

I. SOME INTUITION PUMPING

The Earthquake and the Arsonist

SCENARIO A: You are an averagely decent person, no more outstanding than the rest but with no significant wrongs, crimes or harms to your name. One day there is a tremendous earthquake nearby; you and your family are lucky enough to find safe shelter, but your house is shaken to its foundations and all your worldly possessions are irrecoverably destroyed.

SCENARIO B: You are an averagely decent person, no more outstanding than the rest but with no significant wrongs, crimes or harms to your name. Persons motivated by racist hatred – by an impersonal and implacable malice – delight one day in burning down your house, while your family are all safely elsewhere. Your house is burned to its foundations and all your worldly possessions are irrecoverably destroyed.

Let us reflect.

In both cases, the outcome as it affects you is the same. You and your family are homeless and bereft of whatever material possessions constituted your life, including not just practical necessities (e.g. clothes, pots and pans), but also those material objects of intangible value (e.g. legal documents, photographs, keepsakes). If one took a wholly pragmatic, results-oriented perspective, these two scenarios look indistinguishable.¹

And yet there seems to many, at least, a vast gulf between the two cases. Indeed, it is the crucial difference between whether we are within or outwith the domain of morality. The first scenario presents a natural evil, unfortunate, regrettable, and requiring fairly ordinary and pedestrian steps towards recovery. The second, by contrast, presents a moral evil, to which the appropriate responses are not just dismay surveying the wreckage, but outrage and indignation.² Only such reactive attitudes, and the interpersonal activities of blame and demanding restitution, retribution or punishment, adequately acknowledge (or show acknowledgement of) the fact that *origins matter* – that it makes a difference that I have lost my house due to *someone's wilfully destroying it*, rather than because of an unfortunate shifting of tectonic plates.³ Only recognizing this difference will respect the way in which

¹ One might argue that there is a difference in the results alone in the two scenarios: in the second case, there are also persons abroad animated by impersonal malice who might strike again at any moment. This difference in 'end result' is what makes the two cases dissimilar. This, however, will not do. For it is equally true that, in the first scenario, there are natural disasters 'lurking about', floods and fires and famines that might strike at any moment.

² Or resentment, as the Anglophone philosophical literature since Strawson will have it (P. F. Strawson's classic 'Freedom and Resentment' first appeared in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 1–25, and has been much reprinted since.) As Susan Wolf writes, echoing Seneca and Aristotle (note 19, below) "It seems perfectly appropriate to get angry or resentful when one is insulted, disrespected, or unjustifiably harmed" ('Blame, Italian Style', *Reasons and Recognition*, New York: Oxford University Press 2011, 336).

³ It is curious to note in this context, however, our tendency to moralise natural evils – not in the manner of Biblical parochialism, where the victims must have been guilty of some unknown crime, à la Job in his friends' estimation; but rather, more commonly, in a positivist vein, that if pain and misfortune are suffered, something has gone wrong, and there must be someone to blame for this somewhere – building codes not instituted or enforced, warning systems not in place or used, and so on, as if we would suffer no natural evil if only we (people in general) did not have moral failings. This attitude should be distinguished – and in what follows will by implication be distinguished – from a pragmatic consideration of all factors, including human actions as well as social institutions and circumstances, in determining what steps might be taken to avoid such suffering. The crux of the difference is in the appropriateness of reactive attitudes (resentment, indignation, blame).

the family in Scenario B has been *wronged* (thus avoiding a further injustice against them), and only this will do justice to the humanity of the offender.⁴

Our humanity, on this view, is distinctively marked by the fact that things can be ‘up to us’, and this feature becomes co-extensive with the domain of the moral. For only what we choose to do is liable to praise and blame – or at least to *moral* praise and blame; indeed, the marker ‘*moral*’ here simply indicates that it is the sort of praise and blame reserved for the kind of being capable of action in the proper sense of it, and so of responsibility (in the sense of *morally* responsible, as this might be distinguished from causally responsible⁵). As ‘up to us’ indicates, the point was first put sharply by Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* III.5)⁶; it became especially associated with rational choice and ‘will’ (*prohairesis*) by the Stoics, and then in the Christian era became the ‘free will’ with which we are familiar, and by which we might absolve an almighty Creator god of our sins.⁷ The possibility for autonomy, for being determined through and by oneself, and not by another, is *definitive* of the domain of the moral.⁸

Thinking the domain of the moral in this way gives justice a special place, and has corresponding difficulty in accommodating responsive values.⁹ We might say that in the European tradition the domain of the moral has, since Plato at least, typically been *centred on* justice – this is co-extensive with the domain of the moral, or constitutive of it.¹⁰ As Kant puts it, justice or right [*Recht*] “is

⁴ While this outlook is theorised by philosophers (e.g. Wolf, ‘Blame, Italian Style’), it is given especially powerful voice by Jan Philip Reemtsma in his account being kidnapped and held for ransom, *Im Keller*. Practices of holding morally accountable are moves in a shared conversation which bring the victim back into the social fold: “...sondern weil die Strafe die Solidarität des Sozialverbandes mit dem Opfer demonstriert. Die Strafe grenzt den Täter aus und nimmt damit das Opfer herein. Die Strafe für den Täter ist im Grunde nichts anderes, als es viele freundliche Briefe von Menschen sind, die sagen: <<Welcome back>>. Diese Begrüßung ist von entscheidender Bedeutung für das seelische Weiterleben” (*Im Keller*, 215).

⁵ This latter, one is tempted to say, is not *real* responsibility at all. True responsibility requires that one be, as Galen Strawson says, a “*causa sui*, at least in certain crucial mental respects” (‘The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility’, *Philosophical Studies* 75 [1994]: 5–24), and mere causes are not like that. Blame, on such a view, is criterial of “true” responsibility attributions (Strawson, *Freedom and Belief*, 2nd edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010, 1).

⁶ And so Peter Vernezze aptly characterises, “most of us” as “Aristotelians when it comes to anger” (‘Moderation or the middle way: two approaches to anger’, *Philosophy East and West* 58/1 (2008): 2-15).

⁷ Michael Frede traces out this trajectory in his *A Free Will: The Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought* (A. A. Long, ed., Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2012).

⁸ T. M. Scanlon offers an account which preserves the coherence of blaming without appeal to ‘could have done otherwise’ by reconceiving it as an attitude adjustment based on a judgement of relationship impairment (*Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2008). But it is hardly surprising that Scanlon’s revisionary account has met with strong resistance, for the intuition that blaming disconnected from ‘real responsibility’ claims is not *blame* at all is deeply built into the cultural history of those two concepts. “We cannot,” writes Wolf, “so much as understand that (very large) part of the free will problem that is concerned with moral responsibility and blame if we do not recognize that a kind of blame different from Scanlonian blame was thought to be at stake” (‘Blame, Italian Style’, 343).

⁹ I survey the various attempts a metaphysics of autonomous individuals might make to accommodate responsive values in *PASS 2014*, arguing that attempts to bolt them onto justice-autonomy views are inherently unstable. It is no wonder that a whole alternative ethical picture was thought necessary to accommodate the virtue of care at all (see note 9).

¹⁰ Indeed it goes back further than Plato. Hesiod distinguishes human and nonhuman according to their capacity for a sense of justice, and therefore for corresponding action: “lay up these things in your heart and hear now of right (*dikē*), forgetting violence altogether. For this law for men was established by the son of Cronus: that fish and beasts and flying birds eat one another, since right is not in them; but to mankind he gave right which is by far the best. For if anyone knowing the right is willing to speak it out (*agoreusai*), far-seeing Zeus gives him prosperity” (*Works and Days*, 274-81). A sense of justice opens up a new dimension of right and wrong in action.

a concept of the understanding, and represents a property (the moral property) of actions, which belongs to them in themselves” (KRV A44/B61, tr. Kemp Smith). Justice is the paradigmatic *moral* virtue, emblematic of whatever is distinctive when we (now, in English) feel compelled to attach the word ‘moral’ to act, intention, motivation, virtue, quality, concern and so on.¹¹ Injustice, conversely, captures what is wrong, over and above material and emotional harms, when an autonomous individual – someone *capable* of autonomy and responsibility – violates another individual of the same sort. Views vary; but they are variants on whatever it is that makes us say that the victims in scenario B have suffered twofold: not just misfortune as in scenario A, but in *being wronged*.

The Buddhist emphasis on care (*karuṇā*, compassion) seems intent on minimising this difference. In fact, it is worse than that: Deploying care as the super-ordinate, or governing virtue positively debar us from differentiating the very thing justice requires us to differentiate – viz., the offender from his victim – for both are *equally* entitled to our compassion. This is not an inadvertent implication of Buddhist ethics; it is a core feature, reiterated in several contexts. The central practice of loving-kindness meditation explicitly enjoins loving-kindness for those who ‘are my enemies’, or who have harmed me.¹² Compassion is to be extended to all beings *without distinction*. Nowhere is this more apparent, and more disturbing, than in the Buddhist insistence that we eliminate all anger, and in Śāntideva’s treatment of the anger question in particular.

In what follows, I will try to show there is something deep and important at stake here, and that this extreme position on anger shows us nothing less than a fundamental difference in ways of conceiving of morality.

Justice and its cluster of related concerns such as impartiality, autonomy, blame and punishment, are not front-and-centre of the Buddhist outlook, and indeed may have no place at all.¹³ With Suffering as the First Noble Truth, care – the active concern to eliminate suffering – is central in defining the moral as such. Opportunities for care mark out the domain of the moral, and wise care is the mark of moral goodness, in action or in attitude or motivation. I will try to set out the connection between the first, metaphysical and existential claim (suffering), and the second, moral and practical claim (care). If there is this fundamental distinction in ways of conceiving of and defining the domain of the moral, then classifying Buddhist moral thought as a variant of any of the traditional European theories will be not just futile, but disfiguring – obscuring precisely that in Buddhist moral thought that is most interesting.¹⁴

¹¹ There are dissenters, of course, both historically and in the 20th Century Anglophone tradition. In the contemporary discourse, Carol Gilligan’s *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982) and Nel Noddings’ *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of CA Press, 1982) are among the most prominent contributions; more recently Fiona Robinson (*Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations*. Boulder, CO: West View Press, 1999) and Virginia Held (*The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) have developed this line. But these contemporary dissenters are responding to a real hegemony of justice-centered morality. One of the implications of this paper will be to show just how much one has to re-think in order to challenge the centrality of justice, and put care in its place as the orienting principle governing the domain of the moral.

¹² We could consider as representative Buddhaghosa’s treatment of cultivation of loving-kindness at *Visuddhimagga* IX.1-39, especially X.20.

¹³ I discuss in the sidelining of blame and questions of desert in Buddhism in “...and none of us deserving the cruelty or the grace’ – Buddhism and the Problem of Evil” (Steven Emmanuel, ed., *Philosophy’s Perennial Questions*. Columbia University Press, [forthcoming](#)).

¹⁴ Even differences are never absolute, of course – any more than similarities are – and so noting some points of contact remains potentially illuminating.

II. THE CHARGE

“Disregarding the principal cause, such as a stick and the like, if I become angry with the one who impels it, then it is better if I hate hatred, because that person is also impelled by hatred.” (*Bodhicāryāvatāra* VI.41)

Don’t blame the assailant, Śāntideva says here; his hatred made him do it.

Now, the context for these remarks is Śāntideva’s philosophico-meditational treatment of the perfection of patience, or forbearance, in the *Bodhicāryāvatāra*. So one might want to play down this verse taken out of context. The *Bodhicāryāvatāra*, we might argue, is a meditational exercise, and a Madhyamaka one at that. Its purpose is to get us to ‘try on for size’ various alternative ways of looking at situations, without taking any of these as a definitive declaration of How Things Are, because the changing of perspective itself will have an edifying effect on our own motivational set.¹⁵ (Śāntideva isn’t *really* saying there is no difference between the assailant’s responsibility and that of the weapon he uses; and he doesn’t *really* mean we should regard victims of child abuse as having brought it on themselves.)

And it is certainly true that the *Bodhicāryāvatāra* is a protreptic text; its aim is to affect the reader, turning her towards a better way of life and way of seeing.¹⁶ But there is only so far this fact can go in mitigation; for the text, and the Buddhist eliminativist view of anger, certainly intends to challenge and transform our ordinary notions. An interpretation that leaves everything in our ordinary thinking in place will have missed the point.

In any case, this is far from the only verse in Chapter VI of Śāntideva’s *Bodhicāryāvatāra* that is likely to set alarm bells ringing in those of a contemporary, and especially of an Anglophone sensibility. Consider the following verse, which actively erases the difference between personal and impersonal causes, and disallows even the small window apparently left open in VI.41 for justified anger at the real cause:

“I am not angered at bile and the like even though they cause great suffering. Why be angry at sentient beings, who are also provoked by conditions?” (VI.22)

As anti-anger positions go, the Buddhist position articulated here is extreme.¹⁷ Śāntideva is advising the victim of wanton physical abuse to consider the abuser as culpable *in just the same way* that, in indigestion, excess bile is ‘culpable’ – that is, not at all, in the sense that that term properly has of demarcating a domain of the moral from the non-moral. Even Seneca does not go that far. It gets worse:

“Those who hurt me are impelled by my actions, as a result of which they will go to the infernal realms. Surely it is I alone who have ruined them.” (VI. 47)

¹⁵ In this vein, we might point to the active perspective-changing enjoined in Śāntideva’s discussion of the perfection of meditation (for instance, *BCA* VIII.140), and the meditational exercises of ‘exchanging self for other’ (e.g. *BCA* VIII.120). Nicholas Bommaritto is one who finds the assimilation of personal and impersonal causes so rebarbative that he prefers to convict Śāntideva of irrationality in the service of practical exhortation than take him at his word (‘Bile & Bodhisattvas: Śāntideva on Justified Anger’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 18 (2011): 356–381).

¹⁶ Jay Garfield’s discussion of ‘What is it Like to be a Bodhisattva?’ (*Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33/1-2 (2010-11): 333-57) draws attention to this feature of the *Bodhicāryāvatāra*.

¹⁷ Naturally there are those who have tried to make it less extreme, and not just among contemporary interpreters. Emily McRae discusses Dharmarakṣita’s argument that Buddhism need not entail the elimination of all anger, but rather its transformation into an uncompelled tantric anger (‘Metabolizing Anger: A Tantric Buddhist Solution to the Problem of Moral Anger’, *Philosophy East and West* 65/2 (2015): 466-484). Obviously that would require some acrobatic interpretations of the text at hand.

The explicit willingness to blame the victim is breathtaking. A sober survey of the daily crimes committed against vulnerable persons makes it difficult to take such advice quite seriously. Indeed, one might begin to worry for one's own moral character if one did.

Forget whether the wholesale elimination of anger is a plausible, achievable or even appealing ideal – it is *moral catastrophe*. To achieve such an ideal would make us worse persons –incapable of correctly identifying injustice, incapable of caring enough to want to do something about it, incapable of apportioning blame fairly.¹⁸ The charge reveals the special connection there is thought to be between anger and injustice, in the Aristotelian-Christian tradition.¹⁹ Everyone can agree that *excessive* and *unwarranted* anger is bad; but this just shows that there is proportionate and justified anger – namely, as a response to injustice.²⁰

The Buddhist anger-eliminationist can reject the claim – there is no special connection between injustice and anger; but they cannot thereby avoid conceding the substance of the main point: The Buddhist no-self view does not just take an ironic stance towards personal boundaries;²¹ it eschews altogether any categorical difference between personal and non-personal causes. With that goes suffering injustice as a distinct sort of harm. Candrakīrti's rhetorical question "If you respond in anger when another harms you, Does your wrath remove the harm inflicted?" (*Madhyamakāvātāra* III.4) has force only if there is not some distinct harm in being treated unjustly – a damage to status, or standing, or dignity, say – which could indeed be healed or recovered by resentment, or righteous indignation, anger or blame. If, conversely, Śāntideva is not *really* saying there is no difference between the

¹⁸ The extent of the moral catastrophe may be even greater. Consider this reflection from Reemtsma (*Im Keller*, 187) "...und die Zeit hat mir deutlich gemacht, dass dieses so ganz einsehbare und objektiv vernünftige Gefühl der Sympathie mit den Verbrechern nicht das Geringste ist, was sie mir angetan haben. Es ist wie eine Schändung, und der Verlust der Fauhigkeit, in eigener Sache hassen zu können, läuft auf eine psychische Deformation hinaus. (Ich sage: der Fähigkeit. Was den individuellen Willen angeht, den Hass zu überwinden, so folge jeder den Werten, die er für sich anerkennt. Sich für einen Verzicht auf den Hass zu entscheiden setzt aber voraus, sich auch anders entscheiden zu können.)"

¹⁹ As Seneca puts it "anger is [to be] aroused by the direct impression of an injury" (*de Ira* II.i.3), "and to long to avenge it." Aristotle himself says 'insult' rather than injustice, but Stoic and Christian equalising of persons as moral agents quickly and definitively makes failure to treat another human being as a human being – that is, justly – into the true insult or injury worthy of indignation, and equally available between persons of any social standing. While there was a medieval Christian anti-anger strand, it did not turn on challenging the connection between injustice and indignation, but rather on the humility required of humans in making judgements of injustice. Anger is God's prerogative (or possibly the king's) – *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (B. H. Rosenwein, ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1998) has many excellent discussions of the topic. The Stoics and Spinoza are among the historical dissenters from this mainstream view, and advocated the genuine elimination of anger – the sage, or free man, will not ever feel it. However, in the Stoic case at least this may have more to do with the sage's proper appreciation of the fundamental good order of the universe, so that (when rightly seen) there is *no cause* for indignation, rather than with any dissociation of anger from injustice.

²⁰ For a contemporary articulation of the position, and the associated charge against the anti-anger position, see, for instance, Marilyn Frye's 'Note on Anger' (*Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1983: 84-94), Uma Narayan's 'Working together across difference: Some considerations on emotions and political practice' (*Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 3 (1988): 31-47) and Alison Jaggar's 'Love and knowledge: Emotion in feminist epistemology' (*Inquiry* 32/2 (1989): 151-176), all of which argue that anger can be epistemically productive. An as yet unpublished paper by Amia Srinivasan, 'The Aptness of Anger' (accessed 16 March 2016 at: <http://www.laws.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Aptness-of-Anger.pdf>) argues vigorously that anger-elimination would eliminate moral cognition and responsiveness.

²¹ Mark Siderits argues that a self may be 'worn' by *bodhisattvas* in the mode of "ironic engagement" (*Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons*. Ashgate (2003), 99-111); we will consider below whether sufficient agency can be thus recovered within the no-self view. The point here is only that any such 'ironic engagement' is against the background of an entirely earnest dissolution of any categorial distinction between the personal and the impersonal.

assailant's responsibility and that of the weapon he uses, then he is not giving us any reason or means to abandon afflictive emotions associated with perceiving oneself as having been *wronged*.²² Examining closely just *how* the sixth chapter of the *Bodhicāryāvātāra* functions as a meditational exercise will reveal how inhabiting an impersonal metaphysical outlook de-centres justice from the moral point of view, or indeed makes its concerns vanish. The absence of justice is not an oversight nor an accident, but the inevitable implication of adopting the outlook of dependent arising which underwrites care (*karuṇā*).

III. WHAT IS WRONG WITH ANGER?

Śāntideva is not in any way remarkable among Buddhists in so emphatically eschewing all forms of anger, even supposedly legitimate anger at injustice.²³ Take this vivid piece of advice from the *Middle-Length Discourses* of the Pāli canon:

“Bhikkhus, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw, he who gave rise to a mind of hate towards them would not be carrying out my teaching.”
(*Kakacūpama Sutta*, MN 21: i 129)

The *Milindapañha* is not so graphic, but reiterates that anger “is a thing weakening to the mind” (MP 289); and that “on approaching the world which is abounding in anger and malice and is overset by quarrels, strife, contention and enmity, [one should] anoint his mind with the medicament of loving-kindness” (MP 394). Vasubandhu is content to list anger among the unequivocal impediments alongside “enmity, dissimulation, jealousy, stubbornness, hypocrisy, greed, the spirit of deception, pride-intoxication, the spirit of violence, etc.,” (AKbh. II.27). Buddhaghōṣa reminds us at *Visuddhimagga* IX.1-2 that “No higher rule, the Buddhas say, than patience, and no *nibbana* higher than forbearance”²⁴, and that “No greater thing than patience exists” (quoting S.i, 222). Candrakīrti returns us to the intensity of the *Kakacūpama Sutta*:

“All anger felt towards a Bodhisattva destroys within an instant all merits that arise through discipline and giving of a hundred *kalpas*. No other evil is there similar to wrath.”
(*Madhyamakāvātāra* III.6)

Strong words, and unequivocal from all sides, cutting across the Mahāyāna/Theravāda divide. But what is actually *wrong* in anger?

However much cultural variation there may be in its forms, anger is associated with a phenomenology of agitation and aggression, a physiognomy inflamed and distorted, a physiological intensity and impetuosity towards destructive and counter-productive action. Indeed, these common markers are the indicators that we have, across cultural contexts, sufficiently ‘the same’ phenomenon

²² This parallels the problem of personal responsibility: *Just to the extent* that I now am entitled to recognize the effects of suffering on that successor-me later, I-thinking and appropriation has been reinforced rather than undermined. So the Abhidharma Buddhist may appeal to the cause-effect relation to explain why it is reasonable for me to brush my own teeth each night; but if this cause-effect relation indeed warrants teeth-brushing now, it no less warrants locking my door at night, competing with others for position and praise, and all the other self-regarding behaviours that get us into trouble.

²³ He is not even anomalous in the Indian tradition generally, where anger is evaluated very negatively, not necessarily as morally bad but as disastrously imprudent. In the *Rāmāyana* (*Bālakaṇḍa*, *sarga* 47-48) Indra deliberately provokes the ascetic Gautama's wrath, for this anger dissipates the deity-threatening spiritual powers Gautama had accumulated by his ascetic practices (Robert P. Goldman, tr. *The Rāmāyana of Vālmiki* Vol. 1, Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press 1984). Paul Dundas recounts the Jaina story of Yaśodhara who went to hell for violent thoughts despite making an offering of a mere image of a chicken, made of dough (*The Jains*. London: Routledge 1992, 15).

²⁴ referring us to *Dīgha Nikāya* ii.49 (“Patient forbearance is the highest sacrifice, Supreme is *Nibbāna*, so say the Buddhas”); and *Dhammapada* 184 (“Enduring patience is the highest austerity”).

in view. Thus, for instance, both Buddhaghōṣa and Seneca point to the physical agitation and physiognomic changes characteristic of anger.²⁵ “Wrath disfigures the face and form and leads to evil states”, says Candrakīrti (*MA* III.7). There are characteristic occasions, feelings, physiological reactions and types of action associated with anger. Śāntideva opens his discussion of anger with the observation that “anger destroys all good conduct” (*BCA* VI.1a); and Buddhaghōṣa observes (*V* IX.15) that anger makes one “misconduct himself in body, speech and mind”, so that he experiences bad results (bad rebirth). Anger’s intense affective qualities are unpleasant in themselves, and they cause one not to think clearly, and therefore to act badly – whether that ‘badly’ is prudential or moral. In preferred Buddhist terms, just as craving causes the confused thinking that informs unconstructive actions, so too does its inverse, aversion.

But for the Buddhist, anger is bad not just because it feels bad and leads to bad results. It *does* feel bad, and it *does* lead to bad results, on the whole. Buddhaghōṣa specifically advises against it on these grounds, as does a verse from the *Dhammapadā*:

“Suppose an enemy has hurt you now in what is his domain, why try to hurt your mind yourself as well? That is not his domain” (*Visuddhimagga*, IX.22)²⁶

“Do not speak harshly to anyone. Those who are harshly spoken to might retaliate against you. Angry words hurt other’s feelings, even blows may overtake you in return.” (*Dhammapadā*, v. 133)

Śāntideva, too, picks up on this, articulating the negative consequences of anger for the angry person, whether the direct effect of anger on her own mind, or the effect on one’s relations with others of expressing anger.

“The mind does not find peace, nor does it enjoy pleasure and joy, nor does it find sleep or fortitude when the thorn of hatred dwells in the heart. Even dependents whom one rewards with wealth and honours wish to harm the master who is repugnant due to his anger. Even friends fear him. He gives, but is not honoured. In brief, there is nothing that can make the angry person happy.” (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*, VI. 3-5)

But recognising this much gives us reason only to moderate our anger and its expression – to not *show* our anger, not get carried away with anger, not let anger eat us up inside. None of that sound advice would tell against the judicious feeling and expression of anger, at the right time, in the right way, under the right circumstances. One might even go further and claim that however distorting anger *might* be, it can also be a cognitively correct response. Let anger be, as Śāntideva says, “finding its fuel in discontent originating from an undesired event and from an impediment to desired events” (VI.7) – surely some events *ought* to be undesired, or are genuine impediments to what ought to be desired. If anger can be an appreciation of what is *rightly undesired* – say, injustice – then anger is as apt to be insightful as it is to be distorting.²⁷ Eliminating anger requires an altogether different sort of view of its badness – as the Stoics (those other infamous anger-eliminativists) also recognized.

²⁵ Buddhaghōṣa at *Visuddhimagga* IX.15; Seneca at *de Ira* I.1.

²⁶ Śāntideva echoes this thought that, anger being so bad for the angry person, to be angry is to give one’s enemies what they want – viz., you own misfortune – arguing that it is the anger itself that is one’s real enemy (*BCA* VI.6-12).

²⁷ Srinivasan suggests for instance that that “by reflecting on our anger, and the reactions of the powerful to our anger, we can come to know something about the existence and structure of previously unrecognised injustice. So while anger might have ill effects on our rationality, it can also have positive epistemic effects, and the ill must be weighed against the good. Moreover, if apt anger is itself a cognitive good, like true belief or knowledge – not a mere feeling, but (when apt) an appreciation of the facts – then, whatever its negative effects on rationality, its own intrinsic value must be totted up against them” (*The Aptness of Anger*, 24).

What is fundamentally, and most illuminating wrong with anger, on their view, is not that it confuses our thinking, but that it manifests confused thinking. That is, anger is cognitively rich, but it is never apt. Anger is the particular form that misapprehension of reality takes under certain circumstances. As an embodiment of confusion, experiencing anger tends to reinforce the confused ways of thinking that enable it to arise in the first place – and this will be quite apart from the question of the tendency of anger to cause me to make prudentially bad judgements about what to do. So on the Buddhist view, anger is bad simply because it *is* suffering and it *causes* suffering. But these are both rooted in a prior cognitive fault, for anger cannot arise without a false way of seeing the world; and insofar as it has cognitive content at all, it embodies and reinforces that confused cognition.

It will be no surprise that the fundamental misapprehension of reality underwriting anger (as so many things) is a false belief in self. Candrakīrti is explicit, “For Bodhisattvas, those who see the absence of self, Agent, object, time, and manner of the wounds – All things are like the image in a glass. By understanding thus, all torments are endured” (MA III.3). And we see this claim already in the *suttas*, where a false sense of self gives rise not just to unhappiness generally (MN 22), but specifically to divisiveness and hostility between people (KN III, *Udana* 6.6: *Tittha Sutta*).²⁸

Both Buddhaghōṣa and Śāntideva introduce impersonal metaphysics into their respective anti-anger homilies, with the idea that correctly seeing the selflessness of reality removes the necessary preconditions for anger to arise:

“Since states last but a moment’s time, those aggregates, by which was done the odious act, have ceased, so now what is it you are angry with? Whom shall he hurt, who seeks to hurt another, in the other’s absence?” (*Visuddhimagga*, IX. 22)

We will consider Śāntideva’s treatment more closely.

IV. THE COURSE OF *BODHICĀRĀVATĀRA* VI

Śāntideva begins with the easy cases – gadflies and mosquitoes, thirst and cold (VI.15-16). He frames this with the practical attitude he aims to instil, in place of the counter-productive anger we may be prone to:

“If there is a remedy, then what is the use of frustration? If there is no remedy, then what is the use of frustration?” (VI.10)

He then turns to the truly difficult cases – those where we feel our anger is *justified*. We can easily recognize the silliness and futility of getting angry at falling branches or failed harvests. But anger is more difficult to dislodge when we mistakenly judge (1) ourselves (or those we care about) to be harmed; and (2) to have been harmed by some responsible agent; and (3) not to be ourselves responsible for the harm. Śāntideva does not argue, Stoic-wise, that there is no harm done really – at least he does not try to sweep away all cases with that particular broom.²⁹ Rather the mistake that we must actively identify and undo if we are to dislodge our attachment to anger is the judgement that *I* am being made to suffer by someone else, who – as responsible – should be held to account (is a fitting target of revenge). In effect, Śāntideva draws on what is already established regarding the easy cases and explicitly recommends that we see all possible cases in a similar light – and this is where the bile

²⁸ See also the quarrelling contemplatives of MN 48; and right view as removing disputatiousness in MN 18 and Sn. 4.11. My thanks to Sherice Ngaserin for chasing down these passages.

²⁹ He *does* use it, interestingly enough, when it comes to desecration: “My hatred toward those who revile and violate images, *stūpas*, and the sublime Dharma is wrong, because the Buddhas and the like are free from distress” (VI.64). This is useful advice for our times.

comes in: “I am not angered at bile and the like even though they cause great suffering. Why be angry at sentient beings, who are also provoked to anger by conditions?” (VI.22). Śāntideva is explicitly refusing to distinguish personal from impersonal causes, placing all occasions for anger into a common mutually conditioning field.

The Metaphysical Turn

And then Śāntideva emphasises this very fact – *and so starts doing metaphysics*: “All offences and vices of various kinds arise under the influence of conditions, and they do not arise independently” (VI.25). There is nothing – not any supposed Self, autonomous and free, nor some other primordial principle, nor any particular part of reality – that wishes itself into being. Nothing can be responsible for its own arising, nor therefore for its particular quality or character when it does arise. Of course some evils arise due to wicked intentions, and others do not; but that wicked intention did not *choose* to be any more than a flower chooses to grow. In both cases, there are causes and enabling conditions and innumerable factors which are responsible for the item picked out. The direct implication of the sheer generality of the claim is that, if we are going to go in for the business of determining responsibility or fault, we will inevitably become mired down in an interminable exercise in futility. Better not to start down that road at all.

The critique of the substantiality of persons in particular (vv. 26-31) should show us a way of looking at the world, others and our own experiences such that the “whose fault it is?”-question is not the decisive and pressing question that arises.

And so Śāntideva recommends in light of this:

“Therefore, upon seeing a friend or an enemy committing a wrong deed, one should reflect, “Such are his conditions”, and be at ease.” (VI.33)

Why should we “be at ease” here? And does this mean that we should not, when it is in our power, prevent people from doing wrong? This may look like another *reductio* of the anger-eliminativist position (or the same again in new words). For if someone is about to do wrong, ‘at ease’ is precisely what I *ought not* feel, particularly if I have any sense of justice.

In fact, it is precisely one’s sense of justice – with its fault-finding and blaming, its righteous indignation and its insistence on the splendid isolation of the individual will for forensic purposes – which this little exercise in impersonalism is *meant* to erode. This is where, as above, the Buddhist can only concede the point. Yet consider precisely what this ‘eroding of our sense of justice’ amounts to when achieved by this route. By insisting on the embeddedness of all causes, and by refusing to distinguish one kind as special, Śāntideva removes any warrant for that special moral emotion, ‘blame’. I can, without difficulty, recognize that it is *this* stick, held by *this* hand, impelled by *that* malicious impulse, provoked by *this or that* perception in conjunction with *this or that* memory and cognition – each of which, by regarding them in this way, I acknowledge to have their own causes, which I can only guess at and which may – well, why not? – include indigestion. This is not a problem, and indeed is the very activity towards which our attention has been redirected. Seeing the stick-wielder as impelled by malice, say, does not *absolve* him of responsibility (*moral* responsibility – the only sort needing absolution), because I am not even asking the question of responsibility. The lack of control he has over the malice is not exonerating, but it is pitiable; to lack control, and be riven with afflictive emotions, is suffering. Notice the emphasis on concern for suffering in the immediately following verses, VI.34-38. Addressing myself to the situation in this way, I do indeed see the aggressor in the same way I see reality as a whole, and myself within it – *viz.*, under the aspect of suffering (*sub specie doloris*). But precisely because there is no further fact to find here, no further cause of agitation and distress, I can focus entirely on the pragmatic question of what is to be done.

Doing and Being Done To

But is Śāntideva entitled to this practical conclusion? Isn't the perspective on reality which enables me to stop asking 'whose fault is it?' necessarily enervating? For if the aggressor is not culpable, because there is no one there to *be* culpable, then neither can I be responsible for my own action or inaction, resentment or forbearance – there is no 'I' to act, and 'my own' here can only be used in distancing scare quotes to indicate its falsifying attribution of ownership.³⁰ Śāntideva entertains precisely this objection at VI. 32, "Averting anger is inappropriate; for who averts what?"

Śāntideva's initial reply to the qualm is not especially illuminating – VI.32 finishes with "It is appropriate, because it is a state of dependent origination and is considered to be the cessation of suffering". The verses which follow should help us to understand how this thought meets the Enervating Objection. But it is just here that Śāntideva entertains the case of one being a witness to someone else's evil-doing, and recommends "one should reflect, 'Such are his conditions', and be at ease" (VI.33). The very fact that this is meant to be an *answer* to the concern about the impossibility of our own agency in averting anger should make us read this verse rather differently. 'Be at ease' is not, I suggest, the recommendation that we just accommodate ourselves to someone else's evil actions ("it's their business, and in any case, nothing I can do anything about since I'm not any more of a person than they are"); it is rather the recommendation that we not *become angry* – agitated, blaming, hostile – ourselves, so *that* we might contribute to deflecting and diffusing the anger that is there, rather than adding to it. Only understood in this way would it in any way address the Enervating Objection. This reading is supported by the fact that Śāntideva goes on at VI.39 to observe that "if inflicting harm on others is the nature of the foolish, then my anger toward them is as inappropriate as it would be toward the fire, which has the nature of burning".

It is, admittedly, still difficult to make out how this answers the worry. If I dissolve hostile, harmful people into impersonal aggregations of natural events; and if this is meant to be a perspective on reality as a whole – and after all, why should only I be exempted from this impersonalisation? – then it is still not clear how I can coherently be exhorted to do *anything*, whether it is giving up anger or preventing injustice.

This worry arises, I suggest, from overlooking a seldom appreciated feature of Buddhist no-self: dissolving the self-other distinction likewise dissolves the distinction between agent and patient. More precisely, Buddhist no-self *replaces* a metaphysics of beings (distinct, well-defined, autonomous individuals) with becoming (dependent arising). This is particularly clear in Candrakīrti (e.g. MA VI.113-116); but some version of the claim will be endorsed by non-Mādhyamikas as well. Individuation is an activity of mind, not a perception of reality. It is liable, therefore, to criteria of efficacy – individuation is correctly done not when it maps reality, but when it facilitates achievement of our ends. Our ultimate end ought to be the elimination of suffering, and so the correct ways to individuate will be as and when this helps to remove suffering. So far, so familiar. The less familiar implication is that *classifying* as 'agent' or 'patient' is just one form of individuation. That which is thus individuated is no more *really* a cause or *really* an effect than one group of psychophysical elements is *really* a person. Attributions of agency and patiency are something we do, and they are correctly done when they contribute to removing suffering.

³⁰ As Lea McGarrity observes in a specifically Madhyamaka context, we cannot "take the pedagogical *strategy* of advocating a self seriously if we only ever consider it as *just* a strategy, lest the stance of "ironic engagement" adopted by the bodhisattva be confused with the 'ironic disengagement' of the skeptic or cynical nihilist." ('Mādhyamikas on the Moral Benefits of a Self: Buddhist Ethics and Personhood', *Philosophy East and West* 65/4 (2015): 1082-83).

In order to remove the conceptual preconditions of anger, Śāntideva has just engaged us in an exercise of dissolving persons into the conditions giving rise to the various aspects of the person. If individuals are heaps of conditions arising from other conditions and themselves contributing to causing innumerable further effects in various ways, then identifying agency is impossible; and taking away the effective attribution of agency undermines the ability to generate anger, for anger presupposes some agent at whom we can direct our hostility. Now if at this point we recall the first Noble Truth, we may suppose that Buddhist no-self simply removes all agency from reality – there is only suffering, ‘being done to’. And from here, we are likely to describe the Buddhist view as a species of determinism, and so worry (or not) that all the hortatory is in vain, and the supposition that there is any indeterminacy, and so scope for freedom, is incoherent.³¹

What this line of thought overlooks is that if a distinct, individual *agent* is removed from the picture, so is therewith is a distinct, individual *patient*. What we have lost is not *agency*, but the supposition that there is a clear and stable distinction in reality between agent and patient. This is what it means for ‘dependent origination’ to replace claims of ‘existence’, and this is why Śāntideva invokes dependent origination precisely here. Having eliminated individuals capable of being conceived as distinct agents or *patients*, we have *replaced* that with a view of everything as dependently arising – everything as equally agent *and* patient. And just as individuating is something *we do* – not a way the world is – and something we could *do differently* or *leave off doing*, if it suited us, so likewise and *for that reason* identifying agents and patients is something *we do*, and not something we read off of reality. It is a way of organizing our thoughts and experiences. And since this organizing is not beholden to some ultimate truth for its correctness – there is no way these things are *really* – they are either beholden to no standard of correctness (“call whatever you want *this* or *that*; call whomever you like ‘agent’ and ‘patient’”), or else they are beholden to quite a different standard of correctness.³² Having been relieved of the supposition that I get it right in my ways of organizing reality when my conceptual divisions match the structure of reality, the possibility opens up of measuring correctness according to efficacy: Agency and passivity is rightly assigned when thusly assigning those categories contributes to the elimination of suffering.

It is in this way that, although there are conditions for everything, this is not a recommendation to universal apathy. Instead, it is an invitation to do just what Śāntideva goes on to do here: to recognise that I too am embedded within this complex of conditions. This is why Śāntideva addresses the Enervating Objection by first calling our attention to the several sorts of situations in which someone is *both agent and patient*:

“Persons hurt themselves with thorns and the like out of negligence, with fasting and so on out of anger, and by desiring to obtain inaccessible women and so forth. Some kill themselves by hanging, by jumping from cliffs, by eating poison or unwholesome substances, an by non-

³¹ Thus Charles Goodman in ‘Resentment and Reality’ (*American Philosophical Quarterly* 39/4 (2002): 359-72) supposes the Buddhist must be a hard determinist. Mark Siderits offers instead semi-determinism, appealing to the mere conventionality of freedom and responsibility in order to retain the appearance of space for free will in an ultimate reality which is deterministic (‘Paleo-Compatibilism and Buddhist Reductionism’, *Sophia* 47/1 (2008): 29-42). Both take the less to be that ultimately all is determined. Rick Repetti extensively reviews the literature on Buddhism and determinism or free will, most recently in ‘Recent Buddhist Theories of Free Will’ (*Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 21 (2012): 279-352). I join Jay Garfield (‘Just Another Word for Nothing Left To Lose’, in M. Dasti and E. Bryant, eds. *Freedom of the Will in a Cross-cultural Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press 2014, 164-85) in thinking that if we are posing the question in this way, something has already gone wrong.

³² Although ‘there is no way these things are *really*’ tends to be associated in the contemporary discourse with Madhyamaka, there is a perfectly acceptable Abhidharma version of this thought, fully adequate to the point at hand. If (what we call) persons are streams of interconnected, impersonal *dharmas*, mutually giving rise to each other, then our attributions of agency are just that: *attributions*, and not discoveries or perceptions of how things really are.

virtuous conduct. When under the influence of mental afflictions, they kill even their own dear selves in this way; then how could they have restraint towards the bodies of others?" (BCA VI.35-37)

These rather odd, and oddly lengthy, considerations seem out of place, unless we suppose that the first move Śāntideva aims to make in addressing the Enervating Objection is to call our attention to complexity of agency-attributions, and in particular to the fact that impersonalism does not turn everyone into mere patients (as determinism would have it), but rather reveals all aspects of persons to be involved both as condition and as conditioned. Our first task is to recognize the suffering (both felt and metaphysical) of those towards whom we might naturally become angry were we to instead regard them as autonomous agents – because this is the way of organizing the complex interconnections of conditioning that will be effective in eliminating suffering. It is here that Śāntideva encourages us to regard the cause of our assault as not different in kind from the sort of cause that bile or phlegm might be in causing the discomfort of indigestion (VI.39-41). Our further task, however, and the next consideration in addressing the Enervating Objection, is to recognize that one of the implications of this is that we are ourselves embedded within this co-conditioning network of phenomena. This is why Śāntideva goes on with his lengthy passage about how I got myself a body through my being 'blinded by craving' (VI.44).

"In the past, I too have inflicted such pain on sentient beings; therefore, it is fitting that I who have caused harm to sentient beings should suffer in return... Those who hurt me are impelled by my actions, as a result of which they will go to the infernal realms. Surely it is I alone who have ruined them." (VI.42, 47)

This is only the orgy of victim-blaming that it appears if one has not taken the point of the impersonalism in the previous verses. Buddhist no-self is non-accidentally related to dependent origination. In this particular context demonstrating the flexibility and non-absoluteness of 'agent' and 'patient' invites us to take those assignments as liable not to truth-conditions but to efficacy-conditions. What is needed is a sober look at which assignments *are in fact* helpful. It turns out, it is not the ones we typically make. Recognising that someone else's wickedness does not come from some ordinary malevolent will, and acknowledging my own involvement in constructing situations, are strategically more effective in eliminating suffering. The latter allows me to avoid becoming consumed with debilitating resentment – a phenomenon captured well by Buddhaghōṣa's recognition of the way anger ties us to the one who has harmed us,³³ and in Śāntideva's reference to "the thorn of hatred [that] dwells in the heart" (BCA VI.3). And re-conceiving myself as co-creator of prevailing circumstances opens up appreciation of my potential for affecting situations. Śāntideva uses the flexible individuation of dependent arising to recommend attributions of responsibility which engage one with the project of eliminating suffering – inasmuch as that is in one's power, for another lesson of this impersonalism is that it is always only partly in anyone's power to affect situations.

V. CONCLUSION

Our study in the Buddhist claim that we *ought* to eliminate anger, and their mode of doing so, has show that the link between injustice and anger presumes a metaphysics. The moral perspective that picks out injustice as a special and additional *kind* of harm requires a metaphysics of discrete individuals, doing and 'being done to' in turn, with a clear distinction between the two. But such a metaphysics and its moral categories engender in turn certain typical modes of thought – in particular,

³³ 'In tears you left your family. They had been kind and helpful too. So why not leave your enemy, the anger that brings harm to you?' (V IX.22)

obsessing about Who is to Blame. Particularly in our victim-status-claiming age, we should wonder whether this is especially fruitful – or apt.

The Buddhist cannot show that their view will confirm or conform to all our intuitions about injustice because their basic metaphysical presumptions do not support the centrality of autonomous agency as a distinctive sort of cause, nor the violation of that by such free agents as a distinctive sort of harm. This is not, however, just an oversight or a morally horrifying omission. The proposal of an alternative metaphysics is the proposal of an alternative way of conceiving the moral. For every exercise in appreciating what no-self means, and what its implications are, is simultaneously an exercise in detachment, in recognizing the impulse to blame and resent as harmful assertions of oneself over and against others. Removing the conceptual structures for righteous indignation strips our evaluations of situations and persons of its self-assertiveness. Rather than being enervating, or blinding us to what moral responsiveness demands, this outlook is resolutely practical. None of this denies the no-self anger-eliminationist the resources necessary for forensics: We can see that some sets of conditions have intentions among them; and we can recognise that under some circumstances, these are more effectively engaged with in modes that differ from how we would engage with a forest fire.³⁴ To regard someone's raging violence 'as a forest fire' does not mean that we turn the fire hose on it; it means that we consider the enabling conditions and defeating conditions and seek to eliminate the one and enhance the latter.³⁵

At the same time, as no-self introduces fluidity into our practices of individuation, it presents us with the entangled mutual causation of all factors, and the simultaneous suffering. To see no-self, Buddhist-wise, just is to see that everything is conditioned and conditioning. Released from the demands of indignation, we are left with the only attitude that is appropriate in the fact of suffering – a practically-oriented *care* to relieve that suffering. *Karuṇā* is not an additional feature of a Buddhist outlook, or the next thing on the list of dogmata. Care just is the affective and practical recognition of no-self metaphysics. Without discrete individuals to appeal to in any situation – *these* the perpetrators, *these* the victims – we have only efficacy in removing suffering as the standard preventing us from nihilism. Where before there were culprits to blame, and myself to exonerate or assert in retaliation, there is now only suffering, for which care to alleviate it is simply what is left when I am no longer distracted by righteous indignation.³⁶

³⁴ I discuss the possibilities for Buddhist forensics in more detail in 'The Saṃmitīyas and the Case of the Disappearing Who?: A Buddhist Whodunit' (in *The Return of Consciousness – A New Science on Ancient Questions*, Anders Haag, ed. Ax:son Johnson Foundation, *forthcoming 2016*).

³⁵ It may be instructive to compare in this respect Plato's revisionary account of punishment without blame as properly strictly educative, and with that a similar difficulty he may have in consistently accommodating our ordinary conceptions of justice and desert (on which, see Mary Margaret Mackenzie, *Plato on Punishment*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1981, esp. chapters 11 to 13).

³⁶ My thanks to Thomas Doctor, Malcolm Keating, Sandra Field and Matthew Walker for discussion of these ideas as they were developing; and to Sherice Ngaserin for invaluable research assistance.