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Abstract

A well known issue in Western Philosophy is that of "freedom of the will": whether, how and in what sense human beings have genuine freedom of action in the context of a broad range of external and internal conditioning factors. Any system of ethics also assumes that humans have, in some sense, a freedom to choose between different courses of action. Buddhist ethics is no different in this—but how is freedom of action to be made sense of in a system that sees human beings as an interacting cluster of conditioned and conditioning processes, with no substantial I-agent either within or beyond this cluster? This article explores this issue within Theravāda Buddhism, and concludes that the view of this tradition on the issue is a "compatibilist" middle way between seeing a person's actions as completely rigidly determined, and seeing them as totally and unconditionally free, with a variety of factors acting to bring, and

increase, the element of freedom that humans have. In a different way, if a person is wrongly seen as an essential, permanent Self, it is an "undetermined question" as to whether "a person's acts of will are determined" or "a person's acts of will are free." If there is no essential person-entity, "it" can not be said to be either determined or free.

Buddhist ethics, as with other aspects of Buddhist practice, assume that people are in principle capable of choosing between different courses of action, and that they should be held responsible for their actions. Indeed the doctrine of karma is based on the idea that intentional actions: a) have a shaping effect on a person's character and destiny; b) can change for the better (or worse); and c) that this improvement can be consciously chosen.

More generally, much human discourse assumes that people are responsible for their actions and can be held to account for them, which implies that they were in some sense free to do otherwise. This is assumed in courts of law—unless it can be proved that the defendant was acting under duress, such as a threat of violence, or was out of his or her mind. It is also assumed in the praise and blame that we give in moral discourse.

The Problem of Freedom

"Freedom of the will" is a topic upon which Western Philosophy has spent much thought. While moral discourse and its notion of responsibility assume some kind of freedom to act, this notion is not without its difficulties. People's choices, decisions and intentions, which are

expressions of will, and even the desires and aspirations which feed into these, are clearly under a range of influences:

- Biological influences: one's genes, but also the effect of illness, tiredness, or drugs
- Social influences: from parents, peers, education, and the media, especially advertising
- Personal history: one's life events
- General history: the times in which one lives
- Psychological influences: fears, complexes, inclinations, strengths and weaknesses, and mental illness

Thus one's choices, however "free" they may feel, are made under the influence of a range of conditioning factors or constraints.¹

In the light of the multiple factors conditioning people's actions, a "determinist" philosopher is one who denies that people have genuinely free will: all our actions and choices are determined by causes. Non-determinists emphasize human freedom. A strong example was the French Existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80), who held that we are radically free: we only *let* ourselves be determined by a variety of influences because we deny or overlook our radical freedom, which he saw as based on the uncaused, spontaneous nature of consciousness (Medhidhammaporn 1995:61-71). Whatever circumstances we are faced with as a human being, we can say "no" to them and choose a different way, or at least choose our response to them. For example, the man Sartre condemns for having totally identified with the role of being "a waiter" has the freedom to act in a more authentic way—but he lets himself be molded by the role (Sartre 1958:59-60).

Another philosophical position is some form of "compatibilism," which accepts that all human actions and choices have causes—for them to be totally uninfluenced by anything would make them random events, not free—but as long as the causes include one's desires and conscious rational deliberations, one is acting "freely." However, when they are totally determined by causes outside one's control, they are un-free. As explained by Asaf Federman (2007:6):

Compatibilists do not see freedom as the ultimate control of will over action, rather they explain it as the ability to execute action according to psychological dispositions like will, wish, and desire....Daniel Dennett argues that freedom from causality is not only impossible but also unnecessary. He suggests that what makes us free is our ability to anticipate future events and then act in order to avoid undesired consequences. He concludes that this type of freedom accounts for all that matters: choice, morality, responsibility and self-improvement. One important aspect of his suggestions is that this kind of free will can operate only in a deterministic reality where future events can be predicted. It cannot possibly exist in a non-deterministic reality where events happen with no apparent reason or order.

For the materialist Dennett (1993, 2003), the ability to predict is limited, but "in the human case it is developed to a very high degree which enables us the freedom to act according to what we think is good" (Federman, 2007:7). As our reason² and desires, along with other mental processes, some unconscious, are crucial to the issue of freedom of action, some, including Dennett, emphasize that talk of "freedom of the *will*" is too narrow a label for the issue, while remaining a useful shorthand: the issue is whether a *person* can act freely, in line with his/her desires and rational assessment of

these and the world. This emphasis is seen in points 4 and 5 of Federman's summary of the components of Dennett's notion of free will (2007:7):

- (1) Free will does not originate from God
- (2) Free will does not belong in a separate non-physical substance (like a soul)
- (3) Free will is not an ultimate controller that resides in the centre of being.
- (4) Free will should be seen more as a property of the entire individual, rather than a function of a neurological control room. In other words, free will does not happen at a particular place (in the brain) or at a particular moment (in time t).
- (5) Free will is an expression of many parallel, unconscious and low-level processes. It is not a single process that has an ultimate ruling power.
- (6) Free will evolves. It comes in different degrees and strengths.
- (7) Free will depends on information available to the agent.
- (8) Free will does not contradict determinism or causality.

Freedom of Will in Buddhism

As Luis Gomez says, Indian interest in the problem of freedom of the will has been "rather sporadic" compared to Western discussion of the subject (1975:81). Buddhism has certainly been interested in action, will and freedom, so what does it say or imply on this issue of how responsibility and self-directed change are possible? In this paper, the perspective of Theravāda Buddhism on this issue is explored.

Buddhist texts certainly emphasize that people *are* individually responsible for the actions that they do. This is shown from M.III.179-180,

where Yama, king of the dead, reprimands an evil-doer who has arrived in hell, saying that a certain deed was done by *him*, and not by any friend or relative, so that *he* must experience its karmic result. This passage need not imply that such a past action was done by a substantial, still existent Self—which Buddhism does not accept, but only that it was done by an earlier portion of the "continuity" of mental and physical processes that the person now is: not by any other continuity (see Harvey 1995:66-68). He, no one else, is responsible.

Moreover, the Buddha opposed the fatalistic doctrine of the Ājīvikas, who held that people are not responsible for their actions as they are driven by the external force of *niyati*, or "destiny": people's karma or action is a passive effect of this, over which they have no control (D.I.53). When someone said to the Buddha that there was no such thing as self-agency (*atta-kāra*), he replied by emphasizing that there is an "element of initiating (*ārabha-dhātu*)" in people—i.e., some kind of ability to choose—which allows them to initiate and direct actions such as bodily movements (A.III.337-338). The Buddha opposed determinism as he saw it as a doctrine that froze a person's will to overcome unwholesome/unskillful (*akusala*) actions and develop wholesome/skilful (*kusala*) ones.

Modern scholars have characterized the Buddhist position on the issue of freedom of the will in different ways. Federman holds that Buddhism promotes:

a primitive theory of compatibilism which shares some key features with Daniel Dennett's position on this issue.³ ... the implicit Buddhist stance on freedom of the will allows the existence of choice and responsibility without calling upon an ultimate controlling agency that transcends the causal nexus of mind and body. (2007:1)

As in modern compatibilism, the Buddhist free will is not contrasted with causality itself, but with coercion and compulsion. While the Western tradition tends to emphasize external compulsion and social freedom, Buddhist doctrine tends to emphasize internal compulsions and psychological freedom. (2007:16)

This last point is certainly pertinent: when "freely" acting in accord with one's desires and reasoning, one's freedom may be compromised by the fact that one sometimes has desires one wishes one did not have, yet may still act on them, and by the fact that one's reasoning may be false, biased or strongly influenced by social and cultural conditioning. Federman continues by saying that Buddhism:

affirms that people can, and indeed should, take responsibility over their actions. Choosing right action is not derived from a supernatural or super-causal origin. It is derived from wise contemplation over the possible consequences. This wisdom enables freedom, and is a faculty that can be developed. Therefore, free will is the ability to act wisely in a deterministic universe: where actions yield results. What limits freedom is not causality itself (karma or determinism), but thought patterns, mental-compulsion, and habitual behaviour. (2007:16-17)

Paul Griffiths perhaps reads Buddhism as having a more straightforward doctrine of free will. For him, karma may determine certain things such as one's "mental capacity ... the moral character of one's parents," but:

within these parameters it is still possible to act well or badly, to make the best possible use of what has been determined for one or make things worse by bowing to one's limitations. So Buddhist theory is certainly not strict determinism. (1982:287)

Charles Goodman, on the other hand, sees Buddhism as a form of strict/hard determinism:

The Buddhist traditions offers a way ...to give up both the theory and practice of moral responsibility, and thereby to escape the need to believe in the indefensible notion of free will. (2002:361)

Against what Griffiths says above, Goodman argues (363):

If the parameters are all determined by karma, then people's actions must be caused by the parameters, by something else, or nothing. If actions are caused by the parameters, then they are determined. If they are caused by nothing, they are utterly random, and therefore not free. If they are caused by something else, this something else must either be the self or something other than the self. If the something else is not the self, then either determinism or randomness will result. But the something else can't be the self, because, according to Buddhists, there is no self. Therefore Griffiths's interpretation is untenable.

Note that in this reasoning, he offers no middle ground between "determinism and randomness." He thus allows no room for any form of compatibilism.

In arguing for a determinist reading of Buddhism, he discusses the Buddha's objection to the fatalist view of Makkhali Gosāla (D.I.53-54), as described at M.I.407:

There is no cause (*hetu*) or condition (*paccayo*) for the defilement of beings; beings are defiled without cause or condition. There is no cause or condition for the purification of beings; beings are purified

without cause or condition. There is no power (*balam*), no energy (*viriyam*), no manly strength (*purisa-tthāmo*), no manly endurance (*purisa-parakkamo*). All beings, all living things, all creatures, all souls (*jīvā*) are without mastery, power and energy; molded by destiny, circumstance, and nature (*niyati-saṅgati-bhāva-pariṇatā*), they experience pleasure and pain in the six classes (of humans; cf A.III.383-84).

Goodman seeks to argue that the Buddha's objection to this view does not mean he would have also disagreed with modern hard determinism. He comments that the view actually conflicts with this determinism, as it denies that defilement and purification have a cause (365). However, this is to misread the passage. Its claim is clearly that these have no cause *within the current control of a person*, as these and their actions are "molded by destiny, circumstance, and nature," which surely are kinds of causes. He also points out that, unlike the Indian fatalists, determinists don't deny that human actions have causal efficacy or that they can promote a person's welfare; it is just that they see the "choices" behind the actions as themselves determined and unfree (365-366). That said, it seems clear that the Buddha would have objected both to a denial of a person having "mastery, power and energy" *and* a denial that they have them, but have no control over them. Either way, they could not effectively choose to act so as to improve their conduct.

Goodman holds (359) that:

Western thinkers who have denied the reality of free will have continued to apply notions of moral responsibility in their own lives. Their practice is thus inescapably inconsistent with their theory. By drawing on Buddhist ideas, however, it is possible to develop a view on which perfect people do not ascribe moral responsibility.

However, even Goodman himself cannot abandon the assumption of moral responsibility. In citing Buddhist texts that praise non-anger, he is citing texts that say such things as "you should train thus" in developing loving-kindness (M.I.123). "Should" is a kind of moral appeal, implying some kind of moral agency and responsibility. Moreover, he says (370), that:

in Buddhism, rational thought can be part of a process that leads people to turn against the way of life they know, and to seek spiritual values instead of worldly ones... To live the best kind of life, a Buddhist must transform the functions of his mind.

In the phrases that I have underlined, Goodman is assuming that people have some kind of freedom to change the way they act.

So much for the views of others, which help alert us to some of the issues. In my following review "freedom of the will" and its possible basis within a (Theravāda) Buddhist context, I will organize the discussion under several heads:

- (1) How does Buddhism regard madness?
- (2) How does Buddhism regard social and biological conditioning?
- (3) In the Buddhist perspective, is past karma seen to limit a person's present freedom of action?
- (4) Given that Buddhism does not accept a permanent Self, does this undermine the possibility of freedom?
- (5) As Buddhism sees a person as an interacting complex of conditioned mental and physical processes—the doctrine of Conditioned Arising or Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*)—how might "freedom of the will" be seen to arise in this complex of conditioned processes?

- (6) In particular, how is willing affected by spiritual ignorance, the quality of attention, and the basic radiant purity of the mind?
- (7) What is the relevance of the Buddhist concept of spiritual freedom?

Madness and Related States

In the monastic code, a monk who breaks a monastic rule when mad is not seen to commit an offence (Vin.IV.125). The *Milindapañha* discusses the case of a *Jātaka* story (J.III.514-519) where the *Bodhisattva*, as an ascetic, sacrifices (or almost does?) many animals when a king says that he can marry his beautiful daughter if he does so (Miln.220). The Miln. says that this was an action done when he was "out of his mind with passion, not when he was thinking of what he was doing (*rāga-vasena visaññinā, no sañcetanena*)." The action was not in accordance with his nature for he was "unhinged (*khittacitto*), impassioned. It was when he was out of his mind, thoroughly confused and agitated that, with thoughts confused, in a turmoil and disturbed," like a madman. Thus it is said that:

Evil done by one who is unhinged, sire, is not of great blame here and now, nor is it so in respect of its ripening in a future state. ... there is no punishment for a madman's crime, therefore there is no defect in what was done by a madman, he is pardonable (221).

That is, the actions of a madman are seen as blameless, while actions done when impassioned are of little blame—though getting into such a state can be held to be blameworthy.

Social and Biological Conditioning

Buddhism accepts that one's social environment can have a good or ill influence on the actions one chooses to perform. It emphasizes that one should choose one's friends wisely, as they can lead one astray or support one in good actions. Bad rulers can set a bad example that many in their realm then follow (A.II.74-76).

There is also the idea that history goes through cycles (over huge time-spans) when people's behavior generally deteriorates or improves. This can be seen in the *Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta* (D.III.58-79). This tells of a line of past ideal rulers known as *Cakkavattis* (Universal Emperors). Their tradition was one of compassionate and just rule—until a new emperor neglected to look after the less well off. Consequently, poverty became widespread, such that in time someone stole, society having been previously crime-free. When brought before the emperor, he explained that he stole due to his poverty: so the emperor gave him wealth. Not surprisingly, this encouraged others to steal; until the emperor tried to put a stop to it by executing a thief. Consequently, thieves then armed themselves to avoid arrest and killed witnesses. Others, even if caught, lied about their activities (D.III. 65-67). This then led on to other forms of moral decline in society. That is, social conditions can develop in such a way as to influence the behavior of most people. People are influenced by the times they live in.

In times of war or famine, especially where the norms of normal civilized society break down, perhaps due to a perverse ideology, as under the Nazis, people's behavior takes a marked turn for the worst. Extreme circumstances encourage extreme behavior. It is for such reasons that Buddhism emphasizes the responsibility of a good Buddhist ruler to

encourage wholesome views and behavior and seek to ensure that poverty is absent in society (D.I.134-136; see Harvey 2000:198); for poverty encourages theft and disorder, and is not a good basis for a moral life. Yet it would not be held that, because poverty makes theft more likely, it actually excuses anyone in particular acts of theft—though it might be seen as a mitigating factor.

What of the influence of biology? Clearly, humans are a particular kind of physical being with certain needs, and this shapes the kind of actions people are able to do and tend to do—though they can and do choose to be celibate (not follow sexual desires) and to fast (e.g., Buddhist monks and nuns do not eat after noon). What of the influence of genes? While the idea did not exist in the pre-modern era, contemporary Buddhists are able to say that, as one gets one's genes from one's parents, and one gets one's parents from one's past karma, then any genetic influence on character, and thence behavior, is itself a mode of karmic influence.⁴

The Workings of Karma

Karma (Pali *kamma*, Sanskrit *karma*) literally means "action," but in a religious-philosophical sense, in Buddhism, it is seen as the volition, or act of will behind any action: "It is will (*cetanā*), O monks, that I call karma; having willed, one acts through body, speech or mind" (A.III.415). This means that only intentional actions are regarded as having karmic results or "fruits" (*kamma-vipāka* or *kamma-phala*). The kind of results attributed to karma include one's form of rebirth, body, social class at birth, general character, and crucial good and bad things that happen to one (Harvey 1990:39; 2000:15-16).

The arising of certain kinds of results from certain kinds of action is seen as a kind of natural law which is part of the fabric of existence. The working of karma is seen as one aspect of the general principle of Conditioned Arising. In the most common application of this principle, the twelvefold chain of Conditioned Arising, moreover, karma is equivalent to the second link, "constructing activities" (the *saṅkhāras*), for the most important of these is will, the others being planning and having a latent tendency for something.⁵ The constructing activities are karmically negative or positive volitions put into effect through body, speech or mind (D.III.217, S.II.39-40, S.II.4). At the end of a life, karma provides the parameters within which the next rebirth is found:

karma is the field, consciousness is the seed, craving is the moisture: for beings hindered by spiritual ignorance, fettered by craving, consciousness [and volition and aspiration] are supported in a lower [or middling or excellent] realm. Thus, in the future, there is re-becoming (A.I.223).

Given that Buddhism holds that, in principle, anyone can uncover buried memories of many past lives, this requires some concept of an unconscious level of mind. This is also the most appropriate "store" of karmic traces which have not yet produced all of their results. In many cases, the results can be seen as working by means "internal" to a person: its direct effects on character, and the arising of its results through means such as ineptitude in business (D.II.85, A.II.81-82) or illness (Sn. 125).

Karma is also seen as bringing its results, though, through the external world and the action of other beings. This implies, of course, that it can bring about its results "at a distance." The karmic results of harming the harmless are said to include "loss of relatives, or destruction of wealth, or

ravaging by fire that will destroy his houses" (Dhp.139-140). At A.II.74-75, it is said that, due to the unrighteousness of a king and his people:

moon and sun revolve unevenly. This being so, constellations and stars do likewise; days and nights, months and fortnights, seasons and years revolve unevenly; the winds blow unevenly, out of season. The gods are thus annoyed. This being so, the sky-god does not bestow sufficient rain.

Consequently, the crops are poor and the people are short-lived and sickly. Whatever one makes of the details of this passage, it views immoral actions as upsetting the natural order, and karmic results as arising through environmental and climatic intermediaries: the world reacts to the moral and spiritual level of its inhabitants (as perhaps echoed in contemporary global warming). A similar idea is expressed in the *Aggañña Sutta* (D.III.85-93), which describes the evolution of human society from the earlier sexless beings that inhabited the earth at the start of a world-cycle. Here, as the beings degenerate morally from a god-like beginning, the physical world evolves and becomes more solid and diversified. For example, due to the greed of the beings, they hoard rice, so that while it originally grew to maturity in a day, it comes to grow in the normal way. At the individual level, the reaction of the environment to karma can be seen at J.I.167, where a thunderbolt causes a rock to split and so kill a goat, due to its karma of a past life (though one might say that past karma put the goat in harm's way, but did not itself help to cause the arising of the thunderbolt).

Karmic results also come through the actions of other people. At Thig.400-447, an *Arahat* nun says that, in a past rebirth, she had been a male adulterer, who had then, as a result of this karma, gone through a rebirth in a hell, then as three kinds of animals who were castrated, as a

hermaphrodite human, as a troublesome co-wife and, in her current life, as a woman rejected by several husbands. Moreover, a layman who gives alms will, if he becomes a monk, be "often asked to accept alms" (A.II.32), and even the murder of the enlightened monk Moggallāna is seen as the result of past karma (J.V.126, in commentarial part; cf.Dhp.A.III.65-71). *Visuddhimagga* 229 is quite clear that death due to being attacked with weapons can be due to person's past karma.

In the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* (D.III.142-179), thirty-two characteristics of the Buddha's body are described, individually or in groups, as the product of particular past good actions, and as signs of good things to come, which must also be seen as karmic results. These results include:

- (1) Physical qualities: being long-lived, of little illness, with good digestion, tolerant of exertion; having a persuasive voice;
- (2) Mental qualities: learning quickly, great wisdom, rich in spiritual possessions, which he cannot lose;
- (3) Relations with and treatment by others: being foremost among renouncers; having many followers, who are well-disposed, loyal and obedient to him and united amongst themselves; receiving good food and fine fabrics; inability to be impeded or overcome by any enemy.

Is everything due to karma?

If karma is seen as bringing about its effects partly through events in the world and actions of other people, does this mean that everything is seen as happening due to karma? The answer, for the Theravāda tradition, is "no": most things in the animate and inanimate world are seen as *not* due to

karma, though they are conditioned in other ways. At S.IV.230-231, the Buddha discusses the various causes of the experiences (feelings/sensations: *vedayitāni*) that a person might have. They can originate:

in bile...in phlegm ...in the winds (of the body) ...from a union of humors (of the body) ...born of a change of season ...born of the stress of circumstances ...due to (someone else's) effort (*opakkamikāni*)... and some things that are experienced here, Sīvaka, arise born of the maturing of karma.

It is thus seen as incorrect to say that, "Whatever this person experiences, whether pleasant or painful or neither painful nor pleasant, all that is due to what was done earlier."⁷ This passage is discussed at *Milindapañha* 134-138, where king Milinda is described as wrongly thinking that "all that is experienced is rooted in karma." The monk Nāgasena points out the various causes of feelings, as above, and moreover denies that karma *underlies* them all. Bodily winds, for example, can arise from a number of physical causes, though *some* do also arise due to past karma. On feelings in general, he says "small is what is born of the maturing of karma, greater is the remainder" (135). Miln. 271 also says that, "The earth and the mountains and wind are all born of physical change (*utuḥjā*)."

The *Milindapañha* 134-138 discussion is in relation to illnesses and injuries that the Buddha suffered. King Milinda says to venerable Nāgasena that the Buddha is seen as beyond the results of past bad karma (this is not said of *Arahats* other than the Buddha, though: see case of Moggallāna, above), and that this contradicts his suffering illnesses and injuries. Nāgasena discusses the case of the Buddha's foot being injured by a splinter of rock from a boulder rolled down towards him by his jealous cousin Devadatta. Of the list

of possible causes of the unpleasant sensations this led to, only two are seen as possible: past karma and "due to an effort." As none of the Buddha's illnesses or injuries are seen as due to his past karma (or to stress of circumstances), though, the injury must have arisen "due to an effort"—of Devadatta.

The late canonical text the *Apadāna* (I.299 ff.),⁸ though, differs from the view of the post-canonical, though influential, *Milindapañha*, for it refers to karmic causes for a number of difficulties undergone by the Buddha. After previous bad rebirths, "remnants (*pilotikāni*)" of the Buddha's past bad karma include:

- (1) Physical difficulties: a bad headache; a backache; diarrhea;
- (2) Difficulties due to the actions of other people: suffering wrongful accusations; three attempts on his life instigated by Devadatta, including the one which resulted in an injury to his foot; getting poor alms food for a period;
- (3) Difficulties from his own actions: practicing fruitless asceticism for six years.⁹

Within Theravāda Buddhism, then, there are some differences of opinion on the extent of the effect of karma, at least where it comes to the Buddha.

In the *Abhidhamma* literature, which is in part a later systematizing of earlier *Sutta* material, there is a view which is potentially at odds with the idea that there are many events in the world not due to karma. It is held that in any sense channel, for example the visual, there is a sense-consciousness, in this case, eye-consciousness (awareness of a visual object), rapidly followed by mind-consciousnesses that make sense of and respond to such an object. What is important, here, is that eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-

and body-consciousness are all seen as results of past karma.¹⁰ How can this be, if what they are conscious of is regarded as generally *not* due to past karma? A combination of three possible answers seems appropriate:

- (1) Karma determines what kind of being someone is reborn as, and as different kinds of beings have different kinds of sense-organs, which are sensitive in different ways (e.g., human sight compared to that of a fly or eagle), then the form of a being's consciousness is influenced by karma;
- (2) A certain visual scene may not be due to past karma, but that a certain person is in a particular location so as to see it can be seen as possibly due to past karma;
- (3) Even if there are two people in the same place, they will notice different aspects of what is available to see, for example one will tend to notice pleasant aspects, and the other unpleasant. It is in this sense that their sense-consciousnesses can be seen as the result of past karma: it filters awareness of the surrounding environment so that only particular "edited highlights" tend to be noticed.

The third explanation is not explicitly given in any text, but fits in well with other Buddhist ideas. It is supported by a passage at S.I.91-92, which recounts a tale of a man who is rich due to having given alms to a *pacceka-buddha* in a past life, but a miser unable to enjoy what wealth might buy due to later having regretted his generosity. Here, one can say, past karma entails that the man only notices unpleasant, unenticing aspects of the world.

Karmic fatalism?

To what extent does Buddhism hold that past karma determines new karma in the present? As character often affects what actions one does, and character is largely seen as a product of past actions, does this limit freedom, as implied by Goodman (2002:363) in his above critique of Griffiths? A relevant passage here is M.III.169-171. Here it is said that a being that is reborn in hell will take a very long time before regaining a human rebirth, for this—gaining a human rebirth from a hellish one—is harder than a blind turtle putting its neck through a ring floating on the ocean, when it only surfaces once a century. Even when a human rebirth is regained, the person will be poor, ugly, ill or deformed *and* will behave badly, so as to return to hell! In contrast to this, M.III.177-178 says that a wise man who upholds the ethical precepts will be reborn in a heaven and only "once in a very long while" will he be reborn as a human. When this does occur, he will be rich and handsome, etc., will behave virtuously, and so return to a heaven. In both case, the effects of karma are seen as lasting a very long time, and even the patterns of good and bad actions, and thus the character-traits which prompt these, are seen as similarly recurring: the form and directedness of character is seen as continuing over the ages.

Nevertheless a passage at S.I.93-96 has a different emphasis. It holds that for one born as a *chaṇḍāla* (a kind of outcaste), or as a hunter, or poor, ill-fed, ill-featured, diseased or a cripple:

- (1) If he is an evil-doer and is reborn in hell, he is one "who is living in darkness and bound for darkness."
- (2) If he acts well and is reborn in a heaven, he is one "who is living in darkness and bound for the light."

For one born as a Brahmin or as noble, rich, good-looking:

- (1) If he does evil and is reborn in hell, he is one "who is living in the light and bound for darkness."
- (2) If he acts well and is reborn in a heaven, he is "living in the light and bound for the light."

This implies that one is not stuck with carrying on in evil—or in good. Together, then, these passages imply that a past evil-doer only *tends* to continue in evil. The pattern can be changed, perhaps by a bad person coming under the good influence of others (or vice versa), as with the murderous Aṅgulimāla (M.II.97-105) when he is confronted by the Buddha and goes on to become an *Arahat*. It may also be changed by consistently acting in the best way one's current character tends to allow.

One can think of a person's character as tending to be expressed in a characteristic spectrum of wholesome and unwholesome actions. Over time, the more a person acts towards the wholesome end of the spectrum, this develops their character in a wholesome direction, so that their spectrum shifts its range to include more strongly wholesome actions and less strongly unwholesome actions. Focusing actions at the unwholesome end of the spectrum has the opposite effect. One becomes the kind of person one makes oneself, within one life, and from life to life. An *Arahat* is one who operates only with a wholesome spectrum,¹¹ and has destroyed the roots which would have made a return to unwholesome actions possible.

Indeed, *Therīgāthā* vv.400-447 gives an account of a woman who had previously had a string of bad rebirths in hell or as an animal, but who becomes a Buddhist nun and then an *Arahat*, a liberated person. Likewise, the *Apadāna*, above, sees the Buddha's fruitless period of asceticism, prior to

his enlightenment, as due to past bad karma—but he then went on to change his behavior. There is a tendency to carry on in old character patterns set up by past actions, though one can also break out from these. If new karma was simply the result of past karma, this would entail a deterministic chain that one could never break out of: one would be condemned to eternally repeat the mistakes of the past, and would not be responsible for one's actions.¹²

The Buddha in fact criticized any theories which undermined the idea of responsibility for action. These included:

- (1) Two forms of deterministic fatalism, which respectively saw all experiences (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral) as due either to past karma (*pubbe kata-hetu*) or the creation of a God (*Issara-nimmāna-hetu*);
- (2) A form of indeterminism, which saw all experiences as without any cause or condition (*ahetu-appaccayā*), but as being due to pure chance (A.I.173-175; cf. M.II.214)¹³.

The Buddha saw each of these views as implying that any action, for example, being a murderer, is due to past karma (cf. Kvu.545-546), a deity's action, or chance, presumably due to the experiences / feelings accompanying such acts being so based. He thus saw those who held such views as supporting "inaction" (*akiriya*): if one is not responsible for one's actions, the will to act in a wholesome way, and not an unwholesome one, is paralyzed.

If being a murderer is not determined by past karma or a God, nor arises randomly, how does Buddhism see it? It accepts that one might be more likely to carry out a murder if one's "defilements" (*kilesas*)—greed, hatred

and delusion, etc.—are strong, due to acting on them in the past, that is, due to past karma. An irritable person, for example, is more easily provoked to violence. His or her karmically shaped nature is such that he will often experience unpleasant feelings in response to the actions of others. Nevertheless, while this may lead on to killing someone, there is always a choice involved (unless a person is mad). In terms of *Abhidhamma* theory (see above):

- (1) Though all feelings occurring at the mind's first awareness of a sense-object are seen as the result of past karma, nevertheless,
- (2) Feelings occurring in the mind's *response* to a sense-object are not due to past karma, but are associated with *new* karma.

It has been seen above, though, that Buddhism sees a person's karma as sometimes "catching up" with them through the actions of other people. A person's past karma might be the cause of their being murdered, injured, insulted, or offered poor or good alms food. Does this idea compromise the freedom, and thus responsibility, of a murderer, if his victim's death is due to the victim's own bad karma? Such an issue is raised by the *Apadāna* commentary (Ap.A.114-115), which sees a bad action of the Buddha in a prior life, insulting the past Buddha Kassapa (Ap.I. 299ff.), as itself the fulfillment of Kassapa's bad karma. Masefield comments on this and similar incidents:

That Jotipāla [the Buddha in a previous life], and these others, should have gone to hell simply for playing the role of (a presumably involuntary) agent in the unfolding of some other person's karma, seems a strange and frightening departure from the law of karma as this is usually presented (1995:722).

This problem, if real, would apply to any case where karmic results arise via the actions of others. As has been seen, though, this idea is part of "the law of karma as this is usually presented."

Is there a real problem, though? If person X is murdered by Y due to X's own karma, Y's freedom can be retained if:

- (1) X's character is the result of his past karma and is such as to provoke the easily-irritated Y into murdering him, or
- (2) Due to his karma, X unconsciously puts himself into a position where Y feels that it is advantageous to murder him: note that Moggallāna's murder is seen as having been ordered by ascetics jealous of his success in gaining converts (J.V.126), or
- (3) Y is intent on killing an unspecified person (for example, due to madness or in war), and X's karma determines that it is X who is killed.

In all three cases, except where Y is actually insane, Y has freedom in his or her choices. Yet these self-chosen actions fulfill, as it happens, X's karma, without Y being a passive, blameless agent of X's karma coming to fruition. Y could have chosen otherwise, though in circumstances similar to 1, 2 or 3, X might then be killed by Z. So, one's actions are not determined by *other* people's past karma.

Thus Buddhism opposes karmic fatalism, though a kind of karmic fatalism is attributed to the Jains:

Whatever this individual experiences, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, all this is due to previous action. Thus, by burning up, making an end to ancient actions, by non-doing of new actions, there is no overflowing into the future (M.II.214).

Such a view was seen to motivate the Jain's harsh asceticism, which they performed to bring past bad karma to fruition so as to gradually exhaust it, and also to motivate complete non-violence, done to prevent the generation of new karma. Such a view implies that it is simply possible to "wear away" suffering arising due to past bad karma. The Buddha's criticism of this approach is that it would require knowledge that one had done actions a, b, c, etc., in the past, so that one would know how much karmically caused suffering there was left to wear away. He argues that it can be immediately observed, though, that the cause of suffering due to *asceticism* is in the present, not the past:¹⁴ it is the effort¹⁵ that is put into asceticism. There is, moreover, no reason to think that such new action can wear away the results of previous actions.

For Buddhism, karmic results of a particular action are actually seen to vary, so past karma does not inflexibly determine a fixed result, produced in a mechanical-like way. Only intentional actions bring karmic results, and even then, the result may vary according to the nature of the person that does the act, the results being worse for a morally and spiritually undeveloped person (A.I.249-253): in this case, the bad action "reverberates" so to speak, with other such actions, undiluted by many good actions. Without this flexibility, it is held that there would be "no living of the holy life, no opportunity for the utter destruction of suffering" (A.I.249). It is also said that regret reduces the karmic effect of a (bad or good) past action¹⁶ and that when a person attains "stream-entry," the first glimpse of *nirvāṇa*, they are free of any rebirths at less than a human level (S.V.357). While this must be partly due to the fact that they, from now on, always act morally, it must also imply that any previous bad karma which might have led to a bad rebirth can now no longer do so. So karmic results are not inflexibly determined by past karma alone, but also needs

cooperating conditions to foster their arising, and these may modify the form and timing of their arising. Thanissaro Bhikkhu expresses it thus in "Kamma & the Ending of Kamma"¹⁷

To begin with *this/that conditionality* [the principle behind Conditioned Arising]: This principle accounts not only for the complexity of the kammic process, but also for its being regular without at the same time being rigidly deterministic. The non-linearity of this/that conditionality also accounts for the fact that the process can be successfully dismantled by radical attention to the present moment.

Unlike the theory of linear causality—which led the Vedists and Jains to see the relationship between an act and its result as predictable and tit-for-tat—the principle of this/that conditionality makes that relationship inherently complex. The results of kamma experienced at any one point in time come not only from past kamma, but also from present kamma. This means that, although there are general patterns relating habitual acts to corresponding results (§9 [M. III.203-206]), there is no set one-for-one, tit-for-tat, relationship between a particular action and its results. Instead, the results are determined by the context of the act, both in terms of actions that preceded or followed it (§11 [M.III.209-215; e.g., a bad action may not be immediately followed by a bad rebirth if one has done strong good actions beforehand, or develops right view near death]) and in terms one's state of mind at the time of acting or experiencing the result (§13 [=A.I.249-253]). As we noted in the Introduction, the feedback loops inherent in this/that conditionality mean that the working out of any particular cause-effect relationship can be very complex indeed. This explains why the Buddha says in §12 [A.II.80] that the results of kamma are imponderable. Only a person who has developed

the mental range of a Buddha—another imponderable itself—would be able to trace the intricacies of the kammic network. The basic premise of kamma is simple—that skillful intentions lead to favorable results, and unskillful ones to unfavorable results—but the process by which those results work themselves out is so intricate that it cannot be fully mapped. We can compare this with the Mandelbrot set, a mathematical set generated by a simple equation, but whose graph is so complex ...that it will probably never be completely explored.¹⁸

Lack of a Fixed Self

Edward Conze (1962:104, note 3) held that the issue of "freedom of the will" was a "pseudo-problem": "As trying to determine what the 'I' can do as against outside forces, the whole problem is meaningless to Buddhists," as no substantial I-agent is accepted. This is an interesting take on the issue: as there is no substantial I/Self, it is meaningless to ask if "it" is free or not—though one can still wonder about the operational relative freedom of the processes of willing and reasoning. In any case, if a person *did* have a permanent, unchanging I/Self, it could be no locus of free action, for an action can only arise from something that changes and is *not* permanent. The initiator of an action at time t must have undergone some changes of state from how it was at time $t-1$.

Mark Siderits (1987) argues that, to the extent that one entertains the conventional fiction that there is a "person" (an I/Self) as well as the *khandhas*,¹⁹ such "persons" can be seen as free, in the sense of capable of rational self-determination. Once one focuses on the *khandhas* and the real processes of which they are comprised, though, all are determined by conditions, though reasoning, etc., remain a reality. For him, "free" and

"determined" are not incompatible, as they apply at different levels of analysis: respectively at the conventional level at which "persons" exist, and the ultimate level at which they don't. He thus says:

the early Buddhists are implicitly committed to some form of compatibilism. For they explicitly accept psychological determinism—they hold that each psychological state in a person-series is caused by some prior physical or psychological state. And they also claim... that humans are free in that they are able to act on those choices reached through deliberation (1987:153).²⁰

Charles Goodman objects to Siderits's view, saying that "a causal chain doesn't have to have a person as a relatum to be a threat to free will" (2002:365). Indeed, if Buddhism does not accept a permanent, wholly autonomous Self, might this imply that there is no locus of free action at all? On his reading of the Buddhist teaching on non-Self, Goodman holds that "You do not really exist, and neither does any other person....people, subjects, agents, are not really existing entities" (362). He also summarizes the view of Galen Strawson (1986) that:

If you don't exist, then nothing is up to you. If there is no autonomous self, there is no autonomy. If there is no genuine boundary between self and others, there can be no genuine distinction between actions that flow from the self and motions imposed on the self from outside. Galen Strawson uses these sorts of considerations to defend the idea that, according to Buddhism, the notion of free will is a myth arising from the deluded belief in a self (Goodman, 2002:362).

But if there is a "myth" here, should its claim be discounted at the conventional as well as at the ultimate level? Goodman claims that Buddhists deny

all notions of moral responsibility, and that this supports their non-approval of emotions such as anger and resentment at certain actions; for no one is seen as actually responsible for them (366). He cites (366-367) some parts of Buddhaghosa's advice on how to undercut resentment, by reflecting that a past action done against one was done by momentary *khandhas* that no longer exist (Vism.301) and, as regards the present person, one's anger finds no foothold when one asks oneself which bodily element or which of the *khandhas* one is angry with (Vism.306). Here Goodman sees a "negation of what is recognizably the notion of free will" (367-368). But here he takes a meditative emphasis on certain aspects of reality, as a skilful means to undermine resentment, as the whole of the truth from a Buddhist perspective. In another part of his advice, Buddhaghosa urges people to undermine their resentment by reflecting that the resented person had probably been a close relative or friend in some long-past rebirth (Vism.305, citing S.II.189-90). Hence how a person was in a long-gone rebirth can still be relevant to how one should consider them now. Buddhist writers are happy to cite both the not-Self teaching *and* material on enduring moral agency in support of undermining resentment. These are all seen as compatible.

Goodman also cites (368) the reflections of the Mahāyāna poet Śāntideva on voiding anger:

I feel no anger towards bile and the like, even though they cause intense suffering. Why am I angry with sentient beings? They too have causes for their anger.

Whatever transgressions and evil deeds of various kinds there are, all arise through the power of conditioning factors, while there is nothing that arises independently.

Therefore, even if one sees a friend or an enemy behaving badly, one can reflect that there are specific conditioning factors that determine this, and thereby remain happy.²¹

He sees this as a case of ceasing "to ascribe true agency or self-determination to people." Again, he overlooks that this is a case of emphasizing one aspect of a situation so as to change one's conduct. But while emphasizing the conditioned aspect of the conduct of *others*, the above verses very much assume that the person seeking to overcome their anger is some kind of responsible agent who can choose to change their mental response to a situation, by seeing it in a different way than previously. It does not say: "and your anger at the other person is conditioned too, so there is nothing you can do about it."²²

The not-Self teaching certainly points out the variable and changeable nature of the mind and that people are not as in control of themselves as they might like to think. Nevertheless, as people lack a fixed Self, existing patterns of behavior can be changed—people are not just deterministically stuck with their existing character-pattern: how they have acted so far. Impermanence means that people are free to change from their past, but in ways that have a continuity with and relevance to their past.

Now Conditioned Arising is explicitly seen as taught "by the middle" (*majjhena*): a middle way between various extremes,²³ and so it can also be seen as a middle way between the extremes of:

- One's past rigidly determines one's present nature and actions;
- One's past is irrelevant to one's present nature and actions, as one is *absolutely* "free," as with Sartre.

This is implied by a passage at S.II.19-21. Here the Buddha dismisses four possibilities put to him by Kassapa: suffering is wrought by oneself, by another, by both, or by neither, i.e., fortuitously (*adhicca samuppana*). When Kassapa is perplexed by this, and thinks that the Buddha is denying the reality of suffering, he affirms its reality and says:

Kassapa, (if one thinks,) "The one who acts (performs a karma) is the same as the one who experiences (the result)," (then one asserts) with reference to one existing from the beginning: "Suffering is created by oneself." When one asserts thus, this amounts to eternalism.

But, Kassapa, (if one thinks,) "The one who acts is one, the one who experiences (the results) is another," (then one asserts) with reference to one stricken by feeling: "Suffering is created by another." When one asserts thus, this amounts to annihilationism.

Without veering to either of these extremes, the *Tathāgata* teaches *Dhamma* by the middle: "conditioned by ignorance are the constructing activities...."²⁴ Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. By the utter stopping of that very ignorance is the stopping of the constructing activities²⁵ Such is the stopping of this whole mass of suffering."

That is, the person who did a past (bad) karma that leads to one's present suffering is neither unchangingly the same person as oneself (eternalism), nor was he or she an entirely different person, that was totally destroyed at death (annihilationism) yet bequeathed his or her karma to someone totally unrelated.²⁶ Rather, the past agent of karma has gradually transformed into the present "oneself" according to the working of Conditioned Arising. Thus the *Milindapañha* says (40) that a person "is not [identically] the same and he

is not [completely] different" from life to life: there is an ongoing, but changing, continuity.

The teachings on impermanence and not-Self imply that the mind is ever-changing. It consists of an ever-changing stream of thoughts and mind-sets, ever flowing on, never resting. Its restless energy fluctuates between a great variety of objects, aims, emotions, etc. It constantly hums and roars, and is hardly ever silent, still. It is hungry, and always on the lookout for "food," be this in the form of experiences, things to do, or think about. This is illustrated by verses on *citta* (mind/heart) from the *Dhammapada*:

The flickering, fickle mind, difficult to guard, difficult to control—the wise man straightens it as a fletcher, an arrow.

Like a fish that is drawn from its watery abode and thrown upon land, even so does this mind flutter. Hence should the realm of Māra be shunned.

The mind is hard to check, swift, flits wherever it desires—the control thereof is good; a controlled mind is conducive to happiness.

The mind is very hard to perceive, extremely subtle, flits wherever it desires. Let the wise man guard it; a guarded mind is conducive to happiness (verses 33-36).

Whatever harm a foe may do to a foe, or a hater to a hater, an ill-directed mind can do one still greater harm (verse 42).

Irrigators lead the waters; fletchers fashion arrow-shafts; carpenters bend the wood; the wise control themselves (verse 80).

The ever-changing nature of the mind means both that one is not stuck with an unchangeable nature, and that the stream of mental conditions can go in many different directions, skilful or unskillful. As the mind is ever-changing, subject to a variety of internal and external conditions, it is seen as good to develop greater guidance over the way it operates, based on wise restraint and an understanding of *how* it operates. Thus the wayward mind *can* be controlled, by understanding dawning within it, so that, so to speak, it takes more responsibility for itself and the actions it brings about, such that these are more coherent with the genuine benefit of the overall pattern of mental states.

Will and Conditioned Arising

So, the past person is free to change into a somewhat different person and it is seen as good to guide the ever-changing mind—but how does Buddhism explain how this is done in a self-directed way that in some sense involves free action? Buddhism identifies action, i.e. karma, with the will/volition/intention (*cetanā*) behind it (see above). Yet will is not seen as totally free, for it is part of the flow of conditions, both conditioned and conditioning. It does not stand outside the stream of conditioned events and then intervene to alter them (as seems implied by the philosophers Kant and Descartes): Buddhism sees no I-agent which stands apart from conditioned states, as a totally free, autonomous entity, the agent of willing. As the most important constructing activity (*saṅkhāra*), will is said to be conditioned by spiritual ignorance, though there are clearly other conditioning factors too (such as desire). The constructing activities condition consciousness, which conditions *nāma-rūpa*—the "sentient body" or "mind and body," whose mental component includes, again, will (S.II.3-4). Moreover in the standard order of the five groups (*khandhas*), the

constructing activities follow *saññā*—cognition, labeling or identification—which implies that willing is conditioned by how we interpretatively perceive the world (see Harvey 1995:139).

Will is no passively-determined "it," though. As emphasized in the *Abhidhamma* literature, there is no one unchanging thing called "will," rather, there is just a flux of constantly changing will-type processes. Thus the process-stream of willing can not be "determined" once and for all in a set pattern. Though habit-formation may tend in this direction, the process of willing is constantly open to new patterns of conditioning. How one has willed before will be a conditioning factor on how one wills now—but only *one* conditioning factor among many, for Theravāda Buddhism says that nothing ever arises from only one condition:

Here there is no single or multiple fruit of any kind from a single cause (*kāraṇato*); nor a single fruit from multiple causes, but only a multiple fruit from multiple causes... But one representative cause and fruit are given in this way, "with spiritual ignorance as condition are the constructing activities..." (*Vism.* 542).

Moreover other conditioning factors will themselves be constantly open to change. Thus the concern expressed by Luis Gomez is unfounded:

If the self were unchanging, it is true, the case for free will and moral responsibility would be lost, but an ever changing self is not sufficient guarantee for free will. For if the change were constant and regular, this process itself would become the new "unchanging self." (1975:86)

Willing arises conditioned by a variety of factors, some relatively stable, while others may be constantly shifting. Moreover, the conditioning factors include both states which precede the state of willing which they condition,

and ones that are *simultaneous* with it (Vism.532, 535; Pthn I.1), such as one's degree of awareness. As one can never know or specify the state of all of the conditioning factors, one has a situation which is conditioned but not rigidly determined in a predictable way. Moreover, it is not just that one cannot reliably *predict* what will happen next, the system is itself an *open* one: open to new possibilities. It is notable that the commentaries, while often talking of the "characteristic" (*lakkhaṇa*), "function" (*rasa*), "manifestation" (*paccupaṭṭhāna*) and "proximate cause" (*padatṭhāna*) of various mental states (Asl.63), do not assign any proximate cause to will (*cetanā*) (Asl.111-112; Vism.463), probably reflecting the idea of its relatively open-ended possibilities.

Does this mean that what act-of-will arises is a matter of chance? No, it arises in an orderly but complex way from a set of dynamic conditioning processes. Moreover, some of its more important conditions are mental ones, for example attitudes, feelings, states of knowledge or ignorance, etc., and a degree of control can be exercised over these: one can come to manipulate the factors that condition one—because these factors are themselves changing and conditioned. To know how the flux of conditions works is itself a condition, which may help bring about more wholesome states of mind. In the case of physical causality, the states involved are non-intentional: they simply *are/arise*, and do not *refer* to anything beyond themselves. Mental states, though, are intentional, in the sense of having objects other than themselves. This means that the flow of mental conditions can include conditions which are either the misunderstanding or understanding of specific conditions or of the general flow of conditions. Such understanding and misunderstanding then become conditioning factors in their own right, which may, in the case of a new understanding, open up the ongoing situation to new possibilities.

The more one understands how one is conditioned, the more one can manipulate the conditions, and break out of restricting patterns of conditioning, so as to increase one's freedom. For example:

- (1) To know that feeling leads to craving, when ignorance and attachment are present, means that one can start to develop wisdom and non-attachment and weaken the link (which, along with ignorance, is one of the two weak links in the chain of Conditioned Arising: junctures where it can be broken);
- (2) When there is attachment to an object of desire, for example an inappropriate object of sexual desire, the object is not "what binds" but the desire itself (S.IV.281-283), and certain reflections can undermine it;
- (3) If loving-kindness and patience have been developed, and the inner tendency to ill-will weakened, external provoking conditions which might otherwise prompt aggression may be insufficient to do so (cf. Vism.300): one has a choice in how one reacts, and this choice can be enlarged;
- (4) One can also intervene to help someone else: even to talk to someone and bring about a state of understanding brings some new conditions to bear in them. Provided that their complex of mental factors includes a preparedness to listen, a realignment of these internal states can start to arise and undermine a current pattern.

Careful mindfulness—disinterested observation—of states such as anger or lust weakens or evaporates them. Lack of mindfulness is seen as always part of unwholesome states, and mindfulness always part of wholesome states.²⁷ Mindfulness of an unwholesome state weakens it, while mindfulness of a

wholesome state strengthens it. This can be seen as because mindfulness is itself a wholesome state. The role of mindfulness in enhancing freedom could perhaps be seen in the following way. When there is mindfulness of an unwholesome state, such as anger that has just been experienced, then if the mindfulness is strong enough, there is awareness of where-this-state-is-leading-to, that is, what it nurtures or flows into. The seeing of this both arouses a distaste for what anger conditions, as well as itself changing the existing conditions, so that anger is less likely to continue.

In improving inner conditions, though, one has to work "with the grain" of conditions, for example:

- (1) In meditation to strengthen loving-kindness, one focuses it on people one likes and respects before doing so on disliked persons (Vism.296), and to avoid the arising of sexual attraction in this context, it is best not to meditatively focus the loving-kindness on a person for which this might arise;
- (2) In undermining negative thoughts, the best ploy is often not "will-power" but "re-conditioning" the mind by altering its perception of the object of the thought. Thus the *Vitakka-santhāna Sutta* (M.I.118-122) sees will power as the last resort, after four other methods have first been tried: arousing a counterbalancing perception—for example, seeing an object of attachment as impermanent; reflecting that the negative emotion harms one; distracting the mind by engaging in some task that requires its attention; and tracing the source of the negative thoughts, which often turn out to have been some matter that has become exaggerated in its significance.

Thus "one" can come to control and guide the process of conditioning, instead of letting it blunder on. Francis Story expresses this in an interesting way: "*We are free to select the causes which shall determine our action in the moment of choice*" (1976:392: italics in original). Such freedom to select is not an absolute freedom, though, but is related to one's previous actions and choices. Generally, awareness, knowledge, understanding and a sympathetic imagination are more important in increasing freedom than mere will-power.²⁸ To be dull and unaware means that one will be conditioned in a way that is closer to determinism, as one lets oneself be so conditioned.

Spiritual Ignorance

In the twelvefold chain of Conditioned Arising, it is spiritual ignorance (*avijjā*) that is emphasized as the factor conditioning will and the other constructing activities. Spiritual ignorance is explained as unknowing (*aññāṇam*) as regards *dukkha* (the painfulness of life), unknowing as regards the origin of *dukkha* (craving), unknowing as regards the cessation of *dukkha*, unknowing as regards the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha* (S.II.4). Such spiritual ignorance is clearly more than lack of information; otherwise simply reading about these four "Noble Truths"²⁹ would lead to enlightenment. It is a misperception that is not just a *lack* of spiritual insight, but something that actually opposes this. It is notable that the Theravādin *Abhidhamma* lists it as a specific *dhamma*, or basic process, implying that it is not the mere absence of the *dhamma* wisdom. It is equated with delusion (*moha*) and both are explained (Dhs.1061, 1162) as:

unknowing as regards *dukkha*...the origin of *dukkha*...the cessation of *dukkha*...the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*; unknowing as regards the past...the future...the past and future; unknowing as regards conditionally arisen states from specific conditionality (*idapaccayatā paṭicca-samupannesu dhammesu*); even all that kind of unknowing which is unseeing, non-achievement, non-wakening, non-awakening, non-penetration, non-apprehension, non-comprehension, non-consideration, non-reflection, non-clarification—stupidity, folly, lack of clear comprehension, delusion, bewilderment, confusion, ignorance, the flood of ignorance, the yoke of ignorance, the latent tendency of ignorance, the besetting of ignorance, the barrier of ignorance, delusion, the root of the unwholesome.

The *Vibhaṅga* commentary says:

because ignorance does not allow the knowing, seeing and penetration of the true and essential characteristics of the reality of *dukkha* and keeps it concealed and covered and entangled, it is therefore called “unknowing as regards *dukkha*” (*Vibh.A.138*). Because of its opposition to knowledge, it is unknowing (*Vibh.A.140*).

This implies that ignorance has an element of ignore-ance, an unwillingness to know, an obfuscating of the truth. This provides an outlook on life which is the conditioning context for how one acts. The stronger the ignorance, the more closed-down are one's possibilities.

For Buddhism, then, a crucial conditioning factor on willing and action is one's view of the world: how one perceives things, including how one misperceives and ignores things. This provides the framework of beliefs³⁰ which gives meaning and value to the "world" one experiences, which then

naturally affects what actions one sees as appropriate to do (cf. Harvey 1995:78-88). This factor is emphasized in a passage which says:

It is in this fathom-long carcass, (which is) cognitive (*saññimhi*) and endowed with mind (*-mana-*), that, I declare (lies) the world, and the origin of the world, and the stopping of the world [*nirvāṇa*], and the way that goes to the stopping of the world (S.I.62).

Within the confining parameters set by a certain meaning-world, one has some freedom of action in accordance with one's degree of awareness and reflection. A more full and accurate meaning-world, closer to seeing things as-they-really-are and thus less affected by ignorance, opens up new possibilities, which are closer to the experience of *nirvāṇa*—the unconditioned (*asāṅkhata*).

As regards responsibility, while ignorance of relevant information may exculpate one from blame and responsibility, *spiritual* ignorance does not. If one knows that sentient beings (e.g. humans, animals, and insects) should not be harmed, but not that one's action is actually harming one, this "ignorance" as to a matter of ordinary fact excuses one. The spiritual ignorance which leads one to deny that harming living beings is wrong is no excuse, however, but compounds a wrong action (Harvey 2000:55-57). Of course, lesser degrees of spiritual ignorance—lack of spiritual insight—are seen to affect all beings until they are enlightened. This forms a background to all unenlightened actions, good or bad, though specifically feeds into wrong actions when they are "rooted" in, that is, motivated by, delusion (and associated greed and hatred): "whatever unwholesome states there are, all are rooted in spiritual ignorance...are fixed together in spiritual ignorance," like rafters in a roof-peak (S.II.263). Among other things,

spiritual ignorance feeds the "I am conceit": the conviction that one has a permanent Self to protect and bolster up: the root of selfishness.

The Role of Attention

Spiritual ignorance is not an unchangeable given, but a changeable conditioned factor. At A.V.113-116 is a passage dealing with a sequence of conditions leading up to bad or good actions, and from them on to either ignorance or spiritual liberation. In each such sequence, one item acts as a "nutriment" (*āhāra*) to the next and, "when complete," it "completes" (*paripūreti*) the next: just as water flowing down a mountain first fills up the cracks, then the small pools, then large pools, then small rivers, then large rivers, then the ocean. This is an example of a Conditioned Arising chain, though it is different from the standard list of twelve conditioning links.³¹

The two sequences, along with my explanatory comments, are:

1. Not associating with genuine people (<i>sappurisa</i>)	1. Associating with genuine people
<i>(the kind of social influences one opens oneself to will influence one)</i>	
2. Not hearing the true <i>Dhamma</i>	2. Hearing the true <i>Dhamma</i>
<i>(without good friends and teachers, one will lack good guidance)</i>	
3. Lack of trustful confidence/faith (<i>saddhā</i>)	3. Trustful confidence/faith
<i>(bad guidance leads to cynicism, etc.; good guidance leads to trusting what is truly good)</i>	
4. Unsystematic attention (<i>ayoniso manasikāra</i>)	4. Systematic (<i>yoniso</i>) attention.
<i>(the quality of one's attention— sloppy and unwise, or careful and wise)</i>	
5. Lack of mindfulness and clear	5. Mindfulness and clear comprehension

comprehension (<i>sati-sampajañña</i>)	
<i>(absence or presence of careful awareness of one's states of mind, motives, actions)</i>	
6. Non-guarding of the sense-faculties	6. Guarding of the sense-faculties
<i>(absence or presence of being circumspect about how one responds to objects of the five senses or mind; guarding the senses means avoiding habitual reactions influenced by negative emotions)</i>	
7. Misconduct of body, speech and mind	6. Right conduct of body, speech and mind
<i>(so far, each sequence is the straight opposite of the other)</i>	
8. The five hindrances <i>(desire for sense-pleasures, ill-will, dullness & drowsiness, restlessness & worry, vacillation)</i>	8. The four applications of mindfulness <i>(mindfulness of body, feelings, mind- states, and basic patterns of reality)</i>
9. Spiritual ignorance <i>(first of the 12 causal links in Conditioned Arising)</i>	9. The seven factors of enlightenment <i>(mindfulness, dhamma -investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, equanimity).</i>
10. <i>(No item listed, but next Sutta (A.V.116-119) repeats above sequence and also has spiritual ignorance leading to craving-for-existence, bhava-taṅhā)</i>	10. Release (<i>vimutti</i>) by knowledge (<i>vijjā</i>).

In the usual Conditioned Arising sequence, for the unliberated, even good actions are conditioned by ignorance. Here, though, items 7-10 emphasize that only the negative activities *feed back* and condition the spiritual hindrances which nurture further spiritual ignorance, whereas good actions nurture the basis for an *end* to ignorance.

In the two condition-sequences above, the quality of a person's attention (item 4) plays an important role in effecting the degree of mindfulness, hence how morally skilful one is in how one responds to objects of the senses, and hence how one acts. Attention is that which engages the mind with an object or objects, and once this has happened, many habitual reactions often switch on—some of these may be relatively wholesome, but

if attention is more skilful, more strongly wholesome responses can occur. For example, at A.I.3 (and S.V.64-65) it is said that unsystematic attention to an attractive appearance (*subha-nimitta*) strengthens the hindrance of desire for sense pleasures, and unsystematic attention to an irritating appearance (*paṭigha-nimitta*) strengthens the hindrance of ill-will. A.I.200-201 sees these, respectively, as stimulating and strengthening attachment and hatred, with unsystematic attention in general stimulating and strengthening delusion. To stimulate and strengthen non-attachment, non-hatred and non-delusion, *systematic/wise*³² attention should be given, respectively, to an unattractive appearance (*asubha-nimitta*; such as the thirty-two mainly internal parts of the body), to deep loving-kindness, and the very process of developing systematic attention. The *Vibhaṅga* (373) explains "unsystematic attention" as seeing permanence in what is impermanent, happiness in what is painful (*dukkha*), Self in what is not-Self, and attractiveness in what is unattractive, also "turning of the mind, repeated turning, cognition, advertence, attention to what is contrary to truth."

While unwise, unsystematic attention leads on to lack of mindfulness, non-guarding the sense-doors, wrong conduct, and the hindrances, wise or systematic attention has the opposite effects. It very much depends on the quality and nature of one's attention, which may be fuzzy or sharp, sleepy or vigilant, diffuse and scattered or well focused—and on what the attention focuses. Accordingly, the tone of one's mind—and body—will vary. One can see this as an example of how, in the standard Conditioned Arising sequence, *nāma-rūpa*, or the sentient body, is conditioned by consciousness.

It is not surprising, then, that Buddhism emphasizes the need to train the mind so as to use attention in a more skilful, systematic and wise way.

Indeed, the Buddha said that right view arises conditioned by the utterance of another person or systematic attention (M.I.294), with morality, hearing from others, discussion, calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) maturing such right view towards the fruits of freedom of mind (*ceto-vimutti*) and freedom through wisdom (*paññā-vimutti*). A.I.87 adds that wrong view arises conditioned by the utterance of another person or unsystematic attention. Systematic attention can here be seen as strongly nurtured by mindful discussion and meditation. In *samatha* (calm) meditation, attention is trained so as to be able to remain steadily on one object, not being diverted by the hindrances, so as to be much more calm, stable and gently guided. In *vipassanā* (insight) meditation, attention is trained so as to stop overlooking, in the objects that one normally grasps at, the features of impermanence, *dukkha* and not-Self, that is, to stop ignoring these characteristics, and fully acknowledge them. The purpose of this is that, though one's attention is normally driven by one's desires, inclinations, and past actions (karma), etc., one can build up more skilful tendencies, and gradually increase one's freedom-of-response as the influence of spiritual ignorance— ignore-ance—decreases.

The practice of clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) (e.g. S.V.142), closely related to mindfulness and supported by systematic attention, is also important in guiding behavior. The commentaries explain this in a fourfold way:³³

- (1) Clear comprehension of purpose: ensuring that one's intended actions are in accord with a worthwhile purpose;
- (2) Clear comprehension of suitability: ensuring that one takes proper account of circumstances, and do not seek to carry out a purpose in a way, place, or at a time that is not appropriate for it;

- (3) Clear comprehension of resort: maintaining awareness of one's meditation object when engaged in various activities;
- (4) Clear comprehension as non-delusion: being aware of one's actions as conditioned processes devoid of a substantial Self.

At the very least, this should mean that actions are not simply the result of impulses that have not been assessed as to their appropriateness, but are in accordance with a person's carefully assessed aspirations and/or state of mindful clarity.

The Mind's Basic Purity

A famous passage states:

This mind, monks, is brightly shining (*pabbhassaram*), but it is defiled by defilements which arrive (*āganukehi*). But this is not understood as it really is by the unguided ordinary person, so they do not (meditatively) develop the mind (A.I.10).

This idea of the mind's basic purity implies that conditioning defilements are not an intrinsic part of it, forever determining and limiting it: it is naturally capable of freedom from limiting compulsions. The background purity of the mind might also be seen as part of the basis of freedom of choice in those still affected by defilements.³⁴

The above passage goes on to say,

Monks, whatever states are unwholesome, have a part in unwholesomeness, are on the side of unwholesomeness: all these

have mind-organ (*mano*) as their forerunner (*pubbaṅgamā*). First arises mind, and those unwholesome states follow after (A.I.11).³⁵

A parallel statement is given for wholesome states, with heedfulness (*appamāda*)—i.e., alert mindful attentiveness—stimulating the arising of wholesome states, and negligence (*pamāda*) and indolence (*kosajja*) being a powerful sustainer of the unwholesome. Thus one should be vigilant and wide awake so as to ensure the mind does not get tainted by the "arrival" of defilements such as the hindrances. The following *Suttas* (A.I.12-16) go on to emphasize the positive impact of: systematic attention (mentioned three times); the undertaking of energy (*viriyārambha*); wanting little; contentment; clear comprehension; having good friends; devotion (*anuyogā*) to wholesome states and non-devotion to unwholesome ones (all mentioned twice); and heedfulness. They also talk of the negative impact of: unsystematic attention (mentioned three times); wanting much; discontent; lack of clear comprehension; having bad friends; devotion to unwholesome states and non-devotion to wholesome ones (all mentioned twice); negligence and indolence. This implies that the above positive qualities will allow the mind's still, radiant depths, below its usually restless surface, to affect its surface conscious processes, such that it is more open and free. As stated in the *Dhammapada*: "Just as a lake, deep, clear and still, even so, on hearing the teachings, the wise become exceedingly peaceful" (verse 82).

In the Theravādin commentaries, the "brightly shining" mind is explained as the "naturally pure (*pakati-parisuddham*) *bhavaṅga-citta*" (A.A.I.61). That is, it is equated with the *citta* (mind-state) known as *bhavaṅga*, the natural resting state of mind found in dreamless sleep which is also the transition state between many modes of consciousness (see Harvey, 1995:155-179). In normal waking consciousness, the mind is seen to

very rapidly alternate between *bhavaṅga*-consciousness and more active *cittas* directed to sense-objects. After "disturbance of *bhavaṅga*," the first *citta* is "advertence" (*āvajjana*), carried out by *mano* (mind-organ—cf. attention as *manasikāra*, literally "work-of-*mano*"), which turns the mind toward a particular object. Advertence is said to be "without defilement but defiling" (*Paṭṭhāna* I. 449), so *how* it is done is morally neutral, yet it can lead on to unwholesome states by giving a certain "spin" to the mind, so to speak. The commentarial *Atthasālinī* (277-278) says: "when advertent and determining [identification of the object] are done wisely and methodically, *javana* [the karmically active state in the perceptual process, in which defilements may arise] is unlikely to be unwholesome." So the nature of one's initial attention to an object is crucial to what follows (cf. A.I.11 above). *Bhavaṅga-citta* can be seen as the pure natural resting state of the mind. How one leaves this state of natural purity—how one adverts, the immediate quality of one's attention—is clearly seen as crucial as regards what happens next, and how one actively responds to the world.³⁶ While defilements arise by the mind mishandling its relationships with objects of the senses and mind, it retains a background purity which is constantly being reverted to, and which may thus be seen as an aspect of how freedom of action is possible.

Spiritual Freedom

As pointed out by Federman, Buddhism "tends to emphasize internal compulsions and psychological freedom" (2007:16). While people often see freedom as the ability to "do what one wants," Buddhism would emphasize that desire, or at least craving (*taṇhā*; driven desire), is actually a limiting conditioning factor, binding one to continued rebirth and *dukkha*. Craving is a lack, a limitation, and is not associated with spiritual freedom (*vimutti*):

By desire (*icchāya*; wish, wanting) is the world bound; by the removal of desire is it freed. Desire is what one must forsake to cut off all bondage (S.I.40).

Liberation involves freedom from being driven by the compulsive energy of one's desires. It is felt that, free of attachment, hatred and delusion, the mind can have an unshakeable calm and freedom from upset or compulsion. In such a state, the "brightly shining mind" is free of "visiting" defilements: "This mind, monks, is brightly shining (*pabbhassaram*), but it is freed (*vipamuttan*) from defilements which arrive (*āganukehi*)" (A.I.10) — but permanently, not just temporarily as in *jhāna* (deep states of meditative calm).

Freedom from being driven by what one wants leaves a calm, open space, in which one is able to do what is in line with genuinely skilful aspirations that are not driven, not propelled along and weighed down by craving and grasping. Craving and grasping are seen to *tie one down* by fixing one to their objects. Hence craving is sometimes likened to a seamstress, one who stitches things together. Note, here, the idea of the five "*hindrances*" to meditative calm: desire for sense-pleasures, ill-will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and worry, and vacillation. Similarly there is the idea of the ten *fetters*, which includes some of these and factors such as attachment and the "I am" conceit. All such states, then, are seen to *hinder* the freedom to pursue the spiritual quest, and *fetter* one's freedom. They are seen to bind and limit.

A question that some might ask, though, is: if the *Arahat* is no longer capable of acting in a greedy, selfish way, cannot hate, etc., but spontaneously acts in a good way, in being no longer capable of "choosing" to act badly, is he or she *less* free than before or *more* free? To this, the

Buddhist would say: to remain in the sway of greed, hatred, delusion, laziness, fear, anxiety is no kind of freedom! Such states are quite mechanical in their operation, with stimuli generally leading to uncontrolled habitual responses in the context of delusion and lack of clear awareness. An *Arahat* can be seen to act in a state of natural spontaneity that is fully in line with his or her aspirations and accurate assessment of reality.

Just as a skilled craftsman becomes increasingly free to create beautiful objects, and is no longer being able to create shoddy, ugly work, so the *Arahat* is not unfree in not being able to act in morally unwholesome ways, which can only arise from a limited, ignorant world-view.

Here it is notable that the Theravādin *Abhidhamma* (Bodhi 1993:85-88) sees a particular set of states as among those present in all wholesome states, as are cultivated by spiritual practice. These are six qualities which each relate to mind/consciousness (*citta*) and "body" (*kāya*), i.e. the "body" of mental states other than consciousness:

- (1) Lightness (*lahutā*): bouancy, lack of heaviness and dullness, as when there is ease of action;
- (2) Softness (*mudutā*): being pliable and receptive, free from rigidity and fixed views;
- (3) Readiness (*kammaññatā*): being workable and wieldy, like refined gold ready to be made into many beautiful things;
- (4) Competence (*pāguññatā*): being fit for any task, without vacillation;
- (5) Straightness (*ujukatā*): simplicity, directness, uprightness, free from unnecessary complexity;

- (6) Tranquility (*passaddhi*): freedom from restlessness and unease.

Several of these can be seen to support a state of creative openness, in which the mind has been skillfully mastered to bring out its positive qualities.³⁷

Conclusion

Buddhism accepts "freedom of the will" in the sense that before one acts, one can and should stop and reflect on things to assess its moral suitability (M.I.415-416). One should be mindful of emotions and motives, etc., and guide how they or other factors influence one's actions. One's willing and action is conditioned but not rigidly determined. Freedom of action and will is a relative quantity which arises from the open interacting dance of rapidly changing mental states. Within this, a crucial quantity is the degree to which this cluster of processes contains good awareness of what is going on in the cluster and in the world. Human beings do not act in a world of lifeless conditions, but in one where many conditions include ways-of-seeing other conditions. This can always change, in an impermanent world, especially due to the influence of other people and more careful, systematic attention to the nature of conditions.

Acts of will are part of a flow of change, with an openness to the cutting edge of the present. Attention, emerging from the background purity of mind, leads where and how the mind will engage next; so training this and keeping it conditioned by awareness and understanding make its operation more skilful, wise and open. Thus one's degree of freedom can be increased by understanding and changing existing conditions—it is not a fixed quantity. As Daniel Dennett also holds (2003), it can evolve. The more there

is greed, hatred and delusion, the less freedom-to-act a person has. Mindfulness of how-I-am-conditioned-so-far seems a crucial ingredient in increasing freedom by reducing one's conditioning, replacing limiting unskillful conditioning by more open-ended skilful conditioning. In this, right effort and right resolve (two factors of the Eightfold Path) play an important role in setting up positive tendencies. The Buddhist path is one of first *reconditioning* the mind in a more skilful way and then, on this basis, moving towards the experience of the totally *unconditioned*: *nirvāṇa*.

One could say that a crucial thing that Buddhist practice does is to make one more aware of both how one is conditioned and how one is free. If someone insults one, for example, a normal response is to get angry. If one realizes, though, that:

- (1) Such anger is conditioned by internal conditions (lack of mindfulness, the "I am" conceit, etc.) as well as external ones;
- (2) The internal conditions are not fixed, but are changeable;
- (3) There are thus alternative internal conditions, which if operative, do not lead to anger

then *one has a choice* as to whether to become angry or not, or to continue with arisen anger or let it pass away. In this way, one uses an understanding of how one is conditioned to realign conditions into a less restrictive, less painful, pattern, which enhances freedom. Understanding the conditions pertaining to a situation helps one work with it more effectively, and enables one to transform it.

In our normal state, we may be heavily conditioned, but we have some freedom of choice, and so can be held responsible for our actions—but we can become *more* free (cf. Medhidhammaporn 1995:189), by increasingly

"taking responsibility" for our actions: acknowledging our freedom, and acting on and using it in a wholesome way, thereby increasing it. Here, one may ask: "Is it, precisely, freedom-to-act, the *ability to choose*, which thereby increases, or the range of possibilities that can be chosen *from*?" Perhaps it is something of both, as these are mutually enriching. Exercising choice opens up new choices, which then beckon choice to be further exercised.

On the whole, it can be said that the implied position of Theravāda Buddhism on the issue of "freedom of the will" is a middle way between seeing a person's actions as completely rigidly determined, and seeing them as totally and unconditionally free. As Federman holds, this is a form of compatibilism. It accepts a variable degree of freedom of action within a complex of interacting mental and physical conditions. This freedom of action is such that present awareness always offers the possibility of not being wholly determined by past patterns of internal or external conditioning. This possibility should be acknowledged, utilized and hence further opened up, so as to take greater responsibility for one's actions and states of mind.

In a different way, as Conze and Siderits imply, if a person is wrongly seen as an essential, permanent Self, it is an "undetermined question" as to whether "a person's acts of will are determined" or "a person's acts of will are free." If there is no essential person-entity, "it" can not be said to be either determined or free.

Notes

1. Of course none of the above conditioning factors are themselves unchanging, and they can all be affected—not always in predictable ways—by action aimed at adjusting them or their influence on one.

2. Reasoning is not always a concurrent part of what is generally seen as a "free" action: a spontaneous action may still be a free one, if it comes from a state of calm awareness, or due to a character trait informed by prior reflection, though it may of course arise due to a mechanical reaction, as when a violent person lashes out in an unthinking response. In the Theravādin *Abhidhamma* (Bodhi, 1993: 34-36; cf. S.II.40), wholesome or unwholesome states and actions may be either a) "spontaneous" (*asañkhārika*): arising without hesitation, in an immediate and wholehearted way, without prior thought, or b) "instigated" or "prompted" (*sasañkhārika*): arising due to the prompting or example of someone else, or after some thought or hesitation, perhaps building on or resisting tendencies from one's previous actions.

3. In regard to Dennett's eight-point model, summarized above, Federman comments (2007: 16):

In Early Buddhism, and probably for most Buddhist schools too, free will does not originate from God (1), it does not belong to a non-physical substance like a soul (2) and it is not an ultimate controller that originates from the essence of being (3). When breaking down the individual into the smallest mental factors, none is served as a single controlling factor. This is conceptually close, though not identical, to the idea that no single process in the brain is the ultimate control of behavior (4). In Theravāda *Abhidhamma* there is no acknowledgment of parallel processing in consciousness therefore the neuro-cognitive theory of parallel processing has no Buddhist counterpart (5). It would be difficult to assert that there is an evolutionary model in Buddhism. Nevertheless, the idea that will comes in degrees and strengths accord with the *Abhidhamma* understanding of *cetanā* (6). The individual is free to choose, given the appropriate knowledge of consequences and the appropriate wisdom to evaluate the situation (7). Lastly, freedom to choose between different actions does not transcend causality; it is embedded in causality (8).

On point 5, though, note that the *Abhidhamma*, while it does not see any kind of consciousness (*viññāṇa/citta*) as simultaneous with another in a person, it does see any moment of consciousness as accompanied by various mental qualities (*cetasikas*): feeling, perception, and a selection of constructing activities. Hence these can be seen to be working "in parallel."

4. Cf. Jayatilleke, 1975: 149, 223.

5. S.II.66: "That which one wills (*ceteti*) and that which one plans (*pakappeti*) and that which one has a latent tendency for (*anuseti*): this is an object for the maintenance of consciousness...."

6. The meaning of this is not entirely clear, but the word *opakkamika* can mean "arriving suddenly" or "due to an effort," and the commentarial tradition (AA.III.114 and *Milindapaṭṭhāna* 26) sees this as due to the effort of someone else, whose actions affect someone else "suddenly." Bhikkhu Bodhi translates the term as "due to an assault" (2000: 1279). The "effort," though, may have been intended to refer to the effort of the person themselves, as suggested by a parallel passage at A.V.110 that gives the same list as causes for bodily illnesses.

7. At M.II.214, this view is said to be that of the Jains.

8. This text is as yet untranslated, but the relevant section is cited by Ud.A. 263-266, translated in Masefield, 1995: 633-635. Discussion of this issue is found in Mellick Cutler, 1997, and Xing, 2002.

9. Due to having mocked a past Buddha: "How could there be enlightenment for a bald-headed one, enlightenment being supremely hard to attain."

10. Dhs. secs. 431 and 556, and see also Miln.65, Vism. 488 and Harvey 1995: 151-152, 255.

11. Though an *Arahat's* actions generate no *puñña*, no power to generate beneficial karmic results (Harvey 2000: 43-46).

12. A seeming case of an unbroken negative pattern in an *Arahat* is, though, found at Ud.28-9. The monk Pilindavaccha speaks to other monks in disrespectful terms used to address outcastes; when the Buddha investigates the cause of this, he explains it as due to Pilindavaccha having been a proud Brahmin for his last five hundred lives. That is,

his behavior is purely habitual. However, the Buddha says that it is *not* due to hatred, implying that it is to be seen as a harmless empty shell or echo of past bad behavior. The commentary (Ud.A.192-196) sees the monk as an *Arahat* and says that his behavior was due to unabandoned "impressions stemming from the defilements" (*kilesa-vāsanās*) (193). It explains such "impressions" thus:

that which, even in the continuity of one in whom the defilements are wanting, is the mere capacity, built up by defilements cultivated from time without beginning, to constitute the root-cause of conduct similar to conduct on the part of those in whom defilements have not been abandoned, is a disposition (*adhimutti*) of such a kind. It is not, however, to be found in the continuity of the Lord, wherein the defilements have ... been abandoned by way of abandoning any obstruction to that which is knowable (*ñeyyāvaraṇa*) (Ud.A.194).

That is, even enlightened people, apart from the Buddha, have character features related to past bad karma, even when such features no longer issue from current mental defilements.

13. On these views, see Jayatilleke, 1963: 445-446; 1975: 197-198

14. This point *seems* to undermine the idea of the *Apadāna*, above, that the Buddha's suffering due to his ascetic period was due to his own past bad karma. The argument against the Jains, though, is that one cannot simply wear out the results of past karma by present asceticism—asceticism is also an action, which will have karmic fruits of its own. This need not preclude that a *tendency* towards ascetic behavior might be a result of past karma.

15. Cf. Note 6.

16. Harvey, 1990: 40; Harvey, 2000: 26-28.

17. In his *The Wings to Awakening* (1996: 40-41, cf. Vism.601-02).

18. This is in contrast with the view of Charles Goodman that Buddhism holds to "both universal causality and predictability-in-principle"(2002: 364).

19. Material form, feeling, cognition, the constructing activities and consciousness: the five groups of processes making up what is generally called a "person."

20. Here, though, his actual description of "determinism" does not fit Buddhism, which sees any psychological state as arising from a *complex* of conditions, some prior, and some *simultaneous* with it (see below).

21. BCA VI.22, 25, 39: Crosby and Skilton translation, except that Goodman changes their "reasons" in v.22, for *pratyaya*, to "causes."

22. Moreover, Goodman assumes that because Buddhism sees resentment as inappropriate, it also sees all disapprobation at wrong action as inappropriate. However, Buddhism does not see aversion at the unwholesome actions of others, and expressing disapprobation at them, as to be avoided. In the *Aggañña Sutta* when people choose their first king so as to ensure social order, they say, "Suppose we were to appoint a certain being who would show anger (*khīyeyye*) where anger was due, censure those who deserved it, and banish those who deserved banishment," which he then does (D.III.92). In the *Vinaya*, when a monk steals, conscientious monks "became annoyed, vexed and angry (*ujjhāyanti, khīyanti, vipācenti*)," and told the Buddha, who then rebuked the monk (Vin.III.44). These passages show an acceptance of displeasure at wrong actions, and the appropriateness sometimes of expressing this. The usual word meaning "anger" (*kodha*, Skt. *krodha*) is not used, though. Thus at Vin.II.248-49, it is said that when a monk admonishes another for bad conduct, he should do so with kindness in his heart and without harshness in his speech. *Kodha* is an unacceptable emotion, as shown by its inclusion in the explanation of *dosa*/hate in the Theravadin *Abhidhamma* at Dhs section 1060:

What is hate? When annoyance springs up at the thought: 'he has done me harm, is doing, will do me harm'; 'he has done, is doing, or will do harm to someone dear and precious to me'; 'he has conferred a benefit, is doing, or will confer a benefit on someone I dislike or object to': all such vexation of *citta*, resentment, repugnance, hostility; ill-temper, irritation, indignation; hate, antipathy, abhorrence; mental disorder, detestation; anger (*kodha*), fuming, wrath (*khujjitatta*); hate, hating, hatred, disorder, getting upset, derangement; opposition, hostility; churlishness, abruptness, disgust of *citta*- this is what is called hate.

Perhaps a crucial distinction is that displeasure at a wrong action, and expression of this, is acceptable, but ill-will towards the person doing it is not. If a rebuke is to be giv-

en, it is in part for the benefit of the person themselves. Also, from the last quote, one can see that one should not lose one's mental equilibrium if displeased by wrong action. Goodman still claims, though, that Buddhists advocate the abandoning of "the practice of ascribing moral responsibility," as this will help people develop compassion, generosity and forbearance (2002: 369). Surely, compassion for someone sometimes involves appropriately admonishing them for bad behavior, so as to help them take responsibility for it, and change it.

23. For example, between the (substantial) "existence" and (total) "non-existence" of the phenomena of the world (S.II.17), and between "all is a unity" and "all is a diversity" (S.II.77).

24. The usual sequence of links in the Conditioned Arising sequence follow, as in: spiritual ignorance → constructing activities → consciousness → the sentient body → the senses → sensory stimulation → feeling → craving → grasping → becoming → birth → ageing and death, etc.: *dukkha* (see e.g., Harvey, 1990: 54-60).

25. There follows the sequential stopping of each link in the Conditioned Arising sequence.

26. The "both" and "neither" options are not specifically addressed in the text. The "both" one would be that part of a person is unchangingly the same, and part completely different (cf. D.I.17-21, on partial eternalism). The "neither" one would be the view that suffering arises for no reason, randomly (cf. D.I.28-29).

27. These points are made by the *Abhidhammatha Saṅgaha*, a 12th century compendium of Theravādin *Abhidhamma*, as seen in its translation, Bodhi, 1993, respectively pp. 83 and 85. However, in the Sarvāstivādin *Abhidharma*, mindfulness (Pali *sati*, Sanskrit *smṛti*) is seen as present in *all* mental states: this implies that the Sarvāstivādins had less demanding criteria than the Theravādins for what counts as "*sati/smṛti*."

28. Cf. Plato's *Republic*, which holds that if a person really *knows* the good, in a deep experiential sense, he will do it.

29. Though I think that the common "Noble Truth" is not a very good translation for *ariya-sacca*. This means something like "Ennobling Truth" (Harvey 2007a) or perhaps "Reality for the Noble One(s)" (Harvey 2007b).

30. Jayatilleke (1975: 202-203, 208) explains the conditioning of "volitional activities" (the *saṅkhārā*, translated in the present article as "constructing activities") by ignorance in terms of "how our erroneous beliefs as well as our true beliefs (not amounting to knowledge) about the nature and destiny of the individual along with other factors condition our good and evil volitional acts..." (202-203).

31. Though the same simile is found at S.II.32 for how each of the twelve links in the standard formula of Conditioned Arising acts as a "support" (*upanisa*) for the next.

32. *Yoniso* derives from the word *yonī*, womb or origin. It means "'down to its origin or foundation,' i.e. thoroughly, orderly, wisely, properly, judiciously" (The Pali Text Society's *Pali-English Dictionary*, 560a). For example, S.II.64-65 sees identification with the body as "mine" as undermined by thorough systematic attention to the process of Conditioned Arising: that which leads to the arising of the body.

33. Vibh.A.347-364 = D.A.I.183-207. The latter is translated, with sections of its sub-commentary in Bodhi, 1989: 96-134. A long passage on clear comprehension from S.A. is also translated in Soma, 1967: 83-132.

34. Of course, only the *Arahat* is wholly free of the deep-seated *āsavas* (taints or cankers): attachment to sense-pleasures, attachment to existence, fixed views, and spiritual ignorance. Hence the background purity of the mind of unenlightened people still has the potential for being clouded over by defilements.

35. Cf. the first verse of the *Dhammapada*:

Mental states (*dhammā*) have mind as the forerunner (*mano-pubbaṅgamā*), have mind as leader, are mind-made. If one acts or speaks with a corrupted mind, from that pain follows one, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox.

36. How advertence arises at the start of a perceptual cycle can be affected by whether the active *javana* states at the end of the last object-processing perceptual cycle was wholesome or not. This can perhaps be related to something on a different time-scale: one's state of mind on going to sleep affects one's state of mind on waking. Sleep involves stretches of time, in dreamless sleep, when *bhavaṅga* is seen as the only type of mind-state occurring, and thus parallels the brief instant between perceptual cycles, when *bhavaṅga* states also occur.

As the transition state between all active phases of the mind, *bhavaṅga* is a kind of naturally pure home-base. Just as one's state of mind when one leaves home in the morning can set the tone for the rest of the day, how the mind attends in the moment when it leaves *bhavaṅga* helps to set the tone for following mind-moments. Just as returning home at the end of the day can be an opportunity for letting go of the problems of the day, so return to the *bhavaṅga* state in dreamless sleep is an opportunity to let the mind calm—though it will very often immediately pick up problems again on waking.

37. On the idea of the spiritual path as one of developing a set of subtle skills, see Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1996.

Abbreviations

- A.** *Aṅguttara Nikāya*; (tr. F. L. Woodward and E. M. Hare), *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, 5 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1932-6. Partially translated in Nyanaponika Thera & Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology of Suttas from the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, New York & Oxford: Altamira, 1999.
- A.A.** *Aṅguttara Nikāya* commentary (untranslated).
- Ap.** *Apadāna* (untranslated).
- Ap.A.** *Apadāna* commentary (untranslated).
- Asl.** *Atthasālinī*; (tr. by Pe Maung Tin), *The Expositor*, 2 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1920 and 1921.
- BCA** *Bodhicaryāvatāra* [of Śāntideva]; (tr. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton), *Śāntideva: Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- D.** *Dīgha Nikāya*; (tr. by M. Walshe), *This Have I heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha*. London: Wisdom, 1987.
- D.A.** *Dīgha Nikāya* commentary (untranslated).

- Dhp.** *Dhammapada*; (tr. Nārada Thera), *The Dhammapada*. London: John Murray, 1954; (tr. K.R.Norman), *The Word of the Doctrine*, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997.
- Dhp.A.** *Dhammapada* commentary; (tr. E. W. Burlingame), *Buddhist Legends*, 3 vols. Harvard Oriental Series, Harvard University Press, 1921; reprinted London: Pali Text Society, 1979.
- Dhs.** *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*; (tr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids), *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*. London: Pali Text Society, 1900, 3rd edn 1974.
- J.** *Jātaka with Commentary*; (tr. by various hands under E. B. Cowell), *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, 6 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1895-1907.
- Kvu.** *Kathāvatthu*; (tr. S. Z. Aung and C. A. F. Rhys Davids), *Points of Controversy*. London: Pali Text Society, 1915.
- M.** *Majjhima Nikāya*; (tr. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi), *The Middle Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995
- Miln.** *Milindapañha*; (tr. I. B. Horner), *Milinda's Questions*, 2 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1963 and 1964.
- Pthn.** *Paṭṭhāna*; (tr. U. Nārada), *Conditional Relations* vol.I. London: Pali Text Society, 1969.
- S.** *Samyutta Nikāya*; (tr. By Bhikkhu Bodhi), *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 2 vols. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000.
- S.A.** *Samyutta Nikāya* commentary (untranslated).
- Sn.** *Sutta-nipāta*; (tr. K. R. Norman), *The Group of Discourses*, in paperback *The Rhinoceros Horn and Other Early Buddhist Poems*. London: Pali Text Society, 1984; (tr. H. Saddhatissa), *The Sutta-Nipāta*. London: Curzon Press, 1985.
- Ud.A.** *Udāna* commentary; (tr. Peter Masefield), *The Udāna Commentary*, 2 vols. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1994 and 1995.

- Vibh.** *Vibhaṅga*; (tr. U. Thittila), *The Book of Analysis*. London: Pali Text Society, 1969.
- Vibh.A** Commentary on *Vibh.*; (tr. Ñāṇamoli), *Dispeller of Delusion*, 2 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1988 and 1989.
- Vin.** *Vinaya Piṭaka*; (tr. I. B. Horner), *The Book of the Discipline*, 6 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1938-66.
- Vism.** *Visuddhimagga* [of Buddhaghosa]; (tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli), *The Path of Purification*, 3rd edn, Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1975, and, 2 vols., Berkeley, Calif.: Shambhala, 1976; latest edition, Kandy: Pariyatti Publishing/Buddhist Publication Society, 2003.

References are to volume number and page of the Pali Text Society Pali editions of the texts, which are also indicated in the translations. For further guidance, see explanations on the website of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies:

<http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/~os0dwe/bs12.html>

Access to Insight: a website with many translations from the Pali Canon:

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/index.html> Texts are primarily listed by discourse number, but this is then followed by volume and page number of the Pali Text Society Pali edition.

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