point, subjectivists might well argue that tranquility has little or no value for many people. For example, some

persons would desire, or find pleasure in, a life of adventure, risk and high tension rather than a life of tranquility. Objectivists might maintain that well-being requires a wide range of emotions, positive as well as negative, especially in connection with our care and concern for other persons (virtually all objectivists emphasize the importance of friendship for well-being). This emotional diversity appears to be incompatible with tranquility. In short, according to this objection, the pervasive tranquility proposed by Buddhism looks to be of dubious value, especially as an ideal for all human beings.

The coherence objection focuses on the virtues of compassion and loving-kindness for all human beings that is so central to the ethical dimension of Buddhist enlightenment. On the Buddhist account, suffering is pervasive in the world and the enlightened person is committed to alleviating this suffering. How could such a person be in a state of joyful tranquility? To see the force of this question, recall the earlier depiction of suffering as the “dissatisfaction that accompanies an urgent, powerful, and often unfulfilled desire” that a state of affairs be other than it is. The enlightened person is portrayed as not suffering in this sense. But if the enlightened person also has the virtues of compassion and loving-kindness, then it would seem that he or she would have just such dissatisfaction on account of a desire to alleviate the suffering of other beings in the world.³⁶ Another form of the coherence objection arises for Moderate Buddhism (though not for Indifferent Buddhism). On this view, participation in ordinary goods makes a difference to the well-being of enlightened as well as unenlightened persons. This means that such things as friendship, status, and accomplishment can affect the well-being of an enlightened person. But much of the emotional turbulence in our lives centers on our successes and failures with respect to these goods. Insofar as these goods matter to an enlightened person, even in a

secondary way, it is hard to see how this turbulence can be avoided and hence how joyful tranquility can be maintained.

Can Buddhism respond to these objections? Let us begin with the coherence objection. The heart of the difficulty is that Buddhist tranquility and Buddhist virtues (such as compassion and loving-kindness) seem to involve contrary attitudes or modes of evaluation. For example, consider an unenlightened person who is being tortured and so suffers from great physical pain and humiliation. Buddhist virtue surely involves the belief that this state of affairs should be changed and not accepted, but Buddhist tranquility seems to involve the belief that it should be peacefully and even joyfully accepted. There are several ways in which a Buddhist might respond to this objection.

First, it might be said that the tranquility of an enlightened person pertains only to his own pain and humiliation, not to that of other persons. For example, if an enlightened person is tortured, he will be tranquil with respect to that state of affairs, but if someone else, not yet enlightened, is tortured, then the enlightened person will not be tranquil with respect to that state of affairs.

Though this response is plausible for Indifferent Buddhism, it is not clear that it is plausible for Moderate Buddhism. Moreover, for either form of Buddhism according to this account, the tranquility of the enlightened person is disrupted by the pain and humiliation of unenlightened persons and, given the state of the world, this would not seem to be tranquility at all.

Second, it might be claimed that pain and humiliation are forms of suffering, and hence bad and to be eliminated (at least for the unenlightened), only from the standpoint of conventional truth. From the standpoint of ultimate truth, these claims lack truth-value. The enlightened person is tranquil because she realizes this. However, since the enlightened person is virtuous

and she realizes that in conventional truth these are forms of suffering, and hence bad, she acts to change them. Tranquility and virtue do not conflict because they are rooted in different levels of truth.

However, it is problematic to say that in ultimate truth it cannot be claimed that pain and humiliation are forms of suffering that are bad and to be eliminated—at least if this is taken to imply that all evaluative claims, about suffering and otherwise, have no purchase at the level of ultimate truth. If this denial were the only or fundamental evaluative stance of ultimate truth, then it would be hard to see how there could be any reason to do anything, including helping those who are suffering. It might be said that there are reasons to do things, but that these reasons can only be expressed at the level of conventional truth. But the categories of conventional truth are determined by the pragmatic criterion of usefulness, and usefulness is an evaluative concept. Now, suppose we are wondering whether or not a set of categories *C* is useful and hence viable for the expression of conventional truth. In determining this, we cannot very well appeal to truths about the usefulness of *C* that presuppose the usefulness of *C*. Yet if we appeal to another set of categories *C**, then the same question can be pressed about the usefulness of those categories. If we are to avoid circularity or a regress, the usefulness of *C* must be established in terms of ultimate truth. But if there are no evaluations in ultimate truth, this cannot be done.

Third, it might be argued that Buddhist tranquility is an object-less mood that does not imply any attitude or evaluative stance towards particular states of affairs. Hence, the enlightened person as tranquil does not calmly and joyfully affirm the fact that the tortured person is undergoing pain and humiliation, and so there is no reason why, as virtuous, he cannot be moved to try to change this fact.

However, though an object-less mood might not imply an evaluation of some specific fact, it might nonetheless be inappropriate in the face our evaluations of some facts. For example, there are circumstances in life, such as immediately after a great tragedy that is near at hand, in which it seems inappropriate to be in an especially good mood. Hence, the basic difficulty remains: even as a mood, joyful tranquility seems inappropriate in the face of the suffering in the world. Moreover, moods are mental states that come and go, often with no apparent rationale. By contrast, Buddhist tranquility is a stable condition of an enlightened person that is supposed to make sense on account of Buddhist wisdom.

Each of these three responses denies that the tranquil person joyfully accepts the particular fact that an unenlightened person suffers from pain and humiliation while being tortured. They are surely correct to deny this, but another way is needed to make sense of the denial. Here is an analogy that suggests how this might be understood. It is often said that a parent's love of a child persists (or should persist) unchanged no matter what the child does. In this view, the parent may still approve or disapprove of various things the child does, but the parent's love remains constant in the face of these diverse assessments of behavior: in particular, disapproval of an action does not imply any diminution of love. In this respect, the two attitudes or forms of evaluation—love of the child, and approval or disapproval of its actions—are independent of one another. My suggestion is that we should think of Buddhist tranquility and the evaluations that motivate compassion in a similar way. The joyful tranquility of the enlightened person is constant and unvarying: it remains the same no matter what happens. Moreover, it may be thought of as a supremely positive outlook on the world—a kind of joyful acceptance or embrace of the world as a whole, we might say—and to that extent it involves a positive evaluative attitude (an attitude that the realization of selflessness makes possible). But this attitude is

independent of, and compatible with, positive and negative assessments of particular things that happen in the world. These are the assessments that necessarily guide the compassionate person. Hence, an enlightened person's tranquility is undiminished by his disapproval of the fact that a person is suffering the pain and humiliation of torture. The conjunction of these two evaluative attitudes is psychologically coherent just as it is psychologically coherent for a parent to love a child while strongly disapproving of its actions. Likewise, just as a loving parent tries to correct his or her misbehaving child, so the tranquil person of Buddhist enlightenment tries to alleviate the suffering of the torture victim. The enlightened person calmly tries to improve the situation, without the dissatisfaction that accompanies the unenlightened person's craving to change things.

Ordinarily we think of tranquility in a different way, as making sense only in particular circumstances. For example, it might be thought that a vacation in the Caribbean is an occasion for tranquility, but that a tour of duty in a war zone is not. When we think of tranquility in this way, the idea that tranquility should be a pervasive feature of life seems incredible. But Buddhist tranquility is not like this: it depends, not on particular circumstances that may or may not obtain, but on an internal change in the person, a change that affects the person's overall outlook on life.

This account also suggests a response to the first part of the challenge from contemporary philosophies of well-being, that tranquility is not really important for the well-being of all persons. The challenge is based on the thought that there are particular attitudes and emotions that are important to the well-being of some people, but are incompatible with tranquility. However, once we think of tranquility as involving a positive outlook on life as a whole, an outlook that can co-exist with diverse evaluative attitudes to particular events, it may be possible to overcome this incompatibility, at least to some extent.³⁷ Buddhist enlightenment is surely incompatible with many attitudes and emotions, but we need not assume that it is through and

through affectively flat or neutral. Instead of eliminating all affect, it may significantly transform, mitigate or diminish certain emotional reactions, especially those that are particularly disruptive. This need not rule out every form of life of adventure, challenge or friendship. Rather like a well-anchored ship in a storm—or a Japanese Daruma doll—the enlightened person is a stable center of calm, responsive to external events without being overcome by them.

Of course, much more would need to be said to establish that Buddhist tranquility is an important part of genuine well-being. But I hope to have said enough to show that the claim that it is important deserves to be taken seriously in the contemporary philosophical debate about well-being.

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¹ Monographs devoted to Buddhist moral philosophy include Kalupahana 1995, Keown 1992, and Goodman 2009.

Books devoted to Buddhist ethics include King 2001 (originally published in 1964), Saddhatissa 1997, Harvey 2000, and Clayton 2006.

² The first question has been a central concern of Buddhism from the start. The second question relates to what is usually called comparative philosophy. The third question goes beyond comparison to philosophical evaluation; an example is what Siderits calls fusion philosophy (2003: pp. xi-xiv). Each of these approaches can have value: they should not be seen as competing with one another. So far almost all philosophical reflection on Buddhism has fallen into one or more of these three categories, but a fourth category can be envisioned: a more creative enterprise that draws on both Buddhist and Western philosophical sources and yet transcends both in order to create something new.

³ The most explicit discussion that relates to contemporary theories of well-being is Goodman 2009. He argues that Buddhism is committed to an objective list theory according to which well-being consists of happiness and virtue (see pp. 61-2, 69, 81 and 105). As will be seen, my view is somewhat different.

⁴ For Aristotle and the Stoics, the term for well-being was *eudaimonia*, while for Kant and Mill, the term for well-being was happiness. There is considerable debate about the extent to which, or the respects in which, *eudaimonia* and happiness have the same meaning. In any case, I am assuming that all these philosophers were concerned, at least in part, with well-being as characterized in the opening paragraph.

⁵ For a recent survey of contemporary theories of well-being, see Haybron 2008: ch. 2.

⁶ See Sumner 1996: ch. 1.

⁷ With respect to normative ethical theory, it has been argued that Buddhist ethics is a version of virtue ethics (for example, see Keown 1992) and that it is a version of consequentialist ethics (for example, see Goodman 2009). Garfield (Unpublished A and B) objects to both approaches as distorting Buddhist teaching (cf. Harvey 2000: p. 51). I have sympathies with Garfield's concerns, though I believe nuanced comparisons with Western ethical theories can be valuable.

⁸ This was necessary in order to interpret the words of the Buddha himself. See Siderits 2007: pp. 56-8. The distinction is understood somewhat differently later in the tradition.

⁹ For the Buddhism of the Pāli Canon, an account of well-being at the level of ultimate truth presumably would have to be understood in terms of the elements referred to in the previous paragraph. But knowing this does not take us far in determining what the correct account is. It is hard to see that the doctrine of the elements by itself directly implies a particular account; in particular, it need not be a subjective account insofar as the well-being of a collection of elements we call (in conventional truth) a person might consist in the relationship of those elements to other elements outside that collection. This doctrine is a psychology, not a theory of value as such. Rational reconstructions of a Buddhist theory of value in terms of this psychology are possible, but they are likely to depend on philosophical assumptions that, however plausible they may be to us, are not explicitly endorsed in the Pāli Canon.

¹⁰ This distinction mostly corresponds to the distinction between lay and monastic followers of the Buddha. For the most part, in this lifetime, lay followers aspire to higher levels of UWB, while monastics aspire to EWB. These distinctions are complicated by the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

¹¹ For instance, see *MN* III 202 ff. and *Vism.* I 23.

¹² For example, see *MN* I 85 and 137, and *AN* IV 157-9.

¹³ In this connection, see Burton 2002.

¹⁴ Also, the characterizations are distinct and not obviously compatible. Not to get what one wants and union with what is displeasing often go together, but they can come apart: for example, we might find that we are sometimes pleased, or at least not displeased, when we do not get what we want because we have learned that getting what we want often leaves us unsatisfied.

¹⁵ For the Second Noble Truth, see *SN* V 421. For related texts, see *MN* I 47, *MN* III 63-4, and *SN* IV 19-20.

¹⁶ For example, see *SN* IV 328-30.

¹⁷ That is, it is not plausible to suppose that enlightened persons *in this life* have no desires at all. In fact, the Buddha himself is portrayed as if he had some desires (for example, see *MN* I 354). By contrast, it is reasonable to think that, for Buddhism, nirvana in the sense of dying and escaping the cycle of rebirth is a state free of all desire. For a discussion of desire in the Pāli Canon, see Webster 2005.

¹⁸ For discussion of this distinction, see Collins 1998: pp. 147 ff.

¹⁹ See Goodman 2009: p. 31.

²⁰ For example, see *MN* I 431 and 436. In the Pāli Canon, the Buddha, the *arahants* and the *bhikkhus* are all depicted as being peaceful, tranquil, calm, etc. Also important in this connection are the four divine abodes, especially equanimity, which is described as a form of tranquility (see *Vism.* IX 88). Similar depictions are also found in later Mahāyāna texts.

²¹ *MN* I 508 ff. and 504-5 respectively. Descriptions of nirvana as the state of an enlightened person after death typically include both tranquility and joyfulness (for example, see *MP* VIII, 11). These descriptions are probably intended to be mirrored to some extent in the state of an enlightened person before death. The same is true of happiness (*sukha*), another term that is sometimes used to depict nirvana; for discussion of this, see Collins 1998: pp. 207-13.

²² Goodman 2009 defends a somewhat different objective list interpretation of Buddhist well-being as consisting of happiness and virtue; see the page references in note 3. Keown 1992 effectively regards Buddhist well-being as consisting of wisdom and virtue (for example at pp. 22, 72 and 229-30), though he presents this as an Aristotelian rather than an objective list interpretation (see note 29 below). Neither Goodman nor Keown give much emphasis to

the joyful tranquility aspect of Buddhist well-being (but see Goodman 2009: pp. 31 and 185). In contrast to both of these interpretations, my view is that it is important to emphasize that EWB is an integrated state that has joyful tranquility, wisdom and virtue as its three crucial aspects.

²³ Since it is sometimes said that a human life is more conducive to attaining enlightenment than a life of the gods (higher on the karmic scale), a life that is intrinsically better because it participates in more ordinary goods might not be extrinsically better. A common theme in Buddhism is that participation in some ordinary goods, and especially our tendency to crave them, can present significant instrumental obstacles to attaining enlightenment.

²⁴ Of course, as stated here, it is not clear *how much better* participation in more ordinary goods would be in an enlightened life: for a given number of goods, it might be a lot better or only a little bit better. With respect to this issue, there are different forms that Moderate Buddhism could take.

²⁵ Of course, they are not merely states of mind: virtue ordinarily issues in actions, and wisdom is having a proper understanding of the world. In the case of virtue, it is commonly said that what renders an action virtuous crucially depends on intention, a particular kind of state of mind.

²⁶ See Feldman 2004: ch. 4.

²⁷ Feldman's distinction between sensory pain/pleasure and attitudinal pain/pleasure mirrors the earlier Buddhist distinction between pain/pleasure and our mental response to it.

²⁸ There are qualifications in Feldman's account that I am leaving aside here.

²⁹ For this critique, see Goodman 2009: pp. 70-71.

³⁰ For accounts of Buddha-nature, see Harvey 1990: pp. 113-18 and Williams and Tribe 2000: pp. 160-66.

³¹ Insofar as Keown (1992, pp. 193 ff.) regards Buddhist well-being as a nature fulfillment theory, I agree with him. However, insofar as he emphasizes the similarities with Aristotle, I believe he often overstates or misdescribes what can plausibly be said.

³² Since karma theory states that the well-being of ordinary goods is correlated with virtue, it might be supposed that these goods would have to be given an objective analysis. However, a subjective analysis of ordinary goods cannot be ruled out: for example, it might be that a person's virtue is correlated with whatever states of affairs that person finds pleasure in (where it is understood that, though different people find pleasure in different things, people typically find pleasure in participation in the ordinary goods).

³³ For a sympathetic, but critical discussion of the importance of tranquility among these philosophers, see Nussbaum 1996. In his review of the book, Williams 1994 is even more critical of the value of tranquility.

³⁴ Haybron 2008: pp. 116 and 121. Haybron cites and partly relies on Griswold 1996. In this important discussion focusing on ancient philosophy, Griswold also argues that tranquility is important for happiness, but he understands tranquility quite differently, as being satisfied with who one is and how one is living one's life. By regarding tranquility as depending on the state of the person rather than external circumstances, Griswold is in one respect closer to Buddhism than Haybron. But there are still differences in that Griswold thinks that tranquility is largely a function of supposing one is approaching life in the right way, namely a philosophical way that has nothing to do with Buddhist wisdom. Both Haybron and Griswold think tranquility is a peaceful, but not a passive, state (an issue I will return to below). A related position is defended in Wong 2006. He argues that the detachment-as-resilience view he finds in the Daoist Zhuangzi is superior to the detachment-as-extirpation view he finds in both Stoicism and Buddhism. Murphy 2001 defends an objective list theory of well-being (in the context of a natural law theory) that includes the good of "inner peace." This is defined as "the good of not having unsatisfied desires" (p. 119; this is qualified in subsequent pages). For a given desire, this good can be attained either by satisfying the desire or by abandoning it. Strictly speaking, Buddhism might well allow that inner peace so-defined is a good: that unsatisfied desires can detract from well-being is a common Buddhist theme. However, Murphy's intent in saying that inner peace is a good is to make room for the idea (emphasized in subjective theories) that fulfilling our desires is part of well-being, and the fulfillment of desires is not part of the tranquility aspect of Buddhist enlightenment.

³⁵ For a discussion of this, see Dillon 2000.

³⁶ In a discussion of the divine abodes, Buddhaghosa seems to acknowledge this objection by claiming that equanimity arises only *after* loving-kindness and compassion have successfully promoted the welfare and removed the suffering of others (see *Vism.* IX 109).

³⁷ This response parallels, but is significantly different than, the response of Griswold to a similar objection (see Griswold 1996: pp. 13-16)