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BUDDHIST ETHICS IN WESTERN CONTEXT: THE "VIRTUES" APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Buddhism increasingly seeks to make itself understood in modern terms and to respond to contemporary conditions. Buddhism's legitimation in the West can be partially met by demonstrating that Buddhist morality is a virtue-oriented, character-based, community-focused ethics, commensurate with the Western "ethics of virtue" tradition.

The recent past in Western Buddhist ethics focused on escape from Victorian moralism, and was incomplete. A new generation of Western Buddhists is emerging, for whom the "construction" of a Buddhist way of life involves community commitment and moral "practices." By keeping its roots in a character formed as "awakened virtue" and a community guided by an integrative soteriology of wisdom and morality, Western Buddhism can avoid the twin temptations of rootless liberation in an empty "emptiness," on the one hand, and universalistic power politics, on the other.

In describing Buddhist ethics as an "ethics of virtue," I am pointing to consistent and essential features in the Buddhist way of life. But, perhaps more importantly, I am describing Buddhist ethics by means of an interpretative framework very much alive in Western and Christian ethics, namely, that interpretation of ethics most recently associated with thinkers like Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Hauerwas. The virtue ethics tradition is the Western tradition most congenial to the assumptions and insights of Buddhist ethics. Hence, virtue ethics

provides a means of understanding Buddhist ethics... and, reciprocally, Buddhist ethics also offers the Western tradition a way of expanding the bounds of its virtue ethics tradition, which has been too elitist, rationalistic, and anthropocentric. On the basis of this view, I predict some likely, preferable future directions and limits for Buddhism in a postmodern world.

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INTRODUCTION

My purpose in this article is to speculate about the //optimal, future development// of Buddhism in the West. To speculate about the future is, of course, to reach beyond the narrow protections of expertise into the vulnerability of guesswork. My guesswork about Western Buddhism's future takes the form of two hypotheses for scholarly consideration by interested philosophers and ethicists, Buddhist or not. The two hypotheses can also be viewed by Western Buddhists as recommendations on the future course of their Buddhist practices and communities.

The first hypothesis and recommendation is that Buddhism must begin to demonstrate a far clearer //moral form// and a more sophisticated, appropriate //ethical strategy// than can be found among its contemporary Western interpreters and representatives, if it is to flourish in the West. This hunch is to me almost certainly correct, so I will treat it only briefly at the beginning.

My second conjecture is that Buddhism's success in the West is most likely if Buddhist ethics is specifically grafted to and enriched by the "ethics of virtue" approaches of Western tradition, approaches recently revived in Christian thinkers like MacIntyre and Hauerwas.[1] This second guess is more specific, tentative, and provocative, and, therefore, more interesting, so it will be my dominant theme.[2] Viewing Buddhist morality and ethics in the light of virtues theory is, I believe, true to the central core of Buddhism. The virtues approach also generates a wide range of analytical comparisons with Western philosophical and theological tradition, and helps us foresee and plan for the limits of Buddhism's Western pilgrimage.

Returning for a moment to my first and most general hypothesis, I will begin by saying that I am persuaded that Buddhism is on the threshold of a more significant future in the West. It will increasingly play practical, heuristic, balancing, and liberating roles in the lives of Western people and their societies. But, in order for this to happen, philosophers, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, must help more to clarify the //moral and ethical// terms of Buddhism's soteriological project, in ways coordinate with Western

intellectual tradition. For more than two decades, Buddhist philosophical talent in the West has been focused almost exclusively on ontology and hermeneutics. One result is that Buddhist philosophy in the West has ballooned off into the clouds of "suunyataa-focused dialectics. I propose that our philosophical soaring needs the //ballast// of Buddhist moral practices and the //landmarks// of a refreshed Buddhist ethics to bring Buddhist philosophy more into a practical relationship with the on-the-ground, everyday realities of people's lives. I am moved to this recommendation by my deductive understanding of Buddhist teaching, but also by the fact that American Buddhists, since the early 1980's, have increasingly puzzled over moral and/or political choices and issues, without much help from

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Buddhist philosophers and scholars who are also well-grounded in Western moral and political thought.

When Christians translated their Gospel into Chinese contexts, the Greek "Logos" became the Chinese "Tao," a daring and radical translation, transmuting the Gospel as it transmitted it. A similar translation //problematique// faces us now as Buddhism transmits the "Dharma" to the West. But, in the matter of that part of the Dharma which can be called "Buddhist ethics," no proposal in Western philosophical terms on the shape of Buddhist ethics currently commands wide attention, much less agreement.[3] As a result, the legitimization of the Buddhist Dharma //as a whole// is at risk in the West, for no religious or soteriological philosophy without a developed ethic can be fully and widely legitimized in Western culture.

A variety of philosophical proposals relevant to the Western shaping of Buddhist ethics can be seen across the spectrum of Buddhist thinkers. Happily, no one argues that Buddhist ethics or morality are sui generis, a unique and inviolate form of Buddhist tradition to be transplanted whole and entire into Western cultural soil. Also, few are suggesting that Buddhist morality and ethics are so much embedded in Asian cultures that they cannot be transplanted.

Both in theory and in practice, most Western Buddhists appear to look for and accept a grafting or hybridizing process, assimilating Buddhist moral stock to a plausible, compatible Western moral root. Some are tempted to confuse this process, by reversing it, as if the task is to graft Western moral concerns to a Buddhist root of compassion or, worse, transcendental wisdom. This confusion is like "growing a lotus without planting it in the mud," or "putting the spiritual cart before the moral horse." More simply, this confusion assumes that ethics follows spirit or theory, a rather un-Buddhist notion, given the Buddha's existential impatience with metaphysical gymnastics.

In the 1960's, Buddhist ethical reflection, and morality in the broad sense of "a way of life," were grafted by Western apologists to the stem of existentialism and to some branches of the human potential movement.[4] These early efforts fell short of a satisfactory ethical development of Western Buddhism, in my opinion, because they failed to include much critical, communal, or practical guidance for would-be Buddhist existentialists (or existentialist Buddhists?) and other Aquarians. Recently, more politically relevant splicings have been attempted by several Buddhists within the peace, environmental, and feminist movements.[5]

Only a few Western //philosophers// have attempted grafting work recently in Buddhist ethics, usually by asserting and working out conceptual analogies between Buddhist ethics in general and particular Western philosophers and theologians. Examples of this comparative work include David Kalupahana's proposal that Buddhist ethics melds interestingly with William James' pragmatism, and Christopher Ives' explorations of opportunities to develop a Zen Buddhist social ethic

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in contrast with Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian social ethics. Also noteworthy, if less comparative in its analysis, is Robert Thurman's proposal to find a relevant recipe for contemporary social activism in a specific text of Naagaarjuna.[6]

While I do not find these proposals sufficiently developed to be compelling to Western ethicists, they are thought-experiments that address some issues of interest to Western philosophical and theological ethics, while taking interpretive risks for the sake of Buddhist relevance. I regret that none of the proposals can withstand the kind of friendly critique that comes quickly and easily from ethicists grounded in Christian and Western ethical studies; Winston King, for example, has long been helpful in raising a variety of critical and disturbing questions about the strengths and weaknesses of Buddhist philosophy in a Western ethical milieu dominated by demands for human rights and individual autonomy.[7]

Assuming the under-developed condition of the domain of Buddhist ethics in Western context, I now address at length my second, more tentative conjecture on the future prospect of Western Buddhism. I propose that the most appropriate analogy, the most fruitful grafting prospect for a Western Buddhist ethics, will be with the Western tradition of the "ethics of virtue." By "ethics of virtue" I mean simply an ethics that is //character-based// (rather than principle-driven or act-focused), //praxis-oriented//, //teleological//, and //community-specific//. More fully, I mean the complex tradition of ethics that stretches in the West from Socrates and Aristotle to Alasdair MacIntyre, Philippa Foot, and other contemporary virtues theorists.[8]

This proposal does not originate with me. The conceptual and heuristic linkage of Buddhist ethics with Aristotle's is a key to Damien Keown's approach in his well-argued, revisionist view of Buddhist ethics, *"The Nature of Buddhist Ethics"*.^[9] Earlier, Robert Bellah favored grafting Buddhism to the virtues approach as a possible path to meet his concern to renew an American ethic of community. Specifically, Bellah has called for a "cultural symbiosis" of Zen and modern Aristotelianism as a way of re-asserting "a teleological understanding of the order of human life" and bringing about "the creation of actual communities" that can resist:

a //modern// Western culture that is destroying the natural habitat, undermining any kind of social solidarity, and creating a conception of the individual person which is utterly self-destructive.^[10]

The utopian spirit of his call for Buddhist-like communities of personal and civic virtue suggests that these communities would almost certainly be "marginalized," growing only at the edges of the dominant socio-cultural structures of Western individualism or bureaucratic nation-states. Its utopian character does not seem to dissuade Bellah from making his recommendation. Nor am I. Indeed, such "contrast" communities already exist, however tenuous their rooting in the Western "soul and soil."^[11]

Before taking up this proposal, that Buddhist "morality" and "ethics" can be appropriately transplanted in the West by assimilating them to our own virtues tradition, I need to define Buddhist //morality// more precisely, in the terms of "awakened virtue." "Awakened, compassionate virtue-cultivation" is a more accurate phrasing of what I mean, but, for simplicity's sake, I will avoid using it. "Awakened virtue" usefully describes the process and goal of Buddhist morality. It affirms the intertwined correspondence of the moral and the spiritual, in fresh language, by referring to Buddhist moral vision and praxis in the language of virtues theory, and by retaining the Buddhist insistence on spiritual awakening as a necessary, although not sufficient, condition of moral maturity. Second, I will simply define Buddhist ethics as "philosophical reflection upon Buddhist morality, including descriptive, normative and meta-ethical reflections."^[12]

My purpose in this essay about "awakened virtue" is not to engage in historical and textual analysis. I will not exegete the comparative analogies of "siila or the paaramitaas^[13] to //phronesis//, //arete//, or //virtus//.^[14] My aim is more philosophical, practical, and even policy-oriented: to probe constructively the implications of "awakened virtue," the goal of Buddhist morality and the object of Buddhist ethics, in connection with the future prospects

of Western Buddhism. The effort to construct a Western Buddhist ethics by means of a virtues approach is not without exemplars. For example, Robert Aitken relies on it often in his homiletical text, *The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics*. Aitken fashions refreshing sermons on Buddhist ethics, with a Zen twist, framing most of his chapters as expositions of "The Ten Grave Precepts" of Buddhist morality. He also writes briefly about the Six Perfections, the six paaramitaas of generosity, morality, patience, vigor, meditation, and self-realization, and discusses "virtue" as a way of understanding the Zen life.

Aitken opens his chapter, "The Way and Its Virtue," with a saying of his teacher, Yamada Koun Roshi: "The purpose of Zen practice is the perfection of character." Aitken proceeds to discuss briefly but provocatively the six paaramitaas, relating them to contemporary experience and applications.[15] But his teacher's saying is overlooked and the focus on virtue collapses as, in the perennial fashion of most Zen interpreters, he concludes that:

At the same time, "virtue," "the Six Paaramitaas," "perfection of character" -- these are simply labels for an organic process. Breathing in and out, you let go of poisons and establish the serene ground of the precepts.[16]

Aitken here falls into a common pitfall in the path of ancient and contemporary Zen interpreters, what I call "the transcendence trap." The trap misleads them and us into portraying the perfected moral life as a non-rational expressiveness, something natural, spontaneous, non-linguistic, and uncalculating. This is a "Taoist-like" view of

virtue as "natural, intuitive, skill/power" (Chin., te; Jap., toku), a view Aitken shares with some influential, but late Mahaayaana sutras. This ethical conception results in the kind of ontological dismissal of morality and ethics preached by Aitken at the end of his chapter: "Thus, in the world, too, there is nothing to be called virtue." [17] The common corollary, "there is also nothing to be called character," is unstated by Aitken, although it is part of the same syllogistic net of claims deduced ostensibly from "no-ego" and "suunyataa axioms. This net is true and helpful only within the "deconstructive" mood and context of "suunyataa dialectics and metaphysics. When the net of "no-self" is thrown to catch truth in an ethical context, villains laugh and demons thrive.

A good beginning by Aitken, in taking a virtues approach to interpreting Buddhist ethics, is later swamped by the "suunyataa-weighted dialectical anamorphisms of Mahaayaana and Zen thought. Aitken is enmeshed in what I have called "the satori perspective" in Zen philosophy, the position most clearly seen in D.T.

Suzuki's vigorous anti-rationalism and antinomianism. The "satori perspective" characteristically over-emphasizes the "awakening" dimensions of Buddhist soteriology, to the detriment of the moral, "virtuous" dimensions.[18] Consequently, a view of the Buddhist virtues from this standpoint tends insistently to relativize and diminish the "virtue" in the summum bonum of "awakened virtue," until there is only the "awakened One," beyond good and evil.

A clear and egregious example of this spiritualizing over-emphasis on "awakening," comes to us in the writings of Gerta Ital, in her book, *On the Way to Satori*, where she offers us this advice:

This is something that cannot be repeated often enough: no one who has not completely erased themselves as an ego can do anything to help liberate anyone else, and the attainment of the goal is not easy. The journey is very long Until one is liberated oneself one is simply not capable of helping anyone else.[19]

This is not a complete Buddhism, I believe, and certainly not one that can expect a significant future in the West, except as an individualistic, private, and mainly "therapeutic" mysticism. Buddhism is far more and other than that.

A fuller and more finely articulated virtues approach to Buddhist ethics guides Ken Jones' *The Social Face of Buddhism*. I consider this the best available //ethical// manual on Buddhist social ethics by a Westerner.[20] I recommend it, convinced that it is a touchstone philosophical text in Buddhist ethics. It is unlike Aitken's, because Jones' seriously pays attention to key philosophical, moral, and psychological issues. Regrettably, Jones, like Aitken, walks into "the transcendence trap," by devaluing the roles of will and deliberation in the life of awakened virtue.

Jones affirms in good virtues theory fashion that Buddhist

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morality is a matter of character and cultivation, and that it focuses on cultivating character rather than evaluating particular acts.[21] But quickly he slides toward "the transcendence trap," beginning with a too casual substitution of the word "personality" for "character" [22]:

The emphasis in Buddhist morality is therefore on the cultivation of a personality which cannot but be moral, rather than focusing upon the morality of particular choices and acts. But, to repeat, it is not the will that can create such a personality, no more than I can pick myself up from the ground by my collar. It is to the training that

the will must be applied, from which virtue will naturally flow [emphasis mine].[23]

Jones's disclaimer on the power of will may only be a rejection of Nietzschean or Sartrean voluntarism. If so, he would be correct from a Buddhist point of view, which dialectically affirms both the deterministic weight of karma or character dispositions and our freedom from them in the concomitant "emptiness" of "suunyataa. And he is certainly correct to assert that the will in Buddhist practice, rather than serving a "creative" role in free self-creation, serves mainly to restrain and hold oneself in the various forms of moral and intellectual practice.

However, the fuzziness of the phrase, "from which virtue will naturally flow," places Jones on the lip of the "transcendence trap." He later falls in by constructing virtue as a kind of //natural// "grace," emergent from the //forms// of moral discipline and repetition, //yet// different from them, somehow transcendent, natural and free. As Robert Scharf suggests, this transcendent view of virtuous activity is a mystification of what in Buddhist practice is simply a repetitive and normal process of learning to //perform// in certain ways with skill; Hee-jin Kim, discussing what he calls the "heart of Dogen's thought," refers to the process of Buddhist practice as essentially something prosaic, "the ritualization of morality." [24]

More than Jones can or will admit, schooling in the forms of virtue is a social, emotional, and cognitive process. Becoming good is hardly a natural process in the sense suggested, of being the non-voluntary, non-deliberative unfolding of a natural goodness. Aristotle would agree: "While it is Nature that gives us our faculties, it is not Nature that makes us good or bad." [25] The goal of ethics is to become a person who does good or virtuous things freely from the ground of a well-tempered character, supported by a matured, resolute, and reasonable knowledge of what one is doing. The path of Buddhism does not dissolve character (which is different from ego and personality). It awakens and illuminates moral character and establishes a "noble" selfhood in the wide, deep, expressive freedom of creative forms of life and its perfections.

Jones's view of virtue echoes the Christian moral doctrine of "infused virtue," but without dependence on St. Thomas Aquinas' transcendent, theistic assumptions and absent his clear sense of the

endurance of the "natural" virtues in the perfected saints. I venture the guess that, like Alan Watts and others who fall into "the transcendence trap," Jones devalues the will in preferring "natural expressiveness" (in the sense of what we are born with, //natus//), in his beliefs about learning to be good, because of things that have little to do with Buddhism, the Diamond Sutra, and Mahaayaana

dialectics. I suspect that many a Westerner's "Taoist-like" misreading of Buddhist ethics, as a form of individualistic naturalism, is mostly and often a reaction to the West's residual Victorian morality -- a morality characterized by and hated for its conceived overemphasis on individual, rational self-discipline, strength of will, rigidity of personality, and psychophysical repressions -- and from which middle-aged and older Western Buddhists seem to be still trying to make their escape. In their desire to escape, they share in a broader, late 20th century Western shift to a moral outlook that prizes a rather passive, non-judgmental tolerance of others, combined with a preference for the spontaneous or ecstatic expression of impulses ... at least and especially in contrast with the much maligned Victorians.

To disdain the necessary roles of will and reason in the Buddhist moral process is to overlook the importance of both in early Buddhism. Early Buddhism did not abandon reason, although it did not rely on reason alone. Neither did early Buddhists overlook the necessity of a steady will, even in the stages of Buddhist meditation training. That will and reason were requisite accompaniments of the good person is also evident in later additions to the six paaramitaas list, namely, the paaramitaas of resolution, determination, strength, and skillful means. Obviously, strength of will is necessary even in samaadhi exercises, in making the Bodhisattva vow, or in responding to exhortations of the Zen masters to throw one's whole self and attention into zazen or koan. Buddhist cultivation requires a constant dose of what William James called "animal spirits" and doing the difficult thing against our inclinations.

Now, having by-passed the "transcendence trap" on the way to a Buddhist virtues perspective, I wish briefly to describe what I mean by Buddhist "awakened virtue" in the context of general virtues theory, distinguishing it somewhat from traditional Western views. Following this description, I will conclude by exploring some implications for the West of viewing Buddhist ethics and the Buddhist "way of life" in a virtues perspective.

BUDDHIST MORALITY AS AWAKENED VIRTUE

The Buddha's Dharma or teaching was authoritatively divided in early times into three groups, but they were interdependent facets of one process leading to deliverance (vimutti). The Buddhist investigated and cultivated "siila (morality), samaadhi (deep meditation), and praj~naa (transcendental wisdom).[26] Each of the three facets of self-cultivation evolved appropriate practices ... of moral intention, behavior, and correction; of meditation method and mapping; of transformative shifts of consciousness. We may speak of these practices as the moral, contemplative, and transformative paaramitaas. The last, the transformative paaramitaas, are concerned

with practices that alter consciousness on a transcendental, "Nirvanic" level, while the contemplative paaramitaas have to do with the development of powers of concentration, stability, and tranquilization in meditation. The moral paaramitaas involve practices in which good intentions are aroused and acted upon in the light of a right understanding of the good and of situations. With repetition and correction these practices severally and together nurtured the dispositions, both karmic and salvific, that together constitute Buddhist character.

Why these paaramitaas as the specific Buddhist virtues, rather than others, invites a fuller treatment than I will give here.[27] The paaramitaas, as methods of attending, energizing, pacifying and relating the self to others, work together to wean the self from egocentricity. Beyond ego-weaning, the goal of the paaramitaas is positive: to foster a character that increasingly encounters each moment, each space, each being, as a "mother" enjoys and protects her only child ... to use a traditional simile attributed to the Buddha.

Since moral intentions are always elastic, they need shaping by forms and disciplines, taught by teachers and learned in communities. The virtuous practices that in Buddhism characterize a good person were often defined as at least the six paaramitaas of generosity or gift-giving (daana), morality or the Five Precepts ("siila), patience and forgiveness (k.saanti), courage and vigor (viirya), concentration (dhyaana), and wisdom (praj~naa). Some held that the six paaramitaas constituted a progressive order of training in virtue, from generosity to wisdom. These may be said to be the necessary moral, mental, and spiritual touchstones of the Buddhist virtues tradition, notwithstanding later additions to and analytical divisions of the six. Enrichment of virtue-like practices beyond the paaramitaas is seen in the development of the well-known Four Immeasurables (the Brahmavihaaras or "divine abodes") of Buddhist friendliness, compassion, joy, and peace, which further mapped out, stimulated, and idealized Buddhist moral praxis.

These practices, moral and otherwise, were more often than not "methodologized," that is, formalized, ritualized and institutionalized in ways to promote habitual performances in a general program of self-cultivation and character development, conceived to stretch over many aeons of time (thus requiring the paaramitaa of patience!). Methods would differ somewhat between monk and layperson, and from culture to culture. Some practices were Buddhist adaptations of pre-existing practices and rituals in the surrounding non-Buddhist culture, as Nath shows in her study of the Buddhist transformations of Hindu daana, gift-giving rites.[28]

Buddhist moral self-cultivation tends to encompass not only the formation of good intentions in the heart and mind (reminding us of Kant). Practices also include physical postures and breath-speech techniques. This holistic "psycho-pneumo-physical" approach to moral self-cultivation results, for example, in attention to helping others not only by forming a good will, but also by expressing kind words and offering the material things that they also need. A more holistic

self-training also opens a way to fuse moral practice with aesthetic practice, as an early concern in Buddhism with how gracefully to give gifts demonstrates.

Practice of the moral paaramitaas is said to create and accumulate "merit," or favorable karma dispositions within the psyche, that lead to a better life and higher rebirth. The "ethics of karma," focused upon by Melford Spiro and Winston King as the key to understanding Theravaadin Buddhist societies, is when looked at closely but an "ethics of karma-cultivating virtues and practices." [29] Spiro and King, reflecting an interpretation within the Theravaadin tradition, highlight the ostensibly traditional split between the karmic and the Nibbaanic motives in Buddhist life, one for goodness and reward, the other for salvation and transformative liberation. The two motives are personalized in layperson and monk, respectively. [30]

The tension between moral and religious motives appears also in Mahaayaana Buddhism. At one point the tension was reconciled in the bodhisattva image of a virtuous layman-sage, Vimalakiirti. The Vimalakiirti Sutra affirms that a breach between moral effort and spiritual awakening constitutes bondage and delusion. [31] The center of Buddhist tradition affirms that moral effort, mainly through practicing the paaramitaas, must be conjoined with meditative and transformative practices to be ultimately effective for oneself and for others. It also affirms that the practices of awakening have little foundation and less result, for oneself or others, without the frame, skills, and habit of moral practice. Moral virtue without "suunyataa, or transforming liberation, may be shallow and weak; but "suunyataa without moral virtue is blind and dangerous. She who has accomplished awakened virtue, the merging of skilled, well-disposed, rational moral agency with self-transforming spirit, is, in contrast, deep, strong, ever-maturing, and rational, ... by her character and deeds she reduces suffering and promotes friendliness, compassion, joy, and peace.

In contrast with Western virtues tradition, the Buddhist paaramitaas viewpoint tends, in matters of self and community, to be //biocentric and ecological//. First, Buddhism does not begin with the premise of the substantial, separable, and distinctive self of Aristotelian and Christian thought. In Buddhism, the idea of the atomistic, self-empowering monad-godling of Western individualism is well known, but understood as a delusion born of ignorant desires and fears, resulting in a wish-fantasy for domination. Compared to Western concepts, the self-concept of Buddhism is processional, relational, and "fuzzy." [32]

While the moral saint as individualized hero, above and apart

from others, is not unknown in Buddhism, the open, relational nature of selfhood stresses the solidarity of those who act virtuously with those for whom they act or, better, with whom they practice the perfecting goods of generosity, patience, and so forth. For Buddhist thought the self is fundamentally incomplete, evolving, and interpenetratively co-dependent with others. Since we are imbedded in

mutual dependent community, training in the paaramitaas, moral and otherwise, is necessarily a training with others and for others. Because of this solidarity and because paaramitaas practice nurtures body, speech, and the mind-heart, the Buddhist believes her moral efforts flow necessarily into the community on many levels, materially, verbally, and mentally, in a subtle, looping reciprocity.

Second, Buddhist tradition differs from the Western in defining //membership// in the moral community, the "considered others" to whom paaramitaas-defined practices are to be extended. In the dominant traditions of Western culture, at least since Aristotle, the community of character and virtue has clearly been the //human// community. The politics in which an individual's ethics and virtue find their completion is a human politics - almost always an anthropocentric, urban politics. The Buddhist community of virtue is biocentric, far more inclusive of animals and other sentient beings as objects of moral consideration (in the practice of the six paaramitaas, for example, giving aid to animals) than Western virtues tradition.[33] Because of this biocentric orientation, Buddhist moral practices must include specific training and self-cultivation in our relations with nature, as well as human society, extending daana, "siila, k.saanti, and so on to non-human sentient beings and to the biosphere itself as a community of communities.[34]

Given the exurban settings of Buddhist monasteries and universities, and other factors, Buddhist ethics did not elaborate itself often into urban, class-oriented political theory, a theory of revolutionary change, or a theory legitimizing divine rule... although Buddhist thinkers did propose all three. The community scale imaged by the sa.mgha was smaller and more nurturing of personal development, perhaps that of a village set within nature. Perhaps this goes to explain partially why even urban Buddhists have tended to re-create or simulate in the grounds of their city temples a contrasting, natural refuge, for people, animals, fish, birds, and even insects. A Japanese tea ceremony garden and hut in the middle of Tokyo express this microtopic, exurban focus most eloquently and ironically.

Like the Aristotelian virtues tradition, Buddhist ethics tends to be ahistorical, in that it regards human life as having an important and profound constancy in its nature and goal, persistent amidst the general flow and struggles of actual personal and historical forces. That constancy for the Buddhist lies not in a substantial or eternal

self, but in our common, almost irrefragable experience of suffering and in our inherent capacity to work toward an awakened, moral virtuosity, in wisdom and fellow-feeling.

With respect to the question of historicity, I think that, in comparison with the Christian virtues tradition, Buddhist ethics did not develop so extensive a quasi-historical hagiography, a "sense of narrative," concerning the lives of the virtuous and their exemplars, the saints. The Jaataka Tales, while we classify them as "animal" fables, may be similar in appearance to a "Lives of the Saints." But we should probably resist calling them "narrative" because they display a narrow range of the Buddhist reality picture, and we should

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hesitate to call them unqualifiedly Buddhist, because the stories are from a pre-Buddhist tradition. This comparative absence of emphasis on individual "drama," which may be more of degree than type, applies even to the most obvious Buddhist saint, the Buddha, whose "story" does not serve for Buddhists the whole range of functions that we find centered in the Gospels, in Roman Catholic hagiography or in Muslim //hadith// tradition.[35]

On another theme of contemporary virtues theory, I begin by acknowledging without apology that Buddhism makes moral claims that are universalistic. Buddhists have imagined utopian times and settings for the virtuous, the perfected, the awakened ... and projected a utopic future when "all beings are awakened." But, like all ethical traditions centered on virtues, Christian, Muslim, Confucian, or Aristotelian, the Buddhist paaramitaa tradition looks to the establishment of particular and appropriately designed communities to optimize favorable conditions for self-cultivation and happiness in the good life. Virtue ethics traditions, often focused in small groups engaged in voluntary training, tend to spend little time on the ethical strategies necessary in non-voluntary, pluralistic, very large, or coercive societies. Consequently and not surprisingly, they tend to lack a viable social ethic in modern terms, that is a policy-generating set of principles that can be institutionalized on a mass scale, while protecting individual rights-claims with coercive means.

So, while espousing the general tenets and principles of a universal ethics, Buddhist ethics tends, in practice, to define and effectuate paaramitaa-cultivation in community-specific terms. At the mind-and-heart level, the broad intention "to help others" may be similar across many communities, but at the levels of linguistic and physical practice, the paaramitaas have a local aspect, and in that sense display a modest "historical" quality. For example, while the virtue of giving, daana-paaramitaa, may show local nuances of expression in almsgiving rites, these local forms are practiced with recognition of their universal applicability in their intention, but

not in their formal, material, local features. A tolerant awareness of distinctions between inner and outer aspects of Buddhist practices may result in much less zealous enforcement of verbal, symbolic, and physical conformity in moral (and contemplative) practices in Buddhist contexts. The resulting diversity, flexibility, and tolerance sustain the Buddhist tradition, at the risk of appearing very soft and highly "contextual" in social ethics and politics.

Nevertheless, one does find conformity in the moral forms and practices within Buddhist voluntary communities, of which the sa.mgha is the classical exemplar. Conformity is in keeping not only with the needs of any community for the standardization and predictability of behaviors that enhance trust and efficiency. Shared forms are especially necessary and appropriate to a community guided by virtue ethics. The Buddhist's cultivation of the paaramitaas requires a community designed to respond to awakened virtue practices with specific structures of support and correction.

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Each Buddhist community has a distinctive shape and style, governed primarily by a common goal, the awakened virtue of each member-in-community. This perfectionist aim is universalized and idealized by extending it to encompass the awakening of "all sentient beings." But, on-the-ground, the community's purpose is realized in the details ... of distinctive forms of etiquette, and in the characters of exemplary individuals; in shared schedules, and a common submission to rules; in rituals of giving and receiving, and procedures for correcting and expelling delinquent members. These are communities where one learns and practices what it quite precisely means, mentally and physically, morally and psychologically, to act as an "awakened virtue being." That is, one learns to act, to perform, to talk, walk, sit, sort things out, and take out the garbage like a Buddha.

It should be obvious by now that learning to act like a Buddha means something other than becoming spontaneous, inventive, and free of Victorian inhibitions. The practice of awakened virtue in Buddhist communities requires diligent learning of the forms in and through which one can perform like an awakened virtue being. In the moral sphere, these practices require repeated experiences in learning how to give, to listen patiently, to call up courage in overcoming fear and desire, to observe non-violence in the way one walks, to steady the mind and heart, to make friends with the seasons, and so on. In the meditative sphere, similar forms of practice are observed, submitted to, tasted, repeated, tested, and perfected, in cultivation of the contemplative virtues.

Finally, the Buddhist community, like any virtue-oriented community, is defined in the characters of its persons, as well as in

their stories and the forms of their practices. Its continuation and success depend necessarily upon the degree to which community members become successful practitioners of the community's full repertoire of virtues. Thus, Buddhism will flower in the West only when Western Buddhists take up a fully balanced Buddhist way of life, by cultivating both the moral and the contemplative paaramitaas in proper balance. "Awakened virtue" is the balanced platform upon which to practice the ultimate, transformative, Nirvanic virtues constituting the flowering of the spiritual life of Buddhists.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BUDDHIST ETHICS IN THE WEST

If we accept the propositions that Buddhist ethics is ineluctably and essentially an "ethics of virtue" and, second, that the Buddhist life is necessarily //at every stage// integrative of moral and spiritual practices, several implications emerge for Buddhism as it grows in the West. Some of these implications are corrective of recent Western Buddhist troubles, while others may indicate real limits to Buddhism's success in and impact on the West.

Soon, with the passing away of the pioneering, older generations of Western Buddhists, I hope we will see Buddhism in the West turning from its role as a raft carrying Westerners away from the eroding shores of Victorian -- or Judaeo-Christian -- or technological -- or

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imperialist --or patriarchal culture. While the function of Buddhism as a means of liberation from suffering and oppression is a central one, it is not the only one. The other function of Buddhism is to carry the suffering to the Other shore, to awakened virtue, to becoming a Buddha in Buddha fields where Buddhas flourish. This means working to construct and preserve relationships and communities, as much as cultivating oneself. And this means the renewal of a paaramitaas-approach in Buddhist thought and life.

One corrective consequence of renewing the paaramitaas in Buddhist lives and communities will be the denial of authority to imbalanced Buddhist teachers by the communities that support them. Too many Buddhist teachers in the West in the 1980's have demonstrated that they cannot balance well the moral and the spiritual.[36]

However, a virtues-oriented ethic has limitations in meeting problems caused by the vices of individuals in the practicing community. This is because a virtue ethic focuses on the person-as-agent developing over time, in a learning process often of trial and error. This long-term focus devalues the moral significance of particular acts, even transvaluing them into "teachable moments," while often overlooking the consequences of flawed or vicious acts for others and the community. A particular moral failure is excused as "out-of-character." The result is a greater tolerance of isolated

acts of harming others, for example, unless the acts constitute an intolerable "pattern" of vice that forces community or individual reaction ... perhaps too late.

Every virtue ethics guides us to the good life by means of models of "the good person." The model may be a living person or a narrative character (i.e., the Buddha, Vimalakiirti, Vessantara, Queen "Sriimaalaa, one's roshi, etc.). A focus on character tends to obscure or override the role of general principles and rules as guides to decision-making and mutual regulation.

But rules, however flawed, sometimes have a place. For example, a rule-orientation is preferable in some circumstances and relationships to counter teacher-disciple abuses and distortions. Traditionally, Buddhism depends heavily on its teachers and on the belief that profound qualities of an awakened teacher can be passed directly, through "mind-to-mind" transmission, to her students. Of course, teachers are capable of transmitting the forms of the paaramitaas, moral and contemplative, through imitation, familiarization, direct instruction, and, I will grant, a kind of psychic "osmosis." But, far more difficult to transmit to one's students and friends are the all-important //balance// and //integration// of the paaramitaas in a given person, because they are partly contingent on the individuality of the novice's personality. It is wrong to believe that this balance can be given to the student, rather than earned by self-effort in the corrective view of a vital community.

Buddhist tradition poses to each Buddhist a momentous question: "Who is Buddha?" How do we know that someone is advanced in the practices of "awakened virtue"? That she's a "good person"? The answer

is critical, for it is these people one turns to for instruction, advice, example, confidence, and even faith. A paaramitaas-oriented approach carries us some distance to the answer, because of its dual focus on character and communally validated moral practices. Consequently, the living meaning of awakened virtue is less dependent on the character of single persons upon whom a community focuses, and more dependent on several persons and the community (the sa.mgha-community) in its evolving solidarity. Viewing the practicing community as Buddha, as itself a virtue-oriented awakening being, reduces personality cults and deepens community resources.

The paaramitaas emphasis I am advocating will tend to develop protective standards of a more public nature, to test those who seek to join or lead communities. But a Buddhist virtues approach requires shoring up with useful ethical strategies developed in the West both to assess particular acts and to generate moral rules. The Western Buddhist milieu may also require a //heuristic// recovery of the Vinaya tradition of Buddhist monastic regulation. The Vinaya may have

strayed into the trap of legalistic casuistry, but it did define and set procedures for adjudicating particular acts of monks that could not be tolerated, that had to result in suspension or expulsion. Western Buddhist communities are only now beginning to face up to this kind of decision-making, for which a virtues-orientation is sometimes inadequate.

Having said all this, I acknowledge that act-evaluations and rule-adjudications must be secondary instruments in Buddhist ethics, necessary as they may be in particular moments of particular communities. Essentially, Buddhist ethics is centered in and on "character in community." This focus needs to be kept, for upon it depends the future development of a Buddhist ethics more aimed at relationships than principles, more interested in mutual support than a defense of rights, more empathic than rational, more compassionate than just.

Ethical strategies focusing on rational rules and judgments of particular outward acts are the essential feature of groups so large that they constitute a //society// of strangers, threatened by the Hobbesian shadows of competition and governed by laws of contract, restraint, coercion, property, and command.[37] Laws are secondary to virtue in a Buddhist setting (and in this I agree with Western Buddhists who resist "code" or rule-oriented moralizing as a dominant approach to self- or community-discipline). Nevertheless, while secondary, they are not dispensable.

The primary focus on persons, character, and virtuous practices in Buddhist ethics cannot be sustained without //community//, places where we know each other well enough to call each other into the intimacies of an ethics of intention and practice, as in a family. This means that Buddhist communities must ever be small, small enough that people intimately know each other and the other sentient beings sharing their life and death. I propose that they can be too small, in that a group of four or six can hardly challenge and support the full range of self-cultivation practices necessary to awakened virtue.

The problem of size for many Buddhists in the West lies at the "too small" end of the spectrum. But that's better than to be at the "too large" end. I cannot identify a practicing community that has become too large (say, more than 200 active members), unless one looks at the large metropolitan communities in San Francisco and Los Angeles, which are arguably too large, too complex, and too absorbed in the entropic tasks of organization maintenance of buildings, mortgages, and so on.

We know from reading Aristotle and MacIntyre that an ethics focused in virtue does not picture the way to the good life in abstract or individual or universal terms. The paths of virtue are marked by lived practices special to each community. Virtue-oriented

groups and communities, if we are to believe MacIntyre and Hauerwas, depend more on their traditional "narrative" reality- frames, their memories and stories of good persons practicing the good life, than on their laws or universal principles.[38] But, we also know that Western Buddhists today live in a post-Nietzschean world, where the "stories" are many and "memory" is tattered. It is not at all clear to many Western people that their chosen or inherited stories invoke human reality in a coherent and compelling way.

In the postmodern West, the Buddha's story or the life of awakened virtue can be told and tested only in small, marginalized zones appropriately distanced from the dominant power and value structures. The criteria of testing are two: 1) the plausibility of the story of a person who, through specific practices in a certain kind of community, "awakened, by and through virtuous practices, in wisdom and compassion;" and 2) the evident goodness in the people and communities now engaged in practices of the Dharma. These people are the Buddha. Their story is the Buddha's story.

Acceptance of the virtues approach in ethics presents specific challenges and advantages to Buddhist thinkers and other scholars. For example, we need to develop a more historical scholarship of the paaramitaas dimension in Buddhism. But, hopefully, we can also help people in today's Buddhist communities to think through the tensions among the paaramitaas, the problems of priorities, the meanings of practicing in lay life, and a host of other on-the-ground issues. We need to help Western Buddhists distinguish among therapeutic, aesthetic, moral, economic, political, and spiritual practices and choices. What is the optimum balance of attention and consideration between self and others? What is Buddhist friendship? Does it include mosquitoes? How and why do Buddhists fail morally after years of practice? How does a virtues orientation link up with social justice issues and the development of a Buddhist social ethics? Far more moral and ethical questions buzz in Western Buddhists' lives, awaiting creative, practical inquiry by philosophers, new generation Buddhologists, and others.

I have been recommending the virtues approach. It needs a fuller development, in order to carry Buddhist morality into an inevitable, serious and mutually constructive dialogue with Western philosophers and theologians. My recommendations may appear too straitlaced, or even atavistically Victorian, but what seems clear to me so far is

this. The most constructive future of Buddhism in the West rests on its manifestation in the characters of people, not in eloquent prose, fundraising efforts, temple-building, or incomplete life modeling. Hopefully, a new generation will increasingly take the path of balancing samaadhi-exercise with paaramitaas-practices. Put simply, the future depends on a few good women and men who reveal a balanced,

integrative life -- of "awakened virtue" practices, in families, jobs, and communities. It is through good lives that the Buddha's Dharma can fully flower in the West, transforming our sufferings and awakening in us, each and all, that which is best, inch by inch, moment by moment, breath by breath.

ENDNOTES

[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984; Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

[2] For my judgment that Buddhism will fail to bear fruit in the United States unless it develops moral practices and ethical reflection more in concert with American realities, see James Whitehill, *Enter the Quiet* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 60-74, and Whitehill, "Is There a Zen Ethic?," *The Eastern Buddhist* (New Series) 20 (Spring 1987), 9-33.

[3] A promising and brief sketch of the philosophical roots of Buddhist ethics in the doctrine of "dependent co-arising" (pa.ticca-samuppaada), with a good discussion of "moral agency", is Joanna Macy's "Dependent Co-arising: The Distinctiveness of Buddhist Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (Spring 1979), 38-52. But Macy did not explicitly acknowledge the commensurability of Buddhist ethics with virtue ethics, in terms of key similarities with respect to the nature of the self, dispositions (kamma, sankhaaras, etc.), and freedom.

[4] I think here first of the San Francisco Renaissance figures of Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder, but also of Erich Fromm, William Barrett, Alan Watts, Thomas Merton, and other writers who probed parallels between Zen and their own home-grown existential concerns.

[5] Relevant sources include: (on feminism) Rita Gross, "Buddhism and Feminism: Toward their Mutual Transformation," *The Eastern Buddhist* 19 (Autumn 1986), 62-74; Sandy Boucher, *Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating the New Buddhism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988); (on environmentalism) Allan H. Badiner, ed., *Dharma Gaia* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990); J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames, eds., *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought* (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1989); James Whitehill, "Ecological Consciousness and Values: Japanese Perspectives," *Ecological Consciousness*, eds. J. Donald Hughes and George Schultz (New York: University Press of America, 1980), 165-182; (on the peace movement) Fred Eppsteiner, ed., *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1988).

[6] See David J. Kalupahana, "The Buddhist Conceptions of "Subject" and "Object" and their Moral Implications," *_Philosophy East and West_* 33 (July 1988), 290-304; Christopher A. Ives, "A Zen Buddhist Social Ethic," (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1988) and *_Zen Awakening and Society_* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992); Robert A. Thurman, "Guidelines for Buddhist Social Activism Based on Naagaarjuna's Jewel Garland of Royal Counsels," *_The Eastern Buddhist_* (New Series) 16 (Spring 1983), 19-51. For a Kantian approach, see Philip Olson, *_The Discipline of Freedom: A Kantian View of the Role of Moral Precepts in Zen Practice_* (Albany: State University of New York, Press, 1993).

[7] See Winston L. King, "Buddhist Self-World Theory and Buddhist Ethics," *_The Eastern Buddhist_* (New Series) 22 (Autumn 1989), 14- 26; "A Buddhist Ethic for the West?" (unpublished manuscript, 1990).

[8] A large bibliography of contemporary writings in virtues theory is in Robert B. Kruschwitz and Robert C. Roberts, ed., *_The Virtues: Contemporary Essays on Moral Character_* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1987), 237-63. For a discussion of the translatability and commensurability of one ethical tradition (e.g., Buddhist) with another (e.g., Western virtues tradition), see Stephen E. Fowl, "Could Horace Talk with the Hebrews? Translatability and Moral Disagreement in MacIntyre and Stout," *_The Journal of Religious Ethics_* Vol. 19 No.1 (Spring, 1991), 1- 20.

[9] Damien Keown, *_The Nature of Buddhist Ethics_* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992). See especially Chap. 1, "The Study of Buddhist Ethics," and Chap. 8, "Buddhism and Aristotle."

[10] Robert N. Bellah, "The Meaning of Dogen Today," *_Dogen Studies_*, ed. William R. LaFleur (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 157-8.

[11] "Soul and soil" because a complete virtue ethics not only refers to the capacities of "human beings in general," but also the particular limitations for expressing those capacities in terms of the "soil," literally and metaphorically, in which those capacities for "humanity at its best" are grown. Virtue is formed by "place," and a change of place or soil requires appropriate transformation of the virtues. Ivan Illich and others have called for a "philosophy of soil," because "our generation has lost its grounding in both soil and virtue. By virtue, we mean that shape, order and direction of action informed by tradition, bounded by place, and qualified by choices made within the habitual reach of the actor; we mean practice mutually recognized as being good within a shared local culture which enhances the memory of a place." See, "Declaration of Soil," *_Whole Earth Review_*, No. 71 (Summer, 1991), 75.

[12] By "awakened," I mean the process and state of an empowering liberation of the self, by means of ego-transforming praxis. By "virtue," I mean the ideal cultivated set of rational discernments, personal skills, and dispositions of character regarded as ideal and

relevant to relations with self and others in a known and shared community, in this case the Buddhist community. In Buddhism as I understand it, moral virtue and spiritual awakening are coordinate and mutually necessary; neither alone is sufficient for attaining Buddhahood.

[13] "Siila, "custom or manner," but usually referring to the Five Precepts, avoidance dicta, such as, "Avoid harming living beings," etc. Paaramitaa, "high," "complete," or "perfect," but usually in the context of a list of "perfections," akin to the virtues, characterizing the praxis and character of those pursuing the Buddhist goals of selflessness, insight, compassion, and liberation or "salvation."

[14] Several works can provide historical and textual framework for Buddhist ethics, including H. Saddhatissa, *_Buddhist Ethics_* (New York: George Braziller, 1970), and Gunapala Dharmasiri, *_Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics_* (Antioch, Calif.: Golden Leaves Publishing Company, 1989). Lopez's recent discussion of virtues and sainthood from the Mahaayaana bodhisattva perspective, with comparisons to Roman Catholic tradition, is detailed enough to be helpful; Donald S. Lopez, Jr., "Sanctification on the Bodhisattva Path," *_Sainthood_*, eds. Richard Kieckhefer and George S. Bond (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

[15] For a classic discussion of the paaramitaas, "Saantideva, *_The Path of Light_*, trans. L.D. Barnett (AMS Press, 1990). A more recent translation of "Saantideva's Bodhicaarya-avataara is Marion Matics' *_Entering the Path of Enlightenment_* (London: Macmillan Company, 1970).

[16] Robert Aitken, *_The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics_* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), 158.

[17] Aitken, *_The Mind of Clover_*, 159.

[18] See Whitehill, "Is There a Zen Ethic?"

[19] Gerta Ital, *_On the Way to Satori: A Women's Experience of Enlightenment_*, trans. Timothy Green (Dorset, England: Element Books, Ltd., 1990), 276.

[20] Ken Jones, *_The Social Face of Buddhism: An Approach to Political and Social Activism_* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1989).

[21] Dharmasiri, interestingly, argues that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a peculiar, non-hedonic form of act utilitarianism; *_Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics_*, 26-27.

[22] Much confusion in thinking about Buddhism in the West results because the Asian cultures from which it comes focus morality in the "roles" people play in hierarchical, organic relationships, while modern Westerners who have taken up Buddhism are often urged by their traditions to view morality from the perspective of the autonomous,

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isolated self, understood as an expressive "personality." This cross-cultural difference needs to be more carefully used and understood by Buddhist interpreters. On the contemporary American shift of interest from "character" to "personality," see Anthony Quinton, "Character and Culture," in *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life*, ed. Christina & Fred Sommers (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, Publishers, 1989), 613-22.

[23] Jones, *The Social Face of Buddhism*, 157.

[24] Robert H. Scharf, "Being Buddha: A Performative Approach to Ch'an Enlightenment" (unpublished manuscript, 1989). Hee-jin Kim, *Dogen Kigen: Mystic Realist* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1987), 172-3. Martin Southwold argues, in the instance of Sinhalese Buddhism, that ethical behavior is the focus and vehicle of the "ritual impulse" for Buddhist laypeople in Sri Lanka. Absent a transcendent focus of religious worship and ritual reference, Buddhists have made of ethics and the Dharma the object of ritual activity. Of course, the form of ethics most congenial to ritualization is, of course, virtue ethics. See Southwold, *Buddhism in life: the anthropological study of religion and the Sinhalese practice of Buddhism* (Dover, N.H.: Manchester University Press, 1983), 162-80.

[25] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, Chap. 4. See M.F. Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Learning to Be Good," *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 69-92.

[26] I am taking a rather casual approach to the spelling of these terms, choosing between the Pali and the Sanskrit renderings on the basis of which seems easiest to pronounce and remember in English. I am casual with an excuse however, for I think it must soon be necessary to coin English phonetic neologues for these terms, and I am merely choosing those I like (e.g., I think pa~n~naa is weak-sounding in English when referring to a powerfully transforming insight, or praj~naa-insight).

[27] I hope someone with perseverance can attempt an analysis of the paaramitaas, in comparative light, akin to Lee Yearley's arduous study of the theories of virtue in Mencius and Aquinas. Yearley takes the study of virtue deep into comparative terrain, marking assiduously

more distinctions between Aquinas and Mencius than I care to know, because I can't see readily what difference they make. Lee Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

[28] Vijay Nath, *Daana: Gift System in Ancient India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1987).

[29] See Melford Spiro, *Buddhism and Society* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970); Winston L. King, *In the Hope of Nibbana* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1964). Spiro and King, while admiring many of the personal qualities of Buddhist laypeople, tend to diminish

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their moral achievements as self-regarding, because lay Buddhists link good deeds and good character with favorable rebirths. Scholars from Christian cultures that have given the highest moral value to self-sacrificing altruism, agape, are not likely to regard the Buddha's injunction, to avoid the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, as the most heroic spiritual advice.

[30] Some scholars believe King and Spiro make too sharp a distinction between layperson and monk, between kamma-motives and Nibbaana-motives, in Theravaada Buddhism. See, Harvey B. Aronson, "The Relationship of the Karmic to the Nirvanic in Theravada Buddhism," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (Spring 1979), 28-36; Donald K. Swearer, "Bhikkhu Buddhadasa on Ethics and Society," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (Spring 1979), 54-64. Southwold makes his argument against this "elitist" and "modernist" interpretation of a dualistic Buddhism the center of his work, *Buddhism in Life*. See also, Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 83-105.

[31] Robert A. Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti* (London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976).

[32] This self-concept gives trouble to ethical systems, like Kant's, and social-political traditions, like Western liberalism (of progressive or conservative varieties), that function in terms of rights-claims, human rights, etc. Buddhist ethics, insofar as it is grounded in the processional, ecological self-in-community, and articulated teleologically in terms of the specific paaramitaas and their cultivation, must be in tension with Western tradition on this issue, so long as Western ethics and legal structures are primarily designed to serve individual and corporate property interests. This is not to claim that Buddhist ethics overlooks or radically discounts individual human rights. The origins of Buddhism clearly reflect a vision of human life that is prejudiced toward individual release from social, as well as psychic, oppression of the human spirit. Buddhist ethics supports democracy and human rights protection as a preferable

arrangement of social, legal, and religious tolerance. However, Buddhist ethics views such tolerance and protection as only two of the conditions for a good human life.

[33] See Joanna Macy, "The Ecological Self: Postmodern Ground for Right Action," *Sacred Interconnections*, ed. David Ray Griffin (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1990), 35-48.

[34] David E. Shaner develops the Japanese Buddhist connection between cultivation of character and a "biophilic" experience of nature in an excellent article, "The Japanese Experience of Nature," *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 163-82.

[35] See Shaner's review of recent biographies of the Buddha, in which he discusses the nature and limits of Buddhist hagiography; David E. Shaner, "Biographies of the Buddha" *Philosophy East and West* 37 (July 1987), 306-22.

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[36] Helen Tworikov's *Zen in America: Profiles of Five Teachers* discusses moral concerns in connection with the behavior of some American Zen teachers, but avoids using the words "moral" and "ethical" and makes little use of Buddhist moral tradition to clarify the concerns discussed. Tworikov, *Zen in America* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989). Sandy Boucher reports moral concerns of many American women growing out of their experiences in American Buddhist centers; Boucher, *Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating the New Buddhism*.

[37] Frank Kirkpatrick and I have ventured a comparative philosophical discussion of Buddhist and Christian models of community in our "Mutual/Personal Community: Buddhist and Christian Models" (unpublished manuscript, 1990). See Kirkpatrick's *Together Bound: God, History, and the Religious Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[38] See, for example, Alasdair MacIntyre's much referred to chapter, "The Virtues, The Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition," in *After Virtue*. His emphasis on the "narrative" quality of life is not common to all virtue theorists. The Buddhist notion of "narrative" is, I presume, sufficiently different from the Christian notion to offer a useful test of MacIntyre's claims. For example, is the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection more "plausible" (MacIntyre's criterion) than the story of Siddhartha Gautama?