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The Sāmmitīyas and the Case of the Missing Who

A Buddhist Whodunit?

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The Scene of the Crime

It was a cold, clear afternoon, the air heavy with the smell of burning rubber, acrid in the back of the throat; heart pounding, blood rushing to the head as a single shot rings out; then the scrape of shoes against gravel, legs pumping: “Did anyone see?”

Who is the murderer?

The same person who shivered outside, seeing the black factory smoke rising and tasting it, feeling the rush of blood in the ears, hearing the shot and the footsteps.

No doubt. But who is that, over and above the particulars mentioned?

One could mention more particulars: it was a self-taught, middle-aged man, long nose, likes playing cards. . . There are endless such particulars. And if one is assisting in the creation of a police profile, this is exactly what is needed.

But if we are asking why the police are searching for this person – or, rather, what it is that warrants the police search, the subsequent investigation, verdict and punishment – then no amount of any such particulars will get us what we think we are looking for, when we ask: *Whodunit?* For in that case, what we seek is not any of those particulars, nor all of them together, nor some magically relevant subset, but somehow the

owner or ground or explanation of them all. It was not the long nose, after all, that committed the murder, nor the proclivity for cards. It was not even the elegant finger with the well-manicured nail that committed the murder – even if it did, technically speaking, pull the trigger. It was the owner of that elegant finger, the person who takes pleasure in gambling, *the man himself* who is the murderer.

Only something persisting through changes in all those particulars (or at least distinct from any one of them), at once an agent and a subject, as well as the synthesiser of various modalities of sense and cognition, could be the sort of thing that could be responsible for murder and so justifiably blamed and punished.

Pragmatics and Metaphysics

Because of this, Buddhist minimalist metaphysics, which rejects the ultimate reality of any such thing as an agent–subject-unifier, might look to be on a siding to nowhere. On the standard Abhidharma Buddhist view, there are no wholes, complex unities or substances bearing properties. Wherever a many is brought together into a “one”, this is an indication of mental activity interpreting reality, rather than just taking reality as it is. And this principle holds above all with respect to supposed wholeness of persons. This view is given philosophical articulation in Vasubandhu’s 4th-century *Abhidharmakośa*, but it is evident already in the 1st-century *Milindapañha*’s well-known likening of the deconstructed chariot to the proper referent of the name Nāgasena. The *Milindapañha* passage itself is in turn an explicit exposition of the principle given voice by the *bhikkhuni* Vajirā, in the early Pāli *Samyutta Nikāya*, the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*.

Approached by Māra, confusion, with the challenge, “By whom has this being been created? . . . Where has the being arisen? Where does the being cease?”¹ Vajirā replies:

Why now do you assume “a being”? . . . This is a heap of sheer formations. Here no being is found. Just as, with an assemblage of parts, the word “chariot” is used, so when the aggregates exist, there is the convention “a being”. It is only suffering that comes to be, suffering that stands and falls away.

This Buddhist no-self claim may not have originally been at heart a specific metaphysical claim,² although it was certainly developed in that

direction, and may have had to have been so developed to be taken seriously at all.³ The “self” Vajirā repudiates here may not have a single determinate meaning, not even that given to “self” by those early Hindu seekers of *ātman* inspired by the Upaniṣads’ elusive descriptions of hidden self within.⁴ “Self” as the Buddha enjoined us *not* to seek it is simply whatever version of self provides something one could cling to, clinging to which generates suffering:

“You may well cling to that doctrine of self that would not arouse sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair in one who clings to it. But do you see any such doctrine of self, *bhikkhus*?” – “No, venerable sir.” – “Good, *bhikkhus*. I too do not see any doctrine of self that would not arouse sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair in one who clings to it.”⁵

The central importance of “that to which one could cling” in defining the “self” that is to be rejected can be seen even in the classic formulations of the moment of liberation. *Who* is liberated was famously rejected as a badly-formulated question;⁶ instead descriptions of liberation are wholly impersonal: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.”⁷

Conceptions of the self which generate suffering – that is to say, according to the Buddha, *all* conceptions of self – do so by drawing boundaries between “mine” and “not mine”. After the claim in §22 of the Snake Sutta that any conception of self leads to suffering, the *sutta* goes on to observe that if there were a self, then there would be what belongs to the self (§25); as there is no self, neither is there anything that is “mine”. We are then enjoined, several paragraphs later (§40–41), to abandon whatever is “not yours”, which is to say, properly understood, all feelings, thoughts or perceptions thought of as “my own” or belonging to me.⁸ A conception of the self is harmful just in so far as it hinders my ability to abandon thinking of things as “my own”. To think of myself *as myself* is to distinguish “me” from “not me”, and determine a subset of reality as *mine*: this bit belongs to me, the rest not; this bit is my special concern, the rest not. That is to say, the metaphysical “selves” that Buddhism rejects are whichever entities that, believing them to exist, cause in us a *sense of self* which divides and does not conquer.

That we commonly have a sense of self is a phenomenological fact which cannot be denied; that this sense of self must indicate the real

existence of some thing answering to that sense is firmly rejected.⁹ On the contrary, recognition of the lack of any such thing should dissolve our sense of self, and this dissolution of a sense of self will remove the pervasive suffering that characterises existence.

This means that a Buddhist theory of consciousness can handle neatly a certain sort of “problem of consciousness” which has beset early modern European philosophy and its inheritors.¹⁰ For if the problem of consciousness is just the fact of subjectivity – where this means primarily “what-its-like”-ness, or the fact that there is anything that experiences are like at all, then no Buddhists have a problem with it. Consciousness moments, events of being like something or another, are among the basic constituents of reality.¹¹ But if by “subjectivity” is meant some kind of “mineness”,¹² a fundamental distinction between me and everything else (or privileged access by someone to something), then the Buddhist will balk.¹³ For the ills associated with appropriating this or that as “mine”, with holding fast to a tight distinction between “me” and everything else – you, the world – are precisely what the Buddhist aims to eliminate with her distinctive “no-self” claim.

This appropriating sense of self can be eliminated, Buddhist philosophers argue, by recognising that non-interpreted reality, including especially us as part of reality, is just a vast quantity of successive occurrences of various simple properties. These simple property-particulars happen, and with that they are over – they go out of existence.¹⁴ The set of occurring properties at one time are the causal conditions for the subsequent set of momentary occurrences. Everything else is wishful thinking (conventional, or conceptual reality – *samvrtisat* as it is known in Buddhist discourse). In particular, conceiving of an agent (“I *did* this, it didn’t just happen”), a subject (“I *feel* this, it is not just an event occurring somewhere”) or a unifier and its boundary-drawing (“This is my action, my desire, my pain; that is not me, does not constrain my will or is not my concern”) – each alone could generate a sense of self to cling to, something to care about whether it remains, whether it goes in some preferred way, whether it is under threat or a matter of indifference. But if that is so, it looks as if Buddhist minimalism necessarily rejects any “self” capable of playing the role necessary for attributing responsibility.

Indeed, the metaphysics implied by the pragmatics of no-self, any of the many versions of a metaphysical picture that can make sense of no-self as a legitimate and necessary ethical practice, seems to raise two

related insurmountable problems for attributions of responsibility. These are of particular interest in so far as Buddhist metaphysical minimalism looks strikingly similar to a certain respectable scientific picture of who and what we are – so that if indeed the Buddhists have a problem here, we should perhaps be worried that their problem is our problem.

The first difficulty is that, on a metaphysics of flux, there is no element persisting over time – in particular over the time between the act, the result and the punishment for it. There is no one there to be held responsible. We have different bundles of personal elements at different times but, as the Buddhists' opponents had been telling them for centuries, one cannot hold one bundle responsible for the acts of a different bundle: it is plainly unfair to hold Yajñadatta responsible for what Devadatta did. Moreover, if there is no principle of unity – nothing which is the *person herself* to whom the multitude of properties belong – then what are we even holding responsible? The finger that pulled the trigger? The neuron whose firing made the finger move? The moment of intention or decision, which is now past?²⁵ If there is no unity or unifier or persistence through time, it is difficult even to make out the *murder* in the mass of changing and interconnected but disjunct parts.

The second apparently insurmountable problem comes from the closely related principle of dependent origination. It is a vital part of basic Buddhism that nothing arises without a cause (all arises dependently on conditions, *pratītyasamutpāda*), and this is actively applied to mental as well as physical events. This perfectly kosher commitment to a principle of sufficient reason, however, raises the dark spectre of determinism, more darkly for rejecting a distinct agent as an uncaused original principle of action.

We turn first to this latter difficulty.

The red herring: the illusory problem of free will

Every good detective story needs a red herring to throw our investigators off the scent. Here the red herring is “free will” – and, more specifically, the supposition that this would solve our problem if only we could find such a thing. What we care about in attributions of responsibility, the thought goes, is the deliberate choice to act. When there are accidental or merely mechanical or physical causes, we do not praise and blame; but

where the cause of some event can be traced back to an unforced choice or decision so to act, then we can hold responsible that person who freely chose to act in this way. On this view, the person, for forensic purposes, is those psycho-physical elements most closely associated with this active, choosing will, and it is this free will that grounds the legitimacy of holding responsible. If the Buddhists can offer something to play this role, then we can do without selves and continue blaming and praising; if they cannot, then consistency requires refraining from praise and blame.

It might be thought that such a solution is obviously unavailable to the Buddhists, for the will that grounds attributions of responsibility must endure as the same will over time in order to serve its function. But such persistence is precisely what Abhidharma metaphysics rejects. When we are looking for the “who” of consciousness, and we are doing so because we want to know who to praise and blame and with what right, we have to find some free agent behind the act – and this free agent has got to be the same, over time and across psychological capacities, if we are to be able to blame or punish a wrongdoer. After all, it is not the episodic acts of willing that are held responsible but the *person who wills*, in virtue of their so willing.

But rather than a non-starter, spelling out the option suggests a way the Buddhist could avail herself of this solution, if it seemed a good one. If it is the episode of free choice that grounds holding the *person* responsible, then the Buddhist need only have a non-standard account of what that person is (a bundle and not a soul) in order to appeal to the same solution. We Buddhists, they might say, hold responsible that bundle of psycho-physical events which is uniquely closely associated with the moment of willing which set in motion whichever culpable events it is we are interested in. This is not yet a full answer, because we may well wonder whether close association can ground accountability in the way that sameness or identity can. So we will return to look at this move more closely, once we have disposed of the free-will version of it – because considering this false trail will provide an important clue to getting hold of the Buddhist view the right way round.

Quite apart from questions of unity and persistence, free will is thought to be a precondition for attributions of responsibility of the sort we are interested in when we praise and blame, or when we hold someone *morally* accountable. It should explain why it is we offer a helping hand to the person who was pushed over into our azalea garden, while

we rebuke someone who stomps all over our azaleas. If the Buddhists' view can make good this distinction, then we might perhaps allow them their peculiar bundle-persons as the proximate location of this crucial ground of moral accountability.

The problem with this line of thought is that there is a deep confusion in the very notion of free will.¹⁶ What is supposedly wanted is conceptually impossible. This indeed may be why their non-Buddhist critics never raised the objection that Buddhist *determinism* left persons insufficiently *free* to be held accountable.¹⁷ If such a thing as free will is not found to ground moral accountability, this is not an especially Buddhist problem:¹⁸ if it is a problem for anyone, it is a problem for everyone equally. Yet it need be a problem for no one.

The difficulty begins, innocuously enough, with Aristotle's claim that we are praised and blamed only for what is "up to us".¹⁹ Aristotle, however, had no inkling of a faculty of "will", still less of that will being "free", and he was untroubled about holding adults responsible for values and actions based on habits inculcated from childhood – from before the age when anything could have been "up to us".²⁰ Only once free will was invented did this turn into an insoluble problem, for only then could we demand that there be some undetermined, independent and original cause of action in us, and think that we were making sense. As Hume already pointed out, however, if this cause is undetermined, then it is random, and if it is determined by anything external, then it is not free in the sense demanded.²¹ If we want to say that it is self-determining, the same dilemma arises again: if this self-determining original cause is nothing but a principle of action or choice, and does not itself have content, then its choices (or volitions), while self-caused, are still arbitrary. If this self has content, so that its choices may be non-arbitrary, it is not such as to have control over that content.²²

One might take a Kantian line and say that all action-initiators are *eo ipso* rational – and that there is sufficient content to reason itself that this can determine the will non-arbitrarily. Or one can reject Kantianism and go instead for "personality-ism": each action-initiator has a particular, distinctive content-outlook-personality which does the determining. But, in either case, it cannot be the action-initiator as such that has *chosen* that it be constituted by rationality, or by this particular personality. That is just what it is to be the thing that it is.

At some point, this latter move must be made. To look for anything

else is incoherent. But then our question is: at what point do we make that move, to preserve coherent attributions of “moral” responsibility?

According to the Abhidharma Buddhists, and also to the ancient Greeks, who also did not suffer from the conceptual confusion of “free will”, moral responsibility is attributable to persons when persons are the cause of an action.²³ What caused a person to be such as to be the cause of such an action is a practical question, sometimes of relevance in determining the best response to another’s action, but not usually decisive in determining a category difference between the accountable and the non-accountable. So too, say the Buddhists, the question of why we pause in the chain of causes *just there* is a pragmatic concern, not a principled one.²⁴ (We will look at this more closely below.)

Just as with the notion of an independent agent to ground responsibility, so too, argue the Buddhists, the search for the “who” behind consciousness is a red herring. Consider an argument for no-self with close parallels to the free-will discourse outlined above. At *Samyutta Nikāya* III.66, we are told that body, for instance, could not be “self” because the body is liable to all sorts of conditions we would not wish for ourselves; if it *were* ourselves, we would have control over its states and conditions. And so similarly for any candidate (feeling, thought, volition) for self – they arise and take forms we would not choose, showing that we do not control them. The principle at work seems to be: if it were *my* self, it would be under my control.

But there is a peculiarity here. The self should be whatever controls, not that which is owned, determined, directed, but that which does the directing and determining. If it turned out that bodies, cognitions or volitions *were* controllable, this would not make them the self; this would make their controller the self. Or else, if that would make them my self, what would we call that which did the controlling? Under whose control is it? *Mine*? The self we would have discovered would turn out to be something I *have*, but it would not *be* me. The self that I am remains as elusive as ever, so long as we suppose unconditioned power to determine is somewhere to be found. We wish to identify ourselves as that which is “up to us”, since this ensures our authority,²⁵ yet this attempt requires the distinction between the determiner and the determined, the owner and the owned. Once the distinction is drawn, the categories constructed, then it becomes apparent that it is the controller, not the controlled, that should be the self. The Buddhist no-self claim is precisely that this elusive

self-controlling controller is illusory.²⁶ All we have, and all we need, is consciousness, successive moments of consciousness, and various ways of misconstruing them so as to satisfy our misguided aims and ambitions. Everyone would be a lot happier if we would just leave off with all the interpretation – or at least, for heaven’s sake, not mistake it for real.

Thus, for instance, chapter 9 of the ‘Ornament for the Laity’, an Abhidharma text from probably the 12th century, makes precisely this connection.²⁷ If the non-Buddhist is inclined to insist that consciousness must be grounded in some further thing, a self, then their self will likewise require some cause or ground for its existence. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. If lacking grounding in something else makes consciousness inefficacious and indeed non-existent, then the self of precisely the groundless, uncaused and independent sort the self-theorist postulates must be likewise inefficacious and non-existent, along with all of its supposed attendant attributes or effects.²⁸

The main point is to fend off the demand that consciousness be grounded in something else besides consciousness, in order to be consciousness at all.²⁹ But the means of doing so challenges the search for ultimate or final grounds at all. The Abhidharma Buddhists do not believe that moments of consciousness are *uncaused* – *of course* any particular moment of consciousness has causal conditions for arising as and when it does. But no cause can be asked to play the role of the one unconditioned cause at which everything stops, or from which everything begins. Drawing attention to the Buddhists’ failure to attribute responsibility for consciousness to some independent self only exposes the conception of such a self as itself lacking ground, and so liable to the very objection it attempted to raise.³⁰ Something “free” in the sense of “independent of conditions” cannot, by its nature, play the role for which it was supposedly designed.

Responsibility without freedom

So we are back where we started from in trying to understand attributions of responsibility without recourse to selves of the sort that endure as the same thing over time and unite various modalities – though we have, perhaps, a somewhat better view of what the no-self claim is. The Buddhist cannot point to an act of freely willing as ultimately responsible for some chains of events and not others, and so cannot warrant apportioning

moral responsibility on that sort of ground. But this only throws more weight on the importance of selves to play the individuating role necessary for fair apportionment of responsibility. The fact that belief, evaluation, perception and desire are united in action means I am *warranted* in resenting the wanton destruction of my azaleas, whereas I may only feel dismay at the gust of wind that does the same damage.³¹ The distinctive sort of psychological unity established only by a self, and manifested in genuine *action* (as opposed to mere movement), explains why we are rightly solicitous towards someone pushed into our azaleas, while we rebuke the azalea-stomper.³² Without such a self, there is no distinction between actions and events and, without that distinction, there is no possibility for genuine accountability. The Buddhists cannot make this basic distinction, for they reject the fundamental reality of any such unity. Each person-constituting element has sufficient conditions for its arising, but there is no distinct cause of their unity³³ – this is just what it means to reject the self as the ground or cause of affects and actions. Without some real unity to the person-constituting elements, however, there can be no warrant for attributing *moral* responsibility. I might trace back the causes of death to this particular neural network giving the signal to the finger to pull the trigger, but I will find no one to hold accountable for *murder*.³⁴ Indeed, the murder itself seems to dissolve into a rearrangement of constituents. There is not only no one to bear *moral* responsibility, there is nothing for which to be responsible.³⁵

This same unifying feature of agency enables us to individuate persons in apportioning responsibility; it grounds the basic principle that only the person who *did* the deed may be called to account for it. A non-substantialist process ontology commits the Abhidharmikas, their critics charged, with punishing Yajñadatta for what Devadatta did – that is, with punishing a psycho-physical bundle at time t_2 for the actions of a non-identical psycho-physical bundle at time t_1 . If there is no real unity to the streams of elements, then the bundle of psycho-physical elements (including the intention) at the time of the action will be *as different from* the bundle at the time of punishment as are (what we would ordinarily call) two distinct persons at one time, Yajñadatta and Devadatta. But it is patently incoherent to punish Yajñadatta for what Devatta did. And so it must be equally absurd, on the Buddhist view, to punish *any* set of personal psycho-physical factors, *ever* – since, by virtue of the Buddhists' commitment to transience of such factors, no such set could *ever* be

identical with the set that committed the crime. If Buddhists can meet this objection, then they will have identified a principle of individuation and, if individuation is possible, then we therewith have won unity. The question will be whether this is sufficient unity to make out a moral distinction between the malicious azalea-destruction and the gust of wind – and, if so, whether Buddhists have thereby conceded the existence of the very sort of self they had rejected.

Now the objection may rest on a basic misunderstanding of what the Buddhist no-self view is.³⁶ The lack of an enduring subject or agent-unifier does not entail that a momentary bundle of personal elements counts as a person, so that non-identical bundles at different times must necessarily count as two persons. The Buddhist does not just reject substance: she *replaces it* with process, or continuity. Indeed, the second chapter of the second book of the *Milindapañha* – the chapter following immediately on the well-known chariot example deconstructing the real and substantial unity of the person – is full of several illustrations of causal continuity, exemplifying precisely how responsibility is nevertheless legitimately attributed in virtue of these continuities. On the classic Abhidharma view, this tightly related bundle of events now is a close causal descendant of that bundle of events there. Each one is such as to arise only under these very specific preceding conditions, each of which in turn is such as to be the effect of precisely the preceding conditions. It is the whole process, and not each moment, that gets to be called a person. And it is so called only because recognising *just these* sorts of close causal connections as belonging together proves very effective in serving our purposes. This is how we should understand people as the heirs of their actions (*MN* 135)³⁷, as “owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.”

Similar appeals to continuity in place of identity over time are still being made, to address the same worry, in the 12th-century *Upāsakajanālaṅkāra*, which maintains that

just as in ordinary life one can see the process of plant growth (taking place) without an agent, (but simply) depending on (the existence of) earth, water, warmth, (the appropriate) season, and so on, so one can see that the process (by which) these Good Deeds (give rise to their results), (occurs) because of the coming together of (appropriate) causes and conditions.³⁸

If this appeal to causal continuities without a unifier suffices to legitimate attributions of responsibility, one of the reasons will be a pragmatic understanding of responsibility attribution. This is why the Buddhist rejoinder to the challenge so regularly takes the form of an appeal to the distinction between “conventional” and “ultimate” reality. Conventional reality is real, in a way – more to the point, it is *just as real as* actions, and as real as we need it to be for our purposes. This is because it *gets its legitimacy* from our purposes: what are conventionally regarded and treated as wholes are appropriately so treated just in so far as, and because, doing so enables us effectively to achieve our purposes.³⁹ What is it we are trying *to do*, Buddhists ask, when attributing responsibility? Their answer is clear: we want to locate the causes and conditions that tend to generate suffering, so as to eliminate them and replace them with causes and conditions that generate non-suffering. And so which successions of events are considered distinct processes will be responsive to this need, and which of those pragmatically individuated processes will be of a kind to bear responsibility will depend on which of them will be effectively responded to *as* accountable.⁴⁰

Plants may be processes – successions of events it is useful for us to individuate – but there is no profit in our holding them accountable. If the tree’s branch is old and rotted, it will fall when it does regardless of any resentment and punishment we may or may not send in its direction.

The case is different with processes conventionally called persons, and distinguished from plants precisely because intentionality is a constituent element in the process. Persons (human and non-human) have intentions, aims, hopes and fears; and, for an intentional being, customs of resentment and accountability do indeed have causal influence in the direction the process takes – that is, they can be effective in reducing suffering. So intentions will turn out to matter, in a way. Although they will not be conceived of as ultimate grounds or independent causes, they will be decisive in determining whether attribution of responsibility is appropriate or not. Accountability will not always be in order: even among person processes, there are a wide variety of causes and conditions for suffering, each with their own form of effective remedy, and Buddhism attends to them all. But experience shows that the particular causal factor of intention is more effectively prevented from arising when generally responded to differently from the way other causal conditions are addressed.⁴¹

So if someone is injured by a heavy branch falling on him, the appropriate response (besides attending to the wounds) is a practice of regularly identifying and removing dead wood from trees. If, by contrast, someone is injured by a club being wielded by someone with hostile intent, we have taken it that a practice of causing successors of that intention's psycho-physical bundle some form of restraint and pain tends to be more effective in creating conditions under which such intentions do not arise in future. We may, of course, be mistaken about the efficacy of painful punishment – indeed, we probably are. But a response that addresses the process by which intentions are generated will be called for, rather than one that addresses tree growth. And this type of responsiveness is what we call “holding responsible”.

This may well force us to reconceive blaming;⁴² it should almost certainly cause us to rethink forms of punishment for and responses to any harm that has “intention to harm” among its causal conditions. But it does not make attributions of moral responsibility incoherent – on the contrary, it is a fairly conventional account of what distinguishes attributions of “moral” responsibility from other types of responsibility-attribution.⁴³

Even without a persisting and unified self, I am responsible for my actions, where “I” picks out a process of causally connected psycho-physical events, and actions (as opposed to mere movements) are mine when appropriately related to intentions arising in this same process. Although there is no real unity, unifier or persisting element within this process, and although the process is typically driven onward by (and in turn generates) a sense of self, we are not concerned here with actions I merely *take to be* mine or feel are mine. Such feelings and self-assessments can be unreliable in both directions: I may not recognise as mine actions that clearly follow from my definite intentions and no other, and I may feel as mine some action that in fact is more properly credited to other causes. We are not concerned with a sense of self, or with a process of identification, but with what really can be properly attributed to me – only this can legitimate accountability. According to the Abhidharma Buddhist, however, these actions are not mine in virtue of either (1) their having an independent will as their original source or (2) their components being united by, or grounded in, a real and irreducible whole. The actions are “mine” in the purely locative sense of having an intention arising in the context of *this* rather than some other bundle of mental events.

We might think that there is an obvious problem here in individuating bundles and streams – after all, the Buddhist minimalist claim is that all such complex wholes are not held together by any metaphysical glue. Certainly the Buddhists’ Nyāya critics pressed the point. The objection returns us to the original concern: without real unity, you cannot have real individuals – not even real individual streams of bundles of psycho-physical property-moments. So either there is nothing uniting bundle-streams and the Buddhist is still punishing Yajñadatta for what Devadatta did, or else there is a principle of unity and that just is what it is for there to be a self – a self to cling to, serve, defend and prioritise over others.

Vasubandhu’s reply to this line of thought is brilliantly economical: he simply reminds us that all attributions of unity, even stream-individuation, are pragmatic and *post hoc*. We individuate among manifold causally connected processes in ways that enable us to communicate efficiently and effectively reach our aims. There is no need to *presume* individuation of persons to attribute responsibility, because it is the connections between actions and consequences that our pragmatic individuation tracks in the first place.⁴⁴ The holding responsible *is* the individuating. Actions, their immediate necessary conditions and their closest successors are the *grounds* of individuation – though not because of any mysterious metaphysical specialness of action. It happens that carving our experiences according to these connections is useful. Since Buddhists tend to be very sceptical of the aims determining our sense of usefulness, their critique of the self and their critique of conventional reality go hand in glove.

The plot thickens . . .

Not everybody was satisfied with this brilliantly economical reply. Of course one would not expect those committed to the real existence of the self as agent, or unifying subject, to be satisfied. More surprising is that there were a large number of Buddhists, among them the eponymous Sāṃmitīyas, who were also not satisfied.⁴⁵

For the first four or five hundred years of Buddhist theorising, a substantial number of adherents held an interpretation of the Buddhist view according to which the person was ultimately real. The *self*, of course, was rejected – these are still Buddhists we are talking about, and the self will still be rejected, both as an independent individual and as an object of

searching or aspiration. Nevertheless, the *person* was, the Personalists claimed, ultimately real: that is, it is just as real as its constituent event-processes, and not something just projected by us onto reality, the better to be able to bend experience to our wills.

Needless to say, these Buddhist Personalists were blacklisted. By far the greater part of Vasubandhu's 'Treatise on the Person' (the part of the auto-commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa* which comments on no verse of the original text) is devoted to refuting the *pudgalavāda*. His is one of only three accounts remaining to us of what the view actually was. One of the other two is also from a decidedly hostile source – the Theravāda text, the *Kathāvattu*. Naturally the Buddhist Personalists are depicted by their Buddhist opponents as reintroducing the self by the back door. But, surprisingly to us, when they are so depicted, they are not accused – as we might immediately presume – of making a distinction without a difference. The Buddhist Personalist view was taken by its opponents as significantly different from any of the self-as-agent/subject/unifier views (even if it did end up in the same place), and in need of different arguments against it.⁴⁶

The reason for this, I suggest, is that the Personalist position was indeed a distinctive view and a philosophically motivated one. Thus, they required engagement not just as fellow Buddhists who had to be held to the standard of plausible interpretation of the Buddha's words; they required engagement as fellow philosophers concerned to make sense of reality – concerned in particular, in this case, with making sense of attributions of responsibility and their legitimacy.

The Personalists did not think that a purely conventional self or person, whose unity consisted entirely in *ex post facto* individuations that served our purposes, could account for or legitimate attributions of responsibility. It could not, they thought, dispatch the Yajñadatta-Devadatta objection; and it could not explain accountability of persons, because it could not consistently grant sufficient reality to moral acts taken as such (as theft, say, or murder) that they could be actions for which one might be held accountable.

There is a metaphysical dimension to the Personalist's complaint, and a practical one. Looking simply at the metaphysics, Buddhist minimalists like Vasubandhu deny that there is any right way of carving up reality, and bundling together simple momentary events, except as it is convenient for our purposes (as if our purposes could get off the ground

without some carving up of reality). The only reality any complex whole has is that which it is useful for us to grant some subset of elementary events. But any morally valenced action – that is, any *action* properly so called, as distinct from simply another arising of events – is a complex phenomenon. Even if this is not just obvious, it must follow for any Buddhist who rejects isolated and independent moments of willing as the ground of responsibility and definitiveness of action. Without a wide variety of factors, including physical ones, *taken together as a whole*, there is no action – no theft, betrayal, fraud, assault or murder.

The level at which “murder” comes into focus *as such* is not the atomic level: at the atomic level, there is just a rearrangement of constituents. For there to be *murder*, different sorts of *dharmas* must interact with each other *so as to constitute a whole* – the murderous intention and its relation to the bodily movements constitutive of killing and their relation to perceptions and feelings of pleasure and pain must be taken together, for murder to be on the cards at all. But if that is right, we cannot take murder as that by reference to which we organise our bundle-individuating. That is, it cannot be *because* treating murder thus is useful that we are entitled to individuate person-processes as we do; for, without individuating the person-processes in the first place, there is no *murder*, and so nothing to motivate individuation.

The Buddhist minimalist may, through appeal to dependent origination, have a full explanation of the arising of any particular element constitutive of murder; but they do not allow that there is, or need be, any explanation of all of the elements coming together just as they do, so as to generate some distinctive and new thing, the *murder*. That, they say, is merely our retrospective and convenient way of considering an arbitrarily circumscribed subset of events. But, the Personalists observe, to consider something *as an action* is to take it to be embedded within and constituted by the inter-relation of various sorts of factors. Perceptions can explain the arising of intentions and intentions the arising of perceptions; physical elements explain the arising of further similar and related such elements or events. But action exists at the intersection of these, and can only be understood as grounded in very particular arrangements of these and no other. The action arising may belong to conventional reality, but if the intersecting itself is not ultimately real then there is nothing to make it convenient for us to designate one set rather than another as a whole. Nothing can make it convenient to

conceive of murder *as* murder, or events which arise subsequently as *results of murder*.

This has immediate practical implications. We noted above that the self which Buddhism rejects will be *whatever* sort of entity believing in which grounds the activity of distinguishing “me” from the rest of reality, and appropriating bits of reality as “mine”, while dissociating from others. But there is an obvious problem with this strategy that is not often taken sufficiently seriously. If I should undermine any sense of self that would lead me to say “mine”, how can I simultaneously retain a sense of responsibility for the effects of my actions and values? How do I conceive of myself as the inheritor of my acts? We are told by the Abhidharma Buddhists that the sense in which I am the bearer of the consequences of my action is simply that, events unfolding as they do, we take an interest in some associations and not others, and so designate them processes or continua. But the individuation of these is purely pragmatic, and not legitimated by any actual distinction between, or unity of, processes. This seems insufficient to generate and maintain a sense of responsibility for my choices, values, words and actions – and, indeed, would seem positively to undermine it. A sense of self as something that is not just a conveniently circumscribed set of inevitable processes is the motivating condition for good acts as much as bad ones.

The Denouement

The Personalists do not think we have to posit a persisting self, nor an independent principle of individuation, to address these problems. But they do take the problems seriously as in need of some solution or another. Simply saying “no-self” will not do. What they offer instead, what their person-that-is-not-a-self should be, is a metaphysics of real but non-essential individuation.

As good Buddhists and sober metaphysicians, the Personalists agree that there is no extra element – a self, a subject, a principle of individuation – to which a certain set of property-occurrences belong, or in which they inhere, or which independently grounds the unity of the person. All the same, it is not up to me – my interests, our conventions – whether x belongs to a given continuum. Certain bits of reality do belong together, and not equally to everything else; they belong to

each other, we might say. We cannot perhaps understand what these individual continuities are – better, we cannot explain their belonging together (to each other) in any other way, by reference to anything else, which is to say, *at all*.⁴⁷ They simply do – that is basic; and it *accounts for* our sense of there being more relevance between this evil intention here and that wicked deed there than between, say, my evil intention and your wicked deed.

Such real but non-essential individuation of events into continua or processes suffices to generate a sense of responsibility, for it is not optional or a matter of my convenience whether I should take any particular subset of causal factors together if they really do belong together; so, too, it is not optional whether I happen to take an interest in some complex causal consequence of such a continuum. The murder, *as murder*, may be only conventionally real, but it arises as such not only based on our convenience and purposes but also on the very real intersection of intentions, perceptions and motions that are the person.

This sense of responsibility, enabled by appeal to the non-negotiable belonging of personal factors to each other so as to constitute a person, is a condition for wholesome intentions and actions arising. But this sense of responsibility does not, the Personalist will claim, generate a sense of “mine” as opposed to others – it does not, that is to say, generate a sense of self.

For there is nobody and nothing *to whom* the person-constituting factors belong (they belong to each other); there is nothing whose independence is threatened by the existence of others (the continua are not independent, and do not need to be in order to exist as they do), and there is nothing in a continuum to assert or protect. The person, in the technical sense the Personalists give it, is thus not a self in any of the received senses; nor does acknowledging the existence of real continuity function as a proxy self in the crucial respect.

The solution of the mystery is, on this reading, a relocation of it: a sense of responsibility is warranted and not undermined by the rejection of a self of any description. Seeing that bundles of streams belong to each other constitutes the motivation which is partially causally responsible for subsequent wholesome states. At the same time, as a thing thoroughly dependent on its constituents for any character it has, the person so understood provides no grounds for pretensions of control, for pristine unsulliedness from its constituents, or for identity-threat through suf-

fering or change. The real person enables a sense of responsibility, and legitimates accountability, while providing no quarter for the very things that make belief in a *self* harmful.

Notes

1. *Samyutta Nikāya*, I.135. Translations of the *Samyutta Nikāya* are by B. Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston, MA, Wisdom Publications, 2000.

2. No-self as discourse and practice is explored in S. Collins, ‘What are Buddhists *doing* when they deny the Self?’, in F.E. Reynolds & D. Tracy (eds.), *Religion and Practical Reason*, New York, NY, State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 59–86; see also S. Hamilton, *The ‘I’ of the Beholder*, London, Routledge, 2000, for discussion of no-self as originally more a practical point than a metaphysical one.

3. Thus Vasubandhu, for instance, could be quite specific about the self that is rejected; the agent–subject–unifier triad, above, is taken from his *Discussion of the Five Aggregates*.

4. A philosophical treatment of the self in the *Upaniṣads* is offered in J. Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, chap. 1.

5. Snake Sutta, *Majjhima Nikāya* 22.22. Translations of the *Majjhima Nikāya* are by B. Bodhi and Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Boston, MA, Wisdom Publications, 1995, unless otherwise stated.

6. *Majjhima Nikāya* 72 & *Samyutta Nikāya* 12.35.

7. *Majjhima Nikāya* 57.

8. See also *Majjhima Nikāya* 109.10–13.

9. This rejects, then, what G. Strawson appears to argue in *Selves*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2009, pp. 15–20. D. Zahavi is interested in the “experiential self”, which may not be so much a move from a sense of self to a self sensed as it is simply a declaration to use “self” of that very sense itself. In describing his position as “occupying a kind of middle position between two opposing views . . . the self [as] some kind of unchanging soul substance [and the view that] there is nothing to consciousness apart from a manifold of interrelated changing experiences” (D. Zahavi, ‘The Experiential Self: Objections and Clarifications’, in M. Siderits, E. Thompson & D. Zahavi (eds.), *Self, No-Self?*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 59). Zahavi looks very like the renegade “personalist” Buddhists I discuss below; or, for the full picture of the *pudgalavāda*, see A. Carpenter, ‘Persons Keeping Their Karma Together: On the Philosophical Motivations for the *Pudgalavāda*’, in K. Tanaka, Y. Deguchi, J. Garfield & G. Priest (eds.), *The Moon Points Back*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 1–44. But in pinning his “middle way” to a “firm boundary between self and other” (‘The Experiential Self’, p. 69, note 4, with an approving nod to William James’s thought that “the elementary psychic fact [is] not *thought* or *this thought* or *that thought*, but *my thought*, every thought being *owned*”), he may grant the sense of self more credence than any

Buddhist ought.

10. This point, as well as many related, is argued, with particular reference to the current consciousness literature, in J. Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2015, chap. 5.

11. Most Buddhists, even the later ones, can be classified as D-theorists, dualist-interactionists (Abhidharma) or F-theorists, panprotopsychists (*Yogācāra*) in the taxonomy of D. Chalmers, ‘Consciousness and its Place in Nature’, in S. Stich & T. Warfield (eds.), *Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Mind*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2003, pp. 102–42; Mādhyamikas, as usual, may be playing such a different game that it is wiser to refrain from classification.

12. As, for instance, is put forward in U. Kriegel, *Subjective Consciousness: A Self-Representational Theory*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2009.

13. This is the borderline Zahavi skirts in ‘The Experiential Self’, arguing for instance that “different experiences [of the same person] are all characterized by the same fundamental first-personal character. They are all characterized by what might be called a dimension of *for-me-ness* or *mineness*” (p. 58), though the sense of “mineness” is so carefully distinguished from any familiar sense that it is difficult to determine whether it is the sort of “mineness” the Buddhists had in their sights as the root of grasping, and so of suffering. Similarly unclear to me is whether E. Thompson, ‘Self-No-Self? Memory and Reflexive Awareness’, in Siderits, Thompson & Zahavi (eds.), *Self, No-Self?*, does not perhaps concede too much on the Buddhist’s behalf, and more than necessary on this score, when he writes: “Although the intentionally implicated past experience need not be given as mine in an objectified egological sense (as the experience of my ego), it is given from within as an experience formerly lived through first-personally, that is, by me” (p. 173). What is gained by this last “by me” step? And again, on the same page: “If ‘ego’ means self-as-object, as it does for Sartre, then Sartre’s nonegological conception seems compatible with Zahavi’s insistence that pre-reflective experience is not lived through anonymously, but rather first-personally.” Can we not simply say it is lived through, full stop – which is only to say, it is an experience?

14. There was, of course, much disagreement about the precise nature of this going out of existence, with some Buddhists arguing that the arising, existing and demise of any *dharma* each required its own moment of arising, existing and demise. But Vasubandhu’s position that their coming into existence must itself be the sufficient cause of their going out of existence – and so all existence is strictly momentary – seems the most philosophically consistent and insightful.

15. And, just to make things especially awkward for the Buddhist, this very type of rhetorical question is actively promoted in hortatory discourse such as Śāntideva’s exhortation to patience (*Bodhicāryāvatāra* VI).

16. Detailed scholarly analysis of the steps by which this notion nevertheless came to have a place within a standard moral psychology and conception of the domain of the moral is found in M. Frede, *A Free Will: Origins of the Notion in Ancient Thought*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2012.

17. See J. Garfield, ‘Just Another Word for Nothing Left to Lose: Freedom, Agency and Ethics for Mādhyamikas’, in M.R. Dasti & E.F. Bryant (eds.), *Free Will, Agency and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 164–85, for insightful discussion of the particular and contingent conceptual moves distinctive of the development of European philosophy which gave rise to this problem. While Garfield discusses Madhyamaka Buddhism in particular, one needs no special commitment to Madhyamaka to dissolve the problem of free will. My focus here is on how the related issues appear within Abhidharma Buddhist thought.

18. This has not stopped a good number of contemporary scholars from trying to determine the Buddhist solution, if any, to the problem of free will, or from trying to classify Buddhists generally or particular Buddhist positions along the contemporary analytic spectrum from hard determinism to libertarianism. A comprehensive overview of the discussion, along with extensive references to further scholarly literature, is offered in R. Repetti’s essays ‘Buddhist Theories of Free Will: Compatibilism’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, no. 17, 2010, pp. 279–310; ‘Buddhist Reductionism and Free Will: Palaeo-Compatibilism’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, no. 19, 2012, pp. 33–95; ‘Buddhist Hard Determinism: No Self, No Free Will, No Responsibility’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, no. 19, 2012, pp. 130–97; ‘Recent Buddhist Theories of Free Will: Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and Beyond’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, no. 21, 2014, pp. 279–352. If, as argued in Garfield, ‘Just Another Word for Nothing Left to Lose’, certain non-necessary presumptions must be in place for the problem to emerge, or if, as I argue, these contingent presumptions are badly arranged so as to issue in an incoherent demand, then it is no wonder perhaps that when scholars try to force Buddhists to “answer” the question of free will, they end up saying things like “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 (P. Harvey, ‘Freedom of the Will in Light of Theravāda Teachings’, *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, no. 14, 2007, p. 36).

19. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III, especially chap. 1–3. It is in this form that Karin Meyers takes up her treatment of Abhidharma concerns with agency, looking in particular at the tension arising from the simultaneous denial of self and exhortation to reform ourselves in various ways (K. Meyers, ‘Free Persons, Empty Selves: Freedom and Agency in Light of the Two Truths’, in Dasti & Bryant (eds.), *Free Will, Agency and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*).

20. As with so many things, the Stoics make a decisive move here, though early Christian thought also contributed, as the intellectual history traced in Frede, *A Free Will*, shows.

21. See ‘Of Liberty and Necessity’, in D. Hume’s *A Treatise of Human Nature*, London, Penguin, 1985, and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, sect. 8.

22. See A. Schopenhauer, *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, for a pointed discussion of freedom requiring determinism to escape the madness of arbitrariness.

23. At *Āṅguttara Nikāya* III.337–38, the Buddha is depicted as saying that *of course* there is “self-initiative” (*atta-kāra*), just as there is effort and exertion and persistence, but the passage immediately goes on to remind us that all *karma* originates in greed, aversion and confusion. Initiation of action there may be, but this too arises due to causes and conditions. In the *Questions of King Milinda* II.2, the king determines accountability and identity by tracing an unbroken chain of effects back to something someone did. The particular inappropriateness of dragging free will into the Abhidharma Buddhist discussion, and how responsibility is attributed without that, is set out in K.L. Meyers, ‘Freedom and Self-Control: Free Will in South Asian Buddhism’, PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010, chap. 4.

24. Vasubandhu explicitly rejects the notion of the self-initiating initiator of action in Book IX of his *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. The aggregated psycho-physical elements are the “agent”, he argues, and all of them arise as they do on account of their appropriate physical or mental causes. “That being the case, nothing at all has autonomy. For all things come about depending on conditions” (*AKBh.* IX as translated in M. Kapstein, *Reason’s Traces*, Boston, MA, Wisdom Publications, 2001, p. 373). Meyers, ‘Freedom and Self-Control’, chap. 2–3, distinguishes more carefully between Vasubandhu and his predecessors on this point.

25. One might reflect here on the prominence of identification with that which is “up to us” in the Stoicism of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

26. As Martin T. Adam puts it, in his illuminating discussion of this passage: “While it may be the case that we can be judged empirically free to the extent that we can do as we want, we are not metaphysically free in the sense of being able to directly determine the constellation of factors we identify with, and out of which our actions proceed” (M.T. Adam, ‘No Self, No Free Will, No Problem: Implications of the Anattalakkhana Sutta for a Perennial Philosophical Issue’, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, no. 33, 2011, pp. 251–52). While this may be, as Adam suggests, because as a matter of fact “there is no self-controlling controller”, I am suggesting that what we learn instead is that the very notion of one is incoherent, and discovering such a thing would not give us what we think we want when we seek a self.

27. This short text is translated with insightful philosophical commentary by S. Collins, ‘A Buddhist Debate About the Self; and Remarks on Buddhism in the Works of Derek Parfit and Galen Strawson’, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, no. 25, 1997, pp. 467–93.

28. Collins, pp. 487–88, note 7: “The arguments of 2.2–5, in which I have translated *karaka* as both ‘doer’ and ‘cause’, and *katta* in 2.5 as ‘agent’, is this: the opponent assumes that the Self, as agent and experiencer, does not itself have someone or something else as its ‘doer’, its cause: otherwise there would be an infinite regress. By the same reasoning, the Buddhist position holds, Good Deeds

themselves can exist without a doer, without a Self as cause.”

29. A similar line of argument would presumably be taken against P. Williams’ strenuous objection to “free-floating pains” in his much-discussed paper ‘The Absence of Self and the Removal of Pain: How Śāntideva Destroyed the Bodhisattva Path’. See P. Williams, *Altruism and Reality: Studies in the Philosophy of the Bodhicāryāvātāra*, London, Routledge, 1997.

30. The Mādhyamika Candrakīrti argues in a similar vein in his commentary on his *Madhyamakāvātāra* IV.

31. This picks up the crucial distinction investigated in the seminal P. Strawson, ‘Freedom and Resentment’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, no. 48, 1962, pp. 187–211, but relocates its basis in the *unity* of the agent, rather than in her supposed freedom.

32. Such unity figures prominently in the account of the Nyāya concern with moral accountability in M. Dasti, ‘Nyāya’s Self as Agent and Knower’, in Dasti and Bryant (eds.), *Free Will, Agency and Selfhood*, p. 113: “For Nyāya, agency is, therefore, a special expression of the self’s different capacities and potentialities, which coherently ties them together.” This unity point is brought against the Buddhists with particular force by Uddyotakara in his *Nyāyavārttika* I.1.10.

33. Invoking a different philosophical language, we might say that according to the Abhidharma Buddhists *all* apparent wholes are the result of what Aristotle would call chance: while each constitutive element has an adequate explanation, the coming together of the elements in just this way has no cause of its own, even if the conjunction *looks as if* it is the sort of distinct individual (or intelligible state of affairs) which would ordinarily have some explanation of its own. See Aristotle, *Physics* II.4–6.

34. One is reminded of Socrates arguing for a unitary and immaterial soul as the responsible principle, dismissing the explanatory potential of the bodily constituents, with the remark that “I think these bones and sinews could long ago have been in Megara or among the Boetians, taken there by my belief as to the best course” (*Phaedo* 99a1–2).

35. “If there were no Self as agent and experiencer,” the Buddhist’s opponent objects (*Upāsakajanālaṅkāra* 9.2.1, translated in Collins, ‘A Buddhist Debate About the Self’), “it would follow that Good Deeds do not exist.” This is clearly just the positive converse of the same point: without a unified agent-experiencer, bad deeds likewise would not exist.

36. M. Siderits has argued as much: ‘Beyond Compatibilism: A Buddhist Approach to Freedom and Determinism’, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, no. 24, 1987, pp. 149–59; *Buddhism as Philosophy*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007.

37. The context of the Shorter Exposition of Action (Cūlakammavibhaṅga-Sutta) is an inquiry about natural inequalities: “Master Gotama, what is the cause and condition why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior? For people are seen to be short-lived and long-lived, sickly and healthy, ugly and beautiful, uninfluential and influential, poor and wealthy, low-born and high-born, stupid

and wise. What is the cause and condition, Master Gotama, why human beings are seen to be inferior and superior?” “Student, beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior” (translated by Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*).

38. Chap. 9, 2.7, translated in Collins, ‘A Buddhist Debate About the Self’.

39. I treat this point in greater detail in A. Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, London, Routledge-Acumen, 2014, chap. 6.

40. Legitimizing accountability by appeal to conventional reality is explored from a Madhyamaka perspective in The Cowherds, *Moonpaths*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2015, and, to a lesser extent, in The Cowherds, *Moonshadows*, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2011.

41. The discussion of Vasubandhu on *karma* and intending in Meyers, ‘Freedom and Self-Control’, chap. 5, is especially illuminating on these issues.

42. And if blame is criterial of “true” responsibility attributions, then it will be the case, as Strawson has claimed, that the enlightened perspective, according to the Buddhist, “involves no sort of belief in true responsibility at all”; see G. Strawson, *Freedom and Belief*, 2nd edn., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 317.

43. These issues are discussed further in ‘Ethics Without Justice’ in *A Mirror is For Reflection* (Jake Davis, ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2017)

44. This interpretation of Vasubandhu’s handling of the challenge is explored in more detail in Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, chap. 6.

45. The Sāṃmitīyas were one of a number of sects of early Buddhists who held the *pudgalavāda*, the view or doctrine of the person (so, Personalists). There is no particular reason to pick them out from the many others, and I have no intention of pretending to offer a picture of their particular brand of personalism, if there was such. The *Sāṃmitīyanikāyaśāstra*, a text of the Saṃmitīya school, is one of only three remaining (in Chinese translation) sources of information about the *pudgalavāda*, and the only non-hostile one. It has come down to us in different versions, see T.T. Châu, *The Literature of the Personalists of Early Buddhism*, translated by S. Boin-Webb, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1999, for an excellent scholarly review of these texts; L. Priestley, *Pudgalavāda Buddhism: The Reality of the Indeterminate Self*, Toronto, Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Toronto, 1999, for a wider historical background, as well as an intriguing philosophical reconstruction.

46. The *pudgalavāda* is addressed in greater detail in Carpenter, ‘Persons Keeping their *Karma* Together’, where I argue in particular that it amounts to supposing the person-constituting elements *really do* belong to each other in a way they do not belong to the non-person-constituting elements, and, in this precise respect, we must concede the person is *really* (or, as the Buddhists say, ultimately) real. Zahavi’s view is thus very nearly pure *pudgalavāda*, when he writes that “this self is real and . . . it possesses real diachronicity, but . . . I don’t think its reality – its phenomenological reality – depends on its ability to mirror or match or represent some non-experiential enduring ego-substance” – except for the fundamental dif-

ference that the Buddhists do not and would not rest their case (*this* case) on phenomenology but on explanatory adequacy (Zahavi, ‘The Experiential Self’, p. 74).

47. Thus the Personalists (in)famously declared the person “inexplicable” or “unsayable” (*avaktavya*).

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