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Buddhist Ethics:

The Therapy of Desire and Delusion¹

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This alone -- one's service to sentient beings (*sattvaraddhana*) is pleasing to Tathagatas [Enlightened or Awakened Ones]. This alone is the actual accomplishment of one's goal. This alone removes the suffering of the world. Therefore, let this alone be my resolve. (Santiveda, Bodhicaryavatara, VI, 127)

¹ My thinking about the topic of destructive states of mind owes much to His Holiness, the XIV Dalai Lama and the other participants in a week long conference on the topic in Dharamsala, India in March, 2000. A splendid report on the meetings is narrated by Daniel Goleman, Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them? A Scientific Dialogue with the Dalai Lama (2003). My first paper on this topic was "Destructive Emotions" in Cognition & Emotion 1: 2 (2000) 259-281. There my aim was to defend the Tibetan Buddhist therapy of destructive emotions against those who might attempt to defend all emotions on evolutionary grounds, on grounds that all emotions are biological adaptations.

Thus, one who has patience should cultivate zeal, because Awakening is established with zeal, and there is no merit without zeal...What is zeal? It is enthusiasm for virtue. (Santiveda, Bodhicaryavatara, VII, 1 & 2)

Upon mounting the chariot of the Spirit of Awakening, which carries away all despondency and weariness, what sensible person would despair at progressing in this way from joy to joy? (Santiveda, Bodhicaryavatara, VII, 30)

Virtue and Happiness in Buddhism²

In the previous chapter I offered an analysis of *eudaimonia*, Buddhist style.

Eudaimonia – ‘happy flourishing’ or ‘happiness and flourishing’ – involves reaching a state, better: achieving a way-of-being, feeling and acting constituted by Wisdom (*Panna*) and Virtue (*Sila*). Only in Wisdom and Virtue do we actualize our full potential, our proper function, as human beings. In all likelihood we are happy, contented.

Here I continue the profitable comparative interplay of Buddhism and Aristotle’s philosophy, focussing specifically on their respective ethics.

² The two best books on Buddhist ethics that I have studied are Damien Keown, The Nature of Buddhist Ethics (1992, 2001) and Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Buddhist Ethics (1970, 1997, 2003). Keown’s is a meticulous study from a Mahayanan perspective, which reads Buddhist ethics profitably with Western ethics in view, although I do think he over-emphasizes the similarities with Aristotle. Saddhatissa’s book provides a Theravadan perspective.

Three issues absorb me: (1) What is the connection between virtue and happiness? Is virtue the normal cause of happiness, even a necessary condition? Is the claim that there is strong, possibly necessary, connection between virtue and happiness an empirical psychological claim, or is the claim a normative one?³ (2) Which theory provides the most defensible conception of virtue? Is it possible that Aristotle's theory is too undemanding, and the Buddha's too demanding? (3) How much work needs to be done, specifically, on moderating, modifying, possibly eliminating destructive states of mind before virtue and happiness can take hold?

A Key Difference between Aristotelean and Buddhist Ethics

Despite some similarities between the Buddhist and Aristotelean concepts of the proper function (*ergon*) and ideal end (*telos*) of humankind, there are some important differences between Aristotelean Reason and Virtue and Buddhist Wisdom and Virtue. Reason, in so far as it is relevant to ethics, consists of the practical intelligence (*phronesis*) to see things-as-they are, assess a situation for what-it-is, evaluate means-ends relations, and settle on an appropriate course of action according to the doctrine of the mean. Wisdom involves Reason plus, as importantly, a deep and abiding recognition

³ A strictly causal psychological claim would be something along these lines: virtue typically causes happiness. Stated this way happiness might have unusual other causes (see the magic pill) I discuss later. One might impose therefore, what I call a normative exclusionary clause, which might say, for example, that happiness caused by magic pills or by false belief is not a suitable kind. Below I discuss how one might defend such an exclusionary clause.

that all things -- including the self -- are impermanent. The doctrine of *annata* (Pali) (*anatman*, Sanskrit) is simply the application of the general doctrine of the impermanence of all things to the self, and what it irrationally and narcissistically seeks to accrue, hold, and keep. Wisdom, conceived this way, is part of, or at least interpenetrates with Virtue since it provides the cognitive basis for quelling “thirst,” the cause of much suffering according to the second noble truth. It also provides deep insight into what states of mind and being inhibit and promote happiness.⁴

Virtue also has different content in the two traditions. Buddhists could, I think, go along with Aristotle’s definition of a moral virtue (*arete*) as “a habitual disposition connected with choice, lying in a mean relative to us, a mean which is determined by reason, by which the person of practical reason would determine it.” (NE, II, 6,1107a2). But the Buddhist will complain that Aristotle’s list of the virtues is incomplete. For Aristotle the list is comprised of justice, honesty, courage, temperance, generosity,

⁴ For Aristotle, Reason has a theoretical component (*sophia*) as revealed in mathematics and science, and a practical component (*phronesis*). Practical reason is required for virtue, and thus interpenetrates in similar ways. One might think of Buddhism as claiming that theoretical knowledge of the nature of the soul (*annata*) and of psychology, especially of which mental states are wholesome and which are unwholesome, is also essential to virtuous self-cultivation. Aristotle can be read as thinking that *sophia* similarly contributes to ethics by teaching us what our proper function is. It would still be the case, that theoretical wisdom of the sort we get in the elaborate Buddhist psychology presented in the Abhidhamma plays a much larger role in Buddhist ethics, than *sophia* plays in Aristotle’s ethics.

magnanimity, friendliness, and wittiness (NE, III, 6 to the end of Bk. 4). Compassion and loving-kindness are major virtues for the Buddhist, so much so that the Buddhist picture of the *eudaimon* is described often in terms of Wisdom (*Panna*) and Compassion (*Karuna*), where *karuna* is substituted for the more general term for virtue, *Sila*, and is conceived as the master virtue, as well as the closest kin of *metta* (loving-kindness), with the two, in tandem, comprising the heart of *Sila* (Virtue).⁵ Neither compassion nor loving-kindness are on Aristotle's list, nor are generosity and magnanimity – which are on his list – conceived of as virtues because they embody, express, or are motivated by universal compassion and loving-kindness.⁶

The Comparative Ethicist's Predicament

It follows that the Buddhist conception of the virtuous person is significantly different from Aristotle's. One might say that such differences are to be expected since moral conceptions are developed in response to local ecologies, and thus are dependent on pre-existing aspects of the social, economic, and philosophical climates of different

⁵ In Mahayana compassion (*karuna*) involves wishing that all sentient beings be free of suffering and its causes; loving-kindness (*metta*) involves hoping that all sentient beings are happy and that the causes of happiness abound for them. Thanks to David Louven for this gloss on the meaning of the two terms. The main point is that the two terms are not synonyms.

⁶ One might legitimately ask whether the Buddhist list also includes all the virtues on Aristotle's list. Wittiness aside, all the other virtues on Aristotle's list, courage, honesty, justice as fairness are avowed with Buddhist philosophy.

places and times. Conceptions of human nature and the human good, on this view, can be understood as part of the ‘philosophical climate.’

Arguments for the ecological approach might lead one to think that there might be legitimate plural contenders for a conception of a virtuous life. We might even think that distinctive conceptions of the good are more or less well-suited to different times and places, and that this suitability was part of their appeal in their original context.

It is not, however, that the philosopher who takes the ecological insight seriously is stuck with accepting that each moral conception is, in fact, good, noble or well-suited to its original locale, even by standards internal to that tradition. There is the tactic of examining whether a particular theory has drawn out all the implications of its stated view from the background philosophical climate. There are questions of good faith – does the recommended conception of virtue bear signs of being disproportionately in the interests of its promoters, rather than in everyone’s interest? And so on.

Furthermore, once engaged in comparative philosophical analysis we are operating from a new ecological perspective. In the case under discussion we are looking for a worthwhile, indeed noble, conception of virtue based on an examination of Aristotle’s ethics and Buddhist ethics (each with their own particular and shared “backgrounds”) from the perspective of our own ecological context with its particular problems, needs, as well as the resources gathered and accrued from 2500 years of philosophical examination of the pros and cons (some internal, some external) of these and many other ethical conceptions. This explains why, when a philosopher, including this one, asks a question such as ‘which view of virtue is better?’ he need not be read as ignoring the ecological insight, and thus as asking for an answer from “the point of view

of nowhere.” And the answer that both are good, each in its own way, is still an option. That said, making comparative judgments, seeking all-things-considered consensus on which of two views is better, involves close attention to the original ecology of discovery, invention, and defense; the search for *lucanae* in the drawing out of available, but possibly unseen, logical implications of the original view, and then critically examining them from one’s own culturally and philosophically embedded perspective.

A Necessary Connection Between Virtue and Happiness?

Most philosophers, East and West, have thought that there is a strong connection between virtue and happiness. I start with a strong statement of the nature of the alleged connection, and then throughout the discussion, let reasons reveal themselves that suggest that it may need to be weakened.

Aristotle advanced one version of the strong claim. I call this version Aristotle’s Law, henceforth (AL).

AL: (1) Virtue is a necessary condition for happiness; (2) Normally (barring bad luck, including lack of basic necessities and neurochemical imbalances) it is sufficient to cause/produce happiness.

An especially interesting interpretation of AL involves reading it as a claim of empirical psychology, and as such as falsifiable. AL would be an uninteresting claim, or less interesting, if it is understood as analytic, that is, where the meaning or criteria for

‘virtue’ is simply required for an ascription of ‘happiness’ – where, for example, ‘being virtuous’ was defined in such a way that part of its meaning was ‘being happy,’ or vice-versa. Nor, relatedly on this interpretation of AL, should it be the case that, in practice, a plausible counter-example of a happy person who is not virtuous is excluded as such because he is said not to be happy in the right way, where the right way is required or stipulated as the-kind-acquired-by-virtue.

As I understand Buddhism, AL, or something close enough to it, is commonly espoused. In Santideva’s Bodhicaryavatara (A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life) composed in the 8th century C.E. and considered a canonical source of Mahayana wisdom, we are told that the virtuous “dwell in the hearts of spacious, fragrant, and cool lotuses,” whereas the non-virtuous soul “cries out in distress” (Bk. VII, 44 & 45). Furthermore, the quotes from Santideva at the start of the paper were chosen, in part, because they all can be read as read supporting AL (they were also chosen because they embody the main distinctive features of Buddhist ethical commitment).

Given that I’ve claimed that the Aristotelean and Buddhist ethical conceptions have important differences while (possibly) nonetheless sharing belief in AL – that is, that there is a necessary condition between virtue and happiness -- a puzzle, actually a set of puzzles, arises. Is the acceptance of AL to be understood as a psychological truth that obtains only when the right conception of virtue is realized (assuming, for the sake of argument that there is one right one)? Supposing hypothetically that this is the right interpretation, and that in addition, we have to choose between the Aristotelean and Buddhist conceptions – knowing somehow that one of them is the right one -- which one is the right one, the one we ought to choose, and why?

I can state the puzzles, comprising the set, in other ways: If virtue and happiness have a necessary connection (almost sufficient), does it not matter what the virtues are? Or is it possible that there is a plural set of ways of being virtuous and that realizing any set brings happiness? Even assuming that the character traits called 'virtues' by two traditions are all 'good' as judged from some more expansive, impartial point of view (and not as 'neutral' or 'bad'), does it not matter if the list is judged incomplete (we'll suppose this judgment can be made in part on the basis of an internal failure to see or follow out the implications of the conception)? That is, should we accept that some incomplete set of virtues instantiated in character is necessary (almost sufficient) to produce happiness? Is it possible that some virtues are mandatory (compassion) whereas others (wittiness) are optional so far as AL goes? I'll let this puzzle set and use it to complicate the discussion as we proceed.

One who starts to worry about the interpretation of AL in these ways might recommend a reinterpretation:

AL': True Virtue is that which necessarily produces True Happiness.

I take it that AL' would be a linguistic stipulation and thus should be interpreted as akin to setting out meaning rules for the terms 'true virtue' and 'true happiness.' And despite the concerns expressed above about simply winning the debate about the connection of virtue and happiness by turning the necessary connection claim into an analytic truth, or, even worse, by linguistically stipulating that one's particular conception of virtue is the only one that (also) 'means' or logically entails 'true happiness,' AL' can be interpreted more kindly.

If competing moral conceptions hypothesize that the necessary condition claim is likely true, and its proponents are willing and able to define 'true virtue' and 'true happiness' in substantive ways that do not beg the question, for example, by simply stipulating that they are co-extensive, or that 'happiness' is linguistically entailed by the meaning of 'virtue,' then AL' yields testable predictions.

1. AL': True Virtue is that which necessarily produces True Happiness.
2. Dfs: 'True Virtue' and 'True Happiness' by Aristotle and Buddha.
3. Population A instantiates 'True Virtue' as defined by Aristotle; Population B instantiates 'True Virtue' as defined by Buddha.
4. Population A is Truly Happy, population B is not (by the standards set by A and B, respectively).
5. Conclusion: AL' receives some corroboration, as does A's conception of virtue.

So far, so good. This testable situation works so long as each theory claims that the conception of virtue and the (somewhat) independent conception of happiness it favors satisfy the necessary condition claim.

But suppose, as is entirely possible, that the empirical result gained in 4 was this:
4': Population A and B are both 'Truly Happy.'

Then 5 should read this way:

5': Conclusion: AL' receives some corroboration, as does theory A's conception of virtue and theory B's conception of virtue.

Here the situation would be one in which each theory correctly predicted that true happiness, as each defined it, would accrue from its conception of virtue. Is this possible? Yes. It is bad? Not necessarily. It would require deep ecology to decide

whether a particular conception of happiness is deficient by the lights of the wise members of a culture that avow it, whether some things were missed by the proponents of the view so that some deficiency in either the conception of 'true virtue' or 'true happiness' is revealed. Comparative methods with the resources of ideas and tools acquired over two and one-half millennia are, of course, permitted to make arguments for weaknesses or deficiencies from their perspective.

I focus on the testability, theory-choice situation as it regards the necessary condition claim in either the form of AL or AL' because it directly relates to the topic under discussion. Aristotle and Buddhism have different conceptions of virtue and of happiness (as does our own liberal commonsense morality, about which more later). And it may be that, although not inter-defined in any question-begging way, the two respective conceptions are suited and/or designed to co-occur. This may not be do to any mischievous sleight-of-hand, but rather to deep-seated and defensible ways that local ecological conditions have evolved and are designed to make the co-occurrence happen. I say more about this prospect below.

For now notice that AL' could lead to theory choice of the sort we sometimes get in science if while allowing variability in the definition of 'True Virtue' we had or required the disputants to agree on the same substantive characterization of 'True Happiness.' In this way we could test whether A and/or B (C to Z, as well) produce it. If only one did, we have found True Virtue! In my experience, at least at this time in the

development of moral theory, expecting agreement on a specific conception of happiness especially the one allegedly produced by virtue is not in the cards.⁷

The deep and abiding complexity of the situation facing the comparative ethicist is out-on-the-table. It colors the subsequent discussion. But because the problem is ubiquitous I will not be calling constant attention to it. Nonetheless, keep it firmly in mind.

The Therapy of Desire

In The Therapy of Desire (1994), Martha Nussbaum presents a compelling case for understanding the post-Aristotelean Greek and Roman philosophers as doing much more than simply advancing and refining Aristotle's ethics. Post-Aristotelean ethics advances a view of the good life that is open to everyone, not just the well-bred. Despite the universal access to a life of virtue, the Epicureans and Stoics especially, paint a more

⁷ There are interesting preliminary scientific results that are relevant here. Mood and positive affect are revealed by the principle that the more leftward in the frontal cortex activity is the better the mood. Studies on one monk, a master meditator, showed him as uniquely off the charts leftward compared to thousands of American college students. If this result holds up one might want to say that even by our standards of good mood, happiness, etc., that Buddhist are happier. See my essay "The Colour of Happiness", New Scientist, 17 May 2003. Goleman reports on these results and planned studies in Destructive Emotions (2003).

demanding picture of virtue than Aristotle does. This more demanding ethical conception requires much deeper psychic change than Aristotle thought necessary in order to alleviate suffering and bring happiness in its place. In part, the need for greater direct attention to an individual's psychic economy is due to the fact that Aristotle was insufficiently attentive to the way certain destructive states of mind, for example, greed and avarice, cause suffering and bad actions, but are nonetheless subject to voluntary control. According to the therapists of desire more than good socialization, even as supplemented by attending Aristotle's lectures on ethics, is required for virtue. Direct therapy on the minds of adults to quell or eliminate negative desires is needed as well. In addition, the expansion of the list of virtues to include universal compassion requires work to expand and enhance whatever tendencies of fellow-feeling are rooted in our nature, but that are enhanced insufficiently by local (Aristotelean) moral conventions.

Fortunately, the transformation of the psyche required for true virtue and happiness is possible so long as the philosopher equipped with a more expansive set of instruments than argument alone, plays the role of a trainer or physician for the soul.

The Hellenistic philosophical schools in Greece and Rome -- Epicureans, Sceptics, and Stoics --all conceived philosophy as a way of addressing the most painful problems of human life. They saw the philosopher as a compassionate physician whose arts could heal many pervasive types of human suffering. (1994, p. 3)⁸

⁸ See Lawrence Becker's masterpiece, A New Stoicism (1998) in which he attempts to show that, and how, Stoicism is a live option for us.

The therapists of desire provided, indeed insisted upon providing strong – ideally, valid and sound -- arguments to support their diagnoses, prognoses, and therapeutic practices. In part, like their Indian counterparts, especially Buddhists, this was because they believed that mistaken views (*moha*, Pali) are often at the root of human suffering, for example, money is widely thought to bring happiness but doesn't.⁹ But they also recognized that argument alone does not always produce the necessary change. Even if false belief – what Buddhists call delusion or wrong view (*moha*) -- is lifted at some conscious level ('Ok, money doesn't bring happiness. Now I get it'), there are typically long-standing emotional and conative tendencies and attitudes associated with the false belief (possibly antecedent to it), that in virtue of being deep-seated and partly unconscious may still control the motivational circuits. Even if the false belief is exposed as false, acquisitive desires and behavior may not abate ('I know that money doesn't bring happiness, but I keep trying to accumulate wealth, and I feel vacant, empty,

⁹ These Greek and Roman compassionate philosophers – Epicurus, Lucretius, Zeno of Sidion, Chrysippus, Pyrrho, Seneca, Cicero, Epictetus, Sextus Empiricus, Marcus Aurelius, among them – were, founders, luminaries, and practitioners of schools that arose after Aristotle's death (322 B.C.E.) and that remained highly influential into the 2nd or 3rd centuries C.E. In various ways these philosophers retained admirers until the 19th century. Descartes, Spinoza, Adam Smith, Kant, Nietzsche, and Marx all engaged the work of one or more of these philosophers. And the American Founding Fathers who had read Plutarch's *Moralia* which includes his famous "Lives" of the major Hellenistic philosophers, as well as in all likelihood Cicero and Seneca, reveal that influence in well-known ways in the "Declaration" and the "Constitution."

dissatisfied’). Here the therapists of desire rightly saw the need to bring to bear techniques, in addition to arguments, to adjust or change the economy of desire, often working to outright eliminate certain destructive emotions by antidotes that were psychologically incompatible with them. Wishing someone ill and feeling deep love and compassion for him at the same time are psychologically inconsistent -- at least they comprise a highly unstable tandem.

Michel Foucault refers to this style of doing philosophy, which involves working to form or restructure the self as utilizing techniques of self-work, *techniques de soi*. Nussbaum agrees, but warns that, then as now, there were *techniques de soi* that relied on mesmeric force and hocus pocus without the requirement that sound arguments also be offered warranting soul change of a particular sort by way of a suitable technique.

One of the complaints by early Buddhists against the Brahmanas¹⁰ was that, in addition to their own self-puffery, they promoted a delusional vision of happiness as involving, indeed requiring, merger of one’s own indestructible Soul (*Atman* Sanskrit) with the cosmos’ life-blood (*Brahman*). The belief in *Brahman* epistemically overreaches what the human mind can know, wishfully but confidently asserting that that which is beyond all concepts is most True, most Real. The belief in an abiding and indestructible Soul falls to powerful arguments for *annata* (Pali; *anatman*, Sanskrit) the doctrine that the self is an ever-changing stream without the features of permanence, immutability, and so on.

¹⁰ Those I call ‘Brahmas’ were not Hindus (that comes later) but members of a sacrificial cult that followed the ancient Vedas and early Upanishads, especially the doctrine on merger of *Brahman* and *Atman* as avowed in the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad.

It is part of Buddhist moral psychology that one way a state can be 'unwholesome' is if false view (*moha*) causally contributes to it. So suppose the beliefs in the reality of *Brahman* and *Atman* as well as the desirability of their merger (three falsehoods), led (as they did) to rituals designed to produce the merger and that these rituals produced a state of euphoric joy. There would be this problem: Achieving the happy state in this way is undesirable, unwholesome. This would be true even if the state produced was the same substantively and phenomenologically as the happy state that practitioners of virtue aim to create.

How harmful would the discovery that happiness can be achieved by means other than virtue be for AL or AL'? It would be bad, since the situation, as I have imagined it is one in which happiness is produced while virtue is lacking. A magic pill that could directly produce the right happy state would also provide a counter-example.

Aristotle and his Hellenistic heirs did have a response to these sorts of possibility. But it is not clear it saves AL or AL'. The only standard of argument accepted by the bona fide therapists of desire – Hellenistic or Buddhist -- was one that legitimately showed that -- and how -- suffering could be alleviated and happiness or contentment won. Insofar as AL or AL' is assumed, all such arguments have the same logical structure revealed by their major premise which is stated explicitly or assumed as common background: Treatment *phi* leads to ethical improvement and only ethical improvement leads to happiness. If there were such things as grief or sadness fixes or euphoric joy producers that could do their magic by introducing false belief ('Your loved one is now happy and with God, you will join her later'), they were considered morally wrong. Aristotle's Law,

if true, entails that the best such magic fixes can do is introduce a counterfeit of happiness, not the real thing, nothing that lasts.

But suppose that there are some magic fixes that don't produce detectable counterfeits on the happiness side of the ledger. If so, then the best solution would be (a) to modify the necessary condition claim to some weaker causal claim: virtue is a usual cause of happiness and add (b): only happiness caused by virtue is the right sort to be counted as wholesome or as virtuous happiness. (B) is an explicitly normative, not an empirical claim. Call the new claim AL''.

AL'' differs from AL and AL', as I've indicated, by weakening the necessary condition claim between virtue and happiness (or 'True Virtue' and 'True Happiness') to a claim to the effect that virtue is a normal and reliable cause of happiness. Then it adds, what I'll call, the normative exclusion clause to the effect that only happiness caused by virtue counts as wholesome, virtuous, the kind we are interested in. Defending the normative exclusion clause requires argument. Here are some bases upon which one might mount a plausible defense. First, we might think that there are reasons to say that happiness is only deserved if the happy person participates in producing that state, which she does not do if it simply produced by a magic pill. Or, in the false belief case, we might say that an epistemic norm, our commitment to truth, excludes cases where happiness is won by delusion.

The main point for now is that the strong empirical necessary condition claim with which we began is not so easy to maintain and may need to yield to a more causally and normatively nuanced view.

Buddhist Therapy of Desire and Delusion

Anyone familiar with Buddhist philosophy and psychology will see a strong similarity with the post-Aristotelean therapists of desire. Buddhism is a therapeutic philosophy in Nussbaum's sense. It conceives of the sage as a compassionate soul-healer.

The *bodhisattva*, familiarly, makes these vows:

Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to liberate them.

Delusions are inexhaustible: I vow to transcend them.

Dharma teachings are boundless, I vow to master them.

The Buddha's enlightened way is unsurpassable: I vow to embody it.

How does the *bodhisattva* intend to liberate others? By helping them with *techniques de soi* that will bring their hearts and minds into the space of the "Four Divine Abodes" (*brahmaviharas*) -- also called the "illimitables" or "immeasurables" (*appamanna*).¹¹ The four are:

Loving-kindness (*metta*)

Compassion (*karuna*)

¹¹ Of the four sublime states two, compassion (*karuna*) and appreciative joy (*mudita*) are considered as sui generis mental state types. The other two states are more complex, mixed types. Loving-kindness (*metta*) is a mode of non-hatred which as such does not always show itself as -- or give rise to -- loving-kindness. Although we can rightly say that *metta* is one way of expressing non-hatred, or that a non-hating state of mind is a necessary condition of lovingkindness. The same analytic situation applies to equanimity (*upekkha*) which is a sub-species of mental neutrality.

Appreciative Joy (*mudita*)

Equanimity (*upekkha*).

A soul lives in the divine abodes only if she has purified her soul of the three poisons.

The “Three Poisons” are clinging (*tanha*) or craving (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Only a person who has gone some distance towards purging her soul of the three poisons and replacing them with the four “divine abodes” overcomes, as much as humanly possible, suffering and finds peace and happiness – or better, is on her way to achieving peace and happiness. It is important to conceive of the process as one of ‘awakening’. A person who is waking up is not normally wide awake.

Buddhism and a Problem with Liberal Commonsense Morality

More than the Hellenistic philosophies that Nussbaum champions, Buddhism is a live option in the West. As I see things, this is good. Buddhist therapy for destructive mental states, especially emotions that interfere with happiness and virtue, is readily available and being utilized by an ever-increasing number of Western practitioners. Without overstating a basis for naive hopefulness, the growth of interest in Buddhist philosophy in the West means that novel (to us) resources are available to serve as an antidote to a serious problem prevalent in liberal societies.

What is the problem with liberalism? There is, on the one hand, a belief that happiness is the goal of human life. But it is an essential feature of the liberal outlook that each person is free to determine what is good for her within a system of constraints that, by and large, only sets out an ethical conception that centers on constraints and prohibitions. Liberal morality tells us what we cannot do lest we interfere with the

freedom of others to pursue happiness as they wish. Partly, on principles internal to liberalism itself, great caution is shown in explicitly setting out a shared positive vision of a good life. This is to be settled by individuals, each in their own way. Or by individuals in communities, typically religious, which promote a positive, sometimes even an expansive, conception of the good.

Surprisingly and ironically, in spite of the mantra that happiness is up to each individual, there is, in fact, some sort of shared positive conception of what will bring happiness, despite the idea that each can and should find that in her own way. This shared conception is not, however, the one that one might expect to gain prominence if the messages conveyed in churches, synagogues, and mosques were noble, demanding (which is not always clear), and also penetrated the hearts and minds of Americans. The shared conception I see in my world (which is chock full of people who go to Friday, Saturday, and Sunday services) is the one reflected in and reinforced by the media. What are its main ingredients? Wealth, status, romance (usually superficial). There is more, fancy cars, anti-aging skin creams, hair dye, lots of drugs, especially antidotes to depression, digestive problems due to rich foods, and soft penises (according to ads for “cialis” you should see a doctor if your erection lasts for more than 4 hours; I guess 3 hours and 59 minutes is ok), and so on. The point is that most of the things on the list, especially the first short list, are exactly the ones that every ancient tradition, Ancient Greek, Chinese, Indian, and Hellenistic tells us will not bring happiness.¹²

¹² Is AL or AL' accepted by contemporary commonsense morality in the West?¹² My impression is that it is held, assented to, by liberal commonsense morality, but in a form where virtue is understood as mostly pertaining to behavior (and there mostly to “do not”

From Fellow-Feeling to Universal Compassion and Loving-Kindness

The Hellenistic compassionate philosophers, the therapists of desire, advanced certain Aristotelean ideas and methods, and thus Aristotle can be thought of as the founder of the therapeutic schools. The Buddha lived a century before Aristotle.¹³ Thus Buddhist ideas on the therapy of desire and delusion were hit upon independently, but in response to the same universal problems of human life that motivated Aristotle and his heirs.

Accepting Buddhism as not only a live, but preferred, option for us depends on the credibility of two theses: first, that we are social animals who actualize our social nature by having universal love penetrate, even fill-up, our hearts and minds; second, that this conception of virtue uniquely produces happiness, or, what is different, that

behaviors of restraint designed to allow each to pursue good as she sees fit, not (also) to a state of the soul, and where in addition the conception of ‘virtue’ is weaker, far less demanding, than Aristotle’s – which requires a deep and abiding sense of justice, honesty, moderation in acquiring stuff -- and much weaker than the Buddhist conception which requires universal love and compassion, what in ancient China is called *jian ai*.

¹³ In The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophy, Thomas McEvilley lays out an utterly convincing case that Indian and Greek, Egyptian and Mesopotamian thought, artistic, religious, and philosophical – interpenetrated as far back as 3000 B.C.E. We know that Alexander, possibly not the best spokesperson for Aristotle’s views despite having been raised at Aristotle’s knee, “visited” North India and left Greek settlers among Hindus and Buddhists.

achieving virtue, Buddhist style, brings about a unique kind of happiness that is the most desirable kind.

Aristotle claim that psychological egoism is false provides a basis for the Buddhist recommendation of universal compassion and loving-kindness. We are social animals who live well only in community with others. Insofar as there is a credible philosophical reply to the Thrasymachean challenge that we are psychological egoists, it does not come from Socrates when the challenge is laid down in Books I and II of Plato's Republic, nor does it come from Plato himself in the later books of the Republic. For all Plato really shows is that we can set up society and socialize individuals so that egoism is suppressed. But the reasons he gives for suppression can be read, for all he explicitly says, as congenial to Thrasymachus's view. Suppression of individual egoism by state means and by educating individuals to put reason in control of appetite and temperament produces an equilibrium that, on the assumption of egoism, is the best compromise for all.¹⁴

¹⁴ The Thrasymachean challenge is also raised in the "Gorgias," where Callicles argues that the happy man is one who grows his passions and appetites as far as he can and who has the power to fulfill them. This is what human nature aims at. Socrates repeatedly insists that to do wrong is the worst that can befall a person (worse than being harmed), and that Callicles's egoist will harm others. But the dialogue ends, just as the debate in the Republic with Thrasymachus with Socrates declaring that egoism is wrong and his opponent arguing that is natural and the only know route to individual happiness. Arguably in the "Symposium" and the "Phaedrus" where Plato discusses love more headway is made against the Thrasymachean and Calliclean challenge. But love for Plato

It is left to Aristotle, most explicitly in his chapters on friendship in Nicomachean Ethics, to provide a direct response to the psychological egoist. We are both self-loving and fellow-feeling creatures. Even the mother who is unable to care for her own child and who must give her up for adoption continues to care deeply for her child's well-being (NE, 9, 9.53, 1159a-1159b). Fellow-feeling is a fundamental part of our nature. No one, we are told, would accept the offer of all the other goods, save for friends (NE, 9.11, 1155a). The virtues involved in true friendship involve loving the other as oneself and thus wanting the best for him for his own sake. The desires for friendship and community are not introduced from the outside. They are components, or rooted in components, of our nature as social animals. We fare well only if those we care about (initially this may consist of a small circle) fare well. Seeing them do so, and contributing to their so doing, results in some sort of happiness.

Once this much ground is cleared (Thrasymachus, Callicles, and Hobbes may go home), a basis is laid for the Buddhist argument for universal love and compassion. The argument for universal love and compassion has a familiar ring to it because it has resonances with Kantian and utilitarian defenses of a similar idea. Here's the Dalai Lama's rendition of the core idea:

Genuine compassion is based on the rationale that all human beings have an innate desire to be happy and overcome suffering, just like myself. And just like

is so intellectualist, the eyes of a true lover are set on Wisdom, on the *Eidos* (Forms) – and human love expresses less nobility than love of the Forms -- that he is kept from appealing to the one idea that might mitigate the force of the egoist's picture, namely, our natures include a strong dose of fellow feeling.

myself they have a natural right to fulfill this fundamental aspiration. On the basis of the recognition of this equality and commonality, you develop a sense of affinity and closeness with others. With this a foundation, you can feel compassion regardless of whether you view the other person as a friend or an enemy... Upon this basis, then you will generate love and compassion. That's genuine compassion. (1998, p. 115)

My reading of Buddhist texts written over the last 2500 years finds the warrant, the rationale, the justification, for universal love expressed in this way consistently. The claims about universal compassion do not rest of an innate desire of the universal form, but on a basis in fellow-feeling combined with recognition of the commonality of the human plight and the equal worthiness of all to be free of suffering and, if possible, to find happiness. In the quote it is said that once you recognize 'this equality and commonality' "*you develop a sense of affinity and closeness with others* (my italics)." But this is where work of self-cultivation and therapeutic work with caretakers, friends, and teachers – one's community (*sanga*, Pali; *sangha*, Sanskrit) comes in. No Buddhist accepts the idea that "recognition of this equality and commonality" is sufficient to produce the state of universal compassion. It is sufficient, however, to produce the recognition and the desire that this is a worthy goal to be pursued and embodied. Is universal love and compassion your duty? No Buddhist asks the question that way. Living compassionately and lovingly is a way to realize your nature. And if you want – as you do -- to gain true happiness, then growing the loving, compassionate sides of yourself will gain you that, if anything will.

The Therapeutic Division of Labor

Although Aristotle recommended the virtues of generosity and magnanimity, these were virtues to some significant of the great-souled, well-off, person. And in Aristotle's writings there is both an excessively self-satisfied and patronizing odor to them. There is little textual evidence that Aristotle had a conception of wide compassion on his radar, nor does he display much confidence that *eudaimonia* can be achieved by those who are not already well-bred. Furthermore, although he does in many places speak favorably of the analogy between the physician who treats bodily ailments and the philosopher who treats soul-sickness, it was left to the later Hellenistic philosophers to practically embody the approach.¹⁵ In addition to being well-bred, a person who wishes to become virtuous will do best if she studies and absorbs the arguments laid out in the lectures that comprise the Nicomachean Ethics.

But Aristotle makes clear, especially in the Poetics, that there are techniques available beyond, but consistent with, rational argument, to assist in flourishing. The tragic plays of his contemporaries deal with universal human problems. By identifying with the characters and their plight we have a *catharsis*, a purgation of our own pity and

¹⁵ See Nussbaum (1994) for a deep and elaborate scholarly analysis of Aristotle's reasons for hesitancy in fully embracing the analogy.

fear. In this way our souls are cleansed to some degree, and we are better prepared to deal with loss, sadness and grief that are bound, sooner-or-later, to come our way.¹⁶

For Aristotle there is something akin to a division of labor between practices that work on one's emotional economy (possibly on emotions that can interfere with virtue) and those that lead to cultivation of virtue. Habituation in virtue insofar as it involves cultivation of certain ways of perceiving, feeling, judging, and behaving will go some distance towards attuning the mind to see and feel, as well as, judge and act in the nuanced ways required by each virtue. But there may be states of mind, powerful and common ones, such as existential anxiety or dread that are not treated directly by training in virtue.

Attending performances of tragic plays will work some, how long is unknown, to arouse feelings of pity and fear, to have you feel the commonality of your plight with others, and to purge yourself of certain, possibly negative, emotions – desires for permanent life or complete immunity to suffering, fear and trembling, and so on.

Buddhist therapy of desire blends different kinds of work and techniques to transform the heart-mind. Arguments and direct instruction are used for important philosophical ideas, the four noble truths, the eightfold path, the doctrine of *anatta*, for example. But these forms of direct teaching, akin to attending Aristotle's *Paideia* and hearing his lectures on ethics, are interwoven with dramatic parables and teachings on

¹⁶ Soul-rousing music works similarly (and thus vicariously) for release of certain emotions. In Bk. II of the Poetics which is lost, Aristotle discusses comedy. Some hints about the sorts of emotional release involved and their value can be found in the Rhetoric.

meditation that assist in the psychic changes that Aristotle sees falling mostly in the domain of art.

For the Buddhist, ethical practice is partly artful itself. Here is a classic example of the use of a story, a parable, to adjust the heart-mind. It is ancient and is called, “The Parable of the Mustard Seed.”

A poor woman, Kisa Gotami, had a baby. But when that boy of hers was old enough to play and run hither and about, he died. Sorrow sprang up within her. Taking her son on her hip she went about from one house door to another saying “Give me medicine for my son!” [W]herever people encountered her, they said, Where did you ever meet with medicine for the dead? [N]ow a certain wise man saw her and thought: This woman must have been driven out of her mind by sorrow for her son. [S]aid he: “Woman, as for medicine for your son – there is no one else who knows – the Possessor of the Ten Forces, the foremost individual in the world of men and the worlds of the gods, resides in a neighboring monastery. Go to him and ask.” Taking her son on her hip to the Tathagata who sat down in the Seat of the Buddhas, she said: “O Exalted One, give me medicine for my son!” [T]he teacher seeing she was ripe for conversion, said: “You did well, Gotami, in coming hither for medicine. Go enter the city. Make rounds of every house in the city, and in whatever house no one has ever died, from that house fetch tiny grains of mustard seed.” At the first houses she visited, people went to their pantries to fetch mustard seeds. But she remembered that she was not to accept seeds from households where a family member had died. So she left the first, and the second, and the third house—and so on – empty-handed. Finally, she thought: In the entire city this must be the way! This the Buddha, full of compassion, must have seen!” Overcome with

emotion, she went outside the city to the burning-ground, and holding him in her arms, said: "dear little son, I thought you alone had been overtaken by this thing which men call death. But you are not the only one death has overtaken. This is a law common to all mankind." So saying, she cast her son away in the burning-ground. Then she uttered the following stanza:

No village law, no law of market town,

No law of a single household is this -----

Of all the world and all the worlds of gods

This only is the Law, that all things are impermanent.

Kisa Gotami moves from being overcome with grief and sadness to gaining some perspective on her plight. To be sure, she has suffered a great loss, but everything is impermanent. And she now knows – what we all easily forget – that she cannot, just as we cannot, find even one household in any neighborhood, town, village, or country where the household has not suffered loss of a loved one. Gotami's fellow-feeling, her compassion for others, her sense of the common condition of humanity are enhanced, and this helps her deal with her awful loss. She takes her beloved son to be cremated with great love, a love that has deepened and expanded from focus only on her loss, from her incapacitating grief caused, in part, by the mistaken view that she has been singled out uniquely to suffer in this way. Gotami is deepened by wisdom. He who hears or reads the parable is similarly deepened.

The Buddha's Law

Aristotle's Law is a psychological generalization to the effect that happiness and virtue normally co-occur. More specifically, virtue typically causes true happiness, and nothing else does so. The four noble truths of Buddhism can be read in such a way that they express the same idea (although keep in mind that I have offered reasons for believing that the necessary condition claim will need to be adjusted). Suffering can be alleviated and happiness can take its place only if one's mind is rid of the three poisons of hatred (*dosa*), avarice (*lobha, tanha*), and delusion (*mosa*). Treating the process as developmental, the eradication of the three poisons leaves mental space for a consciousness which makes progress towards embodying the four illimitables, the unlimitables, the divine abodes: compassion (*karuna*), loving-kindness (*metta*), appreciative joy at the well-being and success of self and others (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*). A mind constituted by the four divine abodes is the mind of a person who has diligently followed and abided the noble eightfold path. Her heart is dominated by feeling of compassion and loving-kindness. She is a constant self-cultivator who watches her own motives carefully and works constantly to be free of wishful thinking and delusion. Being dis-ease free she is happy, contented.

Aristotle and the Buddha agree that happiness is the initial psychological goal of humans, A life of Reason and Virtue or Wisdom and Virtue, these being different in several important ways, turns out to be the way, the necessary means, to achieve happiness. If we think, as we should, of there being a process of moral and cognitive development, then reason (or wisdom), virtue (without or with universal love as a component), and happiness (likely construed in theory-relative ways) will admit of

degree along the way, with True Happiness resulting only for the truly rational (or wise) and virtuous.

In the Four Noble Truths, especially the first and the second, the focus is on the ubiquity of suffering and its cause in thirst, acquisitive desire, and the three poisons. The third and fourth noble truths point to techniques, following the noble eightfold path (appropriate/right/perfect (*samma*, Pali; *samyak*, Sanskrit) view, *samma* attention, *samma* speech, *samma* action, *samma* livelihood, *samma* effort, *samma* mindfulness, and *samma* concentration) that extinguish unwholesome desires, and provide remedy from suffering. The Theravada tradition, the “school of the elders” emphasizes that our original psychological goal is the alleviation of suffering.

Thus it is no surprise to a reader familiar with Buddhist history, that *Hammalawa Saddhatissa* in his excellent book, *Buddhist Ethics* (1970, 1997, 2003), written from a Theravadan perspective, treats virtue as a necessary component for the alleviation of suffering. Although Buddha is consistently referred to as “the Happy One,” we are pointed to suttas in the Pali Canon where neither he, nor anyone else, claims to know techniques for achieving happiness, only ones for relieving suffering.

In the Mahayana tradition a more upbeat view emerges. Thus Damien Keown in his equally excellent book on *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (1992, 2001) reads the remedies offered in the third and fourth noble truths -- virtue and meditation -- as prescriptions for alleviating suffering and bringing happiness to the heart and mind. And he proposes that nibbana can be understood as a state of virtuous enlightenment in this life, not necessarily as a post-mortem state in which all craving (the cause of suffering) is extinguished for good (although, of course, there's that too, and not just for enlightened

souls but for everyone). The Dalai Lama speaking for Tibetan Buddhism (a type of Mahayana that emphasizes insight meditation), says again and again the “the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness.”

So the primary psychological motive that Aristotle assumes is back in place. A true Aristotelean might fuss perhaps over what is meant by “purpose.” Our purpose is defined in terms of the proper function (*ergon*) for a creature of our kind and this involves actualizing our potential to be rational and virtuous. But I see no real basis for disagreement here. Since the Buddhist view is that we actualize our full potential by becoming wise and virtuous. Our original motives to be free of suffering and, what is stronger, happy, serve to get us moving on the path to Wisdom (*Panna*) and Virtue (*Sila*).

We are now positioned to see a substantive difference between the kind of happiness that comes from virtue as conceived by Aristotle and Buddhism, respectively. Happiness, for Aristotle comes primarily from virtue (in accord with reason). As I read Aristotle, the kind of happiness that accrues differs in degree and in stability, but not in kind, from the sort of good feelings one has in friendship or in familial love. Even the sort of settled contentment involved may be of the same type one has experienced with success at completing other, i.e., non-moral, worthwhile projects. Buddhists emphasize that there are different kinds of happiness that come from family relations, material success, and so on. But the kind of happiness, that comes from true virtue, given that it involves the “four divine abodes” uniquely pertains to the enlightened state, or being in its vicinity. It differs in kind from other, more mundane, kinds of happiness.

Furthermore, Buddhism is open to interpretations that suggest that there are in fact two necessary conditions for happiness: virtue and direct cultivation through

meditation (typically on virtue) of mental states that are constituents of happiness.¹⁷ Call this two necessary condition claim Buddha's Law, henceforth BL. Minimally, accepting BL over AL (note there is a version of BL' that corresponds to AL') entails differences in the methods and techniques required to attain virtue.

One more point: it seems wise, at this point, to acknowledge that for reasons that I spoke of above, such as magic pills for happiness, and for reasons that will soon become even clearer that both the Aristotlean and the Buddhist might be wise to adjust their respective necessary condition claims at least this far. Continue to claim that virtue or virtue and meditation, combined, are required for happiness, and indeed, normally cause/produce it. But allow for possible exceptions. Then introduce a normative exclusion clause to disallow the exceptional cases from counting as morally approved. This will result in a debate between the two theories that revolve around AL'' and BL'' which say:

AL'': Virtue is the normal and reliable cause of happiness.

BL'': Virtue and meditation (typically) on virtue is the normal and reliable cause of happiness.

To which is added to each a normative exclusion clause, to the effect, that cases where happiness is gained by magic pills or is due to false belief do not count because the allegedly happy person must be involved in

¹⁷ In reporting on the Dalai Lama's practice in The Art of Happiness, Howard Cutler writes: "*The Dalai Lama's strategy, however, seemed to bypass working on social skills or external behaviors, in favor of an approach that cut directly to the heart – realizing the value of compassion and then cultivating it.*"(1998, p. 71 (his italics)).

cultivating her own virtue and happiness; happy states born of delusion are undeserved, and so on

Being Happy that One is Good

According to Aristotle, eudaimonia is the goal every rational person sensibly seeks. If a person possesses a good character and thus lives virtuously she has reason to judge herself worthy and will, in all likelihood, feel happy. She will experience herself at a minimum, as worthy and decent. Happiness of the sort we aim at is a settled or semi-settled state that involves a positive feel for -- a positive sense of -- who one is and how one is doing in negotiating relations and affairs that really matter, intrapersonally and interpersonally. Happiness is not a simple state, so it may involve in addition, to admixtures of self-esteem and self-respect and contentment, optimism, joy, serenity, and equanimity.

Money doesn't bring happiness, high status doesn't, having only friendships of utility or pleasure won't. But virtue normally does. Why is this? One answer might run as follows: Habituation in virtue, as conceived by Aristotle, is designed to bring the co-occurrence about. Each virtue is a disposition to perceive, feel, judge, and act in a way appropriate to the virtue. Thus building virtuous character involves -- much more than building good behavior. It involves, to a substantial degree, growing, pruning, and maintaining in good health certain perceptual and emotional attitudes and motivational tendencies that are constituents of the virtues. These mental factors motivate good action and are required according to Aristotle for assignments of credit and blame.

In addition, the virtues, as constituents of a good life, are approved of and sanctioned by the wise. Conforming to wisdom, especially when one understands the force of the high quality (possibly, valid and sound) arguments of the wise, normally makes one feel worthy, good about oneself. But even for one who has not mastered all the intricate analyses and arguments of, say, the Nicomachean Ethics, good character normally results in feeling good about oneself, contented, worthy. Why's that? Because virtue involves the amplification of our social nature, an innately attractive and pleasing aspect of ourselves-in-social-relations, which becomes ever more pleasant the more fully it blossoms.

The point is that it is not simply that socialization works to produce the relevant feelings, attitudes, and behavior. Mother Nature wired us over evolutionary time to feel positively about being with others and about their well-being, most especially relatives and those others with whom we share communal projects. Moral socialization works by way of sound arguments for a conception of the good life known to one's caretakers who dedicate themselves, as part of the project of building noble individuals, to growing the seeds of fellow-feeling and autonomy. Thanks to a certain directionality in our nature, developing and then expressing a well-formed, virtuous character, leads to feelings of contentment. Excellent social relations are a source of happiness. And the development of autonomy enables us to become self-cultivators, knowing how, where, and when to apply *techniques de soi* to adjust and develop our own characters more fully.

The fact remains that one could have the following reasonable concern. Part of the socialization in virtue will include transmitting the idea that 'if one is good, then one ought to be happy.' Suppose then that I feel happy, but am not virtuous, I might think

mistakenly think I am happy because I am virtuous. If the happiness is the kind that (allegedly) only comes from virtue according to AL, then it is yet another counterexample to AL. But suppose I really am good. Then the thought that I am happy (at least partly) because I am good, is true.

One might think that across various virtue traditions, because happiness is not simply a feeling state, but has cognitive content, that one sort of content it will be tied to in self-ascriptions is some modest version of an 'I am a good person' thought. This has two consequences.

One consequence is that some simulacra of true happiness, say, that caused by the magic pill I mentioned earlier, might reveal themselves as a counterfeit, so long as the state possessed every property of true happiness except the relevant contentful surmise 'that I am a good person.' If it produced that thought however, when it was false, we'd need to do some adjustments to our necessary condition claim (whatever form it has AL, AL', BL, BL'), since something other than virtue (plus meditation) produced the relevant state. This is where the normative exclusion clause recommended above would come in handy. We stipulate that even the right kind happiness if caused by false belief doesn't count. The rationale? Happiness gained by false belief violate our epistemic norms which interact with our moral norms, but which have their own defensible basis.¹⁸

¹⁸ There is work in social psychology about "positive illusions." Most people, even knowing the relevant base rates, of divorce, car crashes, cancer, etc. underestimate that these things could happen to them. Roughly the greater the underestimation, the happier the person is. We ought to distinguish positive attitude from belief. If a person truly believed that it is impossible that tragedy hits them they are deluded. If however the

The second consequence of the fact that each moral tradition will work to make reliable a dependency relation between feeling-happy ascriptions and 'I am good' (by the lights of my tradition) ascriptions, is this: An individual person, be she an Aristotelean, a Buddhist, or a contemporary liberal, will, if she feels happy likely think it is (at least partly) due to the fact that she is good. The judgment can be mistaken. But that aside, the widespread fact that self-attributions of happiness accompany more-or-less accurate judgments that one is conforming to the local conception of virtue, is best explained as due to the fact that we are taught (a) that they should accompany each other, because she who is virtuous deserves to be happy; and (b) because, for similar reasons, virtue is the most likely causal suspect if we feel happy, contented and the like.

The point is that normal socialization encourages, and thus possibly makes self-fulfilling to some degree, ascriptions of happiness when the agent has reason to judge (correctly) that she is in normative conformity. To my mind, this is only seriously problematic when the conception of virtue is not really very worthwhile.¹⁹ But the

deeply hope it won't and are doing work to keep it from happening then the hope can be deemed reasonable

¹⁹ I have in mind here liberal commonsense morality. It is very undemanding (a different point, also true, would be that it does little to discourage people from seeking their good in very unwholesome activities). Nonetheless, as in all traditions, people who think they are morally decent by contemporary liberal standards think they deserve to be happy. I agree that they deserve to be happy. Everyone deserves to be happy. But the folks I have in mind think they deserve happiness because they are good, or good enough. But they are not.

conceptual linkage I have suggested is a plausible component of all methods of teaching virtue, when acquiring virtue is thought to causally contribute to happiness (necessarily, or in some weaker, but reliable way) might explain some sorts of moral complacency or chauvinism – the sorts where people tend to believe that their conception of the good life is better than other contenders. Only it, their own moral conception, as they see and experience things, produces moral contentment, happiness, etc. An alternative conception of virtue might, due solely to the power of socialization, be judged as too demanding, an odd duck, or whatever. This phenomenon of admiring one's own values and norms because one is socialized to believe that they constitute the right way may be an instance of what psychologists call "the anchoring effect." One can easily see how socialization in the goodness-of-one's-way of life, might legitimately come to the service of producing appropriate feelings of self-esteem, self-respect, while, at the same time, enabling certain unfortunate tendencies of moral chauvinism. These I think could be overcome by also teaching about the danger I have just spoken of.²⁰

The Psychology of the *Abhidamma*.

²⁰ There is a good lesson here from social psychology. When research subjects are duped to believe something false and negative about themselves, the effect does not disappear when they discover that they were duped. They need to be taught about the so-called "perseverance effect" itself, which says that false beliefs do not go away simply as a result of being shown to be falsely inculcated. They persevere. Only when one learns this, does the false belief yield.

The Abhidamma is the classic text of Buddhist philosophy and psychology, and is the third of the three baskets, *Tipitaka*, of the Pali canon (*Tripitaka*, Sanskrit). The Abhidamma is composed of seven books. Most of my remarks pertain to books 1 and 7, which deal with psychology. The prefix *abhi* means, or suggests, the drawing of distinctions. It is attached to *damma* (Pali; *dharma*, Sanskrit), which in this context refers to the teachings about the Way contained especially in the *Sutta Pitaka*, the middle basket of the three. The first basket (*Vinaya Pitaka*) consists of wisdom on the life of monks and nuns. The Suttas contain Buddha's wisdom for all persons on the path (*damma*) to wisdom (*pranna*) and virtue (*sila*). Sometimes the suttas consist of doctrinal teachings, as well as parables, such as the "parable of the mustard seed" discussed above

All Buddhists treat books 1 and 7, especially, of the Abhidamma as a psychological masterpiece (other books are devoted mostly to Buddhist views on time, causation, etc.) combining at once deep phenomenology, analytic acuity, and classification of mental states in terms of the 'wholesome' and the 'unwholesome' in accordance with how they fit into the Buddhist view of eudaimonia. This deep respect for the Abhidamma obtains despite the fact that many Mahayana Buddhist see the original manual penned by Theravada monks, as too glowing in its treatment of the monastic life, as well as still embracing remnants of the doctrine of atman.²¹

What first catches the eye of the Western reader is the extraordinary number of distinctions drawn among states of consciousness. The book begins with a taxonomy of

²¹ The complaint is that the decomposition of mental states bottoms out in indestructible psychological atoms which themselves should be considered conditioned, and thus that are further decomposable ad infinitum.

consciousness (*Citta*) into conscious mental state types (*cittas*). These number 89 initially, and reach 121 after some adjustments. Each type is characterized in terms of the sort of object it takes in (so visual and auditory consciousness differ in an obvious way); its phenomenal feel (e.g., sad and happy); its proximate cause or root, e.g., there is greed-rooted and hatred-rooted consciousness; and its function or purpose (avaricious consciousness is thirsty and aims to suck in, swallow, what it desires).

Citta and the *cittas* are analytically distinguished from the mental factors (*citasekas*) that they, as it were, can contain. So, roughly, Joy-Consciousness might contain joy-at-an-infant's-birth-in-my-family or joy-at-a-friend's-success.²² Joy-Consciousness is a type of consciousness, thus a *citta* of *Citta*, whereas joy-consciousness-about-family and joy-consciousness-about-friends would be two sub-types (factor, *citaseka*). Even the *citasekas* admit of lower-level distinctions that happily are not made! But to give a feel: I might be happy [that sister Nancy has a baby] and [that sister Kathleen has one]. The feeling is of the same type, but the intentional content, marked off by brackets, differs in the two cases.

As one studies the Abhidamma one gets into the spirit of drawing distinctions upon distinctions, and, indeed one could really start to believe the Tibetan joke that a master phenomenologist might be able to discern 84,000 (the number is akin to us saying 'a

²² This might sound like a form of Brentano's thesis: all consciousness is consciousness of. As for Brentano there is the objection that moods, feeling low or anxious, aren't always (or necessarily) about anything. They just are. Also certain supramundane meditative *cittas*, familiar to Buddhists, involve (attempting to) reaching a state that is pure, in the sense of contentless.

gazillion’) types of anger or craving – anything for that matter! The second thing, or perhaps it will happen first, that will strike the Western reader is that the words ‘wholesome’ and ‘unwholesome’ (as well as less frequently ‘neutral’) are used in the process of classification itself. One might imagine the objection that ‘real.’ that is, scientific psychology describes and explains and predicts, but does not judge the various kinds of sensations, perception, emotions, and learning it analyses in normative terms.

Indeed, this is our practice in many parts of psychology. But the fact is that clinical psychology and psychiatry texts abound with normative assessment. So one reply to the objection is to conceive of the Abhidamma as a psychological treatise that combines descriptive with normative insights gathered from the Buddha’s teaching in the first two baskets. Just as we might criticize a psychiatry text on the grounds that it assumes an unwarranted conception of mental health, any concerns with the ascriptions of ‘wholesomeness’ or ‘unwholesomeness’ require showing what is wrong in the Buddha’s conception of the good life.

The three poisons, recall, are hatred (*tanha*), craving (*lobha*), and delusion (*moha*). These three, uniquely perhaps, are always bad or unwholesome. Furthermore they ramify and interact with other mental states, indeed with one’s overall sense of well-being, in ways that produce un-ease.²³

²³ The three poisons are first elaborated as giving rise to “The Six Main Mental Afflictions” Attachment of craving, Anger (including hostility and hatred), Pridefulness, Ignorance and delusion, Afflictive doubt, and Afflictive views. These in turn are roots for the “The Twenty Derivative Mental Afflictions” Anger which comes in five types: Wrath, Resentment, Spite, Envy/Jealousy, Cruelty; Attachment which also comes in five

At the other end of the spectrum are the “Four Divine Abodes” (*brahmaviharas*) -
- also called the “illimitables” or “immeasurables” (*appamanna*).²⁴ The four are:

Loving-kindness (*metta*)

Compassion (*karuna*)

Appreciative Joy (*mudita*)

Equanimity (*upekkha*).

One might think that just as the “three poisons” are categorically bad, the “divine abodes” are categorically good. There is one caveat required. Wisdom (*panna*) and virtue (*sila*)—require as a necessary condition avoiding the three poisons. It seems constitutive of loving-kindness, compassion, and appreciative joy at the success of others that these

types: Avarice, Inflated self-esteem, Excitation, Concealment of one’s own vices, Dullness; Four kinds of Ignorance: Blind faith, Spiritual sloth, Forgetfulness, and Lack of introspective attentiveness. Finally, there are six types caused by Ignorance + attachment: Pretension, Deception, Shamelessness, Inconsideration of others, Unconscientiousness, and Distraction. The point is that there a lot of ways one can go wrong. The tools required for the therapy in virtue will not surprisingly need to be abundant and multifarious in kind.

²⁴ Of the four sublime states two, compassion (*karuna*) and appreciative joy (*mudita*) are considered as sui generis mental types. The other two (loving-kindness (*metta*) is a mode of non-hatred which as such does not always show itself as -- or give rise to – loving-kindness. Although we can rightly say that it one way of expressing non-hatred or that a non-hating state of mind is a necessary condition of loving-kindness. The same analytic situation applies to equanimity (*upekkha*) which is a sub-species of mental neutrality.

states rule out (are psychologically incompatible) with hatred and envy (a form of greed). But delusion (*moha*) can mitigate the sublimity of even the “divine abodes.” Suppose one achieves equanimity because she fails to notice certain particulars about her own character, or the character or plight of others, that she ought to be noticing or paying attention to. Here delusion surfaces and might make us question whether the equanimity is warranted. It feels sublime, but it is supported and sustained by failing to see what one ought to see. There is an unwholesome aspect to such equanimity. Similarly one might feel happy about one’s friend’s successes, but have failed to notice that the successes were not achieved in an honest way. Whether one would be judged culpable for this sort of ignorance depends on what was in view and what wasn’t. The point is that certain epistemic deficiencies can undermine the warrant, and thus the sublimity, full stop, of being in an illimitable state of mind. As I see things, only by introducing the sort of normative exclusion clause recommended above do we have legitimate grounds for judging such cases as unwholesome.

And indeed Buddhist psychology pays a considerable amount of attention to the causes of mental state, especially before moral assessment is made. All states rooted in hatred or greed are unwholesome, as our states caused by wrong view. The case of the magic pill that makes one happy is not discussed, but similar cases are. If a seizure causes me to experience euphoria, it is deemed “rootless,” and rootless states are unwholesome. Notice, this means that one can be in a state that feels good, has positive valence, but which is, nonetheless unwholesome. One reason for judging the state unwholesome is that it is normative – both psychologically and ethically – that happiness be produced by goodness or self-work I engage in, not by aberrant neural firings.

One other point: all four abodes are said to involve states of mind towards others. One might agree while emphasizing that, at the same time, all four are in fact states of mind of the individual who has them, and they have unique first-personal phenomenological feel for that person. Their object is, of course, the good of some other. But this analysis seems to run into trouble with equanimity (*upekkha*) which might seem to be a pure state-of-my-soul, and thus not directed at, for, or towards anything outside me. To be sure, my being calm and serene might make me more pleasant to be around, but it is not constitutive of equanimity, as we understand the state, that it has this aim. But this is not true. Equanimity (*upekkha*) means more than serenity. It is constitutive of equanimity that I feel impartially towards the well-being of others. If I am in the state of equanimity, interpreted as *upekkha*, I am in a state that involves, as an essential component, equal care and concern for all sentient beings.

The Work of Meditation

The journey to happiness aims at embodying or realizing the four divine abodes. The Buddha was a compassionate soul healer, a therapist of delusion and desire. The aim is happiness. The normatively approved pre-condition for happiness is wisdom and virtue. But the techniques required for achieving happiness are multifarious. Think of the Buddhist soul-healer as akin to an old-fashioned general practitioner, whose medical kit contains all the different tools to get done whatever needs doing. Sometimes the patient will simply need to understand that because she is very old, say, her aches and pains must be accepted. Perhaps she will be asked to look around at her old friends and acquaintances. She will realize that many have died, and understand that despite her

impatience and stubbornness, that she will go that way too. But perhaps she, and the therapist together, will focus on the old and happy souls who go on, find meaning and purpose in friends, communal games and projects, listening to music, and arguing about politics, despite the aches and pains, quirky memories, and so on. Objectively nothing changes in her physical condition. But perhaps, as with the “Parable of the Mustard Seed,” the old woman sees things differently and feels better. Stories and parables abound in Buddhist texts, each designed for a different mental affliction. There are stories designed to put anger in perspective, to make it wane, to reveal its ultimate fruitlessness. Stories that reveal the empty feelings that accompany relentless acquisitiveness. And so on for every mental affliction starting with the three poisons, moving on to the six main afflictions, and then to the twenty derivative afflictions.

Sometimes the patient will need clear instruction on how to understand her condition for what it is (she doesn’t really get it). And she will need to understand how to get better. Such direct soul-diagnosis and instruction for alleviating her dis-ease is given for everyone in the Four Noble Truths since they include, especially in the Third where we are instructed to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, the directions to practice virtue, including what this entails, and to meditate.

Meditation is a tool like story-telling and direct teaching. There are 84,000 types of meditation! Some work to develop attention, one-pointedness. These may help in living virtuously by making one more attentive to the particulars of another’s situation. There is meditation on emptiness designed to help the individual understand the impermanence of all things. Breathing meditation is good for relaxation, as well as

serving as an antidote for *moha* (false belief). When I attend to the facts ‘now I am inhaling,’ ‘now I am exhaling,’ I focus on things as they really are, and so on.

Here I provide just two examples. Both examples are provided by the Dalai Lama and are based on a type of Tibetan meditation (*Tong-len*) which is a form of widely practiced “give and take” meditation. The first is designed to enhance compassion, the second works first on selfishness, then on empathy and love.

#1: In generating compassion, you start by recognizing that you do not want suffering and that you have a right to have happiness. This can be verified or validated by your own experience. You then recognize that other people, just like yourself, also do not want to suffer and that they have a right to happiness. So this becomes the basis for your beginning to generate compassion.

So let us meditate on compassion. Begin by visualizing a person who is acutely suffering, someone who is in pain or is in a very unfortunate situation. For the first three minutes of the meditation, reflect on that individual’s suffering in a more analytical way – think about their intense suffering and the unfortunate state of that person’s existence. After thinking about that person’s suffering for a few minutes, next, try to relate to that yourself, thinking, ‘that individual has the same capacity for experiencing pain, suffering, joy, happiness, and suffering that I do.’ Then try to allow your natural response to arise – a natural feeling of compassion towards that person. Try to arrive at a conclusion: thinking how strongly you wish for that person to be free from suffering. And resolve that you will help that person to be relieved from their suffering. Finally, place your mind single-pointedly on that kind of conclusion or resolution, and for the last few

minutes of the meditation try simply to generate your mind in a compassionate or loving state (1998, pp. 128-129).

#2: To begin this exercise, first visualize on one side of you a group of people who are in desperate need of help, those who are in a unfortunate state of suffering, those living under conditions of poverty, hardship, and pain. Visualize this group of people on one side of you clearly in your mind. Then, on the other side, visualize yourself as the embodiment of a self-centered person, with a customary selfish attitude, indifferent to the well-being and needs of others. And then in between this suffering group of people and this self representative of you in the middle see yourself in the middle, as a neutral observer.

Next, notice which side you are naturally inclined towards. Are you more inclined towards that single individual, the embodiment of selfishness? Or do your natural feelings of empathy reach out to the group of weaker people who are in need? If you look objectively, you will see that the well-being of a group or large number of individuals is more important than that of one single individual. After that, focus your attention on the needy and desperate people. Direct all your positive energy to them. Mentally give them your successes, your resources, your collection of virtues. And after you have done that, visualize taking upon yourself their suffering, their problems, and all their negativities.

For example, you can visualize an innocent starving child from Somalia and feel how you would respond naturally towards the sight. In this instance, when you experience a deep feeling of empathy towards the suffering of that

individual it isn't based on considerations like 'He's my relative' or 'She's my friend.' You don't even know that person. But the fact that the other person is a human being and you yourself, are a human being allows your natural capacity for empathy to emerge and enable you to reach out. So you can visualize something like that and think, 'This child has no capacity of his or her own to be able to relieve himself or herself from his or her present state of difficulty or hardship.' Then mentally take upon yourself all the suffering of poverty, starvation, and the feeling of deprivation, and mentally give your facilities, wealth, and success to this child. So, through practicing this kind of 'giving and receiving' visualization, you can train your mind. (1998, pp. 213-214)

How Demanding is Buddhist Ethics?

The charge of excessive demandingness is commonly made against consequentialism especially against and the version of act-consequentialism that requires that for each and every action opportunity I have, I should do, or try to do, what will maximizes the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. The first objection to a theory of this form is that it requires a psychologically impossible amount of attention to 'each and every action opportunity.' What are all my action opportunities at this moment? How many different actions are action-opportunities I have at this moment? If an ethical theory requires me to give determinate answers to these questions, even if I am only required to unconsciously compute what all my action-options are (before choosing the most 'optimific') it asks something impossible, perhaps something that makes no sense.

There are familiar ways around this serious objection. Most credible versions of consequentialism define the good as that which maximizes welfare impartially construed, but then go on to suggest a variety of psychologically possible ways that the best-state-of-affairs can be brought about. For example, the good will be maximized if people proceed to love their loved ones, extend benevolence to their neighbors, show concern for their community, and care about the well-being of all. In this way, circles of concern will come to overlap, so that each is the beneficiary of an “expanding circle” of concern. The usual move is to suggest that impartial good will come from the spreading outward of partial concern. It is not clear that this is true. I do not know how to test it. But it is a popular idea, captured most visibly in bumper stickers that read, “Think Globally, Act Locally” -- which seems like pretty good advice.

Without resolving the issue of whether there is an adequate way for consequentialism to keep its distinctive character (defining the good impartially), without also being judged to be too demanding, it is nonetheless useful for present purposes -- which is to decide if Buddhism is too demanding -- to identify the feature that is consistently seen as the source of the problem of excessive demandingness. It invariably has to do with how much impartiality, and of what kind, is required.

To get quickly to the point, distinguish among these different kinds of impartiality: (1) the *belief* that everyone has equal ‘right’ to flourish; (2) *equal love* for everyone; (3) impartiality in *action*.

The *belief* that everyone has an equal ‘right’ to flourish is not psychologically too demanding. Furthermore it is a sensible belief. Here, I repeat the Dalai Lama’s rationale for (1) from meditation #1 above: “In generating compassion, you start by recognizing

that you do not want suffering and that you have a right to have happiness. This can be verified or validated by your own experience. You then recognize that other people, just like yourself, also do not want to suffer and that they have a right to happiness (my italics).”

As stated this rationale is not logically demonstrative. But it can be made so:

- If there is something I desire for its own sake and recognize that everyone else wants the same thing, then I ought to believe that everyone has a ‘right’ to that thing.
- Whenever I recognize that I ought to believe something, I believe it.
- I desire to flourish (not suffer, be happy).
- I recognize that everyone else wants to flourish (not suffer, be happy)
- I ought to believe that everyone has a ‘right’ to flourish
- I believe that everyone has a ‘right’ to flourish

This argument is valid. Thus (1) now follows necessarily. The conclusion must be true if the premises are. The only point of entry I can imagine for questioning the argument’s soundness would involve taking on the major premise. Try if you like. I’ll assume that the argument which simply formally, i.e., deductively, restates the Dalai Lama’s rationale for recognizing a universal ‘right’ to flourish is acceptable, indeed that it is prove.

Next consider (2) *equal love* for everyone. Two questions arise: First, who conceives of commitment to impartiality – now interpreted in accordance with (1) – as *believing* that everyone has a ‘right’ (the same right) to flourish -- as entailing *equal love* for all?

Jesus and Buddha are likely suspects. John Stuart Mill tells us that the main message of his essay, Utilitarianism, is summed up in Jesus of Nazareth's "Golden Rule." This is helpful since Mill is not, in arguing for utilitarianism, promoting a doctrine that is particularly 'lovey-dovey'. That is, I don't need to "love" you in one normal sense of the term, to promote your welfare. This brings attention to the second question about (2). What does *equal love* mean? There are issues about the meaning of both words 'equal' and 'love.' I'll be brief.

Mill's Jesus is not asking us to have warm and fuzzy feelings when he tells us to "Love one's neighbor, as oneself." Was exactly did Jesus mean? Biblical scholars agree that Jesus best clarifies what the Golden Rule means when a hostile lawyer asks him "who is my neighbor?" Jesus' answer comes in the form of the parable of the "Good Samaritan." The Jewish people and the Samaritans were bitter rivals, worshipping different Gods, and so on. The story is that a certain Jewish man is robbed, beaten, and left to die in a ditch. A Rabbi first, and then a Levite (a man of lower rank than a rabbi who assists the rabbi in preparation and oversight of Jewish religious services) both pass by, despite seeing the badly injured man. Then a journeying Samaritan comes along "and when he saw him, he had compassion on him," nursed him, bound up his wounds, put him on his own donkey, and took him to an Inn where he nursed him overnight. In the morning when it was time to leave he paid the Innkeeper and said, "Take care of him and whatever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

Jesus asks "Which now of these three, thinkest thou was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" And he [the lawyer] said "He that showed mercy on him." Jesus then said "Go and do thou likewise." (Luke, 10, 25-37)

Assuming, as everyone does, that the parable clarifies the meaning of the “Golden Rule,” what does it help us see? It helps us see that hatred (*dosa*) is a vice, as in indifference, whereas sympathy, empathy, and compassion (*karuna*) are virtues. Clearly the Samaritan doesn’t feel the sort of ‘love’ towards the injured Jew that he does for his spouse, parents, brothers and sisters, children, fellow community members – towards whom he may feel different kinds of love. Whatever love he feels here is an active, but impartial love (he doesn’t know the injured man in any way that could make him feel any special way towards his character, towards the unique person he is). It is a ‘love’ born of compassion and mercy that would motivate him to help anyone suffering in the same way.

We have insufficient evidence, but we might think that the Samaritan is someone whose heart is filled with compassion (*karuna*) and loving-kindness (*metta*). It needn’t have been that way since some weaker form of fellow-feeling could motivate a person to help anyone in such dire straits. A difference would reveal itself when the straits were less dire, or major inconvenience would result from providing assistance.

In any case the ‘love’ required by Jesus in the “Golden Rule” is decidedly not personal love in any of the familiar forms; it is not romantic or sibling or parental or communal love. It is best described as compassion or loving-kindness toward any and everyone who suffers. As I understand Buddhism it recommends the same virtues, the same kind of ‘love.’

What makes such love ‘equal’ or ‘impartial’ or ‘universal’? Well it is not because one feels the exact same kind of love for the man in the ditch that one feels for one’s children or spouse. What one does ideally feel towards both one’s loved ones and the

man in the ditch is impartial in the sense that one wishes no suffering and happiness for them all solely on the basis of their shared humanity. Both because of how one is positioned and because of the special (additional) love one feels for one's loved ones, one might, possibly through the work of meditation, take some of the deeper features of those personal love relationships and feel-them-into-the wider-world. This would be, I take it, a morally healthy type of projection.

Finally consider (3) impartiality in *action*. A and B are both in equally dire straits, both are drowning, I am equally well positioned to help A or B neither of whom I know, but helping one means the other will die. It is obvious I must help one, but which one? The answer is that in this case it doesn't matter. Flip a coin if you wish. But save one.

Suppose A is my child and B is a stranger. I know what I'd do. Critics of consequentialism sometimes say that a consequentialist in virtue of recommending impartiality in action should do the coin toss. The usual and plausible consequentialist reply is that the world will go better – the good considered impartially will be maximized -- if people maintain, and abide the obligations intrinsic to, their special, partialistic human relations.

Such, happily rare, dilemmas aside, consequentialists will rightly press us about our chauvinistic tendencies. In a world in which 20% of the people suffer in absolute poverty as defined by the World Bank, am I really doing as much good as I can, as I should? Start just thinking about America – although our 'love' ought to eventually extend beyond the borders of our nation state. Imagine, sounding like John Lennon, that well-off Americans were raised to feel compassion (*karuna*) and lovingkindness (*metta*) in the way Buddhism recommends. There are 35 million working poor in America and

perhaps an equal number of unemployed poor (Aristotle taught that you can't lack basic necessities and have prospects for virtue and happiness; Buddhists agree, although they conceive of the basic necessities required as comprised of a more meager basket of goods than Aristotle did). Suppose that in addition to being raised to be compassionate and loving-kind, we also believed in moderation and quelled our avaricious tastes. Being raised this way, the poor and the suffering are on my mind, I want to act so as to alleviate suffering and help such souls become happy. What to do? I could contribute (large sums of now disposable income) to local charities. I could work for political reform, progressive taxes going from say 60% for people in my income bracket to 99% for Bill Gates. These are kinds of impartial actions, or better impartial strategies for the greater good. The people I am imagining, good Buddhist persons, don't feel bad that they have less. They feel good that *Fortuna's* hand in determining the fate of our fellows is weakened and that the hands of those whose hearts feel love and compassion are strengthened.

The only sensibly conception of impartial action I have ever heard defended runs along these lines. This is true despite the fact that we are sometimes asked to picture individuals looking at their savings ledger asking 'what exacting ought I to do at this moment to maximize the impartial good?' And with this picture in mind, the practical impossibility of doing anything sensible, let alone truly good, bears down on us.

I am aware that, in this final section, I have not directly addressed the question of whether Buddhism is too demanding. I have however tried to do so indirectly. We ought to *believe* that everyone deserves to be free of suffering and to achieve some sort of happiness. This is more or less a matter of rational consistency. Working on compassion

and loving-kindness, loving our neighbor as ourselves, makes sense. Doing so, possibly uniquely, holds prospects for making us happier than all the money or stuff in the world can. Furthermore, it positions us – in virtue of our belief about what everyone in fact deserves, and our greatly amplified fellow-feeling – to want to actively work for the impartial good.

Being a virtuous Buddhist is certainly not psychologically impossible. It takes work and practice, but these are not so hard. Usually when an ethical conception is charged with being too demanding, the charge revolves around demands it makes that are perceived to be psychologically or practically impossible. Buddhism advocates no states of mind for the virtuous that are impossible to achieve, nor does it advocate any general purpose algorithm for deciding at each choice point what to do. So it is not subject to either kind of impossibility charge.

Buddhism presents a vision of virtue and happiness. It does not tell us that we are obligated or required to follow the way. It does tell us that so doing amplifies, in healthy ways, our most noble natural tendencies, and thus that if we want to find personal happiness and make the world a better place, following the path of *Damma* (Pali; *Dharma*, Sanskrit) is wise and noble.

One final point. I've claimed that Buddhism promotes a noble vision for realizing our potential, and that it cannot be charged with being too demanding. Aristotle provides a picture of virtue that is better and more demanding than liberal commonsense morality. But as judged from the perspective of Buddhism it is too undemanding. Aristotle saw clearly that our natures contain a healthy dose of fellow-feeling. His vision of the virtuous person is one who grows these sprouts. What Aristotle failed to see was that

growing these sprouts more fully, to the point where compassion and loving-kindness take over our heart-mind, would make us morally better and happier to boot. There I stand.