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Kalupahana presents this treatment of the ethics of the Pali *Suttas* (and to some extent the *Vinaya*) in accordance with his view that such texts held that there is *nothing* which is permanent (not even *Nibbāna*) and there are no eternal laws of any kind. His conclusion asserts that the four *Nikāyas*, along with the *Sutta-nipāta*, *Udāna*, *Itivuttaka* and *Dhammapada* “have one consistent philosophical standpoint characterized by radical empiricism, a nonabsolutist metaphysics, and a pragmatic moral discourse” (p.143). He warns that Buddhists should seek to avoid the kind of situation that the Buddha warned against, in which people are caught up in a web of beliefs, so as to be ready to sacrifice other humans “for the sake of propagating or maintaining their belief system” (p.146).

The book is divided into three parts, the first, containing five chapters, dealing with “Historical Background and Problems” (59 pages). This mainly deals with pre-Buddhist and Buddhist views of the epistemological basis of ethics, with little reference to the actual content of Buddhist ethics. Chapter 1, “Pre-Buddhist Indian Moral Theories” (23 pages), begins with a discussion of the human desire to find moral laws comparable with the “nomological”—i.e. lawlike—character of the physical world. Kalupahana traces a pre-Buddhist line of search for a “deontologically” based universal moral principle, this being seen first in *ṛta* and then in *brahma(n)*, the basis of the four *varṇa* system (which Kalupahana refers to as a system of “caste” (= *jāti*, rather than sacred class). He sees the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which he accepts was compiled “a few centuries after the emergence of Buddhism” (p.7), though also dating it at around 400 BC. (p.vii) and as stimulating the Buddhists to compose the *Dhammapada* (p.143), as holding up an ideal of self-sacrifice which expects people to transcend their humanity in pursuit of *brahman*. He also sees in Arjuna’s initial reluctance to fight, so as to avoid death and disintegration of his family, a “utilitarian” view, and regards the *Gītā* as “a gigantic effort to discredit that utilitarian philosophy and establish what has come to be the absolutely pure and perfect system of deontological ethics” (pp.7-8). Here one sees the author’s tendency to project western philosophical categories onto Indian texts without properly arguing for the appropriateness of doing so. In contrast to the deontology of the *Gītā*, Kalupahana sees a form of Indian utilitarianism, which he regards as having come to be primarily identified with the *śramaṇa* movement, but with the system of the four “stages of life” (*āśrama-dharma*) as its “foundation” (p.10). He sees Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra*, a discourse on statecraft, as the key expression of such Indian utilitarianism, though. The views of such *śramaṇas* as Ajita Kesakambala, Pūraṇa Kassapa, Pakudha Kaccāyana and Makkhali Gosāla, he plausibly sees as forms of “amoralism”. He sees Mahāvīra as effected by the “biological determinism” of the

Ājīvikas, as having a “relativist” theory of knowledge, but as holding that the same objective action always led to the same karmic result. He regards Mahāvīra’s Jainism as similar to Brahmanism, though, in maintaining a distinction between “the transcendent and the empirical, the celestial and the terrestrial”, such that it still had a “sacred-secular dichotomy” (pp.24-5).

From chapter 2, “Knowledge” (11 pages), Kalupahana begins to discuss Buddhism. He begins by asserting that “the Buddha was born and bred in the Brahmanical tradition” (p.26), though in fact it is uncertain how Brahmanised the Sakkan republic of his youth was. Indeed, the statement that “It was his disillusionment with the thought and practices of the Brahmanical tradition that led him to abandon his regal responsibilities” (p.26) seems to be based on no evidence. He regards the “not-born ... non-mortal” (p.28) attained by the Buddha as simply his attainment of the destruction of future birth and death, which seems to imply the idea that complete non-existence would follow the Buddha’s death. Accordingly, he holds that the *Suttas* regard *everything* as subject to dependent arising, with nothing independent beyond it, not even *Nibbāna*. He sees them as accepting that yogic contemplation can give some empirical knowledge, but not that it can give knowledge of a transcendent, changeless realm. Such a view overlooks *Sutta* passages which portray *Nibbāna* as the stopping of the sequence of conditions governed by the principle of dependent arising.

In line with his views elsewhere, Kalupahana sees the Buddha as offering “an empirical understanding of phenomena in a historical present, or what may be characterized as ‘radical empiricism’”, which accepted no permanent entities, nor knowledge of the essence of anything “as it is” in itself, independent of the background of its arising (p.31). Accordingly, he holds that the principles that the Buddha formulated were not meant to be “absolute or incorrigible”, but only as “valid so far” (p.32). He rightly points out that the Buddha did not accept *a priori* reasoning as a valid route to knowledge, but used inductive, *a posteriori* reasoning.

Kalupahana repeats his idea that the Buddha abandoned the dichotomy of truth (*satya*) and falsity (*asatya*), replacing it with a system of truth (*sacca*), that which has “become” (*bhūta*) or arisen, versus that which is either *mūsa*, “confusion”, or *abhūta*, i.e. “not become” so far (pp.33-4). The exposition of this is not clear, and it is not clear how it contributes to a book on ethics. Perhaps this makes it *mūsa*, in Kalupahana’s sense? As to the definition of truth, he says that the Buddha “adopted an enlightened form of pragmatism in the definition of truth” (p.43-44), though it is more plausible to say that the Buddha used a pragmatic criterion to decide which truths are worth teaching to others. This is partly, but only partly, recog-

nised when Kalupahana says that, for the Buddha:

what is true is important only insofar as it is relevant to what is good. Any conception of truth not relevant to making human life wholesome and good would simply be metaphysical and therefore unedifying. ... he was not reluctant to assert that what is true is useful and that what is useful is true (pp.36-7).

In fact, M.I.392-96 has the Buddha saying that it may or may not be spiritually useful to assert a truth to someone, and implying that only true statements can be spiritually useful.

In Chapter 3, “The Fact-Value Distinction” (10 pages), Kalupahana oddly sees a recognition of this dichotomy in the distinction between *ātman* and *brahman*, which were then later fused into one. He regards more materialistically inclined western empiricists as seeing values as purely subjective, and refers to Aristotle’s virtue-ethics only to see it as the root of later emotivism (p.38), making no reference to Keown’s well-argued thesis (*The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 1992, Macmillan) which sees virtue-ethics as close to Buddhist ethics. He goes on to champion William James’s radical empiricist pragmatism as the best way to deal with values. He then looks at the *Suttas*’ analysis of sense experience, arguing that it shows that one never has direct unmediated knowledge of an object, as one’s consciousness of an object is affected by such factors as one’s “interest (*saṅkhāra*)” (p.42), so that the truth or falsity of one’s perception is a matter of their usefulness rather than absolute correspondence with an object. Thus, “Within the framework of such a pragmatic definition there cannot be place for a rigid fact-value distinction” (p.43), with the Buddha using the term *dhamma*(s) for both fact(s) and value(s). For Kalupahana, the Buddha did not simply equate facts and values but gave “a description of facts and values where facts, since they could not be divorced from human knowledge and understanding, are partly subjective, and that values, because they affect the facts themselves, are objective in a pragmatic sense” (p.44)—this being possible as the Buddha had abandoned “absolutist and essentialist conceptions of truth”. On the is/ought distinction, the author argues that, as the Buddha held that nothing existed in an absolute sense, likewise “ought” was de-absolutised, simply being “a pragmatic call to recognize the empirical existence and adopt solutions to whatever problems are associated with it” (p.45). In the Buddha’s thought, the assertion of the unsatisfactoriness of the world, which would normally be seen as a value judgement, is seen as based on the assertion of the impermanence of the world, which would generally be seen as a statement of fact. Once unsatisfactoriness is established as a fact, an “is”, it

become the basis for recommending the path as a pragmatic “ought” (p.46).

The topic of chapter 4, “The World and the Will” (7 pages) seems to be taken up mainly because “will” plays an important part in the metaphysics and ethics of Kant and Schopenhauer. Kalupahana makes the point that the Buddha rejected both a completely autonomous will and the idea that humans have no influence over their own lives and actions. There is no one concept equivalent to “will”, though the *saṅkhāras*, which Kalupahana calls “dispositions” cover much of the ground of this. Some of the range of meanings of this term are explored, though there is no reflection on the fact that “dispositions” is an odd translation given that *cetanā*, “volition”, is often given as the archetypal *saṅkhāra*.

Chapter 5, “The Individual and Society” (8 pages), begins by dealing with the Buddha’s attitude to language, such that he saw it as evolving and changing. Kalupahana sees the *Aggañña-suttanta* as a “fanciful” account of the evolution of the world which shows how the terms of language and notions of the four *varṇas* evolve accidentally. He holds that this understanding, which avoids seeing language as indicating opposed, dichotomous essences, enabled the Buddha to see that neither the individual nor society is absolute: the individual does have rights over against society, but they are not inalienable; society is more than a conglomeration of individuals, but has no absolute authority over the individual (p.58). More argument is needed, however, to build a bridge from the above thoughts on language to these views on society. Kalupahana goes on to point out that the Buddha uses the fact that individuals value themselves as a basis for non-violence to others, and rightly points out that such an argument does not require that “self” is a permanent essence [indeed, if it was, it could not be harmed by violence anyway]. The author sees the Buddha’s rejection of the extreme of harsh asceticism as showing that Buddhist renunciation does not advocate a complete transcendence of self-interest, which he sees to be the case in the “deontological” system of theistic systems such as in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. He goes on:

the Buddha’s conception of society hinges on the self-interest (*saṅkhāra*) of both oneself and others. “Love thy neighbour not for any reason but because that person has the same self-interest as thine”. Thus, it is this extremely significant human interest that makes a society meaningful. Society is ... mutual self-interest.

Such a reading of early Buddhism is not unreasonable, but one wonders whether “self-interest” is the best phrase to capture the like-of-happiness-dislike-of-pain that all beings share, according to Buddhism.

Part II, “The Moral Life, the Principle, and Justification” (44 pages) contains six chapters. In chapter 6, “The Noble Life (*Brahmacariya*) (5 pages), Kalupahana begins by pointing out that the Buddha used *brahma* not to refer to any moral absolute, but in the sense of noble. He goes on to assert that Ānanda, because he thought that good (friendship) was only half of the noble life (S.V.2-3), was “inclined toward transcendentalism” in which religious perfection goes beyond the ordinary moral life. Rather, the noble life is “good” (*kalyāṇa*) in its beginning, middle and end. He then goes on to briefly discuss some *Sutta* versions of the content of the noble life. In this, he oddly describes the four *jhānas* as “preliminary stages of contemplation” (p.68), and also says that the cultivation of virtues (*sīla*) is not, as such, part of the eightfold path, but a preliminary to it.

In chapter 7, “Virtues: The Beginning of the Way” (7 pages), Kalupahana begins by discussing the *Brahmajāla-suttanta* and its delineation of items of moral virtue and a range of wrong views as an inadequate basis for virtue. He goes on to argue that the virtues are part of but not the whole of the noble life, with no one virtue as its essence (p.72). This is unobjectionable, but that said, surely it is not then wrong to see religious perfection as involving more than ordinary moral life? His answer, here, is to distinguish “virtues” from “morals (*dhamma* or *adhisīla*) (p.80), which *do* encompass the whole of the noble life. Kalupahana discusses some of the ten forms of *kusala* action, and different levels and types of virtue: those of the forest, pertaining to animals; worldly morals of the householder and those “attractive to humans”; and those “attractive to the worthy ones” (p.74). He goes on to discuss some of the short-term and long-term benefits of such virtues, according to the *Suttas*.

Chapter 8 (7 pages) is rather provocatively called “The Eightfold Path: The Middle of the Way”. Kalupahana rightly points out that “Peace, well-being and happiness” characterise both the path and its goal of freedom. He goes on to say of the eightfold path, which he sees as a “moral path” which includes a justification for virtue along with virtues and higher virtues (p.81), that it has as its most important characteristics is that “it is the middle of the moral life as well as a middle way”, meaning that it comes between the cultivation of virtues and the freedom that is the climax of the noble life (p.78). This *perhaps* could be said of the *Ariyan* eightfold path, as the ordinary eightfold path prepares for it, and the path to final Arahatsip becomes tenfold, by the addition of right knowledge and right freedom (M.III.71-8: discussed p.79-80). Whether it was an intended meaning of *majjhima-paṭipadā* is another matter.

Kalupahana sees the connotation of *sammā*, “right”, as applied to each path factor, as implying a comprehensive coverage of right and wrong

in all relevant circumstances, but not an absolutist attempt to account for all possible circumstances. The emphasis on right view as at the head of the path shows the importance of epistemology; such right view also avoids both dogmatic certainty and eschewing all views: “Right view then would be the most comprehensive view that can be adopted within the limitations of human knowledge and understanding” (p.79).

From the statement that the eightfold path is among the phenomena that are “dispositionally conditioned” (*sankhata*), Kalupahana concludes: i)—it does not conform to any “incorruptible law” (p.82), and ii) it needs to be modified according to the state of the wayfarer as he/she progresses, and the situations that he/she meets in the changing world (p.83). The common element, though, is provided by the path having a single ultimate goal: freedom: “It is indeed the ultimate goal, which is not a constituent of the moral path, that serves as an incentive to follow the path. It serves the function of an imperative” (p.82). With no absolute law to guarantee results, however, constant effort and mindful vigilance are necessary.

Chapter, 9, “Freedom: The Conclusion of the Way” (6 pages) deals with *Nibbāna*, which the author consistently refers to as as “freedom”. He rightly criticises the two views that a) one should attain full freedom for oneself before teaching others and b) one should not attain freedom oneself until everyone else has been helped to attain it, but he is following false stereotypes in equating the first with Theravāda and the second with the Mahāyāna. He goes on to say, “The middle path between the so-called Theravāda and Mahāyāna has to be one in which the extremes of individualism and socialism are renounced” (p.87).

The author rightly emphasises that there is no absolute break between the “moral life” (i.e. the eightfold path) and its goal, freedom, and that the moral life is still relevant once the goal is reached—it is not transcended. In saying, though, that the reason the Buddha continued in the “moral path” was because “it is not an absolutely fixed blueprint valid for all time” (p.88), but one of responding to new challenges, seems to be a case of projecting pet theories onto his material.

Chapter 10, “The Status of the Moral Principle” (6 pages) presents the Buddha as opposing any notion of an absolute law, with the eightfold path working according to the principle of dependent origination in an objective, law-like way, but allowing appropriate adjustments according to circumstances. In pointing out that “even a person of moral standing can commit offences”, though, he explains this by saying that no human is omniscient (p.94). Now while ignorance of the full consequences of actions *might* still lead a person open to being guilty of some *monastic* offences, it is hard to see how an ethic based on intention requires full knowl-

edge of the consequences of acts in order to retain full moral purity.

Chapter 11, “Justification of the Moral Life” (14 pages) begins by discussing the status of the gods in Buddhism, and then life in the other realms. He regards the “virtues” as “the beginning of the moral life”, intended to lead to social harmony, and also leading to heavenly rebirth; “the morals” go beyond the “virtues”, though, as they lead to the ultimate health of self and other (p.99). Here the language is not too clear: how are “virtues” different from “morals”, particularly when both are part of “the moral life”?—a problem also found in chapters 7 and 8

Kalupahana then goes on to examine the early Buddhist view of karma against the background of non-Buddhist perspectives on karma, usefully pointing out *Sutta* passages which show a range of flexibility in the working out of karmic results, according to the nature of the action, person and circumstances, rather than an inflexible determinism. He goes on to discuss the place of rebirth in early Buddhism, against the background of its non-acceptance of a permanent self, as based on the Buddha’s knowledge of some of his past lives. In accordance with his empiricist interpretation of Buddhism, he also says that the *Suttas* do not claim that all people will be reborn (even all unenlightened ones), only that “past cases of survival have been observed and it may occur in the future as well” (p.106).

Kalupahana points out that the Buddha used the ideas of karma and rebirth as a kind of best-bet wager to help persuade people that it was best to act as if they were true—and so live morally—as this gave one the best chance of happiness. Nevertheless, to only discuss rebirth and karma in a chapter headed “The Justification of the Moral Life” implies that the only justification Buddhism offers for living morally is so as to reap good karmic results. This is to put the cart before the horse. Certain actions are seen to have pleasant or unpleasant bad karmic results *because* they are, by *other* criteria (their motivating roots, and whether they are intended to benefit or harm beings) seen as good or bad. Their goodness or badness is not determined by what karmic results they have, though reference to such results may be used to help motivate others, or oneself, to act in a good way more often, and a bad way less often.

Part III, containing five chapters (30 pages), is “Applications of the Principle”, though at first it is not clear what “the principle” actually consists of. This becomes clear on p.115: “the welfare of oneself and others, that is, mutual self-interest”, so that one should aim for “the welfare, happiness and freedom both of oneself and others” (p.137). Chapter 12, “Society and Morals” (6 pages) begins by discussing the Buddha’s attitude to *varṇa*. Kalupahana sees the *Aggañña-suttanta* account of the evolution of society as showing how a social ethic, based on mutual self-interest, evolved from

within society, rather than being imposed on it from without. He then recounts the ideals of the *Sigālovāda-suttanta* as illustrating the concept of a society based on “mutual human interest”, in which the “pursuit of the happiness and welfare of oneself and others, the foundation of the Buddha’s moral philosophy, is included in every form of relationship” (pp.117-18).

Chapter 13, “Economics and Morals” (5 pages) begins by arguing that ethicists’ neglect of economics is due to assuming that any concern with self-interest is incompatible with morals, and economists’ neglect of ethics is due to their domination by “of crass utilitarianism and materialism”, such that a concern with morals is seen to get in the way of the goal of prosperity for all. Such materialistic concerns he also sees at work on Kautilya’s *Arthasāstra*. Kalupahana cites the *Cakkavatti-sīhanāda-suttanta* as presenting the Buddhist view that material deprivation undermines social harmony, but that such harmony is not sustained simply by hand-outs. He goes on to cite texts showing that wealth generated by one’s own energy is seen as beneficial—provided it is used well and one is not attached to it. Moreover, the society of true mutual benefit does not promote greed, and also looks after the natural environment.

Chapter 14, “Politics and Morals” (6 pages) begins by discussing Indian monarchism, which the author aligns with Brahmanism, and republicanism, which he aligns with Indian “utilitarianism”. He sees the Buddha as favouring republicanism but as developing a view of an ideal monarch, the *cakkavatti*, in a way that drew in some of the ideals of republicanism, and avoided negative aspects of the Brahmanical ideal of kingship. He goes on to discuss this ideal, arguing that the authority of such a ruler is seen to come from below, from the governed. Accordingly, punishment of citizens should not be harsh, just as that given by a parent to a child should not be. In returning to the Buddha’s description of the republican ideal, he sees its principle of “Not authorizing what has not been authorized already, not abolishing what has already been authorized”, not as a bar on all social change, but as a safeguard against disruptive revolution.

Chapter 15, “Law, Justice and Morals” (7 pages) discusses the place and nature of formal laws/rules in Buddhist polities and in the monastic Sangha. Kalupahana sees the rules of the latter as intended to “mold the character” of its members, and that the Sangha “carried the burden of creating a healthy-minded society” (p.132). On the general nature of punishment, he cites M.I.392-96, which has the Buddha say he sometimes uses unpleasant speech *if* it is (true and) (morally) useful, as implying that punishments need to be well suited to the offender, and only be severe if this is of real moral benefit to them. The author sees the *Suttas*’ idea of “justice”, which he sees as another meaning of the word *dhamma*, as being that it is

based neither on timeless transcendent norms, nor on merely human conventions. Rather it is “that which promotes mutual self-interest” (p.135), which he compares to John Rawls’s idea of justice as fairness. Yet he sees Rawls’s Kantian-like emphasis on the absolute autonomy of the individual as out of tune with Buddhism, and his emphasis on reason as needing to be complemented by a concern for moral purity and freedom.

Chapter 16, “Nature and Morals” (6 pages) begins with a restatement of the principle that Buddhist ethics aims at the welfare of self and other, avoiding a deontological approach which demands too much self-sacrifice, and a utilitarian approach in which a minority may be asked to suffer for the sake of a majority. Of course, this mapping of the territory of moral theories omits reference to an Aristotelian virtues-based teleological approach, as explored by Keown in relation to Buddhism, though the above reference to the cultivation of purity, and a reference to the cultivation of wholesome emotional tendencies (p.138) suggests the Aristotelian parallel.

Kalupahana goes on to argue that Buddhism supports a culture based on human interests, but not on individualistic, possessive greed. Moreover, the ideal of compassion and non-violence to all living beings requires the recognition that the natural environment belongs to all such beings, not just humans. The principle of dependent arising shows that humanity and nature are not sharply divided, so nature is not just for the benefit of humans, and nor does the spiritual path require renunciation of nature. In line with this is the *Sutta*’s praise forest groves as both supporting spiritual practice and as places of aesthetic delight.

The book finishes with a short conclusion (4 pages) a brief glossary of selected philosophical terms (3 pages), notes, bibliography and index .

Overall, the book can be described as a relatively brief overview of the ethics of the Pali *Suttas* which emphasises epistemological considerations and carries through the author’s well-known “radical empiricist”-cum-pragmatist interpretation of Buddhism into the field of ethics. While ignoring recent work which has likened Buddhist ethics to those of Aristotle, Kalupahana makes a useful contributions in arguing that early Buddhism is an interests-based ethic aiming at the mutual self-interest of all. However, he tends to use western labels like “deontological” and “utilitarian” for strands of the Indian tradition without always assessing the degree to which they are appropriate. This may partly come from operating from within a western Philosophy department. What of the usefulness of the book for students? They would have to be aware that the particular philosophical reading of Buddhism in the book is not shared by all scholars. As regards information on the substantive content of Buddhist ethics, the book gives

some useful summaries regarding social ethics, but little on such matters as the implications of the five precepts, and how they function(ed) in the lives of Buddhists. On a small technical matter, the footnote numbering in ch.2 has gone awry, so eg. notes 10-13 should be 9-12.