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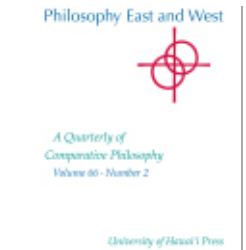
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## READING THE BUDDHA AS A PHILOSOPHER



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Scholars debate whether the Buddha's teachings preserved in the Pāli Canon can be considered philosophy, and whether the Buddha himself can be considered a philosopher. The existence of a philosophically tractable Buddhist soteriology is not in doubt; however, there is debate over the point at which this structure emerges in the tradition. In this essay we put forth several prominent objections to reading the Buddha as a philosopher, then offer responses to these objections based in part on the work of Pierre Hadot (1922–2010). While we cannot claim to capture the definitive reading of the Buddha (if such there be), we suggest that close attention to the Nikāyas gives reason to read him as a philosopher.<sup>1</sup>

Paul Williams suggests that the image of the Buddha as a doctor, seeking to remove the poisoned arrow of ignorance in humanity, precludes his being a philosopher:

For the Buddha our situation is past discussion. . . . The Buddha in this sense is not a philosopher, at least if we understand a philosopher as someone engaged in an activity of reflection and discussion on fundamental issues of, say, metaphysics, ethics and politics. The image often used in Buddhist texts is not of the Buddha as a philosopher, but the Buddha as a doctor, "the great physician." One does not philosophise with one's doctor, at least, not if one's illness is critical but still curable. . . . The Buddha's concern is not discussion. It is not pondering or mulling things over.<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere he places the development of Buddhist philosophy with the Abhidharma/Abhidhamma.<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to Buddhist philosophy in particular, Sungtaek Cho has some caveats:

When it comes to Buddhist philosophy in particular Buddhist texts are not holy scriptures meant to reveal the intent of a God or gods; no divine origin or authority is attributed to them. This distinguishes them from other religious texts such as the Bible and Vedic literature. Nevertheless, Buddhist texts are not purely philosophical, either, in the modern sense; their philosophical arguments are presented in the form of religious narratives, and their richly metaphoric use of language diverges sharply from modern philosophical practice.<sup>4</sup>

Noa Ronkin concurs:

Although the Buddha's message does contain doctrinal concepts and theoretical statements on the nature of *dukkha*, its cause, its cessation and the way to its cessation, these statements function as guidelines for comprehending Buddhist thought and do not amount to a systematic theory. The attempt to ground the Buddha's scattered teachings in an inclusive theory was introduced later on with the advance of the subsequent Abhidharma/Abhidhamma tradition. . . . While the Nikayas present the Buddha's teachings as addressed to specific audiences at specific times and locations, the Abhidhamma seeks to describe the structure underlying the Buddha's Dhamma fully, in ultimate terms that apply in all circumstances. In this sense it marks the attempt to establish Buddhist thought as a comprehensive philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

Likewise, Dan Arnold writes that a truly systematic, formalized philosophical vocabulary did not appear until long after the Buddha's passing:

In introducing Buddhist and Brahmanic epistemology into the contemporary Western discussion of ways of knowing, the character of Sanskrit philosophical discourse changed significantly around the middle of the millennium. It was then that there emerged concerted efforts to systematize and formalize the conceptual vocabulary of the discourse, facilitating a largely shared sense of what, at least in principle, constituted valid arguments. . . . Indeed, some would say that only at this period is there finally what can properly be called Indian philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Buddha as Philosopher: Responses to Objections*

Contrary to Williams's assertion that the image of the doctor is not that of a philosopher, the practices of philosophy and medicine have long been interlinked.<sup>7</sup> The connection between philosophy, chiefly concerned with our moral well-being, and medicine, concerned with our physical well-being, can be found in thinkers such as Avicenna (ca. 980–1037) and Maimonides (1135–1204), continuing into the early Modern philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).<sup>8</sup> Dismissing the philosophical nature of the Buddha's thought by suggesting that he was more concerned with religious or *merely* soteriological matters belies the breadth of concerns of ancient philosophy, religion, and medicine, in both East and West.

The Buddha's approach to philosophy was deeply rooted in practice. This may not seem to fit well with the Western academic approach; however, even in the West philosophy was not understood as entirely theoretical until after the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> So it would not be correct to view the Buddha's emphasis on practice, practical experience, or pragmatic goals as inconsistent with the claim that he was doing philosophy.

Written at a time close to that of the Buddha, Epicurus's *Letter to Herodotus* is evidence, according to Pierre Hadot, of the sort of didactic brevity that would suggest that "the concern for systematic coherence was subordinated to spiritual effectiveness."<sup>10</sup> The primacy of the practical can be seen in later Western philosophy as well. Immanuel Kant, for instance, emphasizes the need for practical (that is, moral)

reason to supersede speculative reason, concluding that “all interest is ultimately practical and even the interest of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone.”<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately this practical orientation is very often lost in Kant’s distinctive *lack* of brevity.

Sungtaek Cho’s caveats are partially correct: contemporary philosophical practice does not typically involve either religious narratives or linguistic usage quite as metaphoric as one finds in some earlier texts. However, we should bear in mind two things. First, philosophy in the West is rife with material of religious import. The division between philosophy proper and theology has never been decisive across either discipline. Again turning to Hadot, we find that Descartes wrote his *Meditations* in the spirit of St. Augustine, recommending that they not only be read, but practiced over a period of time. Spinoza’s *Ethics* has similar ancient roots, and one can read both Nietzsche and Schopenhauer as philosophers of self-transformation.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, contemporary scholars such as Owen Flanagan bridge the fields of academic philosophy and self-transformative traditions, including Buddhism.<sup>13</sup> Second, metaphor has always played a role in philosophical argumentation, from Heraclitus’s river to Plato’s sun, line, and cave to Hobbes’s Leviathan to Daniel Dennett’s cranes and skyhooks.<sup>14</sup> Whether these metaphors qualify as “religious” in nature is beyond the scope of this essay, but each reflects what is in some form an ultimate concern, be it metaphysical, epistemological, or political.

Ronkin sees the issue in terms of the Buddha’s message not being sufficiently “systematic,” “inclusive,” or “comprehensive.” However, a similar lack of a “systematic” or “inclusive” theory does not call into question the philosophical *bona fides* of the Presocratics, Socrates, or numerous later philosophers in the West. Their philosophies and others produced in ancient Greece and Rome were primarily didactic, as opposed to systematic and formal, much like the Buddha’s. The ideal found in the Buddha’s message, like that of many ancient Western and Chinese philosophies, was “a form of life defined by an ideal of wisdom.”<sup>15</sup> This understanding of philosophy as a way of life was elucidated by Hadot to describe ancient Western thought. It also may describe some later Western philosophers. Such an understanding of philosophy—as a pursuit with prescriptions for both Right Understanding and practice—helps us read the Buddha as a philosopher.

This essay will agree with Arnold and Ronkin that the material presented in the Pāli Canon does not constitute either a “systematic” or “formalized” philosophy or one that was “comprehensive” in the manner of Aristotle or Kant. Nevertheless it does constitute a comprehensive philosophy in another, related sense.

Any treatment can be comprehensive in at least two senses: it can be comprehensive in being *thorough*, or it can be comprehensive in being *wide ranging*. To take a couple of examples from the history of philosophy, John Rawls’s theory of justice and the system of ethics elaborated by Confucius and his disciples are both thorough as regards their subject matter. Neither theory attempts to be otherwise philosophically wide ranging. Aristotle’s ethics taken in isolation provides a thorough ethical system; however, one would require the rest of his philosophical corpus to establish that it was comprehensive in the sense of being wide ranging.

## *The Buddha as Philosopher: Arguments in Favor*

Some scholars argue in favor of the Buddha's philosophical *bona fides*. For example, Richard Gombrich concluded "that the evidence that [the Buddha] had evolved such a [philosophically coherent] structure of thought and that it underpinned his pragmatic advice is . . . compelling."<sup>16</sup> And taking issue with the claim that the Buddhism of the Nikāyas constituted only the "germs of a philosophical system," Frank Hoffman says, "what is not correct is the suggestion that early Buddhism is less logical and less consistent than later developments."<sup>17</sup>

Williams himself suggests the philosophical nature of the Buddha's teachings in the preface to his work with Anthony Tribe and Alexander Wynne:

Things are seen the way they actually are by those like Buddhas who are enlightened, that is, awakened to the truth. This distinction has given Buddhism an acute interest in issues of ontology, i.e. what can be said really to exist. Such matters are essentially philosophical. In Buddhism philosophical insight—coming to understand things the way they really are—has transformative moral and spiritual implications.<sup>18</sup>

The Buddha's claim of "having seen things as they truly are" (*yathābhūtaṃ viditvā*) not only served to spark ontological interest later in the tradition; the Buddha himself consistently upheld the realization of impermanence and not-self as fundamental to the attainment of the final goal.

Christopher Gowans suggests as well that "there is much in the Buddha's teaching that is philosophical in nature—for example, his ideas concerning the self, impermanence, and dependent origination."<sup>19</sup> He goes on to suggest that "the practice taught by the Buddha does have theoretical dimensions, and there is much to be learned by focusing on these, so long as we do not lose sight of their practical context."<sup>20</sup>

It is in this light that we read Siddhattha Gotama as a philosopher. His work is primarily ethical in orientation, yet the metaphysical structure that upholds this ethical teaching is not unimportant. If a permanent self (*attan*) or anything permanent (*nicca*) were in evidence, then the Buddha's teaching could have veered into the search for that self or permanent refuge. In fact, it is due to the impermanent nature of all conditioned experience (*saṅkhāras*) that the Buddha repeatedly implored his disciples to practice diligently, as if their heads were on fire.<sup>21</sup> This is opposed to the perhaps "all too human" proclivity to engage in speculation that is not in the service of ending suffering.

Hadot's work helps draw out the connections between the Buddha's thought, as preserved in the Pāli Canon, and Western philosophy. Hadot reawakened scholarly interest in the diversity and complexity of Greco-Roman philosophy, particularly that of the Stoics, Sceptics, and Epicureans. His renewed understanding of the thought-world of ancient Western thinkers reveals many similarities to the world of the Buddha and early Buddhists. For both Buddhism and early Western thinkers, the metaphysics that gives structure and coherence to the practical teachings must be

understood as being in the service of moral and intellectual practices, pursued in the quest for a final goal.

Is there a proper description of “philosophy” such that the Buddha can be correctly described as practicing it? As Matthew Kapstein aptly points out, “we cannot ask ourselves what Buddhist philosophy might be without at the same time asking what it is that we mean by ‘philosophy.’”<sup>22</sup>

Mark Siderits writes, “In the context of the Buddhist path, ‘wisdom’ means the practice of philosophy: analyzing concepts, investigating arguments, considering objections, and the like.”<sup>23</sup> Will this do? It is, of course, impossible to establish anything like truly exhaustive necessary and sufficient conditions for the correct application of virtually any term, and the question is made all the more difficult by the vagaries of historical usage. Nowadays a professional philosopher may be one who does some form of conceptual analysis, or one who investigates the fundamental assumptions we make about the world and our ultimate justifications for these assumptions in the context of an educational institution. This was not always the case, of course. In a classical context, philosophy might be more appropriately considered something closer to a reasoned investigation into the way to achieve the best sort of life. Pre-modern conceptions of philosophy include the “natural philosophy” of a more empirical bent, elements of which go back to the Presocratics. Several of Aristotle’s works, such as the *Physics*, *Meteorology*, or *On the Gait of Animals*, are based at least partly on investigation. As well, a critical part of Aristotle’s ethical program involved *phronesis* or “practical wisdom,” whereby one aiming for ethical betterment learned how to act properly in given real-world situations through trial, error, and training.

Cutting through this Gordian Knot, we will follow Williams’s more circumspect assertion that philosophy is a branch of reasoned “reflection and discussion” that encompasses such subjects as metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics. This approach is in line with the Hadot-inspired claim that philosophy is a pursuit with prescriptions for both Right Understanding (namely metaphysics, ontology, epistemology) and practice (namely ethics, politics).

There is no essential divide in philosophy between reasoned reflection on the one hand and some form of practice on the other. In order to reason appropriately about one’s circumstances, one requires input from the world that must be gained through some form of active, practical manipulation. Any given thinker will emphasize one side, depending on interest and subject matter, but any claim, for example that philosophy is entirely based on reasoned analysis and argumentation, to the exclusion of an element of practice or practical wisdom, cannot survive historical scrutiny.

As we saw above, Williams says that “the Buddha’s concern is not discussion. It is not pondering or mulling things over.”<sup>24</sup> However the suttas reveal much pondering and mulling during his years as a *bodhisatta*.<sup>25</sup> Further, although the Buddha is portrayed as having awakened to an eternal or ancient truth (*sanantana dhamma*), it is likely that his own thought on certain matters, or at least his presentation of them, evolved.<sup>26</sup> Many suttas involve discussion, argument, and, at least on the part of his

disciples, pondering and mulling. A *dhamma* follower (*dhammānusārī*) is a disciple for whom the Buddha's teachings are accepted "after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom" (*paññāya mattaso nijjhānaṃ khamanti*), and the gradual training requires that one "investigate" (*upaparikkhati*) and "scrutinize" (*tuleti*).<sup>27</sup>

The Buddha expected potential disciples to approach his teaching critically.<sup>28</sup> He also expected them to approach him as a teacher critically.<sup>29</sup> There is no sense in the Canon that one was to accept the Buddha's teachings entirely on unreasoned faith; instead the message is one of critical evaluation and faith-in-confidence. He recommended a form of belief or conviction based on personal experience, the testimony of the wise, and the perceived behavior of the teacher. As the Buddha famously said in his *Kālāma Sutta*:

Do not go by oral tradition, by lineage of teaching, by hearsay, by a collection of scriptures, by logical reasoning, by inferential reasoning, by reasoned cogitation, by the acceptance of a view after pondering it, by the seeming competence [of a speaker], or because you think: "The ascetic is our guru." But when you know for yourselves: "These things are wholesome; these things are blameless; these things are praised by the wise; these things, if accepted and undertaken, lead to welfare and happiness," then you should live in accordance with them.<sup>30</sup>

It is true that the Buddha inveighed against argument and "the thicket of views" (*ditthigahana*), that he dismissed conceiving as "a disease, a tumor, a dart," and that he refused to answer certain philosophical questions that appear to have been regarded as requisites for any spiritual teacher of the time.<sup>31</sup> A careful look at these suttas, however, reveals that the Buddha did not reject argument, conceiving, or philosophical claims *tout court*. For example, although the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* contains many claims against particular views and philosophical standpoints, it also begins with the Buddha arguing with the stubborn monk Ariṭṭha for his "pernicious view" that sensual pleasure was not obstructive of liberation.<sup>32</sup> The Buddha rejected philosophizing only when it was unproductive, for example when sophistical argumentation promoted clinging; when concepts such as "I am," "I was," or "I shall be" led to some form of wrong view; or when disputes fell into irrelevancy:

For what reason [should you not engage in disputatious talk]? Because, bhikkhus, this talk is unbeneficial, irrelevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, it does not lead to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.<sup>33</sup>

Why have I left that undeclared? Because it is unbeneficial, it does not belong to the fundamentals of the holy life, it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.<sup>34</sup>

These passages amount to meta-philosophical or methodological arguments in favor of doing philosophy in certain ways—pursuing certain topics and avoiding others because of their benefits and costs. Metaphysical claims not relevant to the direct knowledge necessary for *nibbāna* should be avoided as a waste of time. Argument and disputation for its own sake is not useful, so avoid it.

As regards “views” (*diṭṭhi*) in particular, Hoffman says that the Buddha’s “message is not one view among others, not a theory to be argued about but a way of life to be practiced.”<sup>35</sup> This is perhaps an accurate picture from an internal perspective: the Buddha did not refer to his own approach as one view among many; he often used the word *diṭṭhi* to mean something like “false view” or “speculative view.” However, from an external perspective, claiming that the Buddha did not propound a view amounts to special pleading. The Buddha’s *dhamma* was in fact a theory about a way of life that should be practiced. Further, it was a theory about which he did in fact argue, when presented with contrasting positions. “Right View” (*sammādiṭṭhi*), however, which is understood in practice, is a central element of the Eightfold Path. One cannot attain *nibbāna* without it, and the Buddha commended it in especially strong terms: “Bhikkhus, I do not see even a single thing on account of which unarisen wholesome qualities arise and arisen wholesome qualities increase and expand so much as right view.”<sup>36</sup>

Although the Buddha avoided certain claims and topics based on their uselessness in achieving the ends of the path, this does not imply that the Buddha had no theory, nor does it imply that he had no metaphysics.<sup>37</sup> While the Buddha eschewed pointless speculation, he nevertheless had an extensive metaphysical framework. He presented an ontology of aggregates (*skandhas*), elements (*mahābhūtas*), sense bases (*āyatanas*), and realms of existence (*lokas*) over beginningless aeons (*mahākappas*). He presented a picture of modality (*ṭhāna-aṭṭhāna*) and of complex causal interactions among these elements over beginningless lifetimes (cf. *paticcasa-muppāda*).<sup>38</sup> And of course he also presented a robust ethical theory that distinguished skillful from unskillful (*kusala-akusala*), right from wrong (*sammā-micchā*). While it is thus not correct to claim that the Buddha eschewed metaphysics (we prefer to follow Hoffman and Richard Hayes in this regard), the metaphysical system he provided was to a certain extent inchoate and, at any rate, by no means the central focus of his efforts.<sup>39</sup> His metaphysics was always in the service of his ethics.

Further, any claim that the Buddha was universally opposed to discussion or argument is belied by his own behavior. The Buddha was an accomplished debater, interested in conceptual and logical precision: the Nikāyas include debates and arguments concerning all or virtually all of the Buddha’s contemporary competitors.<sup>40</sup> Certain of his arguments, such as the “sure” (*apaṇṇaka*) bet proposed in favor of rebirth and kammic reward in the *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*, presage or mirror fundamental philosophical arguments found in the West.<sup>41</sup> Nor, as we have seen, was he above cross-examining a monk for mistaken appreciation of the *dhamma*.<sup>42</sup> These are abilities the Buddha himself emphasized:

[M]y disciples esteem me for the higher wisdom thus: “The recluse Gotama is wise; he possesses the supreme aggregate of wisdom. It is impossible that he should not foresee the implications of an assertion or that he should not be able to confute with reasons the current doctrines of others.”<sup>43</sup>

The Buddha was someone for whom concepts, evidence, argument, and critical evaluation, *when used properly*, formed an integral part of the pursuit of wisdom and



liberation. That said, while such analytical, theoretical pursuits formed a necessary part of the Buddha's approach, they were not sufficient for attaining its end. Nor were they the sorts of practices one was meant to pursue for their own sake. As the Buddha said, "Bhikkhus, both formerly and now what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering."<sup>44</sup>

### *The Buddha's Ethical Philosophy*

The Buddha's aim was to create a system of behavioral, verbal, and mental betterment, aimed at what he believed to be the purest form of happiness and well-being.<sup>45</sup> In other words, he aimed to create what could be termed an ethical program, roughly along eudaimonic lines.<sup>46</sup> As Ronkin says, the Buddha did not intend to propound a comprehensive philosophy.<sup>47</sup> While his system brought more or less inchoate forms of metaphysics, cosmology, and epistemology in its wake, neither did the Buddha attempt to develop a wide-ranging theory of human knowledge, as did Aristotle, nor did he attempt to create a "systematic" ethical theory, in the sense of "something distinguishable from other aspects of the tradition."<sup>48</sup> He did not completely develop any of the standard Western branches of philosophy, save one: ethics. We will aim to demonstrate that the Buddha did develop an ethical program that illuminated, in the Socratic sense, "the way we ought to live."<sup>49</sup>

Insofar as ethics is one of the standard branches of philosophy, the Buddha did indeed attempt to establish a kind of comprehensive philosophy: he attempted to establish a *thorough* and *complete* ethical program. Such a comprehensive eudaimonian program is one that purports to provide universally recommended strategies for reaching the ethical *summum bonum*, as well as to provide reasons and arguments on their behalf. Many of the Buddha's previously referenced arguments are aimed at establishing these ethical goals and strategies. To take but one example, in the *Mahāsāropama Sutta* he outlines arguments against taking certain proposed goals, such as attaining "gain, honor, and renown," as truly eudaimonic.<sup>50</sup>

The Buddha's approach to ethics was holistic and recursive enough that it is difficult to locate precisely the right place to enter; perhaps we can do so with a text like the *Mallikā Sutta*, however. There King Pasenadi relates to the Buddha a surprising discussion he had with his wife, Queen Mallikā. Pasenadi had asked Mallikā whether there was anyone dearer to her than herself. One supposes that he expected to hear from her that she was most devoted to her husband, the king. But Mallikā was straightforward enough to admit that there was nobody dearer to her than herself. She then turned the question back to the king, who admitted the same was true for himself. On hearing this, the Buddha said,

Having traversed all quarters with the mind,  
One finds none anywhere dearer than oneself.  
Likewise, each person holds himself most dear;  
Hence one who loves himself should not harm others.<sup>51</sup>

Such sentiments ground the Buddha's ethical system on insight into the universality of human nature. It isn't simply that the world is a certain way, namely that "One

finds no one anywhere dearer than oneself," but more importantly that the nature of the world leads ineluctably to skillful and unskillful, or wise and ignorant ways of thinking and acting: "Hence one who loves himself should not harm another."<sup>52</sup> Were such rules not universal, their role as ethical guides would be vitiated: they would only be guides for the few. Instead, the Buddha saw them as guides for all.

Famously for the Buddha, lived reality is characterized by three marks or aspects: it is impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). These, particularly the first, characterize perhaps the most fundamental aspect of the Buddha's metaphysical picture, the basis upon which he rejected the Brahminic salvific solution of a union between one's soul or *ātman* and the universal Brahman. Indeed, the Buddha went so far as to suggest that if one could locate some part of lived reality that was "permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and that might endure as long as eternity" one should strive to acquire it.<sup>53</sup> If such permanence were found, "this living of the holy life for the complete destruction of suffering could not be discerned."<sup>54</sup>

For the Buddha, impermanence, the conditioned nature of the arising and passing away of states, is what makes life essentially unsatisfactory. His ethical problem is thus rooted in a metaphysical claim about lived reality: permanence is not to be found anywhere, so any solution to the problem of suffering cannot depend on it.<sup>55</sup> Instead, it must be found in an attitude that itself requires mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*) through insight (*vipassanā*) and wisdom (*paññā*).

Much ink has been spilled over the question as to precisely which Western ethical theory best fits the Buddha. It is certainly conceivable that he would have preferred one of the Western approaches had he known of them. Perhaps he had something like virtue ethics or consequentialism in mind. It is also possible that framing the *dhamma* as ancient law, universal in nature, and binary in its description of morality/immorality (*kusala/akusala*) may allow for a Kantian interpretation of Buddhist ethics.<sup>56</sup> It is more likely, however, that the Buddha was less interested in formulating the foundations of his ethical approach than in its effectiveness as a path.<sup>57</sup> As Abraham Vélez de Cea has noted, one can find a variety of Western ethical theories in the early suttas, but although certain of them may prove more illuminating in given contexts, it may not be reasonable to assume that any one of them is exclusively correct.<sup>58</sup> Insofar as the Buddha's aim was to teach "suffering and the cessation of suffering," that aim is consistent with cultivating virtuous mental dispositions, or actions or rules with consequences that do not involve suffering.<sup>59</sup>

So although we feel that a broadly eudaimonic approach to the Buddha's ethical theory is a reasonable, loose interpretation, it is perhaps most illuminating to sketch the comprehensive nature of the Buddha's ethical theory as one finds it in the Nikāyas. In making this comprehensive ethical theory we find the Buddha to be a philosopher.

### *Framework for the Buddha's Ethics*

In order to avoid the imposition of an outside framework on the Buddha's ethics, we endeavor as much as possible to let the texts speak for themselves. The Buddha's

approach to ethics, one can say of the entire *dhamma*, is in terms of the Four Noble Truths:

Friends, just as the footprint of any living being that walks can be placed within an elephant's footprint, and so the elephant's footprint is declared the chief of them because of its great size; so too, all wholesome states can be included in the Four Noble Truths.<sup>60</sup>

The Four Noble Truths constitute Right View in the Eightfold Path.<sup>61</sup> In practice, our grasp of them is said to begin as a form of cognitive understanding that is eventually realized in direct insight. For the purpose of motivating ethical behavior, however, it may be more revealing to look at the truths in a slightly different light. In the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, the Buddha treats his four insights not only as truths, but also as requisite actions: "ways we ought to live" in the broadly Socratic conception of ethics.<sup>62</sup> We might term these the four "to do's," four things that are to be done if we are to reach the *summum bonum* of the dhammic path. These are all aimed at confronting the problem of suffering, or *dukkha*. Suffering is, of course, a larger issue for the Buddha than simple physical or mental discomfort. As he says in his First Sermon,

[B]irth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.<sup>63</sup>

First, there is something *to be understood*: this truth of suffering. Second, there is something *to be abandoned*: the origin of suffering. Third, there is something *to be realized*: the cessation of suffering. Fourth, there is something *to be developed*: the way leading to the cessation of suffering. This schematic formula encompasses both practical and theoretical elements of the *dhamma*, and for the Buddha includes "all wholesome states" by showing the only effective way toward the cessation of suffering. One realizes the ethical goal in the attainment of this form of wholesome cessation. It is not possible to give an entirely concise description of each of these states, since "there are innumerable nuances, innumerable details, innumerable implications" in each of the four.<sup>64</sup> However, we can at least outline the comprehensive nature of the thesis.

### *To Be Understood*

Bhikkhus, when one does not know and see the eye as it actually is[,] . . . forms . . . eye-consciousness[,] . . . eye-contact[,] . . . [the feeling] felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant[,] . . . one experiences bodily and mental suffering.<sup>65</sup>

For the Buddha, in order to pursue the path to the cessation of *dukkha*, one must begin by understanding how completely it permeates ordinary, *saṃsāric* experience. In his *Chachakka Sutta*, or the *Six Sets of Six*, he undertook to present a systematic, comprehensive survey of the elements of experience.<sup>66</sup> His disciple Nandaka gave a similar teaching to *bhikkhunīs*.<sup>67</sup> The Buddha introduced this sutta with a "string of

epithets, usually descriptions of the Dhamma as a whole” that emphasized its importance.<sup>68</sup> He then turned to the focus of the sutta:

The six internal sense bases should be understood. The six external sense bases should be understood. The six classes of consciousness should be understood. The six classes of contact should be understood. The six classes of feeling should be understood. The six classes of craving should be understood.<sup>69</sup>

These six sets of six are analyzed by sense: one each for the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The categories are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive of sentient experience: they constitute “the all.”<sup>70</sup> In understanding each of these, one is to understand the arising of *dukkha* in all its forms.

In the *Chachakka Sutta*, the Buddha proceeds systematically. Having analyzed experience into its six sets of six, he goes through each set, showing how it arises. In particular, consciousness arises based on the meeting of internal sense base, external sense base, and the contact particular to them. Feeling arises based on the meeting of internal sense base, external sense base, and the contact particular to them. Craving (*taṇhā*), the source of *dukkha*, then arises conditioned by feeling.<sup>71</sup>

Having illuminated the existence and arising of these six sets of six, the Buddha then elaborates the approach one should take with respect to them, through insight.<sup>72</sup> One should understand all thirty-six according to the formula “not mine, not I, not myself,” since they are impermanent and subject to change. Not to do so is to fall into delight or aversion, based on ignorance. This, it is claimed, would lead one back to *dukkha*. “Bhikkhus, that one shall here and now make an end of suffering . . . without abandoning ignorance and arousing true knowledge—this is impossible.”<sup>73</sup>

The Buddha elsewhere describes all five aggregates as suffering.<sup>74</sup> In the *Chachakka* the Buddha has only been discussing four of the five: consciousness, feeling, body (*rūpa*) through the sense bases, and volitional formations (*saṅkhāras*) through craving. However, insofar as the aggregates are impermanent and subject to change, and insofar as they are to be viewed as “not mine, not I, not myself,” all five are unsatisfactory, and hence *dukkha*. It would seem that the Buddha’s analysis here of “what is to be understood” is slightly incomplete. As he says, “And what things should be fully understood by direct knowledge? The answer to that is: the five aggregates affected by clinging.”<sup>75</sup>

A resolution can be found in the *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta*. There Sāriputta provides an analysis of the arising of the five aggregates out of the sense bases.<sup>76</sup> “By analyzing this complex into the five aggregates, Ven. Sāriputta shows that any occasion of sense experience is comprised within the truth of suffering.”<sup>77</sup> That is, any co-occurrence of sense bases with contact necessarily brings along all five aggregates.<sup>78</sup>

### *To Be Abandoned*

And what things should be abandoned by direct knowledge? Ignorance and craving for being. These are the things that should be abandoned by direct knowledge.<sup>79</sup>

Craving is the classic example of that which is to be abandoned: it is said to be the origin of the four nutriments that support our continued rebirth within *saṃsāra*.<sup>80</sup> In order to abandon craving we must first understand it.<sup>81</sup> We must see that craving is the weak link in the chain of Dependent Origination. We cannot change the fact that our senses make contact with the world. We cannot change the feelings that arise from contact, be they pleasant, painful, or neutral. But we can at least hope to abate and eventually to remove the craving that results from feeling.

The Buddha analyzes craving into two basic kinds: craving for being (*bhava-taṇhā*), and craving for sense pleasures (*kāmatāṇhā*). Together with ignorance (*avijjā*) they comprise the three standard taints (*āsavas*).<sup>82</sup> The taints lie at the root of our bondage to *saṃsāra*, and their destruction (*āsavānaṃ khayā*) is what is necessary for the attainment of *nibbāna*.<sup>83</sup> As he says in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*:

[I]t is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.

Craving for being is said to root all of our tendencies toward self-view: it is what gives rise to the wrong views listed in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*, as well as the craving for future existence that keeps us bound to *saṃsāra*.<sup>84</sup> Craving for sense pleasures functions in much the same way, by rooting us more directly to “the all” of phenomenal experience. Both of them merge into the taproot of ignorance: unawareness of the Four Noble Truths that ground the Buddha’s ethical program.

In the *Sabbāsava Sutta*, the Buddha gives a thorough account of how one should go about abandoning the taints.<sup>85</sup> He provides seven methods: seeing, restraining, using, enduring, avoiding, removing, and developing. Five of the methods will not lead to complete abandonment: they only serve to moderate the taints. So, for example, one can moderate craving for sense pleasures by employing sense restraint. Although this tactic will not itself lead to abandonment, it may lead to the quiescence necessary to pursue a strategy that does. Only the first and last, seeing and development, lead to true abandonment and cessation. They do so based on elements of the Eightfold Path, which, as we will see, is “to be developed.” For example, Right Effort is crucial in abandoning the taints “by seeing.”<sup>86</sup> This, however, gets us ahead of ourselves in the schema.

### *To Be Developed*

And what things should be developed by direct knowledge? Serenity and insight. These are the things that should be developed by direct knowledge.<sup>87</sup>

The *Mahāsaḷāyatānika Sutta* reverses the traditional order of the last two Noble Truths, speaking first of the path to be developed.<sup>88</sup> We will follow that structure for ease of exposition. As Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi remark, “Here serenity and insight represent the entire Noble Eightfold Path.”<sup>89</sup> The passage privileges meditative accomplishment,

perhaps because it is aimed at an audience already quite familiar with the ethical ground (*sīla*) necessary for insight.<sup>90</sup> At any rate, illustrating the comprehensive nature of the Buddha's path is daunting, since its development constitutes much of the material in the suttas.

We will argue for at least three main, interrelated approaches to the path. First is the Eightfold Path itself, which "covers the side of discipline, in the broadest sense of that word."<sup>91</sup> This formulation illustrates in a conceptually comprehensive fashion how awakening is to be achieved. Although this path purportedly stems from the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (and there constitutes the "middle way" that is to be developed), it gets a particularly detailed exposition in the *Mahācattārisaka Sutta*.<sup>92</sup> Unfortunately, that sutta appears to contain substantial later material, mostly regarding the distinction between "mundane" and "supramundane" interpretations of the path. This material likely stems from interpolations during the development of the early Abhidhamma. Nevertheless, comparisons with *Madhyama Āgama* 189 allow us to point out certain relevant details that appear to have been original to the sutta.<sup>93</sup> In particular, of the eight parts, Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*) "comes first," or, in the Āgama, it "is foremost ahead." It is not simply that Right View comes in the first position of the eight. Right View informs our understanding and appreciation of each of the eight parts of the path, in turn: without at least a glimmer of Right View, we are unable to begin or proceed, since we are unable to tell right from wrong as regards the steps along the path.<sup>94</sup>

While Right View is not itself a process of reasoning, reasoning and the understanding it produces are crucial in getting ourselves to Right View. As Paul Fuller has described, Right View is not a matter of what doctrine is to be held, but rather of how one understands doctrines.<sup>95</sup> Fuller argues, echoing Hoffman above, that Right View is ultimately held not when one simply affirms a doctrinal position, but only when one acts in a certain way, usually described as the "ten wholesome courses of action" (*dasā kusala-kammaṭṭhā*). So described, the path is as much one of reasoning and conceptual understanding as it is of disciplined practice. Understanding must precede practice in order to direct it, but just as *phronesis* is essential to gain Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, so disciplined practice is essential to gain *nibbāna*. Understanding and the practice it directs are equally important for reaching the ethical goal.

The second approach to the path involves the "gradual training."<sup>96</sup> The Eightfold Path is only roughly linear in sequence. One is not expected, for example, to have a very good grasp of Right View before undertaking the ethical precepts that follow, and a complete understanding of Right View depends upon insights gained from Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, which are the last two elements of the Eightfold Path. The gradual training, on the other hand, illustrates how the process of awakening might happen in temporal order, perhaps even in a particular lifetime. We can look to the *Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta* for a description of the stages.<sup>97</sup> They begin with the appearance of an enlightened Tathāgata in the world who teaches the *dhmma*. A normal householder hears the *dhmma*, and decides to practice: now he is on the path. The first stage is the training in ethics (*sīla*) in the grosser sense of

correct speech and behavior. This then matures into a form of inner contentment and further practice in forms of sense restraint, which then transforms into clear comprehension (*sampajañña*). It is at this point that true meditation practice begins.<sup>98</sup> In time the five hindrances are overcome, and the monk attains the four *jhānas*. Having done so, he directs his mind, “purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability,” to the attainment of the three higher knowledges (*te vijjā*).<sup>99</sup> The third of these involves the destruction of the taints (*āsavas*), by way of direct insight into the Four Noble Truths. This is the insight realization that, it is claimed, yields *nibbāna*.

Disciples will undertake such training in different ways, according to their strengths, weaknesses, and interests. In the *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*, the Buddha gives another sketch of the gradual training and discusses seven types of practitioners.<sup>100</sup> Two kinds in particular, the disciple attained-to-view (*ditṭhappatto*) and the *dhamma*-follower (*dhammānusārī*), pursue philosophically oriented paths highlighted by reasoning and examination.<sup>101</sup> They contrast with those disciples who practice mostly by faith or meditative accomplishment.

The third approach to the path is perhaps the most focused that one finds in the Canon: it is the meditative discipline set out in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.<sup>102</sup> Although it presupposes a thorough grounding in the Buddha’s ethical program, this approach can be seen as almost self-contained.<sup>103</sup> It is the “direct path . . . for the realization of *nibbāna*,” one guaranteed to result in “either final knowledge here and now, or if there is a trace of clinging left, non-return.”<sup>104</sup> This can occur in as little as a single day’s practice, in the *Āgama* version.<sup>105</sup> Anālayo highlights the comprehensiveness of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* approach in that it involves contemplation of “whatever there is,” both internal and external.<sup>106</sup> Key to this process is the attainment of the seven awakening factors, the second of which is investigation of dhamma (*dhammavicaya*). Anālayo describes *dhammavicaya* as combining two aspects: “on the one hand an inquiry into the nature of experience . . . and on the other a correlation of this experience with the teachings of the Buddha.” This is an active factor of analysis and reasoning, distinguishing wholesome from unwholesome on the path, contrasting with doubt.<sup>107</sup> It is not a state of simple awareness or mindfulness, since that factor is included under the first awakening factor (*sati*). The *Satipaṭṭhāna* process is said to culminate in a state of perfect knowing: it “leads to a progressive restructuring of perceptual appraisal, and culminates in an undistorted vision of reality ‘as it is.’”<sup>108</sup> This is essential to any process of attaining *nibbāna*.<sup>109</sup>

In each of these descriptions of the path, reasoned reflection and investigation play a central role, either as essential parts of practice, or as recommended routes to practice. There are, of course, other approaches to the path, such as the thirty-seven Wings to Awakening (*bodhipakkhiyādhammā*); the triad of gratification, danger, and escape (*assāda, ādīnava, nissaraṇa*) that Anālayo terms a “comprehensive realization”; or the threefold distinction of wisdom, ethics, and concentration (*paññā, sīla, samādhi*).<sup>110</sup> However, it is our contention that these amount to reformulations of the same basic ethical material rather than wholly different approaches to either theory or practice.

## To Be Realized

And what things should be realized by direct knowledge? True knowledge (*vijjā*) and deliverance (*vimutti*). These are the things that should be realized by direct knowledge.<sup>111</sup>

In the *Mahāsaḷāyatānīka Sutta*, we see the previous elements in the four-part framework for the Buddha's ethics brought together in one compact form.<sup>112</sup> Here the Buddha provides the four "to do's" and brings them together under the Four Noble Truths. The aim in this process of awakening is to develop "true knowledge" (*vijjā*) through "direct knowledge" (*abhiññā*): seeing things as they really are, as opposed to seeing them incorrectly, in a manner influenced by ignorance (*avijjā*). We are to understand experience, see it in terms of the three marks of existence (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*), abandon ignorance and craving by development along the path, and so reach destruction of the *āsavas*. This amounts to complete realization. Or, as he describes in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*,

[*Nibbāna*] is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.

The ethically central steps to be understood, abandoned, developed, and realized are all to be done with direct knowledge.<sup>113</sup> This leads to liberation (*vimutti*) from the bonds of *saṃsāra*. Although details of their philosophical programs differ, this may remind one of Socrates:

Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over[,] his soul is a helpless prisoner . . . [C]ompelled to view reality not directly but only through its prison bars, and wallowing in utter ignorance. And philosophy can see that the imprisonment is ingeniously effected by the prisoner's own active desire, which makes him first accessory to his own confinement. Well, philosophy takes over the soul in this condition and by gentle persuasion tries to set it free.<sup>114</sup>

It is in this sense of philosophy as a tool, process, or discipline for the development of freedom that we propose to read the Buddha's teachings. Both the Buddha and Socrates aim to achieve wisdom through the direct knowledge of reality. In both cases reasoning plays an essential role in attaining freedom from desire.

We claim that the Buddha propounded an ethical philosophy. One question, therefore, is whether this form of liberation gets one to a stage "beyond good and evil," or beyond ethical considerations. Damien Keown devotes a chapter to the refutation of this so-called "Transcendancy Thesis" in his *Nature of Buddhist Ethics*.<sup>115</sup> The Buddha claimed that an *arahant* is constitutionally incapable of violating ethical precepts.<sup>116</sup> Instead of following such precepts by rote, one who is fully awakened is said to take to them like a "fine thoroughbred colt," trained so well that he is "beyond training."<sup>117</sup> Such *arahants* "are spontaneously virtuous and do not even identify with their virtue."<sup>118</sup> Hence, the *summum bonum* of the Buddha's path entails not an escape from ethics, but rather its lived perfection.

In broad outlines, there are two paths that the later tradition termed "mundane" and "supramundane," as we have seen interpolated into the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*.



The former the Buddha recommends for lay followers, which leads to *kammic* rewards in this life or the next, and the latter he recommends for monastics, which leads to *nibbāna*.<sup>119</sup> These should not be seen as distinct ethical programs, however. They lie along the same continuum, the former perhaps best seen as encompassing the three aspects of the Eightfold Path that constitute *sīla*, and the latter encompassing the entire path.

Distinctions between lay followers and monastics should not be seen as hard and fast. There are several instances in the Nikāyas of lay followers achieving advanced stages along the path, up to and including *nibbāna* itself.<sup>120</sup> Specifically, the Buddha tells the lay follower Mahānāma the Sakyan:

If [a lay follower who is sick, afflicted, and gravely ill] says, “My mind has been drawn away from the Brahma world; I have directed my mind to the cessation of identity,” then, Mahānāma, I say there is no difference between a lay follower who is thus liberated in mind and a bhikkhu who has been liberated in mind for a hundred years, that is, between one liberation and the other.<sup>121</sup>

In order to reach the *summum bonum* of the end of suffering, the Buddha recommends four actions or undertakings. Suffering must be completely understood. Craving must be abandoned. To understand suffering and abandon craving, the path must be developed. To reach the *summum bonum*, true knowledge must be realized through the path. This should not be thought of as linear: the process itself is the path. As one progresses, path and goal “coalesce . . . just as the waters of the Ganges and the Yamunā coalesce and flow on together.”<sup>122</sup>

### *Conclusion*

We have discussed not only the range of views held by recent scholars regarding the role of philosophy in Buddhism, but also one plausible way in which Siddhattha Gotama could be read as propounding a thorough, coherent, and profound philosophical ethics, placing him among the ranks of great Western philosophers. Attention to the Nikāyas reveals a teacher deeply committed throughout his life to “analyzing concepts [and] investigating arguments” in Siderits’s description of philosophy. Although the Buddha saw much philosophical speculation as pointless, and even at times harmful, he nevertheless argued for a path directed by Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*), and perfected in part by inquiry and investigation (*dhammavicaya*) into the nature of reality. He provided arguments for his ethical conclusions, and proposed a final goal in terms of the achievement of “true knowledge” (*vijjā*) and the abandonment of ignorance (*avijjā*).

In its broad outlines this is not unlike the approach we find among the philosophical schools of the West. As Matthew Kapstein has noted, the Buddha’s theoretical milieu was far from simple and unsophisticated. Rather, it was filled with “a remarkable variety of doctrines: materialism, determinism, skepticism, hedonism, etc. In short, it was an age of intense intellectual and spiritual ferment, in some respects like

the closely contemporaneous period during which the Sophists rose to prominence in Greece.”<sup>123</sup>

The Buddha’s ethical program was comprehensive in many respects, if “comprehensive” is taken to mean *thorough*. First, it is universally recommended, based on the claim that *dukkha* permeates everyone’s experience of reality. Second, it is analytically comprehensive in detailing the various aspects of lived reality and demonstrating how they amount both to problem and solution. Third, it is practically comprehensive in providing a raft of reasoned, thorough, and detailed options for attacking the basic problem of *dukkha* and thereby achieving a broadly eudaimonic goal. Fourth, although this is something we have only touched on in passing, it is defensively comprehensive in presenting claims and arguments against all or virtually all of the Buddha’s contemporary competitors.

Some may see the Buddha’s lack of a comprehensive, in the sense of *wide-ranging*, philosophical program to vitiate any claim to his being considered a philosopher. We do not agree. First, although he was not interested in providing a complete, foundational picture of reality, the Buddha did in fact have quite a bit to say about metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology. And second, thinkers such as Confucius and John Rawls or pragmatists like Pierce and Dewey are typically considered philosophers even though they may not have had the same interest in foundationalism or wide-ranging completeness as did Aristotle or Kant.

After summarizing methods employed in the key schools of ancient Western philosophy, Hadot concluded:

From the preceding examples, we may get some idea of the change in perspective that may occur in our reading and interpretation of the philosophical works of antiquity when we consider them from the point of view of the practice of spiritual exercises. Philosophy then appears in its original aspect: not as a theoretical construct, but as a method for training people to live and to look at the world in a new way. It is an attempt to transform mankind. Contemporary historians of philosophy are today scarcely inclined to pay attention to this aspect, although it is an essential one. The reason for this is that, in conformity with a tradition inherited from the Middle Ages and from the modern era, they consider philosophy to be a purely abstract-theoretical activity.<sup>124</sup>

While certain of Hadot’s claims are controversial, a number of scholars in Buddhist studies have found his work helpful for breaking down geographic and disciplinary borders.<sup>125</sup> However, among these authors, only Oleksandr Demchenko has sought to utilize Hadot’s insights to examine the Buddha himself.<sup>126</sup> Just as Hadot’s work has brought renewed interest in the “spiritual” (ethically and intellectually transformative) nature of ancient Western philosophy, we hope to see greater attention paid to the philosophical nature of the earliest strata of Buddhism.

Recognizing the philosophical dimensions of the historical Buddha’s thought may help scholars to regard early Buddhism as a legitimate philosophical tradition worthy of study alongside, and in comparison with, that of the West. We propose including Siddhattha Gotama himself in discussions of the periods and internal

developments of Buddhist philosophy, as well as in their external social and philosophical influences.

Finally, we do not claim that seeing the Buddha as a philosopher is the only or even necessarily the best way to understand him and his teachings. Such an evaluation will depend upon one's aims and interests. All we are concerned to have demonstrated is that seeing him as a philosopher is both viable and fruitful.

## Notes

- 1 – For examples of prominent dismissals of non-Western philosophy in academia, and an introduction to Hadot, see, e.g., Matthew Kapstein, *Reason's Traces: Identity and Interpretation in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Thought* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), pp. 5–7, 19–20.
- 2 – Paul Williams, Anthony Tribe, and Alexander Wynne, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 25–26.
- 3 – Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 293.
- 4 – Sungtaek Cho, "The Rationalist Tendency in Modern Buddhist Scholarship: A Reevaluation," *Philosophy East and West* 52, no. 4 (1982): 430.
- 5 – Noa Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The Making of a Philosophical Tradition* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 1.
- 6 – Dan Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief: Epistemology in South Asian Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 1–2.
- 7 – P. J. van der Eijk, *Medicine and Philosophy in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 8 – Stephen Palmquist and Adriano Palomo, "Kant, Buddhism, and the Moral Metaphysics of Medicine," *Journal of Indian Philosophy and Religion*, October 2002, pp. 79–97.
- 9 – Thomas Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment*, Cambridge History of Science Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 11.
- 10 – Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 60.
- 11 – Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Pub. Co., 2002), p. 155.
- 12 – Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, pp. 271–272.
- 13 – Owen Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

- 14 – Daniel Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).
- 15 – Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 59.
- 16 – Richard Gombrich, *What the Buddha Thought* (London and Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2009), p. 164.
- 17 – Frank J. Hoffman, *Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), p. 4.
- 18 – Williams et al., *Buddhist Thought*, p. ix.
- 19 – Christopher Gowans, *Philosophy of the Buddha* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 6.
- 20 – Ibid.
- 21 – *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya* (henceforth, *AN*), trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi, Pali Text Society Translation Series 56 (Bristol: Pali Text Society in association with Wisdom Publications, 2012), 6.20, 10.51, 10.54; *Theragāthā: The Elders’ Verses*, trans. K. R. Norman, Pali Text Society Translation Series 38 (London: Luzac, 1969), 1.39. This article will follow the Pali Text Society in the referencing of Pali Texts—e.g., 6.20.
- 22 – Kapstein, *Reason’s Traces*, p. 4.
- 23 – Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2007), p. 24.
- 24 – Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*.
- 25 – *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (henceforth, *MN*), trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi and Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, Teachings of the Buddha Series (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 4, 26.13–17, 36; *AN* 3.39; *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (henceforth, *SN*), trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi, Teachings of the Buddha Series (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 12.10. We follow the sutta and section numbering format used in these books as opposed to the PTS: “Thus, for example, a reference to *MN* 26.18 means Majjhima Sutta No. 26, section 18”—as described in the preface to the *MN*, p. 16.
- 26 – *Dhammapada* 1.5:
- Na hi verena verāni sammantīdha kudācanaṃ. averena ca sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano.*
- Hatred is not ever appeased by hatred. By non-hatred [hatred] ceases, this is an eternal truth.
- The Pali text is found in “Dhp\_utf8,” edited by Access to Insight; see *Access to Insight [Legacy Edition]*, 30 November 2013, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/>

tipitaka/sltip/Dhp\_utf8.html, accessed April 21, 2014. See also Gombrich, *What the Buddha Thought*, pp. 1–2, pp. 109–110.

- 27 – MN 70.20, 23; SN 25.1.
- 28 – AN 3.65; MN 60.
- 29 – MN 47, 91, 95.
- 30 – AN 3.65.
- 31 – MN 2.8, 22; SN 24, 56.9; *The Group of Discourses: Sutta-Nipata*, trans. K. R. Norman, Pali Text Society Translation Series 44 (London: Pali Text Society, 1984), pp. 824–834; MN 1, 2.7, 63, 113.29, 140.31; SN 12.15, 35.30–32.
- 32 – MN 22.
- 33 – SN 56.9.
- 34 – MN 63.8.
- 35 – Frank J. Hoffman, “The Buddhist Empiricism Thesis,” *Religious Studies* 18, no. 2 (1982): 153.
- 36 – AN 1.307.
- 37 – T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism: Its History and Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York and London: Putnam, 1926), p. 62; K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962), p. 433; David J. Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1976), p. 158.
- 38 – For further information concerning *thāna-atthāna* see MN 12.10, 115.12–19; AN 1.268.
- 39 – Frank J. Hoffman, “Buddhist Belief ‘In,’” *Religious Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1985): 385; Richard Hayes, “Gotama Buddha and Religious Pluralism,” *Journal of Religious Pluralism* 1 (1991): 65–96.
- 40 – For more on the Buddha’s interest in debate and conceptual precision see, e.g., *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (henceforth, *DN*), trans. Maurice Walshe, White Series (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), pp. 1, 9; MN 27, 29, 35–36, 56, 58, 60, 93, 95, 99; AN 3.61, 3.65, 8.12, 9.38; SN 42.8.
- 41 – MN 60.
- 42 – For more on this subject, see MN 22, 38, 63–64.
- 43 – MN 77.13.
- 44 – MN 22.38.
- 45 – AN 9.34; SN 36.31.
- 46 – Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 2001).

- 47 – Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics*.
- 48 – Barbra Clayton, *Moral Theory in Śāntideva's Śikṣāsamuccaya* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 21.
- 49 – *Ibid.*, p. 17; Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, p. 1.
- 50 – MN 29.3.
- 51 – SN 3.8.
- 52 – Norman, *The Group of Discourses: Sutta Nipāta*, p. 705; *The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories*, trans. Daw Mya Tin (Rangoon: Burma Pitaka Association, 1986), pp. 129–133.
- 53 – MN 22.22.
- 54 – SN 22.97.
- 55 – SN 22.97.
- 56 – Cokelet, Berman, and Cooper also draw on Kant to understand Buddhist ethics, though they focus on the later Mahāyāna. See Bradford Cokelet, “Reflections on Kant and Karma,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics Conference on Revisiting Karma* (2005), <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/files/2011/01/cokelet01.pdf>; Michael Berman, “A Metaphysics of Morality: Kant and Buddhism,” *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 2 (2006): 18–41; Rebecca Cooper, “Kantian Consistency in Mahayana Buddhist Ethics: Introducing the Non-Substantialistic Hero” (paper presented at the 10th Symposium on Field-Being and the Non-Substantialistic Turn, St. John Fisher College, Rochester, NY, June 22–June 28, 2007).
- 57 – Gombrich, *What the Buddha Thought*.
- 58 – Abraham Vélez de Cea, “The Criteria of Goodness in the Pāli Nikāyas and the Nature of Buddhist Ethics,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 11 (2004): 123–142; Hoffman, *Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism*, p. 2.
- 59 – MN 22.38, 61.9–8; Vélez de Cea, “The Criteria of Goodness in the Pāli Nikāyas and the Nature of Buddhist Ethics,” pp. 133–134.
- 60 – MN 28.2.
- 61 – DN 22.18–21; MN 141.24.
- 62 – SN 56.11.
- 63 – *Ibid.*
- 64 – SN 56.19.
- 65 – MN 149.3.
- 66 – MN 148.
- 67 – MN 146.

- 68 – MN 148.2. See also MN 27.11 and MN, p. 1362.
- 69 – MN 148.3.
- 70 – SN 35.23.
- 71 – MN 148.4–9. See also, David Webster, *The Philosophy of Desire in the Buddhist Pali Canon* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), pp. 129–139.
- 72 – MN 148.10–27.
- 73 – MN 148.28–33.
- 74 – MN 9.15, 141.20; SN 22.104, 56.13.
- 75 – MN 149.11.
- 76 – MN 28.28.
- 77 – MN, p. 1223 n. 340.
- 78 – SN 18.1–10.
- 79 – MN 149.11.
- 80 – For more on craving see SN 56.13. For more on rebirth and *saṃsāra*, see MN 9.11, 38.15–16.
- 81 – MN 148.9.
- 82 – MN 9.70.
- 83 – *The Itivuttaka*, trans. Peter Masefield, *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* 48 (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2000), pp. 7–13.
- 84 – DN 1.
- 85 – MN 2; see also AN 6.58.
- 86 – MN 2.10, 77.16; SN 49.
- 87 – MN 149.11.
- 88 – MN 149.
- 89 – MN, p. 1364.
- 90 – SN 46.6.
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- 93 – Bhikku Anālayo, "The *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* in Light of its Parallels: Tracing the Beginnings of Abhidharmic Thought," *Journal of the Centre for Buddhist Studies, Sri Lanka* 8 (2010): 59–93.
- 94 – AN 1.306–315.

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- 98 – [Bhikkhu] Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: the Direct Path to Realization* (Birmingham: Windhorse, 2003), pp. 141–142.
- 99 – MN 27.23.
- 100 – MN 70.
- 101 – For *dhammānusārī* see SN 25.1.
- 102 – MN 10.
- 103 – SN 46.6.
- 104 – MN 10.2, 10.46.
- 105 – Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, p. 251.
- 106 – *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- 107 – *Ibid.*, pp. 235–236.
- 108 – *Ibid.*, p. 267.
- 109 – AN 10.95.
- 110 – Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, p. 106 n. 57; Gombrich, *What the Buddha Thought*, p. 109.
- 111 – MN 149.11.
- 112 – MN 149.
- 113 – AN 4.254.
- 114 – Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1981), 82e–83.
- 115 – Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*.
- 116 – AN 9.7; MN 70.15–16.
- 117 – MN 65.33–34.
- 118 – Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna*, p. 258.
- 119 – MN 143.15; Norman, *The Group of Discourses: Sutta Nipāta*, p. 221.
- 120 – AN 6.119–139; DN 16.2–7; MN 68.18–23.
- 121 – SN 55.54.
- 122 – DN 19.8.
- 123 – Kapstein, *Reason's Traces*, p. xvi.



- 124 – Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, p. 107.
- 125 – For more on this, please refer to Kapstein’s *Reason’s Traces*, as well as James Apple, “Can Buddhist Thought be Construed as a Philosophia, or a Way of Life?” *Journal of Oriental Philosophy* (December 2010): 43–55; Georges Dreyfus, “Meditation as Ethical Activity,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 2 (1995): 28–54, <http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/files/2010/04/Meditation-as-Ethical-Activity.pdf>; Matthew Kapstein, “gDams-ngag: Tibetan Technologies of the Self,” in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. Jose Cabezón and Roger Jackson (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), pp. 278–289; Johannes Bronkhorst, *Aux Origines de la Philosophie Indienne* ([Switzerland:] Gollion; [Paris:] Infolio éditions, 2008); Vincent, Eltschinger, “Pierre Hadot et les ‘Exercices Spirituels’: Quel Modèle pour la Philosophie Bouddhique Tardive?” *Études Asiatiques* 62, no. 2. (2008): 485–544; Jonardin Ganeri, “A Return to the Self: Indians and Greeks on Life as Art and Philosophical Therapy,” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 66 (2010): 119–135; and Matthew Kapstein, “‘Spiritual Exercise’ and Buddhist Epistemologists in India and Tibet,” in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*, ed. Steven Emmanuel (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). Our gratitude to Olexandr Demchenko for providing his paper (below), which directed us to several of these sources.
- 126 – Olexandr Demchenko, “Pierre Hadot’s Methodology in Comparative Philosophy: Spiritual Exercises in India and [the] Hellenistic World,” in *7th International Conference on Oriental Studies (Torchinov Readings): Metamorphoses*, ed. Sergey Pakhomov (St. Petersburg, 2013), pp. 286–297.