

**BUDDHISM AND THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL:  
PALI AND MAHAYANIST RESPONSES**

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Without cognising free will as a philosophical problem,  
[the Buddha] takes it for granted that the innate character of each being  
leaves him the freedom to decide about the actions that determine his future.  
--H. W. Schumann<sup>1</sup>

There is free action, there is retribution, but I see no agent that passes out of one set of  
momentary elements into another one, except the [connection] of those elements.  
--The Buddha<sup>2</sup>

[Aristotle] did not do too badly without [the will].  
--W. F. R Hardie<sup>3</sup>

[Nagarjuna's philosophy] is not an incoherent mysticism, but it is a  
logical tightrope act at the very limits of language and metaphysics.  
--Jay L. Garfield<sup>4</sup>

Buddhist philosophy generally divides itself into an early stage in which most of the texts are written in Pali, a language closely related to Sanskrit, and a later Mahayanist development based on writings in Sanskrit. Those who favor a Mahayanist perspective are sensitive about the adjective "early," because they believe that the roots of Mahayana are just as old as the Pali texts, which were not written down until ca. 80 BCE. Pali Buddhist philosophy is generally empiricist and realist in its epistemology and ontology, whereas most Mahayanist philosophers embraced various forms of idealism and even skepticism. Buddhists, along with most all ancient philosophers, embrace a universal determinism of cause and effect, but they have never acknowledged the problem of free-will, which, as we will argue in the first section, appears to be a distinctively modernist phenomenon. For purposes of this discussion, free-will will be defined as a power truly our own independent from causal determinants.

In sections 2-5 we will analyze the issues of this book from the Pali perspective. Here we will find a more robust view of the self, best interpreted in functionalist terms, and also a realist view of causality. We will argue that these Buddhists would join the compatibilists of this book in their defense of moral responsibility. When we turn to the Mahayana school, we will discover that it is much further removed from the free-will-determinism debate. Mahayanists take the

Buddha's idea of "no self" much more radically and they also generally reject a realist view of causality. In the fifth and sixth sections we will offer two views of Nagarjuna, one from "constructive postmodernism" as opposed to "deconstructive postmodernism" with which Nagarjuna is usually associated. (Because of space limitations, we will just briefly mention Yogacara idealism, the other major Mahayanist school.) While we would like to support a constructive postmodernist Nagarjuna, the texts actually do not allow us to do this. This means that while Pali Buddhists can embrace real agency in the world, Nagarjuna and his followers appear to argue that any positive view of the self will prevent us from escaping the cycles of existence. In this view the self is completely deconstructed and that all that we are left with are competing rhetorics of freedom and determinism.

We are delighted that we have been invited to contribute to this book and to offer a Buddhist perspective on these fundamental issues. We believe that Euro-American philosophers have much to learn from the Asian philosophical tradition. Many of them are still unaware of the degree of philosophical sophistication Asian thinkers have attained. Finally, we want to emphasize that we are only teachers of Buddhism and not experts with knowledge of Pali or Sanskrit and all the voluminous texts. We rely heavily on the best work in the field and trust that we have used it accurately and responsibly.

### **FREE-WILL AS A MODERNIST PHENOMENON**

One possible reason for the failure of Asian philosophers to address the issues of this book is the common observation that Asian thinkers, especially those of the Indian Subcontinent, are far more interested in absolute spiritual freedom than freedom of the will. Rather than a freedom somehow related to the world of cause and effect, the Indian yogis appear mostly concerned with a freedom that transcends the physical world entirely. With this vision in mind the casual determination of karma is not a problem at all, as karmic bondage is a state of all beings until final liberation.

Hindu scripture describes the saints as veritable supermen. For example, the *Taittiriya Upanishad* tells us that the yogi "attains . . . independent sovereignty," and enjoys a bliss that is a billion times greater than that of the highest gods (1.6; 2.8.). In the *Maitri Upanishad* the ascetic surpasses Brahman, the Godhead, and "will go [yet further], he [will surpass] the gods in the realm of divinity. . . ." (4.4) In the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* yogis gain incredible powers: they "shall roll up space as if it were a piece of leather" (6.20); and a yogi in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* boasts that "I am the first-born of the world-order, earlier than the gods, in the navel of immortality. . . . I have overcome the whole world" (3.5). Such a view has been called "spiritual Titanism," an extreme form of humanism in which humans take on divine attributes and prerogatives.<sup>5</sup>

In the Pali texts the Buddha rejects these incredible claims of the Hindu and Jain yogis. He was particularly critical of their claims to omniscience. (He did, however, embrace their subordination of the gods and the requirement that they had to be reincarnated as humans in order to be liberated.) Therefore, the Buddha and most of his followers are not spiritual Titans,

primarily because they rejected the divinity of the saint and sought Nirvana in this world rather than in some otherworldly domain. The Buddha also believed that the body was constitutive of personal identity (Sankhya-Yoga and Jain dualists rejected this) and that the emotions and senses were not evil. Finally, the Buddha distinguished between Nirvana in the body and Nirvana at the end of the cycles of existence. Because the Buddha was a strict empiricist and because final Nirvana was beyond the experience of anyone, he declined to say anything about it at all. However, the Buddha and many of his disciples presumably did live in a constant state of embodied Nirvana and the best one-word definition of this state is “freedom.” We will analyze the meaning of this freedom in compatibilist terms in the third section.

There is a deeper and more philosophically interesting reason why the Buddha would have found free-will a nonissue. This may be the same reason that Greeks and Romans generally did not find it a problem.<sup>6</sup> It is also connected to why American pragmatism did not address the issue, and why comparisons of Wittgenstein and the Buddha have become a veritable scholarly industry.<sup>7</sup> None of these thinkers divided up the world in the ways discussed below, specifically a distinctively modernist separation of the “inner” and the “outer” that produces the conflict between an internal freedom and external causality.

Intellectual historians are now getting a better idea about why we find the first discussion of free-will, as Euro-Americans now debate it, in the writings of Augustine of Hippo. This fact is supremely ironic: Augustine believed in the absolute sovereignty of God and the corollary doctrine of divine omnicausality. If free-will requires a power truly our own, then Augustine’s God eliminates any possibility of such freedom. In fact, no medieval Christian philosopher, not even Aquinas, solved this basic problem.<sup>8</sup> In the Condemnations of 1277, the Church declared that God’s power was limited only by law of contradiction. The full implications of this view were elaborated by William of Ockham, who declared that it was logically possible (although not very probable) that while we assume that everything operates according to the laws of causality, God could in fact be causing all effects directly out of his *potentia absoluta*. It is important to note that, except for some Stoic discussions, divine power was generally not an issue for Asians nor was it for Greek and Roman philosophers.

Was the challenge posed by divine omnipotence, the most radical idea of divine power in the history of religion East or West, the catalyst for problematizing human will power and its freedom? (Commentators have also speculated that the paucity of psychological terms in Augustine’s Latin may have hindered his analysis. Sanskrit is much richer in this regard.) This could very well be the historical clue for the later development of distinctively modernist forms of thought. With Ockham the *via moderna* was in full bloom and Aquinas’ natural theology was in serious trouble. The resultant split in reason and faith gradually led to the other dichotomies of modernism, the seeds of which were planted in the late medieval period. Luther’s nominalist teachers would have flinched if they had known that he called reason “a whore,” but they had opened the floodgates for the radical fideism of the Reformation. Faith returned to the inner world, while reason found new triumphs in empirical science. The basic issues of early modern European philosophy arose out of this intellectual milieu.

Modernism gave new meaning to what it means to be a subject, and the primary source of this innovation was the *ego cogito* of Descartes' *Meditations*. The pre-Cartesian meaning of subject (Gk. *hypokeimenon*; Lat. *subiectum*) can still be seen in the "subjects" one takes in school or the "subject" of a sentence. In this ancient sense all things are subjects, things with "underlying [essential] kernels," as the Greek literally says and as Greek metaphysics proposed. After Cartesian doubt, however, there is only one subject of experience of which we are certain--namely, the human thinking subject. All other things in the world, including persons and other sentient beings, have now become objects of our thought, not subjects in their own right. Cartesian subjectivism gave birth simultaneously to modern objectivism as well; and, with the influence of the new mechanical cosmology, the stage was set for uniquely modern forms of otherness and alienation.

### THE BUDDHA AND MODERNIST DICHOTOMIES

Modernism is a form of thought that loves to dichotomize. It separates subjects from objects, the inner from the outer, the private from the public, fact from value, religion and science.<sup>9</sup> (Making these distinctions has great advantages but also, as postmodern critics have shown, profound liabilities as well.) If the freedom of the will is something subjective and causality is something objective, and if free-will happens only in an internal realm and cannot happen in an outer realm of cause and effect, then free-will and moral responsibility are indeed problems of supreme significance. It is no accident, then, that modern philosophy generated other related problems as well. The issue of the freedom of the will was joined with the problem of the ontological status of the external world, the problem of the knowledge of other minds, and the rejection of the idea of moral facts--in sum, the table of contents of an introductory text in modern European philosophy.

None of these problems and none of these modernist distinctions appear in the voluminous records of the Buddha's 45 years of daily philosophical conversations. Was he philosophically naive or was he right in his assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge? If one, for example, does not make a firm distinction between the inner and the outer, then there can be no talk about free events inside us and determined events outside of us. Neither can there be a problem of the ontological status of the external world and the skeptical impasses that arise from this. The Buddha's empiricism was first compared to Hume's, but the most accurate parallel is to James' radical empiricism. James and the Buddha observed that basic experience does not divide into inner and outer; rather, the inner flows into the outer and the outer flows into the inner. (One could perhaps read Hume in the same way.) It is only by some Cartesian method of systematic doubt that an inner world of ideas and perceptions is separated from an outer world of physical things. The Buddha and James also claimed that basic experience does not divide into facts and values, because as the Buddha said: "What one feels, one perceives; what one perceives one reasons about."<sup>10</sup> What one feels is obviously filled with values and emotions.

Critics might agree with James and the Buddha that there are no ontological bifurcations

in our immediate experience, but they still might object that even though their “inner” flows into their “outer,” their “inner” does not flow into another’s “inner.” The Buddhists disagree but for a reason that many Euro-American philosophers will reject outright. The Buddha and his disciples claimed to have ESP powers and they said that they could read the contents of other people’s minds. Specifically, the Buddha claimed to be able to determine the balance on anyone’s karmic mortgage. Quite apart from the validity of ESP, one could argue that we do in fact read other people’s minds through their body language, as many people do in fact carry their emotions on their sleeves. (Is this what Wittgenstein meant by “meaning is a physiognomy”?) The Buddhists would say that this minimal capacity that all of us have is the simply the potential for anyone to use the faculty of mindfulness to a very high and sensitive degree. Although usually referred to as a virtue, mindfulness (*sati*) is more accurately called the faculty (*indriya*) by which the Buddhists control the six senses (the mind is included) and their moral development.

### **BUDDHIST COMPATIBILISM**

Earlier we distinguished between Nirvana at the end of existence and Nirvana while embodied, which can be described as state of contentment (*sukha* as an equivalent to the Greek *eudaimonia*) and as freedom from all craving. In the terms of Keith Lehrer’s analysis in this volume, the Buddhist is free from distracting desires (Lehrer’s example is a craving for chocolate) and disciplines herself, in a way similar to Lehrer’s writer, to act on her spiritual preferences. Lehrer claims that “our preferences are the source of our freedom,” and Buddhists would agree that we empower them as well as they empower us. Buddhists would also agree with Lehrer that what we prefer is always our option while what we desire wells up in us involuntarily.

By giving in to her cravings the Buddhist would continue the cycles of existence forever, something she, or any other clear-minded person, does not prefer. By choosing meditation and other spiritual disciplines as preferences, she prepares herself for the ultimate preference: Nirvana and freedom from Samsara. Furthermore, note that this Buddhist is an agent of her preferences, as Lehrer explains, rather than being just a passive victim of her desires. Finally, with regard to the problem of preference control, the nontheist Buddhist does not have to contend with an omniscient deity, who, according to Augustine and Luther, empowers us to turn to God as well as to turn away from divine grace. Most Buddhists also do not have to contend with mad neurophilosophers from Southern California to control their preferences!

While the issue of free-will does not arise in Buddhism, it is indisputable that it embraces a universal determinism: every effect, without exception, has a cause. The idea that the will is uncaused or is self-caused violates the Buddhist principle of interdependent coorigination (*prattiyasumutpada*): nothing in the universe can originate itself as substances allegedly do or the will is said to do. Buddhist causality, however, is seen as a cosmic web of causal conditions rather than linear and mechanical notions of push-pull causation. Furthermore, the Buddha claimed that we are morally responsible only for those actions that we intend. He took strong exception to the Jain theory that we suffer from accidental karma, such as stepping on a bug that

we do not see. The Jains, another Indian religion contemporary with Buddhism, charged that the Buddha's qualified determinism would lead to antinomianism and ethical subjectivism. Only their strict determinism, they claimed, would maintain objective ethical standards.

The Buddha countered, however, that if the mind is always subject to the control of the past, then there could never be any liberation, nor could there be any moral responsibility. The Buddha proposed that the "freedom of the mind" works in the following way: "If I were to oppose the formation of the cause of sorrow, by opposing this formation I would become dispassionate. Also, if I were to become evenminded in respect to this cause of sorrow, if I were to develop this evenmindedness, I would become dispassionate."<sup>11</sup> The Buddha also claimed that personal temperament and circumstances qualify the effects of past causes such that there is no strict correspondence between cause and effect. The most famous example is the analogy of a lump of salt, first placed in a cup of water (representing the corrupt person) and then placed in a lake (representing the Buddhist saint). The effect in the former is obviously different from the latter. This example has become controversial, because the salt is usually seen as an evil intention, having disastrous consequences in the sinful person but virtually no effect on the saint. The Jains' fears appear to be vindicated: can the saint commit a sin and not be harmed or even blamed for it?

Pali Buddhist ethics can be called a contextual pragmatism, which can be best explained by the famous motto "They who know causation (*prattiyasumutpada*) know the Dharma."<sup>12</sup> This can be read as they who know their own causal web of existence know the truth (i.e., the true facts of their lives) and they will know what to do. The truths we discover will be very personal truths, moral and spiritual truths that are, as Aristotle says, "relative to us." This is not simply a cognitive knowing but a practical grasp of what is appropriate and what is fitting for us and our surroundings. Being mindful is deliberately forming preferences over the desires that might lead us out of our own personal means. Like *phronesis*, Buddhist mindfulness is primarily nonsensuous, correct perception. Note also the Buddha's ethical naturalism, outlawed in European philosophy after Hume, and the bold fusion of fact and value, a topic we will not pursue further.

Both Aristotle and the Buddha thought it was always wrong to eat too much, but each person will find his/her own relative mean between eating too much and eating too little. Such a view is not relativistic in the nonnormative sense, because the principal determinants for eating just right are primarily objective not subjective. If people ignore these objective factors--e.g., temperament, body size, metabolism, and other physiological factors--then their bodies, sooner or later, will tell them that they are out of their respective means. If people are unmindful, they allow unhealthy eating habits take them in one direction or another, but the mindful stay within their respective means. Therefore, the mindful ones are free, while the ones tending to either extreme are not.

We can now define Buddhist free agents as those who are keenly aware of the effects their actions have on themselves and others. They are free from ego attachment and craving either for ascetic deficiency or indulgent excess, representing karmic bondage rather than karmic

freedom. Free and mindful agents know what their needs are and what their preferences should be; and, on the basis of that knowledge, they can separate desires from cravings, defined as desires that either cannot be fulfilled, or for things that are simply not needed. Moral freedom lies in the ability of agents to form desires that are consonant with their needs and personal circumstances. In terms of the contemporary free-will debate, the Buddhists believe in “free action” but have no conception of “free-will,” as a self-determining power that moral agents somehow possess.

For the Buddha the deepest and subtlest craving is the desire for a self-determining and independent self—in a word, a soul substance. It is a supreme irony that what European philosophers assumed is necessary for true human freedom is actually the cause of its greatest bondage. If we qualify the term properly within the context of Buddhist relationality, the word “autonomy” can be used to describe Buddhist agents who are not controlled by craving; rather, they live freely in a personal mean between the extremes of debauchery and self-mortification. Interestingly enough, liberal political theorists, taking seriously conservative critiques of social atomism, are now proposing the idea of a “situated” autonomy.<sup>13</sup> Although Nomy Arpaly does not discuss this idea of autonomy in her chapter in this book, it is clear that Pali Buddhists would affirm her concept of agent autonomy, where agents learn to control their cravings and act on their preferences.

### **CAUSALITY, CONDITIONALITY, AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY**

The Buddha’s qualified determinism has led David Kalupahana to speak of Buddhist “conditionality” rather than causality.<sup>14</sup> For him Buddhist conditionality represents a middle way between strict determinism and the destruction of freedom on the one hand, and an equally unacceptable indeterminism on the other. Because the Buddha rejected the both material and mental substances, Buddhist conditionality amounts to causality with substance metaphysics. We should envision, as we have been forced to do in contemporary physics, all events conditioning one another rather than physical and mental causes pushing, pulling, or otherwise interacting with one another. Incredibly enough, action at a distance has now been confirmed between pairs of subatomic particles, although physicists still do not understand how this can happen. Therefore, Buddhist conditionality could possibly be used to explain the actions of subatomic particles, which are currently impossible to understand according to classical science’s view of causality. In fact, Jay Garfield has recommended Buddhist conditionality as a unifying theory for philosophy of science.<sup>15</sup>

Buddhist conditionality is summarized by the following formulas: “When this is present, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises. When this is absent, that does not come to be; on the cessation of this, that ceases.”<sup>16</sup> Moving from facts to values, the principle of conditionality is summarized as a twelve-fold chain starting with ignorance, then unmindful action, a resultant distorted consciousness, and then nine other conditions that lead to rebirth. If anyone of these conditions is not present, then rebirth in a next life will not happen. One might see it in terms of Aristotle’s formal causation, as the following authors do: “As a theory of

causation, this ‘dependent coarising’ concerns the formal concomitances among things rather than their material derivation from one another. It resembles a medical diagnosis in several ways. By showing that the ailment depends on a series of conditions, it indicates the point at which the series can be broken and so facilitates a cure.”<sup>17</sup>

The language of causality tends to simplify the explanation of an effect, while the language of conditionality makes it much more complex. The doctrine of interdependent coorigination compels the Buddhist to take a much more comprehensive view of causality. The full complement (*samagri*) of conditions must be present in order for an event to happen and for us to fully understand how it happened. Taking an example offered by Edward Conze, we might say that a bullet was the cause of a man’s death. If we then think about the conditions of his death, there might be no end to the search for relevant conditions, including the fact that the sun provided the light for the killer to shoot. Conze offers another example: while sunspots cannot be said to cause economic crises, their occurrence does indeed appear to coincide with and therefore condition them. Scientific causality is particularly circumscribed, as Conze explains: “. . . the modern idea of causality is governed by the ideal of prediction. The concrete totality of events is set aside, certain sectors are ‘isolated’ and observed on their own, with the intention of ‘controlling’ events.”<sup>18</sup>

Conze brings the discussion back to the basic issue of modernism: “When [modern scientists] speak of a cause they mean the *general* cause of this kind of event, taken in the abstract, whereas the Buddhists are interested in the *concrete* conditions of this *particular* concrete event.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Conze concludes that “the Buddhist doctrine of the multiplicity of conditions seems to make a decision on the ‘freedom of the will’ unnecessary. If the total number of conditions is unlimited, and most of them are unknown, it is impossible to say which condition of necessity brings about which event.”<sup>20</sup>

We disagree with Conze. It is clear that the Buddha did indeed reject the existence of any self-causing agents, but did affirm that all events have a multiplicity of conditions. Therefore, Pali Buddhism falls under the general rubric of compatibilism and “soft” determinism. These Buddhists believe that we are morally responsible for our own character and intentions, which although completely conditioned by antecedent events, are nonetheless what we truly want and should do. Recall that the Buddha claims that we are responsible only for those actions that we intend. In Sanskrit *karma* means “action,” so it follows that Buddhist *karma* is volitional action only.

Seeing the law of *karma* as a psychological law allows us to avoid the both the extravagance and absurdities of the common view of it as a cosmic law with inscrutable laws of retribution. (It also means that we may also see, as some Buddhists do, the six realms of existence as a metaphor for the “animal,” “angelic,” and “demonic” moments of one single life span.)<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the law of karma can be conceived as the rather trivial truth that all actions have consequences. Returning to causality as conditionality, we can now state the following conditionals concerning moral responsibility: “If we act motivated by greed, hatred, or delusion, we are planting the seed of suffering; but when our acts are motivated by generosity, love, or



wisdom, then we are creating the karmic conditions for abundance and happiness.”<sup>22</sup> For the Buddhists, *karma* works at two levels—one immediate and one delayed. In any of our acts we can immediately experience the results depending on whether they were done, for example, out of love or hatred. (Only the truly obtuse person will claim to be unaware.) Later on, these seeds of our actions will produce their inevitable fruits and, following the principle of interdependent coorigination, these fruits will finally ripen. The ripening of karmic action is a pervasive metaphor in all Buddhist literature.

### THE PALI SELF AS FUNCTIONALIST

The Buddha’s response to the Axial Age’s discovery of the self was strikingly unique: he proposed the doctrine of no-self (*anatman*), which literally means no *atman*, the Hindu soul substance. This conceptual innovation was so provocative that it was bound to invite misinterpretation, and unfounded charges of Buddhist "nihilism" continue even to this day. The Buddha anticipated Hume's view that the self is an ensemble of feelings, perceptions, dispositions, and awareness (the *skandhas*) that is the center of agency and moral responsibility.<sup>23</sup> The Buddha's view, however, is different from Hume's, primarily because the Buddha appeared to support real causal efficacy among internally related phenomena. (We believe that Hume may have been misled by the current scientific model of externally related atoms.) While Hume deconstructed any theory of causality, the Buddha reconstructed causal relations with his theory of interdependent coorigination. The Buddha agrees with Hume about the absence of causal power but disagrees with him about the absence of causal relations. As the Pali philosopher Buddhaghosa said: “There is no real production; there is only interdependence.”<sup>24</sup> This is the same as saying that causality has been replaced by conditionality.

The Buddha rejected the soul-as-spiritual-substance view of the Upanishads, Jainism, and Samkhya-Yoga, and he deconstructed the "spectator" self of these philosophies 2,500 years before recent thinkers dismantled the Cartesian self. As opposed to strict deconstruction, for example, Pali Buddhists hold that selves, though neither the same nor different throughout their lives, are nevertheless responsible for their actions. (Pali Buddhism, therefore, should be aligned with the school of constructive postmodernism.) These selves are also real in the sense that they are constituted by relations with their bodies, other selves, and all other entities. This is why the Pali self should be viewed in relational or process terms rather than the skeptical implications of the no-self doctrine, which many later Buddhists supported. The Pali self is relational primarily in the sense of its dependence on the five *skandhas* and the internal relations this dependence entails.

Another positive way to express nonsubstantiality is to describe the Buddhist self as "functional." In fact, each of the *skandhas* should be seen as functions rather than entities. On this point, Kalupahana makes good use of James, who while denying a soul substance, maintained that consciousness is a function. As Kalupahana states: "*Rupa* or material form accounts for the function of identification; *vedana* or feeling and *samjna* or perception represent

the function of experience, emotive as well as cognitive; *sanskara* or disposition stands for the function of individuation; *vijnana* or consciousness explains the function of continuity in experience."<sup>25</sup> Both Kalupahana and Peter Harvey describe the Pali self in the positive terms of psychophysical unity, process, and interrelation. According to Harvey, the Buddha never rejected the existence of a life-principle (*jiva*), which "is not a separate *part* of a person, but is a process which occurs when certain conditions are present. . . ."<sup>26</sup> Not only are there significant parallels to James, but the Buddha's process self compares favorably to that of today's process philosophers, following in the footsteps of Whitehead and Hartshorne, who are also the founding fathers of constructive postmodernism.

From this analysis we can clearly see that the Pali self is a robust personal agent fully capable of maintaining its personal integrity and taking full responsibility for its actions. (This of course assumes the truth of compatibilism.) This view of the self is also fully somatic, giving full value to the body and the emotions. At the same time it is embedded in a social and organic nexus of cosmic relations. Hindu philosopher Surendra Verma is unduly puzzled when he asks how it was possible for the Buddha to be filled with thoughts and emotions and "at the same time preaching. . . the nonexistence of the soul."<sup>27</sup> Like many other commentators, Verma simply does not understand the meaning of the Buddha's Middle Way, in this case the mean between annihilationism (no self at all—substantial or otherwise) on the one hand and eternalism (substantial self) on the other. What appears not only puzzling but impossible is for the Hindu *atman*, a Stoic soul, or a Kantian noumenal self—pure spiritual substances all—to have any relation at all with the finite world, let alone with the emotions and the body.

In his very instructive comparison between Aristotle and the Buddha, Damien Keown proposes that the function of moral choice is found in *prohairesis* and *cetana* respectively. Both of these terms have been connected with the European will, but no simple identity can be assumed. (The etymology of *cetana* gives the root as *cit*, which means "to think," and its basic meaning is "visible" or "distinguished," as in that which appears in the mind.) Both of them are neither emotive nor cognitive; rather, they operate as a fusion of the two. Aristotle's description of *prohairesis* as either "intelligence motivated by desire or desire operating through thought"<sup>28</sup> can also be applied to the Buddhist *cetana*, which, as Keown states, "would . . . embrace a continuum that runs from predisposition through choice to action."<sup>29</sup> As one of our readers suggested, *cetana* combines thinking and desire, a project that the Japanese Buddhist Nishida attempts in *An Inquiry Into the Good*.<sup>30</sup> Both Aristotle and the Buddha refuse to dichotomize the self and to compartmentalize a flow of experience that resists such divisions. That is why *cetana* is sometimes identified with *karma* itself (as we have seen, deliberate intentions are the only karmic actions) or with the *skandha* of *sanskara*, a person's dispositions that carry karma from one life to another. Therefore, both Aristotelian and Buddhist philosophy operates very nicely without a concept of the will. Such a strategy does better justice to experience and does not generate unnecessary philosophical problems, a primary one being the freedom of an alleged independent, self-determining will.

## NAGARJUNA AND THE SELF

A South Indian philosopher sometimes called the “second Buddha,” Nagarjuna stands ambivalently at the beginnings of Mahayana philosophy. His arguments are subtle, sophisticated, and complex. Their interpretation is made more difficult because they are written as beautifully crafted quatrains whose density require extra concentration and persistence. As a transitional thinker, Nagarjuna is taken by some commentators (David Kalupahana and Jay Garfield) as continuing the Pali tradition and by others (Frederick Streng and T. Wood) as making a clean break with it. The latter school of interpretation reads Nagarjuna’s quatrains as thoroughly dialectical refutations of any positive thesis, even the minimalist claims of Pali realism. There is general consensus that the Yogacara school of Vasubandhu and Asanga reject Nagarjuna’s views, whatever they are, in favor of a idealism instructively similar to Euro-American schools.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have space to deal with Yogacara except only in an indirect way.

As we have seen, Pali Buddhists do not deny the appearance of an empirical self (*jiva*); rather, they deny that, corresponding to this appearance, there is anything enduring, separate, or independent. These may just be three different ways of saying the same thing, but since they represent three different types of Buddhist arguments, they merit separate presentations. First, there is no self that endures. What we see is constantly changing and there is nothing that stays the same. The traditional argument here proceeds by elimination: the physical bodies change; feelings, beliefs, desires, and intentions all change; consciousness is intermittent; and our self-conceptions change over time. None of the things we can point to as the self remains the same. Therefore the self does not endure. The argument is similar to the one given by Hume.

Second, the self is not separate from the causes and conditions that give rise to it. A standard metaphor for this comes from the *Dhammapada*, a Pali text from the 3rd century BCE. The appearance of a rainbow arises out of a certain combination of mist and light. Remove either one of these and the rainbow no longer exists. Similarly, the appearance of a self arises out of conditions: oxygen, food, parents, etc. Without them, there would be no self. This argument can be made on a general level, as just done, or on a particular level. You wouldn’t be the person you are if your family, friends, and acquaintances all weren’t the people they are, if you hadn’t had the experiences you’ve had, lived in the society you live in, etc. If we define the constellation of these conditions as one’s “world,” we can say that the self cannot be separated, either practically or logically, from the world in which it exists. Again we can say that causality has been replaced by conditionality.

Third, the self is not independent, which is a rough approximation of a Sanskrit term *svabhava*, meaning “self-nature” or “own being.” Nagarjuna uses *reductio ad absurdum* arguments to demonstrate the incoherence of attempts to say anything about an independently existing self. If the self existed on its own, it could not change or stay the same, could not be unified or composite, could not know or be known, etc. And yet, if we cannot say that the self really exists, by the same token we cannot say that the self really does not exist. We cannot say anything at all about it as an independently existing thing. What we are left with is an empirical or a thoroughly conventional self, depending on the way we read Nagarjuna.

The Pali versus Mahayana distinction is now not very helpful, so henceforth we will distinguish between “constructive postmodernism” (CPM) and a skeptical “deconstructive postmodernism” (DPM). Many commentators have interpreted Nagarjuna as anticipating the deconstruction of French postmodernism.<sup>33</sup> We prefer to interpret the Buddha’s philosophical intentions as anticipating CPM, but we are not certain that Nagarjuna can be interpreted under this rubric. We have already referred to more detailed discussions of these two positions in the endnotes, but suffice it to say that CPM is generally realist and supportive of the canons of logic and evidence, while DPM rejects realism and any logocentric methodology. Nagarjuna is a consummate logician and never rejects logic as a standard, so this obviously causes problems for any DPM reading of him. Nevertheless, in our conclusions we will assume that Nagarjuna cannot be fully accommodated within the CPM model.

Let us compare the translations of two quatrains on “agent/producer” and “action/product” to demonstrate not only the different interpretations but also the difficulty in deciphering the poetry of Nagarjuna’s *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. (Hereafter the *Karika*, an abbreviation of the Sanskrit title *Mulamadhyama-karika*.) Here are Jay Garfield’s and Frederick Streng’s translations of the last two verses of Chapter 8:

Action depends upon the agent.  
The agent itself depends on action.  
One cannot see any way  
To establish them differently.

The producer proceeds being dependent on  
the product,  
And the product proceeds being dependent  
on the producer.  
The cause for realization is seen in nothing  
else.

From this elimination [“giving up”] of  
[substantial] agent and action,  
One should elucidate appropriation  
[“acquiring”] in the same way.  
Through action and agent  
All remaining things should be understood.  
(Garfield)

In the same way one should understand  
the “acquiring” on the basis of the “giving  
up” of the producer and the product.  
By means of [this analysis] the product and  
Producer all other things should be dissolved  
(Streng).<sup>34</sup>

Even without knowing Tibetan (the original Sanskrit text has been lost), we can see that Garfield’s translation is more elegant. Moreover, we can see Streng’s skeptical conclusion that distinctions between agents, their actions, and all other things “should be dissolved.” (The Yogacara idealist would say “dissolved in the Buddha Mind.”) Garfield’s rendering is very different: he takes Streng’s “giving up” only as denying agents and their actions any self-being, not rejecting their existence altogether.

We propose that the phrase “phenomenal self” be used for the Pali tradition and CPM

interpretation while reserving “conventional” as a placeholder term for the deluded self who thinks it lives in a real world of interdependent things and events. This conventional self exists only by analogy to the appearance of the color spectrum as it is refracted through a prism. If the prism represents ignorance, then upon enlightenment the phenomenal world proves to be an illusion. If we complete the analogy by speaking of the white light that is refracted, the Yogacara idealists would call that the Buddha Mind while the skeptical Nagarjuna would deny its existence as well. For Mahayana Buddhists following the skeptical Nagarjuna the conventional self has a practical purpose only. Clinging to a notion of self that has self-being, its own perceptions, and possessions is the origin of suffering. Therefore, the use of conventions is governed not by their truth or reference to reality, but by their effectiveness in diagnosing the human predicament and allowing us to see the “emptiness” (*shunyata*) of all things that we thought were permanent and that we thought were somehow ours. From this standpoint, appeals to determinism in one moment and to personal responsibility in the next do not represent an inconsistency; rather, it is a recognition that different forms of rhetoric will be effective in different situations. (By contrast the Pali Buddhists have a realist concept of truth and meaning and that is why they are able to embrace a compatibilist position on free-will.) If the self is thoroughly conventional, then to ask whether it is free or determined is like asking “What is the sound of one clapping”? Zen Buddhists were profoundly influenced by what they took to be Nagarjuna’s skepticism.

Not all quatrains in the *Karita*, however, give us equally plausible readings. Here are two in Garfield’s translation that summarize nicely the point of the preceding paragraph:

If there were no self,  
Where would the self’s (properties) be?  
From the pacification of the self and what belongs to it,  
One abstains from grasping onto “I” and “mine.”

When views of “I” and “mine” are extinguished,  
Whether with respect to the internal or external,  
The appropriator ceases.  
This having ceased, birth ceases (18:2,4).

This quatrain can be rendered intelligible from either a CPM or DPM position, but other quatrains in this chapter appear to give the former approach no support:

What language expresses is nonexistent.  
The sphere of thought is nonexistent.  
Unarisen and unceased, like Nirvana  
Is the nature of things.

One can salvage the CPM position only by some clever qualifications, and then only partially. When Nagarjuna speaks of denying existence, he denies only absolute existence, the negation of

which is absolute nonexistence. (Nagarjuna agrees with Parmenides in rejecting this as inexpressible and meaningless.) But from a CPM standpoint, the nonexistence in this quatrain must be a relative non-being that corresponds to the relative being of interdependent existence that is expressible and meaningful. (A thing's relative non-being is everything that it is *not*, which is actually all the other things that it is dependent upon.) The CPM interpretation of this quatrain runs aground with the conclusion that Nirvana and all things are "un arisen and unceased." This quatrain appears to undermine the DPM interpretation as well, because it implies that Nirvana is the only "thing" that has self-being. Tibetan Buddhists influenced by Yogacara idealism hold that Nagarjuna intended only to reject the self-being of phenomenal reality not the ultimate reality that is the *Dharmakaya*. This is the cosmic body of the Buddha into which all selves that reach Nirvana dissolve. Here is one of their own quatrains:

If emptiness were the method, then  
 Buddhahood could not be. Since other  
 Than this cause there would be no other fruit,  
 The method is not emptiness.<sup>34</sup>

Not many Mahayana Buddhists, except those in some Zen schools, were willing to follow Nagarjuna in rejecting all metaphysical views of the Buddha and his cosmic body. While Nagarjuna's deconstruction is logically rigorous, it was obviously not religiously satisfying for most Buddhists.

### **NAGARJUNA ON CAUSES AND CONDITIONS**

In his interpretation of the *Karita* Garfield maintains that Nagarjuna preserves a distinction between conditionality and causality. Garfield maintains that Nagarjuna holds a positive view of conditionality as explained above, and he demonstrates that Nagarjuna rejects only the view of causes as having some occult power to produce effects. For this argument let us look at the first verse of the first chapter of the *Karita*:

Neither from itself nor from another,  
 Nor from both,  
 Nor without cause,  
 Does anything whatever, anywhere arise.

This is the famous Buddhist "neither-nor dialectic" in action—also called the "four-corned negation" in Indian logic.<sup>35</sup> It is meant to exhaust any possibility of "causality talk," and each of the four options actually represent previous Indian philosophical schools.

The first chapter's second verse contains a very rare phenomenon in the *Karita*, a positive view of conditionality that Nagarjuna does not dialectically destroy:

There are four conditions: efficient condition;  
 Percept-object condition; immediate condition;

Dominant condition, just so.  
There is no fifth condition.

The fourth verse makes it clear that causality understood as a metaphysical power is not a part of conditionality:

Power to act does not have conditions.  
There is no power to act without conditions.  
There are no conditions without power to act.  
Nor do any have the power to act.

We will now offer an example (inspired by Garfield) that demonstrates how one can conceive of conditionality in its four instances without causality. A person takes a match and strikes it, which is the efficient condition. The match lights because there is enough oxygen, it is not too wet, and the tip of the match has not worn to the point of nonignition, which are some of the immediate conditions. The percept-object conditions are those within any perceiver that allows the eyes to see. Finally, the person has struck the match so that she can see whether what she took for a snake in the dark was perhaps just a piece of rope. This is the dominant condition, the purpose of any action; a Buddhist “final cause” if you will. Please note that our example has not appealed to any occult causes or powers as a way of explaining what happens.

There are of course other translations and interpretations of these quatrains, some of which support the skeptical DPM position. These readings generally tend to conflate causes and conditions, and in alternative translations of verses three and ten Nagarjuna appears to reject the existence of relational existence and the impossibility of anything whatsoever arising. Here are the two quatrains from A. L. Herman’s revision of Theodore Stcherbatsky’s translation:

In these four conditions we can find  
No self-nature (*svabhava*)  
Where there is no self-existence,  
There can be no relational existence (*parabhava*).

If existing things have no self-nature  
Then they have no real existence  
The [formula] “this being, that appears”  
Then loses every meaning. (1: 3,10)<sup>36</sup>

Note here the clear negation of the two principal features of the doctrine of interdependent coorigination: the denial of relational existence and the rejection of conditionality. This view of Nagarjuna’s argument anticipates Bradley’s famous attempt to show that an ontology based exclusively on internal relations is just as unintelligible as one based on external relations. We summarize Bradley’s argument as follows: If *A* is internally related to *B* and *R* is the relation, one would then need *R'* to relate *R* to *A*, *R''* that relates to *R* to *B*, *R'''* that relates *R''* to *R' ad infinitum*.

Bradley's conclusion is that either A and B are totally separate or they are identical.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, a putative realism of distinct but interrelated entities by necessity collapses into an either an absolute monism (the Yogacara position--they would have loved Bradley!) or a denial of any intelligible view of reality at all (the DPM Nagarjuna). Appealing to Whitehead's doctrine of asymmetrical relations (e.g., that the present is internal to the past but the past remains external), one could assume that the Buddha would agree with him, because he did not explicitly affirm a doctrine of full internal relations as some Mahayanist Buddhists did. The presence of asymmetrical relations would save Buddhism from the extremes just above and keep the CPM interpretation alive.

Garfield's translation of the two passages above allows us to reject the deconstruction of dependent beings:

The essence of entities is not present in the conditions.

If there is no essence, there can be no otherness-essence.

If things did not exist without essence, the phrase

"When this exists so this will be," would not be acceptable. (1. 3,10)

We take this to mean that if any being lacks self-existence, then any being other does also. (Notice what a difference the translation makes: "relational being" is now "other being.") It also follows that if some beings were substances, we could not affirm the Buddhist law of conditionality. The CPM interpretation of Nagarjuna appears to dissolve his doctrine of two truths, which Garfield formulates as "the conventional truth of the reality and interdependence of all phenomena and the ultimate truth of their emptiness of inherent existence."<sup>38</sup> From the standpoint of CPM these two truths are the same: real interdependence ontologically implies that no being can have self-existence.

## CONCLUSIONS

The traditional libertarian, who believes with Kant that, in the absence of freedom, there cannot exist anything of absolute value in the world, may wonder if there is any role left for freedom in Buddhism. Normally we assume that there has to be a self or an agent in order for there to be freedom, but this is just the presumption the skeptical Nagarjuna questions. If we cannot call the karmic web free since it lacks a self, by the same token we cannot call it determined, since nothing outside of it is causing it. To the extent that people identify a self, that self is determined by causes outside of it. The more cultivated they become on the Buddhist model, the less they think this way. The less *who* thinks this way? A question that the European philosopher might ask. Nagarjuna's answer is *no one, really*. The non-personal web of causes and conditions sheds the delusion, or, rather, ceases to give rise to it. Thus you get the seemingly paradoxical lines from, for instance, *The Diamond Sutra*, that "even though infinite beings have been saved, none have been saved."<sup>39</sup> Thus while we would assume that there has to be a self in order for there to be freedom, Nagarjuna would say that there is freedom only to the extent that there is not a self. The familiar correlation in the European tradition of selfhood and freedom is



reversed: rather than correlates, selfhood and freedom are antitheses.

The reason this matters for the skeptical Nagarjuna is the connection between the self and suffering. The belief in a self that is enduring, separate, and independent, gives rise to desires that are ultimately unsatisfiable precisely because no such self exists. If all talk of the self or anything else is conventional, and if no one set of conventions is more right than the others, what then governs the choice among conventions? The First Noble Truth of Buddhism, enunciated by the Buddha upon his enlightenment, is that all egocentric existence suffers. This is not to say that every moment is agony, which would obviously be false, but that the process of existing, thinking one is a substantial self, is inherently painful. Even the joyful moments take their character from the absence of, or absence of awareness of, discomfort. Our unwillingness to acknowledge this fact and our stubborn insistence that suffering is avoidable only compound the difficulties.

More particularly, suffering is caused by belief in a self that does not exist. Thinking in terms of a self that is enduring, separate, and independent causes people to search for a happiness they cannot find precisely because such a self does not exist. The desire to alleviate suffering by eliminating the belief in a self is the motive force of Buddhism. It is easy to see how, in the Mahayana tradition, one would not be able simply to alleviate *one's own* suffering without relying on the notion of self that caused the suffering in the first place. As a result, motivation must come from the desire to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings. This realization led to the Bodhisattva ideal, enlightened beings, in one sense greater than the Buddha himself, who vow to delay Nirvana until all other beings have entered before them.

The silence of all forms of Buddhism on the debate about free-will first stems from its refusal to divide up the world in the modernist ways discussed above. Second, it is silent because it rejects a substantial self-determining self in the Pali tradition and any notion of an individual self in the Mahayana tradition, whether it be Yogacara idealism or Madhyamaka, the school of philosophers influenced by Nagarjuna. If this is true, then contemporary interest in the debate must be premised on certain assumptions about the self and personhood. We see this clearly in Harry Frankfurt's now classic essay where he claims that one of the desiderata of a theory of free-will is that it demarcate the "essential difference" between people and animals.<sup>40</sup> Buddhists, however, see people on a spectrum of beings, between animals, who are unable to diagnose the origin of their suffering or to take steps to alleviate it, and putative deities who, because of their constant state of bliss, lack the incentive to act. Thus, while Frankfurt and the Buddhists both observe the same phenomenon of first- and second-order desires, one reason the Buddhists do not assign it the same weight was because they refuse to distinguish people from animals for moral purposes. Anticipating Tom Regan's approach to animal rights, the *Dhammapada* assumes that animals have interests and that "life [is] dear" to them (10:3)

The second requirement for a theory of free-will, according to Frankfurt, is that it should explain why freedom of the will is regarded as desirable. For the Buddhists, the existence of orders of desire is an observed fact, of utility in alleviating suffering but of no intrinsic value. Frankfurt's presumption, right or wrong, that freedom is a valuable thing, is a European notion

that can be traced back, as we have seen to Augustine and medieval Christian discussions about sin, salvation, and divine power. The two Buddhist traditions respond in significantly different ways: the Pali tradition affirms the preference for Nirvana over Samsara, while Nagarjuna proclaims, in Nancy McCagney's translation, "There is no distinction whatever between Samsara and Nirvana; there is no distinction whatever between Nirvana and Samsara."<sup>41</sup> Zen Buddhists took this to mean that having a preference for Nirvana is a form of craving, so Nirvana would come to only those without any desire at all, in a moment not of their choosing, right in the middle of the natural course of events. Hence, the Zen master's resort to the koan's *non sequitor*, which is designed to destroy the craving for salvation. Ideally, the monk has neither preferences nor nonpreferences and cannot be said to be free in that Lehrer has defined it.

We have argued that these different estimations of the significance of the free-will question are predicated on different ideas about the self. These ideas about the self may be rooted in still deeper suppositions about moral significance. In the religious traditions of Europe, the moral significance of creatures is primarily predicated on a will that is truly their own: people are thought to have earned salvation or damnation to the extent that they have had a choice. In the Buddhist tradition, moral significance is predicated on the ability to feel suffering: concern is due not just to rational beings, but all sentient beings. Both of these could be contrasted, for instance, to Native American religions, which accord moral significance to mountains and rivers, which presumably can neither choose nor feel but which still play a role in the cycle of life.

Our coverage of Buddhism has been very general and we have been forced to be selective in what we have discussed. Our purpose here has not been to argue the truth of compatibilism or incompatibilism, nor has it been our intent to conclude that Buddhists or Euro-American philosophers are right or wrong. Rather, our principal purpose has been to draw attention to background assumptions from which the current debate has arisen and to offer a different and arguably challenging perspective from Asia. What we hope we have demonstrated is that presumptions about selfhood and moral significance influence our intuitions and the questions we regard as important to ask. And if indeed it should turn out that belief in a deluded form of self is the origin of suffering, or that animals and even mountains and rivers are worthy of moral respect, then these are not things we would want to take for granted as we reflect, as did Frankfurt, on "our most humane concern with ourselves and the source of what we regard as most important and most problematical in our lives."<sup>42</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

1. H. W. Schumann, *Buddhism: An Outline of its Teachings and Schools*, trans. Georg Feuerstein (London: Rider, 1973), p. 53.
2. Cited in Theodore Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1958), p.

133.

3. Cited in Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p. 215.

4. Jay Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 102.

5. Nicholas F. Gier, *Spiritual Titanism: Indian, Chinese, and Western Perspectives* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2000).

6. One could say that the issue was first raised by the Stoics, who criticized Epicurus' attempt to introduce indeterminism among the atoms, but what is entirely missing from Greco-Roman philosophy is the concept of a fully self-determining will. Furthermore, Epicurus' indeterminism is no more successful in addressing free-will than those who would now want to appeal to Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle. Finally, it is clear that modernist concepts such as autonomy and the separation of fact and value were indeed anticipated and affirmed by some ancient schools of thought, such as Sankhya-Yoga, Jainism, Indian and Greek atomism, and Chinese Mohism.

7. For example, see H. Hudson, "Wittgenstein and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West* 23:4 (October, 1973), pp. 4471-482; "Wittgenstein and Nagarjuna," *Philosophy East and West* 35:2 (April, 1985), pp. 157-170; Chris Gudmundsen, *Wittgenstein and Buddhism* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1977); and Nathan Katz, "Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein on Error" in *Buddhist and Western Philosophy*, ed. Nathan Katz (Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), pp. 306-327.

8. See Nicholas F. Gier, "Three Types of Divine Power," *Process Studies* 20:4 (Winter, 1991), pp. 221-232.

9. See *Spiritual Titanism*, chapter 2 and the Series Introduction by David Ray Griffin in any volume of SUNY Press's Series on Constructive Postmodern Thought.

10. *Mahavedallasutta*, I.293.

11. *Majjhima Nikaya* II.214ff., cited in Luis O. Gomez, "Some Aspects of Free-Will in the Nikayas," *Philosophy East and West* 25:1 (1975), pp. 84-85. I am indebted to Gomez for both texts and insights.

12. *Majjhima Nikaya* I.190-1, cited in Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), p. 64. The pronoun has been changed to "they" to avoid the exclusive "he."

13. See William Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues, and Diversity in the Liberal State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), *passim*, p. 230 for a revised view of the self; and "Liberal Virtues and the Formation of Civic Character" in *The Seedbeds of Virtue: Sources of Competence, Character, and Citizenship in American Society*, eds. M. A. Glendon and D. Blankenhorn (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1995), pp. 35-60. See Stephen Macedo, *Liberal Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), *passim*, pp. 220-221 for "situated autonomy."

14. See Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy*, chapter 3.
15. Jay L. Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 73-76.
16. Kalupahana, *Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 28. Reading Kapulahana more carefully than her teacher, my student Kaylani Merrill shows that Buddhist conditionality has a different logic. The Buddha used a Pali *locative absolute* to describe conditionality. The grammar of “when that, then this” is very different from the “if, then” formula found in European forms of sentential logic. See Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 57.
17. R. H. Robinson and Willard L Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1992), p. 17.
18. Edward Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), p. 149.
19. Ibid. The difference between abstract and concrete here can be explained with the distinction between rational or aesthetic order. See N. F. Gier’s “Synthetic Reason, Aesthetic Order, and the Grammar of Virtue,” *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 18:4 (2001), pp. 13-28.
20. Ibid., p. 146 fn.
21. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa recorded a long tradition of a metaphorical interpretation of the realms of existence. See *Toward Truth*, ed. Donald K. Swearer (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1972).
22. I am indebted to Joseph Goldstein for this statement and this insightful way of redefining *karma*. See his “Cause and Effect” in *Radiant Mind: Essential Buddhist Teachings and Texts*, ed. Jean Smith (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), pp. 291. The definition of *karma* as volitional action is not only good Pali Buddhism but it is also the position of the great Mahayanist philosopher Vasubandhu: “*karma* is will (*cetana*) and voluntary action (*cetayita karanam*)” (cited in Theodore Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism* [New Delhi: Motilal Barnarsidass, 1974], p. 32).
23. For the best comparative studies of the Buddha and Hume, see L. Stafford Betty, “The Buddhist-Humean Parallels: Postmortem,” *Philosophy East and West* 21:3 (July, 1971), pp. 237-254; and James Giles, “The No-Self Theory: Hume, Buddhism, and Personal Identity,” *Philosophy East and West* 43:2 (April, 1993), pp. 175-200.
24. Cited in Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India*, p. 149.
25. Kalupahana, *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1987), pp. 20-21. Kalupahana's Pali has been changed to Sanskrit.
26. Peter Harvey, “The Mind-Body Relationship in Pali Buddhism: A Philosophical Investigation,” *Asian Philosophy* 3:1 (1993), p. 31.
27. Surendra Verma, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Gandhi’s Thought* (New Delhi: Orient Longmans, 1970), p. 7.
28. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139b4-5 (Ostwald trans.).
29. Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, p. 218.

30. See the “Nature” and “Spirit” sections of Nitaro Nishida, *An Inquiry Into the Good*, trans. Masao Abe and Christopher Ives (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).
31. See Garfield’s *Empty Words* for the best comparative analysis of this issue.
32. See Ian W. Mabbett, “Nagarjuna and Deconstruction,” *Philosophy East & West* 45:2 (April, 1995), pp. 203. For a constructive postmodern interpretation see Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy and Nagarjuna: Philosophy of the Middle Way* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1986).
33. Jay L. Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*; Frederick J. Streng, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), pp. 181-220.
34. Cited in Tsong-Karpa, *Tantra in Tibet* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1977), p. 117.
35. See Nicholas F. Gier, “Dialectic: East and West,” *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (January, 1983), 207-218.
36. See A. L. Herman, *An Introduction to Buddhist Thought* (Landham, MD: University Press of American, 1983), pp. 287, 288.
37. See F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 18.
38. Garfield, *Empty Words*, p. 225.
39. *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, trans. Edward Conze (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 25.
40. Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *The Journal of Philosophy* 68:1 (January 14, 1971), p. 6.
41. Nancy McCagney, *Nagarjuna and the Philosophy of Openness* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), p. 209; *Karita* 25.19.
42. Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” p. 6.

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