

**Śāntideva and the Transformation of Mind: The Interdependence of Ethics and Wisdom,
with Reference to the Perfection of Generosity**

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Abstract

This thesis argues that Śāntideva's ethics consists of a transformation of mind. We demonstrate this interpretation by presenting a mind-training framework of Śāntideva's ethics, with a specific focus on the perfection of generosity. Generosity is a quality of the mind (*citta*), and to cultivate the mind of generosity, the bodhisattva trains his mind to attain wisdom. Upon attaining wisdom, the bodhisattva's mind is transformed, and he possesses the perfected perfection of generosity. The mind-training framework thus shows an interdependence between ethics and wisdom.

The mind-training framework is demonstrated by first explaining the pertinence of this interpretation; this requires contextualizing Śāntideva's ethics within the scope of *bodhicitta*. Based on this context, we argue that Śāntideva's ethics must be understood from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*. This standpoint reveals the importance of cultivating the perfections with an aim to attain wisdom. To further explain the pertinence of the mind-training framework, we examine competing interpretations of Śāntideva's work and expound their difficulties.

Having addressed various interpretations of Śāntideva's ethics, we then discuss the mind-training framework. We present this framework with reference to a topic that has not received much attention in current scholarship: we refer to a specific training for the bodhisattva, which is introduced in Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. This training shows that to cultivate the mind of generosity, the bodhisattva must cultivate the other perfections in sequence with the goal of attaining wisdom. We then examine the nature of wisdom as described by Śāntideva in Chapter 9 of *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Wisdom, for Śāntideva, is the realization that all persons and phenomena are empty (*śūnya*) of self-nature (*svabhāva*). Upon realizing this, the bodhisattva has a mind of generosity that is not clouded by ignorance; generosity is now perfected. Overall, by incorporating *bodhicitta* in an interpretation of Śāntideva, we aim to show that his ethics is best interpreted as a transformation of mind which reveals an interdependence between ethics and wisdom.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 *Overview*

This thesis examines the ethics of the eighth century Indian Buddhist philosopher, Śāntideva. Śāntideva presents his ethics in two works: *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (henceforth, *BCA*), and *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (henceforth, *ŚS*). These texts present the ethics of a bodhisattva, a being who strives for enlightenment for the sake of alleviating, and ultimately ending, the suffering of other beings. Ethics, for Śāntideva, addresses the question of how the bodhisattva should live.¹ In both his texts, Śāntideva argues that a bodhisattva should live with compassion; this is the essential quality of a bodhisattva. Out of compassion, the bodhisattva makes a vow to free all beings from suffering. The core of the bodhisattva vow is to give all that one owns to other beings to alleviate their suffering. Giving, in this regard, is the epitome, or summary (*saṃgraha*) of the vow and the primary expression of compassion. To give effectively such that other beings benefit from what is given requires cultivating the six perfections (*pāramitā*) and attaining the wisdom of the nature of reality. For Śāntideva, wisdom amounts to the realization of the emptiness of self and phenomena. The six perfections are generosity, discipline, patience, zeal, meditation, and wisdom; these are qualities of the mind, or virtues that the bodhisattva cultivates sequentially in order to reach wisdom and attain enlightenment.² Upon attaining wisdom, the bodhisattva is able to act in a way that best benefits others, as his mind is no longer clouded by false views on reality; he consequently acts according to the bodhisattva vow. The bodhisattva's way of life, then, is to alleviate others' suffering, and he is required to cultivate the necessary mind, or mental disposition (*citta*) which will enable him to attain this goal.

¹ See Clayton 2006, 19, where she mentions that the broadest sense of ethics is a response to the question of how one should live. We start from the same point, but specify it to the life of the bodhisattva, as this captures Śāntideva's context.

² We will examine the perfections in further detail in Chapter 2.

The focus in this thesis is an examination of the bodhisattva's transformation of mind to be able to act according to the bodhisattva vow and alleviate the suffering of other beings. This requires cultivating the six perfections, and we consider this to be the main scope of Śāntideva's ethics. The scope of Śāntideva's ethics can be contextualized within the greater field of Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics. At its core is compassion and the ensuing bodhisattva vow. The vow is not a mere wish, as the bodhisattva acts to fulfil the aspiration of his vow. There are, in this respect, specific activities, or conduct (*carya*), that the bodhisattva aims to partake in for the sake of benefitting other beings. However, to partake in this conduct – to act according to the vow – the bodhisattva must first attain wisdom. The process to attain this requires a training (*śikṣā*). This training consists of cultivating the six perfections, where the bodhisattva works towards the attainment of wisdom. It is noteworthy that one of the perfections, discipline (*śīla*), is sometimes translated as “morality” or “ethics.” We will address the challenges of this translation in Chapter 2; for now, we should see that the scope of Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics is larger than the perfection of discipline alone. Within this greater scope, Śāntideva's ethics addresses the training to be able to act according to the vow; in this respect, his ethics are focused on the cultivation of the six perfections.

Though the primary scope of Śāntideva's ethics is a cultivation to attain wisdom, there is also a unique way of being that follows from the attainment of wisdom, that is, when the mind of the perfections are attained. This way of being consists of the bodhisattva activities, or conduct. However, this goes beyond the focus of this thesis and the primary focus of Śāntideva's work, so we do not engage with it in detail. We nonetheless mention what this part of Mahāyāna ethics would look like to show the results of the cultivation of generosity in a mind-training framework. This reveals that the unique way of being that follows from wisdom is based on a disposition

associated with the perfected perfections, which we will consider with respect to the perfection of generosity.

To demonstrate Śāntideva's ethics as a cultivation that aims to transform the mind, we will examine the first perfection, generosity. As stated, this thesis argues that Śāntideva's conception of the perfection of generosity is part of a mind-training. The bodhisattva aims to train his mind to attain wisdom, which consequently transforms his mind and ensuing actions. To demonstrate this, we will consider generosity from the standpoint of aspirational bodhicitta – a concept we will explain in Chapter 2 – which entails a sequential cultivation of the other five perfections and culminates in the attainment of wisdom, the sixth perfection. Moreover, due to the nature of the cultivation, we will see that there is an interdependence between generosity and wisdom: specifically, the bodhisattva can only attain the mind of generosity – and indeed, be generous most effectively such that other beings are benefitted in the best possible way – by attaining wisdom. Thus, to cultivate the perfection of generosity and best benefit other beings, the bodhisattva must sequentially cultivate the other perfections to attain wisdom.

We focus on generosity in this thesis rather than the other perfections due to its contextual importance within the bodhisattva path. As we will discuss in Chapters 2 and 6, generosity follows from compassion and is thus a fundamental element in the bodhisattva's cultivation. While the other perfections can also be studied separately to show the mind-training framework, analyzing generosity allows us to highlight the importance of compassion and *bodhicitta* that is central to Śāntideva's ethics. Moreover, as we will demonstrate in Chapter 6, a study of generosity includes a relation to the other perfections. Specifically, generosity will be seen as a key perfection for the bodhisattva, and the process of its cultivation leads the bodhisattva to cultivate the other perfections, which eventually culminates in wisdom. Generosity is also

important due to its ease of practice; indeed, it is easiest for lay Buddhists to practice and thus has a wider scope with respect to who can partake in it. Thus, to demonstrate the mind-training framework and the interdependence between ethics and wisdom, it is helpful to examine generosity, the first perfection.

A key idea of mind-training is its incorporation of wisdom. The goal of training the mind is to cultivate the mind of the perfections, and to do so requires the attainment of wisdom. This idea is not unique to this thesis, as mind-training itself is discussed by other scholars, such as Thupten Jinpa.³ Moreover, the idea of mind-training is central in Buddhism; we can therefore find developments of this idea throughout Buddhist literature. However, we differ from these works by presenting a specific mind-training framework that has not received much attention in academic scholarship. We develop a practice presented in *ŚS*: the threefold training of protecting, purifying, and enhancing one's body, possessions, and merit. Indeed, *ŚS* is structured around this threefold training; our inclusion of this text and the training in our interpretation considers a relatively new approach to Śāntideva. Specifically, using the threefold training to present a mind-training framework is a novel approach. Ultimately, the threefold training can be used to show that the cultivation of the perfection of generosity entails a progression towards wisdom, thereby showing the mind-training framework of the cultivation of generosity.

To understand Śāntideva's ethics, it is important to note that he is an adherent of Madhyamaka Buddhism, a subschool of the larger Mahāyāna Buddhist school. As a result, we should understand his work in contrast to the teachings of Śrāvakayāna Buddhism.⁴ Though there

³ See Jinpa 2019.

⁴ Śrāvakayāna translates as "vehicle of the hearers." It is usually referred to through the pejorative term "Hīnayāna," meaning "lesser vehicle." The Śrāvakayāna was seen to be a lesser path primarily because its followers supposedly focused only on their own well-being rather than others. The presence of compassion, then, was used to distinguish between the two schools. Nonetheless, this idea is not quite accurate, as compassion and the well-being of others is

is considerable overlap between the specific teachings of these two schools, they differ with respect to their emphasis on certain teachings.⁵ However, some scholars argue that there are indeed vast differences between the two schools, going beyond a mere difference in emphasis.⁶ The key difference, even if it is just an difference of emphasis, is the object of soteriology. In the Śrāvakayāna, the object of salvation is primarily the individual partaking in the practice, whereas for the Mahāyāna, the object of salvation includes other beings.⁷ To underscore this difference, Mahāyāna Buddhism places an importance on the figure of the bodhisattva. Though the figure of the bodhisattva is present in the Śrāvakayāna traditions as well, they emphasize the figure of the arhat. This is an individual who strives for enlightenment for his own sake.⁸ However, as mentioned, we should be aware that the differences between these two schools of Buddhism is one of emphasis and not presence, especially with respect to the bodhisattva.⁹ Nonetheless, despite the supposed lack of difference, there does indeed appear to be a difference in emphasis in the initial motivation for undertaking the path to enlightenment between the two schools. The

indeed present in the Śrāvakayāna. To avoid the pejorative connotation conveyed by “Hīnayāna,” we will use the term Śrāvakayāna in its place. This school ultimately refers to the early Buddhist teachings based on the Pāli Canon.
⁵ Walsh 1995, 27.

⁶ Akira 1990, 258. Despite the difference, the Śrāvakayāna schools did have a sizeable influence on Mahāyāna schools (see *ibid.*, 291).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁸ Clayton 2011, 289; Tobden 2017, 255-256.

⁹ See Walsh 1995, 27: “The concept of the Bodhisattva, who renounces the enjoyment of Nirvāṇa in order to bring all beings to enlightenment, which is considered the hallmark of the Mahāyāna schools as opposed to the Hīnayāna [i.e., Śrāvakayāna], in fact exists in Theravāda [i.e., Śrāvakayāna] Buddhism as well. The difference of schools is one of emphasis, and does not constitute the unbridgeable gap imaged by some, chiefly in the West.” Nonetheless, the historical Mahāyāna Buddhists criticized Śrāvakayāna texts due to the latter’s supposed lack of concern with helping others (Akira 1990, 106), indicating that Walsh’s statement here may not be entirely accurate, or perhaps it suggests that the Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophers were wrong to criticize the Śrāvakayāna. Westerhoff 2018 also notes some key differences between the two schools, but this too could be a matter of emphasis rather than presence.

See also Karunadasa 2018, 91-95, where Karunadasa argues that in early Buddhism, monks pursue their own enlightenment for the purpose of helping others (see also SN 47.19 for reference to this in the Pāli Canon). Arhats, then, are not selfish and without compassion; it is merely the case that they recognize the necessity of a preliminary training. In order to benefit other beings, one must oneself be moral, wise, and so forth. The figure of the bodhisattva is thus built into the figure of the arhat. Hence, following Walsh, the critique from the Mahāyāna Buddhists is hasty – it is either a misunderstanding on their part, or a critique of what may have been the prevailing attitude among certain monks during the time at which the Mahāyāna scriptures were composed.

bodhisattva has compassion for other beings at the outset and during his practice, whereas the arhat has his own freedom from suffering as his initial focus.¹⁰ It is the bodhisattva ideal that forms the focus of Śāntideva's ethics, not the arhat ideal, thus indicating the importance of compassion throughout Śāntideva's ethics.

Additionally, Śāntideva's ethics is also connected with metaphysics. We will explore the specific relation throughout this thesis, though we can briefly mention here the particular metaphysics to which Śāntideva adheres and the reason for its inclusion in a study on ethics. Similar to other schools of Indian philosophy, freedom from suffering is achieved by attaining the wisdom of the nature of reality, that is, upon attaining an understanding of metaphysics. As a Madhyamaka Buddhist – a Mādhyamika – Śāntideva follows the metaphysical views defended by other Mādhyamikas. Moreover, to defend this understanding of the nature of reality, Śāntideva engages critically with other schools of thought. In addition to critiquing the Śrāvakayāna school, Śāntideva also engages with another Mahāyāna school, the Yogācāra. We will not explore the contrast between these schools in detail here, as it is possible to understand Śāntideva's ethics without a lengthy engagement with the Yogācāra. The relation between the two schools is a fascinating topic of study,¹¹ and noting either the similarities or differences between the two will depend largely on how one interprets the foundational texts of these schools.¹² For now, it is sufficient to note that the schools engaged in dialogue with each other, so to understand Śāntideva as a Mādhyamika, we must acknowledge that his work engages critically with Yogācāra ideas. Overall, we must understand that Śāntideva's ethics is based on

¹⁰ Gowans 2016, 443.

¹¹ See the collection of essays in Garfield and Westerhoff 2015.

¹² Westerhoff 2018, 202-212.

compassion, and that his ethics is closely connected with the wisdom of emptiness. We will see both of these in our interpretation of Śāntideva's ethics.

Śāntideva's ethics – indeed, Buddhist ethics in general – have been interpreted in different ways. One prominent interpretation is a virtue ethics approach; the most notable scholar who defends this reading is Damien Keown,¹³ and other scholars have drawn on his work to defend a virtue ethics reading.¹⁴ Other scholars argue for a consequentialist¹⁵ interpretation of Buddhist ethics, most notably Charles Goodman and Barbra Clayton.¹⁶ We will examine the arguments of these scholars throughout this thesis and engage with their ideas in specific chapters. Ultimately, while they do provide valuable insight on aspects of Śāntideva's ethics, there is more in his work that must be incorporated. Specifically, we must include a cultivation to attain wisdom, as defended in the mind-training interpretation. That is, the bodhisattva's ethics is not merely about acting the right way or developing a virtue; it is primarily about training the mind to attain wisdom. To present this framework, we must address the arguments from the other scholars and show the problems with interpreting Śāntideva's ethics exclusively through a Western ethical framework.

The goal of Buddhist philosophy is to attain freedom from suffering, and the specific goal for a Mahāyāna Buddhist like Śāntideva is to free all beings from suffering. To free others from suffering, the bodhisattva must himself be free from suffering. To be free from suffering requires attaining wisdom, as we will address in Chapter 2. Wisdom, then, is an important part of the

¹³ See Keown 2001.

¹⁴ See Harvey 2004; and Vasen 2018.

¹⁵ In this thesis, we use “consequentialism” and “utilitarianism” interchangeably and understand them synonymously. There is a subtle difference between the two – consequentialism refers to the promotion of any desirable consequences, whereas utilitarianism refers specifically to the promotion of utility. However, since the consequentialist framework is present in utilitarianism, we can apply arguments for utilitarianism to consequentialism. When we refer to specific consequentialist schools, they will be identified.

¹⁶ See Goodman 2009; and Clayton 2006.

soteriological aspect of Buddhism. A complete theory of Śāntideva's ethics should consequently incorporate this soteriological element. Some scholars have done so, most notably Jay Garfield in his interpretation of moral phenomenology.¹⁷ However, we consider wisdom in a slightly different scope from Garfield, hence the need for a different interpretation of Śāntideva's ethics.

Furthermore, some scholars have mentioned the similarities between deontology and Buddhist ethics, though this is usually mentioned in passing.¹⁸ Other scholars provide extended arguments to draw a parallel between the two.¹⁹ These arguments could be used to develop a deontic interpretation of Śāntideva. However, a deontic reading of Śāntideva has not been developed to the same extent as the consequentialist and virtue ethics interpretations. Hence, we do not focus on critiquing this interpretation in this thesis. Nonetheless, a critique of a deontic interpretation would follow the same format as the critique against consequentialism and virtue ethics mentioned above: deontology has some parallels with Buddhist ethics and Śāntideva's ethics – fewer than the other two theories – but it does not capture their full scope. Moreover, some features of deontology are only a suitable parallel if the scope of Śāntideva's ethics is itself narrowed. That is, we must re-imagine certain concepts in Śāntideva's ethics in order to draw a parallel with deontology.²⁰ Consequentialism and virtue ethics, on the other hand, do not necessarily require that Śāntideva's ethics be modified to provide a parallel. For this reason, and the fact that much more work has been done on consequentialist and aretaic interpretations of Śāntideva's ethics, we do not engage with a potential deontic interpretation in this thesis.

¹⁷ See Garfield 2015; 2019; and 2022a.

¹⁸ See Harvey 2004, 50-51; and Whitehill 1994, 9.

¹⁹ See O'Hagan 2018; and Vasen 2018, 331-332.

²⁰ See Vasen 2018, 331-332.

In addition to these major Western ethical theories, some other interpretations have been presented as a reading of Buddhist ethics in general, which may seem promising for interpreting Śāntideva's ethics. One interpretation is to consider Buddhist ethics akin to some schools of Hellenistic philosophy.²¹ In this light, other scholars have argued that Buddhist ethics is best understood as a spiritual exercise, akin to Pierre Hadot's interpretation of ancient philosophy.²² Other scholars, however, reject a single interpretation of Buddhist ethics, arguing that the various existing frameworks are too narrow to address accurately all aspects of Buddhist ethics.²³ For this reason, some scholars argue that a certain theory "best fits" Buddhist ethics despite not capturing all its relevant features.²⁴ Other scholars argue for a slightly different view, noting that Buddhist ethics is particularist.²⁵ A particularist interpretation incorporates elements from multiple ethical theories instead of attempting to fit Buddhist ethics into a single framework.

There are merits to these interpretations, as they each capture relevant features of Buddhist ethics. The reason scholars argue for a theory that "best fits" Buddhist ethics is due to the fact that no single Western theory is able to capture all of its important aspects. Thus, to say that virtue ethics is the most suitable interpretation of Buddhist ethics is not to say that Buddhist ethics is fully analogous to virtue ethics, but rather that most of the important elements of Buddhist ethics can be understood through an aretaic interpretation. Ethical particularism is also a promising interpretation: since there are features of each Western ethical theory in Buddhist ethics, an interpretation that accounts for multiple theories avoids the risk of highlighting one

²¹ See Edelglass 2016, 484.

²² See Kapstein 2013; Kapstein 2016; and Fiordalis 2018 for readings of Buddhist philosophy as a spiritual exercise. For specific reference to Śāntideva read through the lens of Hadot, see Puthiran 2025. For Hadot's interpretation of ancient philosophy, see Hadot 2002. While applicable, this interpretation of Buddhist philosophy is not without difficulties (see Harter 2018, 157).

²³ See Harvey 2004, 51.

²⁴ Ibid. See also Edelglass 2016, 487; Keown 2001; and Vasen 2018.

²⁵ See Hallisey 1996.

theory over another. However, while promising for Buddhist ethics in general, these strategies suffer from a common issue if they are used to interpret Śāntideva: they fail to incorporate the bodhisattva's path to enlightenment and the necessary attainment of wisdom. This is a feature specific to Śāntideva and Buddhism that is not present in Western ethical frameworks. Hence, any interpretation of Śāntideva or Buddhist ethics that is based on a Western ethical framework neglects aspects that are unique to Buddhism. This need not be considered a neglect of the work of the scholars, as their goal may not necessarily be to provide a complete account of Buddhist ethics or Śāntideva's ethics. They may instead only aim to present an account of certain features that can be found in Buddhist texts. In this regard, a consequentialist or virtue ethics interpretation is suitable. However, a study on Śāntideva's ethics cannot be limited in this way, and we therefore require an interpretation that accounts for his specific ideas.

In addition to Western studies on ethics, Śāntideva's *BCA* has been analyzed in various commentaries, notably by Indian and Tibetan philosophers. These commentaries are philosophical treatises in their own right, as they build on the original work greatly. They also, in many cases, critique other interpretations while presenting their own. The only extant Sanskrit commentary is written by Prajñākaramati,²⁶ a philosopher who lived in the 10th-11th century CE, and there are many extant commentaries written in Tibetan. These texts provide a useful analysis and exposition of Śāntideva's overall philosophy and ideas. Moreover, they expound elements that support our reading of a mind-training interpretation. Hence, we will draw on the commentaries to develop our interpretation of Śāntideva in addition to building on the work of other scholars. Some of the major Tibetan commentaries are from Jamgön Mipham,²⁷ Kunzang

²⁶ Vaidya 1960b.

²⁷ Mipham 2017.

Pelden,²⁸ Künzang Sönam,²⁹ and Sonam Tsemo.³⁰ There are also modern commentaries, such as those written by Pema Chödrön,³¹ Alexis Lavis,³² and the current Dalai Lama.³³

Our work differs from commentaries in that we do not aim to expound every chapter and verse of *BCA* and *ŚS*. We instead draw on relevant passages from these texts to defend the framework we propose of Śāntideva's ethics. This requires us to omit lengthy discussions on some of the perfections, as well as some preliminary material that does not focus directly on the nature of the cultivation itself. For example, in *BCA* II, Śāntideva confesses his faults before committing himself to the bodhisattva path. While important in the overall context of the bodhisattva path, it can be momentarily overlooked in the presentation of the framework of the bodhisattva's ethics. Thus, we will only draw on the commentaries to show that Śāntideva's ethics consists of a mind-training.

Furthermore, while the focus of this thesis is on Śāntideva, we will occasionally draw on the work of early Buddhism by referring to the Pāli canon. Śāntideva admits in both *BCA* and *ŚS* that he is not writing anything new.³⁴ Though this can be considered as a mark of humility, it is likely that Śāntideva aims to expound ideas that have already been presented in Buddhist sutras. Indeed, *ŚS* consists of expounding earlier sutras, and much of *BCA*'s arguments can also be found in earlier sutras. Hence, to understand Śāntideva's work, it is helpful to draw on the basis

²⁸ Kunzang Pelden 2010.

²⁹ Künzang Sönam 2019.

³⁰ Śāntideva and Sonam Tsemo 2019.

³¹ Chödrön 2018.

³² Lavis 2018.

³³ Dalai Lama 2018; 2019; Gyatso 2009.

³⁴ *BCA* I.2; and *ŚS* 3.24-25; G 2. References to *ŚS* are provided according to the page and line numbers of Vaidya's Sanskrit edition. However, we also provide a page reference to Goodman's translation, indicated by the letter "G" prior to the page number in his work.

of the earlier Buddhist tradition on which he bases his own ideas.³⁵ Interestingly, there is little work done on highlighting the similarities between Śāntideva and the earlier Pāli tradition; this study can therefore bridge a gap between these two, seemingly different, Buddhist traditions.³⁶ In addition to the sutras, Śāntideva also draws on other Buddhist philosophers. Specifically, since Śāntideva is an adherent of the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism, it is helpful to draw on earlier Mādhyamika philosophers, such as Nāgārjuna – the founder of the school – and Candrakīrti – an important expositor of Madhyamaka philosophy – to understand the foundation for some of Śāntideva’s ideas.

Importantly, though this thesis is a study on ethics, we do not aim here at a comparative study with the major Western philosophers of ethics such as John Stuart Mill and Aristotle. Our primary focus when discussing consequentialism and virtue ethics is the interpretations of the scholars who use them to interpret Buddhist ethics. The goal in this thesis is to present a specific interpretation of Śāntideva, and to do so requires addressing other interpretations. The extent of our engagement with the ethical theories, therefore, is to analyze how they have been used to

³⁵ This is not a feature unique to Śāntideva. See Li 2021, 233-236, where Li argues that Madhyamaka philosophers such as Buddhapālita, Bhāviveka, and Candrakīrti all draw on sutras to expound their philosophy. In commentaries, it is not uncommon to see sutra citations as the only explanation for their verses.

It is also noteworthy that not all commentators use the same sutras when explaining the work of the earlier philosophers. For example, Li notes that Bhāviveka and Candrakīrti cite different sutras in their respective commentaries on Nāgārjuna’s work (ibid., 235). This suggests flexibility in interpretation: one idea does not necessarily correspond to a particular sutra passage. Hence, it may be fruitful to study various sutras to see which idea best corresponds to an idea proposed by the philosopher being studied. On this note, it is also helpful to study Pāli suttas in addition to Mahāyāna sutras.

³⁶ Cross-references are not nonexistent, however, as the Dalai Lama’s series, *The Library of Wisdom and Compassion*, consists of references to various Buddhist schools. See Gyatso and Chodron 2017; 2018; 2022a; 2022b; and 2023. See also Mills 2018 for a reading of Nāgārjuna – a Madhyamaka Buddhist philosopher – which draws on the contextual background provided by the Pāli tradition. However, this pan-Buddhist approach is not commonly seen in scholarship. See Karunadasa 2018, which focuses only on early Buddhist ideas, despite the presence of these ideas in Mahāyāna Buddhism as well.

Importantly, Śāntideva may not have had the Pāli canon in its entirety as we have it today, since the dates of its compilation may not accord with Śāntideva and the other Mādhyamikas. Nonetheless, the ideas from the Pāli canon are indeed Buddhist ideas, so Śāntideva’s exposition of certain ideas may have their origins in sutras from the Pāli canon.

interpret Śāntideva. Nonetheless, Mill and Aristotle will be referenced when we expound the work of the scholars to show where the scholars draw their ideas.

1.2 *Outline of Chapters*

To defend a mind-training interpretation of Śāntideva's ethics, certain steps are required. We will first provide a contextual background in Chapter 2. This is done by addressing the centrality of compassion, whom the ethics are for, and the bodhisattva vow. We will then turn to the primary focus of this chapter, which is to define *bodhicitta* and develop an important concept for our argument: the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*. The mind-training interpretation is established on this standpoint. To explain aspirational *bodhicitta*, we will highlight the importance of wisdom in the cultivation of the perfections, since aspirational *bodhicitta* consists of a cultivation that aims at the attainment of wisdom. The perfections will be explained as a quality of the mind, or mental disposition (*citta*), following Śāntideva's definitions provided in *BCA V*. To cultivate the mind of the perfections requires attaining wisdom, thereby showing that the cultivation of generosity entails a progression towards wisdom.

Chapter 3 commences the discussion on the perfection of generosity. To defend the mind-training interpretation, it is necessary to address the work of scholars who argue otherwise and show the difficulties of their interpretations. This chapter examines the consequentialist interpretation of Śāntideva, drawing primarily on the work of Goodman. We argue here that while consequentialist elements are indeed present in Śāntideva's ethics, they do not encompass the full scope of his ethics, namely, the centrality of *citta* in the perfection. That is, the consequentialist interpretation does not consider the perfection as a mental disposition that must be developed, which consequently neglects the path to attain wisdom. The standpoint of

aspirational *bodhicitta* is not incorporated, thereby showing the main problem with the consequentialist interpretation.

Next, Chapter 4 examines an aretaic interpretation of the perfection of generosity. This interpretation draws on generosity's nature as a mental disposition which must be cultivated. However, there are important problems with a virtue ethics interpretation, namely that the bodhisattva does not simply aim to develop a generous character; he primarily aims to attain wisdom which consequently transforms his character. Nonetheless, as we will have seen with the consequentialist interpretation, there are indeed elements of virtue ethics in Śāntideva. The presence of these elements, however, do not permit us to claim that the entirety of his ethics can be presented through an aretaic framework.

Having shown the difficulties of these two major interpretations, we will then present in Chapter 5 an interpretation that, in our view, best explains Śāntideva's ethics. This chapter introduces the mind-training interpretation of the perfection of generosity, building on the work of Jinpa. Prior to explaining this, however, we will first analyze an ethical theory proposed by Garfield, moral phenomenology. This theory is similar to the mind-training interpretation, hence its inclusion in this chapter. Moral phenomenology argues that the goal of Buddhist ethics is to attain a correct understanding of the nature of the world, which then produces a way of acting in accordance with this knowledge. Mind-training differs from moral phenomenology in that the goal of ethics requires attaining wisdom concerning the nature of reality. Here, there is a difference between these two interpretations regarding their respective objects of wisdom: moral phenomenology contains an understanding of the *world*, and mind-training contains an understanding of *reality*. We will explain this distinction in this chapter to show why the bodhisattva's ethics is better presented through the mind-training framework.

With Chapter 5 having explained the nature of the mind-training interpretation, we will then, in Chapter 6, explain the bodhisattva's mind-training. This training is found in *ŚS*, which outlines a threefold training: to protect, purify, and enhance one's body, possessions, and merit. The bodhisattva engages in this training as an extension of his vow to help other beings and free them from suffering. The framework of this training reveals that the bodhisattva ultimately aims at attaining wisdom in order to accomplish his vow. To cultivate the mind of generosity, the bodhisattva cultivates the other perfections sequentially. Wisdom, as the sixth perfection, is the ultimate goal of the cultivation of generosity – that is, to develop the mind of generosity, the bodhisattva aims at the attainment of wisdom. Upon attaining wisdom, the bodhisattva's mind is transformed, as he now possesses the mind of the perfections; he is consequently able to act in accordance with the bodhisattva vow and best benefit other beings – that is, work to alleviate and end their suffering effectively.

In Chapter 7, we address the perfection of wisdom. Having analyzed the bodhisattva's cultivation to attain wisdom, we now discuss the nature of wisdom itself. As mentioned, wisdom for Śāntideva concerns the nature of reality. To explain the nature of reality, we will first explore the two truths distinction as found in Śāntideva and Madhyamaka philosophy. We then turn to the nature of reality itself, which is emptiness. The two truths are foundational for understanding emptiness, hence its inclusion in this chapter. Chapter 8 follows from Chapter 7, and we address here the relation between the perfection of wisdom and generosity. Wisdom enables the bodhisattva's generosity to be most effective; indeed, as mentioned, it enables the mind of the perfections. This chapter will show how wisdom strengthens the bodhisattva's generosity, which we present by responding to critiques that argue for an incompatibility between ethics and emptiness. As a result of this study, we will see that there is an interdependence between ethics

and wisdom: not only does the cultivation of generosity naturally lead to the cultivation of wisdom, but wisdom itself produces perfected generosity. Chapter 8 therefore completes the presentation of the mind-training framework: we will have demonstrated that in cultivating generosity, the bodhisattva trains his mind to attain wisdom, which then transforms his mind to produce the perfected perfection of generosity. In this way, the bodhisattva is able to act in a way that best benefits other beings.

1.3 *Textual Issues*

We will not analyze here all the textual issues about *BCA* and *ŚS*, though a thorough analysis can be found in Amod Lele's work.³⁷ In this section, we will note the editions of the texts we consult for this thesis. The most complete Sanskrit editions of *BCA* and *ŚS* are published by P. L. Vaidya.³⁸ Regarding *BCA*, there are different editions containing a different number of verses. Unfortunately, we cannot know with certainty which of the verses are later additions, or if the edition with missing verses is simply an incomplete version. Hence, we choose to conduct our study of these texts using the edition that contains more verses. The risk of omitting original passages is greater than including passages not written by Śāntideva – for even if they were indeed written by other philosophers, they at least maintain the same philosophical framework and understanding of Śāntideva's philosophy, so it is more fruitful to use the edition containing more verses. Moreover, the text that has been used for commentaries, such as Prajñākaramati's commentary and the numerous Tibetan commentaries, is the edition with more verses.³⁹ Hence, we will use this edition for our study.

³⁷ See Lele 2007, 14-31.

³⁸ Vaidya 1960b; and Vaidya 1961.

³⁹ Importantly, in this thesis, we draw on Prajñākaramati's commentary and Tibetan commentaries that have been translated into English. It is noteworthy that for both *BCA* and *ŚS*, there exists a vast Tibetan commentarial tradition that remains to be translated into English; we have not accessed these texts nor consulted them in this thesis. Thus,

It is noteworthy that while we primarily use the Sanskrit version of *BCA* and *ŚS*, there are also Tibetan translations of these texts. The history of the transmission of Buddhist Sanskrit texts to Tibet will not be analyzed here. We should nonetheless acknowledge that many texts were brought from India to Tibet from the eighth century onwards, and many translations were made from Sanskrit to Tibetan during this period of this transmission. It is therefore helpful to consult Tibetan editions, especially where the Sanskrit is dense and difficult to understand. Tibetan vocabulary is often simpler than Sanskrit, and this can allow us to read *BCA* without confusion over the meaning of certain terms. The Tibetan edition consulted is edited by Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya.⁴⁰

There are three major translations in English, each of which offer a unique perspective on *BCA*. One translation is from the Padmakara Translation Group,⁴¹ who provide a translation from the Tibetan edition of *BCA*. Their translation is provided in verse form, which aims to maintain a poetic reading of the text.⁴² The second translation is from Crosby and Skilton,⁴³ who emphasize readability and focus on transmitting the meaning of the text rather than aim to keep the poetic form of the original. Crosby and Skilton translate from the Sanskrit edition and consult the above-mentioned commentary from Prajñākaramati for assistance. Prajñākaramati provides many glosses of Śāntideva's terminology, which can assist the reader's understanding of the original verses. The third translation is from Wallace and Wallace.⁴⁴ While mainly translating

the Tibetan commentaries we consult do not reflect their traditional importance but merely what is available in English.

⁴⁰ Bhattacharya 1960.

⁴¹ Padmakara Translation Group 2006.

⁴² *BCA*, like many Sanskrit philosophical texts, is written in a poetic meter. It is difficult to translate the poetic style into English, as the style is unique to Sanskrit and Indian languages: there are set syllables per line, and each syllable should be heavy or light, depending on its placement in the line.

⁴³ Crosby and Skilton 1995.

⁴⁴ Wallace and Wallace 1997.

from the Sanskrit, they also consult the Tibetan edition to provide an accurate translation of Śāntideva's ideas.

There are also three French translations of *BCA* that were consulted. Like the English translations, the French translations were also set aside in favour of the original Sanskrit text. The first of the three French translations is by the Padmakara Translation Group.⁴⁵ This translation is consulted due to it being a translation from the Tibetan edition, and because it maintains a poetic form. The second translation is by Georges Driessens,⁴⁶ who also translates from the Tibetan edition. The third and final French translation consulted is from Alexis Lavis,⁴⁷ who translates from the Sanskrit.

The Sanskrit edition that we use in this thesis is presented with Prajñākaramati's commentary. Prajñākaramati's commentary contains Śāntideva's root verses, and it is these verses that we use to read Śāntideva in the original Sanskrit. We occasionally consult Prajñākaramati's commentary when making translations to rely on his glosses of terminology; we will mention when we use his glosses to help our understanding of Śāntideva's terminology.⁴⁸ Moreover, since we draw on Vaidya's edition of Prajñākaramati's commentary, it is important to note that we follow the verse numbering that he provides. This differs slightly from the translated editions mentioned above. Fortunately, this will not cause too much confusion when following the verses in translation, as the difference is only found in the ninth chapter. Moreover, the extent of the different numbering is that some verses are written one number higher than they were originally written. This is perhaps due to copying a single verse twice, which then had to be

⁴⁵ Padmakara Translation Group 2007.

⁴⁶ Driessens 1993.

⁴⁷ Lavis 2018.

⁴⁸ References to Prajñākaramati's commentary is indicated by the letter "P," and we cite the marginal line numbers found in Vaidya's edition.

removed in later editions. When the verse was removed, the other verse numbers would have to change to accommodate the removed verse; however, some editions may not have changed the initial verse numbers, which thus results in different numberings for the verses.⁴⁹

There are two translations of ŚŚ: the first is from Bendall and Rouse,⁵⁰ and the second is from Goodman.⁵¹ Goodman's translation is an improvement due to providing better readability and organization of the content. Like *BCA*, we primarily use the Sanskrit edition of ŚŚ published by Vaidya, though we consulted Goodman's translation for clarification when necessary. We also provide references to his translation whenever we cite the Sanskrit original to assist those who cannot access the original Sanskrit text. Since a large portion of ŚŚ is citations of earlier sutras, most of our attention for this text is on the root verses.⁵² In addition to the root verses, we have also drawn on Śāntideva's explanation of the sutras he cites, as this develops his understanding of important Buddhist ideas and shows important points of his philosophy.

1.4 Transliteration and Conventions

A final introductory remark concerns some issues of transliteration and conventions used for citations. Sanskrit words will be provided following the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST). These terms will be provided in italics and with diacritic marks. While correct pronunciation is important to see the subtle differences between similar-sounding Sanskrit terms, it is sometimes ignored by contemporary scholars of Indian philosophy. The Sanskrit terms can be read as one would read them in English, and the approximate pronunciation is close enough to the original Sanskrit term that no major issues result in this

⁴⁹ See Lele 2007, 15-16.

⁵⁰ Bendall and Rouse 1922.

⁵¹ Goodman 2016.

⁵² Root verses of ŚŚ are cited with the letter "K" for *kārikā*, the Sanskrit term meaning "verse."

reading. Additionally, it is worth noting that many Sanskrit words are present in the English lexicon. It is not uncommon to hear individuals speak of “karma” or “nirvana.” Sanskrit words that are commonly used in English will not be provided in IAST – with diacritics – nor will they be italicized. However, when these terms are used in a specific technical sense, they will be written in an IAST and italicized format. Pāli transliteration will follow similarly: we use IAST to write Pāli letters, and we will write these terms in italics when necessary. Tibetan transliteration is difficult for readers to follow, since the standard transliteration system – the Wylie transliteration system – does not offer ease in phonetic pronunciation. We therefore provide Tibetan terms first with a phonetic transliteration,⁵³ which is then followed by the Wylie transliteration. For example, the Tibetan term referring to mind-training is *lojong* (*blo sbyong*).

A final stylistic convention to mention is the use of the pronoun “he” to refer to the bodhisattva. Throughout this thesis, we use “he” primarily because Śāntideva’s audience is male. This is not to suggest that there is no possibility for female bodhisattvas; indeed, some scholars refer to the bodhisattva using “she” or “her.”⁵⁴ While this is applicable, we have retained the use of “he” throughout this thesis, as it better approximates Śāntideva’s context. We have avoided the alternative “he or she,” as repetitive usage of this phrase can lead to a cumbersome reading experience. We have also avoided referring to the bodhisattva through the use of the singular and gender-neutral “they,” as this can cause confusion with the more common plural “they.” When quoting scholars, we will follow their use; we will therefore see the bodhisattva referred to as “she” or “they” in these quotations.

⁵³ Following Wilson 1998.

⁵⁴ See Harris 2024, 176.

Chapter 2: An Introduction to *Bodhicitta* in Śāntideva

2.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces key themes in Śāntideva's ethics which provide a background for the discussion in the following chapters. The most central aspect is *bodhicitta*, of which there are two aspects: aspirational (*praṇidhī*) and engaged (*prasthāna*). To provide a foundation for understanding *bodhicitta*, we will first underscore some general points about Śāntideva's ethics. Following this, we will discuss the general features of *bodhicitta*. Having done so, we will be in a better position to understand the two aspects of *bodhicitta*; we thus discuss separately the general nature of aspirational and engaged *bodhicitta*. These points provide the foundation for understanding and interpreting Śāntideva's ethics as a mind-training. The ethical aspect of Śāntideva's work is based on expounding the six perfections (*pāramitā*), though we will not explain these in detail here. We will only highlight that the perfections are qualities of the mind, or mental dispositions (*citta*). Maintaining this understanding will provide a foundation for the following chapters' discussion on the perfection of generosity. That is, by establishing the mental nature of the perfections, we can develop the mind-training interpretation of the cultivation of the perfection of generosity.

2.1 The Starting Point of Śāntideva's Ethics

In the Buddhist context, the wish to free other beings from suffering is compassion (*karuṇā*). It is noteworthy that there are three types of compassion, all of which express the idea of compassion as a state of mind. The first is compassion without any wisdom factors. The second is compassion with wisdom regarding the impermanent nature of beings. The third is compassion that contains the wisdom of the ultimate nature of reality, in which one sees that all

beings are empty, thus strengthening one’s compassion towards beings.⁵⁵ However, we should note that compassion is not just a state of mind; it also involves actively helping others.⁵⁶ In this regard, compassion is not a mere emotion, or a sense of “suffering with” someone; it is rather a disposition to act in a way that alleviates others’ suffering. If one does not yet have a compassionate attitude when seeing the suffering of others, then it can be cultivated. That is, one without compassion can work to produce and deepen his compassion to attain the relevant state of mind necessary for commencing the bodhisattva path. There are two primary methods to accomplish this. The first is based on the instructions on the seven points of cause and effect, and the second is to equalize the notion of self and other.⁵⁷ The latter is emphasized in *BCA* and *ŚS*, so it is our focus here.⁵⁸

An important point about the equalization of self and other is that it is located in different places in each of Śāntideva’s texts. *BCA* introduces this practice in the eighth chapter of the book, whereas *ŚS* introduces this practice at the outset. As mentioned, this practice aims to

⁵⁵ Dalai Lama 2018, 4. These three types of compassion are reflected in the three general standpoints from which Buddhist ethics can be understood, which we discuss in section 2.2.

⁵⁶ See Zopa 2019, 149. Furthermore, Garfield states that the Sanskrit term *karuṇā* is derived from the root *kṛ*, which means “to act.” Thus, Garfield prefers the term “care” instead of “compassion,” as the former reflects an active component (Garfield 2015, 289). Garfield elsewhere notes that the English term “compassion” is from the Latin root *passio*, which suggests a passive nature in which one is merely affected by something else. In this respect, compassion is a sense of “suffering with” someone. However, *karuṇā* “is not a mere feeling, but a determination to act to relieve the suffering of sentient beings” (Garfield 2022a, 112). We will nonetheless maintain the use of “compassion” instead of Garfield’s “care” primarily due to this being the common term throughout Buddhist literature. Moreover, as Garfield’s point highlights, *karuṇā* also consists of a feeling that one has upon seeing the suffering of other beings. Hence, “care” does not capture the full meaning of *karuṇā*, for one can care for others without emotion. Overall, we must note that compassion is not *just* an emotion that one has; it also contains an active component.

However, contrary to Garfield’s hypothesis, the etymology of *karuṇā* might not be based on the root *kṛ*. Thupten Jinpa, drawing on Sthiramati’s work, notes that, “The Sanskrit word for compassion is *karuṇā*, and here the syllable *kaṃ* means “happiness” and the syllable *ruṇa* means “block.” This indicates that when one sees the specific sufferings of others, it is unbearable and can block one’s own happiness. Therefore *karuṇā* means “blocking happiness”” (Jinpa 2020, 136). In this definition, *karuṇā* is not just about working to alleviate the suffering of other beings. Nonetheless, it is worth acknowledging Garfield’s analysis, since *karuṇā* does indeed have an active element.

⁵⁷ See Tsong Khapa 2014, 35-60; and Zopa 2019, 117-216.

⁵⁸ See *BCA* VIII.90-103; *ŚS* K1. We will explore these verses on the equalization of self and other in Chapter 3.

produce compassion, which is critical to have at the start of the bodhisattva path. However, if it is the case that this practice produces the foundational compassion necessary for commencing the path, then the later placement of the practice in *BCA* seems misplaced. However, this issue is easily remedied by noting that the later placement in *BCA* is for the purpose of *strengthening* one's compassion rather than *producing* it. By strengthening compassion in this way, wisdom is also developed.⁵⁹ This shows that while compassion is essential for commencing the bodhisattva path, it is also important throughout the path. The location of the practice in *ŚS* reflects the former point, and its location in *BCA* reflects the latter.

The reading contrasts with a point mentioned by Richard Mahoney, who states that in both *ŚS* and *BCA*, the bodhisattva encounters this practice when he is training in the perfection of meditation.⁶⁰ Accordingly, the placement at the outset of *ŚS* suggests that the text is for a bodhisattva who has already advanced on the path. In response to Mahoney, we can note that Śāntideva not only mentions this verse at the outset of *ŚS*, but also towards the end of this text. Thus, the perspective of equalizing self and other is not merely a practice to be maintained at the outset of the path or during a particular perfection; it must be present throughout the bodhisattva's training in all the perfections. In agreement with Mahoney, we can state that a *full understanding* of the equalization of self and other is for advanced bodhisattvas and those who are cultivating the perfection of meditation. However, the idea presented by the equalization itself is compassion; this is an idea that must be present throughout the bodhisattva's path to enlightenment. Following *ŚS*, we can see that to commence the path that Śāntideva teaches, it is important to have a compassionate mind, that is, a mind that sees no distinction between the

⁵⁹ See Ohnuma 2019.

⁶⁰ Mahoney 2016, 79.

suffering of oneself and others. To understand fully what this entails – the emptiness of all beings and their suffering – requires further progression on the bodhisattva path; nonetheless, the preliminary understanding is used as a starting point to establish a compassionate foundation. Moreover, in contrast to Mahoney, we can also note that the order of chapters in *ŚS* is not for someone who is training in the perfection of meditation. Meditation is the fifth perfection, whereas the first chapter of *ŚS* discusses the perfection of generosity, which is the first perfection. It is nonetheless true that the equalization of self and other is mentioned in *BCA*'s chapter on the perfection of meditation. This simply reflects our earlier point that this practice is for cultivating compassion, and compassion is necessary throughout the bodhisattva's path.

Out of compassion, an individual then takes the bodhisattva vow and thereby becomes a bodhisattva. The vow expresses the aim to free all beings from suffering. Śāntideva summarizes the vow as follows:

One's body (*ātmabhāva*), possessions (*bhoga*), and merit (*śubha*) [gained] in the three times,
 These are given away (*utsarga*) to all beings. And one must protect, purify, and enhance them.⁶¹

⁶¹ *ŚS* K4: “*ātmabhāvasya bhogānām tryadhvavṛtteḥ śubhasya ca | utsargaḥ sarvasattvebhyastadrakṣā śuddhivardhanam.*” All translations are my own, unless specified otherwise. This verse is explored in greater detail in Chapter 6, where we will also discuss important points of terminology. See also *BCA* III.10, which conveys a similar idea as this verse.

There are three primary types of suffering that afflict beings and that bodhisattvas strive to eliminate. These are the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and the suffering of formations (SN 38.14). Suffering is also identified as birth, aging, illness, and death; union with the displeasing, and separation from the pleasing; not getting what is desired; and clinging to the five aggregates (SN 56.11). The list in SN 56.11 corresponds to the three types of suffering. The first list comprises birth, aging, illness, and death, which is the suffering of suffering. This is the general suffering that one undergoes throughout one's life. The second list is getting what one dislikes and losing what one likes, which corresponds to the suffering of change. Essentially, this is the suffering brought about by the changing nature of the world. The third list is not getting what one desires and the suffering that is brought about due to the nature of one's existence. This is the all-pervasive suffering; it is the backdrop of suffering, or one's existential suffering. This suffering is based on superimposing an existent self onto the aggregates (*skandha* – we will not discuss the aggregates here, but a helpful overview is found in Carpenter 2014, 20-47). That is, this suffering is based on ignorance concerning one's nature, hence the importance of wisdom to overcome this suffering.

From Śāntideva's passage, it appears that one does not aim to remedy the all-pervading, existential suffering which greatly afflicts beings. This is because the vow is primarily to alleviate any form of suffering that others face.

The vow states that everything the bodhisattva owns should be given to other beings. However, the bodhisattva does not give these things carelessly, nor does he neglect the quality of these things. He must instead give them in their best form. So, he must protect, purify, and enhance that which he gives to others. There are many formulations of the bodhisattva vow, but its core idea is that one aspires to free all beings from suffering and dedicates his life to this purpose.⁶² This verse, which Śāntideva considers as the summary, or epitome (*saṃgraha*) of the bodhisattva vow, indicates that the act of giving away is the key element of the vow.⁶³ That is, the bodhisattva alleviates others' suffering through giving to them his body, possessions, and merit.

In this regard, the essential mark of a bodhisattva is his compassion, which is briefly summarized as an altruistic wish to free other beings from suffering and acting on this wish. An important aspect of this wish and ensuing vow is to remain in the world so that the bodhisattva can carry out his wish.⁶⁴ That is, the well-being of others is an important part of the bodhisattva's path to enlightenment; he does not neglect others for his own benefit, as discussed in Chapter 1. This vow, though formulated generally as the wish to free others from suffering, is stated explicitly by Śāntideva in many verses in different formulations. His verses noting the vow indicate that he wishes to alleviate others' suffering in any way possible, such as being medicine for others' illness,⁶⁵ averting their hunger,⁶⁶ or being wealth for the poor.⁶⁷ Śāntideva is also

Moreover, eliminating the all-pervading suffering and its causes requires wisdom, which the bodhisattva does not have at the time of making the vow. Hence, he vows to eliminate all the suffering that he can.

⁶² The entirety of *BCA* X can be read as an expression of the vow. Since there are many ways of formulating the vow, we can simply consider the general point expressed by the formulations, as presented in K4.

⁶³ We return to this idea in section 2.5, where we note that the first perfection, generosity (*dāna*), necessarily follows from the bodhisattva vow. That this verse is a "summary" (*saṃgraha*) of the vow is stated in *ŚS* 14.5; G 20. This verse does not explicitly mention freeing other beings from suffering, which is a key component of the vow, but giving everything that one owns to others incorporates this component. Eventually the bodhisattva will give the *Dharma* – teachings on the nature of reality – which helps to free others from suffering.

⁶⁴ Clayton 2011, 288; Finnigan 2018, 167.

⁶⁵ *BCA* III.7.

⁶⁶ *BCA* III.8.

⁶⁷ *BCA* III.9.

explicit in his wish to be of service to others in any way possible, such as giving his body to others so that they can do as they please with it.⁶⁸ The point of the vow is that the bodhisattva dedicates, and thus gives away, his entire life for the sake of others.

To act according to the vow, the bodhisattva must first have faith in three things: the Buddha's teachings, the conduct (*cari*) of Buddhists, and the highest awakening that can ultimately allow him to free beings from suffering.⁶⁹ Faith is a necessary starting point for Śāntideva's ethics, as it establishes a reason for one to follow the bodhisattva path. Ultimately, one must have a conviction that the path can allow for the accomplishment of the vow, for only then is there a reason for commencing the path.⁷⁰ One must acknowledge that the Buddha's teachings are indeed true; that the cultivation of Buddhists is indeed effective to attain enlightenment; and that upon becoming enlightened, one can free other beings from suffering. The focus of this thesis is the bodhisattva's ethics, so we will not explore in detail these aspects of faith. Nonetheless, without a conviction in the success of the path, the natural extension of the vow – the ethics itself – may be doubted and not worthy of pursuit. Thus, to strengthen the resolve that the path will enable one to act according to the vow, the bodhisattva must first have faith.

⁶⁸ *BCA* III.12.

⁶⁹ *ŚS* 4.22; G 3. See also Edelglass 2021. William Edelglass mentions the three aspects of faith that Śāntideva has highlighted. Faith is not only necessary as a starting point for the path, as presented here, but it is also a necessary component throughout the bodhisattva path, for faith inspires, motivates, and energizes the practitioner (*ibid.*, 23). Faith also makes possible the wisdom and compassion of *bodhicitta* (*ibid.*, 24) – a term we will define shortly – which thus indicates the need for faith on the bodhisattva path. Faith in a Buddhist context is not opposed to reason, which is thus contrary to the European/Kantian conception of faith (*ibid.*, 15). We should therefore not dismiss faith on the grounds that it is unphilosophical: faith performs the essential function of being a foundation for reason. However, reason is also established as a foundation for faith (Gyatso 2009, 6). Faith and reason thus mutually support and enhance each other. To understand Śāntideva's use of faith as the starting point for the bodhisattva's ethics, it is enough to acknowledge that faith is a foundational element of the path.

⁷⁰ See Edelglass 2021, 21.

To summarize the introductory points of Śāntideva’s ethics, the starting point is compassion, a wish to free all beings from suffering, which also manifests itself through actions. One then takes the bodhisattva vow, which is an extension of the wish to free other beings from suffering; the vow represents the active component of compassion, for the vow should be carried out. One then has faith in the effectiveness of the bodhisattva path to bring about the results of the vow. It is noteworthy, however, that one cannot completely fulfil the vow. The bodhisattva vow has *all* beings as its target, and to free all beings from suffering is an impossible task – a point that Śāntideva acknowledges, as we will see in section 2.5.⁷¹ Faith is thus for the effectiveness of the path and the cultivation to become someone who can free beings from suffering; faith is for the effectiveness of commencing the bodhisattva path. Having established faith, the bodhisattva then cultivates *bodhicitta*, and it is to this that we now turn.

2.2 *Bodhicitta*

Bodhicitta is a compound word, and there are two ways to analyze the relation between the two terms. The two terms in the compound are enlightenment/awakening (*bodhi*)⁷² and mind (*citta*).⁷³ The two ways these terms can be analyzed is as a mind *for* enlightenment, or a mind *of*

⁷¹ The impossibility of accomplishing the vow is why we note that one *acts according to* the bodhisattva vow instead of *fulfilling* the vow. Acting according to the vow should be understood as a process, an ongoing act, and not a goal that can be completed. See also Tobden 2017, 69: “Someone once said to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, “Bodhisattvas’ prayers are so sublime that it seems unlikely that they can become reality. What is their purpose?” The Dalai Lama answered that although it is impossible to realize most of them, these prayers expand the mind of the bodhisattvas and encourage them on the path.” Thus, the point of taking the vow is to train one’s mind to become an enlightened being. Though the vow is taken with its fulfillment as the goal, one will come to realize that this is impossible, but he will nonetheless act in a manner befitting the vow.

It is noteworthy that it is indeed possible to free *some* beings from suffering, for otherwise, the bodhisattva path would not be worth partaking. The bodhisattva path is based on compassion and thus consists of caring for others; such a path would be deemed useless if it had no value to others.

⁷² *Bodhi* can also be translated as either “enlightenment” or “awakening.” These terms are used interchangeably in this thesis.

⁷³ Another possible translation of *citta* is “intention,” or “thought.” The term “mind” conveys these aspects as well; we therefore use “mind” to translate *citta* due to its broad scope. See Saddhatissa 1997, 11-12 for a discussion of Buddhism as a “mind-culture.” This indicates the importance we must place on the mind in Buddhist ethics and reflects the reason for choosing “mind” as a translation of *citta*.

enlightenment. The former is glossed as *awakening* mind; that is, it is a mind that is in the process of awakening or striving to become awakened. The latter is glossed as *awakened* mind; it is a mind that has already attained awakening. These two readings of *bodhicitta* are both present in Buddhist ethics, though we will focus primarily on the former. A bodhisattva primarily has an awakening mind, and a buddha – a fully enlightened being – has an awakened mind; since this thesis is on the bodhisattva’s ethics, the former is our concern.

To understand the awakening mind, we can examine Śāntideva’s explanation of the term. He describes *bodhicitta* as having two aspects (*dvividham*): aspirational (*praṇidhi*) and engaged (*prasthāna*):

The mind of awakening is to be known succinctly as having two aspects:
The mind that solicits (*praṇidhi*) awakening, and the mind that proceeds towards
(*prasthāna*) awakening.⁷⁴

A literal translation of *praṇidhi* is solicitation, which reflects the notion that one is seeking, desiring, or wishing for, enlightenment. *Prasthāna* translates literally as going forth, or moving, which reflects the notion of actually proceeding, or actively heading towards enlightenment.⁷⁵ The literal translations of these two terms are appropriately glossed as aspirational and engaged, respectively.

Śāntideva further explains these two aspects through the analogy of someone who wishes to go somewhere and someone who actually goes somewhere:

Just as a distinction is understood between wishing to go and going,
The wise should understand accordingly the distinction between these two [aspects of

Other possible translations include “heart” or “heart-mind” referring not to a cognitive capacity, but an emotional, dispositional capacity. Both aspects are conveyed by *citta*. We avoid the translation “heart” due to its conflation with another Sanskrit term, *hṛdaya*. *Hṛdaya* refers to the physical organ, though it also refers to the *essential nature* of something. This detracts from the meaning of *citta*, so we only use the term “mind.”

⁷⁴ *BCA* I.15: “*tadbodhicittaṃ dvividhaṃ vijñātavyaṃ samāsataḥ | bodhipraṇidhicittaṃ ca bodhiprasthānameva ca.*”

⁷⁵ “Enlightenment” in this case refers to *full* enlightenment. We return to this qualification shortly.

bodhicitta].⁷⁶

It is noteworthy that someone who wishes to go somewhere does not possess a mere wish, but also makes the preparation to enable carrying out the wish. For example, someone who wishes to go somewhere will consider travel accommodations, which direction to travel, the appropriate time to travel, and so forth.⁷⁷ Someone who is engaged in going somewhere acts on the prepared plan. However, the aspect of aspiration as including a preparation is not followed by all scholars. Most scholars argue that aspirational *bodhicitta* is a mere wish, and engaged *bodhicitta* is acting on this wish.⁷⁸ The basis for this reading can be found in *ŚS*, where Śāntideva writes:

The mind (*citta*) “I will become a buddha (*mayā buddhena bhavitavyam*),” arises (*utpanna*) from the aspiration.⁷⁹

Utpanna can alternatively be translated as “acquire,” and *citta* can be translated as “thought,” hence the possible reading found in the works of other scholars: namely, aspirational *bodhicitta* is *acquired*, or *possessed*, when one has the *thought* to attain awakening.

In this reading, when the bodhisattva has an aspiration, or wish to become enlightened, he has the thought, “I will become a buddha.” Indeed, this is a tautology; we can read Śāntideva as saying that aspirational *bodhicitta* consists of having the aspiration to become awakened. However, this does not necessarily entail that this thought is the *only* aspect of aspirational *bodhicitta*. As we will address in section 2.3, aspirational *bodhicitta* contains multiple aspects,

⁷⁶ *BCA* I.16: “*gantukāmasya gantuśca yathā bhedaḥ pratīyate | tathā bhedo'nayorjñeyo yāthāsaṃkhyena paṇḍitaiḥ.*”

⁷⁷ Garfield 2022a, 98 offers the same explanation as presented here – that the aspiration requires some preparation instead of being just a wish: “Before traveling, one consults a guidebook (or logs onto TripAdvisor) to learn something about the place one is going. One then knows, before one sets out, what the place looks like, the best way is to get there, where to get a room, and where one can get a good meal, as well as what experiences one might have.”

⁷⁸ For example, see Chödrön 2018, 12; Gyatso 2009, 19; Lele 2007, 35; Sakya Paṇḍita 2015, 406-410; Tobden 2017, 27; and Zopa 2019, 105.

⁷⁹ *ŚS* 8.23; G 10: “*mayā buddhena bhavitavyamiti cittam praṇidhānādutpannam bhavati.*”

namely, a wish and a training. If the aspiration is taken to be a mere wish, one must then be able to engage in *bodhicitta* without any prerequisite training. That is, one could act according to the vow and progress towards full enlightenment without establishing a foundation to do so. This reading therefore skips an important step that must be incorporated into aspirational *bodhicitta*. It is necessary to have wisdom in order to act according to the bodhisattva vow.⁸⁰ This entails a preliminary training that aims at wisdom and enlightenment; once one has completed the preparation, one has attained enlightenment and can therefore act according to the bodhisattva vow.⁸¹ Therefore, to go actively towards full enlightenment requires the bodhisattva to make the preparations necessary for this journey, and the preparation requires more than a mere wish. Hence, some readings misunderstand *aspiration* and result in a narrow understanding of aspirational *bodhicitta*.

It is noteworthy that this presented distinction between aspirational *bodhicitta* and engaged *bodhicitta* is not the traditionally followed view; the view we critique is traditionally accepted. The key difference between the reading followed in this thesis and the traditional reading is where engaged *bodhicitta* commences.⁸² In the traditional view, engaged *bodhicitta* commences when one has begun to cultivate the perfections. This view does not *neglect* the fact that a training is required before one can actively proceed to full enlightenment; this view merely incorporates this aspect into the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*. Here, engaged *bodhicitta* not only concerns one's actively going somewhere, but also making the preparation to go. The reason we have not followed the traditional view is due to the necessity of wisdom for one's engagement on the path to full enlightenment. As mentioned, to act according to the bodhisattva vow and

⁸⁰ See Carpenter 2014, 226.

⁸¹ See ŚS 10.3; G 13 for mention of a preliminary training.

⁸² See Garfield 2022a, 98-100.

proceed towards full enlightenment, one requires wisdom. That is, to *engage* in *bodhicitta* requires wisdom.⁸³ To include the preparation for the attainment of wisdom in a stage where one must have wisdom is therefore problematic. In the remainder of this section and the next two sections, we will outline the necessity of distinguishing between preparation and engagement. When this distinction is understood, the necessity of training one's mind becomes evident, for the mind-training interpretation defended in this thesis entails the attainment of wisdom before the bodhisattva can act according to the bodhisattva vow.

That this reading of the two aspects of *bodhicitta* goes against the traditional view does not disqualify its validity. Historically, Buddhist philosophers have understood the two aspects of *bodhicitta* in various ways, as noted by Kunzang Pelden in his commentary to *BCA*.⁸⁴ One interpretation he provides states that:

Authorities say that bodhicitta in intention [aspirational *bodhicitta*] is what beings may have until they reach the level from which there is no returning to samsara, whereas bodhicitta in action [engaged *bodhicitta*] is what arises once this level is achieved – which is to again say that the two bodhicittas correspond to ordinary beings and to noble beings, respectively.⁸⁵

The final point is important, as the distinction between ordinary beings and noble beings rests on the attainment of wisdom. The former lacks wisdom, while the latter possesses wisdom. Hence,

⁸³ See Tobden 2017, 4. He makes a distinction between two types of wisdom: a common, general wisdom, and wisdom regarding the ultimate nature of phenomena. This second type of wisdom concerns the nature of reality, and it is the wisdom necessary for enlightenment. This is the wisdom required for engaged *bodhicitta*. Moreover, we should understand a distinction between the wisdom one has during the stage of engaged *bodhicitta* and the wisdom one has upon attaining full enlightenment. We will explain this distinction shortly, but we can briefly consider that only a fully awakened being – a Buddha – has full wisdom. Bodhisattvas during the stage of engaged *bodhicitta* have wisdom but not full wisdom.

⁸⁴ Kunzang Pelden 2010, 54-55. See also *BCA* P 24, where Prajñākaramati presents another way of understanding the distinction: he states that engaged *bodhicitta* is a stage which consists of performing bodhisattva activities, that is, acting according to the vow. To act according to the vow, as we will see, requires wisdom. Hence, the aspiration must include the preparation and cultivation to attain wisdom.

⁸⁵ Kunzang Pelden 2010, 54 (translated by the Padmakara Translation Group).

the distinction between the two aspects of *bodhicitta* consists of a stage where one does not yet have wisdom but works towards it, and a stage where one has wisdom.

In brief, we can consider a distinction between a stage of preparation – which accords with aspirational *bodhicitta* – and a stage of acting on the bodhisattva vow – which accords with engaged *bodhicitta*. In order for someone to engage in *bodhicitta* and partake in bodhisattva activities, one must have wisdom.⁸⁶ The stage of preparation is therefore the preparation one undergoes to attain wisdom and become enlightened. Therefore, the two aspects of *bodhicitta* can be understood by indicating that aspirational *bodhicitta* is for an unawakened mind which has not yet acquired wisdom, and engaged *bodhicitta* is for an awakened mind which has wisdom. The unawakened mind prepares to act according to the vow, and the awakened mind is able to act accordingly.

To further understand the distinction between the two aspects of *bodhicitta*, we can consider an analogy provided by Clayton.⁸⁷ Clayton proposes to consider the bodhisattva as an astronaut who is told that there is a mineral on Mars capable of saving humankind from a disease. The bodhisattva therefore trains himself to become an astronaut – that is, to become the type of person who can free others from their ailment. Once he has become an astronaut, he can obtain the mineral and use it to save others. There are two aspects in this analogy that represent the two aspects of *bodhicitta*. The first aspect is transforming oneself to be the type of person who can help others – in this case, training to become an astronaut – which represents the

⁸⁶ In the traditional and more common reading of the two *bodhicittas*, the bodhisattva vow is taken at the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*, that is, when the bodhisattva can perform bodhisattva activities. We have read this slightly differently, as we argue that the bodhisattva's aspiration to alleviate suffering is a crucial part of the vow. Though merely an aspiration, it reflects the dispositional element of the vow.

⁸⁷ Clayton 2018, 156. Clayton's analogy is primarily intended to underscore the difference between the figure of the bodhisattva according to historical and canonical texts as opposed to the figure of the bodhisattva according to contemporary and secular readings. The latter half of the analogy reflects the Engaged Buddhist, which will be discussed briefly in section 2.4. There are some difficulties in this analogy that will also be addressed in that section.

aspirational stage of *bodhicitta*. After he has trained and transformed himself, he can obtain the mineral and bring it to help other beings. Going forth to obtain the mineral and actively helping others represents the engaged stage of *bodhicitta*. This analogy highlights the difference between preparing to help and actively helping and thus reveals the two aspects of *bodhicitta*. There is a clear distinction between the wish – which includes the preparation – and the act that carries out the wish. A being who is not yet an astronaut corresponds to the unawakened mind, and the being who has become an astronaut corresponds to the awakened mind.

Despite attaining wisdom and being enlightened, one still possesses *bodhicitta*, for one has not completed the path to Buddhahood, that is, full enlightenment. To understand how an enlightened being can still possess *bodhicitta*, it is important to distinguish between enlightenment and *full* enlightenment. Aspirational *bodhicitta* consists of a stage where the immediate target is enlightenment, not full enlightenment. Engaged *bodhicitta* is the procession towards full enlightenment. This is because, overall, *bodhicitta* is a mind that strives for full awakening, that is, Buddhahood. This striving is simply bifurcated into the aspirational and engaged aspects, both of which convey different stages on the path to awakening.⁸⁸ Thus, to understand the two aspects of *bodhicitta*, the qualification of *full* is important when discussing enlightenment. Someone with wisdom is an enlightened being, and this refers to a being who possesses a realization of emptiness.⁸⁹ Someone who has deepened this realization and

⁸⁸ We can therefore consider the distinction in aims between aspirational and engaged *bodhicitta* as something akin to “checkpoints” on the path to enlightenment. Wisdom is an intermediate aim on the overall path to full wisdom. Nonetheless, we reiterate that both *bodhicittas* have the same overall aim of full enlightenment for the sake of all beings.

⁸⁹ We can consider such a person as an *ārya*, or a noble being (Tobden 2017, 311). Thus, the distinction between an awakened being and a fully awakened being can be noted as a distinction between an *ārya* and a buddha. We can also distinguish between a bodhisattva who lacks wisdom – non-*ārya* – and a bodhisattva who has wisdom and is on the first *bhūmi* – an *ārya* (see Harvey 2004, 128).

Importantly, though a first *bhūmi* bodhisattva may not typically be referred to as an “enlightened being” – since “enlightenment” is usually reserved to contrast śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas from buddhas – we use this term to highlight the attainment of wisdom. Full enlightenment consists of realizing the nature of reality. Bodhisattvas on

consequently *fully* realized emptiness is considered a fully enlightened being, that is, a buddha.⁹⁰ Thus, we can note a general distinction between a bodhisattva and a buddha: a bodhisattva can⁹¹ be enlightened but not fully enlightened, whereas a buddha is fully enlightened – the distinction rests on the degree of the understanding and realization of emptiness.⁹² One with *bodhicitta* is on a path to Buddhahood, so he must still have *bodhicitta* despite being enlightened.

Following this point, we can consider that a buddha no longer possesses *bodhicitta* in the manner of aspirational and engaged *bodhicitta*. Instead, a buddha possesses *bodhicitta* in a different manner: he possesses *absolute bodhicitta* as opposed to *relative bodhicitta*. Relative *bodhicitta* is what is bifurcated into the aspirational and engaged stage; it is the aspect of working towards full awakening and thus represents *awakening* mind. Absolute *bodhicitta* is the *bodhicitta* of a fully awakened being and consists of effortless and spontaneous activity; this represents the *awakened* mind. A buddha's activity can be explained through the following metaphor:

the first *bhūmi* have some degree of insight into emptiness. So, it is helpful to highlight their wisdom by referring to them as enlightened beings, which thus distinguishes them from ordinary beings and *fully* enlightened beings.

⁹⁰ In Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are ten levels (*bhūmi*) of enlightenment. For a brief overview of the levels, see Zopa 2020b, 115-116. We will address these levels shortly, but for a general understanding, it is sufficient to note that they show a distinction between “enlightenment” and “full enlightenment.” We find a similar point regarding a distinction between levels of awakening in Jainism, which considers three levels (or perspectives) of the self. The first level refers to someone who is unawakened and attached to worldly pleasures. The second level refers to someone who has converted himself to a higher understanding of reality and has renounced the worldly life. This person possesses wisdom and has a particular attitude towards the world. In this state, he has attained the right of liberation (*mokṣa*). The final level refers to the supreme self that is entirely free from all defects (Sogani 1967, 168-170). Evidently, Jain and Buddhist principles are not identical – Buddhists do not admit of a self, nor are the three stages in Jainism congruent with Buddhist views – but the general distinction between the latter two stages of self in Jainism can be used to understand a general distinction between an *ārya* and a buddha in Buddhism.

⁹¹ We use “can” intentionally to note that a bodhisattva can be either an unenlightened being on the path to enlightenment, or an enlightened being on the path to full enlightenment. To distinguish between the two stages that the bodhisattva is on, we can consider the enlightened bodhisattva as an *ārya*-bodhisattva, and an unenlightened bodhisattva as an ordinary bodhisattva. However, this distinction will not be developed in this thesis, as our focus is on the ethics of an ordinary bodhisattva.

⁹² See Westerhoff 2009, 46-52 for a distinction between the intellectual understanding of emptiness and a realization of emptiness. There are, ultimately, three aspects to consider here: the first is the intellectual understanding of emptiness, which is possessed by an unawakened being; then, there is a realization of emptiness, which is possessed by an awakened being; finally, there is a full realization of emptiness, which is possessed by a fully awakened being.

The monsoon clouds in summertime
continuously and without any effort
pour down their vast masses of water,
causing on earth the best possible crops.
Just so, from the cloud of compassion
the rain of the Victor's pure teaching
pours down its waters without ideation,
causing a harvest of virtue for beings.⁹³

As a fully enlightened being, a buddha no longer has any ideation, or mind, in his activity. Here, there is no sense of self, indicating that a buddha's activities are completely impersonal. This type of activity is beyond what Śāntideva discusses, and thus beyond the scope of relative *bodhicitta*. We can simply recognize that Śāntideva's ethics elucidates a path to reach absolute *bodhicitta*. To this end, a fully awakened being does not possess *bodhicitta* according to the definition provided by Śāntideva, for a fully awakened being has no need to pursue full awakening – he has already attained the goal. Absolute *bodhicitta* refers to activities that do not consist of a further cultivation, but instead consist of methods through which one can share his wisdom and benefit other beings. Overall, we can note that a buddha possesses absolute *bodhicitta* simply because he maintains an altruistic nature; his very nature is compassion as a result of his fully awakened status.⁹⁴ Thus, *bodhicitta* here is no longer a mind that *strives* towards awakening, but the mind that *is* awakened.

The distinction between relative and absolute *bodhicitta* is introduced here to indicate that without understanding this distinction, there is a chance of adopting flawed views about the type of actions present in aspirational and engaged *bodhicitta*. Garfield argues in his

⁹³ Maitreya 2018, 64 (translated by Rosemarie Fuchs). This text also provides other metaphors to explain the effortless and spontaneous activity of a buddha.

⁹⁴ Due to the distinction between relative and absolute *bodhicitta* not being present in Śāntideva's work, any mention of *bodhicitta* in this thesis refers to relative *bodhicitta*, unless specifically indicated. Any mention of the two aspects or stages of *bodhicitta* refer to aspirational and engaged *bodhicitta*.

interpretation of *bodhicitta* that engaged *bodhicitta* consists of impersonal, spontaneous actions.⁹⁵ The general view that Garfield presents is correct: aspirational *bodhicitta* consists of actions performed with a sense of self, since emptiness – specifically, the lack of one’s self – has not been realized. Moreover, engaged *bodhicitta* consists of actions performed without a sense of self, as a realization of selflessness has been attained. However, we should acknowledge that during the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*, actions are not *fully* impersonal. Here, emptiness has not been *fully* realized, so there is merely a *diminished* sense of self when one acts. Fully impersonal and spontaneous activities require a *complete* realization of emptiness, which someone on the stage of engaged *bodhicitta* does not possess. Hence, the implications of Garfield’s presentation require the clarification revealed by the distinction between relative and absolute *bodhicitta*. If, following Garfield, engaged *bodhicitta* consists of impersonal and spontaneous actions, then engaged *bodhicitta* must belong to fully awakened beings. Yet this is refuted by observing the distinction between an awakened being and a fully awakened being, and thus relative and absolute *bodhicitta*. There is a difference between enlightenment and full enlightenment, and since engaged *bodhicitta* is still part of the path to full awakening, it cannot consist of actions identical to that of a fully awakened being. Engaged *bodhicitta* should therefore be understood as an aspect of relative *bodhicitta*, and fully impersonal and spontaneous activity must be understood as an aspect of absolute *bodhicitta*.

In summary, while reading Śāntideva, it is important to keep in mind that that he is focused on expounding *bodhicitta*, that is, how one cultivates his mind to attain full enlightenment. To cultivate *bodhicitta*, compassion is a prerequisite. Thus, Śāntideva’s text is written for one who want to alleviate and ultimately end his own and others’ suffering. It is of

⁹⁵ Garfield 2010/2011, 344.

course possible for anyone to become his target audience, as there are practices aimed at cultivating compassion. As a result of undertaking these practices, one becomes a bodhisattva. The bodhisattva is not simply someone with a particular attitude – wanting to free beings – but also someone with a particular vision of reality, as this prompts him to act for the benefit of others. This vision is an impartial view of beings, or a preliminary intellectual understanding of emptiness, especially as it pertains to the self. Upon possessing this preliminary intellectual understanding, the bodhisattva embarks on the preparation to act according to the bodhisattva vow and to help other beings, which entails cultivating *bodhicitta*. He cultivates *bodhicitta* by partaking in the perfections. Before discussing the perfections, there is further discussion required on *bodhicitta* itself – specifically, its two aspects – so it is to this that we now turn.

2.3 Aspirational Bodhicitta

We will first discuss aspirational *bodhicitta*. This aspect consists primarily of training the mind (*citta*), as this is the stage where the bodhisattva prepares himself to act according to the vow. In this stage of preparation, the bodhisattva undergoes a training to attain wisdom. If one possesses the wisdom of the nature of the self and reality, then he has attained freedom from suffering.⁹⁶ If one shares this wisdom with others, they too can be free from suffering.⁹⁷ Of course, one cannot literally give his own realization and wisdom; to share and transmit wisdom instead refers to helping other beings attain wisdom through various methods of teaching. As a

⁹⁶ This is a theme common throughout Indian philosophy. See Dasgupta 2009, 74-75; and Hamilton 2001, 12. In Madhyamaka Buddhism, to be fully free from suffering requires the full realization of emptiness.

⁹⁷ See Gyatso 2009, 26-27: “The Buddha, overwhelmed by compassion, saw how beings suffer, and knowing that the cause of their suffering was the uncontrolled turbulence of their minds, he knew how to help them. He knew that their minds were uncontrolled ultimately because of ignorance, the mistaken belief in the reality of things. He knew, too, how to counteract this with the wisdom of emptiness. For a Buddha is one who knows how to help beings by showing them what they should do and what they should avoid and, above all, who reveals to them the wisdom of realizing emptiness.” That is, a buddha alleviates the suffering of other beings not only by acting in a manner that helps them, but also by sharing wisdom. The Buddha teaches the nature of reality – emptiness – to show that phenomena are not ultimately real. We will discuss emptiness in Chapter 7.

result, to be able to act according to the bodhisattva vow requires a preliminary preparation that aims at the attainment of wisdom.

We can understand the preparation present in aspirational *bodhicitta* as a stage of accumulation, that is, a stage in which the bodhisattva works to acquire that which can help other beings. The object of accumulation is not only the wisdom that frees one from suffering, but also body, possessions, and merit.⁹⁸ The bodhisattva aims to acquire these because they can help others through various ways. The bodhisattva acquires wisdom because this produces enlightenment, and it can also be given to – that is, shared with – others for their benefit. Indeed, to free others, one must oneself be free.⁹⁹ Ultimately, both the objects of generosity and wisdom are necessary in order to best benefit other beings and hence to act according to the bodhisattva vow. Thus, aspirational *bodhicitta* as a stage of preparation entails acquiring the necessary requisites to act according to the vow.

Since aspirational *bodhicitta* is a preliminary stage of the training of the mind, it may seem that actions are not present here. Indeed, Śāntideva mentions the presence of *bodhicitta* without actions:

It is to be known that even without actions (*carya*), *bodhicitta* is beneficial.¹⁰⁰

As Śāntideva only mentions two stages of *bodhicitta* – and actions are a part of the second stage, as we will expound in section 2.4 – it seems that we must consider the stage of “*bodhicitta*

⁹⁸ Dilgo Khyentse 2007, 193-196. These three objects that are acquired form an important part of a threefold training that the bodhisattva undertakes. That is, to acquire the body, possessions, and merit entails protecting, purifying, and enhancing them. This will be addressed in Chapter 6. However, though all three objects are helpful for alleviating suffering, completely freeing others from suffering requires giving wisdom. Since the bodhisattva wants to free others from all three types of suffering and not just the all-pervading suffering, he cultivates the other objects of generosity as well.

⁹⁹ Tobden 2017, 33. See also Kunzang Pelden 2010, 84.

¹⁰⁰ ŚS 9.6; G 11: “*vināpi caryayā bodhicittamupakāraṁ kamiti jñātavyam.*” *Carya* (translated here as “action”) can also be translated as “practice” or “conduct.”

without actions” as the aspirational stage. Śāntideva states this explicitly in ŚŚ.¹⁰¹ However, this does not indicate that aspirational *bodhicitta* does not contain any actions at all, or that this stage is *only* a wish, that is, purely mental. This quote simply states that it is *beneficial* to possess the mere wish of enlightenment. In this mere wish, there are no actions that constitute acting according to the bodhisattva vow, nor are there actions that prepare someone to act accordingly. “*Bodhicitta* without actions” should thus be understood as a starting point, or a preliminary aspect of aspirational *bodhicitta*, and not as the entirety of aspirational *bodhicitta*. There is more to the aspiration than the wish, for as mentioned above, the preparation aspect is an important part of aspirational *bodhicitta*. The preparation can consist of actions; that is, one of the ways the bodhisattva can train his mind is through actions. Therefore, aspirational *bodhicitta* includes actions, but there does exist an aspect of aspirational *bodhicitta* that does not contain actions. We can thus consider two stages of aspirational *bodhicitta*: the wish to be enlightened and the preparation to become enlightened.¹⁰² In the preparation, actions are indeed present, thereby showing that aspirational *bodhicitta* is beyond a mere wish.

The training present in aspirational *bodhicitta* contains compassion. That is, as mentioned above, compassion is not merely the starting point of the path, but it is also present during, at the end, and beyond the path.¹⁰³ Thus, the type of training we find in Śāntideva’s work must be imbued with compassion; indeed, this is evident from the very fact that the figure of the bodhisattva is based on compassion. This is why, in the summary of the bodhisattva vow cited

¹⁰¹ ŚŚ 8.23; G 10 states that aspirational *bodhicitta* contains a wish to be enlightened.

¹⁰² We can recount the types of *bodhicitta* mentioned so far. There are two types of *bodhicitta*: relative and absolute. Within relative *bodhicitta*, there are two aspects: aspirational and engaged. Within aspirational *bodhicitta*, there are two further aspects: the wish and the preparation.

¹⁰³ In the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*, we encounter *great* compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), which refers to a compassion that is possessed alongside the wisdom of emptiness. The great compassion of engaged *bodhicitta* is deeper than the compassion of aspirational *bodhicitta* due to being infused with wisdom.

above, Śāntideva states that one should give to others his body and possessions as well. Evidently, these cannot free other beings from all-pervading suffering, for it is only by giving wisdom that this is accomplished. Nonetheless, despite not alleviating the all-pervading suffering, the bodhisattva gives what he can out of compassion so that he can alleviate some discomforts that other beings face – this is an example of compassion while one is on the path. For example, if someone is struggling to carry a heavy object, he is suffering. In response to this, the bodhisattva can help this person by helping to carry the heavy object.¹⁰⁴ By doing so, he will have alleviated a particular type of suffering, namely, the suffering of suffering.

A bodhisattva maintains this mental attitude throughout the path; he helps others however he can out of compassion for them. Hence, our understanding of aspirational *bodhicitta* cannot be divorced from the bodhisattva's primary motivation of compassion; the bodhisattva does not aspire to attain awakening for his own sake, but for the benefit of all beings. He realizes that in order to free other beings from suffering and best alleviate their difficulties, he requires wisdom. Wisdom, or awakening, is in this regard a means to accomplish the bodhisattva's compassionate aspiration. The actions that follow from the attainment of wisdom reflect the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*.

2.4 Engaged Bodhicitta

Engaged *bodhicitta* consists of alleviating the suffering of others. That is, the bodhisattva no longer aspires to be someone who can act according to the bodhisattva vow; he is now someone who is capable of doing so. In this state, he has completed the protecting, purifying, and

¹⁰⁴ See *BCA* III.18. The provided example is meant to explicate Śāntideva's wish to be a servant for others. This can, in a way, be read as an example of giving one's body to others.

enhancing of that which he gives to others.¹⁰⁵ In the process of doing so, he has attained wisdom and therefore enlightenment. The bodhisattva has completed the preliminary training of the mind, which enables a new way of being in the world – one that allows him to free other beings from suffering.¹⁰⁶ With wisdom comes great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*). In the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*, we can therefore appreciate this interdependence between compassion – and thus ethics – and wisdom. Great compassion follows from a realization of the nature of reality; indeed, one cannot have the former without the latter.¹⁰⁷

Wisdom enables one to act according to the bodhisattva vow because wisdom strengthens ethical behaviour; wisdom enables the bodhisattva’s actions to be most effective in helping other beings.¹⁰⁸ When wisdom is attained, there are no longer any self-oriented actions. This is because wisdom consists of understanding and realizing emptiness, which refers to the lack of self-nature (*svabhāva*) of all phenomena. This also applies to the personal self: there is a realization that there is no “me” nor “mine,” which thus removes the obstruction of a view of a personal self. This is the view of *great* compassion; actions are entirely compassionate due to being infused with the wisdom of emptiness. Therefore, not only does the bodhisattva share his wisdom with others, but he also acts in a way that manifests this understanding – he alleviates others’ suffering by acting in a way that best benefits them without any thought of how he himself might benefit.

¹⁰⁵ However, it is noteworthy that the bodhisattva continues to enhance what he gives – in this case, he enhances, that is, deepens, wisdom, which consequently enhances the objects of generosity.

¹⁰⁶ Laumakis 2021, 52.

¹⁰⁷ See Clayton 2006, 98; Clayton 2011, 288; Garfield 2015, 308; and Laumakis 2021, 51. This is an idea we find throughout Indian Buddhist philosophy, especially so in Nāgārjuna (Westerhoff 2016, 206; see *RA* IV.96).

¹⁰⁸ Clayton 2011, 288. This will be discussed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8.

To further understand engaged *bodhicitta*, we can revisit Clayton’s bodhisattva-astronaut analogy introduced in section 2.2. The analogy has an important difficulty, especially in relation to the path of the bodhisattva during the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*. Though engaged *bodhicitta* refers to the completed aspect of the training of the mind, the bodhisattva is not yet at a stage of full enlightenment – that is, he has not reached Buddhahood. The bodhisattva-astronaut analogy considers the bodhisattva as someone who has completed his training and requires no further practice. Noting the above-mentioned distinction between enlightenment and full enlightenment, we can see the issue in this analogy. Contrary to this analogy, it is instead necessary to maintain that during the practice of engaged *bodhicitta*, one continues to develop one’s mind to reach full enlightenment. Hence, we must assert that the path of the bodhisattva is not complete while on the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*. Through performing the actions grounded in great compassion and based on wisdom, the bodhisattva continues his path to Buddhahood by deepening his realization of emptiness. We must therefore develop Clayton’s analogy further; we must include that by being an astronaut and partaking in the activities of an astronaut, one becomes a better astronaut who can better perform his astronautical duties. He will consequently perfect his nature as an astronaut and thus help other beings more effectively.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, Clayton’s analogy overall provides an important insight into the nature of engaged *bodhicitta*: it is an active aspect and consists of acting according to the initial aspiration.

¹⁰⁹ This reading is not neglected in Clayton’s analogy; we only bring out an implication of this analogy in light of our above-mentioned distinction between enlightenment and full enlightenment. We can also consider an analogy presented in Mardia and Rankin 2013, 152, which likens perfecting one’s spiritual progress to driving. The more one drives, the more skilled of a driver one becomes. The standard driving test and receiving a certification does not require nor represent perfection. Perfecting one’s driving is only aimed at after attaining an initial certification. We can see here a relation between enlightenment, which represents the initial “certification,” and full enlightenment, which represents perfection.

Another useful point to expound engaged *bodhicitta* is to distinguish it from Engaged Buddhism.¹¹⁰ This is a view of Buddhism that has developed in recent decades, and it aims to help others regarding whatever ailment they face, particularly their social situations. Engaged Buddhism differs from engaged *bodhicitta*, for while the latter maintains the prerequisite of a cultivation to become someone who can do the right thing, Engaged Buddhism does not admit of a higher stage to be reached. The bodhisattva in Engaged Buddhism does not hold off from helping others until he is ready; he instead engages in a helpful practice immediately. This can include acts like donating to charity or helping disenfranchised peoples. These actions are indeed present in engaged *bodhicitta*, but they are considered under the path to full awakening. That is, the actions alone are not indicative of engaged *bodhicitta*, thereby underscoring its distinction from Engaged Buddhism.

Due to the difference, the view of Engaged Buddhism is not expounded in this thesis. This thesis follows the view that a preliminary mind-training is necessary in order to be able to free beings from suffering, for the bodhisattva requires wisdom before attempting to free others and to help others effectively. The bodhisattva can indeed help others without possessing wisdom, but the goal of the bodhisattva who possesses *bodhicitta* is not *just* to help others, but ultimately to help by freeing them from the all-pervading suffering and its causes, hence the importance of the presence of wisdom.¹¹¹ Engaged *bodhicitta* requires wisdom, for without wisdom, the bodhisattva may inadvertently harm others in his wish to help them, or he may not

¹¹⁰ See King 2018, 486-487.

¹¹¹ See Clayton 2018 for a discussion on how a bodhisattva's goal has changed from how it was in the past to how it is in the present. In Clayton's view, in the past, the bodhisattva may have needed to cultivate himself, but now, the bodhisattva is more like an Engaged Buddhist. See also Chödrön 2018 for a commentary of *BCA* that reflects this interpretation. However, given the importance of wisdom in the bodhisattva's goal, this distinction may not be fruitful to consider. Instead, we should merely consider Engaged Buddhism as another aspect of the bodhisattva's ethics and not a new, changed goal.

know the best way to help them. Alternatively, his attempt at helping others may be rooted in self-oriented views, which ultimately may not help others in the best possible way – he may help others in ways that he thinks best helps them, but this may fall short of truly helping them. Thus, there is a grander scope in engaged *bodhicitta*, and its goal cannot be achieved by the Engaged Buddhist. This is not to say, however, that Engaged Buddhists are not bodhisattvas. One with wisdom and partaking in engaged *bodhicitta* is consequently an Engaged Buddhist – but the converse does not hold: an Engaged Buddhist does not necessarily partake in engaged *bodhicitta*. This is because an Engaged Buddhist need not have wisdom prior to helping others, hence the key distinction between Engaged Buddhism and engaged *bodhicitta*.¹¹²

A final point to discuss that will help explain engaged *bodhicitta* is the ten *bhūmis*.¹¹³ The *bhūmis* refer to a part of the bodhisattva path, specifically the part of the path which is present *after* the preliminary practices. As mentioned, these preliminary practices correspond to aspirational *bodhicitta*. Engaged *bodhicitta* is present upon completing the preparation, and this is where the *bhūmis* commence. Along with the *bhūmis*, engaged *bodhicitta* also consists of the perfections (*pāramitā*), for the *bhūmis* correspond to the perfections. There are ten *bhūmis*, which correspond to the ten perfections, yet as we will see, Śāntideva only discusses the first six perfections.¹¹⁴ The reason for this is that *BCA* does not intend to present the *bhūmis*. *BCA* focuses primarily on the preparation aspect – that is, what must be done in order to reach the first

¹¹² Specifically, the Engaged Buddhist need not have the wisdom of emptiness, but he may indeed have the knowledge of a particular situation and how to resolve its problems. This knowledge is necessary, but this does not equate it with engaged *bodhicitta*. Nonetheless, an Engaged Buddhist aims to help others, so he is a bodhisattva in this respect. However, he is not a bodhisattva with respect to the cultivation to attain wisdom.

¹¹³ *Bhūmi* translates as “level” or “stage.” We will maintain the use of either “*bhūmi*” or “level” throughout this thesis to avoid terminological confusion with the two stages of *bodhicitta*. So, the use of “*bhūmi*” or “level” refers to the ten levels on the path to awakening, and the use of “stages” refers to the stages of *bodhicitta*.

¹¹⁴ See Harvey 2004, 128-130. Harvey notes that the *bhūmis* correspond to the perfections, and Śāntideva makes the same point in ŚS 9.23; G 12-13 – he only relates the first perfection to the first *bhūmi* here, but the other correspondences can be inferred.

bhūmi.¹¹⁵ Thus, the perfections that Śāntideva presents in *BCA* are not the perfections in their full, or complete/perfected, form – a point we will expound in the following section – and hence, not yet correlated to the *bhūmis*. Due to *BCA*'s lack of mention of the perfected perfections and the *bhūmis*, it seems that engaged *bodhicitta* is not directly explained in Śāntideva's work, so it is not explored in this thesis. We will instead refer to some of aspects of the *bhūmis* to highlight the nature of engaged *bodhicitta*. The essential aspects to consider with the *bhūmis* is that they entail the presence of wisdom, and that they reveal a progressive path to the attainment of full awakening.

That the *bhūmis* entail wisdom can be seen in the necessity of wisdom for certain actions. Clayton observes that Śāntideva does not use the *bhūmis* in his works to present the bodhisattva path.¹¹⁶ She mentions this in part to respond to Damien Keown's view that one requires wisdom (*prajñā*) in order to act in a certain way, for example, to breach the precepts.¹¹⁷ Keown's argument for the necessity of wisdom to act in a certain way is evident in *BCA*: Śāntideva argues that if the bodhisattva's compassion is not pure (*aśuddha*) – indicative of the lack of great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) – then he is not permitted to perform certain moral acts, such as giving away one's body.¹¹⁸ As Keown highlights, one only attains pure, or perfect, compassion when one attains wisdom.¹¹⁹ Therefore, to perform acts eligible to advanced bodhisattvas, one requires wisdom. Hence, from Keown's point, it follows that one can only partake in certain bodhisattva actions when one has reached the first *bhūmi*, thereby revealing that engaged *bodhicitta* requires a realization of wisdom. This is further evident in *ŚS*, where Śāntideva states,

¹¹⁵ See *BCA* X.51.

¹¹⁶ Clayton 2006, 105.

¹¹⁷ See Keown 2001, 154.

¹¹⁸ *BCA* V.87.

¹¹⁹ Keown 2001, 154.

citing the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, that someone on the first *bhūmi* does not have a sense (*saṃjñā*) of a self.¹²⁰ To not have a sense of self entails that one has the wisdom of emptiness; that is, with wisdom, one has renounced views that admit of a self.¹²¹ Thus, wisdom is necessary in order to be on the *bhūmis*.

Nonetheless, to underscore that the *bhūmis* follow from the preparation not only reveals the importance of the *bhūmis* in engaged *bodhicitta*, but also incorporates Clayton's point that Śāntideva does not use the *bhūmis* to explain the bodhisattva's cultivation. Her point is incorporated by highlighting that the lack of mention is merely due to Śāntideva only discussing the preliminary aspect of the bodhisattva's training. Śāntideva only explicitly discusses aspirational *bodhicitta*; thus, he does not expound the *bhūmis*, which occur on the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*. This shows that to understand Śāntideva's ethics, it is important to consider it as a part of aspirational *bodhicitta*.

The second point to draw from the *bhūmis* is that they refer to levels of awakening. As mentioned, the first *bhūmi* emerges upon attaining an initial realization of wisdom; at this stage, the bodhisattva has *realized* emptiness – that is, he has attained a realization of the nature of reality. Prior to this realization, emptiness was merely *understood* on a conceptual level. A realization produces a transformative effect: the bodhisattva's mind and ensuing actions are transformed. Upon reaching the first *bhūmi*, the bodhisattva can then progress to higher levels through further cultivation. The progression results in a gradually deepening realization of emptiness until the tenth *bhūmi* is finally reached. At this level, the bodhisattva has *fully realized*

¹²⁰ ŚS 10.1; G 13. See also Cleary 1993, 704 for the citation in the *Daśabhūmika sūtra*.

¹²¹ Though views of self are dropped upon entering the first *bhūmi*, traces of this view can still reappear (Gyatso 2022, 54). They are only thoroughly eliminated on the eighth *bhūmi*. However, these traces are minimal while on the first to seventh *bhūmi*, so they do not largely obstruct the bodhisattva's actions. He has wisdom, but he has not perfected wisdom to the point of reaching full enlightenment.

emptiness and has attained full awakening. The progression through the *bhūmis* occurs by cultivating the perfections in their complete form, which entails an interdependent practice of the perfections – that is, the six perfections are practiced in conjunction with each other rather than separately. The need to gradually deepen wisdom further entails that one is not yet fully awakened – there is still a cultivation necessary for the bodhisattva. Thus, through the *bhūmis*, we can see that engaged *bodhicitta* is still very much an aspect of relative *bodhicitta*; it is still a mind that strives towards full awakening. Nonetheless, this topic will not be explored in detail in this thesis, for as mentioned, it goes beyond the focus of Śāntideva’s work.

Overall, engaged *bodhicitta* is the active component of relative *bodhicitta*. Whereas aspirational *bodhicitta* consists primarily in cultivating the mind so that the bodhisattva can become someone who can accomplish the bodhisattva vow, engaged *bodhicitta* actively strives to accomplish the vow and thereby consists of acting according to the vow. Engaged *bodhicitta* nonetheless also includes a training of the mind. The training during this stage of *bodhicitta* is no longer a cultivation of the mind to attain wisdom; instead, acting according to the bodhisattva vow deepens wisdom and compassion in order to lead the bodhisattva to full enlightenment. The understanding of both aspects of *bodhicitta* can be furthered by considering the six perfections, so we conclude this chapter with an overview of the perfections.

2.5 The Six Perfections

The six perfections naturally follow from *bodhicitta*. This is because, as Śāntideva states, giving away (*utsarga*) is the summary of the bodhisattva vow, and giving is the first of the six perfections.¹²² The rest of the perfections follow from the first – as will be discussed in Chapter 6 – indicating that the six perfections follow from the wish to free beings from suffering.

¹²² See also Dilgo Khyentse 2007, 151: “Generosity is the natural expression of a bodhisattva’s altruistic mind.”

Moreover, incorporating the above-mentioned point that the vow follows from *bodhicitta*, the six perfections can be said to follow overall from *bodhicitta*. However, though the perfections naturally follow from *bodhicitta*, they are not present in their perfected, complete form, for the perfections must first be cultivated and developed; only then can they be qualities that allow one to act according to the bodhisattva vow. Thus, what follows from *bodhicitta* is a cultivation that the bodhisattva undertakes in order to be able to act according to the vow, that is, to give effectively and free other beings from suffering.

This thesis provides an interpretation of the perfection of generosity based on an understanding of the perfections that is contrary to the commonly seen interpretation in secondary literature, according to which aspirational *bodhicitta* is a mere wish and engaged *bodhicitta* is acting on the basis of the wish. The reason for adopting an alternative view has briefly been explained above, as there are problems with considering aspirational *bodhicitta* as a mere wish. Our alternative reading is also based on a passage from the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*

Prajñāpāramitā (henceforth, *Aṣṭa*):

However, Kauśika, when generosity, discipline, patience, zeal, and meditation are seized by the perfection of wisdom, then the sound “perfections” attain the name “perfections.” Then, these five perfections obtain an eye for entering the path to omniscience and to reach omniscience.¹²³

Thus, for the perfections to become fully perfected perfections, there must be a prior cultivation to enable them to be infused with wisdom. The cultivation of the perfections must, then, be

¹²³ *Aṣṭa* 87.7-9: “*yadā punaḥ kauśika dānaṃ śīlaṃ kṣāntirvīryaṃ dhyānaṃ ca prajñāpāramitāpariṅhītaṃ bhavati, tadā pāramitānāmadheyaṃ pāramitāśabdaṃ labhate | tadā hyāsāṃ cakṣuḥpratīlambho bhavati pañcānāṃ pāramitānāṃ sarvajñatāmārgāvatārāya sarvajñatānuprāptaye.*” “Omniscience” (*sarvajñatā*) refers to full awakening. This idea is found throughout the *prajñāpāramitā* sutras. Jamgön Mipham seems to have this sutra passage in mind when he references the same point (Mipham 2017, 80). See also Künzang Sönam 2019, 146-147. It is worth acknowledging the merits of using the *Aṣṭa* passage to influence our reading of Śāntideva, as Mipham and Künzang Sönam both draw on this source. We therefore follow these commentators in highlighting the importance of this sutra to understand the perfections.

interpreted in a manner which enables the infusion. We present this interpretation in Chapters 4-6, where the cultivation of generosity is shown to produce wisdom gradually. Since wisdom is cultivated as generosity is being cultivated, the cultivation of generosity is shown to have a relation with wisdom. If generosity were instead independent of wisdom, the *Aṣṭa* passage would be neglected; this passage indicates that wisdom must infuse generosity, which can only be the case if generosity has a relation to wisdom. The cultivation aspect of the perfections is present in the stage of aspirational *bodhicitta*, and the perfections in their fully perfected form are present in engaged *bodhicitta*.

This passage also highlights the importance of “the attainment of wisdom” that is crucial in aspirational *bodhicitta*. When the bodhisattva attains wisdom, this knowledge infuses the prior perfections and “perfects” them. In this way, the *Aṣṭa* passage reveals that there are two aspects of the perfections. The first aspect consists of the perfections where they are not truly “perfections.” For example, the bodhisattva vow requires giving; this is indicated in the first perfection, generosity (*dāna*). However, when the bodhisattva first partakes in generosity, he does not partake in the perfected perfection of generosity. He instead partakes in the *cultivation* or training of the perfection of generosity, which is an ongoing process that is incomplete until generosity is infused with wisdom. Hence, the initial encounter with the perfections when they are the immediate extension of the bodhisattva vow is an incomplete nature of the perfection. This is the aspirational *bodhicitta* stage, in which each perfection is cultivated individually and sequentially.¹²⁴ The sequential order of the perfections is naturally present due to the method of cultivation: in order to cultivate and develop the perfection of generosity, the bodhisattva must

¹²⁴ The sequential reading of the perfections is mentioned in some commentaries to *BCA*. For example, see Künzang Sönam 2019.

cultivate the following perfections.¹²⁵ This sequence continues until wisdom, the final perfection, is reached, for then the perfections attain their perfected form. Therefore, the cultivation enables the perfections to be seized by wisdom, and they thus become full, actualized, and perfected perfections, capable of leading to full awakening.¹²⁶

When the perfections are in their cultivation stage, they are incomplete and thus worked towards their completion. We use the term “perfections” when referring to the perfections in the cultivation stage, despite this not reflecting their perfected nature. This is done primarily to show that though incomplete, the perfections during their cultivation stage are still a *part* of the overall nature of the perfections. That is, the perfections in the cultivation stage are an aspect of the perfections in the same way that aspirational *bodhicitta* is an aspect of *bodhicitta*.¹²⁷

The second aspect of the perfections is revealed through an essential point in the *Aṣṭa* passage, which is the presence of wisdom alongside the other perfections. The attainment of wisdom results in it infusing the prior five perfections, thus enabling them to be perfected and lead to full awakening. Here, the perfection of generosity contains the perfection of wisdom, which entails the inclusion of the other perfections as well. It is only when the perfections are infused with wisdom that they can lead to full awakening – to omniscience, or Buddhahood – so only the interdependent perfections in the state of engaged *bodhicitta* lead to full awakening.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ This particular reading of the sequence will be developed in Chapter 6.

¹²⁶ This also reveals a distinction between “wisdom” (*prajñā*) and “full/perfect wisdom” (*prajñāpāramitā*) that we discussed above with respect to the two *bodhicittas*. The *Aṣṭa* passage notes that with wisdom, the perfections *lead to* full wisdom, thereby indicating a temporal gap between wisdom and full wisdom. Accordingly, we can see the distinction between aspirational *bodhicitta* and engaged *bodhicitta*, and a distinction between ordinary beings, noble beings (*āryas*), and buddhas – ordinary beings have no wisdom, *āryas* have wisdom, and buddhas have full wisdom.

¹²⁷ It may be useful to add a qualifier to “perfections” in the same way that qualifiers are added to “*bodhicitta*” to reflect its two aspects. Yet we do not do so in this thesis because *BCA* lists the perfections without any qualifiers. This is done even when the perfections are referenced in their cultivation stage.

¹²⁸ ŚS 151.22-23; G 271: “*evameva bhagavan mahākaruṇādhiṣṭhitānāmanyeṣāṃ bodhikarāṇāṃ dharmāṇāṃ svasmin svasmin karaṇīye prācuryaṃ bhavanti.*” That is, when there is great compassion, the qualities that lead to full awakening are present. Great compassion is only present when wisdom is present. The interdependent

Thus, the perfections from the standpoint of engaged *bodhicitta* represent the second aspect of the perfections alluded to in the *Aṣṭa* passage.

The six perfections are mentioned in the above passage and were introduced in Chapter 1. To reiterate, they are, in order, generosity (*dāna*), discipline (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*), zeal (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). Some of these English translations differ from the ones commonly used, though these are not chosen without reason. Overall, these English terms are used due to their better reflecting the meaning that Śāntideva provides and due to their capturing the overall nature of the perfection. Yet a brief exposition on some of the translation choices is useful, particularly when they differ from common scholarship.

Śīla is often translated as “ethics” or “morality,” but this is a limited scope of the term.¹²⁹ If we opt to translate *śīla* as either of these two terms, then there are two challenges: 1) there is a failure to appreciate the non-ethical aspects of *śīla*, and 2) there is a failure to appreciate non-*śīla* aspects of ethics. To address the first issue, we should observe that *śīla* encompasses not only right and wrong, or good and bad actions, but also everyday conduct, such as how to gesture, how to walk, and so forth. Indeed, *śīla* consists of all the precepts. So, there are features of *śīla* that do not fit into the common conception of ethics. To address the second issue, we can consider that Buddhist ethics refers to the entirety of the Buddhist path and not just one’s conduct.¹³⁰ Thus, “ethics” understood as the entire Buddhist path covers a broader scope than

perfections are a manifestation of great compassion and follow from wisdom. The interdependent perfections represent the perfections when infused with wisdom.

Moreover, as the *Aṣṭa* passage states, the perfections in their perfected form – that is, the interdependent perfections – are an essential aspect of the path to full awakening. There is thus a temporal gap between possessing the perfections and attaining full enlightenment, for the perfections need to be cultivated further.

¹²⁹ See Whitaker and Smith 2018, 55 for an analysis of ethics as conveying one’s moral character and disposition.

¹³⁰ Clayton 2006, 24. Clayton considers the definition of ethics in relation to the question of the best way to live: “Insofar as Buddhism, at least the teachings of Buddhism, can be understood as essentially a response to this question, then all of Buddhist teachings can in one way or another be considered ethics.” Though this is not the only possible definition of ethics, it is the one we adopt in this thesis.

śīla, so it can be a confusing translation. In this regard, it is better to understand *śīla* as “discipline,” particularly conveying the notion of disciplinary conduct, or right conduct. Moreover, “discipline” implies a mental quality, like the difference between generosity and giving – the former is a mental disposition, while the latter is the action. As will be discussed, Śāntideva considers the mind/mental disposition as the central aspect of the perfections. “Discipline” conveys a quality of the mind as opposed to a term like “conduct.” Hence, discipline most accurately captures the meaning of *śīla*.

Vīrya is translated here as “zeal,” though some other possible translations are “vigour,” “valour,” “perseverance,” “enthusiasm,” or “diligence.” Etymologically, *vīrya* means heroism, or manliness, referring to the qualities that are possessed by a heroic individual. By *vīrya*, we should therefore understand that the perfection refers to this energetic, enthusiastic, vigorous, striving quality of a hero. A hero is someone who goes on adventures, overcomes adversity, and accomplishes his ambitious goals. He is someone who makes great effort towards his aspirations and heroic conquests. In brief, he is zealous. Thus, zeal appropriately addresses the relevant features of *vīrya*.

Finally, *dhyāna* has elsewhere been translated as “concentration,” which does appropriately grasp the mental quality of the term. However, “meditation” is a better translation due to the perfection encompassing not just concentration, but also contemplation and still-mindedness, all of which feature in Śāntideva’s exposition of the perfection. So, “concentration” is limited in its scope to represent the meaning of *dhyāna*, which can perhaps shed light on some translations of *dhyāna* as “meditative concentration.” Yet to account for the broad nature of meditation, which Śāntideva does in *BCA*, implies concentration, so there is no need for the redundancy in our translation. For instance, meditative concentration could simply refer to a

deep concentration, which is portrayed accurately through just the term “meditation.” Hence, meditation is an appropriate translation of *dhyāna* to convey Śāntideva’s use of the term.

It is noteworthy that while cultivating each perfection, there is an elimination of a related negative mental state, that is, an affliction.¹³¹ The afflictions are: for *dāna*, greed; for *śīla*, lack of self-control and undisciplined behaviour; for *kṣānti*, anger and hatred; for *vīrya*, laziness and depreciation; for *dhyāna*, distraction; and for *prajñā*, ignorance. It is important to understand that the elimination of negative mental states is not an *additional* element of cultivation. Instead, the elimination of the negative mental states is a result of cultivating the perfection itself. That is, as the bodhisattva cultivates generosity, he gradually eliminates greed, for to be generous is to be without greed. Likewise, as the bodhisattva cultivates patience, he gradually eliminates anger and hatred, for to be patient is to be without anger and hatred.

To understand the perfections, we will now examine Śāntideva’s descriptions of them. The above translations of the perfections do not convey their entire nature, and it is easy to be misled by what the perfections entail if we only consider the translation of the term. Thus, it is important to examine Śāntideva’s descriptions, which are present in the fifth chapter of *BCA*. Immediately prior to providing these descriptions, he underscores the importance of the mind:

“All fears and unlimited sufferings exist
Due to the very mind,” said the Knower of Reality [the Buddha].¹³²

¹³¹ Dilgo Khyentse 2007, 151. See also McRae 2018, 344, where McRae argues that the *brahmavihāras* are cultivated through eliminating a corresponding affliction. This framework of cultivation is present with the perfections as well.

¹³² *BCA* V.6: “*bhayāni sarvāṇi duḥkhānyapramitāni ca | cittādeva bhavāntīti kathitaṃ tattvavādinā.*” We see the importance of the mind throughout Buddhist literature – and in other schools of Indian philosophy, though we will not refer to them here. See DN 22 (*Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*); Garfield 2022a, 83-84; and Gowans 2021, 104 for some examples in Buddhism.

This introduces the importance of the mental aspect that is present in all the perfections. Indeed, just prior to describing the perfection of generosity, Śāntideva emphasizes that the perfection is not the act itself:

If the perfection of generosity were to make the world free from poverty –
Yet even today there is poverty in the world – then how could it have been possessed by
the previous Protectors?¹³³

The perfection of generosity does not imply the elimination of the poverty of all beings, for otherwise, previous buddhas¹³⁴ – the previous Protectors who were fully awakened beings of the past – would not have possessed the perfection of generosity, since there is still poverty in the world today. This would be contradictory, for a fully awakened being must possess the perfections in full. Hence, the perfection cannot be about accomplishing a particular action.

Since the perfection does not consist in fulfilling the quality denoted by the term, there must be another definition of the perfection of generosity. This definition is found in the following verse:

Because of the mind that gives all one’s possessions, along with its fruit, to all people –
On account of that, the perfection of generosity is defined as the very mind.¹³⁵

That is to say, the perfection is a quality of the mind, or a mental disposition, which consists of the bodhisattva giving everything that he owns to others. The mention of the mind is important, for he does not aim merely to give his possessions, but to develop his mental attitude. *Mind* does not simply refer to a mere *thought*.¹³⁶ To have the perfection of generosity, in this case, entails that one has a *disposition* to be generous, that is, to give everything that one owns to others.

¹³³ *BCA* V.9: “*adaridraṃ jagatkṛtvā dānapāramitā yadi | jagaddaridramadyāpi sā kathaṃ pūrvatāyinām.*”

¹³⁴ Prajñākaramati explains that the previous Protectors are the buddhas of the past (*BCA* P 100).

¹³⁵ *BCA* V.10: “*phalena saha sarvasvatyāgacittājjane'khile | dānapāramitā proktā tasmātsā cittameva tu.*”

¹³⁶ We will revisit this idea in Chapter 5.

Though the emphasis is on the mind, the perfection of generosity also consists of the act of giving. In one sense, acts of generosity are present as a way to train the mind and develop the generous mind.¹³⁷ Additionally, upon possessing the generous mind, acts of generosity will follow. It is merely the case that the *primary* aspect of the perfection is the mental disposition. When this disposition is possessed, the actions that accord with the perfections can follow, and these actions will be indicative of the perfected perfection of generosity rather than a mere act of generosity. For instance, generosity that is infused with wisdom entails that there is no sense of self to obstruct the mental disposition, as mentioned above. That is, there is no attachment, no pride, no reluctance to give, and so forth; one is able to give purely for the sake of the recipient rather than aim to receive some benefit through giving.

That the mental quality is the key element of the perfections is emphasized in the definitions of the following perfections as well. Śāntideva explains the next perfection, discipline, by posing a rhetorical question:

Where can fish and other creatures be led away, so that I may not kill them?
Instead, when the mind that abstains [from killing] is obtained, the perfection of
discipline is understood.¹³⁸

Śāntideva first considers the perfection of discipline through the particular disciplinary conduct of non-killing, which is one of the precepts in Buddhism.¹³⁹ Śāntideva’s rhetorical question considers one manner by which one could possess the perfection of discipline. Śāntideva asks where creatures can be hidden from one’s sight, for by not seeing them, one will not have the opportunity to kill them. For example, if the bodhisattva is prone to killing mosquitoes, he may

¹³⁷ We will explain this idea in Chapter 4.

¹³⁸ *BCA* V.11: “*matsyādayaḥ kva nīyantāṃ mārayeyaṃ yato na tān | labdhe viraticitte tu śīlapāramitā matā.*”

¹³⁹ See DN 1. This is the first precept: *panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.*

choose to use some mosquito repellent to avoid seeing them. By doing so, he will not have the opportunity to kill them since he does not encounter them; thus, he seems to have accomplished his goal of non-killing. In this view, the perfection of discipline is attained simply because the maxim of non-killing is followed due to the specific circumstances that prevent the bodhisattva from harming other beings. Yet Śāntideva immediately says that this is not indicative of the perfection of discipline. The bodhisattva must instead have the *mind* of non-killing – that is, the mind that abstains from killing – to possess the perfection.¹⁴⁰ Thus, the perfection of discipline is not simply about following maxims, nor is it about creating an external situation which can allow one to act in a certain way. The perfection of discipline is a quality of the mind.

Śāntideva’s mention of the mind that abstains (*viraticitta*) from killing requires some clarification. *Citta*, as mentioned above, means “mind.” *Virati* has multiple possible translations, one of which is “indifferent to worldly attachments.”¹⁴¹ Our proposed translation – “mind that abstains” – follows from incorporating Śāntideva’s rhetorical question at the outset of this verse. If we consider *viraticitta* as a mind that is indifferent to worldly attachments, then we lack a direct relation to Śāntideva’s rhetorical question. The rhetorical question points to a contrast between the *act* of non-killing versus the *mind* of non-killing; the goal here is to emphasize the mind as the primary element of the precept of non-killing. Nonetheless, the mind that abstains from killing is a mind that is consequently indifferent to worldly attachments, as the mind has no

¹⁴⁰ This example is similar to the notion of moral luck developed by Bernard Williams (see Williams 1981a). The discussion on moral luck emphasizes that in actions, the important element is the *intention* or motive rather than the effect the act has in the world (ibid., 20). Śāntideva makes the same point: non-killing is not about having an effect on the world through the act of non-killing but rather possessing the mind of non-killing. Though Śāntideva’s example is similar to the discussion on moral luck, we only raise this point to show that the mind is the primary element of the perfection. That is, to have the perfection of discipline, the bodhisattva requires the mind of discipline rather than perform an act of discipline.

¹⁴¹ This is the translation provided by Clayton in Clayton 2006, 75. In her view, the perfection of *śīla* is, “When one’s aspirations are no longer directed to achieving worldly goals.” A similar reading is also provided by Prajñākaramati (*BCA* P 101).

inclination for the world to be one way or another – the mind here has no reason to harm other beings. This suggests the value of translating *virati* as “indifferent to worldly attachments.” However, to emphasize the verse’s context with respect to not harming other beings, it is beneficial to underscore the mind that abstains from killing. Thus, our translation of *viraticitta* conveys the meaning of a mind that is not disposed to kill or harm others.

Śāntideva also describes the following perfection, patience, by commencing with a rhetorical question:

How many sky-like villains must I kill?
Instead, when the mind of anger is killed, all enemies are killed.¹⁴²

Like the previous perfection, Śāntideva first proposes to consider patience as the result of the bodhisattva eliminating all enemies who bother him.¹⁴³ For without enemies to bother him, the bodhisattva will be patient; his anger and hatred will not arise if there are no beings to cause these emotions. Yet Śāntideva takes the same approach as the previous perfection and dismisses this proposition. He states that the bodhisattva must instead have the *mind* of patience.

Specifically, the bodhisattva must eliminate the mind of anger, not those who cause him to be angry. Without an angry mind that is affected by external situations, there will no longer be anyone or anything to deem as an enemy. If the bodhisattva can therefore control his mind instead of the external situation – as the external situation is beyond his control – then he will be

¹⁴² *BCA* V.12: “*kiyato mārayiṣyāmi durjanān gaganopamān | mārite krodhacitte tu māritāḥ sarvaśatravaḥ.*” The term *gaganopamān* literally means “sky-like.” It refers here to a sky-like quantity, in the sense of something uncountable. See *BCA* P 102.

¹⁴³ Though Śāntideva does not explicitly refer to patience in this definition, it is clear that this is his focus: in *BCA* VI, the chapter that discusses patience, Śāntideva writes about quelling the mind of anger. As such, the reference to anger in this description is a reference to the perfection of patience. Commentaries to *BCA* mention this idea as well, as seen in the works of Prajñākaramati (*BCA* P 102), and Sonam Tsemo (Śāntideva and Sonam Tsemo 2019, 121-123). The same principle follows for the rest of the perfections’ descriptions – though Śāntideva does not mention them by name, his reference to the perfection is clear when considering the overall definition.

patient. Again, the point of the perfection is not about accomplishing or performing the act, nor is it about producing circumstances that allow the characteristic to manifest; the essential aspect of the perfection is its mental quality.

The following perfection, zeal, is explained similarly. It is emphasized as that which arises from a sharp mind as opposed to activities that one performs to generate merit. So, following the common theme with the other perfections, the bodhisattva must strive to cultivate the mind:

There is no fruit from a lethargic course of conduct, even through speech and body.
That which comes from a sharp mind alone reaches the divine realm, and the like.¹⁴⁴

The bodhisattva can act and speak zealously by saying and doing things that are typically associated with progress on the bodhisattva path. However, when he lacks a zealous mind, such speech and acts will not be performed consistently or enthusiastically; thus, they will not be conducive for progressing on the path. In this regard, speech and deeds are considered inferior to the mental disposition.¹⁴⁵ If the bodhisattva aims to progress on the path, which Śāntideva references by mentioning that one reaches the heavenly, divine realm (*brahmatā*),¹⁴⁶ zeal must be a quality of his mind rather than his speech and deeds. The fundamental quality of zeal is not these acts themselves, but the state of mind; one's effort must be a disposition rather than a mere action. For example, a courageous individual is not someone who acts in a certain way, but someone who has the mind, or disposition of courage. Likewise, a zealous individual is not someone who only acts and speaks in an enthusiastic, vigorous manner, but someone who

¹⁴⁴ *BCA V.15*: “*sahāpi vāksarīrābhyāṃ mandavṛtterna tatphalam | yatpaṭorekakasyāpi cittasya brahmatādīkam.*” We can understand “body” (*śarīra*), as one's actions; this conveys anything that is done by the body.

¹⁴⁵ Śāntideva and Sonam Tsemo 2019, 124.

¹⁴⁶ Reaching this realm is temporary, as full awakening does not consist of being reborn in the heavenly realm. Yet if the bodhisattva cultivates merit, then he will have the ability to reach this realm, which indicates the bodhisattva's progress on the path to full awakening.

possesses the mind of zeal. The mind of courage and zeal do indeed produce courageous and zealous acts, but the mental disposition is the primary element. In this way, the perfection of zeal is also a mental disposition.

The perfection of meditation is likewise explained. Meditation appears to consist automatically of a mental aspect, since it is fundamentally about training one's mind. In his description, Śāntideva emphasizes the mental aspect, or meditative quality, when performing acts such as rites and penances. So, while the bodhisattva can indeed partake in non-mental rites, he must engage in them with a focused mind. This is made evident when highlighting the key element of meditation:

The omniscient one said that all chanting and penances, though done for a long time,
Is useless if the mind is distracted and lethargic.¹⁴⁷

Thus, not only when the bodhisattva meditates must he keep a focused mind, but also whenever he does any action aimed at producing merit, such as penances. Being mindful during such actions is the key aspect of cultivating the meditative mind. Meditation is used here as an umbrella term, under which chanting and penances are included, and though not mentioned, it also includes practices such as sitting, breathing, and contemplative exercises. These practices all have the goal of leading the bodhisattva to awakening. Śāntideva argues that meditation is not simply about *doing* these actions, but about maintaining a concentrated mind when performing these actions. Like the previous perfections, Śāntideva merely provides an example – such as non-killing to represent discipline – to demonstrate the core of the perfection, which is the mental quality. Here, Śāntideva considers meditation under the scope of chanting and penances. It is interesting to consider that this perfection reflects a potential critique of other Indian

¹⁴⁷ BCA V.16: “*japāstapāṃsi sarvāṇi dīrghakālakṛtānyapi | anyacittena mandena vṛthaiveytyāha sarvavit.*”

philosophical schools, namely that by doing good acts and performing rituals, one can accrue merit.¹⁴⁸ Śāntideva’s description of the perfection of meditation refutes this conception by placing an importance on one’s mental disposition while performing these rites rather than the mere performance itself.

Wisdom, the final perfection that Śāntideva discusses, is also presented as a quality of the mind. The perfection of wisdom does not refer to intellectual knowledge but to a realization of the nature of reality that transforms the bodhisattva’s mind and ensuing actions. In this regard, wisdom is a mental disposition. Śāntideva highlights that wisdom is the goal of the training due to its ability to free the bodhisattva from suffering. He explains wisdom in the following manner:

Those who have not cultivated the concealed mind – which is the very essence of the Dharma – wander aimlessly in circles trying to defeat suffering and obtain happiness.¹⁴⁹

Indeed, to be free from suffering and obtain happiness, one must cultivate the mind. As mentioned, for the bodhisattva, freedom from suffering is not limited to just oneself, but also to others. So, if he wants to free other beings from suffering, he must contribute to their attaining of wisdom and thus to their transformation of mind. The essence of the *Dharma* – which can be understood as either the Buddha’s teaching or the nature of reality – comes from the mind alone, not from external sources like gods or rituals. Cultivating the mind is therefore the core of Śāntideva’s philosophy; his instructions on how to partake in the bodhisattva path consists primarily of mental cultivation. The bodhisattva cannot attain freedom from suffering through penances or acts of service, even if these do contribute to a good life. Only through wisdom –

¹⁴⁸ See Dasgupta 2009, 71-72.

¹⁴⁹ *BCA* V.17: “*duḥkhaṃ hantūṃ sukhaṃ prāptūṃ te bhramanti mudhāmbare | yairetaddharmasarvasvaṃ cittam guhyaṃ na bhāvitaṃ.*” To “wander aimlessly in circles” (*bhramati mudhāmbare*) is likely a reference to the wheel of rebirth, as beings cycle through birth and death.

which is attained by cultivating the mind and investigating the nature of reality – can the bodhisattva be free from wandering aimlessly in cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*).

To underscore the importance of the perfections as qualities of the mind, we can consider an analogy that Śāntideva provides while introducing the perfections:

Where can leather be found to cover the entire world?
[Instead] the world can be covered by just the [leather] skin of a shoe.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, it is indeed impossible for me to control external phenomena.
I will instead control my own mind. What is mine by restraining others?¹⁵¹

This analogy is presented after describing the perfection of patience, but it is applicable to all the perfections, as it highlights the importance of the mind. Here, Śāntideva considers covering the entire earth with leather so that his feet will not be sore when he walks. However, it is impossible to find enough leather to cover the entire earth and to partake in the process of covering every inch of the earth with leather. Śāntideva instead advises wearing leather shoes, for the same goal – preventing one’s feet from being sore – is reached through a manageable means. He then likens this to the cultivation of the entire bodhisattva path. It is indeed impossible to control all the external phenomena, such as the many villains who induce anger. Thus, instead of striving to attain the impossible goal of creating the perfect external situation, Śāntideva advises the bodhisattva to control his mind.

Overall, it may seem that the perfections lack an active aspect due to Śāntideva’s emphasis on their mental quality, but we have indicated that their active component follows when the mental component is present. Though actions are indeed performed, they are secondary

¹⁵⁰ BCA V.13: “*bhūmiṃ chādayitum sarvāṃ kutaścarma bhaviṣyati | upānaccarmamātreṇa channā bhavati medinī.*”

¹⁵¹ BCA V.14: “*bāhyā bhāvā mayā tadvacchakyā vārayitum na hi | svacittaṃ vārayiṣyāmi kiṃ mamānyairnivāritaiḥ.*” By “what is mine” (*kiṃ mama*), Śāntideva refers to what he can gain or achieve from restraining others, which we can understand as including any external phenomena.

to the mental disposition. We do not expound the active component of the perfections here, since the purpose in this section is merely to provide an overview of the perfections. We have not expounded the descriptions in detail, nor have we addressed Śāntideva's extended discussion of the perfections, as to do so requires an extensive study. What should nonetheless be clear from this brief presentation is that there is a primary element in the nature of the perfections.

2.6 Conclusion

We have discussed the starting point of Śāntideva's ethics and how it leads to an important aspect of his work, *bodhicitta*. A discussion of *bodhicitta* entails a discussion of the six perfections; we thus highlighted the nature of the perfections here. As we study the perfection of generosity, we will see that it demonstrates not only a training and transformation of the mind, but also an interdependence between it and wisdom. Moreover, in this chapter, we have proposed an interpretation of *bodhicitta* that goes against the common reading. This is due to adopting the reading found in the *Aṣṭa* passage – that the perfections require the infusion of wisdom not only to be a perfection in their perfected form, but also to lead to full awakening. Our understanding of the perfections incorporates this reading: since only engaged *bodhicitta* contains the perfections infused with wisdom, only engaged *bodhicitta* is capable of leading to full awakening. Thus, the perfections as they are cultivated in the stage of aspirational *bodhicitta* must exist without wisdom. Yet in order for the perfections to be infused with wisdom, the bodhisattva must cultivate each perfection to lead it to the state of infusion. This takes place in the stage of aspirational *bodhicitta*. Though the common interpretation is that aspirational *bodhicitta* contains a mere wish, we have expanded the scope of this stage to include a preparation. Engaged *bodhicitta* consequently follows from this preparation.

Chapter 3: The Perfection of Generosity and Consequentialism

3.0 Introduction

In accordance with the description of the perfections presented in Chapter 2, generosity is understood as a quality of the mind, that is, a mental disposition. However, prior to expounding this nature of generosity and its subsequent transformation of mind for the attainment of wisdom, this chapter will examine how some other scholars have interpreted the perfection of generosity. Specifically, we will examine the consequentialist interpretation. While presenting the major arguments for this position, we will also examine their limitations in order to present the strongest view of the consequentialist interpretation of generosity. Nonetheless, we will see by the end of the chapter that a consequentialist framework cannot capture the full scope of the perfection of generosity from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*, namely the inclusion of wisdom. It is nonetheless important to examine the consequentialist interpretation of generosity, as it accurately highlights important aspects of the perfection.

This chapter will focus primarily on the analysis presented by Charles Goodman, as his work is most prominent and addresses the key points of similarity between Buddhist ethics – including Śāntideva – and consequentialism. Much of the recent scholarship on the consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics follows the work of Goodman, hence the value of focusing on his work. We begin this chapter by analyzing features of consequentialism that Goodman identifies in Śāntideva. These aspects of consequentialism are based on an agent-neutral framework found in Śāntideva’s presentation of generosity. As a result of this agent-neutral framework, Goodman identifies features of act-consequentialism, such as altruism and self-sacrifice. To support Goodman’s arguments, we will also consider the work of Mark Siderits, who draws on the reductionist account of persons to identify a consequentialist framework in Buddhist ethics and Śāntideva, notably its agent-neutral standpoint. Moreover, the

defense of agent-neutral consequentialism in Śāntideva requires a study of his argument for impartiality. Thus, we will also examine Śāntideva's argument for the equalization of self and other that he outlines in *BCA* VIII. As we do so, we will analyze a prominent critique from Paul Williams to further our understanding of the role of impartiality in the perfection of generosity. Overall, we will show that there are indeed agent-neutral elements in Śāntideva's ethics, which shows that we can understand aspects of the perfection of generosity through an agent-neutral consequentialist framework.

Following this, we will turn to a discussion of agent-relative consequentialism in Śāntideva. We will present this view by drawing primarily on the work of Charles Fink and Barbra Clayton. The presence of agent-relative consequentialism raises an important point about Śāntideva's ethics, namely that different ethics are applicable for different people depending on their stage of development on the path to enlightenment. That is, generosity can be understood through both an agent-neutral and agent-relative consequentialist framework. This means that we can identify various forms of consequentialism in the perfection of generosity, such as act-consequentialism, motive-consequentialism, and universalist consequentialism. We will use this point to reconcile the presence of both agent-neutral and agent-relative consequentialism in Śāntideva.

Despite showing the suitability of the consequentialist interpretation of generosity, we will conclude this chapter by noting the difficulties of this interpretation, which, as mentioned, draws on the lack of inclusion of wisdom. Ultimately, while the social aspect of how one is to act with others can be adequately addressed by the consequentialist interpretation, its inability to address the full nature of generosity requires us to go beyond this interpretation. We ultimately follow a point mentioned by Stephen Harris: while comparative studies are fruitful in

highlighting similarities with Buddhist ethics – and hence Śāntideva – they do not reveal an underlying framework which we can use to classify Buddhist ethics.¹⁵²

3.1 *The Perfection of Generosity and Agent-Neutral Consequentialism*

The perfection of generosity is mentioned throughout *BCA*, but its primary exposition is in *BCA* III. Goodman cites *BCA* III.8-10 and argues that these verses depict a consequentialist framework, specifically an act-consequentialist framework. Ben Eggleston defines act-utilitarianism accordingly:

An act is right if and only if it results in at least as much overall well-being as any act the agent could have performed. In other words, in any situation, an agent acts rightly if she maximizes overall well-being, and wrongly if she does not.¹⁵³

Goodman argues that Śāntideva’s verses are, “full of poetic expressions of radical altruism and total, self-sacrificing compassion.”¹⁵⁴ Altruism and self-sacrificing compassion are qualities that exemplify the definition of act-consequentialism, as overlooking one’s own happiness to benefit others entails that the greatest number of people benefit.¹⁵⁵

The verses Goodman cites reflect the idea of wishing to be like an object that can benefit others. These verses primarily depict the bodhisattva vow of helping other beings, but their specific exposition contains references to generosity. This reflects the bodhisattva’s generosity to give his body to others and to be of assistance to other beings:

May I destroy the pain of hunger and thirst through the rain of drink and food.
May I be food and drink in the aeons of famine.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Harris 2015, 250.

¹⁵³ Eggleston 2014, 125.

¹⁵⁴ Goodman 2009, 90. See Davis 2013, 283-289 for a further analysis of the self-sacrificial element in the bodhisattva’s ethics.

¹⁵⁵ See Mill 2001, 11.

¹⁵⁶ *BCA* III.8: “*kṣutpipāsāvyathāṃ hanyāmannapānapravarṣaṇaiḥ | durbhikṣāntarakalpeṣu bhaveyaṃ pānabhojanam.*”

And may I be an inexhaustible treasury for beings in poverty.
May I stand before them, with various forms of assistance.¹⁵⁷

Thus, my body, possessions, and merit gained in the three times,
I give these, without attachment, for the benefit of all beings.¹⁵⁸

In these verses, altruism is evident in the claim of wanting to alleviate others' hunger and thirst and aspiring to be like a treasury which benefits beings. The self-sacrificial element is present in giving one's body, possessions, and merit; these are things that the bodhisattva would benefit from possessing, but since he gives them away, he sacrifices his own benefit. Hence, Goodman takes these verses to reflect a consequentialist standpoint in the perfection of generosity.

Though Goodman considers these verses to depict an act-consequentialist framework, we can also identify aspects of motive-consequentialism in these verses. Eggleston defines motive utilitarianism accordingly:

An act is right if and only if it would result from the motives whose general possession would result in at least as much overall well-being as would the general possession of any motives.¹⁵⁹

Śāntideva's verses exemplify the motivation of the bodhisattva vow, for the bodhisattva aspires to alleviate others' suffering by giving to them. That is, the bodhisattva wants to act in a way that is based on his *motivation* to result in the greatest good for the greatest number – indeed, *all* – beings. The motive-utilitarian quality of these verses further shows the relevance of a consequentialist interpretation of Śāntideva's ethics.

¹⁵⁷ *BCA* III.9: “*daridrānām ca sattvānām nidhiḥ syāmahamakṣayaḥ | nānopakaraṇākārairupatiṣṭheyamagrataḥ.*” These various forms of assistance are described by Prajñākaramati as a place of rest, a seat, a dwelling, ornaments, and so forth (*BCA* P 79).

¹⁵⁸ *BCA* III.10: “*ātmabhāvāmsthā bhogān sarvatryadhvataḥ śubham | nirapekṣastyajāmyeṣa sarvasattvārthasiddhaye.*” The same idea in this verse is found in ŚS K4.

¹⁵⁹ Eggleston 2014, 130.

However, despite the presence of consequentialism in these verses, we should caution against hastily applying this framework to Śāntideva. There are aspects of the perfection of generosity that are not captured through a consequentialist interpretation, namely, the aim to attain wisdom. In this regard, there is a two-fold goal to the bodhisattva's ethics: he wants to act in a way that best benefits other beings, *and* he wants to develop wisdom so that he can attain enlightenment. These two goals are not entirely distinct – for the bodhisattva aims at enlightenment for the sake of benefitting other beings – but they do reflect two standpoints of the bodhisattva vow that must be acknowledged. Hence, a consequentialist interpretation may neglect the bodhisattva's transformation of mind to attain wisdom. Likewise, if we focus solely on the bodhisattva's path to wisdom, we may neglect the bodhisattva's wish to free other beings and acting on this wish.¹⁶⁰ Thus, we should not restrict our interpretation of the bodhisattva vow – and the actions that follow from the vow – as depicting a consequentialist framework. Nonetheless, there are indeed consequentialist elements in Śāntideva's verses, as seen through the altruistic and self-sacrificial aspects present in the cited verses.

We can further identify other consequentialist elements in Śāntideva. Goodman identifies altruistic and self-sacrificial elements not just in the above-mentioned verses, but also in ŚŚ's

¹⁶⁰ To accommodate both aspects, we can perhaps consider Clayton's interpretation of a hybrid theory between consequentialism and virtue ethics (Clayton 2009). Virtue ethics incorporates the transformation of character, and thus the progression towards wisdom, and consequentialism depicts the bodhisattva's actions. Interestingly, the cultivation of character is not an idea foreign to consequentialism: as Mill notes, utilitarianism, "could only attain its end by the general cultivation of the nobleness of character" (Mill 2001, 11). We could also consider the view of perfectionist, or character consequentialism (see Goodman 2013, 615-616), which address a form of consequentialism that incorporates the transformation of character. Hence, a consequentialist interpretation seems suitable to interpret Śāntideva's ethics. We will, however, address a potential issue of the transformation of character in the next chapter, such that even if we do adopt a hybrid theory to interpret Śāntideva's ethics, or a form of consequentialism that incorporates the transformation of character, we will still miss an important aspect of the perfection of generosity.

chapter on the perfection of generosity. This chapter contains a passage in which the actions of a bodhisattva, namely regarding his generosity, are presented:

The bodhisattva makes an effort with sincerity – through the power of body, speech, and mind – to alleviate all suffering (*duḥkha*) and despair (*daurmanasya*) in the present and future, and to produce happiness (*sukha*) and pleasure (*saumanasya*) in the present and future for all beings. But if he does not search for the causes and conditions for this, nor strive to prevent obstacles for this, nor cause small suffering and despair to prevent great suffering and despair, nor abandon a small advantage for the sake of obtaining a great advantage – if the bodhisattva disregards these even for a moment, he is at fault.¹⁶¹

All the points mentioned in this passage reveal the salient elements of consequentialism. As Goodman explains:

Not one of the major characteristics of classical act-utilitarianism is missing from this passage. The focus on actions; the central moral importance of happy and unhappy states of mind; the extension of scope to all beings; the extreme demands; the absence of any room for personal moral space; the balancing of costs and benefits; the pursuit of maximization: every one of these crucial features of utilitarianism is present.¹⁶²

Since the ŚŚ passage is presented in the chapter on generosity, it indicates that to possess the perfection of generous requires acting in the manner described. This manner consists of maximizing the good of others, which reveals the similarity with the consequentialist framework.¹⁶³ Since important consequentialist elements are key elements in Śāntideva's presentation of generosity, Goodman argues that we must interpret generosity according to the consequentialist framework, specifically an act-consequentialist framework.

¹⁶¹ ŚŚ 12.9-13; G 17: “*bodhisattvaḥ sarvasattvānāṃ vartamānānāgatasarvaduḥkhadaurmanasyopasamāya vartamānānāgatasukhasaumanasyotpādāya ca niḥśāṭhayataḥ kāyavānmanahparākramaiḥ prayatnaṃ karoti | yadi tu (ta)pratyayasāmagrīm nānveṣate, tadantarāyapratikārāya na ghaṭate, alpaduḥkhadaurmanasyaṃ bahuduḥkhadaurmanasyapratikārabhūtaṃ notpādayati, mahārthasiddhayarthaṃ cālpārthahāniṃ na karoti, kṣaṇamapyupekṣate, sāpattiko bhavati.*”

¹⁶² Goodman 2009, 90.

¹⁶³ Goodman 2017, 332.

However, Gordon Davis argues that the altruistic elements instead *prevent* Buddhist ethics from being consequentialist. He argues that, “A consequentialist agent should modify or even abandon altruism (*qua guide*) whenever doing so would produce better results.”¹⁶⁴ That is, there are times when a consequentialist should *not* be altruistic. As seen in the quoted passage, Śāntideva argues that altruism – specifically, his striving to produce happiness for all beings and eliminate their suffering – should *never* be abandoned, even for a moment. Hence, if we follow Goodman and identify altruistic elements in Śāntideva’s exposition of generosity, this does not entail that we should read this in accordance with a consequentialist framework. Nonetheless, as we can see in Goodman’s analysis of Śāntideva’s passage, altruism is not the only point that is present in the passage. That is, the bodhisattva is more than just altruistic; the parallel with consequentialism is not refuted simply by noting that the bodhisattva’s altruism does not match a consequentialist framework. Thus, altruism *alongside* other features in Śāntideva enables us to consider Śāntideva through a consequentialist framework. We can therefore investigate the other aspects of the bodhisattva’s generosity to see its consequentialist aspects.

In addition to the altruistic and self-sacrificial elements of generosity, the *BCA* verses and the *ŚS* passage also reveal an agent-neutral, or impartial standpoint, which is identified as an important aspect in consequentialism and is thereby used to support a consequentialist reading of generosity.¹⁶⁵ In Śāntideva, to maximize the good – to benefit all beings through being like food

¹⁶⁴ Davis 2013, 283.

¹⁶⁵ However, as Harris 2015, 262-263 states, consequentialism is not the only ethical framework with an agent-neutral standpoint, as impartial benevolence – and hence agent-neutrality – can also be found in deontology and virtue ethics. Nonetheless, Goodman uses the agent-neutral presence to argue for a consequentialist interpretation (Goodman 2009, 43; 75). Due to this, in addition to the other aspects of consequentialism that have been highlighted, such as maximizing universal well-being, we will interpret the impartial standpoint of the bodhisattva’s ethics as a ground for consequentialism. However, since other frameworks are possible as a result of the impartial standpoint, the ensuing arguments for a consequentialist reading of the bodhisattva’s ethics does not exclude interpretations based on other ethical frameworks.

and drink, or a treasury – the bodhisattva must be impartial and consider all beings equally; otherwise, he will not have the self-sacrificial disposition necessarily to alleviate others’ suffering. We can see the importance of impartiality in the following explanation of consequentialism provided by Philip Pettit:

According to consequentialism, the right alternative in any choice is a promotional function of the agent-neutral good. The neutral good is a sort of good that can be identified in common terms from any perspective. It might also be described as the non-indexical good, since the main mark is that its expression does not require the use of an indexical such as ‘I’ or ‘mine’, ‘we’ or ‘ours’, ‘here’ or ‘now.’¹⁶⁶

The good that can be identified from any perspective entails that no particular perspective is valued over others; no particular perspective is considered as a basis for one’s actions – this is the impartial perspective. Importantly, consequentialism is necessarily established on an impartial standpoint.¹⁶⁷ The central aspect of consequentialism is that the greatest good is produced for the greatest number of beings, which can best be achieved by considering all beings from an impartial standpoint.

This agent-neutral, or impartial framework is found in the Buddhist account of equalizing self and other – a topic that Śāntideva mentions in *ŚS* K1 and in *BCA* VIII.90-103.¹⁶⁸ As this is an important aspect of Śāntideva’s ethics, it shows that the structure of his ethics, in general,

¹⁶⁶ Pettit 2012, 42.

¹⁶⁷ See Mill 2001, 17: “As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator.” Moreover, “Laws and social arrangements should place the happiness or (as, speaking practically, it may be called) the interest of every individual as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole.” And, “Education and opinion, which have so vast a power over human character, should so use that power as to establish in the mind of every individual an indissoluble association between his own happiness and the good of the whole.” These passages from Mill highlight the importance of the impartial perspective in consequentialism.

¹⁶⁸ We will return to these verses later in this section. The origins of this argument can perhaps be traced to early Buddhism (see SN 55.7). See also Karunadasa 2018, 106, where Karunadasa explains a moral guideline called self-comparison (*attūpamā*): “Self-comparison invites us to put ourselves in another person’s position and to refrain from inflicting on others what we do not wish inflicted on ourselves.” This idea is reflected in Śāntideva’s equalization of self and other.

entails consequentialism. To develop this agent-neutral, impartial framework, we can consider the reductionist view of personal identity. Siderits argues that Buddhist ethics is grounded in a reductionist view of persons, which entails a consequentialist framework.¹⁶⁹ Siderits presents reductionism as the ultimate truth from a Buddhist standpoint:

To attain enlightenment, and thus enter into the state of *nirvāṇa*, is to come to know the truth of Reductionism, both in theory (through mastery of the theories and arguments of Buddhist philosophy), and as concretely embodied in one's own case (through meditation).¹⁷⁰

Siderits defines Reductionism as the view that all phenomena can be reduced to some basic, fundamental elements. For example, each person is reducible to his body, feelings, perceptions, and so forth.¹⁷¹ The conglomeration of these parts are *not* ultimately real – the conglomeration is merely a conventional designation that is convenient for use in the everyday transactional society; conversely, the parts themselves are ultimately real.¹⁷² One who knows the ultimate reality of persons – that persons are just *parts* and not the whole that they appear to be – will be altruistic, for there is no reason to privilege the conglomeration. Siderits's argument presents the same idea as Śāntideva's argument in *BCA* VIII.90-103.¹⁷³ In brief, following this argument, Siderits argues that the location of pain, or suffering is irrelevant to its badness. One normally considers pain to be bad because it is *his* pain, but as Siderits argues, the Buddhist Reductionist –

¹⁶⁹ Siderits 2016, 294.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 288.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 284. See also Harris 2018, 225: "Reductionism about persons entails that persons have no metaphysical depth; what really exists are a plurality of causally related physical and mental events, which are conceptually unified under the concept of "person.""

¹⁷² Siderits 2016, 285. We can see the underpinnings of the two truths distinction in Siderits's argument, though we will adopt a different approach: we argue in Chapter 7 that the ultimate truth is the emptiness of self-nature rather than the underlying parts – this is the Madhyamaka view specifically, and consequently the view we must attribute to Śāntideva. In this regard, the ultimate truth of selflessness transcends the distinction between self and other.

¹⁷³ Though Siderits does not cite Śāntideva's verses specifically, he mentions that the argument he presents is most clearly formulated in *BCA* (*ibid.*, 289).

that is, an enlightened being – will not see himself as his conglomerate appearance. Thus, pain must be removed regardless of whose pain it is.¹⁷⁴

The altruism that follows from the reductionist metaphysics entails that no one's suffering is to be considered with more value than another's. That is, there is an impartial and agent-neutral standpoint due to the reductionist account of persons. Hence, Siderits argues that the structure of Buddhist ethics is consequentialist.¹⁷⁵ The ethical framework that underlies the perfection of generosity, then, can also be identified as consequentialist, or at least be shown to have consequentialist elements. As we will address shortly, the argument that Siderits uses to identify the reductionist presence in Śāntideva is used by the latter when discussing generosity specifically, thereby showing that the impartiality established by reductionism can be used to support the consequentialist interpretation of generosity. Overall, the impartial and agent-neutral standpoint is not only presented in the verses and passage cited above but is built into the structure of Śāntideva's ethics.

This reductionist view is also mentioned by Derek Parfit – though not in the context of Buddhism – whose writings can also shed light on the potential consequentialist implication of Śāntideva's argument. Parfit presents an extreme account of reductionism, which holds that there

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 289-291. See also Harris 2018, 225-226, where Harris argues that accepting the reductionist account leads to impartial benevolence. We can consider impartial benevolence as a feature of consequentialism, thereby showing that the reductionist account of persons leads to a consequentialist framework.

Additionally, that there is no self from an ultimate standpoint suggests that an aretaic interpretation of Buddhist ethics is improbable, since virtue ethics entails “human” flourishing – that is, there must be a *self* that flourishes (Siderits 2016, 292). Despite this, Siderits does claim that aretaic elements are present in Buddhist ethics, thereby arguing for a hybrid form of aretaic-consequentialism (see also Clayton 2009). It is, moreover, possible to consider another form of virtue ethics that reconceptualizes “human flourishing” (for one example, see Higgins 2005), which can perhaps account for a flourishing human without positing a self. We will explore the aretaic interpretation of the perfection of generosity in the following chapter.

¹⁷⁵ Siderits 2016, 292.

is no reason to be concerned about one's own future.¹⁷⁶ This view is presented in relation to the theory of self-interest, in which it is stated that a rational agent must aspire that things go well for himself. If one holds the extreme reductionist view, then there is *no* reason to value oneself, for what one believes to be "oneself" is a mere fiction. That is, "oneself" is an appearance based on the conglomeration of parts. If it is rational to care about one's self-interest, then one should not care about his appearance-self, for this is not truly *him*. Thus, one should not be concerned about his future states of being, for these are not *him* either; they are also based on the appearance of the conglomeration of parts. If we accept this extreme account of reductionism, a consequentialist outlook will follow. For when one is not concerned about himself or his future, it is not to say that he is *not* concerned about others either. Instead, he merely does not give any special privilege to himself and his future states of being: he has a neutral perspective concerning himself and others. Knowing that the agent-neutral perspective consists of an impartial outlook towards all beings, we can see that the extreme account of reductionism entails caring for other beings without privileging oneself. To act in accordance with this view, then, entails a consequentialist framework.¹⁷⁷ Hence, the reductionist account of persons – in the extreme view presented by Parfit – entails consequentialism.¹⁷⁸

However, an important critique to the reductionist view is that it may not be the case that reductionism is the ultimate view of persons held by Buddhists, especially Mādhyamikas. For

¹⁷⁶ Parfit 1987, 307. The extreme account is not the only view of reductionism that Parfit discusses. He also presents a moderate view, which entails taking seriously the psychological continuity of persons (ibid., 311). As we will discuss in the next section, there are times when Śāntideva does take seriously some aspect of the agent, that is, the psychological continuity of a person.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 319. See also ibid., 331, where Parfit argues that utilitarians ignore the boundaries between lives, one reason for which relies on the reductionist account of persons. Indeed, when there is no self to privilege over others, one must accept the alternative of caring for other beings. See also Goodman 2009, 44; 92. We will shortly see this argument in Śāntideva.

¹⁷⁸ Goodman 2013, 620. Goodman summarizes an argument from Parfit that outlines the necessity of consequentialism as following from a reductionist metaphysics.

while reductionism entails that there are indeed fundamentally existent parts, some Buddhists – Mādhyamikas like Śāntideva – might not accept this view. Goodman argues that Śāntideva not only admits that souls, selves, and so forth do not exist, but also that, “Reality is a vast and complex process, consisting of innumerable tiny, momentary entities called *dharma*s, which a contemporary analytic philosopher would classify as tropes.”¹⁷⁹ Goodman also mentions that this follows the Abhidharma view of the Buddhist doctrine of non-self. However, Śāntideva does not hold this view: as a Mādhyamika, he instead holds the view of universal emptiness, such that even the parts themselves – the “tiny, momentary entities” – do not exist.¹⁸⁰ For our current purpose of refuting the identification of Śāntideva with the reductionist view, we should understand that the view of emptiness in Madhyamaka philosophy goes beyond the reductionist account presented by Siderits. If Śāntideva’s view of emptiness is *not* a reductionist account of persons, then drawing the conclusion that he is a consequentialist will require more evidence.¹⁸¹

Nonetheless, even if the reductionist view of persons is not held by Śāntideva, the impartial perspective is clearly present. For example, the above-mentioned passages that Goodman cites reveals an impartial outlook, as the bodhisattva is to care for others regardless of who they are. The bodhisattva aims to benefit *all* beings, thereby reflecting his impartiality. Moreover, as mentioned, the impartial standpoint is presented explicitly in ŚŚ K1:

¹⁷⁹ Goodman 2009, 92.

¹⁸⁰ Siderits identifies this view as “eliminativism” (Siderits 2016, 285-288). This is a more radical position compared to the reductionist’s view, as it holds that there is *no* self. That is, the eliminativist disagrees with the reductionist on the status of the conventional truth/existence of the parts. We will revisit this idea in Chapter 7 to address Śāntideva’s position on emptiness and the two truths; this discussion will show if Śāntideva holds a reductionist or eliminativist view – or at the very least, a non-reductionist view. See Wetlesen 2002, 48-49 for reference to Mādhyamikas *not* accepting a reductionist view, which can support the possibility of Śāntideva arguing similarly.

¹⁸¹ Nonetheless, Śāntideva may *temporarily* hold a reductionist view of persons. This view may eventually be transcended when the bodhisattva attains the wisdom of emptiness. Until the reductionist view is transcended, however, it will be considered valid, and the ethics it implies will follow. Thus, the bodhisattva may temporarily adopt a consequentialist framework insofar as he holds a reductionist view of persons.

When fear and suffering are not dear to both me and others,
Then what is unique about me that I protect myself and not others?¹⁸²

This verse is presented towards the beginning of ŚŚ's chapter on generosity, which indicates that generosity requires an impartial outlook. Therefore, to understand the perfection of generosity, it is necessary to understand the impartial standpoint from which generosity operates. Thus, in the remainder of this section, we will examine the meaning of this verse to clarify the nature of impartiality that underlies Śāntideva's presentation of generosity.

K1 implies a self-sacrificial element, as one's own suffering is not considered more valuable or worthy of alleviation than another's suffering. Additionally, since all beings want to avoid suffering, the bodhisattva sees no difference between eliminating his own suffering and the suffering of others; he thus has an impartial perspective. The impartiality established in this verse thus reveals an agent-neutral standpoint. The same conclusion that is drawn by the reductionist account of persons follows here: the bodhisattva is not partial towards anyone or anything, thereby entailing that he must act in a way that maximizes the happiness of everyone. Thus, the bodhisattva must act as a consequentialist.

The impartial outlook presented in K1 is also presented in an argument in *BCA* VIII.90-103. Though in *BCA* Śāntideva presents these verses when discussing the perfection of meditation, we can draw on the argument for impartiality established by these verses and apply this idea to generosity, since the argument in these verses and K1 is identical.¹⁸³ That is, the argument for impartiality established in the *BCA* verses can be considered as an exposition of the

¹⁸² ŚŚ K1: “*yadā mama pareṣāṃ ca bhayaṃ duḥkhaṃ ca na priyam | tadātmanaḥ ko viśeṣo yattaṃ rakṣāmi netaram.*”

¹⁸³ In Chapter 2, we addressed the reason for the different placements of this argument in Śāntideva's texts: the different placements highlight the importance of impartiality and compassion throughout the bodhisattva path.

idea in K1. As we will discuss in the next section, a beginner bodhisattva will not have an impartial perspective; he instead operates from a partial perspective. Thus, the placement of K1 at the beginning of the bodhisattva's training indicates that the bodhisattva must have a preliminary understanding of the equalization of self and other, which gives rise to his aspiration to help other beings and to progress on the bodhisattva path. As the beginner bodhisattva progresses through the path, he deepens his compassion and develops a greater conviction in the equality between self and other. In this regard, the point expressed by K1 and *BCA* VIII.90-103 is the same, but it is interpreted and used by the bodhisattva differently according to his stage on the path: it either reflects a preliminary understanding which serves as a foundation for the bodhisattva's cultivation, or it is a training to deepen his understanding of selflessness and is thus a way to progress on the path. In both cases, the argument aims to develop compassion. By seeing that there is no distinction between one's own suffering and that of others, the bodhisattva develops compassion and consequently works for the benefit of all beings. Moreover, compassion and generosity are closely connected; we will see in Chapter 6 that Śāntideva considers generosity as the expression of compassion.¹⁸⁴ Thus, the bodhisattva's cultivation of compassion through studying these verses can be understood as a cultivation of his generosity.

The argument in *BCA* VIII reveals that the bodhisattva should consider himself and others as equal – indeed, the verses have been glossed as “the equalization of self and other.” Once this is established, it can be applied as the foundation for generosity; that is, to be generous requires being impartial. There are different interpretations of these verses, all of which do not

¹⁸⁴ See also Chappell 1996, 360-361 for reference to generosity as compassion.

need to be consulted in detail here. We will, however, analyze some interpretations to present the details of Śāntideva's argument. Śāntideva's argument in these verses is as follows:

First, one should meditate attentively on the equality of self and other.
All beings equally have happiness and suffering. They are to be protected like I protect myself.¹⁸⁵

Just as the body – which has many parts, as seen through the division of hands and other limbs – should be protected as if it were one,
In that way, the divided world – which is undivided in its nature of suffering and happiness – all this should likewise be [protected].¹⁸⁶

Even if my suffering does not afflict the bodies of others,
It is indeed suffering, which is unbearable due to the love I have for myself.¹⁸⁷

Thus, even if another's suffering is not experienced and known by me,
His suffering is still unbearable for him because of his love for himself.¹⁸⁸

Another's suffering is to be removed by me because, just like my own suffering, it has the nature of suffering.
I should also help others because, just like my own [nature as a] being, they [too] have the nature of beings.¹⁸⁹

When happiness is equally dear to both me and others,
Then what is unique about me that I strive for happiness [only] for myself?¹⁹⁰

When fear and suffering are not dear to both me and others,
Then what is unique about me that I protect myself and not others?¹⁹¹

If I do not protect others because I am not harmed by their suffering,
Why do I protect my future body from suffering, which is not my [immediate] pain?¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ BCA VIII.90: “*parātmāsamatāmādaḥ bhāvayedeḥmadarāt | samaduḥkhasukhāḥ sarve pālanīyā mayātmavat.*”

¹⁸⁶ BCA VIII.91: “*hasādībhedenā bahuprakāraḥ kāyo yathaikaḥ paripālanīyaḥ | tathā jagadbhinnamabhinnaduḥkhasukhātmaḥ sarvamidaḥ tathaiva.*”

¹⁸⁷ BCA VIII.92: “*yadyapyanyeṣu deheṣu madduḥkhaḥ na prabādhate | tathāpi tadduḥkhameva mamātmāsnehaduḥsaham.*”

¹⁸⁸ BCA VIII.93: “*tathā yadyapyasaṃvedyamanyadduḥkhaḥ mayātmanā | tathāpi tasya tadduḥkhamātmāsnehena duḥsaham.*”

¹⁸⁹ BCA VIII.94: “*mayānyaduḥkhaḥ hantavyaḥ duḥkhatvādātmaduḥkhavat | anugrāhyā mayānye'pi sattvatvādātmasattvavat.*”

¹⁹⁰ BCA VIII.95: “*yadā mama pareṣāḥ ca tulyameva sukhaḥ priyam | tadātmanaḥ ko viśeṣo yenātraiva sukhodyamaḥ.*”

¹⁹¹ BCA VIII.96: “*yadā mama pareṣāḥ ca bhayaḥ duḥkhaḥ ca na priyam | tadātmanaḥ ko viśeṣo yattaḥ rakṣāmi netaram.*” This verse is identical to K1.

¹⁹² BCA VIII.97: “*tadduḥkhena na me bādhyato yadi na rakṣyate | nāgāmikāyaduḥkhānme bādhyā tatkena rakṣyate.*”

“I also exist at that [future] time,” is a wrong assumption.
Indeed, one thing dies, and quite another is born.¹⁹³

If it is considered that one’s pain is to be protected by oneself,
[Then consider that] the pain of a foot does not belong to the hand. So, why does one
protect the other?¹⁹⁴

Even if it is unsuitable, this occurs because of a sense of self.
[Ultimately,] the unsuitable [conceptions] of self and other should be annulled with all
one’s power.¹⁹⁵

A continuous flow [of consciousness] – like a row – and a collection – like an army – are
not real.

He who suffers does not exist. Therefore, to whom belongs the suffering?¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ *BCA VIII.98: “ahameva tadāpīti mithyeyaṃ parikalpanā | anya eva mṛto yasmādanya eva prajāyate.”*

¹⁹⁴ *BCA VIII.99: “yadi tasyaiva yadduḥkhaṃ rakṣyaṃ tasyaiva tanmatam | pādaduḥkhaṃ na hastasya kasmāttatena rakṣyate.”*

¹⁹⁵ *BCA VIII.100: “ayuktamapi cedetadahaṃkārāṅpravartate | tadayuktaṃ nivartyaṃ tatsvamanyacca yathābalaṃ.”*
This verse can be interpreted in different ways (see Kunzang Pelden 2010, 288-289). The “unsuitable” in this verse can refer to the unsuitable *conceptions* of self and other, as translated here, or it can refer to that which is unsuitable *to* oneself and others. The following verse argues against the existence of a self, so we read this verse as presenting the same point, noting that self and other are unsuitable conceptions. Nonetheless, the two readings present the same idea: that which is unsuitable to oneself and others is the notion of self-nature (*svabhāva*), which implies that the conceptions of self and other are unsuitable.

Furthermore, another point of interest is that translators usually read the first line as an argument from an opponent, and the second line as Śāntideva’s response; this follows Prajñākaramati’s reading (*BCA P 334*). Here, a sense of self, which is indeed an unsuitable view, provides the basis for one’s concern with one’s body. Śāntideva argues that this unsuitable view should be annulled; this implies that it should not be used as a basis for compassion.

However, this verse can be understood differently. Though there appears to be a dialogue here, the verse is not explicit on which line represents Śāntideva’s view. We can consider an alternative reading: the first line is Śāntideva’s view, which continues the idea from the previous verse. The hand protects the foot because there is a sense of self, despite the wrong nature of this view. The second line contains an opponent’s claim that wrong conceptions should be annulled, which implies that compassion should not be grounded in an unsuitable view, namely, the sense of self. The opponent’s argument indicates not only that there is no sufferer, but it also implies that suffering itself is nonexistent. Śāntideva’s response is in the final two verses cited here: no limitations or qualifications need to be placed on suffering, and suffering should be removed regardless of its belonging to someone. Thus, there is no need to question the nature of suffering without a sufferer; the very presence of suffering is enough reason to eliminate it.

Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, we can read this verse not merely as a dialogue, but as a presentation of the conventional and ultimate perspective – a point we will expound in Chapter 7. The conventional view is the unsuitable conception that there is a sense of self. Ultimately, there is no self, as Śāntideva argues in the following verses. Therefore, regardless of the perspective adopted, compassion follows. That is, from the conventional perspective, the sense of self prompts the bodhisattva to be compassionate, and from the ultimate perspective, the lack of self entails the bodhisattva’s compassion. Thus, Śāntideva’s argument here is that the bodhisattva should have compassion regardless of his perspective.

In both these proposed alternative readings, the first line in the verse is accepted as Śāntideva’s view. We defend this reading since, in *BCA IX.76-77*, Śāntideva argues that the delusory view of the self is taken seriously to account for concepts in ethics – we will discuss this point in Chapter 8. To read the first line as Śāntideva’s view enables us to be consistent with Śāntideva’s argument in *BCA IX*. Nonetheless, the specific reading of this verse is not crucial for our understanding of these verses: we only aim to show here that Śāntideva argues for an impartial, universal compassion. Regardless of how we read this verse, an impartial standpoint follows.

¹⁹⁶ *BCA VIII.101: “saṃtānaḥ samudāyaśca pañktisenādivanmṛṣā | yasya duḥkhaṃ sa nāstyasmātkasya tatsvaṃ bhaviṣyati.”*

All sufferings are unowned, without exception.

They are to be prevented because they have the nature of suffering. Why is a limitation placed on this?¹⁹⁷

Why is suffering to be prevented? Because there is agreement amongst everyone [that it should be prevented].

If suffering is to be prevented, all suffering should indeed be prevented. If it is not [to be prevented for others], the same applies for oneself.¹⁹⁸

These verses present an important argument. Śāntideva argues that the bodhisattva should see no distinction between the suffering of oneself and others, even though the two appear to be distinct. Śāntideva rhetorically considers some points against this claim, such as the bodhisattva's inability to experience what others experience, as this seems to entail a distinction between two individuals and a possible defense for selfishness. However, he argues that happiness and suffering are alike to all beings; there is no distinction regarding this. Thus, in the same way that one aims to prevent his future suffering, he could also care about others' suffering. That is, he can care about suffering that does not immediately affect him.¹⁹⁹ As Janet Gyatso argues, the sense of self that one imputes on one's bodily existence can be extended to encompass other beings as well.²⁰⁰ Thus, the bodhisattva can care for others even if they are not under his usual conception of "himself." Furthermore, Garfield comments on these verses indicating that the sense of self is constructed by the mind, and that because there is no self, one must relieve suffering no matter its location.²⁰¹ Drawing on these points, it can be seen that these verses reflect an impartial concern for the suffering of other beings.

¹⁹⁷ *BCA* VIII.102: “*asvāmikāni duḥkhāni sarvānyevāviśeṣataḥ | duḥkhatvādeva vāryāṇi niyamastatra kimkṛtaḥ.*”

¹⁹⁸ *BCA* VIII.103: “*duḥkhaṃ kasmānnivāryaṃ cetsarveṣāmvivādataḥ | vāryaṃ cetsarvamapyevaṃ na cedātmāpi sarvavat.*” Vaidya identifies a discrepancy in manuscripts: the final two words are elsewhere noted as “*cedātmani sarvavat.*” Our reading follows Vaidya's edition, as it is consistent with Prajñākaramati's commentarial explanation and the Tibetan edition of *BCA*.

¹⁹⁹ See Siderits 2016, 289-291, as mentioned above.

²⁰⁰ Gyatso 2019, 105.

²⁰¹ Garfield 2018, 133.

Moreover, these verses also argue that separate entities, such as the hand and the foot, protect each other because there is a sense of a self that underlies these two distinct entities. As Śāntideva mentions, the sense of self is a wrong view, but it can nonetheless be used as a basis for distinct entities to help each other. Since the sense of self is imposed by the mind, it can be altered. If one instead considers all beings as a part of the self, then one can strive to remove all beings' suffering in the same way that one aims to remove one's own suffering.²⁰² The contrary view results in the same conclusion: the *elimination* of the false conceptions of self and other – rather than an extension of the concept of self – eliminates the basis for privileging one's own suffering over others' suffering, as seen through the above analysis from Siderits and Parfit. In either case – whether one expands his conception of self or eliminates the very conception – one will strive to remove all suffering, not just his own.²⁰³ Overall, the argument presented by Śāntideva in these verses is that all suffering is to be removed. If it is to be removed, it must be removed entirely; there is no basis for removing only one's own suffering while ignoring another's suffering. In this regard, Śāntideva establishes an impartial standpoint in these verses. The agent-neutrality presented in these verses reflect the same idea as K1, thereby suggesting that we consider generosity through an impartial framework.

These verses have received much attention in scholarship, including arguments against Śāntideva's establishment of impartiality. One interpretation of these verses is a meditative reading. This reading suggests that the verses aim to transform the bodhisattva's way of seeing himself and others and consequently change his behaviour.²⁰⁴ As the bodhisattva engages in

²⁰² As we will discuss shortly, this is a conventional view of the self. We discuss in Chapter 8 that this view is ultimately incorrect, but the bodhisattva momentarily takes this view seriously to account for features in ethics.

²⁰³ Since both readings lead to the same conclusion, we will not aim to show which of these readings is correct. It is sufficient to note that they both establish impartial compassion.

²⁰⁴ Garfield, Jenkins, and Priest 2016, 75.

meditative practices to see the equality of self and other, he can develop a feeling of concern for others and act accordingly: the bodhisattva can use these verses to develop his compassion.²⁰⁵ Another reading, and one that we will focus on in this chapter, is that these verses present an argument for rationally grounded behaviour. Importantly, this reading is not opposed to the meditative reading.²⁰⁶ It is merely the case that the meditative reading does not *emphasize* the strength of the argument. That is, even if the argument fails, or is weak, the bodhisattva can meditate on equalizing self and other to cultivate his compassion. The argumentative reading, on the other hand, holds that the impartial perspective is what a rational person would do; the strength of the argument matters on this reading. However, Paul Williams critiques Śāntideva's argument, claiming that it is self-defeating.

Williams argues that Śāntideva has destroyed the bodhisattva path. Thus, though these verses aim to establish the bodhisattva's compassion, they do the very opposite. Williams argues that Śāntideva's argument for impartiality must deny any possible existence of a self.²⁰⁷ Williams outlines the argument Śāntideva presents in these verses to show that Śāntideva aims to remove the subject of pain (*duḥkha*): Śāntideva argues that when the subject of suffering is removed, there is no need to value one person's suffering – that is, one's own suffering – over another's suffering. Thus, the bodhisattva can strive to eliminate all suffering. However, in order to make this claim, Williams argues that Śāntideva must eliminate any conception of the conventionally existent self – that is, he must eliminate the conception that there is a conventional difference between self and other. To explain Williams's point, we should understand that the self can be

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 61. Though the meditative reading is important – especially since these verses are present in Śāntideva's chapter on the perfection of meditation – our analysis here will focus on the argument for impartiality established by these verses.

²⁰⁶ See Harris 2024, 44.

²⁰⁷ Williams 1998, 119.

conceived on two levels: the conventional and the ultimate. These conceptions will be developed in Chapter 7. In brief, there is an appearance of a self from the conventional perspective, and there is no self from the ultimate perspective. Because there is no self from the ultimate perspective, it is impossible to consider the self from this standpoint for a discussion on ethics.²⁰⁸ The appearance of a self on the conventional level is brought about by the view of the self that maintains one's thoughts, desires, projects, and so on – features that distinguish one individual from another.²⁰⁹ This conventional self is also, importantly, the subject of suffering. That is, suffering exists in dependence on the conventional self.

The core of Williams's critique relies on the point that the conventional self must, in some way, exist in order for there to be suffering. To distinguish the conventional self from the self that is denied by Buddhists, the conventional self can alternatively be identified as a "person" rather than a self.²¹⁰ As Williams mentions, "The person does indeed exist as a conventionality, it is the person who lives, breathes, needs to have his or her pains removed, and becomes enlightened."²¹¹ This is the problem that Williams raises with Śāntideva's argument:

²⁰⁸ As Keown argues, "The discipline of ethics requires only that one individual can be distinguished from another" (Keown 2001, 19). Thus, the ultimate perspective of no self provides no basis for ethics. This point is not without contention, as Goodman argues in response, "The doctrine of no self is at the heart of Mahāyāna ethics; it has far-reaching and dramatic normative implications" (Goodman 2009, 96). That is, the lack of distinction between self and other is the very basis for Śāntideva's ethics. See also Westerhoff 2016, 205-206 for references indicating the connection between the realization of emptiness – that is, the lack of self – and compassion – that is, ethics. We will develop this idea in our response to Williams's argument. Incorporating the points from Goodman and Westerhoff, we can argue that the ultimate truth of no self *informs* ethics. A detailed response to Keown's claim will be presented in Chapter 8.

²⁰⁹ Williams 1998, 109-110.

²¹⁰ Williams 1998, 109. Williams follows a distinction found in Geluk texts between self (*dak (bdag)*) and person (*kang sak (gang zag)*). In Sanskrit, this distinction can be outlined through the difference between *ātman* and *pudgala*, which are the respective translations of the two Tibetan terms indicated here.

²¹¹ Ibid. A similar point is raised by the Dalai Lama. He outlines a distinction between "existence" and "inherent existence." He notes that this is essential for avoiding nihilism: "Reflecting on the illusion-like nature of phenomena after meditating on their emptiness prevents falling to the extreme of nihilism. While phenomena do not inherently exist, they do exist" (Gyatso and Chodron 2023, 298). Thus, he too takes that the conventional world – including the self – must have some sort of existence; they merely do not have *inherent* existence. We will revisit this point in Chapter 7. See also Westerhoff 2016, 204.

suffering needs a subject.²¹² So, when Śāntideva eliminates the conception of the individual who suffers, the suffering itself is also eliminated. As such, the bodhisattva, whose objective is to eliminate the suffering of others, no longer has a viable goal. That is, Śāntideva's argument is that one should not value one's own suffering since one does not exist. But if this is the case, Williams argues, there is no need to value anyone's suffering, since they do not exist either. The destruction of the bodhisattva path is a consequence of considering suffering impartially. The problem with Śāntideva's argument, therefore, is that upon seeing that there is no distinction between self and others, the need for compassion does not arise. Thus, the bodhisattva has no grounds to exist: if there is no one who suffers, then whose suffering is the bodhisattva to remove? If suffering does not exist, then what is the purpose of a bodhisattva?²¹³ Thus, the bodhisattva and his path, according to Williams, is destroyed.

On the other hand, if we interpret Śāntideva's argument as not rejecting the *conventional* self to avoid the above critique, Williams claims that an egoist view follows. In this regard, the self is rejected from the ultimate standpoint. As Williams argues:

If I can distinguish at all between myself and you – and clearly there is and has to be a distinction (accepted by [dGe lugs] Madhyamaka) even without True Selves – then I can give priority to myself even if that is held to be selfish. The 'ought' of unselfishness

²¹² Williams 1998, 160.

²¹³ These questions will be addressed in detail in Chapter 8. We can briefly note here that there are stages on the path, and the beginning of the path requires taking seriously the notion of the other. But as one progresses through the path, the notion of the other falls away, and there is just suffering that is present without someone who is suffering. The bodhisattva will also realize that there is indeed no sufferer on the ultimate level, but from the perspective of the sufferer who takes the conventional view seriously, there is indeed suffering.

Interestingly, we can also see a response to Williams's critique in *Nidānasamyutta* (SN 12.12). In this sutta, a monk named Moliyaphaguna asks the Buddha "Who feels?" (*ko vedayati*). That is, who is it that experiences feelings, such as happiness, sorrow, and so forth? The Buddha responds by saying that this is an "unfit question" (*no kallo pañho*). It is unfit because there is ultimately no one who feels, that is, no one who experiences suffering. Instead, the Buddha says that the "fit question" (*kallo pañho*) is "What is the condition for feeling?" (*kiṃpaccayā vedanā*). This draws on the topic of dependent arising and the lack of a self, a point we will investigate in Chapter 7. In brief, Williams's concern that "there must be *someone* who suffers" is an unfit statement, as there is no self from the Buddhist perspective: Williams's critique consists of a loaded question which Buddhists would not accept.

simply does not follow from the ‘is’ of *anātman*.²¹⁴

That is, if the conventional self, or person, exists, then this conventional self would be given priority: if we take Śāntideva’s argument to be rejecting the self only on the ultimate level, then egoism follows. The altruism that Śāntideva aims to establish with this argument – that the bodhisattva should care about others – does not follow, according to Williams. If there is no altruism, there is no bodhisattva path, for the path is based on the altruistic motivation to help other beings. Hence, even if there is no self from the ultimate standpoint, there is no effect on the conventional status of beings. That is, the lack of self does not affect the ethics of the conventional self. So, Williams’s argument outlines two possible interpretations of Śāntideva’s argument and shows that they are both self-defeating. Either Śāntideva destroys the bodhisattva path by eliminating the (conventional) agent who suffers, or Śāntideva eliminates the altruism that is the foundation for a bodhisattva’s ethics by maintaining the (conventional) agent who suffers.

Williams’s argument has drawn the attention of many scholars, and we will consider some of their responses here. One response, as mentioned above, is that Śāntideva is not trying to provide a rational and sound argument for adopting compassion.²¹⁵ Instead of an argument, Śāntideva’s goal with these verses is merely to provide a meditative instruction. The practice of equalizing self and other is, in this regard, a way to lessen one’s attachment to oneself. By doing so, the bodhisattva will be able to consider all beings’ suffering without privileging his own suffering. Therefore, he will become more compassionate.

²¹⁴ Williams 1998, 111.

²¹⁵ Finnigan 2018, 178-180. This is the meditative reading addressed above.

Though the meditative reading avoids the problem presented by Williams, we will respond to his argument by defending the soundness of Śāntideva's argument. We will build our response upon the work of three scholars: Barbra Clayton, Stephen Harris, and Jon Wetlesen. Clayton argues that we must limit Śāntideva's elimination of suffering to the ultimate level. Thus, the conventionally existent self – or the person – and its suffering still exists. As mentioned, Williams considers this point and claims that altruism does not follow for the conventionally existent self. However, Clayton argues that Śāntideva's verses only aim to eliminate a distinction between one's suffering and another's to the point that there is no justification for considering one's suffering over another's.²¹⁶ On this view, the conventional beings who suffer still exist, but egoism does not follow. That is, Śāntideva's argument aims to show that the existence of a conventional self does not grant any particular privilege for the bodhisattva to consider one individual's suffering over another's. Though one can indeed privilege his own suffering over others' suffering, it is not a reasonable course of action due to the self's lack of existence on the ultimate level.

To demonstrate this point, we can consider the alternate case: that Śāntideva's argument does establish egoism. If there is no self on the ultimate level, and the conventional self is all that exists, then it may be possible for one to value his conventional self over others, as Williams argues. However, we can now consider the grounds on which the conventional self is valued. Following Williams, one may argue that since one's conventional self exists, it can be given priority over others' conventional selves. However, there is no inherent value of the conventional

²¹⁶ Clayton 2001, 91.

self – the supposed inherent value is precisely what Śāntideva’s argument undermines. As

Clayton argues, there is no justification for this *because* there is no self on the ultimate level:

Even though one can, at the conventional level, distinguish between me and you, my pain and yours, *because* there is *ultimately* no difference between me and you, that conventional distinction does not justify me privileging my pain over yours. Yes, indeed I *can* certainly act selfishly to prevent my pain and not yours, but this is not ultimately justified or reasonable given the doctrine of no-self.²¹⁷

There is nothing special about one’s conventional self that warrants privileging it over the conventional self of another individual. The inherent value of the conventional self would have to be justified by giving it some inherent characteristics; that is, it must be justified according to an ultimate nature of the self. However, by denying the existence of an ultimate self, there is no justification for valuing one conventional self over another. If we attempt to justify an inherent value based on the conventional self, then we can consider Śāntideva’s point that all beings are alike in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering. Since beings are conventionally alike in this regard, a justification for an inherent superior value on conventional grounds cannot be maintained. Thus, it is logically inconsistent to act from an egoistic standpoint when there are no grounds for egoism, thereby entailing one to act altruistically.

A similar response is presented by Harris.²¹⁸ His response is separated into two parts. He mentions first that there are independent reasons for removing suffering, whether it is one’s own or others, which draws on verses 90, 94, 95, and 103 of Śāntideva’s argument – in brief, suffering should be removed simply because it is suffering, and no one likes to suffer. Harris then mentions that any justification for privileging one’s own well-being is refuted. Since an enduring self does not exist, it cannot be appealed to as a basis for privileging the removal of

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Harris 2018, 224.

one's own suffering. Thus, the existence of the conventional self does not eliminate the bodhisattva's compassion:

Śāntideva can be seen as claiming that although conventional selves exist, when we realize they are only convenient fictions, we will accept that we should not prioritize our own conventional self's welfare above that of other persons.²¹⁹

Moreover, Harris argues that this establishes the foundations for impartial benevolence, since the bodhisattva is now committed to removing everyone's suffering, not just his own. In both Clayton's and Harris's responses, the bodhisattva path is not destroyed; instead, the basis for considering one's suffering above others' suffering is destroyed. Śāntideva's argument, therefore, establishes the bodhisattva path, for when the bodhisattva sees the equality of suffering, he can aspire to remove all beings' suffering.

The final response to Williams's critique that we will consider is presented by Wetlesen. His response highlights similar ideas to the responses from Clayton and Harris. Moreover, this response can also be used to address the problems of the reductionist view mentioned above. Wetlesen argues that a non-reductive framework does not necessarily lead to an egoist view.²²⁰ That is, when the bodhisattva eliminates the distinction between self and other, it is not the case that compassion is also eliminated. In his argument, Wetlesen claims that Śāntideva aims to include other beings into his conception of self.²²¹ Here, one's self is considered as a part of an interdependent organism – akin to an ecosystem – rather than an eternal, independent existence. Wetlesen's argument relies on the idea that, "One forms one's self-identity through a process of

²¹⁹ Harris 2011, 100.

²²⁰ Wetlesen 2002, 54. This point responds to Williams's interpretation that the verses argue for a reductionist account of persons. As Wetlesen states, Williams argues that a non-reductionist view must lead to egoism – without eliminating the sense of self, that sense of self will be privileged over others (ibid., 50).

²²¹ Ibid., 64.

identification.”²²² Thus, one’s sense of self can be expanded to include other beings; the bodhisattva merely identifies his sense of self beyond his immediate body. Importantly, Wetlesen highlights that this new identification of the sense of self is an establishment of the *conventional* self, for on the ultimate level, there is no self.²²³ The conventional self is hence understood as an interdependent entity. Thus, Śāntideva’s argument in these verses is, contrary to what Williams argues, for the sake of *correcting* our understanding of the conventional self, rather than eliminating it. One may mistakenly consider this conventional self as an independent existence, such that one values it over other beings. Śāntideva aims to eliminate this misconception and show that the conventional self is instead equal with others. When self and other are equalized, the conventional status of self and other are seen correctly: they are part of an interdependent ecosystem. In Wetlesen’s reading, like Clayton and Harris, Śāntideva accepts the point raised in Williams’s second critique, as the conventional self is maintained; however, accepting this point does not defeat Śāntideva’s argument. Instead, by equalizing the conventional self with others, egoism is eliminated, and altruism follows. Importantly, the bodhisattva also avoids apathy, since he is not *indifferent* to all forms of suffering but instead equalizes his own and others’ suffering.²²⁴ This equalized perspective is consistent with an impartial perspective, as there is no reason to value one’s self over others.

²²² Ibid., 69. This is similar to Janet Gyatso’s point mentioned above.

²²³ Ibid., 79.

²²⁴ Harris 2011, 101 raises the potential objection of an opponent who chooses to be indifferent to all suffering. However, indifference does not follow since the bodhisattva already accepts that suffering should be eliminated. If he did not accept this, he would not be on the Buddhist path to attain freedom from suffering. Indeed, the first Noble Truth is the truth of suffering (*duḥkha*). Śāntideva’s argument can thus be understood not as an argument for a complete novice to the bodhisattva – indeed, Buddhist – path, but for someone who already accepts the basic principles of Buddhism. In this regard, insofar as suffering is a problem – which all Buddhists accept – it should be eliminated for everyone.

Wetlesen's analysis also overcomes the potential objection to the reductionist view raised above. The objection concerned the status of the impartial standpoint if Śāntideva does not hold a reductionist view. To address this, we can consider that the conventional self is not *reduced* but is instead expanded to encompass an interdependent existence. That is, in contrast to the reductionist view's *reduction* of the sense of self as the necessary ground for altruism, the *expansion* of the sense of self also produces altruism. In Wetlesen's argument, the real conventional self is expanded and considered as a part of an interdependent ecosystem, in which there is no independent, inherent self. In this regard, what is eliminated is the *misconception* about the nature of the conventional self, not the conventional self entirely. Thus, in all the examined responses to Williams's argument, we can see that the bodhisattva remains impartial despite not eliminating the conventional sense of self. That is, though the reductionist view entails an impartial perspective, it is also the case that a non-reductionist view – a view that maintains the existence of the conventional self and equalizes it with the conventional other – entails an impartial perspective.

It is important to acknowledge that though we refer to the *existence* of the conventional self, this should be understood as a preliminary point and a temporary understanding that will eventually be rectified as the bodhisattva progresses further on the path. However, one cannot simply reach an understanding and realization of non-self without prior cultivation. He must first understand the conventional nature of the self. Wetlesen notes that we can understand the transformation of the bodhisattva as a progression from a "small self" to a "big self."²²⁵ That is, the bodhisattva proceeds from a false understanding of the self to a correct understanding.

²²⁵ Ibid. See also Harris 2024, 122-123, where he notes that Śāntideva's goal in these chapters is to expand one's commonly conceived boundaries of the conventional self.

Building on this point, the bodhisattva then proceeds to an understanding of the *lack* of self. In Chapters 7 and 8, we will see that this conventional self merely *appears* rather than *exists* – however, it is considered to *exist* solely on a conventional level. This view is a useful fiction that is necessary at this stage of the bodhisattva’s path, but as he cultivates wisdom, the bodhisattva will transcend the view that admits the *existence* of the conventional self. Therefore, the responses to Williams’s argument considered here reflects the *conventional* nature of the self.

These responses to Williams’s argument reveal a foundation for a consequentialist framework in Śāntideva’s conception of generosity. As discussed, Śāntideva’s argument establishes that all beings are to be considered equally. Hence, an impartial outlook on all beings follows, and as mentioned above, the impartial standpoint is the very standpoint of agent-neutrality. An agent-neutral ethics then follows; this entails an ethical framework that considers all beings equally. That is, a consequentialist framework follows from Śāntideva’s argument for equalizing self and other. Based on these points, Goodman argues that the specific consequentialist framework we find in Śāntideva’s impartial standpoint is universalist consequentialism.²²⁶ Moreover, he argues that, “All versions of universalist consequentialism are agent-neutral: they give one common aim to all agents. This common aim is that the lives of all sentient beings go as well as possible.”²²⁷ Thus, this form of consequentialism outlines that the well-being of all individuals matter equally. The equalization of self and other establishes the equal consideration of all beings, thereby providing the basis for Goodman’s claim.²²⁸

²²⁶ Goodman 2009, 93. Goodman also identifies act-consequentialist features in Śāntideva, as mentioned above. The argument for impartiality specifically shows universalist consequentialism.

²²⁷ Goodman 2013, 618.

²²⁸ See also Harris 2024, 120; 128.

As we will see in the following section and the next chapter, the perfection of generosity consists of more than just the impartial, agent-neutral perspective. While agent-neutrality is an important aspect of generosity, we should not deduce that simply due to the presence of this aspect, the perfection of generosity *is* consequentialist. Indeed, as we will see, there are other aspects to the perfection that reveal other ethical frameworks. To see this, the next section will discuss agent-relative consequentialism in generosity. Though this is still a consequentialist framework, the presence of a non-impartial perspective allows for the possibility of other non-consequentialist ethical frameworks. Thus, the ensuing discussion will show that despite the importance of impartiality, there is more to the perfection of generosity than this neutral, impartial perspective.

3.2 *The Perfection of Generosity and Agent-Relative Consequentialism*

In the previous section, we showed the presence of agent-neutrality and impartiality in Śāntideva to demonstrate that generosity must be grounded in an impartial standpoint. However, we cannot conclude that an agent-relative perspective is *not* present in addition to the agent-neutral presence. Though Goodman argues that agent-relativity is a general feature of virtue ethics and not consequentialism, and that Śāntideva's ethics is based on an agent-neutral standpoint,²²⁹ there also exists an agent-relative form of consequentialism in Śāntideva. To understand the general nature of agent-relative consequentialism, we can consider an example from Charles Fink. This example can be analyzed to show the difference between an agent-neutral and agent-relative consequentialist framework:

²²⁹ Goodman 2009, 75. We can also consider the argument from Frances Howard-Snyder, who argues that rule consequentialism is agent-centered (or agent-relative), which thereby disqualifies it from being a consequentialist theory (Howard-Snyder 1993, 272-273). Nonetheless, as we will shortly show, it is indeed possible to bring about the best consequences while taking into account the individual and his characteristics. That is, an agent-relative consequentialist theory is indeed plausible.

Suppose we could save the lives of ten hospital patients but only by killing and dissecting one healthy person whose organs could then be used in transplant procedures. Although this would be morally reprehensible, classical utilitarians seem to be committed to saying that this would be the right thing to do.²³⁰

From an agent-neutral consequentialist standpoint, Fink is correct to state that sacrificing one individual is the right thing to do, since the well-being of the majority is the objective to be accomplished here. One individual is harmed – indeed, killed – for the benefit of ten individuals. We see examples of this sort of self-sacrifice in Buddhist ethics as well, such as the example of the Buddha (in his past life) sacrificing his body to feed a hungry tigress and her cubs²³¹ – though, importantly, Fink’s example shows someone *forcibly* sacrificed for the sake of others, whereas the past-life-Buddha *willingly* chose to sacrifice himself out of compassion.

Nonetheless, the sacrifice of one individual to help many individuals is present in both cases.

Conversely, from an agent-relative standpoint, we must incorporate how each individual is impacted by the situation – for instance, would the ten individuals be sad to learn that their well-being is the result of the death of one individual, or would they feel grateful for the gift? Would the individual to be sacrificed be happy if he knew he was to die for the sake of other beings? The responses to these questions depend on the individuals and their personal projects, or characters. For example, if a bodhisattva has no attachment to his life, he may be willing to sacrifice his life for others. Conversely, a bodhisattva may even choose *not* to sacrifice himself if he can produce better overall consequences by staying alive.²³² However, other individuals, such

²³⁰ Fink 2013, 679.

²³¹ This is a story from the *Jātaka Tales*, a collection of stories recounting the past lives of the Buddha. See Schedneck 2023, 13.

²³² Though a bodhisattva may not endorse this view due to his self-sacrificial disposition, there are indeed cases when the bodhisattva sees the bigger picture and partakes in actions that benefit himself at the expense of some other beings. For example, see ŚS 75.5-10; G 130: Śāntideva cites the example of the prohibition of eating meat, but an exception is made if it leads to great benefit. We can see a real-life example of this with the current Dalai Lama. Though he was a vegetarian, he was advised by doctors to eat meat due to health issues (Gyatso and Chodron 2017,

as non-bodhisattvas, might not have this self-sacrificial disposition and choose to value themselves over others. An agent-relative approach takes into account these individuals' characters and personal projects – that is, how each individual would feel about the situation – in the consequentialist calculation to determine the right action, whereas an agent-neutral approach would ignore their personal projects and maximize well-being as considered from an impartial standpoint.

This point is also raised by Amartya Sen, who presents two scenarios in which two individuals' levels of happiness change.²³³ In this example, scenario one involves one person who possesses a lot of wealth and another person who possesses very little wealth. Scenario two considers a redistribution of the wealth: the first person will be slightly less happy, but the second person would be much happier. In scenario one, let us quantify Person 1's happiness level as ten, and Person 2's happiness level as four. In scenario two, Person 1's happiness level decreases to eight as a result of losing wealth, and Person 2's happiness level increases to seven as a result of gaining wealth. There is thus a greater overall happiness in scenario two – an overall happiness level of fifteen – than there is in scenario one – an overall happiness level of fourteen. Hence, there is more utility – and thus better consequences – in the second scenario, so a utilitarian must state that the second scenario consists of the right actions. From Sen's example, we can see that the best consequences are determined when taking into account the individuals' personalities, that is, their characteristics. Thus, the best consequences are produced from an agent-relative standpoint rather than an agent-neutral standpoint.

266). His dietary choice results in harm for other beings – animals – yet the benefits the Dalai Lama brings to many other beings through his teachings produces greater well-being for more individuals.

²³³ Sen 1979, 473-474. See also Eggleston 2014, 133 for a similar argument. The argument presented here reflects the view of sum-ranking welfarism. On this form of consequentialism, see Bykvist 2014, 106-113.

Having seen the general features of agent-relative consequentialism, we can consider its presence in Śāntideva. This is evident in the idea that to act from an agent-neutral standpoint requires developing the right intention and view.²³⁴ That is, one cannot act from an agent-neutral standpoint without prior training and development on the bodhisattva path; ultimately, one needs a certain level of wisdom to act from an impartial standpoint.²³⁵ Thus, for someone on the earlier stages of the bodhisattva path, an agent-relative approach seems favourable since it does not require a developed level of wisdom. Indeed, following Reiko Ohnuma’s argument, the bodhisattva does not give his body before becoming an advanced bodhisattva.²³⁶ Hence, the beginner-bodhisattva is *not* impartial: he values and keeps his own body rather than give it to others. Giving the body to others would provide benefit to them, but the bodhisattva does not partake in this act due to lacking the requisite wisdom and subsequent mental disposition.

This is mentioned explicitly in *BCA*. Śāntideva mentions initial practices of generosity that do not have an impartial standpoint, which thereby shows that a shift in perspective is eventually required. The bodhisattva shifts from an agent-relative to an agent-neutral perspective as he progresses on the path to awakening:

The master [the Buddha] orders that, at first, vegetables and the like [i.e., other foods] are given.

Later, upon making progress [on the path], one could give away one’s own flesh.²³⁷

When there arises the wisdom that one’s own flesh is like a vegetable,
Then what is difficult about giving away one’s flesh and bone?²³⁸

²³⁴ See *BCA* V.87.

²³⁵ This wisdom is not necessarily the full realization of emptiness. The bodhisattva can act impartiality when he equalizes self and other, rather than realizing the selflessness of all persons and phenomena.

²³⁶ Ohnuma 2019, 121.

²³⁷ *BCA* VII.25: “*ādau śākādidāne’pi niyojayati nāyakah | tatkaroti kramātpāścādyatsvamāmsānyapi tyajet.*”

²³⁸ *BCA* VII.26: “*yadā śākeṣviva prajñā svamāmse’pyupajāyate | māmsāsthi tyajatastasya tadā kiṃ nāma duṣkaram.*”

The first verse indicates that the bodhisattva should *not* have an impartial outlook with regard to vegetables and his body. At the outset of the path, one has less attachment to food than one's body; hence, the bodhisattva does not yet give away his body but only gives simple items. The second verse indicates the impartial perspective: vegetables and one's body are seen equally – through a perspective infused with wisdom – such that the bodhisattva can give his body as easily as he gives vegetables. Therefore, bodhisattvas on the earlier stages of the path have a subjective, non-impartial standpoint, whereas more developed bodhisattvas have an objective, impartial standpoint due to possessing wisdom. The more extreme demands of impartiality and agent-neutrality are only adopted as the bodhisattva progresses on the path to enlightenment.

We can further demonstrate the agent-relative presence in Śāntideva through an argument proposed by Clayton. Clayton considers some verses from *BCA* that does not specifically discuss generosity, but we can apply the idea in these verses to generosity to show its agent-relative aspect:

Someone else who would create an obstacle to [the bodhisattva's] merit (*puṇya*), even for a moment –

There is no end to his evil destiny, for he destroys the benefits of [other] beings.²³⁹

Having destroyed the benefit of just one being, he [himself] would be destroyed.

What more would result from [destroying the benefit of] beings dwelling across the entirety of space?²⁴⁰

Clayton argues that these verses indicate that it is wrong to obstruct a bodhisattva's merit,²⁴¹ for when one obstructs a bodhisattva's merit, he prevents the arising of the potential benefits that the

²³⁹ *BCA* IV.9: “yo'pyanyaḥ kṣaṇamapyasya puṇyavighnaṃ kariṣyati | tasya durgatiparyanto nāsti sattvārthaghātinah.” That this verse refers to the *bodhisattva's* merit is seen in the previous verse (*BCA* IV.8).

²⁴⁰ *BCA* IV.10: “ekasyāpi hi sattvasya hitaṃ hatvā hato bhavet | aśeṣākāśaparyantavāsināṃ kimu dehinām.”

²⁴¹ The bodhisattva's merit can also refer to his merit-producing actions, that is, actions that not only benefit other beings but actions that also produce meritorious results that can be given to beings. To obstruct a bodhisattva's merit is to hinder or prevent his development and ability to be an effective bodhisattva; here, the bodhisattva is unable to acquire merit and use it for others' benefit. We will revisit the idea of merit and how it is given in Chapter 6.

bodhisattva would bring to other beings.²⁴² Since the bodhisattva has taken the bodhisattva vow, he aspires to benefit all beings and works towards this goal. When the bodhisattva is obstructed from carrying out this task, he is unable to benefit other beings. If we include another element that follows from these verses – obstructing another person who is not a bodhisattva – an agent-neutral consequentialist response would indicate that obstructing the merit of both individuals would amount to the same level of wrongdoing, since both the bodhisattva and non-bodhisattva would be considered equally. However, when adopting an agent-relative standpoint, we cannot consider both obstructions equally: obstructing the bodhisattva’s merit results in greater harm for a greater number of people – the bodhisattva’s future actions are consequently obstructed, so beings in the future will not be helped effectively by this bodhisattva. Conversely, obstructing a non-bodhisattva’s merit does not negatively affect many other beings. Thus, actions that obstruct a bodhisattva’s merit are seen to be more wrong when compared to obstructing a non-bodhisattva’s merit.

We can relate Clayton’s argument to generosity to show the agent-relative aspect of generosity. It is better to give to a bodhisattva rather than a non-bodhisattva, for doing so brings about more well-being for more individuals. By giving to a bodhisattva, his compassionate actions are not obstructed; they are rather made possible due to the assistance he receives on account of being the recipient of generosity. Conversely, giving to a non-bodhisattva would indeed help him, but the non-bodhisattva does not necessarily have the personal goal of helping others. While it is indeed possible to be altruistic without being on the bodhisattva path, it is nonetheless the case that *all* bodhisattvas have an altruistic motivation, whereas only *some* non-bodhisattvas have this motivation. Moreover, the bodhisattva’s very nature is compassion and

²⁴² Clayton 2009, 21.

altruism, so his actions are *always* for the benefit of others – that is, the bodhisattva is primarily concerned with acting for the benefit of other beings. Conversely, there are times when a non-bodhisattva may not be altruistic. Hence, a general assessment is that when giving to the non-bodhisattva, fewer beings are benefitted, so one should aspire to give to bodhisattvas.

The notion of giving to certain individuals over others is not an idea unique to Śāntideva. Maria Heim highlights that historically, Buddhists had a graded approach to the recipient of generosity.²⁴³ The hierarchy, Heim argues, is based on the recipient's moral qualities. Animals are the lowest among the recipients, while buddhas are the highest. Within this range include laypeople with certain livelihoods – such as a livelihood that harms others or one that benefits others – and beings who have attained certain levels of awakening. The purpose of this hierarchy is to illustrate to whom it is best to give, namely with respect to the amount of merit that the giver can receive due to his generosity.²⁴⁴ This therefore reveals an agent-relative form of generosity, for one is to be generous through a consequentialist calculation that takes into account the individuals involved in the situation.

Nonetheless, there is also an agent-neutral form of consequentialism, as seen through Goodman's analysis discussed above and Śāntideva's argument in *BCA* VIII.90-103. Thus, we can conclude that *both* consequentialist frameworks appear to be present in Śāntideva's account

²⁴³ Heim 2004, 65.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 69. This seems, however, to reflect early Buddhist teachings. Later Mahāyāna teachings emphasize compassion and altruism, which entails that one gives to those who need it most; this includes those who are not esteemed monks (*ibid.*, 79). The contrast with generosity grounded in altruism is mentioned by Heim to reflect different types of gifts. Such gifts include teachings, public services, and so forth (*ibid.*, 74).

Moreover, generosity with a hierarchy amongst the recipients may only exist to reflect the merit that one receives due to his generosity, whereas a generosity grounded in compassion has as its focus the well-being of the recipients. That is, one may gain better merit due to giving to a monk, but this does not reflect one's generosity for the sake of alleviating suffering: generosity for the sake of alleviating suffering may result in benefitting other beings, but the giver may not receive as much merit as he would by giving to those higher in the hierarchy. There is thus a different goal with respect to the generous actions undertaken.

of generosity. Though both frameworks are present, we should note that they are present for different individuals according to their progress on the path. Initially, the bodhisattva will have an agent-relative standpoint, and later, he will have an impartial, agent-neutral standpoint. However, there remains some issues with the agent-neutral form of consequentialism, as highlighted above in the example from Sen. If the ideal consequences are produced upon incorporating individuals' characters, then an agent-relative perspective is the ideal form of consequentialism. Thus, the agent-neutral consequentialism that is present in a later-stage bodhisattva appears to be a flawed consequentialist perspective.

One potential response to this critique is that there can be different goals for each consequentialist theory. Agent-relative consequentialism is present when the focus is on the well-being of each individual; therefore, to produce the best consequences, it is necessary to take into account each individual's subjective level of well-being. Here, the bodhisattva is concerned about *individual beings*' suffering and aims to alleviate these beings' respective suffering. However, from the standpoint of an impartial view which aims at the elimination of *all* suffering, an agent-neutral approach is required, for suffering is suffering, regardless of its owner – indeed, its lack of owner. Here, the goal is to eliminate suffering itself, not merely the suffering of an individual. This does, however, raise the question of the existence of suffering without the sufferer. We can respond to this critique by again considering that different consequentialist frameworks are suitable for different levels on the path. An early-stage bodhisattva takes seriously the notion that there are *beings* and that they suffer; hence, he takes an agent-relative approach. However, a later-stage bodhisattva understands that a being does not exist independently, but rather interdependently. Hence, the later-stage bodhisattva does not strive to eliminate a *particular* individual's suffering – for he cannot, since such a being does not exist –

but instead aims to eliminate suffering itself, which requires looking beyond the single individual. Consider, for example, someone who attempts to save an endangered species, such as a rhino. To save rhinos does not necessarily require that he saves each and every rhino. That is, he would not track down every rhino and ensure that each rhino's well-being is ensured. He can instead aim to produce an environment in which the rhino can thrive. He thus cares for the *environment* – the greater whole of which the rhino is a part – and consequently saves each individual rhino. The advanced bodhisattva operates similarly: he aims to eliminate suffering itself, not the specific suffering of particular individuals. So, he aims to create and sustain an environment where suffering cannot arise. Therefore, it may be the case that suffering does not exist without the sufferer, but the nature of the sufferer goes beyond the bodily form of the individual. In this regard, the agent-neutral framework represents a compassion based on the wisdom of emptiness rather than a compassion that is based on accepting the existence of beings.

Another potential response to the supposed supremacy of agent-relative consequentialism is that when the bodhisattva has attained an agent-neutral perspective, it is merely the case that he does not impose a value on beings and their suffering. We can explain this point with reference to subjective and objective impartiality.²⁴⁵ When a bodhisattva has developed an agent-neutral perspective, there are two reference points from which the impartial perspective can be analyzed. From the bodhisattva's *subjective* perspective, he is impartial to all beings and their suffering; that is, he does not impose a value on any persons or phenomena. He does not consider one being's suffering as greater than another being's suffering, or one being's happiness as worth more than another being's happiness. Hence, he is subjectively impartial. On the other hand,

²⁴⁵ These two standpoints of impartiality should not be conflated with two types of consequentialism – that is, subjective consequentialism and objective consequentialism (for the latter see Mason 2014, 178). With the two standpoints, we mean to emphasize two kinds of *impartiality*.

there is still the *objective* account of beings and their projects. From an objective standpoint, a bodhisattva produces greater well-being amongst people than a non-bodhisattva, as mentioned above. A subjectively impartial bodhisattva can still maintain objective differences between beings; their individuality, character, and projects are thus incorporated into a consequentialist calculation while maintaining an impartial framework. The bodhisattva with an agent-neutral perspective merely does not consider the objective differences between beings as an indicator of the value of beings and their suffering.

As a result of the subjective and objective differences, the bodhisattva can maintain an agent-neutral perspective and simultaneously incorporate an agent-relative perspective. To build on this idea, we can consider an example from the Stoic philosopher Hecaton, presented by Richard Kraut, who advocates for a solution based on an impartial perspective while maintaining the importance of beings' relative character.²⁴⁶ That is, he presents a way to maintain both an impartial and partial perspective. In Hecaton's example, there are two sailors who are struggling to survive in the water. There is a plank nearby, but only one sailor can grab hold of it and be saved. To decide who grabs the plank, Hecaton instructs that it should be grabbed by the one whose life matters most for him and his republic. Kraut argues that this is an impartial standpoint, as the reason for deciding who is saved does not depend on the inherent value of the individual. The decision is reached on objective, rational grounds – the individual who has a stronger reason to survive should grab the plank.²⁴⁷ In this case, no value is imputed onto the two individuals; only their roles are considered. We can consider this point with the above example of obstructing a bodhisattva as opposed to a non-bodhisattva: there is an objective reason to

²⁴⁶ Kraut 2017, 281-282.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 282.

suggest that a bodhisattva produces greater well-being for other beings in contrast to a non-bodhisattva. Thus, the bodhisattva can be impartial in the value he attributes to beings and their suffering but nonetheless be partial when determining how to bring about the best consequences.

The presence of having two perspectives thus only *seems* to conflict. Kraut argues that the Stoics can maintain the dual perspectives without contradiction:

We can say, on [the Stoics'] behalf, that when we look at the universe from an impartial perspective, we find reasons for arranging human society in a way that charges us to favor certain people over others. The human community is best served, in other words, if we do not all aim to give equal attention to all of its members, but specialize in attending to the well-being of this or that group or individual.²⁴⁸

Kraut acknowledges that this Stoic view is similar to what is found in rule utilitarianism. The rule utilitarian holds that one acts according to rules that, when followed, lead to the maximization for the greatest good for the greatest number of beings.²⁴⁹ According to Kraut, from an impartial perspective, the best rules sometimes require being partial, such as valuing one's child over a stranger. The greater valuation of one's child follows the rule that family relations are taken seriously. A society would be well-ordered if parents care for their children without impartiality.²⁵⁰ A well-ordered society allows for many beings to live a good life; that is, a greater well-being is produced as a result of the well-ordered society. Thus, the justification for the partial treatment is based on an impartial standpoint: the parent does not admit that there is an inherent quality in the child that makes the child better than strangers. Rather, an impartial justification is provided: the greatest good for *all* beings will result if parents give preferential

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 285.

²⁴⁹ See Miller 2014 for an overview of rule utilitarianism.

²⁵⁰ Kraut 2017, 286.

treatment to their children. To be impartial thus requires one to be partial at times; to be impartial requires taking into account the individuals' characters, or roles.²⁵¹

In these examples, the impartial perspective is maintained. Likewise, the bodhisattva with an agent-neutral perspective can maximize the good of all while taking into account the individuality of beings. To reiterate, the agent-neutral perspective entails that all beings are considered *equally*; to consider all beings equally requires taking into account their individuality – but doing so *without imposing a subjective value on these beings*. There is no extra, inherent value imposed on the child that the parents help, or the bodhisattva who helps other beings; it is merely the case that these beings have roles which, when considered from an impartial standpoint, are important to incorporate in a consequentialist calculation. Hence, the bodhisattva is subjectively impartial, but he avoids the objective impartiality that ignores the characteristics of beings. It is important to acknowledge, moreover, that there remains a distinction between agent-neutral and agent-relative consequentialism, especially in the bodhisattva's generosity. An early-stage bodhisattva who has an agent-relative perspective considers that there is indeed a difference between a bodhisattva and a non-bodhisattva or that certain objects are indeed more valuable than others. A later-stage bodhisattva who has an agent-neutral perspective does not

²⁵¹ A similar example is provided by Charles Larmore. He considers the example of a stranger stepping on one's foot: "Only because it is an act that can cause pain – an ill that, as such, anyone has reason to put an end to – can you claim that that person owes it to you not to do such a thing and that you have a right to complain if he does. The agent-relative reason he has not to treat you in such a way rests on the agent-neutral consideration that pain is something to be prevented or stopped when it occurs" (Larmore 2021, 49). In this case as well, the agent-relative perspective is considered alongside the agent-neutral perspective.

Interestingly, this response can also be drawn from Śāntideva's argument in *BCA* VIII.90-103. The agent-neutral standpoint that is argued for maintains the agent-relative features of individuals and their capacity for happiness and suffering.

override the agent-relative aspect. Rather, he incorporates it into the agent-neutral view by not imposing a subjective value on these relative aspects.²⁵²

It may be questioned what a view of pure impartiality would look like, and how that would be incorporated into the bodhisattva's ethics. That is, it may be questioned if a bodhisattva could go beyond the impartial view that takes seriously the relative nature of other beings. Such a view does exist in the bodhisattva's ethics, but to adopt this view requires him to go beyond consequentialism. This bodhisattva would have to transcend all ethical rules and norms. A bodhisattva who has transcended ethics does not *act* or follow rules, nor does he have a motive to benefit other beings. This is the nature of beings who are awakened; as discussed in Chapter 2, this would consist in the activity of fully awakened beings, where one is like a raincloud that rains where it goes. The raincloud's nature is to provide rain, which benefits crops wherever it goes. Likewise, a bodhisattva who has transcended ethics simply expresses the nature of compassion, and he benefits other beings as a result of his compassion.

Goodman considers this behaviour to be like that of act-consequentialists.²⁵³ However, this behaviour is only coincidentally similar. The bodhisattva does indeed act in a way that benefits the greatest number of beings, but there is a crucial difference: the bodhisattva's final perspective does not rely on the *equalization* of self and other, but rather the *elimination* of conceptions of self and other. Thus, the impartial foundation necessary for consequentialism is

²⁵² Perhaps this solution fails: as mentioned above, Howard-Snyder argues that the agent-relative features in rule consequentialism disqualify it from being a consequentialist theory. This thesis does not aim to address this critique, as to do so requires a deeper study of consequentialism than is provided here. We have only aimed to show that the two consequentialist frameworks can be present simultaneously. By doing so, we have shown how the bodhisattva can operate with an agent-neutral framework and still incorporate the relative features of individuals.

²⁵³ Goodman 2009, 6: "Spontaneously, and without any need for deliberation or practical reasoning, they behave as if they were act-consequentialists." However, the spontaneous altruism may not fit the consequentialist framework, for the bodhisattva does not have any notion of sacrificing well-being, nor does he calculate the best course of action. Goodman's comparison is too general: the equation between act-consequentialism and spontaneous compassion results in a view that any action that benefits others is act-consequentialist.

transcended, for the bodhisattva's perspective now relies on the realization of emptiness. Upon attaining this realization, the bodhisattva is spontaneously compassionate to all beings he encounters. He no longer has an agent-neutral perspective but a no-agent perspective. This goes beyond Śāntideva's immediate presentation of generosity, as his ethics is focused on becoming someone who can act according to the no-agent view, so it will not be addressed here.

Overall, based on the presence of agent-relative generosity in Śāntideva – in addition to the agent-neutral perspective – we can see why scholars propose a consequentialist framework to explain the nature of the perfection of generosity. However, despite the arguments for a consequentialist interpretation, there are difficulties with this interpretation. Some have been mentioned throughout this chapter, but importantly, if we want to understand the perfection of generosity from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*, we must go beyond an ethics that focuses only on one's actions. For as mentioned in Chapter 2, the perfections from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta* aim at the attainment of wisdom. Thus, the main issue with a consequentialist interpretation is that this framework does not present the *entirety* of Śāntideva's ethics and generosity; it instead only addresses how the bodhisattva is to act with others.²⁵⁴ This is not a problem of the consequentialist interpretation in general, for scholars who argue for such an interpretation of generosity may not aim to interpret the perfection in relation to wisdom. The scholars may instead aim only to interpret some action-guiding, or social elements of the perfections.²⁵⁵ However, since the goal in this thesis is to present generosity from the standpoint

²⁵⁴ See De Silva 2016, 235. Even in this regard, the consequentialist interpretation only addresses *some* cases where the bodhisattva acts with others. For there are times when the bodhisattva, instead of following a consequentialist framework, follows a super-altruistic framework (see Davis 2013, 283, as mentioned above). Alternatively, the bodhisattva can act following a deontological or aretaic framework.

²⁵⁵ See Goodman 2009, 6-7, where Goodman discusses three types of compassion. The third level of compassion depends on a realization of emptiness, that is, wisdom – this addresses the activity of a buddha, as mentioned above. Goodman argues that, “Those who have [wisdom] do not believe in any ethical theory at all” (ibid., 6). Thus, we should only consider the consequentialist interpretation of the perfection of generosity for a limited scope of the

of aspirational *bodhicitta* to demonstrate the mind-training framework, we must look beyond the mere social level at which the consequentialist framework can perhaps be identified. Thus, even if consequentialism offers a suitable parallel at the social level, it is insufficient to address the full scope of the perfection of generosity.

Moreover, even if generosity at a social level is attempted to be explained through a consequentialist framework, another problem arises: one can be generous in ways that need not be interpreted as consequentialist, as discussed above with reference to Davis's argument. We have discussed above that the demands of self-sacrifice can be used to identify a parallel with consequentialism. However, these extreme demands are not, according to Harris, a feature unique to consequentialism. For example, one can act in a self-sacrificial way for the sake of imitating a moral exemplar, namely the Buddha.²⁵⁶ In this case, the extreme demands for acting generously are shown to have similarities with virtue ethics, where the agent imitates a moral exemplar. Thus, simply because one aspires to help others, and simply because this assistance consists of extreme, self-sacrificial demands, does not necessarily entail a consequentialist framework.²⁵⁷ We will not explore here the debate concerning whether generosity's action-guiding elements are best understood through consequentialism or virtue ethics. The nature of

bodhisattva's ethics, before the bodhisattva attains awakening. The perfection's full nature – which incorporates its relation to wisdom – must be addressed primarily with reference to the transformation of mind, as we will see in the following chapters.

²⁵⁶ Harris 2015, 262.

²⁵⁷ Determining which ethical theory best fits the action-guiding elements of the perfections is an ongoing debate, as Buddhist ethics contains elements from multiple ethical theories. Thus, following Harvey, we should not reduce Buddhist ethics – and hence Śāntideva – to a single Western ethical framework (Harvey 2004, 51). We should instead appreciate the varied facets of Śāntideva's ethics and consider them in relation to his overall goal of freedom from suffering.

Despite this, we should not therefore conclude that Śāntideva is a moral particularist. Charles Hallisey argues for this approach in Theravāda Buddhist ethics. A particularist approach entails the presence of multiple ethical frameworks; this is the case for Buddhist ethics (Hallisey 1996, 37). However, moral particularism does not incorporate a transformation of mind to attain wisdom. To adopt a moral particularist reading entails that we take *how one acts* as the central point of Śāntideva's ethics. Moreover, moral particularism only considers Western ethical frameworks, so some aspects of Śāntideva's ethics are neglected. Therefore, though moral particularism can address the presence of various ethical theories in Śāntideva, it is hasty to say that he is a moral particularist.

generosity can clearly be seen to have elements of consequentialism, but this does not dismiss the possibility of other ethical frameworks as well. In the same way that there are multiple consequentialist frameworks depending on the bodhisattva's path to awakening, there can be multiple ethical frameworks on his path. Thus, we should understand that the consequentialist interpretation only highlights *specific elements* of the perfection and not its full nature.

3.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that aspects of the perfection of generosity can be understood through a consequentialist framework. This chapter has mainly investigated other scholars' works on the perfection of generosity and its relation to consequentialism. We primarily investigated the arguments of Charles Goodman to show the agent-neutral consequentialist framework in Śāntideva, and we supported his points with reference to the work of other scholars. Additionally, the agent-relative consequentialist framework was investigated with reference to Charles Fink and Barbra Clayton. Through a study of these scholars' works, it was shown that consequentialist elements are indeed present and reveal important aspects of the nature of generosity. Nonetheless, the goal in this thesis is to address the complete nature of the perfection of generosity from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*, which must incorporate its relation to wisdom; for this, we must go beyond a consequentialist interpretation. Hence, in the following chapter, we will further examine the nature of the perfection of generosity, focusing on its nature as a quality of the mind, or mental disposition. This enables us to see the transformation of mind that is present in Śāntideva's ethics. Moreover, importantly, we will be able to see how this transformation relates to wisdom.

Chapter 4: The Perfection of Generosity and Virtue Ethics

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we will examine the nature of the perfection of generosity to show that it is a quality of the mind, that is, a mental disposition, instead of a guideline for action. This will be presented in section 4.1 with reference to *BCA* III and *ŚS* Chapter 1. The previous chapter discussed the social aspect of generosity, that is, how the bodhisattva acts with others. His actions can be analyzed – though not exclusively – through a consequentialist framework. However, the perfection of generosity encompasses more than just how one acts with others. The perfection is a quality of the mind that must be cultivated; it entails a transformation of mind.

The transformation of mind will be discussed in section 4.2. Specifically, we will address the framework of how the bodhisattva transforms his mind to develop the mind of generosity. As we will see, the transformation is not an attempt merely to attain a generous character, but to attain the mind of generosity. To transform the mind requires wisdom, as discussed in Chapter 2 – wisdom is necessary for the perfection to become perfected. Thus, the cultivation of generosity works towards the attainment of wisdom. This is seen through the cultivation gradually lessening and working to eliminate the affliction of greed, which is rooted in self-grasping. When greed is lessened, so too is self-grasping; self-grasping follows from ignorance, which shows that as greed is lessened, so too is ignorance. Hence, there is a gradual cultivation of wisdom as generosity is cultivated. In this section, we will therefore show how the cultivation of generosity relates to wisdom by addressing generosity's relation with greed.

Having presented the nature of generosity as a mental disposition and a cultivation to attain this disposition, we will finally analyze an aretaic interpretation of generosity in section 4.3. The cultivation of generosity and the ensuing transformation of mind have apparent

similarities with virtue ethics. Thus, to understand the perfection, it is helpful to consider some of its aretaic parallels. We will also consider critiques to the aretaic interpretation of generosity – and to Śāntideva’s ethics specifically – and refute them when necessary to provide a stronger account of the aretaic interpretation. However, some critiques are relevant and show that virtue ethics does not offer a satisfactory parallel with Śāntideva. Overall, we will show that though aspects of the perfection of generosity can be understood through an aretaic framework, it does not capture all the elements of the perfection. Nonetheless, like the previous chapter, studying the aretaic interpretation can deepen our understanding of the perfection of generosity.

4.1 *The Perfection of Generosity as a Mental Disposition*

To show that the perfection of generosity is a mental disposition that must be cultivated, we can consider Śāntideva’s expressions of the mind of generosity in *BCA* and *ŚS*. The *BCA* verses that will be discussed in this section expound the explanation of generosity presented in Chapter 2.²⁵⁸ As a quality of the mind, the perfections consist not in what one does, but in what one is disposed to do; that is, the disposition is a characteristic that one has.²⁵⁹ As Garfield states, “Generosity doesn’t consist in the first instance in a set of actions, but in a *preference*, or an *orientation*.”²⁶⁰ For example, the bodhisattva with the perfected mind of generosity is not someone who merely performs acts of generosity, or successfully eliminates the poverty of beings; he is instead someone whose mental disposition is to give all his possessions to others.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ The verses we will investigate reflect the same idea as *BCA* III.8-10, which are cited by Goodman to show a consequentialist interpretation of generosity, as seen in the previous chapter. Ultimately, we show that these verses reflect generosity as a mental disposition rather than actions in a consequentialist framework.

²⁵⁹ This understanding of disposition is similar to the conception of virtue found in ancient ethics. See Annas 1993, 9: “All ancient theories understand a virtue to be, at least, a disposition to do the morally right thing.”

²⁶⁰ Garfield 2022a, 95.

²⁶¹ See *BCA* V.9-10, as discussed in Chapter 2. By identifying the perfection with one’s disposition, we avoid the understanding of mind as a thought, or intention to give to others. Certainly, the thought to benefit others will be possessed, but it is secondary to one’s generous disposition. This reading contrasts with Harris 2024, 53-54, where he argues that generosity *first* benefits oneself, then *secondarily* benefits other beings. In this view, having generous thoughts benefits oneself through generating merit. Out of this thought, one can then act generously and benefit

In the context of the bodhisattva vow, this disposition is infused with the aspiration to alleviate the suffering of all beings; thus, the disposition of generosity is the mind to give all of one's possessions to others for the sake of alleviating their suffering. When the bodhisattva possesses this disposition in its perfected form, he is prepared to give when it is required, and to do so, he must not have a sense of ownership over his possessions. Indeed, the bodhisattva who possesses the perfected perfection of generosity does not consider objects to be his own, nor does he contemplate the benefits and detriments of giving prior to actually doing so. His very disposition is to give freely for the sake of helping others. In this regard, the mental disposition of generosity amounts to the bodhisattva's generous character.

To show that generosity is a quality of the mind, or mental disposition, we will first examine a verse that directly reflects the bodhisattva vow. The vow precedes and is expressed by generosity; it is therefore helpful to understand the aspirational vow before studying the mental disposition of generosity. The aspiration is shown through Śāntideva imagining himself to help others in their ailments, in the way that medicine alleviates an illness:

May I be medicine for the sick, and may I also be their doctor
And attendant until their sickness does not return.²⁶²

Though a literal reading of this verse may be possible through considering one's body as medicine – for instance, giving blood, donating organs, and so forth – this verse likely reflects an aspiration to help other beings. This verse reflects the bodhisattva vow through the metaphor of being medicine, a doctor, or an attendant/nurse. The medical metaphor is appropriate for the

others. However, we will show that when generosity is understood as a disposition, both oneself and others are benefitted simultaneously.

²⁶² *BCA* III.7: “*glānānāmasmi bhaiṣajyaṃ bhaveyaṃ vaidya eva ca | tadupasthāyakaścaiva yāvadroḡāpunarbhavaḥ.*” *BCA* III.8-10, discussed in the previous chapter, also references the bodhisattva vow of freeing other beings from suffering.

bodhisattva vow, for the illness that the bodhisattva strives to eliminate is ignorance. As discussed in Chapter 2, ignorance of the nature of reality is the primary cause of suffering.²⁶³ The bodhisattva aims to teach the nature of reality so that beings can be free from suffering. Interestingly, the Buddha himself is described as a doctor who alleviates the illness of suffering through teaching the nature of reality.²⁶⁴ The bodhisattva aspires to be a doctor in the same way as the Buddha – as a spiritual doctor who alleviates individuals’ all-pervading suffering.

Though being a doctor is considered with a spiritual significance here, we can also consider an aspiration to help beings in other ways. A doctor, in a general sense rather than a spiritual sense, need not remedy an individual’s all-pervading suffering, as he can also alleviate other forms of illness, such as bodily pain. The wish to be a doctor, then, is not just to be like the Buddha and teach the *Dharma*; it also consists in being like medicine generally, that is, in being someone who can alleviate any form of suffering.²⁶⁵ Hence, the bodhisattva wishes to help others in any way possible, in the same way that medicine and doctors help to alleviate the illness of suffering beings. By expressing the aspiration to alleviate others’ illness, or suffering, this verse can be understood as reflecting the bodhisattva vow.

Having expressed the bodhisattva vow, we can see in the following verses how this aspiration relates to the disposition of generosity. The disposition of generosity is expressed through various metaphors in *BCA*. For example, Śāntideva writes that he wishes to be like certain objects which satisfy the desires of beings. Their primary desire is to be free from

²⁶³ See the discussion on the three types of suffering presented in Chapter 2. See also Carpenter 2014, 14-19.

²⁶⁴ See SN 46.14 for reference to the Buddha as a doctor. See Mills 2018, 37, where emptiness is presented as a medicinal drug for a therapeutic effect.

²⁶⁵ See *BCA* P 77, where the sick individuals (*glānānām*) are glossed as those who are afflicted by illness (*vyādhipīḍitānām*). Thus, Prajñākaramati does not gloss the illness as ignorance, but emphasizes general illnesses. This allows us to consider illness and medicine in ways beyond a spiritual doctor (*BCA* P 77 glosses medicine (*bhaiṣajya*) as herbs, or a medicinal drug (*auśadha*)).

suffering, and the bodhisattva’s aspiration to alleviate suffering is his vow.²⁶⁶ The verses we will examine reflect the aspiration of the bodhisattva vow, as mentioned in the previous chapter, but they also reveal elements of how the vow is expressed. The expression of the vow is the mind of generosity; it is the mind to give all that one owns so that others can benefit.

When Śāntideva writes that he wishes to be like an object which satisfies the desires of other beings, he is reflecting this disposition of generosity:

I am the protector of helpless beings, and the caravan-leader for travellers.
And for those who wish to cross [a river], I am a ship, a causeway, and a bridge.²⁶⁷

For all beings, may I be a lamp for those who require light. May I be a bed for those who require sleep. May I be a servant for those who require service.²⁶⁸

For all beings, may I be a wish-fulfilling gem, a vase of good fortune, a successful mantra, a great medicinal plant, a wish-fulfilling tree, and a pleasure-granting cow.²⁶⁹

Just as the earth and other elements are useful in various ways for the limitless beings dwelling across space –²⁷⁰

– In that way, may I be a source of life in various ways for the sphere of beings across space, as long as they are not freed [from samsara].²⁷¹

These verses present various objects that have the characteristic of supporting other beings. In wishing to be like these objects, Śāntideva aspires to be whatever others need of him. It is an expression of *giving oneself*²⁷² – specifically, his body²⁷³ – to others so that they can obtain

²⁶⁶ In Chapter 6, we develop the notion that the primary way to alleviate others’ suffering is through generosity. See ŚS 14; G 20, and ŚS K4.

²⁶⁷ BCA III.17: “*anāthānāmahaṃ nāthaḥ sārthavāhaśca yāyinām | pārepsūnām ca naubhūtaḥ setuḥ saṃkrama eva ca.*”

²⁶⁸ BCA III.18: “*dīpārthināmahaṃ dīpaḥ śayyā śayyārthināmahaṃ | dāsārthināmahaṃ dāso bhaveyaṃ sarvadehinām.*”

²⁶⁹ BCA III.19: “*cintāmaṇirbhadrageṭṭhaḥ siddhavidyā mahauśadhiḥ | bhaveyaṃ kalpavṛkṣaśca kāmadhenuśca dehinām.*”

²⁷⁰ BCA III.20: “*prthivyādīni bhūtāni niḥśeṣākāśavāsīnām | sattvānāmaprameyāṇām yathābhogānyanekadhā.*”

²⁷¹ BCA III.21: “*evamākāśaṇiṣṭhasya sattvadhātoranekadhā | bhaveyamupajīvyo’haṃ yāvatsarve na nirvṛtāḥ.*”

²⁷² See Harris 2024, 52.

²⁷³ On this reading, see Kunzang Pelden 2010, 128. In Chapter 6, we will explain in further detail why we understand this aspiration as the bodhisattva giving his body.

benefit or use to satisfy their desires. The bodhisattva, in being like these objects, is therefore someone who can be of service to others in the same way that these objects are.²⁷⁴ Hence, these verses are metaphors that express the disposition of generosity. For example, if the bodhisattva has the characteristics of a wish-fulfilling gem, he can satisfy the desires or wishes of other beings. They can wish for anything they desire, whether it is to obtain possessions that alleviate their suffering, or for their general well-being. The bodhisattva, in having the same characteristics as the gem, aims to satisfy the wishes of other beings. The fundamental characteristic of these objects is that they *give support* to other beings, which is the quality the bodhisattva aims to possess.

We can also consider the presentation of generosity in *ŚS* to show further that the perfection of generosity is a mental disposition. *ŚS*'s chapter on generosity contains passages which present bodhisattvas giving everything that they own, namely their body, possessions, and merit.²⁷⁵ For example, the bodhisattva gives parts of his body, such as his liver, kidney and lungs, to beggars.²⁷⁶ Many possessions are also considered as gifts to be given, such as jeweled chariots, chariots made from the best materials, chariots with jeweled thrones, and so forth.²⁷⁷ In addition to giving the best version of a particular item – in this case, the best version of a chariot – the bodhisattva also gives various objects, including those towards which one would normally be attached:

²⁷⁴ Though we reference the bodhisattva wanting to be *like* these objects, Mroziak 2007, 38 provides a literal reading, where the bodhisattva manifests himself as these objects for the sake of other beings. However, we avoid the literal reading due to the primacy of reading generosity as a mental disposition.

²⁷⁵ *ŚS* 18-22; G.26-36. These three objects of generosity encompass everything that the bodhisattva can possibly own and give. Developing a disposition to give these three objects forms an important part of his training, which we will discuss in Chapter 6.

²⁷⁶ *ŚS* 18.19-20; G 28.

²⁷⁷ *ŚS* 19.4-9; G 29-30.

He gives away a kingdom, a city, or palaces in the city – all decorated with ornaments. Moreover, he appropriately gives to beggars all his followers; he gives away his sons, daughters, and wives; he gives all his houses to beggars, and he gives away his entire enjoyments and pleasures.²⁷⁸

These are all possessions that one would be reluctant to give, for if one is wealthy, he may not want to give away his wealth or that which brings him wealth. Additionally, to give away one's family members reflects renouncing one's dearest possessions, in contrast to giving gifts like food. As seen in the definition of generosity in *BCA* V.10, the bodhisattva must have the disposition to give away *everything* he owns, which thereby includes the possessions that are dearest to him. Ultimately, the mind of giving away family members, for example, is a mind that is ready to give that which one holds dear.²⁷⁹ This mind expresses the lack of greed and attachment; it is a purely generous mind.

In addition to one's body and possessions, the bodhisattva also gives merit.²⁸⁰ This is given not only to assist other beings with their general suffering, but specifically for the purpose of progressing on the path to enlightenment:

May this root of merit of mine purify the paths of all beings, their births, and their greatness of merit. May beings not be overcome or exhausted; may they have

²⁷⁸ ŚS 19.10-13; G 30: “*rājyaṃ vā parityajan puṭabhedakaṃ vā nagararājadhānīm sarvālaṃkārabhūṣitām yathārhaṃ vā yācanakeṣu sarvaparivāraṃ parityajan putraduhitr̥bhāryām vā dadāno yācanakebhyaḥ sarvagrhaṃ vāpasṛjan yāvatsarvopabhogaparibhogān vā dadānaḥ.*” Here, one's family members are considered as one's possessions, though that relation would not be considered today. That is, “We don't need to agree with the social values of an ancient culture in order to learn a valuable point from an ancient story. While in ancient times – and to some extent even today – a wife and children being a man's property was acceptable to Indian sensibilities, clearly it is not acceptable now in other countries” (Gyatso and Chodron 2017, 138).

The giving of family members might be a reference to the legendary king Hariścandra, who gave away all of his possessions, which included his followers and family members. Though Hariścandra was not a Buddhist, his story might be a reference to a situation with which Buddhist monastics would be familiar. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, the example of giving family members could be a reference to one of the Buddha's past lives, in which he gave away his wife and children as an act of generosity (see *ibid.*, 137; see also Heim 2004, 39).

²⁷⁹ Gyatso and Chodron 2017, 138. The gift of one's family is the most difficult kind of gift (Heim 2004, 39). When this can be given, so too can other, easier gifts.

²⁸⁰ In Chapter 6, we will explore in greater detail the notion of giving merit. Briefly, we do not have to consider giving merit as giving a supernatural quality but giving that which one obtains as a result of his meritorious actions.

unparalleled minds and remain mindful; may they be learned and have a firm resolve; and may they have unlimited wisdom.²⁸¹

The root of merit (*kuśalamūlam*) can be understood in different ways. Franklin Edgerton explains the root of merit as found in Pāli scriptures as *alobha* (non-greed), *adosa* (non-aggression/non-anger/non-hatred), and *amoha* (non-delusion), while noting that other sources provide other roots of merit.²⁸² We can consider another option: the root of merit is one's good actions.²⁸³ That is, on account of one's good actions, one produces merit.

That these examples of generosity in ŚS reveal a mental disposition can be seen through what exactly is required to be given. Not all bodhisattvas possess kingdoms or palaces; these are only possessed by kings who are bodhisattvas. Only a king could give away these possessions, so this passage cannot be read as an instruction for every bodhisattva to follow. If we instead consider these passages as reflecting a disposition, then these passages can be applicable for all bodhisattvas. The bodhisattva, even if he does not have these items, is *disposed* to give them; that is, his mind is such that he would give these objects if he ever does come to possess them. In contrast, we can consider a point made by Richard Mahoney, who argues that Śāntideva does not address the mental aspect of giving possessions.²⁸⁴ Mahoney instead mentions that Śāntideva merely provides a list of objects that are to be given. However, by considering that not all beings have, or can have these objects, it is clear that Śāntideva is not presenting a list of objects to be given. If it were such a list, then every bodhisattva would have to become a king, then give away

²⁸¹ ŚS 20.27-30; G 33: “*idaṃ mama kuśalamūlaṃ sarvasattvānāṃ gativiśuddhaye saṃvarteta upapattiviśuddhaye saṃvarteta, puṇyamāhātmyaviśuddhaye saṃvarteta anabhibhūtatāyāṃ saṃvarteta, aparyādānatāyāṃ saṃvarteta durāsadacittatāyāṃ saṃvarteta, smṛtyapramoṣatāyāṃ saṃvarteta gatimativiniścayatāyāṃ saṃvarteta, buddhayapramānatāyāṃ saṃvarteta.*”

²⁸² Edgerton 1953, 188. The Sanskrit equivalents for these terms are *alobha* (non-greed), *adveṣa* (non-aggression), and *amoha* (non-delusion). These three are antidotes to the three poisons, which are *lobha*, *dveṣa/dosa*, and *moha* (see AN III.65).

²⁸³ This reflects Goodman's translation of *kuśalamūlam* as “wholesome action.”

²⁸⁴ Mahoney 2016, 83.

his kingdom, palaces, and so forth. Since this is not the path followed by bodhisattvas – as few bodhisattvas become kings – it follows that we should not consider the objects Śāntideva mentions as a list of objects to be given.

Reflecting a similar point, Ohnuma argues that the bodhisattva does not give his body the moment he aspires to help other beings, or simply because his body is available to be given; she argues that the bodhisattva must develop his body.²⁸⁵ Since the bodhisattva cannot give his body immediately after aspiring to do so, Śāntideva's presentation of generosity does not reflect an instruction to act; it instead presents the disposition of generosity. The bodhisattva's disposition of generosity is simply expressed here through giving the best version of objects, or possessions like family members that one usually holds dear. These examples of bodhisattvas acting generously therefore reflect their disposition to give away everything they own; this is the nature of generosity that we should identify in these examples.

From these examples, we can see that the nature of the perfection of generosity is not the mere act of giving but a mental disposition. The examples cited above do not impose a guideline about how to act, but express a disposition, that is, a quality of mind. Actions will indeed follow from this disposition, but the disposition is the primary aspect of the perfection. To possess the perfection of generosity entails that the bodhisattva's mind reflect that of the objects Śāntideva has chosen as metaphors. The bodhisattva must have the disposition to give himself to others and be of service to them in any way possible; he must have the disposition to give away everything he owns. Overall, the nature of generosity, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is the mind to give all that one owns, which has been illustrated through the examples provided by Śāntideva.

²⁸⁵ Ohnuma 2019, 121-122.

4.2 *The Perfection of Generosity and the Elimination of Greed*

When we understand the nature of the perfection of generosity as a mental disposition, we can understand its relation to wisdom. The bodhisattva aims to attain the mind of generosity, and to do so, he requires wisdom. Thus, as the bodhisattva transforms his mind to develop the mind of generosity, it must in some way relate to the attainment of wisdom. Wisdom consists of the realization of emptiness, specifically the selflessness of persons and phenomena. The realization of emptiness is hindered by afflictions. Each perfection aims to eliminate an affliction, which thus clears away the obstructions that allow for the realization of emptiness. Ultimately, all afflictions arise from ignorance. Ignorance entails positing the inherent existence of a self, or a self-nature; this can be glossed as “self-grasping.” Implicit in self-grasping is a sense of self.²⁸⁶ Cultivating wisdom eliminates self-grasping in full, yet prior to this, the bodhisattva can *lessen* his self-grasping by cultivating the perfections and working towards the elimination of the afflictions. As the afflictions are lessened, the strength of one’s self-grasping lessens, which thereby prepares one for the realization of emptiness.²⁸⁷ The cultivation of generosity aims to eliminate the affliction of greed (*lobha*). Thus, to understand how the cultivation of generosity lessens self-grasping, we will first address the nature of greed, then examine its relation to self-grasping.

We briefly mentioned above in the discussion on the roots of merit that *lobha*, along with *dveṣa* (hatred) and *moha* (delusion), is one of the three poisons. These poisons are the fundamental afflictions which hinder an individual’s development to enlightenment and general

²⁸⁶ See Gyatso and Chodron 2022b, 186: “The view of personal identity involves grasping both I and mine as inherently existent.” Though the Dalai Lama does not use the term “sense of self,” he refers to personal identity, which we understand as a sense of self.

²⁸⁷ See Harris 2024, 36: “By eliminating the [afflictions], [the perfections] restore accurate perception of the world. In particular, they eliminate the deep psychological tendency to conceive of oneself as the central figure in the universe, which arises from delusive reification of the self.”

well-being. These are the primary afflictions, as they not only produce other afflictions, but they themselves harm the bodhisattva. Ultimately, they produce inner conflict within individuals. When they are present, the bodhisattva cannot cultivate merit and is thus unable to help others; he is also unable to help himself attain enlightenment due to not developing the necessary conditions for awakening. As such, the three poisons must be eliminated in order for one to attain enlightenment.²⁸⁸

While *lobha* is translated here as “greed,” it also conveys the general notion of being attracted to something. That is, *lobha* is not just wanting, but also attachment, clinging, or grasping (*upādāna*). There are, in this regard, different expressions of greed, such as lust, avarice, seeking fame, and clinging to views.²⁸⁹ Moreover, the root of the term is *lubh*, which can be glossed as causing someone to be confused. Thus, we can understand greed as the state of longing for something, and this produces confusion, specifically regarding the value of things, the benefit one can obtain from things, and so forth. One can imagine an inherent quality in the items that he may wish to possess, which shows the relation between greed and confusion, or ignorance. That is, when one has greed, one is caused to be confused regarding the nature of phenomena. The alternative is also the case, for when one is confused, or ignorant about the nature of reality, he is thereby prevented from attaining enlightenment. Out of his confusion about the nature of reality, he develops greed for illusory phenomena. Having greed therefore hinders wisdom, for greed is rooted in ignorance.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ See Cummiskey 2016, 538.

²⁸⁹ Harvey 2004, 46.

²⁹⁰ See Keown 2001, 223: “It is the initial conception of [things] as good things which provides the stimulus and motivation for pursuing them.” See also Harris 2024, 29. Harris also states that greed and ignorance/delusion are connected to anger (*ibid.*, 85-88). Greed causes anger due to not getting what one wants; that is, anger arises as a result of unsatisfied cravings. Anger, like greed, arises because of ignorance; due to not understanding the nature of reality, one gets angry at illusory phenomena. This shows the relation between the three poisons.

The dangers of attachment are well-documented in Buddhism, as it is a key component of the Noble Truths: specifically, the second Noble Truth states that suffering is caused by craving, or attachment (*tṛṣṇā/taṇhā*).²⁹¹ The relation between craving (*tṛṣṇā*) and greed (*lobha*) is perhaps evident from the synonymous meanings of the terms, which permits us to follow a similar understanding of the two terms.²⁹² That is, our understanding of greed can follow from an understanding of craving. There are three types of craving: craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, and craving for nonexistence.²⁹³ Being greedy for sensual pleasures entails craving for objects or experiences that gratify one's sensual desires. Having greed for existence is a craving to immortalize oneself in any particular way. One desires to establish himself and exist beyond his death in some way; for instance, one might aim to establish a particular reputation for himself. Finally, being greedy for nonexistence entails an aversion towards unpleasurable experiences. One may aim to get rid of certain situations or may even aim to end his own life.²⁹⁴ According to the three aspects of craving, it is evident that greed conveys the general sense of wanting something. The opposite of greed, or its antidote, is not simply *not* wanting, as this falls under the scope of craving for nonexistence. For instance, if one craves the nonexistence of pain, one will consequently crave pleasure. This sort of non-greed is not to be cultivated, as it maintains a sense of greed. Instead, one should renounce all greed by eliminating it at its source; this requires developing wisdom and eliminating the ignorance that produces greed.

²⁹¹ *Tṛṣṇā* is not simply “desire” as we sometimes find in Buddhist literature. Buddhism admits of good, or noble desires, usually using the term *chanda* (see *BCA* VII.31 where *chanda* is presented as a positive quality to be cultivated). Craving, or greed, is a desire that is never-ending and based on conceiving reality as existing inherently.

²⁹² See Rahula 1974, 29 for a synonymous usage: “It is this ‘thirst’, desire, greed, craving, manifesting itself in various ways, that gives rise to all forms of suffering and the continuity of beings.” Moreover, instead of *lobha*, the affliction of greed is sometimes portrayed as *rāga*. *Rāga* is also translated as greed, or craving, which further allows us to consider a synonymous meaning between the various terms for greed.

²⁹³ Harvey 2013, 63.

²⁹⁴ Though, as Harvey notes, this ironically causes further rebirth (Harvey 2013, 63).

The dangers of greed are also mentioned by Śāntideva in *BCA* VIII.71-85. Those who are greedy may engage in actions that prevent them from living a satisfactory life, such as working hard for a full day such that they are too tired to do anything else.²⁹⁵ It is important to note that Śāntideva does not have in mind here regular individuals who work hard to make ends meet. For instance, those who need to provide for a family may have to work long hours and will consequently be tired. These people are not greedy but working to survive. Śāntideva adds an important qualifier when he provides this example, along with others in this set of verses: he states that suffering afflicts those who act out of a desire for pleasure – that is, desirous beings (*kāmin*) strive for pleasure and consequently suffer. Driven by the search for pleasure (*kāma*), one has unnecessary greed for transient things, such as wealth and reputation, and this causes suffering.²⁹⁶ Due to the need to satisfy one's greed, one suffers in various ways, such as being away from one's family,²⁹⁷ endangering oneself,²⁹⁸ and being afflicted by mental troubles of contemplating how to obtain and protect one's wealth.²⁹⁹ Moreover, due to being attached to wealth, one lives his life in hopes of acquiring wealth and not merit; his greed prevents him from pursuing true freedom from suffering.³⁰⁰ As seen, the dangers of greed are numerous, but the most pressing danger is that it causes suffering to arise. The relation between suffering and craving has been discussed extensively in Buddhist literature and will not be repeated here.³⁰¹ For our purpose here, we will only highlight the structure of the relation between greed and suffering.

²⁹⁵ *BCA* VIII.73.

²⁹⁶ *BCA* VIII.80.

²⁹⁷ *BCA* VIII.74.

²⁹⁸ *BCA* VIII.77.

²⁹⁹ *BCA* VIII.79.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ See particularly the second noble truth: the cause of suffering is craving. A brief overview is presented in Harvey 2013, 62-73.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the bodhisattva aims to attain enlightenment. To attain full enlightenment, the bodhisattva must eliminate the three poisons. The affliction of greed is eliminated through the cultivation of generosity. However, the cultivation of generosity alone is not enough to eliminate greed. Indeed, all afflictions are rooted in how the mind is set: it is *wisdom* that therefore fully eliminates the afflictions. One who lacks wisdom will think that things have inherent existence and that they can bring about inherent well-being for oneself. The ignorant individual will also believe that *he* exists to obtain benefit from objects. His greed, therefore, is rooted in the belief that he exists as a *self* which can obtain benefit.³⁰² The bodhisattva therefore aims to cultivate wisdom in order to eliminate completely the affliction of greed.³⁰³ In this regard, to cultivate generosity fully requires the bodhisattva to work towards the attainment of wisdom.

Since wisdom is required to eliminate greed, the purpose of cultivating generosity may be questioned. Indeed, as the Dalai Lama argues:

In order for the realization of emptiness to arise in the mind, it is not necessary for one to engage in the other transcendent practices as well [...] the practice of transcendent generosity and so on is not necessary for the cultivation of [the view of emptiness]; nor is it necessary for eliminating the afflictive obscurations.³⁰⁴

However, despite the necessity of wisdom for the elimination of greed, the cultivation of generosity is also important, as it prepares the bodhisattva for the cultivation of wisdom – indeed, it enables it. Wisdom can be cultivated on its own, without first cultivating generosity,

³⁰² Rahula 1974, 30: “‘Thirst’ has as its centre the false idea of self arising out of ignorance.”

³⁰³ We can therefore see, following Harris, that the bodhisattva’s cultivation is “both self-beneficial and altruistic” (Harris 2023, 518) – though importantly, there is no temporal difference between the two benefits. As a result of developing the mind of generosity, the bodhisattva benefits others through giving to them, and he benefits himself through eliminating greed, one of the three poisons that causes suffering. The twofold nature of the perfections – self-benefit and altruism – forms an important concept in Śāntideva’s ethics, to which we will return shortly when addressing Warren Lee Todd’s critique of an aretaic interpretation of Śāntideva.

³⁰⁴ Dalai Lama 2019, 3.

but the cultivation of generosity works as a foundation which helps in the cultivation of wisdom. Moreover, the bodhisattva cultivates generosity instead of solely cultivating wisdom because he is concerned with the well-being of others. That is, he does not merely wish to attain wisdom and free himself from suffering, but he also aims to alleviate other beings' suffering. This is accomplished through generosity. The bodhisattva follows a path that is rooted in compassion for others, rather than a path that aims solely at wisdom.³⁰⁵

During the cultivation of generosity, greed is lessened and eventually eliminated with the attainment of wisdom. The elimination of greed is not a separate cultivation in addition to the cultivation of generosity, but rather a result of the cultivation itself. That is, as the mind of generosity is cultivated, the affliction of greed is gradually lessened. Though the bodhisattva aims to cultivate generosity specifically and not the elimination of greed, the cultivation of generosity encompasses the cultivation of lessening greed. Nonetheless, these can be identified as two separate cultivations.³⁰⁶ We can distinguish between generosity and the lack of greed by highlighting that generosity goes beyond the mere renunciation of possessions. To be without greed entails that one renounce his possessions and have no desire to own anything, but this does not necessarily mean that he will *give* to others. Though it may be possible for one to give to others while still having greed, his greed is nonetheless lessened to some extent. However, when generosity is cultivated, so too is the lack of greed. So, though the cultivation of generosity and

³⁰⁵ Consider the distinction between a bodhisattva and an arhat mentioned in Chapter 2.

³⁰⁶ See Garfield 2022a, 97. Garfield outlines the difference between the paths presented by Buddhaghosa and Śāntideva: “While Buddhaghosa sketches a path of *elimination*, Śāntideva presents a path of *accumulation*.” The key difference between these two paths is that Buddhaghosa holds there to be a pure mind underlying the afflictions, whereas Śāntideva emphasizes the cultivation of positive qualities. So, in Buddhaghosa’s view, enlightenment can be attained by eliminating the afflictions and allowing the pure mind to shine forth, whereas for Śāntideva, enlightenment is attained by developing positive qualities – the perfections – *in addition* to eliminating the afflictions.

the elimination of greed are not identical, the former encompasses the latter, so no separate cultivation is required to eliminate greed.³⁰⁷

The relation between generosity and the lack of greed can be seen by revisiting the explanation of the mental disposition of generosity. In Chapter 6, we will address three objects of generosity: the bodhisattva's body, possessions, and merit. When the bodhisattva has the disposition to give these, he has no greed for them. He does not desire to obtain possessions to benefit his body, nor does he aim to benefit himself through his use of his body. For example, a bodhisattva who possesses the disposition of generosity may give his body to a hungry and sick tigress. If the bodhisattva was greedy, he would not do this; he would only be concerned about *his* benefits that arise from his body.³⁰⁸ He would want to maintain his body so that he could use it to experience pleasures, to live lavishly, and so forth; he would not be concerned about the benefit brought to others. However, if the bodhisattva has the disposition of generosity and thereby lacks greed, he can give his body freely. The same is the case with his possessions and merit: he does not grasp these, believing that he can use them to bring benefit to himself, such as procuring wealth, pleasure, and so forth. He instead gives them to others for their well-being. Ultimately, the description of generosity mentioned above – that it is a mental disposition to give all that one owns – incorporates the lack of greed. Thus, as the bodhisattva cultivates the mental disposition of generosity, he gradually eliminates his greed.³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ See *BCA* III.11. The difference between generosity and the elimination of greed lies primarily in a bodhisattva's motivation to reach enlightenment as opposed to a regular motivation to reach enlightenment. The bodhisattva is motivated to help other beings, so he *gives* to them. Non-bodhisattvas on the path to enlightenment may have in mind only their own well-being, which consists of merely renouncing possessions, that is, eliminating their greed.

³⁰⁸ This is a part of the above-mentioned craving for existing: a greedy bodhisattva would not want to give away "himself" and no longer exist.

³⁰⁹ See also *AN* IV.61, where the Buddha teaches that possessing generosity incorporates the lack of greed. See also Harris 2023, 517-518, where he highlights Śāntideva's conception of generosity as a mind in which "mental appropriation (*upādāta*) and all forms of craving are eradicated." That is, to develop the mental disposition of generosity incorporates the elimination of craving, or greed.

We can now consider the relation between the cultivation of generosity and the attainment of wisdom. As the bodhisattva cultivates generosity, he gradually transforms his mind to attain wisdom. The bodhisattva does not transform his mind merely to become generous – though this is indeed part of his goal and part of the transformation – but primarily to develop wisdom.³¹⁰ The relation between generosity and wisdom is specifically present through the elimination of self-grasping, that is, ignorance. As mentioned, the cultivation of generosity eliminates the affliction of greed, which is rooted in self-grasping and a sense of self. That a sense of self underlies greed is evident in the implication of the *I* when things are taken as *mine*.³¹¹ That is, if one thinks that things are *his* – that is, *mine* – then he posits an *I* who is the owner of these items. Thus, a sense of self arises upon establishing greed. Indeed, as mentioned by Nāgārjuna, if there is no *self*, then there is no *mine*.³¹² That is, there can be no ownership of possessions if there is no owner. The inverse is of this is our current concern: if there is *mine* – that is, greed – then there is a sense of *self*. We can build on this point by noting that possessions are desired in order to obtain benefit from them – one wishes to benefit oneself through obtaining what he desires:

It is appropriating something as *mine* that makes me act selfishly, in the interests of that self and to the detriment of others, for as soon as I say ‘mine,’ I want only the good things for myself. Thus desire and aversion are generated, and from these lamentation, and so on, for myself and others.³¹³

³¹⁰ See *BCA* IX.1. See also Westerhoff 2009, 49, who states that Mādhyamikas aim to bring about a cognitive change rather than merely produce an ontological theory. The goal of cultivating the perfections, therefore, is to bring about a change in one’s perception of reality; this is accomplished through the attainment of wisdom. Wisdom, then, should not be understood purely theoretically, but as an experiential realization of the nature of reality, that is, a realization that produces a transformation in one’s behaviour.

³¹¹ Gyatso and Chodron 2022b, 186. See also Collobert 2022, 4, where it is noted that grasping (*upādāna*) gives rise to the self. Though Collobert mentions *upādāna* instead of *lobha* – grasping instead of greed – the two terms are similar in encompassing the nature of desire and attachment.

³¹² *MMK* 18.2. See also Collobert 2022, 5; and Westerhoff 2018, 54.

³¹³ Carpenter 2014, 21-22.

For instance, if the bodhisattva keeps his wealth, he can purchase goods and enjoy the benefits that can be obtained from them. Likewise, if he is attached to his body and does not share it with others, he can use it to produce pleasure for himself. Hence, there is a *self* that he aims to benefit through his greed.

A similar point is also mentioned in the *Chachakka Sutta* (MN 148), where the Buddha taught that by seeing things as *mine*, one gives rise to identity, that is, a sense of self (*sakkāya*).³¹⁴ To eliminate this sense of self, he teaches that one must regard things as *not mine*.³¹⁵ That is, extinguishing the views of *me and mine* is the necessary criterion for extinguishing a sense of self. This concept can be explained with reference to the twelve links of dependent arising.³¹⁶ This is a chain of twelve factors which indicate that when one factor exists, the others will follow. Here, the sense of *mine* is represented by grasping (*upādāna*), which conveys the same notion as greed (*lobha*). When there is grasping, or greed, the other factors in the twelve links are also present; conversely, when there is *no* grasping, the other factors are also *not* present.³¹⁷ When the twelve links are not present, there is no place for a sense of self to arise.³¹⁸ That is, when there is grasping, there is also ignorance, birth, death, feeling, consciousness and so forth. As we can see, encompassed in the twelve links are the five aggregates, which are the basis for experiencing a self.³¹⁹ Hence, eliminating grasping, or greed,

³¹⁴ MN 148.16-21.

³¹⁵ MN 148.22-27.

³¹⁶ See Collobert 2022, 2. Though we will not examine the twelve links in detail, it may be helpful to see all of them listed: 1) ignorance, 2) karmic formations, 3) consciousness, 4) name and form, 5) six sense organs, 6) contact, 7) sensation, 8) craving, 9) grasping, 10) becoming, 11) birth, 12) old age and death.

³¹⁷ DN 15. See also Westerhoff 2009, 47.

³¹⁸ DN 15.23-32. See also Jones 2009, 248.

³¹⁹ Rahula 1974, 20: “What we call a ‘being’, or an ‘individual’, or ‘I’, according to Buddhist philosophy, is only a combination of ever-changing physical and mental forces or energies, which may be divided into five groups or aggregates (*pañcakkandha*).”

will lead to the elimination of the sense of self.³²⁰ Knowing, moreover, that wisdom consists in realizing non-self, or emptiness, we can see the relation between cultivating generosity and wisdom. As the bodhisattva lessens his self-grasping through cultivating generosity, he lessens his ignorance; he lessens his tendency to experience a *self*. In this regard, the cultivation of generosity prepares the bodhisattva for the full realization of emptiness.

Though the mind undergoes a natural transformation as it becomes generous, the transformation *to attain wisdom* is the important aspect of the cultivation of generosity that should be emphasized. To eliminate greed and fully develop the mind of generosity, wisdom is required. Therefore, to understand the cultivation of generosity as a transformation of mind, we must understand that the cultivation is not merely for the purpose of developing the mental disposition of generosity, but primarily for developing wisdom, which in turn produces the mental disposition of generosity. Since wisdom produces the mental disposition of the perfected perfection of generosity, it must be incorporated in the cultivation of generosity. This understanding of the perfection leads us to consider a virtue ethics interpretation.

4.3 *The Perfection of Generosity and Virtue Ethics*

One of the ways that generosity, and the perfections as a whole, have been interpreted is through an aretaic framework. When generosity is understood as a quality of the mind and consists of a cultivation to attain this mental disposition, it has some apparent similarities with virtue ethics. Thus, to explain the proposed nature of generosity, we will examine some of these points of similarity. We will not address every aspect of similarity between virtue ethics and the

³²⁰ We have not explored in detail the relation between the twelve links of dependent origination and the experience of a self, as that is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, we should focus solely on the principle that establishes a sense of self on the basis of the twelve links. On this topic, see Jones 2009; and Carpenter 2014, 85-87. See also Rahula 1974, 53-66, who discusses the topic of non-self in greater detail, drawing on the twelve links as a foundation for this discussion.

perfection of generosity, as this section does not aim to present a full comparative study. Instead, we will analyze some features of virtue ethics and highlight points of similarity with Śāntideva to show that aspects of the perfection of generosity can be understood through an aretaic framework. We will also address crucial differences to show the challenges of an aretaic interpretation of generosity. The main point of similarity between virtue ethics and the perfection of generosity is the shared features involved in the transformation of mind – a point that is essential in the cultivation of generosity. Thus, when the perfection of generosity is understood as a mental disposition, an aretaic interpretation seems to follow. However, as we will see in this section, these similarities are not enough to capture the full extent of Śāntideva’s ethics.

Prior to addressing the similarities between virtue ethics and Śāntideva, we will first address a general critique of this relation. The aretaic interpretation of generosity – indeed, Buddhist ethics as a whole – is not accepted by all scholars. Warren Lee Todd, for example, argues that Buddhist ethics is not a form of virtue ethics because it emphasizes altruism over self-cultivation:

Active altruism *does not* represent a virtue ethics. Virtue ethics stops with the subject and hardly considers the object, the other. Śāntideva’s ethics, on the other hand, are consistently directed towards benefitting the other.³²¹

We can recall Davis’s critique against consequentialism mentioned in the previous chapter: because the bodhisattva does not sacrifice his altruism – because he has a “super”-altruistic framework – he could not be considered a consequentialist. Todd takes a similar stance regarding virtue ethics: since the bodhisattva consistently has others’ well-being as his focus, he cannot be a proponent of virtue ethics. The cultivation of virtues to achieve self-flourishing requires one to

³²¹ Todd 2016, 31.

cultivate oneself, which effectively ignores other beings.³²² Hence, virtue ethics cannot account for the altruistic aspect of generosity.

Todd's characterization of an aretaic interpretation of Buddhist ethics is also found in Goodman's work.³²³ There may perhaps be forms of virtue ethics which have as their sole focus one's own well-being and moral development, but this does not appear to be the form of virtue ethics found in Śāntideva. Instead, it is merely one part of the virtue ethics found in his work. As Fink highlights, the different characterizations of virtue ethics can lead to confusion on which particular form of virtue ethics we identify with Buddhist ethics,³²⁴ and thus Śāntideva's ethics. Despite this confusion, we can identify an important feature of virtue ethics by following Fink's argument that virtue ethics takes into account the well-being of others. He writes that, "Virtuous people not only live deeply satisfying lives, they are also strongly motivated to do the right thing or to act in ways that benefit others."³²⁵ That is, on account of having cultivated virtues, the virtuous agent benefits other beings. Hence, regardless of the form of virtue ethics considered to interpret the perfection of generosity, other beings will benefit. We can see this with reference to the perfection of generosity. The bodhisattva who develops the mind of generosity naturally gives to other beings. He is not self-centered, nor does he grasp things hoping to obtain benefit from them. Indeed, as Śāntideva notes, when someone has given his body to others, they can do

³²² Todd does note, however, that virtues are indeed present in Śāntideva's work, along with aspects of consequentialist thinking (ibid., 32). However, he refrains from narrowing Śāntideva's ethics to one theory.

Though we will refute Todd's argument in this section, it is useful to note that Aristotle would also reject Todd's characterization. Aristotle argues that for happiness to be a complete good, it cannot be a solitary happiness; it must extend to one's family, friends, and fellow citizens (*NE* 1097b 7-10). We raise a similar idea in the bodhisattva's ethics below, where the bodhisattva extends his sense of self to encompass other beings and thus care for others.

³²³ See Fink 2013, 672, who mentions Goodman to refute his critique. Fink does not cite a particular passage from Goodman, but traces of this idea can be found throughout Goodman 2009 (for example, see Goodman 2009, 42).

³²⁴ Fink 2013, 673.

³²⁵ Ibid., 678. This is therefore in contrast to Todd's and Goodman's claim that virtue ethics is focused primarily on self-development.

whatever they please with it.³²⁶ To give one's body to others represents a developed mind of generosity. Thus, as a result of cultivating the mind of generosity, other beings are benefitted.

We can also consider a point mentioned by Harris, who argues that the perfections and other virtues in Śāntideva have a dual role. He argues that the virtues “enable the bodhisattva to effectively remove others' suffering, while also benefiting the bodhisattva himself.”³²⁷ So, the bodhisattva not only aims to develop in himself a generous disposition, but he also aims to help other beings through cultivating the perfection of generosity, as seen through the nature of a generous bodhisattva. As mentioned in the previous section, the bodhisattva cultivates generosity by eliminating the affliction of greed. Through eliminating the afflictions, he benefits himself, as the lack of afflictions lessens his suffering. Indeed, the bodhisattva aims to attain enlightenment through cultivating the perfections. Attaining enlightenment is indicative of benefitting oneself; thus, the bodhisattva clearly benefits himself through cultivating the perfections. However, this self-benefit is not the only feature of virtue ethics, as the bodhisattva helps others as a result of being virtuous. Indeed, generosity benefits other beings, as they receive gifts from the bodhisattva.

Though the points from Fink and Harris can be used to respond to Todd's critique, the question remains on what is primary in the bodhisattva's ethics: the cultivation of virtues to attain wisdom or helping other beings. That is, is wisdom or generosity³²⁸ the central aspect of the bodhisattva's ethics? To respond, both aspects are equally important; they simply reflect different standpoints from which the bodhisattva's ethics can be considered. As we will see in

³²⁶ *BCA* III.12-14.

³²⁷ Harris 2024, 2.

³²⁸ We will discuss in Chapter 6 that generosity is the extension of compassion. The bodhisattva expresses his compassion through generosity.

Chapter 6, the bodhisattva undertakes a specific training to cultivate the mind of generosity. From this standpoint, the cultivation of generosity is the important aspect of the bodhisattva's ethics. However, the reason the perfections are cultivated is for the purpose of attaining wisdom; in this regard, the attainment of wisdom is considered the important aspect. The presence of both wisdom and generosity is not a contentious point, as they reflect the two elements of the bodhisattva vow: the aspiration for enlightenment emphasizes wisdom, and the aspiration to benefit others emphasizes compassion and generosity. Depending on which of these standpoints, or aspects of the vow we wish to emphasize, there will be a particular presentation of the perfections.³²⁹

Therefore, Todd's point that the concern with others' well-being is the central point of Śāntideva's ethics is only partly correct. It is indeed the central point, but only from a particular perspective of the bodhisattva's ethics. Therefore, the relation between generosity and wisdom is perhaps best understood through the imagery of a mobius strip,³³⁰ or a circular relation. The bodhisattva wants to attain enlightenment so that he can most effectively help other beings. Thus, he aims at the attainment of wisdom, thereby showing that wisdom is the principal aspect of his ethics. However, because the bodhisattva wants to help other beings and free them from suffering, he is generous towards them; the bodhisattva expresses his compassion and altruism through generosity. From this perspective, generosity is the principal aspect of his ethics.

Wisdom is the principal aspect of the bodhisattva's ethics when his ethics is categorized with

³²⁹ *ŚS* is written from the perspective of generosity, and *BCA* is written from the perspective of wisdom. This is evidenced by the root verses of *ŚS*, which discuss primarily the threefold training – the specific training we will discuss in Chapter 6. In this text, the perfections are presented as methods of undertaking this training. In *BCA*, the emphasis is on wisdom as the goal of the path, along with the point that the perfections are taught for the sake of wisdom (*BCA* IX.1). The threefold training is not expounded in detail throughout *BCA*, but it is mentioned as a starting point for the cultivation of the perfections (*BCA* III.10).

³³⁰ I thank Professor Sumegi for this imagery (via personal correspondence).

respect to his cultivation; generosity is the principal aspect when his ethics is categorized with respect to his compassionate disposition. Nonetheless, both are aspects of the bodhisattva's ethics: the bodhisattva is concerned with self-development *and* helping other beings. Hence, we cannot claim that because the bodhisattva places an importance on altruism, it is the sole principal aspect of his ethics. Consequently, we cannot claim that an aretaic interpretation falls short due to the bodhisattva's emphasis on altruism. The bodhisattva, through cultivating wisdom, is able to be altruistic and help others most effectively. Altruism and self-development are hence connected.

Moreover, the point that virtue ethics does not account for altruism can be refuted with reference to an argument from Julia Annas. Annas argues that in ancient ethics, there is indeed no distinct virtue of self-sacrifice. This is not because altruism is absent from ancient ethics, but because altruism is built into the virtues themselves.³³¹ For instance, when the bodhisattva develops the mind of generosity, he accordingly develops a concern for other beings. Todd's critique is therefore refuted, since the self-development focus in virtue ethics incorporates altruism. When the bodhisattva cultivates himself to attain wisdom, he develops the virtues laid out by the perfections and consequently helps other beings. That is, since the bodhisattva cultivates himself to develop the perfections, he develops his ability to be altruistic most effectively.³³²

³³¹ Annas 1993, 225.

³³² Another potential response to Todd's critique, which we will not explore here, can be considered with reference to a point mentioned in the previous chapter. Wetlesen's argument that the bodhisattva enlarges his conception of self to encompass other beings can be considered a way to include other beings in one's self-concern. So, even if the bodhisattva only focuses on self-benefit, his conception of himself will encompass other beings – though we must note that this is a provisional teaching, as the bodhisattva will eventually overcome this conception of self. See also Annas 1993, 256-260 for a similar point.

Having addressed Todd's critique, we can consider the aretaic features of Śāntideva's ethics. This is primarily seen through the incorporation of wisdom in ethics. Keown raises a similar idea, as he underscores the importance of nirvana in characterizations of Buddhist ethics.³³³ To take into account nirvana is to take into account wisdom, since nirvana, or enlightenment is attained when one possesses the wisdom of reality. Hence, virtue ethics, which takes into account nirvana as the end that is aimed at, incorporates wisdom in its ethical framework.³³⁴ That is, ethics must in some way relate to the attainment of wisdom. In this regard, virtue ethics seems to provide a suitable framework for interpreting the perfection of generosity.

The particular relation between ethics and wisdom can be seen in Śāntideva's conception of the perfections. Generosity, for Śāntideva, will not be a perfected perfection when the bodhisattva lacks wisdom, for such a bodhisattva will still have self-grasping. As discussed in the previous section, the bodhisattva's cultivation of generosity gradually produces wisdom. The presence of wisdom as that which enables the prior perfections to be perfected is similar to a point found in ancient virtue ethics. Rachana Kamtekar argues that for many ancient philosophers, wisdom was the principal virtue and necessary for other virtues.³³⁵ So, we can see that the structure of the perfection of generosity, which requires the infusion of wisdom, fits the framework of virtue ethics. Thus, an aretaic interpretation of generosity seems to be a suitable

³³³ Keown 2001, 200: "It is the failure to acknowledge the ethical dimension of nirvana that lends plausibility to the utilitarian characterisation of Buddhist ethics." See also Vasen 2018, 324.

³³⁴ We mentioned in the previous chapter that Keown argues against the necessity of wisdom for ethics. By noting that nirvana contains an ethical dimension, Keown seems to contradict himself, as it seems that the wisdom of emptiness – the criteria for nirvana – leads to certain actions. Hence, ethics requires wisdom. To resolve this contradiction, we can consider Keown's point against the necessity of wisdom for ethics as only applying to *some* actions. In this regard, only some actions – namely, the actions of unenlightened beings – do not require wisdom. Though this is true, in order for nirvana to have an ethical dimension, ethics must in some way relate to the attainment of wisdom. Thus, while the ethics of unenlightened beings do not *require* wisdom, they do *incorporate* wisdom. This will be our focus to show the aretaic reading of Śāntideva's ethics.

³³⁵ Kamtekar 2013, 30. However, it may be argued that the wisdom that underlies virtues is practical wisdom. This is different from Śāntideva, where wisdom concerning the nature of reality underlies the perfections. We will return to this point shortly.

interpretation under which we can classify the perfection. However, the incorporation of wisdom can be missed in some forms of virtue ethics. This is particularly evident when addressing how to cultivate the virtues.

In Buddhist ethics, one method to develop the mind of generosity is through performing acts of generosity.³³⁶ This is mentioned by Kunzang Pelden in his commentary to *BCA*, where he provides the example of giving from one hand to another.³³⁷ This practice was taught as a way to remove one's greed. Since one is greedy and attached to his items, he "gives" to himself. By doing so, he is able to reduce his attachment to his possessions. Gradually, as his attachment to the items lessens, he will be able to give them to others. He will initially give to friends and family – those to whom he is close – and later, he can give to strangers, and all other beings. The scope of the bodhisattva's generosity therefore grows as he develops the disposition of generosity and accustoms himself to giving. Moreover, by giving things of lesser value, like certain possessions, the bodhisattva can become accustomed to giving things of greater value, like one's body.³³⁸ In this way, he is able to develop the disposition explained in *BCA*: the bodhisattva will develop his mind to give everything he owns for the sake of others.

³³⁶ Śāntideva notes in *BCA* V.107 that by performing permitted acts and avoiding non-permitted acts, one can train his mind. This is mentioned with reference to the perfection of discipline, but the idea can be applied to generosity: by performing acts of generosity, the bodhisattva can develop the mind of generosity.

³³⁷ Kunzang Pelden 2010, 242. This is mentioned when he comments on *BCA* VII.25. See also Palmo 2022, 22, where the gradual expansion of the bodhisattva's scope of generosity is a common practice in his training: he is instructed first to imagine caring about his mother, then extend that care and compassion to all beings. That is, the bodhisattva begins with a small scope, then extends his scope as he progresses on his training. This practice is considered here with regard to generosity.

See also Dilgo Khyentse 2007, 153-154: "A very miserly man once came to see the Buddha for advice. He was totally incapable of giving anything away. The Buddha told him to begin training himself by giving small objects with his right hand to his left hand. As the man slowly got used to the idea of giving, the Buddha encouraged him to give small things to members of his family, then to friends, and then finally to strangers. Eventually, the man was able to give away whatever he had with great joy to anyone he came across."

³³⁸ Tobden 2017, 187. Giving the things of greater value also entails the presence of wisdom. When there is wisdom, one will not identify oneself with these great things, so one will not see himself as "suffering" due to giving them away. See also Chapter 3 where we discussed the bodhisattva first giving simple items like food, then later giving his body upon attaining wisdom.

Repeatedly performing actions to develop a virtue is a key concept in virtue ethics. This draws on Aristotle's notion of performing actions to develop a habit.³³⁹ However, there is an important difference between the development of virtue in Śāntideva and in Aristotle. Sarah Broadie argues that though Aristotle claims that performing brave and just actions, for example, makes one brave and just, he does not indicate *how* partaking in this behaviour leads to developing the disposition associated with the virtue.³⁴⁰ A potential response to this problem can be found by explaining the nature of the virtuous action. For instance, the virtue, or perfection of generosity is attained through practicing acts of generosity. Due to the repeated action, one develops the skill of acting generously.³⁴¹ In this reading, to say that one develops the virtues entails that one develops skill in the action. This is a point of difference between Aristotle and Śāntideva, for as mentioned, Śāntideva is concerned primarily with the mental disposition, or mind of the virtue rather than the act associated with the virtue. To attain the perfection of generosity, for Śāntideva, wisdom is required; developing skill in the action alone is insufficient.

To highlight the difference between an aretaic reading of Aristotle and Śāntideva, we can expound how partaking in the action relates to developing the mind of generosity. That is, we can consider the psychological transformation that the bodhisattva undergoes as he practices acts of giving. The transformation in Śāntideva can be explained with reference to the sense of self, specifically what one considers to be his self. For example, when the bodhisattva gives from one hand to the other, he can ask himself if he truly *gave* that possession, for it is still in *his* ownership. Then, he may ask who *he* is – the right hand that gave the item, or the left hand that

³³⁹ See Kamtekar 2013, 36; *NE* 1103a 30-b 2.

³⁴⁰ Broadie 1991, 72: "What [Aristotle] does not make clear is *how* by engaging in the behaviour we come to develop the virtuous disposition expressed by that sort of behaviour." See also Sherman 1997, 82.

³⁴¹ Broadie 1991, 72: "Is it that by doing brave things we get better and better at doing them, in the same way as we acquire skills – through practicing?"

received the item? Moreover, if he can place his sense of self in one part of his body – one of his hands – then perhaps he can also incorporate other beings in his conception of his self.³⁴² For instance, he may consider his hands to be *him*, because both hands are supported by the body; that is, they are aspects of the body. He can then consider what supports his body: clearly, he is supported, or able to exist due to other beings, such as his family members who offer him assistance, or the ecosystem which provides him sustenance. Thus, his *self* cannot be found in just his body, but in dependence on other beings as well. Eventually, the bodhisattva can come to see the same with other beings, in addition to his family members, as they also support his existence. He therefore sees that what he considers to be his self is a dependently originating phenomenon rather than an individual, separate existence.³⁴³ What makes him who he is, then, is not an inherently existing entity or essence, but a designation applied to a particular set of parts – whether this is only the aggregates, or an ecosystem of beings. Indeed, he eventually sees that there is no *I* to be found anywhere, since, as Ohnuma argues, the ability to set these designations is predicated on the lack of an inherent self.³⁴⁴ Thus, the act of giving transforms the bodhisattva’s understanding of himself. He is able to develop a generous mind through seeing that he has not gained or lost anything through his generous actions. As he transforms his idea of his sense of self – gradually realizing that there is no separate, individual existence to be considered as the “self” – he is developing wisdom. Hence, the bodhisattva develops wisdom through partaking in acts of generosity.

³⁴² See Ohnuma 2019, 124. Reimagining one’s “self” is part of the bodhisattva’s training.

³⁴³ A similar argument, though presented in a different context, is found in Wetlesen 2002. The context that Wetlesen presents is related to the practice of equalizing and exchanging self and other. In this context, Janet Gyatso mentions that the practice of exchanging self and other is used “to create a sense of self located in others” (Gyatso 2019, 105). In this regard, the practice of giving serves as a foundation for the practice of exchanging self and other, since it allows the bodhisattva to consider himself as more than just his body.

³⁴⁴ Ohnuma 2019, 128.

Therefore, we can summarize the difference between virtue ethics and Śāntideva's conception of generosity by noting that the goal of non-Śāntidevan virtue ethics is "the development of character so that a person becomes habitually and spontaneously good."³⁴⁵ Virtue ethics entails a transformation of one's character, thereby presenting a hopeful parallel with Śāntideva, as he also emphasizes a mind-transformation. However, as mentioned, the primary goal for Śāntideva is to attain wisdom; this will indeed *result* in transforming one's character, but this is a secondary aspect of the transformation.³⁴⁶ That is, for Śāntideva, the *development of character* that is central in virtue ethics is *not* the primary aspect of the bodhisattva's transformation, thereby showing the issues of an aretaic parallel for addressing the transformation of mind that we find in Śāntideva.³⁴⁷ There is another dimension to Śāntideva's ethics, which contrasts with a point mentioned by James Whitehill:

The goal of ethics is to become a person who does good or virtuous things freely from the ground of a well-tempered character, supported by a matured, resolute, and reasonable knowledge of what one is doing.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Keown 2005, 23. This distinction should be understood with respect to the *primary* goal of virtue ethics. For instance, there are other goals in Aristotelian virtue ethics, such as deliberation and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Nonetheless, the *primary* goal remains, as Keown identifies, a person's ability to do what is good "habitually and spontaneously." For Śāntideva, this is *not* the primary goal, hence the key difference.

³⁴⁶ See Garfield 2022a, 29: "Although the solution to the problem of suffering certainly requires the transformation of our actions – physical, verbal, and mental – that transformation, on this view, is a consequence of a deeper and far more important transformation of our fundamental way of seeing the world and our place therein." That is, the fundamental nature of the transformation is to attain wisdom. Though Garfield mentions one's "way of seeing the world and our place therein" – that is, *phenomenology* rather than *ontology* – we only highlight the fact that he gives actions a secondary importance in the transformation of mind. In the next chapter, we will address the difficulties of Garfield's conception, namely its focus on one's experience of the world rather than reality itself.

There is also the issue of Buddhist ethics aiming to *overcome* one's character, that is, one's self. A fully enlightened being is indeed without a view of a self, and the bodhisattva's ethics does indeed aim at this. However, while he is on the path to enlightenment, he takes seriously his conventionally appearing self and acts accordingly. We will explore this idea in Chapter 8.

³⁴⁷ Whitehill 1994, 4 highlights that his interpretation of Buddhist ethics as virtue ethics is based on it being character focused. Given the secondary importance of character and primary importance of wisdom, Whitehill's aretaic interpretation does not accurately grasp the similarities with Śāntideva.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

Whitehill seems to have in mind one's good character, which is based on practical wisdom – that is, “knowledge of what one is doing.” Śāntideva goes beyond this; the bodhisattva's good character is based on his wisdom of the nature of reality.

This shows that the difference between Aristotle and Śāntideva is primarily in the process of cultivation and what is aimed at by the cultivation. This is specifically regarding how the repeated actions produce the virtue associated with that action. In this regard, Śāntideva maintains a connection to ontology: the bodhisattva develops virtues by developing an understanding of the nature of reality. The bodhisattva develops the mind, or virtue of generosity not because he has developed skill in the *act* of generosity – though he will indeed have this skill as a result of developing the mental disposition. Instead, the bodhisattva aims to attain wisdom; upon possessing wisdom, he will have the perfected perfection of generosity. As mentioned, the bodhisattva's cultivation of generosity gradually cultivates wisdom. Thus, the difference between these two frameworks of virtue ethics is that though wisdom is indeed incorporated into the general structure of virtue ethics, it is not necessarily incorporated into the transformation itself, nor is wisdom given primary importance in the development of the virtues.

Moreover, it is important to highlight the difference between practical wisdom and theoretical wisdom in ancient virtue ethics. For Śāntideva, the perfection of generosity must be infused with the wisdom of emptiness. The wisdom that is present in Aristotle's virtue ethics is practical wisdom; here, a virtuous agent who possesses the virtue of generosity must know the right time to give, the right recipient of the gift, and so forth. David Charles argues that what makes giving *fine* (*kalon*) for Aristotle are these aspects of practical wisdom concerning

giving.³⁴⁹ Such practical wisdom is also present in Śāntideva: a bodhisattva with the mind of generosity knows how to give, the right time to give, and so forth.³⁵⁰ However, this wisdom is not what Śāntideva has in mind when he states that wisdom underlies the perfections.³⁵¹ Nonetheless, when the bodhisattva has wisdom concerning the nature of reality, practical wisdom follows.³⁵²

Apart from the inclusion of wisdom, there is another parallel with virtue ethics which can be used to identify aretaic elements of the perfection of generosity. This is the incorporation of narrative as a means to transform oneself.³⁵³ Śāntideva's verses and passages on generosity discussed in section 4.1 do not primarily instruct a specific method of cultivation, as they mainly explain the nature of generosity through various metaphors. However, reading these passages can inspire the bodhisattva to act generously, which thereby develops his disposition of generosity. Beyond being inspired by reflecting on the qualities of objects – such as a wish-fulfilling gem – the mention of other bodhisattvas and buddhas behaving generously can also inspire the bodhisattva.³⁵⁴ That is, the bodhisattva's conviction to help others can be strengthened upon reading and learning about the achievements of other bodhisattvas and buddhas. The bodhisattva can see that other beings are benefitted due to being the recipient of various gifts. As someone who has vowed to help other beings, the bodhisattva will be inspired to act generously and

³⁴⁹ Charles 2017, 117. See *NE* 1120a 23-25.

³⁵⁰ See *BCA* V.88-89. Śāntideva provides restrictions on who can receive teachings on the *Dharma*. That is, the bodhisattva is to give with the practical wisdom concerning giving. We will not explore the presence of practical wisdom in Śāntideva besides mentioning its presence, but it may be helpful to consider the Buddhist concept of *upāya-kauśalya* (skillful means/skill-in-means) as a parallel to practical wisdom.

³⁵¹ See *ŚS* 150.18-19; G 269. Specifically, Śāntideva notes that right intention, or mental disposition (*āśaya*) underlies the virtues of a Buddha. The *āśaya* is attained through developing the wisdom of the nature of reality.

³⁵² This fits the general framework of the perfections. Though not discussed explicitly by Śāntideva, the seventh perfection is “skillful means” (*upāya-kauśalya*). The sixth perfection is wisdom concerning the nature of reality. Thus, after attaining wisdom, one will have the skillful means to benefit others in the best possible way.

³⁵³ See Westerhoff 2018, 32 for an example of the transformative and soteriological efficacy of historical narrative.

³⁵⁴ Carpenter 2019, 50. See *ŚS* 16-22; G 24-36, where such examples are presented.

emulate the other bodhisattvas and buddhas. Consequently, his generous disposition will be cultivated, as he will develop in himself the spirit of helping others through giving them gifts.

Narrative as a method of cultivation is explained by Vasen as a way of considering oneself in a particular context:

From our birth onward, we find ourselves in a society with stories, and it is in finding our place within these stories that we shape ourselves. We are embedded in the stories that tell us what is good, and it is on these stories that we base our choices.³⁵⁵

By adopting this context, one can act differently, which consequently transforms his disposition. In relation to what is found in Śāntideva, the narratives of bodhisattvas partaking in generosity inform a bodhisattva-in-training of the right way to act. Indeed, narratives are a way to teach *how* to act. Śāntideva's examples of bodhisattvas partaking in acts of generosity reflect a narrative that a bodhisattva-in-training can follow. Considering a narrative allows the bodhisattva to imagine himself in a particular situation and reflect on how he would act in that situation. Consequently, he can change his disposition.³⁵⁶ The point of the narratives, Vasen argues, is that they contextualize certain activities within a larger scope.³⁵⁷ For Śāntideva, this larger scope is *bodhicitta* – the quest to attain enlightenment for the sake of benefitting other beings. The stories of bodhisattvas behaving generously show that being generous is a good action due to its helping other beings. The bodhisattva therefore partakes in these actions, and this consequently develops the mind of generosity – as mentioned above, partaking in generous actions is a way to develop the mind of generosity. Since narratives promote a way of transforming one's character and a reason to develop virtues, it reflects an aspect of virtue ethics that we can identify in Śāntideva.

³⁵⁵ Vasen 2018, 323. Vasen explains narratives as a method of cultivation in virtue ethics.

³⁵⁶ Garfield 2022a, 54. Garfield uses the presence of narrative to argue for his theory of moral phenomenology. We will revisit this aspect of the narrative framework in the next chapter.

³⁵⁷ Vasen 2018, 323.

Despite these points of similarity between virtue ethics and the perfection of generosity, there is one important critique that scholars have raised regarding an aretaic interpretation of the perfections – indeed, of Buddhist ethics in general. This critique was briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, where we mentioned that virtue ethics admits of human flourishing; that is, there is a *self* that flourishes.³⁵⁸ The incorporation of a self is at odds with Buddhist metaphysics, which postulates non-self, or specifically, the lack of a self's inherent, independent existence. This critique is similar to one raised by Paul Williams, who argues that Buddhist ethics is not a form of virtue ethics.³⁵⁹ His argument rests on the activity of an enlightened being: he argues that a buddha is not virtuous because he spontaneously helps other beings.³⁶⁰ This spontaneity lacks the practical wisdom necessary in virtue ethics. Moreover, virtue ethics relies on a distinction between self and other. Williams argues that a fully enlightened being is beyond such distinction.³⁶¹ To describe a buddha's activity, we can revisit the metaphor provided in Chapter 2, where a buddha's activities are likened to a rain cloud which produces rain wherever it goes. There is no intention or thought to be virtuous and benefit other beings; instead, the rain cloud rains simply because it is its nature to produce rain. Likewise, the buddha is naturally compassionate simply because it is his nature. In this regard, there is no *self* that flourishes and acts intentionally with a certain aim. Overall, the presence of the spontaneous activity of a fully enlightened being poses difficulties to the potential parallels with virtue ethics.

The critique rests on the notion that human flourishing is not possible in Buddhist ethics due to the doctrine of non-self. One response to this is that human flourishing does not require an *inherently existing* self. It only requires that the appearance of such a self be taken seriously. In

³⁵⁸ Siderits 2016, 292.

³⁵⁹ Williams 2009a.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 125.

the famous dialogue between Nāgasena and King Milinda titled *The Questions of King Milinda*, Nāgasena argues that a chariot is empty of inherent existence. The argument itself does not have to be repeated here, but we can acknowledge that despite the emptiness of the chariot, it can still function as a *good* chariot, or *bad* chariot.³⁶² If the chariot performs its task as a chariot appropriately – even if this task is conventionally designated – then we can say that the chariot is *good*. In relation to humans, a flourishing human could simply be someone who, despite his empty nature, appropriately performs the function of a human.³⁶³ To perform appropriately the function of a human requires taking into account one’s nature as a being that lacks inherent existence.³⁶⁴ This view maintains that the individual is indeed empty, and there is no substantial, inherent “self” that flourishes. In this regard, Buddhist metaphysics is not contradicted. A similar point is provided by Harris:

Virtue theorists need not presuppose any specific metaphysical commitments to explain the regularities and reliability of virtuous response. Appealing to the metaphysical structure of a person conceived of as a unified entity is only one way of doing so.³⁶⁵

Hence, there are different ways to account for the “self” that flourishes or is virtuous. The human flourishing that is important in virtue ethics can be considered in ways that do not admit of an enduring, inherent self. Moreover, as mentioned, some scholars argue for the existence of a “person,” or a “conventionally existent self,”³⁶⁶ which can take the place of a flourishing “self.”

³⁶² See Westerhoff 2018, 131.

³⁶³ See *NE* 1097 b21 – 1098 a20 for Aristotle’s argument on function. We do not have to engage with Aristotle’s particular argument for the function of humans but simply acknowledge the framework that highlights the importance of performing someone’s or something’s function.

³⁶⁴ See the discussion in the previous chapter on the equalization of self and other. We argued there that Śāntideva uses this argument to *correct* one’s understanding of the conventional self. Once the correct understanding is attained, one can act accordingly. In relation to virtue ethics and a flourishing human, when one obtains a correct understanding of the self, his ensuing appropriate actions constitute a state of flourishing.

³⁶⁵ Harris 2024, 25. That is, while virtue *ethicists* like Plato, and to an extent Aristotle, presuppose metaphysical commitments, virtue *theorists* need not do so.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 58; Garfield 2022b, 37. We will revisit the existence of a person or the conventionally existent self in Chapter 7.

Accordingly, we do not have to avoid an aretaic reading on the grounds that it must admit of a self that is denied by Buddhists.

We can also address Williams's point specifically to respond to this critique. There are two responses to consider. The first is that we are not attempting to address the activities of a fully enlightened being here. Śāntideva's text is aimed at bodhisattvas who aspire to become enlightened. Thus, the cultivation to become enlightened is the goal of his philosophy.

Accordingly, the parallel with virtue ethics will be restricted to this point, where we can find some parallels with virtue ethics. The second response to Williams is to reconsider the nature of virtue ethics. A virtuous individual could perhaps be understood as partaking in spontaneous activity rather than a practically wise action. We would, moreover, also reconceptualize the "self" that flourishes, as discussed above. This spontaneous activity could also rely on the lack of a self-other distinction that is present in Buddhism. Hence, Williams's critiques do not refute an aretaic reading of Śāntideva.

The parallels between virtue ethics and Buddhist ethics are usually made with reference to Aristotle's virtue ethics, as has been addressed in this section. However, there is another form of virtue ethics presented by Kathleen Marie Higgins in her analysis of the Daoist philosopher Zhuangzi. She presents a theory of negative virtue, which consist of, "virtues characterized by one's abstaining from certain activities or states of mind."³⁶⁷ She explains this form of virtue ethics as drawing on one's psychological orientation:

One is negatively virtuous as [a] consequence of cultivating inner stillness and relinquishing efforts to control one's situation [...] such negative virtues are virtues of

³⁶⁷ Higgins 2005, 125.

abandoning projects.³⁶⁸

Though Higgins explains negative virtue with reference to Zhuangzi and Daoism, we can apply her analysis to Śāntideva and Buddhism to show that there may be another way to consider an aretaic parallel with Śāntideva.

Importantly, negative virtues are not dispositions in the sense that they are action-guiding.³⁶⁹ This immediately rectifies Williams's concern that a buddha is beyond such action-guiding rules. Indeed, in being negatively virtuous, one is virtuous when acting spontaneously.³⁷⁰ However, this point contrasts with Śāntideva's point that the perfections are a quality of the mind, that is, a mental disposition. The bodhisattva, in possessing the disposition of generosity, is not purely spontaneous. In this regard, the similarity with negative virtue seems to be appropriate when considering the ethics of a buddha rather than a bodhisattva. Thus, we must caution that though there are favourable parallels with Śāntideva, the concept of negative virtue does not capture the full scope of his ethics.

Nonetheless, the most evident parallel we can identify between negative virtues and Śāntideva is the elimination of greed. The bodhisattva aims to eliminate projects, or ways of life that are based on self-grasping; in the cultivation of generosity, he aims to eliminate his greed. As a result of eliminating greed, the bodhisattva will have the virtue of generosity and act generously. As mentioned, greed cannot be eliminated unless wisdom is attained. Therefore, to be negatively virtuous, the bodhisattva must cultivate wisdom. Such an idea is found in Higgins's analysis as well, as she argues that right behaviour – to be virtuous – is a result of

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 126.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 130. Higgins argues that Zhuangzi's notion of virtue contrasts with Aristotle's notion of virtue. For Zhuangzi, the Daoist concept of *wuwei* – non-doing, or non-action – does not encompass practical wisdom.

responding properly to situations through undistorted perception.³⁷¹ The bodhisattva who has cultivated wisdom has an undistorted perception of reality; it is not veiled by self-grasping. Thus, he can respond to situations in accordance with how reality truly is – empty – rather than how it appears to a distorted perception.³⁷² To respond to situations accordingly requires practical wisdom; as the seventh perfection, the bodhisattva cultivates this after attaining wisdom. This enables him to act in accordance with the details of a situation; the bodhisattva will know the right time to give, how to give, and so forth. Though spontaneity is lacking in the bodhisattva's ethics, he still possesses a manner of acting that goes beyond a distorted perception, which thus highlights some similarities with negative virtue ethics.³⁷³ It may, however, be debatable if this notion of negative virtue is indeed a theory of virtue ethics. In this case, it may be more suitable to consider a new ethical theory or framework. Thus, instead of focusing on Śāntideva as a negative virtue ethicist – and to do so is indeed problematic, as there are elements in Śāntideva that do not fit Higgins's analysis – we will examine another ethical parallel in the next chapter.

Overall, as seen through this analysis of virtue ethics, though there are elements of virtue ethics in Śāntideva, it does not capture the full nature of his ethics. This has led some scholars to suggest a hybrid theory to interpret Śāntideva's ethics, as this can encompass parts of virtue ethics and parts of consequentialism.³⁷⁴ Alternatively, Goodman highlights two forms of consequentialism called “perfectionist consequentialism” and “character consequentialism,” which are consequentialist theories that incorporate a transformation of character.³⁷⁵ Though he

³⁷¹ Ibid., 133.

³⁷² The concept of transforming one's perception is a point that leads Garfield to consider a new ethical theory: moral phenomenology.

³⁷³ There is, of course, a key difference between negative virtue ethics and the bodhisattva's ethics, as the latter does not behave spontaneously with practical wisdom. For the bodhisattva, practical wisdom is still very much a calculated action; spontaneous activity, on the other hand, is limited to a buddha.

³⁷⁴ See Clayton 2009.

³⁷⁵ Goodman 2013, 615-616.

does not explicitly propose a hybrid theory, these two forms of consequentialism contain aretaic elements, particularly the transformative nature. However, the hybrid theory and these forms of consequentialism fall short of an adequate parallel to Śāntideva's conception of generosity, for the primary aspect of the transformation is the attainment of *wisdom* rather than the mere development of one's character.

It may nonetheless be possible to consider a hybrid theory that accounts for the attainment of wisdom alongside consequentialist elements. This is an improvement on a basic aretaic-consequentialist hybrid theory, as it overcomes the problems of virtue ethics generally. Yet such a hybrid theory also has some difficulties due to the presence of deontological elements in Śāntideva.³⁷⁶ Śāntideva, and Buddhist ethics generally, have too many elements to fit into one Western framework, or even a hybrid theory. Even if we adopt an aretaic-consequentialist-deontological hybrid theory, we will deviate from the goal of Śāntideva's ethics, which is to attain enlightenment in order to free other beings from suffering. Moreover, there are aspects of Śāntideva and Buddhist ethics that do not adequately fit a Western ethical framework – such as meditation – which further shows the problem of narrowing Śāntideva's ethics in order to fit the framework. Thus, the attempt to present a hybrid theory, even if it captures salient elements of Śāntideva, does not provide an adequate parallel of his ethics, as there are elements that cannot be captured. Moreover, simply because there are virtues in Śāntideva's ethics does not entail that he is a virtue ethicist, for as Harris notes, consequentialism and deontology also incorporate

³⁷⁶ While not engaged with in detail by scholars, the deontological elements in Śāntideva could be found with respect to following the precepts and the presence of a good will (see Harvey 2004, 51; Whitehill 1994, 9).

virtues in their frameworks.³⁷⁷ Therefore, it may be more suitable to consider a different approach to Śāntideva's ethics. It is to this that we will turn in the next chapter.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the perfection of generosity as a quality of the mind, which entailed that it must be understood as a disposition to be cultivated. In order to cultivate generosity, the bodhisattva must develop wisdom. Thus, the transformation of mind that is produced by the cultivation of generosity aims at the attainment of wisdom. We examined this framework with respect to the gradual elimination of the affliction of greed. Greed is rooted in ignorance, so as greed is lessened, so too is ignorance. This chapter also addressed an aretaic interpretation of the transformation of mind. There are some difficulties with this interpretation, as important aspects of the perfection of generosity are not accounted for in this framework. It may be possible to propose a new type of virtue ethics to fit Śāntideva's conception of generosity; however, this is not the space to undertake such a project. Based on existing aretaic frameworks, all aspects of the perfection of generosity cannot be accounted. Nonetheless, this interpretation addresses salient elements about generosity; aspects of the perfection of generosity can be understood through an aretaic framework. Thus, it is useful to consider in order to strengthen our understanding of the perfection. However, further aspects of the perfection can and should be addressed. This will be done in the following chapter, where we provide an interpretation that is able to account for all the essential elements of the perfection of generosity.

³⁷⁷ Harris 2015, 266-267; see also Harris 2024, 22-29. Harris outlines a distinction between virtue ethics and virtue theory. Virtue theory entails the use of virtues in one's ethical framework, but it may not consider them the most important aspect. Virtue ethicists, on the other hand, consider the cultivation of virtues to be the foundational aspect. Consequentialism and deontology, in this regard, are examples of virtue theory.

Chapter 5: The Perfection of Generosity, Moral Phenomenology, and Mind-Training

5.0 Introduction

We explained that the perfection of generosity is a quality of the mind which must be cultivated and that the cultivation aims at the attainment of wisdom in order for the perfection to become perfected. Having shown the difficulties of a virtue ethics interpretation, we will present in this chapter an interpretation of generosity that best captures its nature: the cultivation of the perfection will be presented under the framework of mind-training. Prior to presenting this view, we will first address a theory of ethics proposed by Jay Garfield, moral phenomenology. Moral phenomenology shares some similarities with mind-training, hence its inclusion in this chapter, but it also differs in important ways. To prepare for the discussion on mind-training, we will first expound the nature of moral phenomenology and consider generosity from this standpoint. Though this theory is proposed uniquely for Buddhist ethics, Garfield misses a key point about Śāntideva's ethics that reveals a crucial problem with this interpretation. Accordingly, we will reject the moral phenomenological interpretation, though we will acknowledge that it reveals an important element of Śāntideva's ethics.

After presenting the moral phenomenological interpretation, we will then present the framework of the mind-training interpretation of generosity. "Mind-training" is a translation of the Tibetan term *lojong* (*blo sbyong*). That Śāntideva's ethics are a practice of *lojong* is not a new idea, as seen from an analysis presented by Jinpa.³⁷⁸ In this chapter, we will outline the framework of a *lojong* interpretation, which will prepare us for the next chapter's presentation of *lojong* in Śāntideva. To present the framework, we will first explain what is meant by "mind" (*citta*) and explain its usage in Śāntideva's context. We will then develop the framework for

³⁷⁸ Jinpa 2019.

mind-training that we will follow in this thesis: the bodhisattva trains his mind to attain wisdom in order to transform his mind. As a result of attaining wisdom, the bodhisattva will be able to act in a better way, that is, in accordance with the bodhisattva vow; he will be able to benefit beings effectively through his generosity. Overall, this chapter will show that Śāntideva's ethics should be read as a mind-training that aims at the attainment of wisdom.

5.1 *The Perfection of Generosity and Moral Phenomenology*

5.1.1 *Defining Moral Phenomenology*

Moral phenomenology is proposed initially by Garfield, and other scholars have also highlighted the value that this interpretation provides.³⁷⁹ It takes as the primary feature of ethics the way one experiences himself and others – ultimately, how one experiences the world:

Buddhist moral theorists see ethics as concerned not *primarily* with actions, their consequences, obligations, sentiments or human happiness, but rather with the nature of our *experience*.³⁸⁰

Rather than elements found in Western ethical frameworks, such as consequences and obligations, Buddhist ethics,³⁸¹ according to Garfield, is concerned with one's experience of the world. Moreover, it is concerned with developing one's experience in order to produce right actions. Garfield explains that a moral phenomenological understanding of ethics entails:

An approach to ethics in which **the principal object of concern and of moral evaluation is the way one experiences the world** [...]When we approach ethics phenomenologically, **we aim to foster ethical growth** not by instilling a sense of duty, teaching people to focus on the consequences of their actions, or accustoming them to *do* things, but **by training people to see themselves and others in a better way, with the confidence that that experience will not only be more accurate but also yield more**

³⁷⁹ See Carpenter 2019.

³⁸⁰ Garfield 2015, 279.

³⁸¹ Though Garfield mentions “Buddhist moral theorists” specifically, he has in mind Buddhist ethics as a whole. He references philosophers such as Śāntideva and Āryadeva; he also refers to ethical concepts in Buddhism, such as the *brahmavihārās*.

effective engagement with the world in a host of situations.³⁸²

In this definition of moral phenomenology, Garfield highlights the importance of ethical growth. The bodhisattva aims to become a better ethical agent so that he can best benefit other beings, that is, effectively engage with the world and address its suffering. The bodhisattva does not transform himself by acting according to Western ethical frameworks, but by transforming his vision and experience of the world.

Based on the analysis of generosity discussed in the previous chapter, where the perfection was described as a quality of the mind that must be cultivated, it follows that a suitable interpretation of the perfection must incorporate the bodhisattva's transformation of mind. As Carpenter underscores:

Rather than argue for this or that ultimate ground of normativity, the *Guide* [i.e., *BCA*] aims to change the categories in which we experience the world, the perspective we take on our experiences, and to modify quite comprehensively what is “on our minds.”³⁸³

Carpenter's point further highlights the presence of a transformative framework in *BCA*, which therefore shows the necessity of incorporating a transformative aspect in an interpretation of the perfections. Hence, to cultivate the perfection of generosity – indeed, all the perfections and qualities outlined in *BCA* – the bodhisattva must transform the way he experiences the world. Accordingly, the transformation of the vision of the world that Garfield emphasizes is a suitable interpretation due to addressing an essential aspect of the bodhisattva's project. To see why *BCA* aims to transform one's experience of the world, we can consider that the primary concern of Buddhism is to free individuals from suffering.³⁸⁴ This must be given precedence over aspects of

³⁸² Garfield 2019, 192-193. The italicized words are Garfield's emphasis; the bolded words are mine.

³⁸³ Carpenter 2019, 47.

³⁸⁴ Garfield 2010/2011, 338. For bodhisattvas, this is to free all beings from suffering, whereas for non-bodhisattva Buddhists, one only frees oneself from suffering.

other ethical theories, such as imperatives or utility calculations.³⁸⁵ To solve the problem of suffering, as discussed in Chapter 2, requires attaining wisdom. An interpretation of Buddhist ethics must therefore incorporate a transformation of mind that aims to attain wisdom.³⁸⁶

A result of seeing the world as interdependent and empty entails that one will develop compassion for others. This aspect is captured by the second aspect of moral phenomenology, where the bodhisattva has transformed his way of behaving in the world. That is, due to seeing the world correctly, the bodhisattva can act in accordance with this vision: how one sees the world can influence one's actions.³⁸⁷ For example, drawing on a common example used in Indian philosophy, if one sees a coiled object in a dimly lit room, he may think that he is perceiving a snake. Upon seeing the "snake," he will experience fear and act in accordance with this perception and experience; he may try to run away, or he may try to trap the snake so that it cannot attack him. However, if he shines light in the room and sees that the coiled object is merely a rope, his ensuing actions will also differ: he will not fear the coiled object, and his actions will be in accordance with this understanding of what he sees.

Similarly, if the bodhisattva wrongly sees himself as an *independent* existence, he will act in accordance with this belief: he will seek to benefit himself, perhaps at the expense of others, and will largely be concerned about his own well-being. Even if he is not completely selfish, his altruism will nonetheless include some selfish elements. Upon correcting his vision of the world and seeing himself as an interdependent entity that lacks an inherent nature, the bodhisattva will

³⁸⁵ Ibid. See also Garfield 2015, 281-282.

³⁸⁶ This aspect of the bodhisattva's ethics is important to highlight, for as Garfield notes, the bodhisattva is not *just* altruistic – he also aims to benefit himself (Garfield 2010/2011, 334). The dual nature of the bodhisattva's ethics – self-benefiting and other-benefitting – was addressed in the previous chapter.

³⁸⁷ Garfield 2015, 287.

act compassionately: he will act in a manner that does not prioritize his own well-being over others' well-being – he will thus care for others. Indeed, as Garfield summarizes:

To the extent that it is grounded in an egocentric perspective, perceptual appraisal constitutes the affective and conative horizon of confusion, attraction, and aversion that grounds all other immorality; to the extent that it is grounded in an understanding of interdependence, it can constitute a horizon of moral maturity and kindness grounded in insight.³⁸⁸

Thus, the transformation of vision to see the world correctly results in a transformation of one's moral capacities. That is, the bodhisattva's moral development relies on transforming his perception and experience of the world.³⁸⁹ Hence, the core of moral phenomenology is based on two points about the human psyche – “That to see the world aright leads naturally to appropriate action, and that it is possible to transform our perceptual experience through practice.”³⁹⁰

5.1.2 *Generosity and Moral Phenomenology*

Having explained the framework of moral phenomenology, we will now consider how the perfection of generosity can be understood through a moral phenomenological framework. This is shown through three ways that the perfection is cultivated: 1) through practicing acts of giving, 2) the equalization of self and other, and 3) by contemplating and reflecting on the generous activities of other bodhisattvas. These methods have been discussed in the previous chapters, so we will not expound them in detail here; we will only show that they can be understood through a moral phenomenological framework.

In the first method of cultivating generosity, a bodhisattva who has greed commences his cultivation of generosity by giving to himself, from one hand to another. Eventually, he is able to

³⁸⁸ Garfield 2022a, 39. See also the discussion in Chapter 3 where we argued that an impartial standpoint entails compassion.

³⁸⁹ Garfield 2015, 288. One's perception of the world naturally includes one's perception of oneself.

³⁹⁰ Garfield 2019, 193.

give to others; his acts of generosity gradually develop his mind of generosity. In accordance with moral phenomenology, these actions eventually enable the bodhisattva to see himself and his possessions differently. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the bodhisattva can reconsider his “self” that he aims to benefit. That is, when the bodhisattva passes objects from one hand to another, he can consider one hand as “him” and the other hand as “another.” However, he can soon realize that both hands are indeed “him” due to their being parts of his body. Thus, the bodhisattva can consider “himself” as the body, so he will not feel that he is truly giving anything to another person. The bodhisattva can later develop this understanding of his “self” by including other beings in his conception of “self.” We can revisit the point discussed in Chapter 3 concerning Wetlesen’s argument about the transformation from the small self to the big self. The small self consists of seeing oneself as an independent entity and as just the body-mind complex. The big self consists of seeing oneself as part of an interdependent web of existence.

That the bodhisattva transforms his vision of the world – particularly his vision of himself – has been developed in the previous chapter. The bodhisattva lessens his self-grasping as he cultivates generosity, which thereby allows him to see himself and his possessions as lacking an inherent existence, that is, a self-nature. We will not repeat the previous chapter’s analysis here, but we can nonetheless reiterate the key point of the transformation: as the bodhisattva performs acts of giving, he gradually lessens his greed. When he lessens his greed, his self-grasping is also lessened, for greed is rooted in, and is an expression of, self-grasping. Thus, as the bodhisattva cultivates generosity and lessens his greed, he comes to see himself in a different way: eventually, he will no longer see his self as an independent entity that needs to be benefitted at the expense of other beings. During the cultivation of generosity, the bodhisattva still has self-grasping; it is only with the attainment of wisdom that self-grasping is eliminated. Mere giving is

insufficient for producing the understanding of selflessness, but it does play an important role in *lessening* one's self-grasping. Therefore, as a result of practicing acts of giving, the bodhisattva comes to experience the world in a way that is less self-centered and thus acknowledges its lack of inherent existence. This then results in a compassionate disposition. Hence, the moral phenomenological framework is present in this method of cultivation: the bodhisattva transforms his vision of the world to transform his mind and ensuing actions.

The example of transforming one's perception of oneself is also present in the equalization of self and other, as presented in *BCA* VIII.90-103.³⁹¹ The bodhisattva, by equalizing himself with others, transforms his perception of himself such that he does not see himself as an independent entity worthy of special attention. Just as the bodhisattva lessens his self-grasping by practicing acts of giving, he accomplishes the same result through equalizing himself with others. The equalization of self and others is, in contrast to practicing acts of giving, a reflective exercise. As a result of engaging in this reflection, the bodhisattva transforms his behaviour towards other beings – his experience of seeing himself as equal with others prompts him to be compassionate and generous more effectively due to seeing that he is not an independent entity whose needs must be uniquely satisfied. Importantly, since he *equalizes* self and other, there is still some element of self-grasping – the bodhisattva has not fully eliminated the idea that his *self* exists. Nonetheless, the bodhisattva has *lessened* his self-grasping through his practice of equalization, since he does not consider his existence as inherently more valuable than others' existence. Rather than see himself as an independent entity, he sees himself on par with other beings.

³⁹¹ See Chapter 3 for a translation and examination of these verses.

This reading of the equalization of self and other follows the meditative reading mentioned in Chapter 3. Instead of merely being an argument, the bodhisattva aims to correct his vision of himself and to undermine the falsely perceived self by meditating on the nature of his self.³⁹² The meditative reading of the equalization of self and other reflects an important part of the bodhisattva's ethics that is indicative of moral phenomenology: he is not instructed on what he *should* do, but rather transforms his perception of the world to transform his mind and enable better actions. That is, upon reflecting on the nature of one's own existence and seeing that he is equal with others, the bodhisattva will be compelled to act compassionately and generously:

If one recognizes a habitual selfish tendency in oneself (or its emergence in a particular instance), reflecting on the idea that we are empty of selves might help undermine the self-grasping that is constitutive of this emotional state and thereby help transform it to another psychological state, such as unselfishness or compassionate concern for others.³⁹³

In Finnigan's reading, the practice of equalizing self and other allows one to undermine his misconception of his self-existence. Reflecting on the idea that there is no inherent value in oneself allows one to develop compassion. That is, as he cultivates this perspective, the bodhisattva lessens his self-grasping and gradually eliminates the ensuing afflictions that are rooted in a sense of self. This thereby provides a foundation to act in a way befitting a bodhisattva – that is, to act in accordance with the bodhisattva vow. The bodhisattva will not act selfishly, but compassionately. Hence, the equalization of self and other can be understood through a moral phenomenological framework. The meditation on equalizing self and other is a practice to develop compassion and generosity, as discussed in Chapter 3. Hence, the cultivation of generosity itself can be interpreted through a moral phenomenological framework: the

³⁹² Finnigan 2018, 178-179.

³⁹³ Ibid., 179.

bodhisattva transforms his vision of the world – namely, his understanding of self and other and subsequent experience – to produce a compassionate and generous disposition.

Finally, the moral phenomenological framework is also found in the third example of cultivating generosity: reflecting on the generous activities of other bodhisattvas. We discussed in the previous chapter that this is an example of the narrative aspect in Buddhist ethics, as the examples of other bodhisattvas are presented in stories within various sutras. Garfield argues that the particularities of a case influence one's moral judgement.³⁹⁴ The particularities of a case are exemplified in the stories of bodhisattvas behaving generously, as the stories present beings who are suffering but are helped through bodhisattvas' generosity. By presenting bodhisattvas behaving generously, these stories show the actions of beings who have *bodhicitta* – notably, beings whose *bodhicitta* is more developed than the bodhisattva who reads and studies these examples. Hence, the bodhisattva who studies these sutras can imagine seeing and experiencing the world through the perspective of these other bodhisattvas. The bodhisattvas in the sutras reflect the standpoint that the bodhisattva-in-training aspires towards. By reflecting on the other bodhisattvas' actions and qualities, the bodhisattva himself can consequently be inspired to act similarly. The purpose of the stories, then, is to provide examples of a new perspective and way of experiencing of the world, which in turn promotes a way of acting. This, Garfield states, is an aspect of moral phenomenology:

Narrative is not a mere expository device in Buddhist literature; it functions to demonstrate that moral reflection and moral development always take place in the context of stories in which we are protagonists, and that this reflection and development must make sense in the context of those stories. The narrative, *by encouraging us to see a situation in a new way [...] cultivates our moral perceptual skills*, and thus *transforms us ethically* not by giving us arguments for new moral conclusions but *by changing the way*

³⁹⁴ Garfield 2022a, 60.

*we see the world.*³⁹⁵

The bodhisattva's cultivation of generosity exemplified through narrative can therefore be understood as an example of moral phenomenology.

5.1.3 *A Critique of Moral Phenomenology*

Despite the seeming suitability of this interpretation, there is an important issue to address. The transformation of experience that is presented by moral phenomenology cannot capture the full extent of Śāntideva's ethics, since one's understanding and experience of the *world* does not correspond to the knowledge of *reality* that is necessary in the bodhisattva's cultivation. That is, Garfield's interpretation does not go far enough regarding the transformation of mind, since the bodhisattva, in his quest to attain wisdom, aims to attain an understanding of the *reality* of emptiness and not merely experience the *world* of interdependence. By merely aiming to perceive the world correctly and experience it accordingly, the bodhisattva only aims at attaining a correct perception of conventional reality – that is, appearances – rather than perceive ultimate reality – that is, emptiness. If the bodhisattva perceives ultimate reality, his perception of conventional reality and his ensuing experience of the world will consequently change. However, the converse is not the case: the bodhisattva's experience of the world does not entail that he has wisdom – the correct perception of conventional reality does not result in the knowledge of ultimate reality.

The distinction between the two perceptions can be expressed through an example of seeing a stick placed in water. When placed in water, the stick appears to be bent. In reality, the stick is refracted; though it is straight, it appears bent. The experience of seeing the bent stick

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 56. Emphasis added to highlight the moral phenomenological elements.

does not correspond to its real nature of being straight. The phenomenological understanding of the world only captures appearances and what one can experience – it only captures the conventional reality, and this is what the bodhisattva, under a moral phenomenological reading, would aim to perceive. He would consequently change his ensuing behaviour to fit this appearance; his actions in relation to the stick will follow from an understanding of the stick as a *bent* stick. Nonetheless, one who knows the true nature of the stick – and water, sunlight, and so forth – will also know it as an object that, when placed in water, will only *appear* bent. In this regard, we can see that the knowledge of ultimate reality can indeed influence one’s experience of the world and one’s behaviour in it, though the converse is not the case.

The distinction between the world and ultimate reality, and the bodhisattva’s mind-training to attain wisdom concerning the latter, is further seen by considering the equalization of self and other.³⁹⁶ In this practice, the bodhisattva aims to experience the world through the perspective that his “self” and the “self” of other beings are equal. However, Buddhists argue for the truth of non-self. Thus, from the ultimate standpoint, there is no *self* that is equal with others. Indeed, self and other are merely conventionalities – aspects of the world – that are equalized. The bodhisattva does not, therefore, aim at the wisdom of reality when he equalizes self and other; he instead aims to perceive the world correctly. This shows that moral phenomenology is focused on a correct perception of the *world* rather than *reality*. Hence, the equalization of self and other can be read through a moral phenomenological framework, but the equalization is only an aspect of Śāntideva’s ethics and does not present the entire bodhisattva path. Since the bodhisattva aims to attain the wisdom of reality, there is more to his cultivation than seeing the

³⁹⁶ As discussed above, Garfield uses this argument to defend the moral phenomenal reading. See also Garfield 2016, 87-90.

world correctly. It is perhaps for this reason that the equalization of self and other is presented in the *BCA* chapter prior to the chapter on wisdom.³⁹⁷ The need to go beyond conceptions of self and other shows that moral phenomenology does not go far enough in addressing the bodhisattva's cultivation, which thereby shows the problem with this interpretation.

By emphasizing an understanding of *reality*, we can argue that the transformation of mind in Śāntideva concerns *ontology* rather than *phenomenology*. Phenomenology is not concerned with *reality*, but only with its *appearance* and one's subjective experience of the appearance:

Ontological arguments [...] are oriented toward objects, that is, they take a circumscribed object as a site of analysis and attempt to determine (and thereby undermine) the ontological status of that object. Phenomenological analysis, in contrast [...] is oriented toward the experiential dimension of a subject rather than objects [...] Phenomenology is supposedly not concerned with ontology; that is to say, *phenomenological analyses putatively address not what is, but what appears* [...] In contrast to ontological analysis, phenomenology is geared towards the way we experience the world.³⁹⁸

In this passage, Douglas Duckworth highlights a distinction between appearance and reality; as we will develop in Chapter 7, this distinction concerns the conventional and ultimate truth, respectively. The bodhisattva's ultimate goal is to attain wisdom concerning the nature of reality – emptiness. Hence, he is concerned with more than a mere experience of the world.

If it is argued that there is no ontology in Madhyamaka philosophy, then a phenomenological understanding would be the only necessary goal for the bodhisattva.³⁹⁹ In this

³⁹⁷ Though we mentioned above that one can reflect on the empty nature of the self through meditating on the equalization of self and other, the realization of the emptiness of self only develops with further cultivation. The equalization of self and other is merely a preliminary training which makes possible the deeper realization of emptiness. Hence, Finnigan's statement mentioned above should be understood with respect to the full bodhisattva path rather than just the equalization of self and other.

³⁹⁸ Duckworth 2022, 27-28, emphasis added.

³⁹⁹ See Garfield 2015, 65-66 and Gowans 2021, 107 for mention of the lack of an ultimate truth. If there is no ultimate truth, only a phenomenological analysis would be possible. We will return to this point in Chapter 8.

reading, an understanding of reality is attained through an experience of the world and nothing beyond this, for the conventional truth of appearances is all that exists and can be known. That is, correctly seeing the conventional world for what it is would entail an understanding of reality. Consequently, the proposed problem of moral phenomenology does not follow, since there is no *ontology*, or reality which the bodhisattva aims to understand. Hence, there is no further analysis required beyond the correct perception and experience of the world.

However, we can consider a point mentioned by Śāntideva in *BCA IX* that establishes the need to go beyond one's experience of the world to attain wisdom:

Conventional and ultimate are identified as the two truths.
Reality is beyond the scope of intellect; it is said that the intellect [concerns] the conventional.⁴⁰⁰

The bodhisattva aims to attain the wisdom of reality, which is beyond the scope of the intellect (*buddhi*). In a Madhyamaka context, the intellect can only analyze appearances; that is, the intellect can only analyze the conventional world. This verse acknowledges a reality distinct from the conventional appearances. A similar point is raised by the Dalai Lama:

Why are our senses not reliable with respect to reality – emptiness? Sense consciousnesses know veiled truths, and veiled truths appear truly existent to them. If our senses were reliable cognizers of reality, the true existence that appears to them would be how phenomena exist. If that were so, there would be no need to realize emptiness, for our senses would already perceive phenomena's ultimate nature. In that case, we would not need to exert time and effort to train ourselves in the ārya path or to hear, think, and meditate on emptiness.⁴⁰¹

The intellect analyzes objects of the world; emptiness is not an object, so it cannot be analyzed accordingly. Since the bodhisattva's goal is to attain the wisdom of reality, he must go beyond

⁴⁰⁰ *BCA IX.2*: “*saṃvṛtiḥ paramārthaśca satyadvayamidaṃ matam | buddheragocarastattvaṃ buddhiḥ saṃvṛtirucyate.*” We will revisit this verse in Chapter 7.

⁴⁰¹ Gyatso and Chodron 2023, 77-78.

the scope of the intellect, which entails going beyond a mere experience of the world. Emptiness, then, cannot be understood solely on a phenomenological level and analyzed through the intellect, but must be engaged with on the ontological level.⁴⁰² That is, the bodhisattva's transformation of vision cannot stop at a perception of the world, but must aim at reality.

Moreover, though ontology typically concerns the study of *being*, it concerns for Mādhyamikas a study of the lack of being which is beyond the extremes of existence and nonexistence. The scope of Madhyamaka ontology is not found in Western philosophy, but its scope is still very much an ontological scope, as it concerns the nature of reality – the topic of what exists – in order to show that a real nature does not exist.⁴⁰³ In the strictest sense of ontology, as a study of *being*, emptiness is not within its scope, since Mādhyamikas argue against inherent existence and argue for the lack of being. However, in the sense that emptiness entails an investigation into the nature of being to show that there is no fundamental being, and that emptiness concerns a study of reality rather than appearances, emptiness can be understood as an ontological topic.⁴⁰⁴ This is further shown through Karma Phuntsho's description of emptiness – that is, ultimate reality – as an ontological topic, since it concerns the nature of being rather than the nature of appearances:

The theory of Emptiness is a Buddhist philosophical schema which addresses this ontological issue. By demonstrating how things are empty and what they are empty of, it distinguishes the real from the false, the substantial from the imagined, the ontic from the apparent. It is an existential enquiry into *what there is* by searching for ontic reality behind the veil of appearance. Thus, the doctrine of Emptiness is the Buddhist ontological theory *par excellence*.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² See Phuntsho 2005, 115.

⁴⁰³ See Garfield 2002, 101: "Nāgārjuna's enterprise is one of fundamental ontology, and his conclusion is that fundamental ontology is impossible. But that is a fundamentally ontological conclusion."

⁴⁰⁴ Phuntsho 2005, 33.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 4.

Emptiness, or the nature of reality, is therefore within the scope of ontology rather than phenomenology, as it examines *what there is* rather than one's experience of reality.

The fact that the bodhisattva is required to go beyond the correct conventional perspective and experience of the world is further indicated by Traleg Kyabgon. In his discussion of mind-training (*lojong*) and *bodhicitta*, he notes that:

While the main practice of [mind-training] is the cultivation of relative bodhicitta, the ultimate aim is to realize a transcendental or absolute state. *We are not simply trying to effect a psychological change in how we see and experience the world.*⁴⁰⁶

It is too simplistic to suggest that Śāntideva's aim is *merely* to transform how one sees and experiences the world to transform one's behaviour. To realize the transcendental state is to realize emptiness; it does not merely refer to a particular experience of the world. The transcendental state does not, however, refer to a conception of emptiness as an Absolute principle that is separate from the world. The emptiness-reality is intertwined with the world-appearance, as we will explain in Chapter 8. Nonetheless, to see and experience the world in a particular way refers to attaining a perception of the world as it appears; conversely, to realize a transcendental state refers to understanding the nature of reality, which requires a different, non-intellectual perception whose content is beyond description. Though the nature of reality is intertwined with the appearance of the world, it does not follow that an experience of the world will produce knowledge of the ultimate reality. Emptiness thus transcends the intellectual knowledge of the world; indeed, one transcends all views and concepts.⁴⁰⁷ Hence, when the

⁴⁰⁶ Kyabgon 2007, 30-31, emphasis added.

⁴⁰⁷ See *Paramatthaka Sutta* (Sn IV.5).

bodhisattva transforms his mind to attain wisdom, he must aim at an ontological analysis rather than a phenomenological analysis.

Nonetheless, as can be seen from the analysis of moral phenomenology, the bodhisattva does not *neglect* wisdom under a moral phenomenological framework. Garfield writes that to transform one's experience of the world requires, "an understanding of one's own nature as a selfless, interdependent being and of the world as a matrix of interdependence in which one is inextricably embedded."⁴⁰⁸ Since one must realize his nature as an interdependent entity, it seems that wisdom is accounted for, which thus seems to show that the proposed critique against Garfield and moral phenomenology is inadequate. However, the extent of the wisdom that Garfield addresses is the true nature of the *conventional* world, that is, the appearance of the world. To realize oneself as an interdependent being is, following Wetlesen's analysis mentioned in Chapter 3, a part of the path to enlightenment, but not the end of the path; to realize oneself as an interdependent being is to realize oneself as a big self, which is not the final goal of the bodhisattva's path to wisdom. The realization of oneself as *empty* – that is, *self-less* – is a higher, or transcendent truth; it represents part of the ultimate reality at which the bodhisattva aims.⁴⁰⁹ Hence, wisdom is not fully captured in Garfield's analysis, for wisdom must concern a realization of the ultimate truth rather than the conventional truth.

In summary, Garfield's point that moral phenomenology aims to foster ethical growth through a transformation of vision is indeed an important aspect of Śāntideva's ethics, but the nature of wisdom that is attained marks a departure from Garfield's interpretation. Though Garfield argues for the importance of the transformation of vision, he considers the primary

⁴⁰⁸ Garfield 2019, 193.

⁴⁰⁹ Specifically, this refers to the selflessness of persons; the bodhisattva is also required to cultivate a realization of the selflessness of phenomena.

aspect of the transformation to be one's subjective experience of the world: here, one transforms his vision of the world rather than aim at an understanding of reality. The bodhisattva instead fosters ethical growth by cultivating the *wisdom of reality* rather than by *experiencing the world* differently. The wisdom of reality goes beyond the experience of the world, and an interpretation of the bodhisattva's ethics which accounts for a transformation of mind must therefore incorporate the realization of reality. Hence, to suggest that the primary concern of Śāntideva's ethical project is a transformation of one's experience of the world is limited in its scope, thereby showing the difficulty with a moral phenomenological interpretation.

5.2 *The Perfection of Generosity and Mind-Training*

5.2.1 *Defining Mind-Training*

To overcome the limitations of the moral phenomenological reading, we will consider the framework of Śāntideva's ethics as a mind-training. We will first analyze the nature of mind (*citta*) to identify what is being trained. "Mind" does not refer to one's "thought" or "intention." This was highlighted in Chapter 2 when the nature of the perfections was explained to be a mental disposition; we explained there that the mind refers to one's overall mental attitude. We can expound this point by drawing on Harris's explanation of the perfection of generosity. He mentions that for Śāntideva, generosity consists of a mental activity rather than the actual *act* of generosity. He writes that generosity, "is essentially *mental*, and private in the sense that it does not depend on direct interaction with any person."⁴¹⁰ Moreover, generosity is "not transferring possessions to a specific person but is rather *mental relinquishment* of these items to sentient beings in general."⁴¹¹ Harris develops this point by considering an example from *BCA*. Here, the bodhisattva partakes in a ritual where he mentally offers objects to buddhas and bodhisattvas; he

⁴¹⁰ Harris 2024, 55, emphasis added.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 54, emphasis added.

visualizes himself giving to them.⁴¹² Harris argues that these mental offerings and visualizations amount to acts of generosity.⁴¹³ Indeed, the bodhisattva may not have possessions, so he can only visualize himself giving them as opposed to actually doing so.⁴¹⁴ This analysis does not, however, dismiss the presence of generous actions. Harris's analysis simply makes evident that the mental activity of giving – visualizing oneself being generous – should be considered on the same level as an act of generosity: for Śāntideva, the transference of physical ownership is not a necessary feature of generosity.

However, the mental activity of generosity is not indicative of *citta*. The mental activity of being generous – visualizing oneself giving to others or possessing the thought to give to others – should be understood as an *aspect* of the overall mental disposition. That a mental activity such as visualization cannot constitute the perfection can be seen through the rhetorical question Śāntideva poses in his description of the perfection of discipline.⁴¹⁵ In *BCA* V.11, Śāntideva argues that the avoidance of the act of killing does not amount to the possession of the perfection of discipline. One must instead have the mental disposition of non-killing; one's mental attitude must be such that he is not compelled to partake in actions that harm others. From a cursory reading, this idea seems to be followed when considering generosity as a mental activity, but there is a crucial point that is neglected. The problem can be seen by revisiting the discussion in Chapter 2, where we discussed the instance of moral luck with respect to non-harm. A bodhisattva can be fortunate to not encounter creatures, like insects, such that he will never encounter an opportunity to kill them. As Śāntideva states, this is *not* the perfection of discipline;

⁴¹² See *BCA* II.1-21.

⁴¹³ Harris 2024, 50: “Śāntideva takes the visualizations themselves to be acts of generosity, regardless of whether anything physically changes hands.”

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁴¹⁵ *BCA* V.11; see also the discussion of this rhetorical question in Chapter 2.

one does not possess the quality of non-harm simply through the luck of not encountering beings and not having the opportunity to harm them. The same analysis can be made with respect to one's mental activity of non-harm. If the mental activity is all that is required for the perfection, then one who is in deep sleep or in a coma would possess the perfection, for he will not engage in mental activities of harming others; that is, he is unable to visualize himself harming others. Due to the luck, or circumstance of not thinking about harming others, one would possess the perfection.

This analysis can be applied to the perfection of generosity. The active quality of the perfection – the action or mental activity – is not indicative of the perfection. The active quality is certainly an *aspect* of the perfection, but if it is taken to represent the entirety of the perfection, then we encounter the problem that Śāntideva mentions in his rhetorical question: one would be generous simply due to his external circumstances and not because he possesses a generous mind. Likewise, one can mentally partake in generosity without possessing a generous mind. For instance, one can read a story about a generous individual, then visualize himself partaking in generous actions like the individual in the story. This visualization will not constitute the perfection of generosity, since it is momentary and not indicative of the bodhisattva's mental attitude in general. Indeed, a greedy individual can visualize a situation in which he gives to others, but since he has a greedy disposition, he does not have the mind of generosity.

Therefore, while the importance of the mental activity does correctly identify the lack of primary importance given to the action, this does not entail that the mental activity is the sole aspect.⁴¹⁶ The perfection is also not a combination of the mental activity and the action. We must

⁴¹⁶ See Edelglass 2018, 232, where Edelglass argues that Śāntideva is also concerned with actually giving to others. We saw this in Chapter 3 as well, where we mentioned that the bodhisattva gives his body to others to alleviate their suffering.

instead understand the mind as referring to a mental disposition, that is, a mental attitude, from which actions and visualizations can, and do, follow. This disposition therefore reflects one's overall character. When the mental disposition is present, the bodhisattva will partake in actions associated with the perfections; for example, he will behave generously due to possessing the mind of generosity. Likewise, when the disposition is present, the bodhisattva will mentally relinquish his possessions to other beings and visualize himself giving to others.⁴¹⁷ So, though the mental activity of giving is deemed more important than, or equal to the act of giving, we can deem the mind of generosity to be of even greater importance with regard to defining the perfection. Accordingly, we can see a difference between a mental activity and a mental disposition. The latter concerns an orientation of one's mentality; within this overarching mental attitude, we can find one's habitual tendencies and experiences.⁴¹⁸ Mental activity and actions are encompassed in this disposition, thus indicating the greater scope of the mental disposition. The mind is an overarching quality of the bodhisattva, not a momentary thought he possesses.

Moreover, just as there is a difference between the mind and a mental activity, we should also consider a difference between the mind and an *intention*. In explaining Śāntideva's definition of generosity Garfield writes that:

Śāntideva asserts that generosity consists not in any act, but rather in an *intention*, and a rather comprehensive one at that, one in which one relates to all beings as potential beneficiaries.⁴¹⁹

In Garfield's analysis, the perfection of generosity is the *intention* to give all of one's possessions to all beings. Like Harris, Garfield aims to distinguish the mental aspect of the perfection from

⁴¹⁷ One can also give and visualize giving without possessing the perfection of generosity. This is the point that we wish to establish here: simply visualizing oneself giving does not constitute the perfection. It is, nonetheless, a characteristic, or quality of one who has the mind of generosity.

⁴¹⁸ See Jinpa 2020, 97.

⁴¹⁹ Garfield 2022a, 118, emphasis added.

the act associated with the perfection. Garfield's analysis is partly correct, since the bodhisattva who possesses the perfection of generosity will indeed have an intention to give to others. However, the intention follows from the mental disposition. The mind is an overarching quality of which the intention is a part; the mental disposition refers to one's complete mental attitude, whereas an intention indicates a momentary mental state that he possesses. Hence, the *intention* to give does not connote the perfection of generosity; it is merely an aspect of it. Actions, thoughts, and intentions, in this regard are *outcomes* of the mind of generosity.

To develop the mind of generosity, it is helpful to consider the cultivation through a mind-training framework. The mind-training that is present in Śāntideva can be understood with reference to the Tibetan practice of *lojong* (*blo sbyong*). As Kapstein underscores, *lo* (*blo*) refers to “mind, thought, [or] intellect.”⁴²⁰ The sense of *lo* followed in our interpretation of mind-training is not limited to *thought*; the issue with this understanding follows what has been mentioned above regarding generosity as a mental activity. That is, the thought of generosity does not encompass the overall disposition, as the thought can occur when the disposition is not present and can occur through luck or circumstance. Similarly, intellect also refers to a limited scope of the mind, specifically, an activity of the mind. The intellect refers to that which analyzes and understands phenomena. In this regard, the intellect is better understood as *buddhi* rather than *citta*.

Rather than thought or intellect, we consider *lo* in the greater sense of *mind*, or *mental attitude*.⁴²¹ Though *lo* includes mental operations – such as those belonging to the intellect – the overarching sense of *mind* can be found by highlighting its synonymity with *sem* (*sems*).⁴²² *Sem*

⁴²⁰ Kapstein 2013, 103; see also Jinpa 2006, 1.

⁴²¹ See Jinpa 2019, 146, where he mentions that *lo* can stand for “attitude.”

⁴²² See Das 1902, 902.

is the Tibetan translation of *citta*.⁴²³ Thus, it may seem appropriate to argue that Śāntideva's ethics is best understood as *sem-jong* rather than *lo-jong*, since the bodhisattva aims to develop *citta* during his cultivation of the perfections. However, by considering a specific practice that falls under *lojong*, we can argue that *lo* is used synonymously with *sem*. The practice of equalizing self and other, which is a key practice of *lojong*,⁴²⁴ is not simply an intellectual training, that is, a training to transform one's thoughts or understanding of the world. This training is also used to elicit a compassionate response to the world; it aims to transform how one responds to, and behaves in, the world. This transformation entails transforming one's overall mental disposition; hence, there is a greater scope than just one's intellect. *Lojong*, then, should be understood in the sense of transforming one's mental attitude, that is, the overall mind.

To further show that *lo* trains *citta* and not merely one's intellect, we can consider a point mentioned by Jinpa. He mentions that *lojong* is used as a way to cultivate *bodhicitta*:

The main practice [of *lojong*] is framed in terms of the cultivation of the two awakening minds (*bodhicitta*): conventional *bodhicitta* [...] and ultimate *bodhicitta*⁴²⁵ [...] All remaining *lojong* practices are, in one way or another, aimed at enhancing, reinforcing, and complementing the main practice of the two awakening minds.⁴²⁶

That is, one cultivates *bodhicitta* through *lojong* practices. *Bodhicitta*, we must recall, is the *mind* of awakening. Hence, one trains his *mind* through *lojong*; that is, *lojong* practices aim to develop one's *citta*. Even if this relation does not entail a synonymity between *lo* and *sem/citta*,⁴²⁷ there is still a relevant relation between *lojong* and the development of *citta*. In this relation, *lojong* practices could be understood as specifically training one's intellect rather than one's *citta*, but

⁴²³ Ibid., 1976. *Sem* is also the translation of *citta* used in Tibetan editions of *BCA*.

⁴²⁴ See Jinpa 2019, 150-151.

⁴²⁵ In Chapter 2, we referred to this as Absolute *bodhicitta*.

⁴²⁶ Jinpa 2019, 148.

⁴²⁷ See Kyabgon 2007, 7, where subtle differences are noted between *lo* and *sem*.

these trainings are nonetheless for the overall purpose of cultivating one's *citta*. Indeed, there are many *lojong* practices, some of which do focus on developing one's intellect. However, since *lojong* practices are ultimately for the purpose of developing *bodhicitta*, these practices must be understood as training *sem/citta* – that is, one's overall mental disposition. The practices that train one's intellect are part of a greater project of training the mind. As we discussed with the moral phenomenological interpretation, the equalization of self and other is only a part of the bodhisattva's path to wisdom; it is therefore part of the overall *lojong* path. Thus, whether *lojong* is synonymous with *semjong* such that *lojong* is itself *semjong*, or if *lojong* is a distinct practice that trains *sem/citta*, it is evident that *lojong* practices develop *citta*.

Moreover, since the mind of the perfections can only be attained when the respective mental dispositions of the perfections are infused with wisdom, a thorough training in *citta* requires cultivating wisdom. *Lojong* practices aim at developing wisdom: this is seen in the above passage where Jinpa notes that *lojong* aims to cultivate ultimate *bodhicitta*.

Ultimate/Absolute *bodhicitta* concerns the realization of emptiness, which entails the possession of wisdom. By cultivating wisdom, *lojong* practices in turn cultivate *citta*. The training of *citta*, furthermore, is not an incidental training, for the purpose of *lojong* is to develop *bodhicitta*. The development of wisdom is intertwined with *lojong*'s primary goal of developing *citta*. The framework of *lojong* therefore shows that it is concerned with developing *citta* rather than the intellect. For while the intellect can be trained without being infused with the wisdom of ultimate reality, the cultivation of *citta* necessarily requires a connection with wisdom. Hence, we should understand a relation between *lo* and *sem/citta*.

Mind-training can further be understood by considering the training itself, that is, *jong*. This has several aspects, which, when considered, highlight its relation to wisdom. Jinpa notes

that it can refer to 1) a general training in which one acquires a skill or obtains mastery in a field of knowledge; 2) habituation or becoming familiar with a specific way of being or thinking; 3) cultivating specific mental qualities, such as compassion and *bodhicitta*; and 4) purifying, or removing afflictions, such as the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion.⁴²⁸ The second, third, and fourth aspect all require, to some degree, the attainment of wisdom. For instance, to remove afflictions completely, wisdom is necessary. Moreover, developing wisdom will also produce great compassion and develop *bodhicitta*. To become familiar with a specific way of being requires wisdom; this is evidenced through the bodhisattva's concern with developing the mind and ensuing dispositions of the perfections. In this regard, a central aspect of *jong* is that it is a training that aims at attaining wisdom. So, *lojong*, or “mind-training” is a framework which consists of training the mind to attain wisdom. When applied to the bodhisattva path, the training to attain wisdom is specifically for the sake of all beings, not simply to develop the four goals mentioned above.

Ultimately, all of the Buddha's teachings can be characterized as a mind-training, in the sense that they aim to teach a path to overcome suffering – hence the removal of afflictions – and cultivating compassion for others, both of which are aided by wisdom. The Tibetan idea of mind-training, however, refers to specific practices conducive to the cultivation of *bodhicitta*, and a key aspect of this is to reorient one's concept of oneself, others, and the world.⁴²⁹ To this end, there are specific mind-training practices that can be undertaken, such as the equalization and exchange of self and other. Despite the presence of specific practices, the overall idea of *lojong* is the same as that of the general scope of mind-training: it is a training undertaken for the

⁴²⁸ Jinpa 2006, 1-2.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

purpose of benefiting other beings. In this thesis, we will focus on a specific training that fits the mind-training framework. In Chapter 6, we will examine a training that does not draw on previously existing accounts of mind-training; rather, we will examine a training that is largely ignored in Western scholarship and show that it fits the framework presented here. Prior to introducing this practice, however, we will introduce some general examples of mind-training in the cultivation of the perfection of generosity and in Śāntideva to see the scope of mind-training.

5.2.2 *Examples of Mind-Training in the Perfection of Generosity*

The following chapter will present an important example of mind-training in Śāntideva, but we can momentarily analyze some of the above-mentioned examples through a mind-training framework. We highlighted the importance of wisdom as the goal of the transformation rather than a mere transformation of character. We will not repeat the full discussion here, but we can see that based on that framework, the cultivation of generosity is best understood through the lens of mind-training as opposed to a virtue ethics or moral phenomenological framework.

One of the examples discussed is that the bodhisattva trains his mind by practicing acts of giving, as these actions lessen his greed. By lessening his greed and eliminating self-grasping, the bodhisattva works towards the attainment of wisdom; he gradually realizes that all phenomena lack self-nature and are empty. Unlike moral phenomenology, the bodhisattva does not merely experience the world differently through this practice but instead attains wisdom concerning the ultimate nature of his self and phenomena. Thus, the *lessening* of greed and self-grasping should be understood as working towards an *elimination* of greed and self-grasping. This is done by considering the distinction between the “big self” and “no self” mentioned in Chapter 3. Whereas a moral phenomenological approach would stop at an understanding of the “big self” – since this concerns the world – mind-training proceeds to an understanding of “no

self” – since this concerns reality. That is, as the bodhisattva lessens his self-grasping by giving from one hand to another, he comes to realize that “he” does not exist. Hence, he attains the wisdom of reality; his mind is trained with the goal of attaining wisdom.

Another exercise in Śāntideva that demonstrates the mind-training framework is to consider reality from a different point of view. Śāntideva’s example concerning narratives reveals this point: the bodhisattva imagines reality from the perspective of other bodhisattvas, which inspires him to imitate their mental attitudes and act accordingly. That is, the bodhisattva develops his mental attitude by reflecting on the actions of other bodhisattvas. Since the other bodhisattvas have the *bodhicitta* that the bodhisattva himself aspires to have, he is inspired to be like them. To be like the other bodhisattvas entails having the same mental disposition that they have: the other bodhisattvas have a mind of generosity – not necessarily a *perfected* mind of generosity – which results in generous actions. As considered in the previous example, performing generous actions can develop a generous mind. The examples expressing narratives are part of the mind-training to transform the mind: the bodhisattva does not complete his transformation until he attains wisdom, but he gradually works towards the full transformation through considering the perspective of other bodhisattvas. Evidently, this exercise does not concern a mind-training with respect to attaining wisdom, as the perspective of other bodhisattvas may not correspond to the nature of reality. Nonetheless, this perspective is used to support the bodhisattva’s cultivation and progression towards wisdom.⁴³⁰ It inspires him to practice acts of generosity and consequently lessen his self-grasping.

⁴³⁰ We criticized moral phenomenology for not orienting one’s perception towards reality and instead aiming at the correct perception of appearances, that is, the world. When the bodhisattva adopts the perspective of other bodhisattvas, he may not be orienting his perception towards reality. Hence, the critique posed against Garfield can be applied here. However, we can respond to this critique by acknowledging that the mind-training does not only concern developing the perception of the other bodhisattvas; it includes a further cultivation to attain wisdom. The

Moreover, to be like the other bodhisattvas does not entail imitating their actions, but their mission, which is reflected by their mental disposition. Their fundamental goal is to help other beings and free them from suffering; this is accomplished through the perfected perfection of generosity. An important aspect of the narratives is not only that the bodhisattvas give to other beings, but that other beings' suffering is alleviated. This is the goal that the bodhisattva aims to accomplish and the mental attitude that he is inspired to imitate and develop. To help others most effectively, like the bodhisattvas he reads about, the bodhisattva must cultivate wisdom and attain the perfected perfection of generosity. The narratives, then, inspire the bodhisattva to train his mind and develop wisdom. Simply reading or hearing the narratives will not produce wisdom, but they will prompt the bodhisattva to cultivate wisdom. The examples expressing narratives therefore show that by considering reality from another perspective, the bodhisattva can train his mind and elicit a gradual transformation; narratives are therefore *part* of the overall mind-training framework.

Finally, Śāntideva's instruction of the equalization and exchange of self and other is an important practice in the mind-training corpus across Tibetan philosophy. Jinpa provides an analysis of this practice and its relation to *lojong*,⁴³¹ and we will draw on his work here. We introduced the *equalization* of self and other in Chapter 3; this is addressed to highlight the impartial standpoint in Śāntideva's ethics. Jinpa underscores a key point in *BCA* where Śāntideva argues that due to self-identification, one cannot tolerate one's own suffering.⁴³² By equalizing oneself with others, one's transforms his understanding of "self," as we mentioned in Chapter 3;

further cultivation is not present in moral phenomenology, which thus shows the difference between the mind-training reading and moral phenomenology. The narratives do not simply prompt the bodhisattva to be generous, but to attain wisdom; narratives, in this regard, are a foundational practice for the attainment of wisdom.

⁴³¹ Jinpa 2019.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, 151.

this enables the bodhisattva to develop a compassionate disposition. Building on this practice of the equalization of self and other, Śāntideva then instructs the bodhisattva to practice the *exchange* of self and other⁴³³ and outlines this practice in the rest of *BCA* VIII.⁴³⁴ The purpose of the exchange is as the name states: the bodhisattva is instructed to imagine himself as another individual, and to imagine the other individual as his original self. As Jinpa mentions, “This is not simply a matter of changing one’s attitude, but more radically, entails renouncing one’s self-identity and viewing others as one’s own self.”⁴³⁵ Hence, the bodhisattva has “exchanged” himself with another individual.

This practice enables the bodhisattva to consider himself and others from a different perspective; he is able to see the world through another’s perspective. This enables him to develop compassion, as he imagines himself encountering all the situations the other person encounters, especially the other’s hardships. Moreover, this practice helps the bodhisattva to identify with and strive to eliminate the other’s suffering. In this practice, the bodhisattva first assumes that his own suffering is to be removed. The bodhisattva then imagines himself as another being. Since the bodhisattva is now that other being, that other being’s suffering – the bodhisattva’s new “self” in this thought experiment – should be removed, following the bodhisattva’s initial intention. In this regard, his compassion for others is developed.⁴³⁶

As a practice in developing compassion, the equalization and exchange of self and other evidently fits the framework of a mind-training. Specifically, it reflects the third aspect of *jong* mentioned above. Importantly, this practice also has a relation with the attainment of wisdom.

⁴³³ *BCA* VIII.120.

⁴³⁴ Specifically, *BCA* VIII.140-184.

⁴³⁵ Jinpa 2019, 151.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

Jinpa underscores the purpose of the equalization and exchange as, “A fundamental reorientation of one’s perspectives and attitudes, *switching from habitual self-centeredness to other-centeredness* so that one cares for others and their welfare.”⁴³⁷ To eliminate self-centeredness, one requires wisdom. In this regard, the practice of equalization and exchanging self and other works to lessen the bodhisattva’s self-grasping, and this gradually produces wisdom. Hence, this practice serves the same function as practices like “giving” to oneself or imagining oneself in other situations through narratives. These practices all have as their aim the lessening of the sense of self and the consequent development of wisdom.

It is worth noting, as a final point, that the proposed interpretation of mind-training does not exclude other interpretations. Indeed, we saw the presence of consequentialist and aretaic elements in Śāntideva’s ethics in the previous two chapters, and in the previous section, we saw elements from a moral phenomenological reading. We can therefore conclude that Śāntideva’s ethics contains elements of various ethical theories. However, depending on which element we wish to emphasize, there will be a certain presentation of his ethics and a certain theory that is best suited to interpret this presentation. If we wish to emphasize one’s actions, a consequentialist account seems best fitting – though not necessarily, as discussed in Chapter 3. If we wish to emphasize a transformation of mind, then either a virtue ethics or moral phenomenological reading seems best fitting – though we would have to modify these theories and emphasize a particular version of these theories.⁴³⁸ Indeed, the mind-training reading that we defend contains elements that are present in both virtue ethics and moral phenomenology. The key difference is the emphasis on the inclusion of the wisdom of reality: the bodhisattva’s

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 154, emphasis added.

⁴³⁸ Moreover, though not discussed in this thesis, the cultivation of discipline requires following precepts, which, to some extent, can be interpreted through a deontological framework (see Vasen 2018, 331-332).

training is presented with respect to the fact that he aims at attaining the wisdom of reality. After attaining wisdom, the bodhisattva may indeed possess virtues and may indeed act in accordance with a consequentialist framework. Nonetheless, to emphasize that the attainment of wisdom is the primary aspect of Śāntideva's ethics entails that we adopt a mind-training interpretation.

Wisdom – not actions, virtues, intentions, or experience of the world – is the primary goal of the bodhisattva's ethics, which can then produce these other aspects.

5.3 Conclusion

Śāntideva's conception of the perfection of generosity must be interpreted in relation to attaining wisdom, since wisdom enables the mind of the perfection. This entails that we consider generosity under a mind-training framework, where the bodhisattva trains his mind to attain wisdom, which thus transforms his mind to possess the mental disposition of generosity. To show this framework, we first considered a similar interpretation proposed by Garfield, moral phenomenology. Though this theory underscores that the bodhisattva's primary goal is to transform his vision and experience of the world, it has a key problem that prevents it from being a suitable interpretation. This framework primarily focuses on the bodhisattva's attainment of a correct perception of the world. Śāntideva instead requires that the bodhisattva attains the wisdom of reality. Thus, while Garfield's interpretation does incorporate a transformation of mind, it does not present the full scope of Śāntideva's ethics, as the wisdom of reality is neglected. Hence, to highlight the transformation of mind with respect to attaining wisdom, we must consider the bodhisattva's cultivation as a mind-training. In the next chapter, we will expound the mind-training that the bodhisattva undertakes.

Chapter 6: The Bodhisattva's Mind-Training: A Study of the Threefold Training

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we will present an important aspect of the perfections when they are considered from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*. The perfections in this stage consists of a sequential cultivation which aims at the attainment of wisdom; this will be explained with reference to a training presented in ŚŚ. By demonstrating the sequence of the perfections, we will show that the cultivation of generosity aims at the attainment of wisdom. That the perfections are cultivated sequentially is not a novel idea, but this chapter presents a unique reason for the sequence by drawing on Śāntideva's exposition of the threefold training. Moreover, the unique reason for the sequential framework entails that the perfections are interdependent. Upon attaining wisdom, it infuses the prior perfections and consequently transforms the bodhisattva's mind and ensuing actions. Therefore, demonstrating the sequential framework of the perfections will show the mind-training framework of the cultivation of generosity, as its cultivation necessarily incorporates the attainment of wisdom in order to enable the perfected perfection of generosity.

The sequence of the perfections will be presented with reference to the threefold training of protecting, purifying, and enhancing the objects of generosity, that is, the bodhisattva's gifts. To partake in the threefold training entails cultivating the perfections with the goal of attaining wisdom. The threefold training produces a gradual transformation of the bodhisattva's mind, upon which the bodhisattva will be able to act in accordance with the bodhisattva vow and best benefit other beings. This is the basis of the cultivation of the perfection of generosity. To understand this cultivation, we will first analyze key terms from the ŚŚ verse that introduces the threefold training, then provide an overall explanation of this verse. Following this, we will address the sequential nature of the perfections as entailed by the threefold training by addressing

the relation between the threefold training and the perfections. This ultimately shows that we can consider a training presented by Śāntideva in ŚŚ through the lens of a mind-training framework.

6.1 Definition and Explanation of Key Terms

To explain the threefold training, it is necessary to study first the verse that summarizes the content of ŚŚ:

One's body, possessions, and merit [gained] during the three times,
These are given away to all beings. And one must protect, purify, and enhance them.⁴³⁹

This verse was introduced in Chapter 2 as the summary of the bodhisattva vow.⁴⁴⁰ We can draw on a point mentioned by Dale Wright to identify the connection between generosity and compassion, and hence a connection between generosity and the bodhisattva vow:

When compassion is fully present, a separate concern for generosity is unnecessary. We require the effort of generosity only when we lack the compassion to live the bodhisattva's vow – to live on behalf of others as much as we do on behalf of ourselves. *When compassion is complete, we do not hesitate to give; it comes forth quite naturally.*⁴⁴¹

In this passage, Wright indicates two aspects of generosity: generosity is an extension of compassion, and generosity is a training to develop compassion.⁴⁴² Importantly, when generosity is a training to develop compassion, the compassion that is aimed at is *great* compassion (*mahākaruṇā*). In Wright's analysis, compassion is both the starting point and endpoint of the bodhisattva's ethics. In this regard, we should understand that compassion is present *throughout*

⁴³⁹ ŚŚ K4: “*ātmabhāvasya bhogānām tryadhvavṛtteḥ śubhasya ca | utsargaḥ sarvasattvebhyastadrakṣā śuddhivardhanam.*” We will henceforth refer to this verse as K4.

⁴⁴⁰ See also Clayton 2006, 40, where she states that this verse is a summary of the key features of ŚŚ and the essence of the bodhisattva path. ŚŚ is structured around explaining the threefold training, and this explanation includes other aspects of the bodhisattva path, such as the perfections.

⁴⁴¹ Wright 2009, 51, emphasis added.

⁴⁴² On the second aspect, see Wright's point that, “When we simply do not feel compassion for others, the teachings and practices of generosity are available to help inaugurate those feelings” (ibid.).

the bodhisattva path. Indeed, it is, “the seed, water, and harvest of the *bodhisattva* path.”⁴⁴³ The bodhisattva’s ethics incorporates compassion throughout the path to wisdom, as will be seen in the threefold training.

As mentioned, generosity is the key ethical aspect of a bodhisattva.⁴⁴⁴ This is primarily because it is the expression of compassion; our study of generosity must therefore incorporate its close connection to compassion. Conversely, as discussed in Chapter 3, Maria Heim argues that generosity (*dāna*) had different connotations in South Asia. Heim highlights a noteworthy general feature of generosity that is distinct from the bodhisattva’s generosity: one is generous only towards worthy recipients, such as those who are highly esteemed, or monastics.⁴⁴⁵ Generosity is thus seen as a way to venerate the recipient and a way to develop merit. In contrast to this view of generosity, the bodhisattva’s generosity is based on compassion; here, the primary concern is the wish to free other beings from suffering. Importantly, the bodhisattva does not merely want to free one or two beings from suffering, or even “worthy” beings from suffering – he wants to free *all* beings from suffering. Generosity as the means through which the bodhisattva alleviates other beings’ suffering is not limited in its scope.⁴⁴⁶ Moreover, when compassion underlies generosity, one is not generous for the sole sake of receiving esteem, or karmic merit. While such consequences may arise, they are not the bodhisattva’s focus; he is

⁴⁴³ Jenkins 2016, 103.

⁴⁴⁴ Mahoney 2016, 15. See also Harvey 2013, 267 on the importance of generosity in Buddhist ethics.

⁴⁴⁵ Heim 2016, 195.

⁴⁴⁶ However, see Mahoney 2016, 84, where a hierarchical list of worthy recipients is presented for a bodhisattva. Though a hierarchy of recipients seems to suggest a similarity with giving only to worthy recipients, the bodhisattva’s generosity differs due to incorporating all beings in his generosity. Rather than only giving to *some* individuals, the bodhisattva gives to *all* individuals – though he is aware that some beings can better use his gifts to benefit a greater number of beings. The bodhisattva, then, follows a hierarchy for recipients with respect to how other beings can best be benefitted. See the discussion in Chapter 3 on giving to a bodhisattva as opposed to giving to a non-bodhisattva.

primarily concerned with alleviating the suffering of other beings through his generosity.⁴⁴⁷ The bodhisattva's generosity, therefore, should be understood as different from conceptions of generosity that lack compassion.

Due to its connection with compassion and wanting to free other beings from suffering, the generosity established in K4 must be developed – that is, it must be able to best benefit other beings. This is established in the threefold training regarding the protection, purification, and enhancement of the bodhisattva's gifts. To understand the threefold training, it is helpful to analyze the definitions of the key terms presented in K4. The key terms that require further examination are body (*ātmabhāva*), possessions (*bhoga*), merit (*śubha*), giving away (*utsarga*), protection (*rakṣā*), purification (*śuddhi*), and enhancement (*vardhana*). In this section, we will only expound the first three terms; these are the bodhisattva's gifts. That is, we will discuss what exactly the bodhisattva gives to others. The latter four terms will be explained in the context of the threefold training; they will therefore be examined in the following section. Prior to this, however, we will first show that this threefold training is indeed a *training* that the bodhisattva undertakes.

The fact that the protection, purification, and enhancement constitute a training is evidenced by the title of Śāntideva's text, *Śikṣāsamuccaya*. This is a compound word consisting of the terms *śikṣā*, which means “training,”⁴⁴⁸ and *samuccaya*, which means “compendium” or

⁴⁴⁷ There are cases when the bodhisattva *will* aim to develop karmic merit, since this is what enables his progression to enlightenment. However, the progress to enlightenment is yet again for the sake of benefiting beings. Thus, the attainment of merit is not the bodhisattva's *sole*, or *primary* concern.

⁴⁴⁸ Apte 2007, 1550 provides many possible translations of *śikṣā*, one of which is “training.” We could, alternatively, understand this term as “instruction.” That is, ŚS provides instructions on how the bodhisattva should train. However, “instruction” and “training” do not have to be read in contrast to each other: the instructions that ŚS provides is how the bodhisattva should train. From the perspective of the bodhisattva, the instructions are understood as a training, yet from the perspective of the teacher – namely, Śāntideva, as the author of the text – these are indeed instructions.

“anthology.” Thus, *ŚS* is an anthology that consists of training instructions. Goodman glosses *śikṣā* as a transformation of one’s emotional life through spiritual practice.⁴⁴⁹ In this regard, Goodman conveys the meaning of *śikṣā* through a sense of training, that is, spiritual practices. We can also note the Pāli equivalent for this Sanskrit term, *sikkhā*, which also conveys the notion of “training.” Consider, for example, *sikkhāpada*, which is the term that is translated as “precepts,” but more specifically refers to *training guidelines*, or *training instructions*.⁴⁵⁰ It is in this respect that the term “training” has been used in this thesis: the bodhisattva engages in a series of *śikṣās* as a way to train and transform his mind. These instructions for training are presented throughout *ŚS*, and they are summarized in K4. These trainings incorporate other aspects of the bodhisattva path as well, namely the perfections; we will explore the relation between the threefold training and the perfections in section 6.2. Overall, the training for the bodhisattva consists of a protection, purification, and enhancement of three things: his body, possessions, and merit. As we will discuss later in this chapter, and following the discussion of the previous chapter, this training relies on transforming the mind; hence, the threefold training is fundamentally a *mind*-training.

Having established that the threefold training is indeed a training, we will now turn to an analysis of the key terms. The first term to discuss is the first of the three things that the bodhisattva gives away: *ātmabhāva*. Three possible translations of this term are provided by Apte in his dictionary: the existence of a soul;⁴⁵¹ the self, or a peculiar nature; and the body.⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁹ Goodman 2016, lxi.

⁴⁵⁰ See Vasen 2018, 331 for an analysis of the Pāli term *sikkhāpada*, and why “precepts” is not a good translation. He emphasizes its *training* nature. See also *The Pali Text Society’s Pali-English Dictionary* Part VIII, 167.

⁴⁵¹ Attestation of this translation is found in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, which is a non-Buddhist source, so it will not be considered here.

⁴⁵² Apte 2007, 325.

The latter two translations are found in studies on ŚŚ: Clayton uses “self”⁴⁵³ and Goodman uses “body.”⁴⁵⁴ Following Edgerton lends support to Goodman’s reading, as in his dictionary, he provides the translation of *ātmabhāva* as “body.”⁴⁵⁵ Thus, considering the use of *ātmabhāva* in the Buddhist context suggests that the translation of “body” is appropriate. We can see the Buddhist connotation of “body” when studying Śāntideva’s work. In various verses in *BCA* III, Śāntideva uses *ātmabhāva* in a way that makes specific reference to the body. The first verse to observe refers to the same three things that K4 instructs the bodhisattva to give; this is presented in the first two lines of *BCA* III.10.⁴⁵⁶ Here, Śāntideva mentions the body (*ātmabhāva*), possessions (*bhoga*), and merit (*śubha*). He also references the “three times” (*trayadhva*), which is the past, present, and future. Due to the similarity between this verse and K4, we can study the use of *ātmabhāva* in *BCA* III to arrive at an understanding of *ātmabhāva* in ŚŚ; this can be used to show that “body” is preferable to the translation of “self” or “peculiar nature.”

In *BCA* III.12 and 13, Śāntideva states that he has given his body to others, so they can do as they please with it. That is, they can beat it, play with it, ridicule it, and laugh at it. One cannot beat a “self,” or one’s “peculiar nature.” For example, if one’s nature is to be kind, others cannot beat his kindness. However, others can beat a body. This suggests that “body” is what is meant

⁴⁵³ Clayton 2006. Mahoney 2016 and Lele 2007 use “person,” which reflects the same point as “self” in this context. This translation is not incorrect, though it does have some challenges which will be highlighted shortly. However, “body” – the translation we use in this thesis – also has problems, as we will highlight shortly. Nonetheless, the benefits of the translation “body” outweigh its problems, whereas the benefits of “self” or “person” do not outweigh its problems. Hence, we maintain the use of “body” as the translation of *ātmabhāva*.

⁴⁵⁴ Goodman 2016. See also Ohnuma 2019, where Ohnuma references the “body” as that which is given.

⁴⁵⁵ Edgerton 1953, 92. Edgerton compiled a dictionary for what he calls “Buddhist Sanskrit.” We will not discuss this form of Sanskrit and its relation to Classical Sanskrit here. However, we can briefly mention that some scholars, led by the work of Edgerton, hold that Buddhists used a form of Sanskrit that contained a different grammar from Classical Sanskrit and additionally used terms to convey different meanings. As such, a new dictionary was required to account for terms used in a Buddhist context. Not all scholars uphold the existence of a unique form of Sanskrit, but it is clear that Sanskrit terms do have unique meanings in Buddhism. Indeed, it is not just Buddhist schools that use Sanskrit terms in a unique context – within all schools of Indian philosophy, common Sanskrit terms are used in their own context and convey different meanings (see Dasgupta 2009, 2).

⁴⁵⁶ *BCA* III.10ab: “*ātmabhāvāṃstathā bhogān sarvantrayadhvagatam śubham.*”

by Śāntideva in these *BCA* verses when he speaks of giving away his *ātmabhāva*. Moreover, in the Buddhist context, overcoming the sense of self is an important goal. Thus, if Śāntideva instructs one to protect, purify, and enhance his *self*, he is contradicting a basic Buddhist principle, for the self does not ultimately exist – he would be instructing to give something which does not exist.⁴⁵⁷ Thus, to translate *ātmabhāva* as “self” would be problematic, thereby giving support to our use of “body.” Moreover, that the bodhisattva gives his body is noted especially by Susanne Mrozik. She highlights that the bodhisattva gives his body parts – such as his eyes, limbs, and so forth. She also notes that ŚŚ explains the *ātmabhāva* as being composed of the four great elements, earth, water, fire, and air.⁴⁵⁸ This therefore reflects the corporeal aspect of what is given; if we choose to translate *ātmabhāva* as “self” or “person,” we may overlook the physical body itself.

Nonetheless, *ātmabhāva* evidently covers more than just one’s physical body. In line with the bodhisattva vow, Śāntideva wishes to be of assistance to others in any way possible. This includes not just giving one’s body to others, but also to be of service to them. That is, the bodhisattva dedicates his entire life to others. In this regard, the bodhisattva gives away not just

⁴⁵⁷ However, some Buddhist scholars argue for a different conception of “self” than what is denied by Buddhist philosophers. See Garfield 2022b; and Gowans 2021, 86-88. Indeed, Śāntideva’s use of *ātmabhāva* instead of *ātman* – the latter is specifically what the Buddha denied – may suggest that “self” is used in a different context here. However, the conception of self suggested by Garfield and Gowans does not appear to be what *ātmabhāva* conveys – perhaps *pudgala* would be an appropriate term to convey their notion of “self.” *Pudgala* is translated as “person,” and an ancient school of Buddhism, the Pudgalavāda (also known as the Vātsīputriya), admitted the existence of this conception of a self – which, as one could expect, faced criticism from other Buddhist schools. Nonetheless, the Pudgalavādins were adamant that their notion of *pudgala* did not contradict the non-self teaching of the Buddha, thereby indicating the presence of a different conception of “self.” In a similar way, like *pudgala*, *ātmabhāva* is likely used to indicate something different than the “self” that is denied by Buddhists. However, using “self” or “person” may cause confusion between the particular object that is given to others and the sense of self that the Buddhist aims to overcome. Using “body” as a translation avoids a potential conflation.

Moreover, we mention the conventional self in Chapter 3, and we will return to this notion in Chapter 8. While the conventional self is indeed established and “exists” conventionally, it suffers from the same difficulties as “self” when used as a translation of *ātmabhāva*. Nonetheless, in the same way that we could understand the *ātmabhāva* as “self,” we could also understand it as part of the conventional self, namely the bodily aspect.

⁴⁵⁸ Mrozik 2007, 23.

his body, but his entire being – not just his flesh and blood body, but his conduct, thoughts, and so forth.⁴⁵⁹ In this light, it is perhaps beneficial to translate *ātmabhāva* as “self,” following Clayton, as “self” conveys a grander scope than “body.” This conception of *ātmabhāva* goes beyond the physical body, as the bodhisattva gives his very being to others. This reading is also found in the equivalent Pāli term *attabhāva*, which Karunadasa glosses as “the empiric individuality as composed of mental and physical factors.”⁴⁶⁰ In this regard, the term does not only refer to one’s body but one’s entire being – his entire individuality. However, we should avoid a potential conflation between *ātmabhāva* and *ātman*, that is, a permanent, enduring self, for Buddhism denies the existence of *ātman*. To avoid confusion with the notion of non-self, and to emphasize the bodily aspect of what is given, we will avoid the use of the translation “self” or the similar term “conventional self.”

Overall, there is no single term that conveys an ideal translation of *ātmabhāva*. At best, we may use a hyphenated term “body-mind,” but this may then cause confusion when Śāntideva refers to giving his physical body to others. That is, there are times when the bodhisattva simply gives his body to others, as seen in the above examples of *BCA* III.12 and 13, rather than his mind; the bodhisattva does not give his entire body-mind complex in this regard. Hence, whichever term we choose to translate *ātmabhāva* will be narrow in its scope, and either option – body or self – is an applicable translation. Though we use the translation of “body,” we should ensure to maintain an understanding of “body” that goes beyond the flesh and blood, physical

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁰ Karunadasa 2020, 119.

body. The bodhisattva also gives his conduct, his thoughts, and so forth – he gives his entire being⁴⁶¹ to others.⁴⁶²

The next gift the bodhisattva gives is *bhoga*. *Bhoga* has been translated here as “possessions,” referring to that which the bodhisattva owns.⁴⁶³ A literal translation of *bhoga* is “objects of enjoyment,” which is the translation used by Clayton; in their respective works, Lele and Mahoney use a similar translation of “enjoyments.”⁴⁶⁴ Clayton states that these objects of enjoyment could be general pleasure-inducing objects, such as food and wealth, but they could also be objects that belong to a monastic, such as robes, a begging bowl, and any offerings the monastic has received.⁴⁶⁵ Summarily, we can understand possessions as wealth, clothes, and sustenance.⁴⁶⁶ In the spirit of what should be renounced and given to others, *all objects* are given to others. So, a general conception of “possessions” is taken as the translation of *bhoga*. Moreover, the meaning of “possessions” is not antithetical to “objects of enjoyment,” as what one owns is indeed what one enjoys. Hence, we merely use a simplified term that conveys the same meaning as that presented by Clayton, Lele, and Mahoney.

The third gift that the bodhisattva gives is merit (*śubha*). Merit is the most difficult of the three gifts to understand. Not only is the translation of this term contentious, but what exactly *śubha* corresponds to is a vast topic that will be explored in the rest of this section. *Śubha* is used

⁴⁶¹ Mroziak 2007 translates *ātmabhāva* as “bodied being,” which conveys a similar notion our reference of “entire being.” Mroziak also notes that “embodied being” can be understood synonymously with body (ibid., 21), though the complexities of a narrow understanding of “body” should be avoided in accordance with what we have mentioned.

⁴⁶² See *BCA* III.17-21 for the bodhisattva giving his body/self in various ways, including being a servant for others (III.18), that is, giving his conduct by working for others. See also Lele 2007, 41 for various aspects of the *ātmabhāva* that is given to others.

⁴⁶³ “Possessions” is also the translation found in Goodman 2016.

⁴⁶⁴ Lele 2007; Mahoney 2016.

⁴⁶⁵ Clayton 2006, 47.

⁴⁶⁶ Kunzang Pelden 2010, 125.

in the sense of karmic fruitfulness, which we have glossed as “merit.”⁴⁶⁷ The idea of *śubha* as “merit” is explicit in Śāntideva’s work, as he uses *śubha* and *punya* – the latter is the common term used to refer to karmic merit – synonymously.⁴⁶⁸ We could, however, use a different term to translate *śubha* to show its distinction from *punya*, for while these terms are used synonymously, as will be shown shortly, they are indeed two different words, and as such, using two different translations can appropriately convey their difference. This approach would be suitable if our goal in translating *śubha* is to offer an exact terminological parallel. While this is an aspect to consider when translating terms, it is also important to account for the philosophical meaning of the term; in this regard, translating *śubha* as “merit” is effective. The distinction between *śubha* and *punya* as two separate terms is lost, as both terms would be translated as “merit,” but their identical meaning is maintained, and for the purpose of this thesis, this philosophical meaning is the important point to bring forth.

We can see the synonymous use between *śubha* and *punya* in K21. When explaining the purification of merit, Śāntideva uses the term *punya* to refer to merit:

And one should know that the purification of possessions occurs through the purification of right livelihood.
The purification of merit (*punya*) is [obtained] through actions filled with compassion and emptiness.⁴⁶⁹

The second line is important here, as it refers to the purification of merit (*punyaśodhanam*).

Based on this line, it may be objected that Śāntideva is explaining the purification of *punya* here and not the purification of *śubha*. However, this objection is refuted by following the order of the protection, purification, and enhancement indicated in K4. The bodhisattva is instructed to apply

⁴⁶⁷ Harvey 2013, 43 also glosses karmic fruitfulness as “merit.”

⁴⁶⁸ See Clayton 2006, 49 and Goodman 2016, lxiv.

⁴⁶⁹ ŚS K21: “*bhogaśuddhiṃ ca jānīyāt samyagājīvaśodhanāt | śūnyatākaruṇāgarbhaceṣṭitātpunyaśodhanam.*”

the threefold training to his body, possessions, and merit. In the verse cited here, we see in the first line a reference to the purification of possessions (*bhoga*). It is reasonable to assume that the next object of purification is *śubha*, as this follows the order presented in K4. Thus, when Śāntideva mentions the purification of *punya*, we can reasonably assume that he uses this term synonymously with *śubha*.⁴⁷⁰ Moreover, there are many other passages in ŚS that express the synonymous usage,⁴⁷¹ lending support to reading *śubha* as “merit.”

Upon noting the identity between the two terms, we can address the reason why “merit” is the chosen translation, as both *śubha* and *punya* can be translated in various ways that nonetheless account for its synonymity. For example, both terms not only mean “merit,” but also “good,” or “happiness.” Throughout Śāntideva’s explanations of the threefold training, *śubha* is referred to as karmic fruitfulness, that is, the fruits of one’s actions. Of the possible translations of *śubha*, “merit” best captures the aspect of karmic fruitfulness. Clayton’s translation of *śubha* as “welfare” also appropriately captures the karmic fruitfulness aspect of the term – thus being understood along the same lines as *punya* – while also accounting for the fact that *śubha* is a distinct term from *punya*, as only the latter would be translated as “merit.” However, to emphasize the identity between *śubha* and *punya*, we use a single translation – merit – for both terms.

Another possible translation of *śubha* that is worth considering is “good,” as found in Goodman. Goodman uses “good” perhaps to convey the notion of “good consequences” that arise in the future, on account of the actions that one does. In this regard, Goodman also maintains the meaning of karmic fruitfulness. However, we have avoided this translation

⁴⁷⁰ Clayton 2006, 137 footnote 42.

⁴⁷¹ For some examples, see ŚS K26; ŚS 82.13; ŚS 165.13; ŚS 165.20; and ŚS 167.24.

because, though it is indeed possible to translate *śubha* as “good,” this use is found generally in phrases like “good evening” (*śubha sandhyā*) and “good night” (*śubha rātri*). So, while it may indeed be possible to read *śubha* as “good” in the sense that Goodman does, there is a need to distinguish this conception of “good” from the standard “good” of “good evening.” Therefore, to avoid confusion between these conceptions of “good” and to rely on a more accurate translation of the ethical meaning of *śubha*, “merit” is used.

Having addressed the translation of *śubha*, we can now consider its meaning. Merit, stated simply, is the results of our good actions. This idea should be understood in line with the Buddhist conception of karma,⁴⁷² which states that every intentional action brings a result, and the doer of the action must experience this result.⁴⁷³ When the karmic law is incorporated into the understanding of merit, it becomes clear why the bodhisattva is instructed to give his merit to others. According to the theory of karma, actions determine one’s future rebirths. Hence, it follows that if one does *good* actions, then he will have *good* future rebirths, such as being reborn in a favourable life, or being reborn in a heavenly realm.⁴⁷⁴ Not only do one’s actions affect his future lifetimes, but it also influences his current life: the good actions can ripen in this life, so one who does good actions can benefit from them in this life rather than a later lifetime. Ultimately, the good future states – a future rebirth, or an immediate good consequence in this life – are attained through merit: by doing good actions, one accrues merit that will later come to fruition.

⁴⁷² It is important to add the qualifier “Buddhist” when referring to the karmic law. Indian philosophical schools have different conceptions of karma, so to understand the bodhisattva’s ethics, we should understand karma as taught in Buddhism.

⁴⁷³ The result can emerge immediately or over time. We can consider two examples to show this. In one case, suppose someone has fallen and breaks a bone; this produces an immediate result of pain. In another case, suppose someone overeats unhealthy food; this produces a delayed result of stomach pain.

⁴⁷⁴ For more on the Buddhist realms of rebirth, see Harvey 2013, 32-36.

Karma, moreover, is not a simple linear formula of “A causes B.” It is instead multifaceted, incorporating various conditions alongside the act itself. That is, A causes B – but only insofar as C, D, and E are also present.⁴⁷⁵ Thus, it is not the case that simply because one has performed good actions in the past, one will encounter good results in the future. The fruition of a result requires the presence of other necessary conditions. We can thus consider the original good actions like seeds that have been planted, but for the seeds to sprout requires necessary conditions, such as sunlight, water, and so forth.⁴⁷⁶ Though it is the case that every action will produce a result, the result can be delayed or muted if the necessary conditions are not present. Therefore, acquiring merit should be understood in a manner that requires the bodhisattva to continue doing good actions. That is, the bodhisattva cannot do a single good deed and expect good results.

However, due to the karmic law, it may not be possible to truly give one’s merit to another being, especially when considered under the notion of transferring merit to others.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁵ See Monius 2001, 70-74. Monius analyzes *Maṇimēkalai*, a Tamil Buddhist epic, which reveals that Buddhist karma contains this complex nature. Monius argues that this conception of karma is weaved throughout the text to contrast with this story’s “sister epic,” titled *Cilappatikāram*, a Jain text (or perhaps Ājīvikān – *Cilappatikāram* is generally considered a Jain text, but affinities with Ājīvikān thought are also present. This debate does not have to be discussed here; it is enough to understand that the text is non-Buddhist). *Cilappatikāram* presents karma in a near-fatalist manner, as the characters in the story are shown to lack control over the events in their lives due to their past karma. Indeed, Monius highlights the difference between the two terms used to refer to karma in each text: *Maṇimēkalai* uses *viṇai*, whereas *Cilappatikāram* commonly uses *ūlviṇai* (ibid., 74). These are both Tamil terms: *viṇai* translates as “deed,” or “action,” and *ūlviṇai* refers more specifically to the actions done in a former life, which in turn affect this current life. In common parlance, *ūl* taken by itself translates as “fate.” So, we can understand *ūlviṇai* as “fated actions,” or that which happens on account of fate. The notable difference in the terms used suggests that *Maṇimēkalai* aims to highlight the different understandings of karma and karmic consequences, specifically the lack of fatalism in Buddhist karma. Jain (or Ājīvikān) karma is presented in the linear manner, and Buddhist karma is presented in the multifaceted manner – that is, requiring the presence of other conditions. This is the general Buddhist conception of causation. See also Karunadasa 2018, 83-91.

⁴⁷⁶ On the analogy of actions as a seed, see Harvey 2013, 44.

⁴⁷⁷ See Clayton 2011, 283. She argues that transferring merit may be problematic, for it violates the karmic law that one must experience the fruits of one’s own actions (see also Cozort 2009, 213: “We cannot experience the ripened karma of someone else.” See also Saddhatissa 1997, 33). Nonetheless, Clayton writes that we must incorporate the idea of transferring merit in order to understand Buddhist moral thought, as it is an idea rooted in the Buddhist social system. That is, “The relationship between lay Buddhists and the monastic order or Sangha relies on a mutual exchange of merit: by offering food, clothing, and other forms of material support to monastics, laypeople earn

This is like partaking in a physical exercise, then attempting to transfer the results of that physical exercise to another being. Evidently, this is impossible.⁴⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the mere *thought* or *wish* to give one's merit is an important element here, for we must recall that in aspirational *bodhicitta*, the focus is primarily on training the mind and not about actively producing a result. This idea builds on a point mentioned by Wright, who argues that:

Whatever a bodhisattva might believe about the workings of karma, whether interpreted literally or in another way, the effect of this mental exercise is meant to shift the mind's orientation.⁴⁷⁹

This is to say that the bodhisattva who develops the thought of transferring his merit may or may not actually transfer his merit. What is important in this practice is the change that the bodhisattva himself undergoes; the thought of transferring his merit enables him to become less self-centered. The bodhisattva nonetheless engages in the practice of transferring his merit with the conviction that he is indeed offering his merit to other beings and that they will indeed receive the meritorious consequences. Whether this transference actually occurs or not is

merit, and monks in turn gain merit by offering guidance and, most important, the gift of the Dharma to laypeople" (Clayton 2011, 282). The transference of merit follows from this notion of giving and receiving with others.

One option to make sense of this problematic notion can be found in Carpenter 2014, 228. Carpenter argues that we should consider Śāntideva as not always stating what is definitively true, but only true insofar as the teaching is useful – a seeming reference to the Buddhist notion of skillful means (*upāyakaūśalya*). So, though it may not be possible to transfer merit, the bodhisattva can proceed as if it were indeed true. However, the manner in which we proceed in this thesis is based on an understanding of “transferring merit” as transferring the *results* of merit, which will be explained shortly.

⁴⁷⁸ Despite the impossibility under the karmic law, there are examples of Buddhists wishing to transfer their merit to others. This was done specifically for dead relatives who were reborn in a state where they cannot cultivate their own merit (Obeyesekere 2002, 138). So, in this case, the literal transference of merit is taken as an actual practice of Buddhists, but as a result, the karmic law is questioned – one does not have to experience the results of one's own actions. The weakness of the karmic law is also a prevalent theme in Indian devotional (*bhakti*) traditions, where a deity can eliminate one's demerit (ibid., 135). This seems to be a theme in some schools of Buddhism as well, such as the Pure Land school in Chinese Buddhism (see Harvey 2013, 216). However, early Buddhist teachings note that one is responsible for one's own actions – this point is based on taking seriously the Buddhist notion of karma, as mentioned above. The confusion can perhaps be remedied by considering the transference of merit as transferring the *results* of merit.

⁴⁷⁹ Wright 2009, 60. This is mentioned in the context of giving one's merit to others.

irrelevant for the purpose of the bodhisattva's mind-training – it is primarily important to identify the change in the bodhisattva's orientation.

In this regard, the thought of transferring merit functions as a training of the mind, as it cultivates a generous disposition from which one can easily give anything. So, by maintaining the thought to benefit all beings, the bodhisattva wishes to give them that which will indeed benefit them in the greatest possible way. Even if the karmic law holds that the bodhisattva cannot actually give his merit due to rigidity of the law, the thought of giving merit expresses his compassion. Moreover, though he does not truly *own* merit, the bodhisattva wishes to give it away so that others can have the good fortune that the bodhisattva is to experience. By developing the mind to give something as great as his merit, the bodhisattva can easily give his other possessions. In this regard, the wish of transferring one's merit functions as a training of the mind.

Though the transferring of merit can be considered as merely a mental exercise, there is yet another way of interpreting this practice. This interpretation draws on acting in accordance with the bodhisattva vow and aiming to alleviate the suffering of others. To do this requires understanding giving merit as giving the *results*, or fruits of one's actions rather than giving the merit itself. For example, if through the bodhisattva's meritorious behaviour, he accrues the meritorious result of wealth, then the idea behind giving his merit entails giving the accumulated wealth. Another example considers giving wisdom, which is one of the fruits of the meritorious actions that is obtained by partaking on the bodhisattva path. To give wisdom entails teaching others so that they too can be wise and consequently be free from suffering. Thus, to give merit does not entail that one *transfers* the merit itself; he instead gives what he has obtained as a result of his actions. This is done to ensure that other beings can also attain awakening, thereby

fulfilling the aspiration of the bodhisattva vow. In short, the bodhisattva's aspiration to give away his merit falls under the scope of his wish to give away anything that could benefit others.⁴⁸⁰ To adopt this reading of giving merit, we must maintain that any good fortune one receives in the future is itself the merit that one shares with others. Though this reading is not expressed explicitly in the bodhisattva vow, it conveys the spirit of the vow – that one helps others by giving everything he owns.⁴⁸¹ This, therefore, does not seem to be a stretch of the bodhisattva vow or of giving merit in general.

In this regard, *śubha* is simply the results of one's good actions. Whatever the bodhisattva obtains as a result of his good actions is given to others. Interestingly, this means that the body and possessions of the bodhisattva are secondary to the merit. Merit is what determines the bodhisattva's future – his future states of existence and possessions – so, as a result of accumulating merit, the bodhisattva will come to possess a good body and good possessions. These are, importantly, only for the purpose of being in a position from which the bodhisattva can help others. They are not acquired because they are seen as desirable in their own right. Moreover, cultivating merit allows the bodhisattva to attain wisdom; through merit, the bodhisattva is reborn in a life where he can study the Buddha's teachings and attain awakening. Thus, when the bodhisattva gives his merit, he gives that which will enable others to reach wisdom and ultimately alleviate their suffering; in this case, giving merit includes sharing his opportunities to learn, or sharing teachings that he has already learned. In this regard, one's merit is more important than his body and possessions, as it can more directly lead others to awakening. It is nonetheless necessary that the bodhisattva also cultivates his body and

⁴⁸⁰ Williams 2009b, 203.

⁴⁸¹ This reading, however, is mentioned loosely in *BCA* X.1. Śāntideva writes that he gives what he can *as a result of* the merit he has accumulated. If we incorporate this in our reading of giving merit, then we can proceed confidently with the reading proposed here.

possessions, not only because they are also given to others and should be in good condition, but also because they can be used to produce merit, which can then be used by others to proceed towards awakening.

6.2 *The Threefold Training*

6.2.1 *The Perfection of Generosity and the Sequence of the Perfections*

Having explained the objects of generosity, we can discuss the bodhisattva's training itself. Importantly, this section discusses the *framework* of the threefold training in order to show the mind-training framework of Śāntideva's ethics. For specific details on how the bodhisattva engages in the training, one can consult ŚŚ.⁴⁸² The remainder of this chapter aims to show that the cultivation of generosity entails a mind-training with the goal of attaining wisdom, which consequently transforms one's mind. Presenting the framework of the threefold training is sufficient to demonstrate this, as we will see that the threefold training requires the bodhisattva to cultivate the perfections in a naturally occurring sequence; that is, to cultivate generosity, the bodhisattva must cultivate the other perfections in sequence. The end of the sequential cultivation is wisdom, which shows that the cultivation of generosity has wisdom as its goal. Furthermore, as a result of attaining wisdom, better actions are produced due to the interdependent nature of the perfections, which is evident through the prior five perfections being infused with wisdom. Overall, the threefold training reveals that the cultivation of generosity fits the mind-training framework introduced in the previous chapter.

The threefold training requires the bodhisattva to give three things; these gifts are to be understood as giving everything that he owns and will own. As the expression of compassion, giving, or generosity, is an important point of the bodhisattva vow, as it is how the bodhisattva

⁴⁸² See also Mahoney 2016 for an account of the training.

alleviates the suffering of other beings; therefore, it is a necessary action for the bodhisattva. However, he should not give things simply because he wishes to do so; in order for the gifts to be useful to others and effectively alleviate their suffering, the bodhisattva requires a training. We can draw on Dilgo Khyentse to highlight this idea:

However strongly you may want to help others, you are a beginner and lack the capacity to do anything much for them. The first step you need to take toward being really useful to others, therefore, is to perfect yourself, by training and transforming your mind.⁴⁸³

This training and transformation of mind allows the bodhisattva to develop his compassion and become a proper giver – that is, to give the right things, to give to the right people, to give at the right time, and so forth. He is able to give such that other beings’ suffering is alleviated. As he transforms his mind, the bodhisattva cultivates the best of his body, possessions, and merit, so that these can be given to others to satisfy their needs and alleviate their suffering.

This idea is also expressed by Śāntideva. In order to give so that these three things are beneficial to others, the bodhisattva should not give things in a worthless, or unpleasant state:

The body, etc. [i.e., possessions and merit] are given for the enjoyment of beings. What enjoyment is there when [the gifts] are unprotected? Why give that which cannot be enjoyed?⁴⁸⁴

If the body is weak and useless, then giving it to others may not be useful to them and thus will not help them in any way; the body will not be enjoyed by other beings. Likewise, if the bodhisattva’s possessions are defective, then giving them to others is useless in the context of his goal of alleviating their suffering. Indeed, these are not true gifts at all, for they provide no value to the recipient. Therefore, the bodhisattva must protect, purify, and enhance his gifts. That is,

⁴⁸³ Dilgo Khyentse 2007, 44.

⁴⁸⁴ ŚS K5: “*paribhogāya sattvānāmātmabhāvādi dīyate | arakṣite kuto bhogaḥ kim dattaṃ yanna bhujyate.*” See also Kunzang Pelden 2010, 188. In translating this verse, we draw on *bhoga*’s meaning as an object of enjoyment.

the bodhisattva is led to this threefold training due to the need to give the best of what he has, as this will enable the gifts to benefit others:

Therefore, for the benefit of [other] beings, one should protect his body, and so forth.⁴⁸⁵

The clear use of a transition phrase – “therefore” (*tasmāt*) – indicates that the training *follows* from establishing the need to give to others and provide them with benefit. For the sake of benefitting other beings, the bodhisattva *therefore* undertakes a training, thereby giving rise to the threefold training.

The proposed reading of the training as *threefold* contrasts with the reading adopted by traditional Indian and Tibetan commentaries. These commentaries defend a *fourfold* training, which considers *giving* as a part of the training alongside the protection, purification, and enhancement.⁴⁸⁶ The basis for a reading of the training as *fourfold* can perhaps be identified in ŚS:

As long as it is appropriate, there should be a giving, protection, purification, and enhancement (*utsarga-rakṣā-śuddhi-vṛddayo*) of the body, possessions, and merit.⁴⁸⁷

Śāntideva presents the four components of the training in a single compound, which suggests that we read this as a single, fourfold training. Though this translation is grammatically correct, Sanskrit grammar is ambiguous, and the phrase can also be read in another way:

As long as it is appropriate, there should be protection, purification, and enhancement regarding the giving of the body, possessions, and merit.

⁴⁸⁵ ŚS K6ab: “*tasmātsattvopabhogārthamātmabhāvādi pālayet.*”

⁴⁸⁶ See Kunzang Pelden 2010, 126-127.

⁴⁸⁷ ŚS 14.18; G 21: “*ātmabhāvabhogapūnyānānaviratamutsargarakṣāsuddhivṛddayo yathāyugaṃ bhāvanīyāḥ*”

The difference in this translation is based on how we read the four components of the compound: instead of reading them as components of a single training, it is also permissible to read the final three terms in a locative-case relation to the first term. Hence, it is grammatically permissible to read this phrase as either a fourfold training or a threefold training. To identify which of the two readings to follow, we must rely on the context provided in *BCA* and *ŚS*.

In addition to the points mentioned above, we can identify a threefold training by drawing on *BCA* III.10. This verse presents the same idea as K4. However, there is an important difference – *BCA* III.10 does *not* reference the threefold training. There is only mention of giving the three gifts:

Thus, my body, possessions, and merit gained in the three times,
I give these, without attachment, for the benefit of all beings.⁴⁸⁸

Hence, the idea of giving one’s body, possessions, and merit is presented without the need to protect, purify, and enhance these gifts. There is, in this regard, a distinction between giving and the training. If the fourfold training is intertwined such that the training is *fourfold*, as the commentarial tradition suggests, then its neglect in *BCA* seems odd. The training does not appear in the surrounding verses, nor is it mentioned explicitly in the rest of *BCA*. Moreover, as seen in *BCA* III.11, the centrality of “giving away” is emphasized and is separate from the training, which suggests that there is a distinction between “giving” and the rest of the training. Therefore, we can identify giving as the direct expression of compassion and thus the expression of the bodhisattva vow; the training follows from the need to enable the effectiveness of the bodhisattva’s generosity.

⁴⁸⁸ *BCA* III.10: “*ātmabhāvāmstathā bhogān sarvatryadhvagataṃ śubham | nirapekṣastyajāmyeṣa sarvasattvārthasiddhaye.*”

It is also worth considering that in the fourfold training, the bodhisattva first aims to develop a renunciatory mind with respect to these three items. He first trains to give these items, then trains to protect them, and so forth. A problem, however, emerges when we consider *BCA* VII.25-26, which we discussed in Chapter 3. Here, Śāntideva instructs the bodhisattva to give simple items, like food, prior to giving his body. On the other hand, with respect to the fourfold training, the bodhisattva has an order of operations to follow: he must first give his body, then his possessions, and finally his merit. If the bodhisattva first trains to develop a renunciatory disposition with respect to his body, as indicated by the ŚŚ training, then his training does not follow Śāntideva's point in *BCA*. Following *BCA*, the bodhisattva would commence his training by developing a renunciatory disposition towards simple items like food. To overcome this problem, it is helpful to consider the training as threefold. Giving, in this respect, is not a part of the training itself, but simply a reflection of the overall vow to help other beings.

Nonetheless, though the proposed reading as a *threefold* training is unorthodox, both this reading and the fourfold training would be read in the same scope with respect to the mind-training framework. The bodhisattva progresses through a cultivation of the perfections to attain wisdom in order to best benefit other beings. That is, all six perfections are incorporated in the training. In the fourfold training, it would simply be the case that this training is not for the purpose of *giving* to others, but an overall development of the bodhisattva's compassion and *bodhicitta*. To strengthen the bodhisattva's compassion and alleviate the suffering of other beings, the bodhisattva undergoes a fourfold training with the goal of attaining wisdom. In the threefold training, we simply emphasize giving as the expression of compassion and prioritize it in relation to the bodhisattva vow; the bodhisattva still aims to develop his compassion, but it is presented through its expression of generosity. Regardless of how we understand the training,

then, the mind-training framework is present, since there is a shared goal of cultivating the six perfections with the aim to attain wisdom in order to best benefit other beings.

To understand the threefold training, we begin with an analysis of *utsarga*, as it is the primary instruction for the bodhisattva. We have translated *utsarga* as “giving away.” It can also reasonably be translated as “renouncing,” referring to the idea that the bodhisattva should abandon his possessions. We will use “giving away” because it implies the presence of a recipient to whom things are renounced. To renounce something implies the mental quality of non-possessiveness and merely getting rid of ownership, whereas to give away implies that there is someone who receives the object. The attainment of awakening – in Buddhism and other philosophical schools – does indeed require one to renounce the three things mentioned in K4. However, the bodhisattva path incorporates a compassionate and altruistic motivation, thereby emphasizing the need to give away rather than merely renounce these things. This is evident in the following verse from *BCA*:

The renunciation of everything is nirvana, and my mind strives for nirvana.
If I am to renounce everything, it is best that they be given to beings⁴⁸⁹

Thus, in the spirit of the bodhisattva vow, possessions are not merely renounced but given to others so that they can be useful for them.⁴⁹⁰ Additionally, when considering the need to protect,

⁴⁸⁹ *BCA* III.11: “*sarvatyāgaśca nirvāṇaṃ nirvāṇārthi ca me manaḥ | tyaktavyaṃ cenmayā sarvaṃ varam sattveṣu dīyatām.*” It is noteworthy that the term translated as “renounce” is from the root *tyaj*. The “give” in “given to beings” uses the root *dā*, which carries a more literal meaning of “to give.” Though Mahoney states that *tyāga* is used interchangeably with *dāna* and *utsarga* (Mahoney 2016, 70), the distinction between “renouncing” and “giving away” is important to maintain, hence the different terms used in the translation of this verse.

⁴⁹⁰ We can claim, as Lele does, that giving these things to others has the unfortunate consequence of trapping them in samsara (Lele 2007, 137). Indeed, the very reason the bodhisattva renounces his possessions is to remove the fetters that bind him to samsara – but by giving these to others, he seems to bind them to the world and does not free them from suffering. Lele offers various solutions to this problem, one of which is that the bodhisattva gives for the sake of winning others over to the bodhisattva path (Lele 2013, 720). This even includes giving things that should not be given, such as alcohol (ibid., 703). In this case, the goal is to enable the recipient to develop a mental state that encourages him to be like a bodhisattva (Lele 2007, 151-153).

purify, and enhance the gifts, “giving away” is considered a better translation than “renounce.” For the bodhisattva does not simply protect, purify, and enhance his gifts in order to renounce them; he does so to make them useful for other beings. Thus, the context of the threefold training indicates that the bodhisattva is to give away all that he owns rather than simply renounce them; the possessions are understood as gifts rather than items to be abandoned.

Another important reason for choosing “giving away” as a translation of *utsarga* is the similar scope between *utsarga* and *dāna* (generosity). *Dāna* is the first perfection, indicating that it is the first practice, or aspect of cultivation that the bodhisattva should engage in after developing compassion and *bodhicitta*. This is not only evident in *BCA*, where *dāna* is presented after establishing the presence of compassion and *bodhicitta*, but also in *ŚS*, where *utsarga* is presented after establishing the presence of compassion:

When fear and suffering are disliked by both me and others,
Then what is unique about me that I protect myself and not others?⁴⁹¹

This verse contains the essence of compassion: the bodhisattva should care about others because there are no grounds for valuing his own suffering over another’s. We can draw from the similar placement of “generosity” (*dāna*) and “giving away” (*utsarga*) – appearing after establishing the presence of compassion – that these two concepts refer to the same idea. For both concepts, there is a sense of giving to others so that they can benefit from the gifts. Overall, the primary teaching

Another response we can consider, and one that makes sense in the context of the threefold training and giving to individuals, is underscoring that not all beings strive for nirvana. The bodhisattva thus helps beings in any way that he can, not merely by eliminating the all-pervading suffering and leading them to nirvana. For example, giving one’s possessions can help others be free from some general discomforts faced in daily life. They can also bring enjoyment to others, which may require giving things like alcohol (Mroziak 2007, 26).

⁴⁹¹ *ŚS* K1: “*yadā mama pareṣāṃ ca bhayaṃ duḥkhaṃ ca na priyam | tadātmanaḥ ko viśeṣo yattaṃ rakṣāmi netaram.*” See Chapter 3 for an examination of this verse.

that the bodhisattva should follow is to give all his possessions to others.⁴⁹² Thus, “giving away” is a better translation of *utsarga* because it incorporates the meaning of generosity alongside renunciation; that is, this translation incorporates an important aspect on the bodhisattva’s path to awakening – renunciation – while also accounting for the bodhisattva’s context – helping others.

Despite this similar use of the terms presented here, Clayton provides a different account of the relation between *utsarga* and *dāna*.⁴⁹³ She argues that one must first practice *utsarga* to be able to practice *dāna*; in this regard, the two terms have different meanings. Though they both contain the idea of giving to others, *utsarga* has a simpler connotation. It is not the *perfection* of generosity, as indicated by *dāna*, but rather a mere giving away. However, Clayton’s distinction between the two terms does not suggest a different reading from the one we propose. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are two aspects of the perfections. The first aspect is seen from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*. The perfections here are in their incomplete form, which is a state when they are cultivated to *become* perfected perfections. *Utsarga* merely references this aspect of *dāna*. That is, *utsarga* is indeed *dāna*, but not the fully perfected form of *dāna*. The perfected perfection of generosity is present with the attainment of wisdom; the threefold training that follows *utsarga* aims at this. This training, as we will see, consists of the cultivation of the other perfections in order to reach wisdom. Once wisdom is attained, the bodhisattva perfects the perfections and reaches their second aspect, which is the perfections when

⁴⁹² Specifically, he aims to cultivate the *mind* of giving, as mentioned in Chapter 2 and 4. The threefold training aims to cultivate and develop this mind so that the bodhisattva can be generous in the most effective way. For this reason, we also avoid the meaning provided by Harris. Harris identifies the similar use between *dāna* and *utsarga* – and mentions that *tyāga* is also synonymous with these terms – and notes that the similar meaning for these terms is “renouncing” or “abandoning” (Harris 2024, 55-57). Since giving to others is the important aspect of the term when considered from the standpoint of the bodhisattva vow, we opt to translate these three terms under the sense of “giving away.” While *tyāga* is indeed used in the sense of renouncing, or abandoning, we must ensure to maintain *utsarga*’s sense of giving to other beings.

⁴⁹³ Clayton 2006, 42.

considered from the standpoint of engaged *bodhicitta*. Thus, once wisdom is attained, *utsarga* becomes *dāna*; nonetheless, *utsarga* is very much an aspect of *dāna*, hence their identical meaning.⁴⁹⁴

To further see the identity between *utsarga* and *dāna*, we can consider the relation between *utsarga/dāna* and the training in *ŚS*. One way to consider the relation is to see *utsarga* as prior to the training that the bodhisattva undertakes.⁴⁹⁵ Another way to see the relation is to consider *utsarga* as an aspect of the training itself: that is, the bodhisattva trains in *utsarga* in addition to the three trainings outlined in K4.⁴⁹⁶ We will defend a third option that builds on Clayton’s reading: the threefold training is the method through which *utsarga* is cultivated. This reading emphasizes the idea that the bodhisattva is unable to give simply because he wishes to do so. The reason for this reading has been mentioned above. We ultimately hold that there is one concept that is explained throughout *ŚS*: how to cultivate and strengthen generosity and thereby act in accordance with the bodhisattva vow.

Using this framework, we can see a relation between the threefold training and the perfections: generosity, the first perfection, is established as a key aspect of the bodhisattva vow, and the threefold training is the method through which generosity is cultivated. The threefold training reveals the sequence of the perfections, for the aspects of the training are accomplished by distinct perfections. That is, to be generous effectively – to give so that others benefit – the

⁴⁹⁴ In Chapter 2, we referred to both aspects of the perfection of generosity through a single term, generosity (*dāna*), which was done to indicate that despite not reflecting the *perfected* form of the perfections, the cultivation stage is very much an *aspect* of the perfection. However, a different term is used in *ŚS*, which helps to understand the distinction between the perfection-in-training and the fully perfected perfection. Nonetheless, they both convey the same idea.

See also the title of the first chapter of *ŚS* – “Chapter One: The Perfection of Generosity” (*dānapāramitā prathamāḥ paricchedaḥ*). This chapter focuses largely on expounding *utsarga*, despite the title referring to *dāna*. Therefore, we can understand *utsarga* as a reference to the perfection of generosity, that is, *dāna*.

⁴⁹⁵ See Clayton 2006, 42.

⁴⁹⁶ See Goodman 2016, xxviii. This is the fourfold training, as mentioned above.

bodhisattva requires some further training: this is the threefold training. To protect the gifts, the bodhisattva cultivates the perfection of discipline and patience;⁴⁹⁷ to purify the gifts, he cultivates the perfection of patience, zeal, meditation, and wisdom;⁴⁹⁸ and to enhance his gifts, he cultivates the perfection of wisdom,⁴⁹⁹ but also goes beyond this perfection.⁵⁰⁰ With wisdom, the perfected perfection of generosity is attained, so the bodhisattva can be generous in a way that best benefits others. This entails being generous without a sense of self and ownership; such generosity can be truly selfless and benefit others. The bodhisattva's generous actions are able to alleviate others' suffering, as the bodhisattva is generous solely for the welfare of other beings. Thus, as the bodhisattva proceeds through the threefold training, he proceeds sequentially through the perfections. In sum, the bodhisattva cultivates generosity through the threefold training, and he partakes in this training through cultivating the other perfections sequentially.

The sequence of the perfections is evident in the proposed framework because there is a sequence to the threefold training. The sequence of the training can be seen by studying its structure; this is explicit in *ŚS*, as the structure is expounded in the root verses of the text. Clayton outlines the distinction between the protection, purification, and enhancement as follows: protection is addressed in K5-16, purification in K17-21, and enhancement in K22-27.⁵⁰¹ These verses contain references to specific perfections, which thereby shows the sequential framework that can be used to understand the relation between the perfections and the threefold

⁴⁹⁷ See *ŚS* K7-8. See also *BCA* VI.1-2: Śāntideva states here that to protect his accrued merit, the bodhisattva should avoid anger; that is, he should be patient. In addition to anger, we can include the need to avoid all afflictions.

⁴⁹⁸ *ŚS* 100; G 177 indicates patience, zeal, and meditation fulfilling the purification role. *ŚS* K21 indirectly references wisdom as that which purifies the gifts.

⁴⁹⁹ *ŚS* K23. See also Chapters 16-19 of *ŚS*.

⁵⁰⁰ See Clayton 2006, 58. Clayton notes that the enhancement consists of further practices. These practices are beyond the scope of aspirational *bodhicitta* and hence beyond the scope of this thesis, so it will not be addressed here.

⁵⁰¹ Clayton 2006, 40. K1-4 introduces the bodhisattva vow and the need for the threefold training.

training.⁵⁰² Moreover, the sequence is not that, *first*, the body is protected, purified, and enhanced; *then* possessions are protected, purified, and enhanced; and *finally*, merit is protected, purified, and enhanced. Instead, the bodhisattva must first protect his body, then his possessions, and finally his merit; then, he purifies these in this order; and finally, he enhances them in this order.⁵⁰³ As mentioned, and as we will develop shortly, the protection of the gifts is cultivated through two perfections, discipline and patience. The bodhisattva protects his possessions through discipline, then protects his merit through patience. The sequence of the training in relation to the gifts thus reveals an order through which the perfections should be cultivated, thereby revealing the sequence of the perfections. However, there is some overlap, as one perfection can be used for different aspects of the threefold training. Nonetheless, the sequence of the perfections is not disrupted on account of this overlap, so it will not be addressed here.

Despite our claim that ŚŚ reveals a sequence of the perfections, Paul Harrison argues that there is no clear structure to the perfections in this text, as he states that, “The plan laid down in the Root Verses cannot be mapped onto the Six Perfections evenly or symmetrically.”⁵⁰⁴ His argument is based on the chapter divisions, which, he claims, address the perfections without a fixed order. We can respond to Harrison’s claim by arguing that the fundamental feature of the text is the protection, purification, and enhancement of the gifts. Thus, the goal is not to present the perfections in a sequential order, but to demonstrate the threefold training. However, the threefold training contains certain perfections. So, when we present the threefold training, we will encounter the perfections in a sequential order. This will be evident in the ensuing sections.

⁵⁰² Śāntideva does not use ŚŚ to argue that the perfections are sequential, but we will nonetheless demonstrate the sequence by studying the nature of the threefold training. That is, we will bring out what is implicit in ŚŚ.

⁵⁰³ See Mrozik 2007, 22. In the fourfold training, the bodhisattva would first give these three gifts, then protect them, and so forth.

⁵⁰⁴ Harrison 2019, 33.

Additionally, some chapters of ŚŚ explicitly state which perfection they address. These chapters follow in the order of the perfections themselves. For instance, Chapter 1 discusses the perfection of generosity, Chapter 5 discusses the perfection of discipline, Chapter 9 discusses the perfection of patience, Chapters 10 and 11 discuss the perfection of zeal, Chapters 12 and 13 discuss the perfection of meditation, and Chapter 14 discusses wisdom. Harrison is indeed correct that multiple perfections are addressed in some chapters. However, in these cases, one perfection is given more importance than other perfections, which we can see from the content of the chapters themselves – indeed, from the very titles of these chapters. Thus, there is a *primary* perfection amongst the various perfections discussed in a single chapter. Amongst the primary perfection of the chapters, there is evidently a sequential progression of the perfections. Generosity is presented first, discipline second, and so forth. Thus, though Śāntideva does not use the perfections to structure the text, there is still a noticeable sequence to the perfections.

We will not discuss all aspects of the threefold training in this chapter. That is, we will not discuss how the bodhisattva trains in protecting his body, possessions, and merit, and then how he trains in purifying and enhancing them. Instead, we will merely study some aspects of the threefold training to show primarily that they reveal the sequence of the perfections; for example, we will study the training in protection through the protection of possessions and merit. The aim in this chapter is merely to show that the perfections follow a sequential cultivation in order to cultivate the mind of generosity, so the analysis of the threefold training will be restricted to developing this point. Highlighting the sequence of the cultivation shows that wisdom is the goal of the cultivation, which thereby indicates that the cultivation of generosity aims at the attainment of wisdom. This will therefore demonstrate the mind-training framework.

6.2.2 Protection

The first component to discuss in the training is protection (*rakṣā*). The meaning of *rakṣā* is not contentious: it means “protecting” or “guarding.”⁵⁰⁵ The point that must be grasped is what exactly “protecting” entails, and why the bodhisattva protects what he gives. The latter has been mentioned above: the bodhisattva protects his gifts to ensure that they can be useful for others. Śāntideva discusses separately the protection of the body, possessions, and merit. The separate presentations highlight different ways that the bodhisattva protects his gifts; however, there is a shared underlying component to the protection. The protection is primarily to prevent unwelcome qualities from arising in one’s mind.⁵⁰⁶ The unwelcome qualities are afflictions (*kleśa*) that hinder the mind and obstruct the value of the gifts. There are three primary afflictions, which are the three poisons: *lobha* (greed), *doṣa* (hatred), and *moha* (delusion). Within these, there are more specific afflictions.⁵⁰⁷ In a Buddhist context, afflictions are also understood as “impurities.”⁵⁰⁸ Thus, to protect the mind from afflictions entails protecting one’s mind from impurities, that is, preventing the impurities from arising. By protecting the mind, the bodhisattva’s gifts are consequently protected, as he relates to his possessions without the potential to harm them.⁵⁰⁹ The goal of protection is to ensure that the bodhisattva gives things that are valuable to the recipient; by protecting his mind, the bodhisattva ensures that the gifts are in good condition and can benefit other beings.

The bodhisattva protects his gifts through the cultivation of the perfection of discipline and patience. Discipline consists of following the precepts, that is, training guidelines of

⁵⁰⁵ Mahoney 2016 uses the term “preserving,” which denotes the same meaning as “protecting.”

⁵⁰⁶ Clayton 2006, 63.

⁵⁰⁷ Dasgupta 2009, 100. Some of the other afflictions are arrogance, doubt, and idleness.

⁵⁰⁸ Edgerton 1953, 198.

⁵⁰⁹ The same is the case for purification and enhancement: when the mind is purified and enhanced, so too are the gifts.

conduct.⁵¹⁰ Śāntideva states that following the precepts is a way to protect possessions.⁵¹¹ Thus, we can see the connection between protection and discipline: to protect possessions requires one to cultivate the perfection of discipline – specifically, to follow the precepts. There are many precepts, and the list and scope differ for the type of individual who engages in them, for example, a bodhisattva, a monastic, or a lay Buddhist.⁵¹² No matter the precepts that are followed, Śāntideva considers them to be important for protecting the gifts, as they will ultimately train the bodhisattva’s mind to develop the disposition associated with the precepts.

As Śāntideva explains in *BCA*:

Having seen the training – that which is forbidden and that which is permitted – one should practice [them] in order to protect the mind [while] in the world.⁵¹³

The training in following the precepts protects the mind while the bodhisattva is in the world.

That is, following the precepts protects the mind from the arising of afflictions.

Protection also occurs because the bodhisattva can avoid being careless with his possessions.⁵¹⁴ When one is careful with possessions, they are protected from being harmed, lost, or destroyed. This allows the possessions to maintain their overall good state.⁵¹⁵ The relation between following the precepts and being careful with possessions rests on the notion that following the precepts tames the bodhisattva’s mind.⁵¹⁶ One follows the precepts not for the mere sake of performing a specific action – or *not* performing a prohibited action – but rather for

⁵¹⁰ See Vasen 2018, 331-332. See also Park 2009, 412.

⁵¹¹ ŚS K14. The precepts are followed to develop the *mind* of certain qualities, such as non-killing, non-stealing, and so forth.

⁵¹² See Keown 2001, 25-56.

⁵¹³ *BCA* V.107: “*yato nivāryate yatra yadeva ca niyujyate | tallokacittarakṣārthaṃ śikṣāṃ dr̥ṣṭvā samācaret.*”

⁵¹⁴ ŚS 80.4-5; G 139.

⁵¹⁵ This method of protection can also apply to the body.

⁵¹⁶ By “taming his mind,” we refer to Śāntideva’s point that the mind remains “like a piece of wood (*kāṣṭhavat*)” (*BCA* V.48-53). When the mind is like a piece of wood, it is tamed. The taming of the mind is attained through mindfulness, which the bodhisattva develops by following the precepts. As we will see shortly, meditation also plays an important role in developing mindfulness.

the sake of *training his mind* to develop the mental attitude expressed in that precept.⁵¹⁷

Therefore, protection occurs through training the mind; the bodhisattva does indeed aim to protect his gifts, but this is accomplished through training his mind. When the mind is pure, so too are the gifts, for with a tamed mind, the bodhisattva is careful with his possessions.⁵¹⁸

The protection of possessions is also seen through the cultivation of patience. Someone with patience is not prone to destroying his possessions. For example, professional tennis players are sometimes frustrated when they play, and out of frustration, they break their rackets. If they were patient, they would be able to control their emotional outbursts and not act out of frustration. They will, consequently, protect their possessions.⁵¹⁹ In the same way that a tennis player with patience is not prone to destroying his possessions, the bodhisattva who cultivates patience will not destroy his possessions. Thus, he can give these possessions while they are in a state of usefulness due to their not being destroyed. Ultimately, someone with patience will protect his possessions by preventing afflictions from arising in his mind; the lack of the arising of afflictions is the very nature of protection. When the mind does not have afflictions, one will not act in a way influenced by these afflictions. That is, the bodhisattva will not have anger, hatred, or agitation, which thus allows him to act in a way that prevents harm from coming to his mind and possessions.

⁵¹⁷ As discussed in Chapter 2, the bodhisattva follows the precept to not kill or harm others in order to cultivate the *mind*, or disposition of not killing or harming others. That is, following the precepts produces a change in the bodhisattva's character (Wright 2009, 55).

⁵¹⁸ While evident that this supports generosity – for the objects of generosity are protected and able to be given in a good state – discipline also enables a better form of generosity through itself being an object of generosity – it is another object of generosity that the bodhisattva can give to others. Heim highlights that one can give the gift of fearlessness (*abhaya-dāna*). To give this gift entails following the precepts and refraining from harming other beings (Heim 2004, 129-130). Thus, beings will not be fearful in one's presence due to the knowledge that the individual will not harm them.

⁵¹⁹ The protection in this case is egoistic as opposed to the altruistic foundation that is present in the bodhisattva. Though the underlying intentions are different, this example is only for the sake of identifying patience as a tool for protecting possessions.

Through this, we can see a sequence between discipline and patience. The goal of cultivating discipline is to achieve a tamed mind by following the precepts. The cultivation of patience allows the bodhisattva’s mind to attain tranquility and be tamed. Thus, to assist the cultivation of discipline and protect possessions, patience follows.⁵²⁰ As we will shortly address, wisdom is that which thoroughly assists discipline and completes its cultivation; the mind is completely tamed with the attainment of wisdom. Nonetheless, to reach wisdom, the bodhisattva goes through the perfections in order; that is, he first requires patience, since the mind of patience directly helps discipline. In this way, we can see the sequence of the perfections.

Another important function of patience is to protect merit. In reference to the above-mentioned analogy of karma as seeds, we can consider patience as that which prevents the sown seeds from being destroyed. Śāntideva writes in *BCA* that:

All the meritorious actions, such as generosity and offerings to the Sugatas,
Performed over a thousand aeons – anger destroys that.⁵²¹

That is, the actions that produce good future circumstances are destroyed, prevented, or kept away (*pratihanti*) by anger. So, it follows that to maintain and protect the merit that produces a good future, the bodhisattva should prevent anger from arising. The good future that arises is simply the meritorious actions coming to fruition, such as a good rebirth, wealth, health, and so forth. Thus, patience – that is, the calm and undisturbed mind – is the means to protect merit.

⁵²⁰ “The nature of patience is keeping the mind in virtue whenever we encounter disturbance and harm” (Zopa 2020a, 1). That is, patience helps to maintain a calm and undisturbed mind. As mentioned in Chapter 2, patience is the antidote to anger and hatred. An angry mind is unable to be at peace (*BCA* VI.3); that is, an angry mind is agitated and untamed. Therefore, by cultivating patience, the bodhisattva assists the cultivation of discipline.

⁵²¹ *BCA* VI.1: “*sarvametsucaritaṃ dānaṃ sugatapūjanam | kṛtaṃ kalpasahasrairyatpratighaḥ pratihanti tat.*” “Sugata” literally means “one who has gone to bliss.” It is used as an epithet for the Buddha.

Overall, the general nature of protection is a training of the mind to prevent afflictions, which thereby allows the bodhisattva's gifts to be in the best state that they can be. To be generous most effectively, the bodhisattva must protect his gifts. This is attained through cultivating discipline and patience. The sequence of the perfections is revealed primarily through the point that discipline enables generosity to be effective, and patience then assists discipline. Patience does indeed have its own role in protecting the mind; here, it still follows the overall goal of protection. So, in order for the bodhisattva to train in protecting his objects of generosity, he must sequentially cultivate discipline, then patience.

6.2.3 Purification

The second component of the training is purification (*śuddhi*). This term has some complications due to what exactly *śuddhi* means. Goodman acknowledges two possible, similar meanings.⁵²² The first is “purification,” and the second is “clear away.” These two understandings of *śuddhi* share the overall conception of purification, so it may seem that there is no problem. There is, however, a problem that Goodman indicates, which is that if we aim to “purify” hatred, we end up with “pure hatred.”⁵²³ This is clearly not Śāntideva's goal: he instead uses “purify” in the sense of “clearing away.” Ultimately, to describe the bodhisattva's task metaphorically, he is making pure a field in which seed-like-afflictions reside. So, when we use the term “purify,” it should be understood in the sense of eliminating the afflictions.⁵²⁴

With this understanding of purification, we can see its necessity in the bodhisattva's training. Purification enables the bodhisattva to become someone who can better alleviate the

⁵²² Goodman 2016, xxvii.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ As mentioned above, the afflictions are understood as impurities. To say that the bodhisattva purifies his mind of the afflictions is to say that he clears away impurities. Clearing away, or purifying afflictions requires specifically the cultivation of an antidote – the perfections. For instance, one does not eliminate anger by forcibly not being angry; he instead purifies his anger by cultivating patience.

suffering of others, as he has fewer afflictions affecting his mind and therefore his conduct. Ultimately, the primary affliction is ignorance which grasps at the self-nature (*svabhāva*) of all persons and phenomena – that is, ignorance which does not know emptiness.⁵²⁵ When ignorance is eliminated, the bodhisattva can best benefit other beings due to lacking self-oriented views, as we will discuss in Chapter 8. Initially, the bodhisattva has afflictions which prevent him from attaining Buddhahood,⁵²⁶ and he is consequently unable to help others effectively. For example, if the bodhisattva has the affliction of anger, he is unable to be patient with others when assisting them, which thereby hinders the effectiveness of his assistance. Additionally, when the affliction of greed is present, the bodhisattva will not be able to give his possessions to others in a way that best benefits them – indeed, he may not be able to give at all. Therefore, the primary goal of purification is to eliminate the afflictions; the goal is to purify the mind.⁵²⁷ A purified mind lacks self-centered views, which allows the bodhisattva to have the sole focus of alleviating others’ suffering.

The bodhisattva purifies his mind and his gifts through the cultivation of patience, zeal, meditation, and wisdom. Ultimately, wisdom completely purifies the bodhisattva’s gifts, since it eliminates the affliction of ignorance, and all afflictions are rooted in ignorance. However, the bodhisattva requires preliminary trainings in order to attain wisdom. The cultivation of the other

⁵²⁵ Gyatso and Chodron 2018, 73-76 provides an overview of different aspects of ignorance. Nonetheless, these aspects all relate to not understanding emptiness and positing the self-nature of persons and phenomena. Thus, we understand ignorance positing self-nature as the primary aspect of ignorance, especially from a Madhyamaka standpoint.

⁵²⁶ ŚS K 18.

⁵²⁷ Though the fundamental purification is of the mind, Śāntideva provides examples of literally purifying one’s body, such that others will benefit simply by being in the presence of the bodhisattva (see ŚS 89; G 155). However, this example is also rooted in the mind; one’s mind must first be made pure in order to purify one’s body and possessions.

Nonetheless, the bodhisattva can also purify his gifts by cleansing them or making them available for others. For example, cleaning food before giving it to others “purifies” the food from dirt. However, this type of purification does not rely on the cultivation of the perfections, so it is not what Śāntideva expounds. The cultivation of the perfections as a way of purification relies on purifying the mind and eliminating the afflictions.

perfections function as preliminary trainings. These perfections themselves nonetheless lessen the afflictions, as seen in Chapter 4, which shows that they have an important role in purifying the mind; they are not merely prerequisite preparations for wisdom. Hence, the cultivation of the perfections other than wisdom is necessary for purifying the mind. Moreover, in addition to purifying the mind, cultivating these perfections also assists in protecting the bodhisattva’s mind and gifts.⁵²⁸ For when the mind is purified, it is no longer prone to acting in ways that harm the mind and the gifts. This shows the interdependent nature of the perfections, as the later perfections assist the task of the earlier perfections. We will revisit this point in the next section.

Śāntideva introduces the importance of purification by presenting an analogy. This analogy aims to show that Buddhahood can only be attained when the mind is purified of afflictions:

Just as grain covered by grass decays with diseases and does not grow,
Accordingly, the sprout of Buddhahood covered by afflictions does not grow.⁵²⁹

This is to say that afflictions prevent awakening in the same way that grass prevents grain from growing. In the following verses, Śāntideva outlines the importance of the remaining perfections – patience, zeal, meditation, and wisdom – for purifying the mind.⁵³⁰ Prior to introducing these

⁵²⁸ ŚS 100.1-2; G 177.

⁵²⁹ ŚS K18: “*tr̥ṇacchannaṃ yathā śasyaṃ rogaiḥ sīdati naidhate | buddhāṅkurastathā vṛddhiṃ kleśacchanno na gacchati.*”

⁵³⁰ We mentioned in Chapter 2 that all the perfections serve as antidotes to afflictions. For example, the perfection of generosity is an antidote for the affliction of greed. Thus, it may be questionable why we focus on these four perfections for the training in purification as opposed to the previous two perfections. We take this reading because wisdom is that which completely purifies afflictions, so the bodhisattva must cultivate wisdom if he aims to purify the mind. Thus, the role of these four perfections should be understood as a progression towards wisdom. If the bodhisattva returns to generosity in order to eliminate the affliction of greed, he will be unsuccessful, since he is not progressing towards wisdom. The bodhisattva purifies the mind within the context of reaching wisdom, which requires the cultivation of these four perfections.

perfections specifically, Śāntideva provides an overview of purification. He specifically highlights that purification entails clearing away afflictions:

What is the purification of the body? It is the clearing away of destructive afflictions, Through [studying] the essential meaning of the words of the fully awakened Buddha. When there is no effort, however, one obtains detrimental rebirths.⁵³¹

In this verse, moreover, Śāntideva outlines how the bodhisattva eliminates afflictions: the bodhisattva must study the words of the Buddha. That is, he must attain wisdom and realize emptiness. In order to work towards wisdom, the bodhisattva must make an effort to attain wisdom. This requires cultivating the following perfections – patience, zeal, and meditation – and only then will he be able to attain wisdom.

In the following verse, Śāntideva introduces three of these four perfections to show that they are cultivated for the purification of the mind:

One should be patient. One should strive to hear [the Buddha’s teachings]. Then, one should seek shelter in a forest.
One should engage in absorption. One should meditate on impurity, and the like.⁵³²

This verse is introduced after the exhortation to purify the body.⁵³³ So, to purify the body, one must be patient and strive – that is, be zealous – to hear the teachings of the Buddha. The instruction to seek shelter in a forest is also an aspect of zeal, as a forest provides a good environment in which one can meditate without distractions.⁵³⁴ Finally, one should calm his mind, then meditate on impurity and other similar aspects that lead one to an understanding of

⁵³¹ ŚS K19: “*ātmabhāvasya kā śuddhiḥ pāpakleśaviśodhanam | saṃbuddhoktyarthasāreṇa yatnābhāve tvapāyagaḥ.*”

⁵³² ŚS K20: “*kṣameta śrutameṣeta saṃśrayeta vanam tataḥ | samādhānāya yujyeta bhāvayedaśubhādikam.*” We understand “engage in absorption (*samādhānāya yujyeta*)” as having a calm mind, thus reflecting an important component of the perfection of meditation.

⁵³³ See K19 above.

⁵³⁴ See *BCA* VII, the chapter on zeal, which mentions the importance of seeking shelter in a forest. See also Chapter 10 of ŚS, which explains zeal by highlighting the importance of leaving the household life and seeking shelter in a forest. Hence, we can understand the instruction to seek shelter in a forest as an instruction to be zealous.

emptiness, as this develops the bodhisattva's understanding that all phenomena lack self-nature. Not only are these perfections presented as practices which purify the body, but they are also presented in a sequential order. One must first be patient in order to have a zealous disposition. Once one has zeal to hear and study the Buddha's teachings, one can begin to meditate and produce the foundation for wisdom. In this regard, the way of training in purification reveals a sequential order of the perfections.

Not only is the sequence of these three perfections presented in K20, but Śāntideva also explains this verse by introducing wisdom as the goal of the cultivation. That is, to purify the mind, the bodhisattva must ultimately attain wisdom:

For the impatient person who cannot endure fatigue, zeal (*vīrya*) for hearing [the Buddha's teachings] is prevented. And he who does not hear [the Buddha's teachings] does not know the method of concentration (*samādhyupāya*), nor the method to purify afflictions.⁵³⁵

Without patience, zeal cannot arise.⁵³⁶ Without zeal, or effort to hear the Buddha's teachings, there is no concentration (*samādhi*),⁵³⁷ which is a key part of the perfection of meditation (*dhyāna*). Though not mentioned explicitly here, when these aspects are lacking, there is no wisdom – “the method to purify afflictions” is not present. As mentioned, wisdom is that ultimately purifies afflictions. Thus, to state that the method to purify afflictions is not present indicates that wisdom itself is not present. In this regard, without cultivating the prior perfections, wisdom is not present.

⁵³⁵ ŚS 100.5-6; G 177: “*akṣamasya hi śrutādau vīryaṃ pratihanyate'kheadasahatvāt | aśrutavāṃśca na samādhyupāyaṃ jñāti, nāpi kleśaśodhanopāyam.*”

⁵³⁶ See Clayton 2006, 53.

⁵³⁷ In relation to K20, we can understand *samādhi* similar to *samādhāna* – both reflect a deep concentration, or state of absorption. Specifically, we should understand them as similarly reflecting the perfection of meditation.

Moreover, this passage states that after cultivating patience, the bodhisattva should cultivate zeal. Śāntideva further expresses this explicitly when he writes:

Thus established in patience, one should begin to have zeal to hear [the Buddha's teachings].⁵³⁸

This further shows a sequence to the perfections. The sequence can be seen by examining patience. Patience purifies the bodhisattva's mind and gifts by clearing away the affliction of anger.⁵³⁹ To be patient effectively, however, one must have wisdom. That is, understanding that beings are without agency and that phenomena do not – indeed, *cannot* – intentionally cause trouble will allow the bodhisattva to be patient.⁵⁴⁰ In *BCA* VI, Śāntideva explains patience with reference to teachings on emptiness, but these teachings on emptiness are not immediately developed in this chapter; they are only developed in his chapter on wisdom, that is, *BCA* IX. Thus, the cultivation of patience by itself is merely foundational; patience is only perfected upon attaining wisdom. The bodhisattva realizes that he requires wisdom to be patient most effectively, which will thereby completely purify his mind, and consequently, his gifts. To accomplish this, he thus develops zeal for hearing the Buddha's teachings, that is, emptiness.⁵⁴¹

In addition to zeal, meditation, the next perfection in the sequence, is also important for purifying the bodhisattva's gifts. While zeal is the disposition that prompts the bodhisattva to strive for wisdom, meditation carries out this disposition and establishes a foundation for wisdom.⁵⁴² Moreover, meditation itself functions as a method of purification. A key factor in

⁵³⁸ ŚS 105.1; G 186: “*evaṃ kṣāntipratisthitaḥ śrutaṃ vīryamārabheta.*”

⁵³⁹ See *BCA* VI.1-2.

⁵⁴⁰ See *BCA* VI.23-26.

⁵⁴¹ See ŚS 105.8-9; G 186. Śāntideva indicates the more general point that one has zeal for the Buddha's teachings (ŚS K19), but we can simplify this by noting that the Buddha's teachings here refer to the nature of reality, that is, emptiness.

⁵⁴² See Ohnuma 2019.

purification is possessing a composed, or calm mind (*samādhāna*). Possessing a calm mind, which is indicative of meditation, participates in the elimination of the afflictions:

And for one with a calm mind, there is no other fruit than the purification of afflictions.⁵⁴³

Indeed, a calm mind does not respond to events with anger, pride, or agitation. We should also acknowledge that meditation has two aspects: calming (*śamatha*) and insight (*vipaśyanā*).

Without first developing the calm mind, one cannot begin to develop insight. So, when zeal leads to meditation, we should understand that zeal leads directly to calming meditation, and that then leads to insight meditation. Insight meditation is the aspect of meditation that establishes the foundation for wisdom due to its preliminary inquiries on the nature of reality. Additionally, insight meditation provides an intellectual understanding of emptiness; in this regard, insight meditation is not *just* foundational, but also a part of wisdom.⁵⁴⁴ Thus, to accomplish the bodhisattva's striving to hear, study, and follow the Buddha's teachings, he develops a calm mind; meditation therefore follows zeal.

The sequence is further shown by noting that as the bodhisattva meditates, he reaches closer to wisdom, for wisdom is the result of insight meditation – that is, meditation on things like impurity. Meditation leads to wisdom since an investigation into the nature of reality follows from calming one's mind; once the mind is calm, one is able to investigate the Buddha's teachings and hence attain the goal aimed at by the perfection of zeal. Wisdom is attained in part

⁵⁴³ ŚS 100.12; G 178: “*samāhitasya ca na kiṃcītphalamanyatra kleśaśodhanād.*”

⁵⁴⁴ See Gyatso 2022, 100. Due to the object of insight meditation being the same as wisdom, there may be confusion on the difference between these two perfections. That is, if insight meditation investigates the nature of reality, then what separate use does wisdom have? Insight meditation is an investigation into specific aspects of reality, such as the body (see *BCA* VIII.43-71). Insight into the nature of the body is not conducive to a realization of emptiness, but it provides a foundational and intellectual understanding of the emptiness of the body. Wisdom, on the other hand, extends the investigation to the nature of reality to produce a more comprehensive understanding – and eventually, realization – of emptiness.

through engaging in dialogues with other schools of thought and refuting their views pertaining to the nature of the self and reality.⁵⁴⁵ These dialogues prepare the bodhisattva to have an experiential knowledge of emptiness, that is, a realization of emptiness. By dialoguing with other schools of thought, false views of reality are refuted. Ultimately, realizing emptiness entails a non-intellectual form of knowledge, which will be explained in Chapter 7. Nonetheless, the role of dialogue and the importance of an intellectual understanding of emptiness should not be overlooked. Importantly, the realization of emptiness – wisdom – follows from the perfection of meditation, which thereby shows the sequence in the bodhisattva’s cultivation.

To explain the role of wisdom in purifying the gifts, we can look specifically to merit. Since the purification of merit follows the purification of possessions, we can further see the sequence between meditation and wisdom. The cultivation of meditation purifies possessions, and the cultivation of wisdom purifies merit; hence, the cultivation of wisdom follows the cultivation of meditation. Śāntideva mentions the importance of wisdom in the purification of merit in K21:

And one should know that the purification of possessions occurs through the purification of right livelihood.
The purification of merit is [obtained] through actions filled with compassion and emptiness.⁵⁴⁶

In the second line of this verse discussing the purification of merit, the reference to actions filled with compassion and emptiness can be understood as a reference to wisdom.⁵⁴⁷ A correct

⁵⁴⁵ See *BCA IX*. Other Madhyamaka texts, such as Nāgārjuna’s *MMK* and Candrakīrti’s *MĀ*, also engage in dialogue with other schools of thought. The polemic structure is a necessary part of attaining wisdom, but it is also important to understand that this intellectual knowledge cannot by itself allow one to attain wisdom. Hence, wisdom is not just a knowledge of facts, which one can glean through dialogue, but an experiential, transformative realization (see Whitaker and Smith 2018, 66).

⁵⁴⁶ ŚS K21: “*bhogaśuddhiṃ ca jānīyātsamyagājīvaśodhanāt | śūnyatākaruṇāgarbhaceṣṭitātpunyaśodhanam.*”

⁵⁴⁷ See Zimmer 2020, 553-554 for an equation between compassion and wisdom.

understanding of reality results in actions that befit a bodhisattva – actions filled with compassion and capable of best benefitting other beings. To purify merit, the bodhisattva thus acts in a manner that is grounded in wisdom. To return to the analogy of karma as seeds, recall that negative actions can prevent good seeds from sprouting. Conversely, positive actions can prevent negative seeds from sprouting – or at least lessen their impact. The negative conditions are cleared away, thus purifying the bodhisattva’s merit.⁵⁴⁸ That is, the positive actions that the bodhisattva performs – actions filled with compassion and emptiness – purify the bodhisattva’s merit.

Therefore, the bodhisattva engages in a sequential cultivation of the perfections with the goal of attaining wisdom in order to purify his gifts and help beings most effectively. This shows the first part of the mind-training framework: the bodhisattva transforms his mind with the goal of attaining wisdom. As we will see in the next section, the threefold training is not yet complete. The next section will further expound the role of wisdom and its infusion of the prior perfections to show that the perfections are interdependent. This analysis will show the second part of the mind-training framework: that a transformed mind and ensuing actions follow from attaining wisdom.

6.2.4 *Enhancement*

The final component of the training is enhancement (*vardhana*). *Vardhana* can be glossed as causing something to grow. Clayton translates *vardhana* as “cultivate,” but the term also refers to a greater *accumulation* of the objects of generosity.⁵⁴⁹ Goodman uses “enhance,” and we follow his translation here. To enhance something can refer to increasing its quantity, or

⁵⁴⁸ See Mahoney 2016, 140, where it is noted that cultivating wisdom is the most effective way to eliminate obstacles that prevent the accumulation of positive qualities, that is, merit.

⁵⁴⁹ Clayton 2006, 60-61.

increasing its quality.⁵⁵⁰ However, the body cannot be quantitatively enhanced, so when the body is enhanced, it refers strictly to its quality. By this, we can understand the body as being with fewer, and ultimately no afflictions, and without anything that obstructs the body from helping others; the body is enhanced to become a better body. Possessions and merit can have a quantitative enhancement in addition to a qualitative enhancement, in that the bodhisattva can accumulate more possessions and merit. “Enhancement” conveys both the qualitative and quantitative notions of *vardhana*, so it is the translation used here. Overall, enhancement entails a resolve to maintain and further develop good qualities,⁵⁵¹ namely, compassion and wisdom.⁵⁵² As with the protection and purification, enhancement is primarily a matter of training the mind. By enhancing compassion and wisdom, the bodhisattva is able to give more effectively and give more gifts that can benefit other beings. That is, he can give with fewer obstructions, and he can acquire better possessions due to acting in a way that consistently produces merit.

Śāntideva explains the necessity of enhancement by arguing that it is not enough simply to give what one has:

Those who receive are many, and it [i.e., the gift] is insignificant. What can be done with it?
And it does not produce great satisfaction – therefore, it is to be enhanced.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ Mahoney 2016 uses “increase” to translate *vardhana*, which effectively captures the same idea as “enhance.” However, Lele 2007, 43-44 addresses the issue with this translation, notably the challenge of “increasing” one’s person/body. In this sense, we must understand the two aspects of enhancement, the quality and quantity, and apply them as necessary to the bodhisattva’s gifts.

⁵⁵¹ See Clayton 2006, 63. Following what was mentioned above, the bodhisattva has cleared away his afflictions and has good, pure qualities. In the state of enhancement, he strives to maintain these and create further good qualities.

⁵⁵² Though compassion and wisdom are the primary good qualities that the bodhisattva develops, the other perfections are also included here (see *RĀ* V.35). The other perfections in their perfected form can be considered as aspects of compassion and wisdom.

⁵⁵³ ŚS K22: “*grahītāraḥ subahavaḥ svalpaṃ cedamanena kim | na cātīṛptijanakaṃ vardhanāyamidaṃ tataḥ.*”

The bodhisattva continues to cultivate his gifts – and consequently, his mind – for others’ benefit. He aims to procure better objects of generosity – in terms of quantity, so that more beings can receive gifts, and in terms of quality, so that the recipients can be satisfied in better ways. Both aspects of enhancement are ultimately for the purpose of alleviating the suffering of other beings. The need for enhancement shows that the bodhisattva’s path is not complete with the attainment of wisdom. He continues to develop himself so that he can best benefit other beings.

The bodhisattva’s training in enhancement can be understood with reference to engaged *bodhicitta*. As mentioned in Chapter 2, aspirational *bodhicitta* leads to awakening, and engaged *bodhicitta* consists of assisting others to reach awakening – that is, effectively alleviating their suffering – which can only be done when the bodhisattva himself has attained wisdom. Once the bodhisattva has attained wisdom, he is able to act in accordance with the bodhisattva vow. As he acts accordingly, he enhances his objects of generosity. Nonetheless, he is also able to help others through the actions that enhance his gifts, as will be seen shortly. Since the stage of enhancement largely concerns engaged *bodhicitta*, we will not examine these actions in detail, as this analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis. We will instead focus on the framework of the training in enhancement to show that it consists of actions that follow from wisdom. This, then, shows the mind-training framework, as there is an ensuing ethics that follows from attaining wisdom.

To show that actions follow from wisdom, we can consider the interdependent nature of the perfections. To enhance his gifts, the bodhisattva continues to train through the interdependent nature of the perfections. The interdependent nature of the perfections can be seen throughout their sequential cultivation. The cultivation of meditation purifies the objects of

generosity by calming the bodhisattva's mind. By calming the mind, the bodhisattva will develop mindfulness. When he is mindful, he can purify his mind of afflictions. Jonathan Gold mentions that mindfulness purifies the mind by eliminating the five hindrances – desire, ill-will, sloth and laziness, restlessness and worry, and doubt.⁵⁵⁴ In this regard, we can consider a relation between meditation and discipline, as the cultivation of discipline aims to tame the mind. Taming the mind is assisted through mindfulness, and mindfulness is attained by calming the mind through cultivating meditation. There is a subtle difference between a calm mind and a tame mind, that is, between the respective goals of meditation and discipline. In the perfection of discipline, the bodhisattva aims to *prevent* afflictions – which include the five hindrances – from arising. By taming the mind, afflictions are prevented from arising, which thereby protects the mind. In the perfection of meditation, the bodhisattva aims to *eliminate* – that is, purify, or clear away – the hindrances that are already present; in this regard, calming the mind through meditation purifies, or removes existing afflictions. Ultimately, if one is able to have a calm mind, then one's mind will not be agitated or disturbed prior to his acting. Consequently, he will not react in negative and harmful ways. Thus, one can improve his discipline as a result of cultivating meditation. We can therefore see an interdependence here: when the mind is calm, its tamed nature can be strengthened.

In addition to discipline, the perfection of meditation also assists the cultivation of the perfections of patience and zeal. Having a calm mind allows the bodhisattva to be patient, the cultivation of which, as mentioned, purifies the afflictions of anger and hatred. If the mind is calm, it will not react aggressively to what is encountered. A calm mind allows one to assess a situation and react appropriately; that is, one can be patient instead of angry. Moreover, two of

⁵⁵⁴ Gold 2018, 759.

the five hindrances – sloth and restlessness – are opposites of the perfection of zeal. Thus, following Gold’s analysis that mindfulness eliminates the hindrances, the perfection of meditation’s practice of mindfulness and subsequent development of a calm mind assists the cultivation of the perfection of zeal. Hence, the sequence of the perfections reveals their interdependent nature, since the sequence entails that the later perfections support the earlier ones.

The interdependent nature of the perfections is most evident with wisdom, as wisdom perfects the prior perfections. That is, when the perfections are infused with a realization of emptiness, they are *perfected*, and the bodhisattva is truly able to be generous, disciplined, and so forth. Therefore, to train through the interdependent perfections entails that the bodhisattva cultivates and partakes in the perfections when they are infused with wisdom. Moreover, this includes not just wisdom, but the mind of all perfections: thus, the cultivation of *perfect* generosity is not just grounded in wisdom but also grounded in meditation, patience, and so forth. For example, the bodhisattva’s perfected generosity consists of giving with a calm mind in addition to giving with a realization of emptiness. When the bodhisattva gives with a realization of emptiness, the calm mind is naturally present as well.

Therefore, to enhance gifts, the bodhisattva requires wisdom. This is stated in K23 and K24:

What is the enhancement of the body? It is the enhancement of strength and activity. The enhancement of possessions occurs through generosity filled with compassion and emptiness.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵⁵ ŚS K23: “*ātmabhāvasya kā vṛddhirbalānālasavyavardhanam | śūnyatākaruṇāgarbhāddānādbhogasya vardhanam.*” See also RĀ IV.96. Nāgārjuna mentions here that actions filled with compassion and wisdom are teachings of the Buddha that are tailored to the individual; this reflects one’s compassionate and wisdom-based actions.

Having first made, through effort, a firm intention and resolution,
And placing compassion foremost, one should endeavour to enhance merit.⁵⁵⁶

Though not mentioned explicitly in these verses, wisdom is necessarily present in the enhancement of possessions. This has been mentioned above regarding what it means for an action to be filled with compassion and emptiness.⁵⁵⁷ generosity filled with compassion and emptiness entails generosity that is infused with wisdom. Moreover, K24 mentions that the bodhisattva must have a *firm* intention and resolution – it is not just a simple resolution or intention in this case. This indicates that zeal, which consists of having an intention and resolution, is infused with wisdom; this is a reference to *perfected* zeal. Therefore, the bodhisattva enhances his gifts through cultivating the perfections in their interdependent nature – that is, through the cultivation of *perfected* perfections.

The presence of the cultivation of the perfected perfections can further be shown with reference to the point that the bodhisattva performs actions infused with wisdom. We mentioned above that these actions purify the bodhisattva’s merit, but such actions also enhance his merit. Specifically, these actions quantitatively increase merit. To produce more merit, the bodhisattva must act in a certain way; he must perform actions that are grounded in wisdom. For instance, the bodhisattva partakes in the perfected perfection of generosity and gives without a sense of self, that is, with an understanding of emptiness. While this is not the only way to produce merit, these actions are more meritorious than actions that are not based in wisdom, for the bodhisattva is able to be generous more effectively when he has wisdom. Likewise, he is more effectively able to be disciplined, patient, and so forth when he has wisdom. Wisdom thus establishes and

⁵⁵⁶ ŚS K24: “*kṛtvādāveva yatnena vyavasāyāśayau dṛḍhau | karuṇāṃ ca puraskṛtya yateta śubhavṛddhaye.*”

⁵⁵⁷ See the discussion on ŚS K21. See also Chapters 16-19 of ŚS, which discuss these verses in greater detail and make explicit reference to the perfection of wisdom.

enables one's lack of greed, anger, and so forth; it is in this way that wisdom *perfects* the prior perfections.⁵⁵⁸ His generosity and patience is never neglected for the sake of benefitting himself, thereby showing their superiority over generosity and patience that is not grounded in wisdom. Since the bodhisattva acts in a better way, he produces more merit; that is, he enhances his merit. Consequently, the bodhisattva is able to attain better possessions and a better-quality body – these are *enhanced* – which shows that wisdom enhances the bodhisattva's gifts.

Based on this presentation of enhancement, we can see the second part of the mind-training framework: there are ensuing actions upon attaining wisdom. The need for enhancement reveals actions that follow from wisdom, namely, actions grounded in compassion and an understanding of emptiness. This is the interdependent nature of the perfections, which reflects their nature when they are infused with wisdom, or *perfected*. That is, the perfected perfections of generosity, discipline, and so forth are the result of the transformed mind upon attaining wisdom. In addition to leading to full enlightenment, these actions enhance the bodhisattva's gifts to increase their usefulness to other beings. As mentioned, the training in enhancement reflects the stage of engaged *bodhicitta*, so the actions themselves have not been examined in detail. Nonetheless, such actions are indeed present, which thus reflects the mind-training framework of the bodhisattva's cultivation of generosity.

6.3 Conclusion

The threefold training exemplifies the mind-training framework by showing that the perfections are cultivated sequentially with wisdom as their goal. In this training, the bodhisattva's goal is to be generous in a way that best benefits other beings, and this requires attaining wisdom. The cultivation of generosity therefore aims at attaining wisdom. This

⁵⁵⁸ See Clayton 2006, 58.

cultivation is presented through the threefold training: to protect, purify, and enhance his gifts, the bodhisattva cultivates the perfections sequentially. To cultivate generosity, the bodhisattva must cultivate discipline due to the need to protect what is given. To support and enable discipline to be the best it can be, patience naturally follows and must be cultivated. Likewise, in order to enable patience to be the best it can be, one must have zeal to attain wisdom. Zeal then leads to meditation due to the latter being a prerequisite for the attainment of wisdom. Finally, wisdom follows from meditation due to it completing the training that meditation commences. In this regard, there is a sequential progression through the perfections, as each one gradually builds upon and strengthens what came before it. The nature of the sequence, then, results in an interdependence between the perfections, since the later perfections infuse and strengthen the prior perfections. Wisdom, as the end of the path, ultimately infuses all perfections and consequently *perfects* them. Due to perfecting the prior perfections, wisdom produces a new way of acting in the world: wisdom enables the bodhisattva to act according to the perfected perfections and hence to act according to the bodhisattva vow. This therefore shows that the threefold training reveals the mind-training framework, where wisdom is the goal of the cultivation in order to transform the mind and ensuing actions.

Chapter 7: The Perfection of Wisdom I: The Two Truths and Emptiness

7.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we will discuss the object of wisdom, emptiness. This will prepare us for the next chapter, which addresses the role of wisdom in the bodhisattva's ethics; we will show there that wisdom is necessary for perfecting the bodhisattva's generosity. The previous chapters have shown that the bodhisattva's cultivation of generosity is a mind-training, and an important part of this involves working towards the attainment of wisdom. The next part of the mind-training framework to discuss is why wisdom is necessary for ethics. To demonstrate this, we will first discuss wisdom itself. Śāntideva addresses wisdom in *BCA IX*, and it is usually given great attention in commentaries – many commentaries have been written on this chapter alone. We will not discuss *BCA IX* to the same extent as these commentaries, as our goal in this chapter differs from the goal of these texts. The goal here is not to explicate Śāntideva's entire conception of wisdom, nor is it to argue for the validity of his arguments. Such a project requires engaging with the entire Madhyamaka tradition in addition to other schools of Indian philosophy which dialogued with the Mādhyamikas. We will instead focus primarily on presenting the object of wisdom as found in Śāntideva. In presenting the object of wisdom, *BCA IX* engages with other philosophical schools and their views on reality. The underlying idea of Śāntideva's arguments is that all phenomena are empty. Emptiness is a key concept in Madhyamaka philosophy. Hence, to understand wisdom, it is helpful to draw on the work of other, earlier Madhyamaka philosophers, as Śāntideva builds on their ideas. In this chapter, then, we will draw on the work of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti – two important Madhyamaka philosophers – to develop the explanation of wisdom.

We will present wisdom in two sections. Śāntideva begins *BCA IX* with an examination of the two truths, which shows the foundational importance of this concept for wisdom. As we

will also see in the next chapter, the two truths distinction is important to show how wisdom strengthens the bodhisattva's generosity. We will therefore begin with a presentation on the two truths distinction in section 7.1. There are various aspects of the two truths, which we will address in subsections. We will first provide a general overview of the two truths, drawing on Śāntideva's analysis. We then engage with an interpretation of the two truths presented by Candrakīrti to contrast with Śāntideva's view. Finally, our presentation of the two truths may seem to lead to a relativist position. We will therefore address why the two truths distinction does *not* lead to relativism by emphasizing the nature of *truth* in the two truths.

Following this, we will turn to the object of wisdom in section 7.2. Wisdom concerns the nature of reality; when the bodhisattva aims to attain wisdom, he aims at an intellectual understanding and non-conceptual realization of the nature of reality. The nature of reality in Madhyamaka philosophy is emptiness (*śūnyatā*), or the selflessness of persons and phenomena. This section will therefore explain the nature of emptiness. We explore different aspects of emptiness in subsections. We will first explain emptiness by highlighting its relation to the concept of self-nature (*svabhāva*). Emptiness is conceived of as the lack of self-nature, hence the importance of understanding this concept. We then turn to the relation between emptiness and dependent arising. This relation is important to highlight due to the synonymy between these two concepts. Emptiness can further be explained by highlighting why it is often glossed as the selflessness of persons and phenomena. Explaining this relation allows for a focused understanding of emptiness, underscoring specifically what it means for persons and phenomena to be empty. Finally, we will address the soteriological efficacy of emptiness. As Buddhists, Mādhyamikas aim to attain freedom from suffering, so the cultivation to attain wisdom must have soteriological efficacy. Overall, understanding these two aspects of wisdom – the two truths

and emptiness – provides a foundation for the next chapter, which completes the presentation of the mind-training framework of Śāntideva’s ethics.

7.1 *The Two Truths*

7.1.1 *An Overview of the Two Truths*

Prior to presenting emptiness as the nature of reality, Śāntideva presents the two truths distinction, as this framework provides a necessary foundation to understand emptiness.⁵⁵⁹ To understand the two truths in Śāntideva, it is helpful to contrast his presentation with the view of early Buddhist schools. Y. Karunadasa analyzes the two truths in early Buddhist schools, notably the Theravāda Abhidhamma.⁵⁶⁰ In his analysis, he indicates the difference between the Pāli term *sammuti* and the Sanskrit term *saṃvṛti*. Whereas the latter is used to denote “concealing,” the former denotes “convention.” In this regard, the early Buddhist use of the conventional truth does not refer to a falsity, or misrepresentation of reality. It is rather another way of explaining reality:

Since *sammuti* refers to convention or general agreement, *sammuti-sacca* means truth based on convention or general agreement. On the other hand, the idea behind *saṃvṛti-satya* is that which covers up the true nature of things and makes them appear

⁵⁵⁹ The two truths are an important concept in Madhyamaka Buddhism. However, Madhyamaka is not the only school in Indian philosophy to use a two truths model: a similar exposition can be found in Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta school (see Todd 2016, 14), and in Kundakunda’s Jain philosophy (see Long 2009, 125-131). It is unclear which school first proposes the two truths distinction – Śaṅkara draws on the *Upaniṣads*, and Kundakunda is believed to have lived before Nāgārjuna, who is the first Madhyamaka expositor of the two truths model – though Kundakunda’s dates are contentious, and he may have lived after Nāgārjuna. There does not appear to be mention of the two truths in earlier Jain philosophy, so Kundakunda may be drawing on non-Jain sources to develop his model. Moreover, Nāgārjuna’s work responds to the Abhidharmika Buddhists, who also used the two truths model (see Harvey 2013, 119), suggesting an earlier date for this framework in Buddhist philosophy. The presence of the two truths across many schools in Indian philosophy simply makes evident the fact that these schools readily draw on each other to develop their philosophy (see Dasgupta 2009, 5-6). Indeed, a restricted model of Indian philosophical schools is perhaps unsatisfactory for this reason (see Edelglass, Harter, and McClintock 2023, 1-2). The two truths, then, should be understood as an important concept not just in Madhyamaka philosophy but throughout Indian philosophy – however, it is understood in different ways according to the philosophical school. Our focus here is the Madhyamaka interpretation of the two truths.

⁵⁶⁰ Karunadasa 2019, 71-81.

otherwise.⁵⁶¹

Karunadasa further explains that the difference between the conventional and ultimate truth in early Buddhism is like the difference between dialects in a language.⁵⁶² An individual can better understand a certain dialect over another, so it is beneficial to use that dialect to explain things to that individual. This does not indicate that one dialect is somehow superior to the other. Thus, rather than two *truths*, Karunadasa argues that it is more suitable to refer to these as, “two modes of expressing what is true.”⁵⁶³ That is, the two truths are two ways of explaining the same thing. Hence, the conventional truth does not conceal the true nature of phenomena but merely explains it in a certain way.

Though this general distinction between the two truths is also present in Śāntideva, there is an important addition found in his work. As Kapstein underscores:

The two truths came to be regarded by subsequent thinkers as primarily designating two levels of reality, or perhaps two ways of experiencing reality, rather than just two ways of speaking about reality.⁵⁶⁴

This is to say that the two truths are not simply two different explanations of the same concept, or phenomenon. They are, rather, two different experiences of reality. Śāntideva does not dismiss the early Buddhist reading in his view but builds on it: the two truths are two ways of describing something – one that is based on an ignorant perspective of reality, and another that is in accordance with reality. Reality is still the one concept being explained. The two truths are indeed two explanations, as Karunadasa notes, but these explanations are based on two

⁵⁶¹ Ibid., 73. We should acknowledge, however, that an understanding of *saṃvṛti* as “general agreement” is also prevalent in the Madhyamaka tradition. Thus, while *saṃvṛti* is sometimes understood as “concealment,” this is not to the neglect of its other meaning.

⁵⁶² Ibid., 76.

⁵⁶³ Ibid., 80.

⁵⁶⁴ Kapstein 2019, 87.

experiences. Thus, rather than two synonymous terms used to explain a single phenomenon, the phenomenon is experienced in two ways and subsequently explained in two ways.

Accordingly, the overall presentation of the two truths in Śāntideva can be understood to represent two perspectives from which reality can be seen: the conventional (*saṃvṛti*) and the ultimate (*paramārtha*). Śāntideva describes the two truths accordingly:

Conventional (*saṃvṛti*) and ultimate (*paramārtha*) are identified as the two truths. Reality (*tattva*) is beyond the scope of intellect; it is said that the intellect [concerns] the conventional.⁵⁶⁵

In this verse, Śāntideva presents the two truths to distinguish what can be known. *Samvṛti* can be glossed as “relative,” drawing on its nature as a conditioned or dependent truth. This suggests that the conventional truth is a truth that is relative to, or dependent on certain parameters, namely the parameters of an ordinary human’s intellectual understanding. Moreover, it is not true in and of itself but only true within the framework of an ordinary human’s experience.⁵⁶⁶

In his explanation of Śāntideva’s verse, Prajñākaramati glosses *saṃvṛti* as “concealing,” which indicates that the conventional truth conceals the correct knowledge (*parijñānam*) of reality.⁵⁶⁷ This reading is also found in Candrakīrti:

Delusion, from covering self-nature, is concealment (*saṃvṛti*).
That which is fabricated by convention (*saṃvṛti*) and accepted as real –
The sage [Buddha] said that this is the conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatyam*).
And as fabricated, phenomena conceal (*saṃvṛti*).⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁵ BCA IX.2: “*saṃvṛtiḥ paramārthaśca satyadvayamidaṃ matam | buddheragocarastattvaṃ buddhiḥ saṃvṛtirucyate.*”

⁵⁶⁶ Karunadasa 2019, 73. See also Künzang Sönam 2019, 53.

⁵⁶⁷ BCA P 352. See also Kapstein 2019, 87-88. Kapstein mentions that for Prajñākaramati, the sense of “concealment” is the primary meaning of *saṃvṛti*, as opposed to the sense of “convention.”

⁵⁶⁸ MĀ VI.28: “*mohaḥ svabhāvāraṇād dhi saṃvṛtiḥ satyaṃ tayā khyāti yad eva kṛtimam | jagāda tat saṃvṛtisatyam ity asau munih padārtham kṛtakaṅ ca saṃvṛtiḥ.*” Candrakīrti explains three possible meanings of *saṃvṛti* in his work, *Prasannapadā*. The first is surface level; this is an analysis that does not investigate the nature of reality in

Reality is concealed by superimposing a self-nature (*svabhāva* – a concept we will explain in section 7.2.1) onto empty phenomena. Phenomena therefore appear to have a self-nature, and their true nature of emptiness is consequently concealed: the appearance of phenomena conceals the reality of phenomena. In this regard, the conventional truth is how phenomena appear, that is, what appears to the common human perspective. Conversely, reality (*tattva*) refers to the nature of reality, which in the Madhyamaka context is emptiness.⁵⁶⁹ The ultimate truth of phenomena is how phenomena exist beyond the veil that obstructs one’s vision; the ultimate truth is beyond any parameters, or restrictions in the scope of knowledge. From this standpoint, phenomena are empty of self-nature. Accordingly, in contrast to the Theravāda Abhidhamma, this explanation of the conventional truth follows the Sanskrit use of the term: the conventional truth is a false depiction of reality, that is, something which conceals reality.⁵⁷⁰

Śāntideva’s verse also indicates that the conventional truth is known through intellectual knowledge. An intellectual understanding is based on conceptual knowledge. The ultimate truth – emptiness – is not something that can be described through language, descriptions, or concepts.

detail. The second is mutual reliance, where the nature of phenomena can only be asserted in dependence on something else. The third meaning is conventional, referring to general conventions of ordinary beings (see MacDonald 2015, 200-201; see also Newman 2024, 86-87). We will see these meanings throughout our discussion of the conventional truth. However, we will focus primarily on the sense of concealment or covering reality, as that is the reading provided by Prajñākaramati and best fits Śāntideva’s use. The sense of concealment can be derived from the first meaning of *saṃvṛti* provided by Candrakīrti, since the surface-level analysis of phenomena conceals their true nature.

⁵⁶⁹ *BCA* P 354. Prajñākaramati also notes that the ultimate truth can be glossed as *dharmadhātu*, *niḥsvabhāvatā*, *tathatā*, or *bhūtaḥkoṭi* – all terms which are synonymous with emptiness (*sūnyatā*). *Tathatā* specifically means “suchness,” which suggests that we should not read emptiness as nonexistence. In this regard, we simply use the general term “reality” to refer to emptiness. See also Mipham 2017, 81.

⁵⁷⁰ This reading of the two truths is also found in some Abhidhamma Buddhist schools (see Bhikkhu Bodhi and Mahāthera Nārada 2007, 25-26). Thus, to note the contrast with Karunadasa’s presentation of the Theravāda Abhidhamma, we must understand that there were multiple Abhidhamma schools, each of which may have a different reading of key Buddhist concepts. In this regard, we should not read the Mādhyamikas as *rejecting* the early Buddhist reading of the two truths but building on it. They accept that the conventional truth refers to general agreement, but this is not its sole meaning. A key difference between the early Theravāda Abhidhamma and Śāntideva is that for the former, the two truths are equally true, whereas for the latter, the two truths are hierarchically true (see Kapstein 2019, 87). We will revisit this idea shortly.

Hence, knowledge of the ultimate truth is beyond the scope of the intellect.⁵⁷¹ Wisdom, then, requires the bodhisattva to develop a realization of emptiness that is not based on his intellectual capacities. However, this is not to say that an understanding of emptiness is completely beyond the scope of ordinary beings, such that ordinary beings cannot attain enlightenment. As the Dalai Lama notes, ordinary beings can understand emptiness through inferential reasoning, but they cannot directly realize emptiness.⁵⁷² He further states that:

Words and concepts are insufficient approximations of the experience of realizing emptiness. Nevertheless, to gain this experience, we must start by learning the words and concepts to refute inherent existence [*svabhāva*] and to establish emptiness.⁵⁷³

Thus, we should understand intellectual knowledge as part of the path that leads to enlightenment. The intellectual investigation analyzes concepts to refute wrong views, but it does not, in itself, amount to a realization of emptiness.⁵⁷⁴

That the intellect cannot be used to ascertain emptiness can further be seen in Gorampa's philosophy. This is presented by Sonam Thakchoe:

Ordinary beings are not cognitive agents of ultimate truth and are totally incapable of understanding ultimate reality [...] Strictly speaking, the conceptual cognitions of ordinary beings are, according to Gorampa, completely inadequate to the task of

⁵⁷¹ As an analogy, we can consider the example of describing the taste of a mango. Its taste can be described as sweet and watery; this amounts to an intellectual-based understanding of the mango's taste, as it is described through language. Alternatively, one can taste the mango itself and experience its taste; this amounts to a non-discursive knowledge of the mango's taste. While an intellectual-based description of the mango's taste provides some information, it cannot provide one with a complete knowledge of the taste. Conversely, a direct experience of the mango's taste cannot be described in words; descriptions like "sweet" and "watery" will get close but fail to convey the exact nature of the taste.

⁵⁷² Gyatso and Chodron 2023, 44.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., 46.

⁵⁷⁴ See Mipham 2017, 86. See also Jinpa 2023, 59, where this point is referenced as a shared view amongst Mādhyamika philosophers. In this regard, emptiness is not entirely unknowable, contrary to some views presented by early Tibetan scholars (see Gyatso and Chodron 2023, 42). We must emphasize that reality is beyond the scope of *intellectual* knowledge. Intellectual inquiry does, however, play a role in preparing one for the attainment of wisdom, such as through refuting wrong views, and providing a conceptual definition of emptiness. See also Rochard 2023, 25.

comprehending ultimate reality.⁵⁷⁵

Śāntideva holds a similar view, as seen in IX.2 where he mentions that emptiness is beyond an understanding that is obtained through intellectual means. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 5, there is a distinction between knowing the world/appearances and knowing reality; this distinction is represented in the two truths. Like how the ear cannot see colours – for sight is a function that does not belong to the ear – the intellect cannot realize emptiness due to lacking the required capacities.⁵⁷⁶ In this way, we can understand Gorampa’s point that ordinary beings are completely incapable of ascertaining emptiness. However, as mentioned, the intellect does ascertain appearances. The appearance of phenomena includes general descriptions about them; for example, that grass is green, that a knife is sharp, or that fire is hot. Though accurately capturing their appearance – importantly, how these phenomena appear to a human perspective – the ultimate truth of these phenomena are *not* as they appear. In reality, the phenomena lack any self-nature; thus, they lack any descriptive quality. Grass cannot be said to be green *on the ultimate level*, for greenness is a dependent quality. That is, “green” depends on a certain physical occurrence that comes into contact with a human eye; the mind then identifies what is seen as “green.” Any attempt to describe the nature of reality through a conceptual means is merely a description of the phenomenon’s appearance, and the phenomenon’s appearance is understood in a way that is dependent on the observer. Ordinary beings who operate on a conceptual understanding can only ascertain appearances rather than reality.

⁵⁷⁵ Thakchoe 2007, 82. Gorampa was a 15th century Tibetan philosopher who expounded Madhyamaka ideas.

⁵⁷⁶ See Gyatso and Chodron 2022b, 217; see also Newland 2011, 59.

The fact that ultimate truth cannot be perceived through ordinary perception reveals another point about the two truths. Namely, there is a difference between those who use ordinary perception and those who use an exalted perception:

Regarding [the knowledge of the two truths], people are seen in two ways: the yogi and the common man.

In this distinction, [the views of] the common men are opposed by [the views of] the yogis.⁵⁷⁷

For Śāntideva, the conventional truth is perceived by the ordinary person, or common man (*prākṛtaka*), and the ultimate truth is perceived by the yogi. Śāntideva may be drawing on Candrakīrti to present this point, as the latter presents the same idea:

If the world had valid knowledge (*lokaḥ pramāṇam*), then the world alone could see reality.

What is the need for the superior noble ones (*ārya*)?

What is the need for the noble path and conduct?

Therefore, knowledge from the foolish is not considered suitable.⁵⁷⁸

Candrakīrti poses rhetorical questions to show that the knowledge from the world – that is, knowledge from the common man – is insufficient for ascertaining reality and cannot be a valid source of knowledge. If it were sufficient, then there would be no value in the Buddha’s teachings, and there would be no value in the realizations of the *āryas* who have followed the path and attained awakening. Buddhas and *āryas* use a non-intellectual means of knowing to ascertain reality. Hence, Candrakīrti considers a distinction between ordinary, worldly

⁵⁷⁷ *BCA IX.3*: “*tatra loko dvidhā dr̥ṣṭo yogī prākṛtakastathā | tatra prākṛtako loko yogilokena bādhyate.*” A yogi can be understood as a philosopher in some sense. The Dalai Lama explains a yogi as “someone who grounds their understanding of the world in a philosophical perspective” (Gyatso and Chodron 2022b, 52). The Dalai Lama also considers scientists as a type of yogi since, “they engage in investigation and analysis” (ibid.). By these definitions, we can understand a yogi as a philosopher – that is, someone who investigates the nature of reality in search for truth. The yogi, importantly, also lives according to his knowledge; he does not simply investigate reality for its own sake, but in order to live well and to be free from suffering – and a bodhisattva-yogi investigates reality for the sake of freeing other beings from suffering.

⁵⁷⁸ *MĀ VI.30*: “*lokaḥ pramāṇam yadi tattvadarśī syāl loka evety aparaiḥ kim āryaiḥ | kim āryamārgeṇa bhavec ca kāryam mūḍhaḥ pramāṇam na hi nāma yuktaḥ.*”

individuals, and the yogis/*āryas* who analyze reality. Though Śāntideva uses a different term – *yogi* instead of *ārya* – we can understand the yogi similar to an *ārya*, that is, as a being who does not simply accept worldly knowledge and analyzes the nature of reality. An *ārya*, moreover, has some realization of emptiness, whereas a yogi is working towards this realization – though some yogis can have varying levels of realization of emptiness. Nonetheless, yogis and *āryas* are alike in investigating the nature of reality beyond its appearance. Hence, they are alike in not accepting worldly knowledge – that is, knowledge from ordinary, unenlightened beings – as indicative of the truth. The important distinction is between the knowledge of ordinary, worldly individuals, and the knowledge of those who analyze reality.

Moreover, a key point in IX.3 is that the view of the yogi *opposes* the view of the common man. That is, the view that ascertains appearances is not what is ultimately true about phenomena. When ultimate reality is perceived – and from the standpoint of ultimate reality – the conventional reality is false. However, the yogi does not deny the conventional truth entirely. To do so would be problematic, since ethics operates in the conventional realm, as we will explain shortly. The conventional truth is still established, but with a conditioned, or relative status of truth; in this regard, we should understand that appearances can be perceived correctly. This idea can be found in Tsong Khapa’s work. Jinpa, in his explanation of Tsong Khapa’s philosophy, notes that, “conventional existence becomes existence only by means of conditioned, dependent origination.”⁵⁷⁹ That is, the conventional truth is not true regarding the nature of reality, but it is true regarding appearances, that is, regarding dependently arising phenomena. The appearances are true according to the perspective of the common humans’ understanding. Though false from the standpoint of ultimate reality, this perspective can still be adopted for the

⁵⁷⁹ Jinpa 2002, 153.

sake of engaging with other beings who share the conventional perspective. Indeed, as Guy Newland notes, the false nature of the conventional truth does not mean that the conventional truth does not exist.⁵⁸⁰ This can be seen with the example of a mirage. The mirage exists as a mirage, but the mirage does not reveal something that really exists in the world; that is, there is in truth no water, but there is indeed the illusion of water. Therefore, the two truths are not both true indicators of *reality*; this is where we can see Śāntideva’s point regarding the opposition between the views of the common man and the yogi.⁵⁸¹

The opposition of views can further be seen with reference to Gorampa’s view of the two truths. In his analysis of Gorampa’s philosophy, Thakchoe explains:

The two truths are divided only according to the cognitive experiences of individuals. He who sees only phenomena, according to Gorampa, is ignorant, and he who sees reality, rather than the phenomena, is wise. This is because he who sees phenomena is caught within the web of conceptual elaboration, and he who sees reality has transcended conceptual elaboration.⁵⁸²

In Gorampa’s reading, the conventional truth is a false perspective based on ignorance.⁵⁸³ The perspective of ignorance indicates perceiving the conventional appearances as reality. The yogi, however, does not make this mistake, and he thus opposes the view of the common man: the yogi understands the conventional truth as conventional. We will develop this point in the next chapter, though we can briefly note that the relation between the conventional and ultimate truths can be seen with an example of an actor playing a role in a movie. To play a role, Garfield notes,

⁵⁸⁰ Newland 2011, 58.

⁵⁸¹ Accordingly, we can see the difference in the conception of the two truths between Śāntideva and the Theravāda Abhidhamma, as mentioned above.

⁵⁸² Thakchoe 2007, 13.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, 40: For Gorampa, “Conventional truth is described as “truth” only from the perspective of ignorance.” See also Gyatso and Chodron 2023, 36: “‘False’ means something does not exist in the way it appears [...] when we say ‘veiled truths are falsities,’ it means that they don’t exist from their own side although they appear to.” To exist from their own side means to exist with *svabhāva*, as we will address in section 7.2.1.

is to be a *person* as opposed to a *self*.⁵⁸⁴ The role played by the actor has conventional reality – it is true within the scope of the movie. The role has real qualities, characteristics, and so forth, but it is not ultimately real. From the perspective of the actor, the character he plays is a fiction, but from the perspective of the character, his actions, worldview, and so forth are true qualities that he possesses. Similar to how an actor engages with the character he plays and inhabits the worldview of that character, the yogi can accept the parameters of conventional reality and operate in accordance with this perspective.⁵⁸⁵ This entails that he understands the conventional truth as conventional.

Therefore, the yogi’s knowledge of the ultimate truth does not dismiss the conventional truth altogether, but merely refutes the view that conventions describe reality:

What is seen, heard, and known is not denied here.
 Instead, we aim here to negate [the view] that the imagination is ultimately real
 (*satyataḥ*) – as this is the cause of suffering.⁵⁸⁶

Suffering is based on a false view of reality. We can see from this verse that the perspective of the common man is not a false view *in itself*, as it indeed has real value in the world; it is only a false view of reality. Thus, Śāntideva does not deny the perspective of ordinary individuals

⁵⁸⁴ See Garfield 2022b, 38-39. Though Garfield refers to the role as a *person* to distinguish it from the *self* that is denied by Buddhists, we simply refer to the role as the *conventional self*. We do so due to the need to highlight the importance of the conventional world and conventional truth; by referring to a conventional self, we can easily see the shared scope of the conventional level.

⁵⁸⁵ This analogy falls short of an overall representation of the two truths, as Mādhyamikas do not defend the existence of an ultimately real individual who plays the role. Moreover, in the context of a movie, the role has validity regardless of who plays the role; in this regard, the truth of the role can be determined regardless of who plays the role (Garfield 2022b, 38). However, for Mādhyamikas, the conventional truth cannot be divorced from the ultimate truth, as we will see in the next section and develop in the next chapter. This analogy should only be used to highlight the level of truth carried by an ultimately unreal role. That is, the character is not ultimately real, but the character does indeed have real character traits. Likewise, the conventional truth is not ultimately real, but it does have conventional validity. Regarding the question of who or what is playing the role, we can note that the role is created through various causes and conditions. In Madhyamaka thought, there is no one who plays the role, strictly speaking, but there are conditions that enable the role to arise.

⁵⁸⁶ *BCA IX.26*: “*yathā dṛṣṭaṃ śrutaṃ jñātaṃ naiveha pratiśidhyate | satyataḥ kalpanā tvatra duḥkhaḥeturnivāryate.*”

which ascertains the appearance of phenomena, but only their status as ultimate reality. The perspective of ignorance specifically concerns the status one gives to what he views: viewing conventions as reality is indicative of ignorance, but viewing conventions as conventions is indicative of wisdom. In this way, there is an opposition between the yogi and the common man concerning the two truths.

7.1.2 *The Two Truths: Two Natures or Two Perspectives?*

There is an important debate concerning the two truths: this is the question of whether the two truths are two *natures* of one reality or two *perspectives* on one reality. This debate does not have to be analyzed in detail here, but we will briefly outline the two-nature reading to show that it is *not* the view held by Śāntideva; he instead holds that the two truths are two perspectives on reality. The two-nature reading is found in Candrakīrti’s presentation of the two truths:

All phenomena (*bhāva*) have two natures (*rūpa*):
 The phenomenon seen with right understanding, and [the phenomenon seen] with wrong understanding.
 The object (*viśaya*) which is seen correctly is reality (*tattva*);
 [And] that which is seen incorrectly is the conventional truth (*saṃvṛti*) – so it is taught.⁵⁸⁷

This verse mentions that there are two natures, or aspects (*rūpa*), which are seen through two different perspectives. *Rūpa* can alternatively be translated as “form,” referring to a physical object such as a body. Indeed, Candrakīrti refers to the *viśaya* that is seen correctly and incorrectly – the translation of *viśaya* is “sense object” or “object of concern,” thus suggesting that “object” is a suitable translation. However, we should not misunderstand *viśaya* as a form like a body, since *rūpa* is used in the context of phenomena. A phenomenon having two bodies may cause confusion in the topic of inquiry. In the context of phenomena, we are concerned with

⁵⁸⁷ *MĀ* VI.23: “*samyagmṛṣādārśanalabdhabhāvaṃ rūpadvayaṃ bibhṛati sarvabhāvāḥ | samyagdrśaṃ yo viśayaḥ sa tattvaṃ mṛṣādrśāṃ saṃvṛtisatyam uktam.*”

two qualities, aspects, or natures that they possess. Hence, we translate *rūpa* as “nature.” This also follows the common translation used by other scholars, and as this translation is not contentious with Candrakīrti’s meaning, we will maintain this translation here.

The two-nature reading is expounded by Thakchoe in his analysis of Candrakīrti’s two truths. Thakchoe explains that the first nature is when an object is seen through an exalted cognitive process, whereas the second nature is seen through an ordinary perception. The first nature concerns the ultimate truth, or reality (*tattva*), whereas the second nature concerns the conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*).⁵⁸⁸ This idea is also expressed by Prajñākaramati. In his explanation of IX.2, Prajñākaramati cites *MĀ VI.23* to argue that:

All phenomena carry two *svabhāva*. Regarding these two *svabhāva*, the object of the childish is that which is falsely seen – this is the conventional truth. And the object of those who attain reality [i.e., the yogis] is that which is correctly seen – this is the ultimate truth. This distinction is according to the knower of the treatise [i.e., Candrakīrti], as explained in [*MĀ VI.23*].⁵⁸⁹

Prajñākaramati understands the two *rūpa* to refer to two *svabhāva*, that is, two self-natures; his reading thus influences the above translation choice of *rūpa* as “nature.” Moreover, Prajñākaramati notes that to ascertain each nature, a different perspective is used. This idea is also mentioned by Thakchoe: the perspective of a yogi ascertains reality, and the perspective of a common man ascertains appearances.⁵⁹⁰ Though two perspectives are accounted for, they are

⁵⁸⁸ Thakchoe 2023, 164.

⁵⁸⁹ *BCA P 361*: “*tadetat svabhāvadvayaṃ sarve padārthā dhārayanti | anayośca svabhāvayormṛṣādṛśām bālīsānām yo viṣayaḥ, tat saṃvṛtisatyam | yaśca samyagṛśāmadhigatatattvānām viṣayaḥ, tat paramārthasatyamiti vyavasthā śāstravidām | yadāha – [MĀ VI.23].*”

⁵⁹⁰ Thakchoe 2011, 44-45. See also Jinpa 2002, 151: “These two aspects [i.e., the two truths] are those that are apprehended, respectively, by two distinct perspectives – the non-deluded perception of the *āryas* and the deluded perceptions of the world.”

used to ascertain two natures. Hence, the two truths are understood as two natures of phenomena.

This is further explained by the Dalai Lama:

The two truths are not two ways of looking at one thing. They are distinct objects that are apprehended by two different types of consciousnesses [...] The two truths are understood in relation to two aspects or two natures of each phenomenon.⁵⁹¹

Accordingly, this analysis of the two-nature reading does not argue in favour of the two-nature reading *over* the two-perspective reading; it instead shows that the two are complementary readings. Nonetheless, since each perspective perceives a particular nature, this reading is emphasized as a two-nature reading of the two truths.

Despite the complementary nature of two perspective-reading and two nature-reading, Śāntideva's presentation of the two truths, in contrast to Candrakīrti, does not refer to two natures. His presentation can instead be used to emphasize a two-perspective reading of the two truths. Śāntideva distinguishes between the two truths accordingly:

Phenomena are seen and also imagined by common men as reality,
And not illusion-like – this is the dispute between yogis and common men.⁵⁹²

Śāntideva mentions the difference between how phenomena are “seen” (*drśyante*), thereby highlighting different perspectives. He states that phenomena are seen in two ways, not that there are two natures which are ascertained. This verse also builds on the above-mentioned distinction that common men view appearances while yogis view reality. It is not only the case that their perception is different, but that the common man takes what he views to be ultimately true instead of illusion-like. That is, he misidentifies the appearance with reality, whereas the yogi

⁵⁹¹ Gyatso and Chodron 2023, 10.

⁵⁹² *BCA IX.5*: “*lokena bhāvā drśyante kalpyante cāpi tattvataḥ | na tu māyāvadityatra vivādo yogilokayoh.*”

realizes that appearances are mere appearances.⁵⁹³ The basis of this division is how one perceives phenomena, thereby indicating a difference in perspective rather than the existence of two separate natures. That is, the yogi and common man are not differentiated due to viewing two different things, but due to taking their perception to have a certain status of reality. This can further be seen with reference to an example provided by Harris:

This appearing object [i.e., the illusion], moreover, is intersubjectively available; the magician and the spectators look at the same illusionary woman, just as the bodhisattva and ordinary people interact with *the same conventional object*. Nevertheless *the perspective with which they experience these objects differs radically*, depending on their level of insight into an object's nature.⁵⁹⁴

Harris outlines the importance of the perspective with which the objects are viewed. He does not mention viewing two natures; he instead mentions that there is a single conventional object with which individuals – yogis and ordinary, unenlightened beings – interact.

Furthermore, Śāntideva mentions that even the yogi has a superior perspective to the common man; indeed, some yogis have a superior perspective to other yogis:

Through a difference in intelligence, even [the views of] yogis are opposed by [the views of] more advanced yogis.
This occurs through the use of an example which both accept, without analyzing the purport.⁵⁹⁵

The first line of this verse is significant for this point – yogis oppose the view of other yogis. Interestingly, this suggests that there are more than two perspectives, as multiple yogis can have different, progressively higher perspectives. Likewise, different unenlightened, common men can have varying perspectives on what appears. That is, there can be many levels of conventional

⁵⁹³ See Mipham 2017, 89-90.

⁵⁹⁴ Harris 2024, 170, emphasis added.

⁵⁹⁵ *BCA IX.4*: “*bādhyante dhīviśeṣeṇa yogino'pyuttarottaraiḥ | dr̥ṣṭāntenobhayeṣṭeṇa kāryārthamavicārataḥ.*”

truth. For example, there is a difference between one who sees a stick bent in water and deduces that the stick is bent, as opposed to one who understands the principle of refraction and deduces that the stick is straight. There is, in this regard, a true account of the appearance of the stick. Despite this, one may argue that the stick does truly *appear* to be bent. In this regard, that the stick appears bent is also conventionally true; it is true according to the parameter of simple, unanalyzed vision. Thus, there are levels of conventional truth. The lower levels are a result of impaired cognitive faculties, whereas the higher levels are a result of unimpaired cognitive faculties. Mere vision leads to the understanding that the stick is bent, whereas vision with an understanding of the laws of physics – the principle of refraction – leads to the understanding that the stick is straight. A two-nature reading of the two truths cannot account for multiple conventional perspectives, as the many perspectives on appearances would have to amount to more than two natures. Likewise, the different levels of realization attained by yogis would also amount to more than two natures. Since, for Śāntideva, there are multiple perspectives, it shows that he does not defend a two-nature reading of the two truths.

7.1.3 *The Two Truths and Relativism*

Based on this presentation of the two truths, it may be argued that relativism follows: since the human perspective is conventionally true, and there are many humans, which human perspective amounts to the truth? As Tom F. J. Tillemans notes, “It might well seem to imply an extreme conservatism that nothing the world ever endorsed could be criticized or rejected.”⁵⁹⁶ Mādhyamikas were aware of this problem, as Kamalaśīla and Dharmakīrti both argue against the possible relativist implication of this view of conventional truth.⁵⁹⁷ A relativist reading of the conventional truth can be found in Koji Tanaka’s interpretation. Tanaka draws on Candrakīrti’s

⁵⁹⁶ Tillemans, 2011, 152.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., 152-154.

notion of conventional truth to note that truth is in accordance with *lokaprasiddha*.⁵⁹⁸ This term means “according to the world.” World (*loka*) refers to the *people* of the world, namely, those that are not enlightened, such as “cowherds and people on the street.”⁵⁹⁹ This leads to the possibility of relativism, since multiple beings in the world can have a different standard of truth. The danger of this view, Tanaka argues, is that no one could criticize an expert’s analysis about certain matters, as no account of truth is privileged over others.⁶⁰⁰

To respond to Tanaka’s reading, we argue that his analysis of *lokaprasiddha* is inaccurate. If something is true in accordance with the world, it does not mean that whatever worldly individuals say is indicative of the truth. Rather, the truth is identified by what the world sees *correctly*. John Newman highlights a Pāli sutta, the *Pupphasutta*,⁶⁰¹ which shows that the Buddha refers to what is accepted by the *wise individuals* (*paṇḍita*) in the world.⁶⁰² Candrakīrti does not explicitly mention that *wise* individuals are the standard of correctness, but this may have been common knowledge amongst his audience. As Newman notes, “Bits and pieces of an ‘I do not dispute with the world’ *sūtra* are found in a very large number of additional texts, including both non-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna *sūtras* and *śāstras*.”⁶⁰³ In this regard, standard phrases could be understood without needing to be explicated or presented in their entirety. *Lokaprasiddha* could perhaps be one of these phrases which monastics – the audience of Candrakīrti – would recognize as implying *loka-paṇḍita* rather than *loka* alone.

⁵⁹⁸ Tanaka 2016, 46.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 50.

⁶⁰¹ SN 22.94.

⁶⁰² Newman 2024, 77.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 78.

Moreover, Newman notes that Candrakīrti underscores a distinction between what is seen with proper and improper faculties.⁶⁰⁴ Thus, it is not just the Pāli canon which maintains a distinction between correct and incorrect worldly knowledge. Based on an ordinary human's means of knowledge, something can be identified as true, false, somewhat true, and so forth. Therefore, correct perception is still required for worldly individuals; an expert's analysis follows correct perception rather than an ignorant individual's incorrect perception. In this regard, *lokaprasiddha* is better understood as what is true according to the *standards* of the world. The standard is intellectual knowledge rather than an ordinary being's unintellectual understanding. The *wise* individuals implied in *lokaprasiddha* operate using correct perception; they have knowledge based on unimpaired human faculties. Tanaka's argument, therefore, does not sufficiently show that there is a potential problem of relativism in the conventional truth.

We can further respond to this potential problem by considering a point raised by Lawrence McCrea. In his presentation of Jñānaśrīmitra's philosophy, McCrea notes that:

Different conventional truths must be seen as ranked in a continuum ranging from lower (*adhara*) to higher (*uttara*), with the latter being systematically preferred to the former, even though both necessarily fall short of ultimate truth.⁶⁰⁵

This point shows that it is acceptable to have multiple perspectives with respect to appearances.⁶⁰⁶ However, relativism is avoided since the conventional truths are arranged *hierarchically* – it is not the case that all individuals' views of conventional truth are equally true. The standard that decides the hierarchical arrangement depends on how well the appearances are ascertained. The closer a view gets to describing an appearance correctly, the higher it is in the

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 84-85.

⁶⁰⁵ McCrea 2023, 565.

⁶⁰⁶ As Kapstein notes, Śāntideva's presentation of the two truths accepts the possibility of "a whole spectrum of philosophical views" (Kapstein 2019, 87). That is, there are many truths, each of which correspond to the various perspectives of the common man and yogis.

hierarchy. Garfield highlights that for Tsong Khapa, the standard of correctness for conventional truth is seeing with unimpaired cognitive faculties.⁶⁰⁷ Garfield explains this through the example of a mirage: one with knowledge of how mirages work will see the mirage as a mirage, whereas one without this knowledge will mistakenly think that the mirage is a real body of water.⁶⁰⁸ When correct cognition is applied to phenomena in general, there is a correct view of world, which includes the knowledge of laws of physics, being able to see with unimpaired vision, and so forth. When phenomena are viewed correctly, they are seen to be dependently arising.⁶⁰⁹ As there is a standard for a correct account of appearances, relativism is avoided. While other conventional truths can indeed be true from their own perspective, they are not the highest conventional truth since their parameters for knowledge are not based on a correct view of appearances.

The importance of correct cognition can also be found in Candrakīrti's work. Instead of a mirage, like Garfield's example, Candrakīrti presents the example of someone who sees incorrectly due to suffering from an eye disease:

Those who are afflicted by an eye disease
 Imagine nonexistent forms of hair, etc.
 Those who see with pure vision –

⁶⁰⁷ Garfield 2011, 34-35; see also Newland 2011, 69-70. As mentioned, this is also the case with Candrakīrti.

⁶⁰⁸ Garfield 2011, 29. See also *BCA* IX.28, where Śāntideva notes that an unreal illusion can be seen: we can understand this as seeing a mirage. The example of the mirage is also used in the Pāli Canon, where the Buddha teaches that someone who analyzes a mirage will see that it lacks a real existence (SN 22.95).

⁶⁰⁹ See Wetlesen 2002. We highlighted this point in Chapter 3 with respect to Wetlesen's notion of a "big self" – which is a correct ascertainment of the appearance of the self – as opposed to his notion of a "small self" – which is an incorrect ascertainment of the appearance of the self.

The fact that there is a true analysis of the appearance of the self – indeed, that there is a conventional *truth* – is an important point in Madhyamaka Buddhism. In contrast, we can consider the Jain school of thought, in which there are also multiple conventional truths. Here, many determinations can be true depending on the perspective that is taken (Dasgupta 2009, 176; 179-181). This leads to the Jain doctrine of *syādvāda*, meaning the doctrine of "perhaps." *Syāt* – written as *syād* in a compound – is the optative form of the existential verb, indicating that any statement must be made with this qualifier. That is, things are only *perhaps* true, not inherently, or ultimately true. From a Jain standpoint, the various truths are all conventionally true – and *equally* true – whereas for a Buddhist, the conventional truths have a hierarchical relation – and they are also a lower level of truth compared to the ultimate truth.

They see reality. The same should be understood here [with respect to the two truths].⁶¹⁰

The eye-disease prevents individuals from seeing clearly; indeed, they will see floating hairs, or things which are not really present. Hence, they “imagine” that they see things which do not really exist. Conversely, those whose vision is *not* obstructed will be able to see with “pure vision.” They can see the world as it is without any obstructions. Candrakīrti’s point that “the same should be understood here” is a reference to the two truths, as his surrounding verses makes evident. This verse is simply an example to highlight the distinction between the two truths. We can use this distinction to underscore that viewing the conventional truth incorrectly is like viewing the world with some obstructions – in Candrakīrti’s example, with an eye disease, and in Garfield’s example, without the knowledge of physics. On the other hand, viewing the conventional truth correctly consists of seeing without obstructions – without an eye disease, or with the knowledge of physics. This verse reveals that there is a correct standard to seeing the conventional truth, which thus overcomes the potential problem of relativism – not every view is correct, for some are obstructed whereas others are pure, that is, unobstructed.

This idea has important implications for ethics. Garfield considers that the conventional status of truth may delegitimize its nature:

The problem before us concerns the degree to which ethical truths or injunctions can be binding on us if they are “only” conventionally true. That is, does the conventional status of ethical truth take us straight to ethical relativism, or at least to ethical “optionalism?” We want to know that it is *really true* that torturing children is wrong, that generosity is to be cultivated, and that suffering is bad. **Adding “conventionally” to any of these claims appears to weaken their force and to render ethics insufficiently important.**⁶¹¹

⁶¹⁰ *MĀ* VI.29: “*vikalpitaṃ yat timiraprabhāvāt keṣādirūpaṃ vitathaṃ tad eva | yenātmanā paśyati śuddhadṛṣṭis tat tattvaṃ ity evaṃ ihāpy avaihi.*” See also *MĀ* VI.24-25 for a distinction between seeing correctly and seeing incorrectly.

⁶¹¹ Garfield 2016, 77-78. The italicized words are Garfield’s emphasis; the bolded words are mine.

As discussed, by noting that there is indeed a standard of truth, we can avoid the general problems associated with ethical relativism. A correct analysis of the nature of phenomena from a worldly perspective reveals that it is beneficial to be generous and care for others, and that it is detrimental to harm others. While it may be possible to argue otherwise and claim that it is better to be selfish, this is not in accordance with the conventional truth, as discussed in Chapter 3. That is, since all beings are interdependent, compassion is the correct response to the world.⁶¹² Since there is a standard for correctness, ethical relativism is avoided.

This passage from Garfield also introduces the potential problem of the qualifier *conventional*, namely that it seems to weaken the nature of truth. For if something is conventional, it lacks the strength of an ultimately true account. Garfield argues against this and notes that the qualifier *conventional* would only denote a weaker form of truth if one held a “substantial *difference*” between the two truths.⁶¹³ However, Mādhyamikas argue that the two truths are identical, as they are two perspectives on the same reality. The conventional truth is indeed a truth, though it is importantly the truth of how phenomena *appear* rather than how they *are*. For bodhisattvas – the audience of *BCA* – the sense of self and intention remain, so the conventional truth which accepts the labels of “self” and “other” is the standpoint from which the bodhisattva operates.⁶¹⁴ Ethics takes seriously the concept of personal identity, or the need for some sort of “self,” as we will see in the next chapter. For Mādhyamikas, the concept of personal identity, which is part of the conventional self, is only possible at the conventional level. Therefore, through the need to take seriously “self” and “other,” the bodhisattva’s ethics must operate at the conventional level. Hence, conventional ethics is not a weaker form of ethics, but a

⁶¹² Ibid., 89-90.

⁶¹³ Ibid., 78.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 89. See the discussion in Chapter 3 on the equalization of self and other.

way of operating in the world which accepts the ultimately unreal nature of phenomena. It is an ethics based on certain parameters which are necessary in order to engage with other beings. The conventional status of ethics can only be said to be weaker since it takes seriously these concepts that lack an ultimately real status of truth. Nonetheless, with respect to these concepts, they represent a *truth*, that is, a correct standard for ethics. Therefore, relativism is avoided, as there is a standard of correctness for the truth, and the *conventional* status of ethics does not relegate it to a lower level.

7.2 Emptiness

7.2.1 Emptiness and Svabhāva

The bodhisattva aims to attain the wisdom of the nature of reality in order to be free from suffering. Moreover, upon attaining wisdom, he can free other beings from suffering, as discussed in Chapter 2, hence its importance in his cultivation. In order to understand the two truths fully, the bodhisattva must understand emptiness. Emptiness (*śūnyatā*), that is, the lack of self-nature (*svabhāva*), is the ultimate truth of reality; understanding and realizing this will enable the bodhisattva to engage with the conventional world of appearances correctly. Emptiness entails that all phenomena lack any independent, substantial essence whatsoever. To explain emptiness is therefore impossible, for there is no substance to describe. Moreover, any attempt at an explanation is an intellectual endeavour that aims to describe a substantial nature of phenomena. It aims to provide a conceptual definition of a particular nature, but emptiness is beyond concepts and descriptions.⁶¹⁵ The inexpressibility of emptiness refers to its inability to be known through intellectual means, as mentioned in section 7.1.1. This is summarized by the Dalai Lama:

⁶¹⁵ Gyatso and Chodron 2023, 42.

Emptiness is also *indescribable* – it cannot be articulated by language. Emptiness as it is experienced by a yogic direct perceiver cannot be fully known or understood by words or concepts no matter how many statements are made about it or how much it is described. It goes beyond being an object of terms and conceptual minds; words cannot accurately express it and conceptual consciousness cannot realize it exactly as it is.⁶¹⁶

It is nonetheless possible to note what emptiness is *not*. Emptiness is not an essence, like a world-soul; it is not a permanent, immaterial ground for all existence. Emptiness is precisely the opposite: it is the *lack* of a ground. The ground that phenomena lack is a substantial nature which allows them to exist through their own ability; lacking this entails that they are empty of this substantial nature.

To understand emptiness, it is necessary to explain *svabhāva*. Literally, this term means “own-being,” referring to something that exists through its own power: *sva* means “belonging to oneself,” and *bhāva* means “nature.”⁶¹⁷ That is, unlike dependent qualities, whose truth or existence relies on conditions or parameters that enable their existence, *svabhāva* exists in and of itself, without relying on anything else.⁶¹⁸ Hence, “independent existence,” or “existing through own’s own power” conveys the meaning of *svabhāva*. Other possible translations of *svabhāva* – such as essence, inherent existence, and substantial nature – all convey this point. For simplicity, we will use the term “self-nature,” since it most directly captures the meaning of *svabhāva* as that which exists through its own ability. Ultimately, for Mādhyamikas, there is nothing that exists in this way; there is nothing that exists independently. All phenomena exist in dependence on other phenomena, which thereby entails that all phenomena lack *svabhāva*:

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁶¹⁷ See Siderits 2022, 172. Though Siderits presents this reading, he also argues that the Abhidharma schools consider *svabhāva* as a defining characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*). In this regard, “intrinsic nature” would be a satisfactory translation of *svabhāva*. However, given the close connection between *svabhāva* and dependent arising, which we will discuss shortly, “self-nature” offers a better translation of *svabhāva*, especially in a Madhyamaka context.

⁶¹⁸ See Westerhoff 2009, 24.

Looking at the world around us, it is clear that things exist dependently. Effects depend on causes. Farmers plant seeds in order to grow crops; students go to school to learn. Dependency in terms of causes producing effects is all around us. As human beings, we depend on one another to learn, to have food, to be cared for, and to care for others. Whatever is dependent cannot be independent.⁶¹⁹

In this passage, the Dalai Lama explains that all phenomena are dependent, which thereby entails that they lack self-nature. Indeed, as Phuntsho explains, “All things are empty because they lack self-existence; they lack self-existence because they originate in dependence on causes and conditions.”⁶²⁰

To explain what it means to be dependent on other phenomena, Westerhoff outlines two types of dependence: existential dependence and notional dependence.⁶²¹ An existential dependence, as evident in the name, indicates that something *exists* in dependence on something else. For example, a child exists in dependence on his father. A notional dependence is terminological: a father cannot exist as a “father” unless he has a child. This does not refer to his physical existence – for the being who is a father exists before the birth of his child – but to have the description of “father” requires the existence of his son.

These two types of dependence are not the only criteria to explain dependent arising. The Dalai Lama outlines a threefold presentation of dependent arising: 1) arising in dependence on causes and conditions, 2) existing through dependence on parts, and 3) an imputation in dependence on a basis of designation.⁶²² The first type of dependence consists of effects emerging from causes, such as flowers sprouting from seeds. The second type of dependence consists of identity: phenomena attain their identity through dependence on parts, such as a

⁶¹⁹ Gyatso and Chodron 2022a, 204.

⁶²⁰ Phuntsho 2005, 5.

⁶²¹ Westerhoff 2009, 26.

⁶²² Gyatso and Chodron 2022a, 205-208. See also Hopkins 1996, 166-167. There are subtle distinctions between these three types of dependence, but they all reflect the idea of existing due to the power of something else.

chariot existing due to the parts of the chariot. The third type of dependence indicates that phenomena exist through being imputed on a basis of designation. This third type of dependence has two aspects. The first is the dependent nature of concepts such as “long” and “short,” or “father” and “son” – the existence of each concept is dependent on a complementary concept. The second aspect is that phenomena exist through being named rather than existing inherently.⁶²³ For instance, the hotness of fire exists when there is someone to analyze and conceptualize the fire as “hot.” These three types of dependence, for Mādhyamikas, show the emptiness of all phenomena, as they all entail the lack of *svabhāva*. These criteria outline the many ways that phenomena are dependent. It is meant to be an exhaustive account of all the possible ways that phenomena can exist; Mādhyamikas aim to show that there is nothing that can exist through its own power. That is, all phenomena lack *svabhāva*.

We can further see the meaning of *svabhāva* in Nāgārjuna’s work. In *MMK XV*, Nāgārjuna defines *svabhāva* as that which exists independently. The *svabhāva* of phenomena, he argues, cannot be created; it cannot be the result of causes and conditions:

How could that which is fabricated be called “self-nature (*svabhāva*)?”
For self-nature is unfabricated, and it does not depend on anything else.⁶²⁴

Thus, *svabhāva* cannot be a dependent entity, since having a self-nature entails being uncaused/uncreated and independent. Moreover, Nāgārjuna mentions in a later verse that *svabhāva* must also be unchanging.⁶²⁵ These, then, are the characteristics of *svabhāva*: uncaused, independent, and unchanging. Since no entity can have these characteristics, Mādhyamikas deny the existence of *svabhāva*. They argue that, contrary to these characteristics, all phenomena exist

⁶²³ Gyatso and Chodron 2022a, 212.

⁶²⁴ *MMK XV.2*: “*svabhāvaḥ kṛtako nāma bhaviṣyati punaḥ katham | akṛtrimaḥ svabhāvo hi nirapekṣaḥ paratra ca.*”

⁶²⁵ *MMK XV.8*; see also Jinpa 2023, 307.

due to causes and conditions; all phenomena are caused, dependent, and changing, thus showing that they lack *svabhāva*. By existing due to causes and conditions, phenomena are said to be dependently arising, in that they exist through the power, or support, of other conditions. In this case, the *svabhāva* of phenomena cannot be accounted for, since phenomena have a dependent-nature rather than a self-nature – phenomena are therefore empty.

To demonstrate the lack of *svabhāva*, Nāgārjuna examines various concepts and phenomena in *MMK* and refutes their ability to exist on their own accord. Śāntideva does the same throughout *BCA IX*. As mentioned, we will not examine these arguments. We can nonetheless note that arguments against *svabhāva* are posited in relation to views proposed by other schools of philosophy. For example, Śāntideva argues against the views proposed by the Sāṃkhya school⁶²⁶ and Nyāya school,⁶²⁷ which were both major non-Buddhist schools in classical India. Śāntideva also argues against non-Madhyamaka Buddhist schools, such as the early Buddhist schools⁶²⁸ and the Yogācāra school.⁶²⁹ Śāntideva analyzes and refutes their arguments to prove that emptiness is not self-defeating and in fact necessary for phenomena to appear; this requires him to argue against the existence of *svabhāva*. Thus, we should understand emptiness in close relation with *svabhāva*, specifically that *svabhāva* does not exist due to the dependent nature of all phenomena.

Importantly, when phenomena are said to lack *svabhāva*, this does not imply that there is no existence at all. As Jinpa notes, the lack of *svabhāva* only indicates the nonexistence of a particular way of existing, specifically, not existing inherently, or through own's own power.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁶ *BCA IX.61-68.*

⁶²⁷ *BCA IX.69-72.*

⁶²⁸ *BCA IX.58-60.*

⁶²⁹ *BCA IX.11-35.*

⁶³⁰ Jinpa 2023, 31.

Though phenomena lack *svabhāva*, their conventional nature is maintained. It is simply the case that this conventional nature is not an uncaused, independent, or unchanging existence: the conventional nature of phenomena is their *dependent* existence. As we will see in the following chapter, one must take into account the conventional existence of the self to act in the world. The conventional self exists through dependence on various other phenomena. In this regard, the conventional self does not exist inherently, since there is no unchanging, independent entity; it merely appears to exist. That is, empty phenomena exist conventionally, without *svabhāva*.

7.2.2 *The Synonymity between Emptiness and Dependent Arising*

We have shown that the lack of self-nature follows from the dependent nature of all phenomena. We can now discuss the relation between emptiness and dependent arising. While traces of this idea can be seen in section 7.2.1, we will address this relation directly. Nāgārjuna explicitly identifies the synonymity between the two terms:

We declare that which is dependent arising to be emptiness.⁶³¹

This line is part of a verse that has received much attention in scholarship. One reading of this verse is presented by Mark Siderits and Shōryū Katsura, who argue that the two terms cannot be used interchangeably and are thus not synonymous. Rather than an identity, these terms *imply* each other:

Candrakīrti explains that when something like a sprout or a consciousness originates in dependence on causes and conditions [...] its so doing means that it arises without intrinsic nature. And anything that arises without intrinsic nature is empty or devoid of intrinsic nature. On this understanding of 18ab [the line cited above], *emptiness is not the same thing as dependent origination; it is rather something that follows from dependent origination*.⁶³²

⁶³¹ MMK XXIV.18ab: “*yaḥ pratīyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe.*”

⁶³² Siderits and Katsura 2013, 277, emphasis added.

Siderits and Katsura's reading is that emptiness *follows* from dependent arising. We can explain this view by noting that if emptiness and dependent arising are identical, it would be such that when dependent arising is known, so too would emptiness. However, this cannot be the case, since dependent arising is a quality of phenomenal appearances. The nature of appearances is that they are dependently arising; this can be analyzed through intellectual means. However, as mentioned in the section 7.1.1, emptiness is beyond the scope of the intellect and thus beyond the scope of analyzing phenomenal appearances. Hence, knowing one does not amount to knowing the other.

To know emptiness requires that one first analyze phenomena to see how they appear. When phenomena are seen to be dependently arising, one is still in the stage of analyzing their conventional existence, that is, their appearance. Here, phenomena can be identified through concepts like "hot" and "cold"; or "good" and "bad." These concepts are identified by analyzing their dependent nature; for instance, phenomena are hot in relation to beings who perceive heat, and heat arises due to an assemblance of various conditions. Emptiness is the next step of analysis: upon realizing that these concepts exist in dependence on other conditions, one can see that the concepts are empty of self-nature. That is, the concepts do not identify an inherent quality of phenomena. Moreover, the phenomena themselves exist through dependence on other phenomena, such as an organism in an ecosystem, which further shows phenomena's lack of self-nature. In this regard, the analysis of emptiness is a further step of investigation after realizing the dependent nature of phenomena, thus indicating that emptiness *follows* from dependent arising.

This reading differs from another, more common interpretation, which takes Nāgārjuna literally and identifies the synonymy between dependent arising and emptiness. Accordingly,

Thakchoe notes that, “knowing emptiness and knowing dependent arising are also identical in epistemic terms.”⁶³³ Garfield’s commentary to *MMK XXIV.18* further explains the synonymy:

Nāgārjuna is asserting that the dependently arisen is emptiness. Emptiness and the phenomenal world are not two distinct things. They are, rather, *two characterizations of the same thing*. To say of something that it is dependently co-arisen is to say that it is empty. To say of something that it is empty is *another way of saying* that it arises dependently.⁶³⁴

This analysis contrasts with Siderits and Katsura’s explanation. Garfield underscores that the reason the two concepts are synonymous is because they are “two characterizations of the same thing.” This phrase must be understood not as two *characteristics*, but as two ways of describing a single phenomenon, that is, as *characterizations*. If there were instead two characteristics, there would be two separate aspects that are identical. Conversely, Nāgārjuna argues in *XXIV.18ab* that *that* which is dependent arising *is itself* emptiness. This can be seen in the Sanskrit use of the relative-correlative construction through the words *yaḥ* and *tām* in this line. In Nāgārjuna’s verse, *yaḥ pratīyasamutpādaḥ* indicates the relative phrase, “that which is dependent arising.” The correlative phrase is *śūnyatām tām*, “that is emptiness.” In this regard, there is one thing being referenced and explained in two different ways.

We can understand the synonymy between these concepts by drawing on Śāntideva’s point that the two truths are two perspectives on viewing a single phenomenon. The conventional perspective is that which ascertains the dependently arising appearances, and the ultimate perspective is that which views the emptiness of phenomena. Hence, emptiness does not *follow* from dependent arising, but emptiness is itself what it means for phenomena to arise dependently. In this regard, emptiness is not another *step* of analyzing phenomena, but simply

⁶³³ Thakchoe 2011, 50. See also Berger 2010.

⁶³⁴ Garfield 1995, 305, emphasis added.

another *way* of viewing phenomena. This reading maintains Siderits and Katsura’s point that there are two separate analyses: one can describe phenomena according to their appearance – such as noting if something is hot or cold – or one can describe phenomena according to their reality. It follows, moreover, that to understand dependent arising thoroughly, one must also understand that it entails emptiness. An understanding of dependent arising that does not acknowledge the lack of self-nature is incomplete. Emptiness therefore explains the nature of dependent arising: to be dependent is to be empty, and to be empty is to be dependent.

7.2.3 *Selflessness of Persons and Phenomena*

In our explanation of emptiness, it is helpful to note its relation to the selflessness of persons and phenomena. We have used these terms interchangeably throughout this thesis, and we can analyze them to see why they are interchangeable. As mentioned, emptiness entails the lack of self-nature. The assertion that persons and phenomena are selfless is simply another way of expressing the lack of self-nature – that persons and phenomena are empty. This relation is explained by Karunadasa, who notes that, “‘emptiness’ is not a separate characteristic. Rather, it is another expression for ‘nonself.’”⁶³⁵ In relation to the explanation of emptiness presented above, persons and phenomena are dependent on other conditions. Since they are dependent, they lack the ability to exist through their own power, hence their lack of self-nature, or selflessness. Selflessness, moreover, may be mistakenly contrasted with the Self (*ātman*), or what Karunadasa refers to as an “overself.”⁶³⁶ The *ātman* is not explicitly denied in the assertion that persons and phenomena are selfless, but the implication is indeed present. *Ātman* refers to a soul, which Buddhists define as an independent, eternal existence.⁶³⁷ Since phenomena are

⁶³⁵ Karunadasa 2018, 44.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 44-49.

⁶³⁷ Rahula 1974, 33.

unable to exist through their own power, any potential existence of *ātman* is denied. Hence, the selflessness of persons and phenomena does not specifically mean the *ātman*-less of persons and phenomena. It rather means that persons and phenomena are not self-powered; that is, they do not exist through their own ability.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the selflessness of phenomena is a concept that is central to Mahāyāna Buddhism. A common view in scholarship is that early Buddhists – the Śrāvakayāna – only recognized the selflessness of persons and did not recognize the selflessness of phenomena.⁶³⁸ However, in *Mogharājamāṇavapucchā*, the Buddha instructs Mogharāja to “see the world as empty.”⁶³⁹ The selflessness of phenomena is not, therefore, a concept unknown to early Buddhists. However, some Buddhist schools – perhaps the Sarvāstivāda, the school that maintained that “everything exists” (*sarva-asti*) – may have accepted the existence of phenomena. Thus, we should understand that the selflessness of phenomena is a concept that is *emphasized* in Mahāyāna texts, and not necessarily a concept that is *introduced* here. Madhyamaka Buddhists, then, necessarily incorporate this understanding of phenomena in their understanding of emptiness. That is, they underscore the necessity of realizing the selflessness of phenomena in addition to the selflessness of persons. Emptiness must be attributed to all phenomena, not just to the self.

7.2.4 *The Soteriological Efficacy of Emptiness*

A final point to address is the soteriological efficacy of emptiness. We mentioned in Chapter 2 that realizing emptiness frees an individual from suffering. This occurs primarily due to wisdom eliminating the ignorance of an inherently existing self, or the ignorance concerning

⁶³⁸ Mipham 2017, 115.

⁶³⁹ Sn V.15: “*suññato lokam avekkhassu.*”

the self-nature of persons and phenomena. Attributing self-nature to oneself and phenomena is the root cause of suffering:

If there is something called “I,” fear will arise from any source.
[But] there is indeed no “I” whatsoever – [so] whose fear can there be?⁶⁴⁰

This verse indicates that fear – and we can include suffering as well – arises when one believes oneself to exist inherently, that is, as an “I.” When nonself is understood, there is no source for fear. In this regard, we must understand fear and suffering as arising not from external phenomena – as Śāntideva writes, “from any source” (*yatastato vā*) – but instead from one’s view of a self, that is, the belief that there is something called “I.” However, when there is no view of self, these external sources will not cause fear. The source of fear and suffering is not the external sources themselves, but their relation to one’s sense of self.

To demonstrate this, we can consider how pleasurable or unpleasurable experiences arise. While not identical to fear and suffering, examining pleasure and displeasure shows that external phenomena are not inherently pleasure-inducing; rather, it is their relation to the sense of “I” that makes them pleasure-inducing. For example, a tasty food is not in itself something that will produce pleasure. Instead, there must be someone to eat that food, and only then will there be a pleasurable experience. However, the food is not inherently pleasurable, since another individual can eat that food and not derive pleasure; for example, someone who experiences a tragic situation may not derive pleasure from eating the food. Hence, there must be a particular connection with a sense of individuality, a sense of “I,” in order to produce experiences. Likewise, no external phenomena in themselves produce fear and suffering. Instead, when the

⁶⁴⁰ *BCA IX.57*: “*yatastato vāstu bhayaṃ yadyahaṃ nāma kiṃcana | ahameva na kiṃcicedbhayaṃ kasya bhaviṣyati.*”

conditions are such that phenomena are encountered by an individual, or a sense of “I,” suffering arises. To eliminate suffering, then, one must remove this sense of “I.” One must realize selflessness, that is, his lack of self-nature. In brief, Śāntideva’s verse outlines that as long as nonself is not understood, the conditions for the arising of fear and suffering are present. When nonself is understood, the conditions have been eliminated.

The view of an eternally existent self can further be seen to cause suffering due to it producing views of “I” and “mine.” Consequently, eliminating views of “I” and “mine” will eliminate suffering.⁶⁴¹ The reason suffering follows from the view of a self is explained by Carpenter. She argues that these views lead to selfishness, such that one acts for one’s own benefit at the expense of others. As a result, the three poisons – greed, hatred, and delusion – arise.⁶⁴² There is greed due to the need to acquire things to benefit oneself. Hatred for others arises as a consequence: one wants to be the sole beneficiary of attaining goods, so he holds the belief that other beings should not benefit. This reinforces the delusion of self-existence, where one believes oneself to exist independently of others and lives according to this belief.

To see how this leads to suffering, we can consider the principle of dependent arising, namely, the interconnectedness of phenomena. The interconnectedness of existence entails that when one aspect of an ecosystem is harmed, so too are the other aspects. Likewise, when a dependently arising being acts for his own benefit and aims to harm others, he himself is harmed in turn. Conversely, if one realizes that one is interdependent with others and does not have an

⁶⁴¹ MN 22.22-29. A similar idea is presented by Siderits, who argues that emptiness, “liberates because it undermines the last vestige of clinging, the belief that there is a mind-independent ultimate truth” (Siderits 2003, 18). Siderits’s argument is based on the semantic interpretation of emptiness; this view holds that there is no separate, independent ultimate truth. Specifically, there is no self that exists separate from the aggregates (ibid., 20). Realizing this removes the source of suffering.

⁶⁴² Carpenter 2014, 22.

inherent self-nature to benefit, he will have a new outlook on life and act accordingly. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this leads to a compassionate way of life. The principle of interdependence – which is a basis for the eventual realization of emptiness – shows that when other beings are benefitted, one’s own happiness is also affected. In the same way that the detriments of one part of the ecosystem affects other aspects, benefits to one aspect will benefit other aspects.

The realization of emptiness also prevents one from viewing events in the world as inherently harmful. To highlight the soteriological efficacy of emptiness, we should note that emptiness does not *solve* the problem of suffering so much as it *de-problematizes* or *dissolves* the problem. This can be seen through an analogy that considers appearances as a dream. Events in a dream may cause suffering, but when one realizes that the dream is simply a dream and does not affect reality, suffering will not arise. For example, if a childless woman dreams that she has a child who is suddenly swept away by a river, the solution to her problem is to rescue the dream-child. If the woman suddenly wakes up and, in her half-awaken state, asks others to help her son, the primary solution to her problem is to enter her dream and rescue her dream-son. The teaching of emptiness, on the other hand, is akin to telling the woman that she did not have a son in the first place, and that her dream was simply a dream. In this regard, the teaching of the nature of reality has not *solved* the problem of rescuing the woman’s child, since the dream-child is still floating down the dream-river. However, emptiness has shown that the problem is not a problem in the first place; the overall problem is a mistaken assumption about the illusion-like reality with which one improperly associates.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴³ This example is merely to note how the teaching of emptiness would resolve the problems faced by ordinary beings. However, not every being is ready to hear these teachings, nor are they ready to accept that the dream-like

Towards the end of his chapter on wisdom, Śāntideva presents the notion that realizing emptiness dissolves suffering. After examining arguments to show that all phenomena are empty,

Śāntideva concludes:

Thus, there is no annihilation nor existence at any time.
Therefore, this entire world is unarisen and unceasing.⁶⁴⁴

This is to say that the world is empty – it does not arise, nor does it cease. On the conventional level, one can identify arising and ceasing, but ultimately, there is no self-nature that arises and ceases throughout this process. Upon drawing the conclusion that all phenomena are empty,

Śāntideva then explains the results of realizing emptiness:

Wandering beings are like a dream. Upon analysis, they are similar to a plantain tree.⁶⁴⁵
In fact, there is no difference among those who are liberated and those who are not.⁶⁴⁶

Thus, regarding empty phenomena, what can be gained, and what can be lost?
Who will be honoured or disregarded by whom?⁶⁴⁷

From what is there happiness or sorrow? What is there to like or dislike?
What is there to crave? When investigating craving, where is its self-nature?⁶⁴⁸

Upon analysis, what is the world of beings? What mere name⁶⁴⁹ will die?
Who will come to exist? Who exists now? Who is a relative? Who is friend of whom?⁶⁵⁰

Śāntideva argues that upon realizing emptiness, one will no longer see that there is someone who truly exists. Beings are like a plantain tree which lack a core; this symbolizes the lack of an

relations between beings are merely dream-like, that is, not truly real. For this reason, the bodhisattva takes seriously the conventional existence of the individuals in the world and alleviates – that is, solves – their worldly suffering.

⁶⁴⁴ BCA IX.150: “*evaṃ na ca nirodho'sti na ca bhāvo'sti sarvadā | ajātamaniruddhaṃ ca tasmātsarvamidaṃ jagat.*”

⁶⁴⁵ The plantain tree is a common metaphor used in Buddhism to represent the lack of a self-nature. In *Pupphavagga* (SN 22.95), the Buddha explains this metaphor, noting that one who cuts a plantain tree will see that it has no essence (*sāra*). The tree will appear empty, unsubstantial and essence-less (*ritakaññeva khāyeyya, tucchakaññeva khāyeyya, asārakaññeva khāyeyya*).

⁶⁴⁶ BCA IX.151: “*svapnopamāstu gatayo vicāre kadalīsamāḥ | nirvṛtānirvṛtānām ca viśeṣo nāsti vastutaḥ.*”

⁶⁴⁷ BCA IX.152: “*evaṃ śūnyeṣu dharmeṣu kiṃ labdhaṃ kiṃ hṛtaṃ bhavet | satkṛtaḥ paribhūto vā kena kaḥ sambhaviṣyati.*”

⁶⁴⁸ BCA IX.153: “*kutaḥ sukhaṃ vā duḥkhaṃ vā kiṃ priyaṃ vā kimapriyam | kā tṛṣṇā kutra sā tṛṣṇā mrgyamāṇā svabhāvataḥ.*”

⁶⁴⁹ That is, since no individual exists, he is just a mere name. This is another way to ask, “what individual will die?”

⁶⁵⁰ BCA IX.154: “*vicāre jīvalokaḥ kaḥ ko nāmātra marīṣyati | ko bhaviṣyati ko bhūtaḥ ko bandhuḥ kasya kaḥ suhṛt.*”

essence, or self-nature. Moreover, his point that there is no difference among those who are liberated and those who are not is likely a reference to Nāgārjuna's equation between samsara and nirvana.⁶⁵¹ If samsara and nirvana had self-natures, these could be analyzed and their difference could be determined. However, since they are empty, no difference between the two can be identified.⁶⁵² Similar to samsara and nirvana, an enlightened being and an unenlightened being are not inherently different – it is not the case that one being is bound to the world and another is unbound. Rather, all beings are ultimately unbound; the only difference is the perspective that either incorrectly sees beings as bound or correctly sees beings as unbound.

Since all beings and phenomena are empty, Śāntideva asks rhetorically what one can gain or lose. That is, there are no inherently existing phenomena that one can obtain or lose. He also questions the source of happiness and sorrow or likes and dislikes. There is, moreover, nothing to crave, no beings, no death, no birth, no relatives, and so forth. When one has realized that all phenomena are empty, the worldly problems that are associated with these concepts dissolve. Importantly, Śāntideva does not assert that one will no longer face the sufferings of the world, or that one will be able to withstand the death of loved ones, for example. He instead claims that these are no longer an issue for one who has realized emptiness. However, this is only the case from the perspective of ultimate truth. As most beings operate from a conventional perspective, these issues are legitimate concerns for them; the bodhisattva thus aims to alleviate their conventional suffering. However, the most effective way to alleviate the conventional suffering is to show that the conventional nature of the world is indeed conventional. This, therefore, highlights the soteriological efficacy of the ultimate truth: emptiness shows that there is

⁶⁵¹ See *MMK* XXV, especially XXV.19.

⁶⁵² Garfield 1995, 331. This further underscores the two-perspective reading of the two truths: the ultimate truth is merely a different way of viewing the same phenomenon that unenlightened beings perceive.

ultimately no source, ground, or reason for suffering, thereby removing the conventional suffering.

7.3 Conclusion

The perfection of wisdom has been presented with reference to the two truths and a study on emptiness. This study has not been exhaustive of all elements of emptiness; to do so requires a detailed engagement with the arguments for emptiness. This discussion nonetheless showed the nature of emptiness to be the lack of self-nature. This chapter only aimed to present Śāntideva's metaphysical view rather than defend it against other critiques; to this end, we examined the work of Nāgārjuna, as his work is key to developing the important aspects of wisdom found in Śāntideva. This chapter has also discussed the two truths distinction, which outlines the distinction between appearances and reality. The bodhisattva aims to attain wisdom concerning the latter. We have drawn on the work of Candrakīrti to develop this point, as he is an important Madhyamaka philosopher whose work likely influenced Śāntideva. The two truths will be especially relevant in the following chapter, as understanding the role of wisdom in ethics requires that the bodhisattva takes seriously the conventional truth. To take seriously the conventional truth requires the bodhisattva to understand the ultimate truth of emptiness. Thus, this chapter has presented the foundation for the next chapter, where we will show how wisdom enables the bodhisattva's generosity to be most effective in helping other beings.

Chapter 8: The Perfection of Wisdom II: Perfecting Generosity

8.0 Introduction

In this final chapter, we will address the question of how wisdom “perfects” generosity. The goal here is not to address the perfect form of generosity itself, but rather the necessity of wisdom for the perfected perfection of generosity. The perfect form of generosity is a separate topic and would require a discussion on the nature of generosity when there is ultimately no donor, no recipient, no gift, and so forth. We instead focus on showing why and how emptiness – specifically, the realization of emptiness – is necessary for the bodhisattva’s generosity. Briefly, wisdom enables the perfected perfection of generosity by removing self-grasping, which allows the bodhisattva to engage with the conventional world correctly – he can engage with the conventional *truth* rather than with conventional falsity. He does not superimpose a self-nature onto persons and phenomena and thoroughly recognizes their dependent nature, which thus allows him to act in a way that best benefits other beings.⁶⁵³ This analysis will ultimately show the interdependence between ethics and wisdom, which thus completes the presentation of the mind-training framework. By showing that the cultivation of the perfections aims at the attainment of wisdom, which in turn strengthens the bodhisattva’s ethics and produces a new way of acting, the mind-training framework is evident. Chapter 6 outlined the framework of the cultivation of the perfections by showing that the cultivation of generosity entails a gradual progression towards wisdom. We build on that discussion here and show why wisdom enables generosity to be perfected. That is, we have seen that the reason the cultivation of generosity

⁶⁵³ Traces of this idea have been presented in the previous chapters, such as in Chapter 3 with respect to the equalization of self and other, and in Chapters 4 and 5 with respect to the elimination of greed. This chapter will present the necessity of wisdom for generosity with respect to the two truths distinction and emptiness.

aims at wisdom is to enable generosity to be most effective in helping other beings, and this chapter addresses why this is the case.

The presentation of how wisdom enables generosity to be perfected will be shown with reference to two critiques. Each critique is analyzed in a separate section. Section 8.1 discusses the critique of the necessity of a self for ethics. By this, we mean that ethical behaviour and concepts in ethics seem to require a truly existent self. This critique is posited by a Śrāvakayāna school of Buddhism – likely a Pudgalavādin – though we also develop this critique by drawing on the work of Christine Korsgaard.⁶⁵⁴ In this critique, the doctrine of emptiness seems to prevent the possibility of ethics by addressing the issue of the possibility of ethics without a self. The focus of this critique concerns the two truths: if there is ultimately no self – if the self is ultimately empty – what becomes of ethics? Our response will draw on the importance of the conventional truth for ethics, noting that the conventional self is sufficient to account for the features of ethics.

This leads to the second critique in section 8.2: if all that is needed for ethics is the conventional truth, why is it necessary to realize the ultimate truth, that is, emptiness? This critique will be presented by developing a critique posited by a Śrāvakayāna school, though we will also reference points raised by Siderits⁶⁵⁵ and Sonia Sikka.⁶⁵⁶ The core of this critique, however, is found in Keown's work, who argues that analyzing metaphysics is irrelevant for analyzing ethics.⁶⁵⁷ We will respond to this critique by showing that although the conventional truth is indeed important, it can only be understood fully if it is combined with the realization of

⁶⁵⁴ Korsgaard 2009.

⁶⁵⁵ Siderits 2017, 11.

⁶⁵⁶ Sikka 2018.

⁶⁵⁷ Keown 2001, 19.

emptiness. That is, knowing the ultimate truth of emptiness enables the bodhisattva to engage with the conventional truth as it is rather than engage with a conventional falsehood. So, while section 8.1 does indeed argue for the importance of the conventional truth for ethics, we must ensure that a *correct* understanding of the conventional truth is maintained – this requires the wisdom of emptiness, that is, the ultimate truth. In all, the responses to these critiques show that the perfection of generosity does indeed require the infusion of the wisdom of emptiness, which thus demonstrates the mind-training framework of Śāntideva’s ethics.

8.1 *The Conventional Self and the Perfection of Generosity*

This section examines the need for a self in ethics. A Śrāvakayānist argues that essential elements in Buddhist ethics requires an existent self. We will first analyze this critique and develop this idea by drawing on the work of Korsgaard. Korsgaard’s work highlights the importance of personal identity. We will examine the nature of personal identity in Madhyamaka thought to show that the Mādhyamika can account for this without contradicting the principle of non-self. To do so relies on understanding personal identity as an aspect of the conventional self. We then turn to the main response to the critique, which is to highlight a fictionalist view. Fictionalism shows that the conventional world can still be taken seriously despite not being ultimately real. That is, the Mādhyamika can engage with the conventional world despite its ultimate unreality. Thus, the conventional self is shown to be sufficient to account for the important features of Buddhist ethics.

8.1.1 *The Necessity of a Self: Personal Identity and the Conventional Self*

The critique raised by the Śrāvakayānist is in response to Śāntideva’s point that those with wisdom can use the conventional truth to guide others.⁶⁵⁸ The objection asks how the

⁶⁵⁸ *BCA IX.8.*

conventional truth can be used accordingly – and consequently be the basis for ethics – if it is unreal and like an illusion. The Śrāvākayānist implies that there must be a self to account for features of ethics:

[Śrāvākayānist]: How is there merit from an illusion-like victor, as if he was real?
If an illusion-like being is dead, how can he be reborn?⁶⁵⁹

As mentioned in Chapter 7, the conventional truth concerns the appearance of the world. From an ultimate standpoint, the appearances are illusion-like, in that the appearances do not depict what is real. The Śrāvākayānist's objection thus argues that an illusion-like buddha – the victor (*jina*) – cannot be a source of merit. That is, if the Buddha were like an illusion, he would not be able to produce merit for those around him. Similarly, if the self is like an illusion – the illusion-like being – then rebirth would be impossible.

This is a problematic notion for Buddhists: it may lead to the Cārvāka view that denies karma and rebirth, as karma is an important element for rebirth. The Cārvākas were schools⁶⁶⁰ of Indian philosophy that denied the existence of karma and rebirth. It is perhaps in an attempt to distinguish the Buddhist view from the Cārvākas' that some Buddhists felt the need to introduce a non-illusory self, which the Śrāvākayāna critique here implies. Moreover, though Śāntideva's verses do not explicitly name a Buddhist school, it may be the case that the Śrāvākayānist with whom he is dialoguing here is the Pudgalavāda school. This school was critiqued by other Buddhist schools, such as the Theravāda, as their *pudgala* position was seen as a “veiled

⁶⁵⁹ BCA IX.9: “*māyopamājjinātpunyaṃ sadbhāve'pi kathaṃ yathā | yadi māyopamaḥ sattvaḥ kiṃ punarjāyate mṛtaḥ.*”

⁶⁶⁰ Though the Cārvāka are often presented as a single school, there is evidence to suggest that there were multiple Cārvāka schools. Notably, the titular character of the Tamil epic *Maṇimēkalai*, a Buddhist nun, questions various philosophers of different philosophical schools. Amongst those she questions, two follow Cārvāka/materialist principles. Hence, at least two schools are noted to belong to the Cārvāka schools (see Bhattacharya 2011, 39).

recognition of the soul theory.”⁶⁶¹ They were, nonetheless, adamant that their theory did not admit of a self, but merely a “person.” A real person, the Pudgalavādin-Śrāvakayānist would assert, is necessary to account for karma, merit, and so forth. In this view, an illusion-like Buddha cannot produce merit and benefit other beings; similarly, an illusion-like being cannot be reborn. If there is no rebirth, karmic activity is useless. That is, there is no need to perform karmically meritorious actions, since there is no individual who will receive the benefits from these actions – not just in future lives, but in this life as well. Karma and rebirth are important ethical features in Buddhism; thus, the implication in this critique is that there must be a self to account for these features.

Śāntideva responds to this critique by highlighting the nature of illusions and the illusory – that is, conventional – nature of merit:

[Mādhyamika]: As long as there is a collection of conditions, the illusion still occurs. How can it be that, due to a long-lasting continuum, a being truly exist?⁶⁶²

The nature of an illusion is not that it must last for a short period of time; an illusion remains as long as the causes and conditions of its appearances are present. Hence, an illusion can last for a long time, which may also transcend a single lifetime. As indicated in the twelve links of dependent origination, there is a circular chain of factors that amounts to the arising of an individual.⁶⁶³ These twelve links are the conditions for an individual’s conventional existence, that is, his body-mind complex. As long as these conditions are present, the illusion-like individual will arise. Therefore, Śāntideva holds that the individual who performs actions and experiences karmic results continues to have an illusory existence that transcends a single

⁶⁶¹ Karunadasa 2019, 28. For more on the Pudgalavāda, see Carpenter 2015.

⁶⁶² *BCA IX.10*: “yāvatpratyayasāmagrī tāvanmāyāpi vartate | dūrghasamtānamātreṇa katham sattvo'sti satyataḥ.”

⁶⁶³ See Rahula 1974, 53-54.

lifetime. So, to respond directly to the Śrāvakayānist's critique, an illusion-like being undergoes rebirth because his rebirth is an ongoing part of the illusion. There is no need to posit a truly existent self, since an illusion-like self can account for karma and rebirth.

In this critique, the Śrāvakayānist is also concerned with what becomes of merit. When making offerings to a buddha, one expects to receive merit. It is necessary to account for merit since it is a crucial aspect of Buddhism. Individuals perform good actions with the aim of receiving merit in return; this is done with the aim of procuring good future states of existence both in this life and the next. Moreover, the bodhisattva aims to generate merit for the purpose of helping other beings. As mentioned in Chapter 6, if the bodhisattva accumulates merit, he can share it with other beings and help to alleviate their suffering. Thus, the Śrāvakayānist poses the critique of what becomes of generating merit if the Buddha is illusion-like. The problem raised by the Śrāvakayānist is that the production of merit requires a truly existent buddha; that is, individuals cannot generate merit by worshipping or giving to an illusion-like buddha.

However, in response to this critique, we can note that though the Buddha is merely illusion-like, offerings to him can still generate merit. In this regard, one does not require a truly existent Buddha.⁶⁶⁴ Moreover, Mipham notes that the merit itself is merely illusion-like.⁶⁶⁵ Thus, offerings to an illusion-like Buddha produce illusion-like merit. To say that merit is illusion-like is to say that it is conventionally existent. As discussed in Chapter 7, something that is illusion-

⁶⁶⁴ See Patrul Rinpoche 2011, 173-174. Patrul Rinpoche tells the story of an old woman whose son would regularly travel for work. She asked her son for a relic of the Buddha so that she could make offerings to it and worship it. Her son, however, only remembered his mother's request during his return journey. So, he took a tooth from a deceased dog's skull and told his mother that it was the Buddha's tooth. The old woman believed her son and made offerings to this tooth. Though the tooth was not truly a relic of the Buddha, the old woman saw it as such and therefore generated merit.

⁶⁶⁵ Mipham 2017, 93.

like does not mean that it is nonexistent, but merely that it does not exist inherently. As Harris summarizes:

At the conventional levels of description, entities endure and function reliably as long as the relevant causal patterns hold. Similarly, conventionally existing persons die and take rebirth.⁶⁶⁶

Harris states that the conventional self, or conventionally existing persons, account for the ethical concepts raised by the Śrāvakayānist. The conventionally existing person is the illusion-like being that Śāntideva mentions. So, the Śrāvakayānist's critique does not defeat the Madhyamaka position. The illusion-like nature of the world is fully capable of accounting for the necessary features of Buddhism. That is, Buddhism does not require a truly existent self to account for the features of ethics.

We can further see the concern raised by the Śrāvakayānist by noting that if there is no self to perform karma and receive merit, then ethical nihilism follows. For example, if the bodhisattva believes himself to not have a self, then he may not take seriously the need to attain awakening, since he does not exist to progress on the path. Similarly, there are no individuals that the bodhisattva frees from suffering, so the bodhisattva path loses its basis for existence.⁶⁶⁷ Therefore, following the Śrāvakayānist, to account for these features of ethics requires an existent self. A similar point is raised by Korsgaard:

To regard some movement of my mind or my body as *my action*, I must see it as an expression of my self as a whole, rather than as a product of some force that is at work *on* me or *in* me.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁶ Harris 2024, 165.

⁶⁶⁷ See the discussion in Chapter 3, where we responded to Paul Williams's critique concerning non-self and the bodhisattva path.

⁶⁶⁸ Korsgaard 2009, 18.

Korsgaard argues that for an action to be one's own, there must be an agent performing the action. That is, for an action to be *mine*, there must be an *I*, or self that performs that action. In the bodhisattva's case, to perform a generous, or compassionate action requires that *he exists* as a generous or compassionate agent.

A similar point is raised by Siderits. He considers the point that for an action to be "mine," it must follow from "my" intention. For an intention to be "mine," it must follow from "my" character. Siderits concludes:

Eventually, this quest will lead us back to a time before I was born. It is this prospect that leads the agent causation theorist to claim *I can be responsible for the action only if the event of the intention's occurrence is the effect not of a prior event but of an agent, me.*⁶⁶⁹

That is, for an action to be "mine," it must somehow come from "me." This seems to imply the necessity of a self for actions; for actions to belong to someone, there must indeed be *someone*. This, as mentioned above with the Śrāvākayānist claim, implies the necessity of a self. Applying this argument to the doctrine of non-self seems to lead to the point that the ultimately empty bodhisattva cannot act, for non-self seems to indicate that there is no agent. In relation to the above Śrāvākayāna critique, there is no agent to perform karma and receive merit, which entails that the bodhisattva path cannot exist unless we posit a truly existent bodhisattva.

Korsgaard's point relates to the Śrāvākayānist's critique since both argue that there must be something – or someone – to account for the features of ethics. For Korsgaard, this is personal identity. The bodhisattva responds to this critique by highlighting the importance of the conventional self, that is, the illusion-like being. By considering what exactly personal identity

⁶⁶⁹ Siderits 2017, 140, emphasis added. Siderits does, however, note the problem with this argument. He argues that an action can take place without an enduring agent (ibid.). We only present his argument here to expound the Śrāvākayānist's view.

entails, we can see how it relates to the conventional self. According to Korsgaard, personal identity requires that the individual takes seriously some parameters that he sets for his existence:

Valuing yourself under a certain description consists in endorsing the reasons and obligations to which that way of identifying yourself gives rise. To say that a citizen of a certain nation values himself under that description is not to say that his purpose is to be a citizen of that nation. It is to say that he ratifies and endorses the reasons and obligations that go with being a citizen of that nation, because that's how he sees himself.⁶⁷⁰

Personal identity, in this regard, consists of constituting oneself under a particular description. According to this definition, it is not objectively, or inherently true that someone is who he is – for example, a citizen of a country, or a bodhisattva. However, one can choose to take these designations seriously, which then influences how he acts. That is, to act, one does not need to exist inherently but only needs to accept a certain demarcation of a self; this is his personal identity. Since the bodhisattva is not inherently who he is – a citizen, or so forth – he is empty of this identity. To be empty of this identity is not to say that the identity does not exist, but rather that the identity exists in dependence on causes and conditions. Following Korsgaard's point, the bodhisattva does not say that his inherent purpose is to be a bodhisattva; rather, he sees himself as a bodhisattva and therefore acts accordingly.

Mādhyamikas also take seriously some parameters that one sets for his own existence. Garfield notes that when one decides to do something, the conditions that motivate that action are cognitive and emotional states that one takes as his own:

The narrative that constructs the conventional self that is the basis of my individuation includes [the cognitive and emotional states] in virtue of our psychology and social practices.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁷⁰ Korsgaard 2009, 24.

⁶⁷¹ Garfield 2017, 54, emphasis added.

In this regard, one constructs his identity by viewing himself within a certain narrative, which includes one's very way of living – that is, his cognitive and emotional states. Moreover, Wallace notes that one can have varying bases of designation for his identity: on a simple level, one's identity can be his body-mind; on a greater level, it can be one's substrate consciousness; and on yet another level, it can be one's Buddha nature.⁶⁷² Wallace's point highlights the fact that one's identity is not something fixed or inherent; it is rather formed by one's imputation. Indeed, as the Dalai Lama states, "The view of a personal identity superimposes inherent existence on our own I and mine."⁶⁷³ That is, personal identity follows from reifying an experience that one has. These experiences include things like "I am hungry," or "I am happy," and so forth. To ascribe that *there is someone* who experiences these is ultimately false, since the experiences are based on the aggregates rather than an inherently existing self:

The [five] psychophysical aggregates are the basis of designation of the self; they are the basis of our innate sense of self. The notion "I" comes about as a result of some experience; it arises in relation to one of our aggregates.⁶⁷⁴

Hence, personal identity is something that one superimposes on the five aggregates. Personal identity in Madhyamaka philosophy thus accepts the same premise as Korsgaard's argument in noting that one's identity is based on adopting certain parameters.

The conventional self is constructed through the five aggregates and the twelve links of dependent arising. In Madhyamaka thought, the conventional self can be understood as that which bears one's identity.⁶⁷⁵ From a Buddhist standpoint, that which bears the identity is the five aggregates, as seen above in the Dalai Lama's analysis; the five aggregates are therefore

⁶⁷² Wallace 2017, 120-121.

⁶⁷³ Gyatso and Chodron 2022b, 133. See also Wallace 2017, 118.

⁶⁷⁴ Gyatso and Chodron 2022b, 170. This passage highlights, moreover, that personal identity is ultimately a delusion. We will return to this point shortly, namely that the delusory view is taken seriously for ethics.

⁶⁷⁵ See Korsgaard 2009, 24. She references an existence that "bears" a personal identity.

what we consider the conventional self.⁶⁷⁶ Thus, the Mādhyamika and Korsgaard refer to different things with respect to the conventional self and personal identity. Nonetheless, the Madhyamaka view of the conventional self is not opposed to personal identity; we must understand personal identity as a part of the conventional self. In the Madhyamaka view, one's self arises through the twelve links of dependent arising. From these links arise consciousness, feelings, and overall dispositions – these are aspects which shape one's identity. These links are also connected to the five aggregates, which form the basis of one's conventional existence. That is, the aggregates consist of one's body, consciousness, feelings, and so forth. Thus, the twelve links which establish the illusory/conventional self are the basis for the self and consequently personal identity.

To understand the relation between the conventional self and personal identity, it is helpful to analyze the term *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*. This term literally translates to “the view of a true self/body,” though the Dalai Lama translates this as “personal identity.”⁶⁷⁷ Though the term is not used by Śāntideva, Prajñākaramati explains a point in *BCA* IX.78 using a similar term, *satkāyadarśanam*.⁶⁷⁸ *Darśanam* and *dr̥ṣṭi* are based on the same root (*dr̥ś*), thus reflecting a similar use; both terms can be read as “the view of a true self/body.” Specifically, this term refers not simply to one's *view*, but one's *belief* in a truly existing self. Following the Dalai Lama's translation, then, the Madhyamaka conception of personal identity is a belief in a self which arises due to the experiences obtained through the five aggregates. Importantly, the flaw that the Mādhyamika highlights is to take this personal identity as indicating an *inherently true* nature.

⁶⁷⁶ See *MĀ* VI.124-127; 142-144; 150-151.

⁶⁷⁷ Gyatso and Chodron 2022b, 133.

⁶⁷⁸ *BCA* P 493. Prajñākaramati does use the term *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* shortly after in the same context. It is likely that he first used *satkāyadarśanam* instead of *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* to highlight the similarity with Śāntideva's term that he is expounding: Śāntideva uses the term *ātmadarśanam*. Hence, maintaining *darśanam* is useful for a reader's understanding.

The five aggregates, then, construct the appearance of an individual self; this is considered the conventional self, a part of which is personal identity.

Though ultimately unreal, this identity – indeed, the overall conventional self – is taken seriously for ethics.⁶⁷⁹ Śāntideva explicitly presents this response in *BCA* IX. When faced with the charge that compassion loses its basis due to emptiness, Śāntideva responds by noting the importance of the conventional self. We can use this response to highlight the importance of the conventional self to account for the features of the bodhisattva’s ethics:

[If you argue] “If beings do not exist, to whom is there compassion?”
[We respond]: for the individual who is imagined through delusion, [whose existence] we accept for the sake of the goal.⁶⁸⁰

[And if you argue], “If there is no individual, whose is the action to be done?” [We respond]: though this is true, [the endeavour exists] on account of delusion.
The delusory action is not prevented for the very purpose of alleviating suffering.⁶⁸¹

In these verses, Śāntideva responds to the critique that compassion loses its basis if there is no inherently existing self. His response is that though the bodhisattva is ultimately nonexistent – though there is ultimately no inherently existing self – one’s existence and his actions are postulated through delusion. To exist conventionally is to postulate a self that is based on delusion, for the “existence” of a self is based on a false view of reality.⁶⁸² This illusory existence is taken seriously to account for the features of the bodhisattva’s ethics; that is, the conventional

⁶⁷⁹ This is therefore a key difference between the conventional self and the “person” of the Pudgalavādins. The conventional self does not exist – it only has *conventional* existence – whereas the “person” for the Pudgalavādins exists.

⁶⁸⁰ *BCA* IX.76: “*yadi sattvo na vidyeta kasyopari kṛpeti cet | kāryārthamabhyupetena yo mohena prakalpitaḥ.*” “The sake of the goal” refers to freeing other beings from suffering.

⁶⁸¹ *BCA* IX.77: “*kāryaṃ kasya na cetsattvaḥ satyamihā tu mohataḥ | duḥkhavyupaśamārthaṃ tu kāryamoho na vāryate.*”

⁶⁸² Despite postulating a self, the bodhisattva does not superimpose an inherent existence on his conventional designation. The bodhisattva merely acts in accordance with conventional designations, but importantly, he knows that the conventions are mere conventions (see Harris 2024, 166; 172).

self is taken seriously. In this regard, for the sake of other beings, the bodhisattva acts according to the view that the conventionally existent self is real:

The saint (*bodhisattva*) is firmly determined that he will help an infinite number of souls to attain nirvāṇa. In reality, however, there are no beings, there is no bondage, no salvation; and the saint knows it but too well, yet he is not afraid of this high truth, but proceeds on his career for attaining for all illusory beings illusory emancipation from illusory bondage.⁶⁸³

Importantly, however, he is not deluded by this perspective; he recognizes that this is a delusion that is taken seriously for the purpose of benefiting other beings, indeed, for ethics in general.⁶⁸⁴

The delusory view of the self as an agent who acts is necessary to adopt in order to engage with other beings who operate within that framework, that is, with beings who imagine themselves to exist inherently. From the standpoint of ordinary beings, suffering – and beings who suffer – truly exist, and this suffering is what the bodhisattva aims to eliminate. In agreement with the view of ordinary beings, the bodhisattva accepts his illusory existence as a real entity and acts accordingly.

Korsgaard argues that personal identity is necessary to account for the features of ethics. The Mādhyamika argues that the conventional self is necessary. The Mādhyamika and Korsgaard are similar in this regard, since the conventional self includes one's identity. There may indeed be a difference regarding how identity arises, the nature of the self that bears this identity, or even the nature of the identity itself, but the necessity of an entity is shared by both Korsgaard and the Mādhyamika. Thus, we can respond to the Śrāvakayānist's critique by noting that though a self is

⁶⁸³ Dasgupta 2009, 127. Dasgupta's use of *illusory* beings reflects our use of *conventional* beings. See also Harter 2023, 504 for a discussion on the philosopher Haribhadra, who argues that the path is taken as a necessary illusion.

⁶⁸⁴ See Garfield 2017, 52-53. Garfield notes that the "person" – what we have termed the "conventional self" – is merely a conventional designation that one creates. Moreover, the Mādhyamika's account of agency "only addresses the realm of dependent origination, of conventional truth" (*ibid.*, 52). That is, the Mādhyamika takes seriously conventional concepts, which exist in the realm of dependent origination, in order to benefit other beings.

indeed necessary to account for features of ethics such as karma and rebirth, this does not entail an eternally existent self. That is, the Śrāvakayānist's argument does not undermine the Madhyamaka position; it rather clarifies how we should understand the empty nature of the self. Like how personal identity is the basis for actions without being ultimately existent – that is, as a pre-existing entity – so too is the conventional self not ultimately existent while being the basis for features of ethics.

This idea is also raised by Candrakīrti. He argues that Mādhyamikas accept the provisional existence – that is, the conventional existence – of one's identity for the sake of other beings:

Just as “I” and “mine” were taught
By the Buddha, who was free from the view of personal identity (*satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*),
Accordingly, though all phenomena lack self-nature,
He taught provisionally that they exist.⁶⁸⁵

“I” and “mine” are views that the Mādhyamika aims to overcome. However, for the purpose of teaching other beings – that is, to free them from suffering – the bodhisattva momentarily maintains these concepts. As Candrakīrti notes, the Buddha is someone who is free from the view of personal identity. Thus, when he uses concepts like “I” and “mine,” it is for the purpose of helping other beings.

8.1.2 *The Conventional Self Taken Seriously: Madhyamaka Fictionalism*

To demonstrate how the bodhisattva takes seriously his illusory existence, we can revisit an analogy introduced in the previous chapter: the bodhisattva is like an actor who plays a character. This analogy shows the bodhisattva acting *as if* beings and their suffering are real

⁶⁸⁵ *MĀ* VI.44: “*ahaṃ mamety eva yathā dideśa satkāyadr̥ṣṭer vigame 'pi buddhaḥ | tathā 'svabhāvān api sarvabhāvān astīti neyārthatayā dideśa.*”

despite not being so. The character is not ultimately real – since he is a fiction devised for a play or movie – but the bodhisattva assumes the reality of this character in order to act in the fictional world assumed by the character. The character is thus relatively real and performs relatively real actions, such as acting as a king who rules over others, as a warrior who fights others, and so forth.⁶⁸⁶ This relative truth is the conventional truth; it is an appearance that the actor takes seriously for the purpose of partaking in the play. This analogy also reveals the point that the actor must take on the role of *his* character and not another individual's character. That is, if one's character is a warrior who fights others, he must perform *that* role and not the role of, for example, a monk who has renounced the world. In this regard, we can analogically say that there is a conventional *truth* for the character: his being a warrior is a conventionally true account of his appearance.

However, from the standpoint of ultimate truth, there is no real warrior, as the warrior is a role played by an actor. We can immediately notice a problem with this analogy, for in Madhyamaka thought, there is no overall actor who plays a role. Instead, there are a collection of causes and conditions that produce the role.⁶⁸⁷ Like a character in a play, the bodhisattva adopts a relatively real character, though importantly, he knows that the character is a fiction and not real. By knowing that the character is not real, he will not be caught up in or overwhelmed by the

⁶⁸⁶ See Jinpa 2002, 165. Jinpa provides a similar example regarding characters in a play. He considers the fictional Sherlock Holmes and argues that it is false to say that Holmes is a Tibetan who lives in Lhasa. In this regard, there is a *true account* of the fictional character.

⁶⁸⁷ In this regard, it is important to note a distinction between “illusion” and “illusion-like.” As seen in the above verses (IX.9 and 10), Śāntideva does not use the term “illusion” (*māya*), but instead uses the term “illusion-like” (*māyopama*), where the suffix *opama* (which appears as *opama* in this compound) means “like.” We can find similar usages of the term *māyavat*, where the suffix *vat* also indicates “like.” The distinction between “illusion” and “illusion-like” is important to note, since an illusion itself is based on something real. For instance, objects can be arranged in a way to produce an illusion of another object; one can take a pile of sticks and arrange them to look like an animal. Here, there are real sticks that produce the illusion of an animal. On the other hand, if an appearance is *like* an illusion, it need not have an underlying basis. The appearance is only *like* an illusion in that it does not exist as it appears. In our example of the individual who plays a role, his appearance as a character does not account for how he really is, since he is ultimately empty.

character's situation. Nonetheless, within the scope of the play, there will be some characters who are suffering, and their suffering will need to be alleviated. Since, from the Madhyamaka standpoint, these characters do not realize that they are merely characters, they operate from a different framework than those with wisdom – they operate as if the play is a true account of reality. For their sake, the bodhisattva assumes the framework that the play is truly real and that their suffering is also real, despite knowing that this is not the case. This is a delusion when compared to the reality that they are all actors, but this delusion is maintained for the sake of alleviating the suffering of the other beings.

This analogy can be understood through an idea highlighted by Tillemans called “fictionalism.”⁶⁸⁸ A fictionalist account of the world holds that ultimately, certain views are false. However, fictionalists can accept a level of truth regarding the world's views.⁶⁸⁹ A Madhyamaka Buddhist, by this definition, is a fictionalist. The fictional account of the world is referenced through qualifiers such as “conventional.” To note that the world is conventionally real, or that there is a conventional self, is tantamount to highlighting its fictional nature:

Just as fictional discourse allows us to talk about unreal fictional entities in an ontological uncommittal way, so does Buddhist conventional discourse allow us to talk about unreal conventional objects in an ontological uncommittal way.⁶⁹⁰

However, we must clarify what exactly fictionalism entails to draw its parallel with Madhyamaka thought. Tillemans argues that the fictionalist account of a Mādhyamika is similar to error theory.⁶⁹¹ Mark Eli Kalderon explains error theory through the following definition: “The sentences in the target class express propositions that represent the putative subject matter but are

⁶⁸⁸ Tillemans 2011, 158-159.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁶⁹⁰ Guerrero 2023, 348.

⁶⁹¹ Tillemans 2011, 158; see also Chakrabarti 2020, 177.

systematically false.”⁶⁹² Simply put, fictionalism refers to truth in a particular context, but these claims are ultimately not true – not necessarily *false*, but fictions.⁶⁹³ For ethics, this leads to the view that, “While people widely believe that there *are* properties like good and bad, in fact there are only ethical attitudes and standards for ethical reasoning.”⁶⁹⁴ The fact that there are *standards* is an important point to highlight; as mentioned in the previous chapter, the conventional truth is indeed a true account of appearances ascertained through valid reasoning. Thus, the fictional status of concepts such as “good” or “bad” should not be understood as arbitrary designations, but designations in accordance with a correct standard of reasoning. That is, since the conventional truth is indeed a truth, it is not a completely false view, but only false with respect to a greater reality, in this case, the ultimate reality of emptiness.

This presentation of fictionalism should not, therefore, be conflated with what Emily Bourne calls “Pretence Fictionalism,” which considers the fictional truth akin to a game of make-believe.⁶⁹⁵ In a game of make-believe, the truth is arbitrarily decided, as the rules of a game can vary. In contrast, as seen in our presentation of the two truths, a fictionalist account of Madhyamaka philosophy maintains a truth according to correct standards of reasoning.⁶⁹⁶ Though fictionalism provides a useful parallel for understanding the Madhyamaka position, we will see in section 8.2 that there is an important difference – namely, the ultimate truth informs the conventional truth. The standard of correctness for the conventional truth depends on the

⁶⁹² Kalderon 2005, 105. Kalderon also provides a revised definition of error theory: “Competent speakers should not believe propositions expressed by the target sentences that they accept either because they are false or because they are unjustified” (ibid., 106).

⁶⁹³ Kassor 2018, 1186.

⁶⁹⁴ Tillemans 2011, 159.

⁶⁹⁵ Bourne 2013, 152-153. We will not analyze this form of fictionalism beyond noting that it is not the view held by Mādhyamikas.

⁶⁹⁶ It is noteworthy that different Mādhyamikas can have different interpretations of the two truths, so we may find different accounts of fictionalism. However, this thesis is not the appropriate place for this inquiry; we will instead proceed with a fictionalist account that is appropriate for our proposed interpretation of the two truths.

ultimate truth: the conventional truth of dependent arising can only be understood fully if it is seen to imply emptiness. In this regard, there is a correct standard for associating with phenomena; for instance, one must not associate with phenomena as inherently existent. Conversely, in pretence fictionalism, the ultimate truth does not necessarily determine the conventional truth. Nonetheless, the Madhyamaka view does indeed take on a form of fictionalism, since the conventional truth is only fictionally true, hence our reference to this framework here. We must understand Madhyamaka fictionalism as a specific type of fictionalism, one that maintains a relation between the two truths.

8.1.3 *Fictionally Real vs. Ultimately Real*

Adopting a fictionalist view allows us to incorporate Korsgaard's point about the necessity of personal identity alongside the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness. The bodhisattva assumes the reality of the conventional self – which includes his personal identity – despite knowing that it is ultimately unreal. There is, however, an important difference between Korsgaard and Śāntideva. Though both Korsgaard and Śāntideva maintain that there is a designated agent who acts, this designation refers to something real for Korsgaard, whereas for Śāntideva, this designation refers to something conventional and illusory. As Mipham identifies, there is a difference between Buddhist realists and Mādhyamikas regarding the reality of phenomena such as merit. There is no disagreement that merit arises; there is only disagreement on if merit is real or unreal.⁶⁹⁷ Likewise, the reality of the designations that Korsgaard highlights is a point of difference between her view and Śāntideva's view. There is a key difference between something that is truly real – the realist view – and something that is only real in the fictional world – the Madhyamaka view.

⁶⁹⁷ Mipham 2017, 93.

For Śāntideva and the purpose of the bodhisattva path, the difference in the agent's ontological status is minor, as the bodhisattva is indeed a bodhisattva from the conventional standpoint. The analysis of the real nature of all phenomena is neglected for the sake of benefitting others.⁶⁹⁸ If the bodhisattva analyzes the nature of individual beings – both himself as a bodhisattva and other beings who need to be freed from suffering – he will see that they are empty of self-nature and therefore not truly afflicted by suffering. From this perspective, there is no sufferer, nor is there suffering to remove. However, since other beings take seriously the illusory world of suffering, the bodhisattva also takes this perspective seriously to help others. Thus, the bodhisattva fully accepts the conventional truth and operates in the world of appearances as if it is real.⁶⁹⁹

For a realist, this fictionalist response is unsatisfactory: to say that the conventional truth is ultimately unreal simply ignores the realist's position. Thus, a realist would not accept the proposed fictionalist position that Mādhyamikas hold. The Mādhyamikas, moreover, would disagree with the realist claim that the appearances are truly real. The Madhyamaka response to the realist position is to argue that the ultimately unreal nature of phenomena can be seen through further investigation of the phenomena themselves. That is, the Mādhyamika argues that the realist position is only held due to the lack of analysis on the nature of phenomena:

Even perceptible forms and the like are [established] due to general acclaim, not due to valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*).
That [general acclaim] is false, like the general acclaim that impure things are pure.⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid., 89.

⁶⁹⁹ See the above reference to *BCA IX.76-77*.

⁷⁰⁰ *BCA IX.6*: “*pratyakṣamapi rūpādi prasiddhyā na pramāṇataḥ | aśucyādiṣu śucyādiprasiddhiriva sāmṛṣā.*”

Śāntideva indicates here that phenomenal appearances – “perceptible forms and the like” – do not have true, inherent existence. By “general acclaim,” he refers to what is determined by ordinary, unenlightened beings. Ordinary beings assert that phenomena truly exist as they appear. To posit that phenomena truly exist is simply a result of following what others have said about these phenomena; they have not been analyzed, so their real nature has not been discovered – specifically, their ultimately unreal nature has not been discovered. Importantly, the phenomena have not been analyzed *enough*, as a thorough analysis will reveal their empty nature.

In contrast to knowledge from general acclaim, Śāntideva uses an important term in this verse, *pramāṇa*, to refer to valid knowledge. Different philosophical schools accept different *pramāṇa* as a source of valid knowledge. For instance, the Cārvāka schools hold only perception through empirical means to be a source of valid knowledge. Other schools will include other sources, such as inference and/or the testimony of trusted individuals. In a recent work, Malcolm Keating explores the meaning of *pramāṇa* with reference to the Nyāya school of philosophy. He uses the translation “cognitive tool,” but also identifies other common translations, such as “way of knowing,” “knowledge source,” or “epistemic instrument.”⁷⁰¹ The key idea of *pramāṇa* is that it is a source of *valid* knowledge. In this regard, a *pramāṇa* would not be information obtained in a dream, for example. For Mādhyamikas, an important *pramāṇa* is valid reasoning.⁷⁰² By analyzing phenomena and reasoning about their nature, the Mādhyamika can arrive at valid knowledge concerning their true nature. *Pramāṇa* should, in general, be understood as an instrument of inquiry that leads to valid knowledge. For the purpose of Śāntideva’s verse, it is only important to distinguish *pramāṇa* from invalid knowledge – the latter is specifically the

⁷⁰¹ Keating 2024, 22.

⁷⁰² See Mipham 2017, 90.

generally held views of common individuals who have not analyzed phenomena. Hence, Śāntideva's point in this verse is that when seen and analyzed correctly, the true nature of phenomena will be evident: phenomena do not ultimately exist, despite appearing to do so. Likewise, designations of personal identity, or a true self, will be seen as ultimately empty.

In this verse, moreover, Śāntideva provides a response to the realist view that phenomena truly exist. Śāntideva argues that when phenomena are not analyzed, they appear to exist. Everyday life operates on this unanalyzed perspective, and as there is no need to analyze phenomena for usage in daily life, this view is satisfactory for most individuals. However, when analyzed, phenomena are seen as nonexistent; what is seen as real is in truth unreal. The realist, according to the Mādhyamika, does not analyze reality thoroughly enough to arrive at this view. We have discussed in the previous chapter that all phenomena arise dependently and thus lack self-nature, that is, the ability to exist through their own power. The unreality and emptiness of phenomena is entailed by their dependent nature. For Mādhyamikas, something is said to be real if it exists with *svabhāva*: as uncaused, independent, and unchanging. For Buddhists, nothing is able to exist in this way, thereby indicating that no phenomena truly exist. Hence, by examining the nature of phenomena, their emptiness can be seen, which thereby refutes the realist position.

The realist can nonetheless respond by questioning the point of emptiness if all that is required is the conventional truth. That is, we have shown that due to a fictionalist outlook, the bodhisattva's ethics only needs to take seriously the conventional truth. If this is the case, then what is the purpose of realizing emptiness? What role does emptiness have in the bodhisattva's ethics? The realist may claim that the difference between the fictionalist and the realist is merely a matter of terminology; they both regardless take seriously the same level of reality but simply refer to it differently. We turn to this critique in the next section and show that this is not the

case: there is an important difference between a fictional truth and an ultimately real truth. Namely, the ultimate truth of emptiness is what enables the fictional truth to be fictional; the conventional truth is established due to the ultimate truth of emptiness. Hence, it is necessary to realize emptiness in order to engage properly with the conventional truth.

8.2 *Emptiness and the Perfection of Generosity*

This section discusses how the realization of emptiness strengthens the bodhisattva's generosity, that is, his ethics. The realization of emptiness allows the bodhisattva's generosity to be perfected and thus be more effective in helping other beings. This analysis will reveal that the knowledge of the ultimate truth is necessary for strengthening one's understanding of the conventional truth. That is, it is not the case that the conventional truth alone is enough for ethics – one requires a *correct* understanding of the conventional truth. To present this, we will draw on a critique raised by a Śrāvakayānist, who questions the purpose of emptiness for liberation. The Śrāvakayānist argues that following the four noble truths are enough to attain enlightenment, thus removing the need for realizing emptiness. A similar point is raised by some scholars who argue that there is no ultimate truth. An analysis of this position will prepare us for the main discussion in this section, which is a response to the objection that the ultimate truth is not required for ethics. We will thus show that there is indeed an ultimate truth, then show that this affects one's ethics.

8.2.1 *A Critique of the Ultimate Truth*

The critique from a Śrāvakayānist is presented in *BCA IX*, which questions the need for emptiness. In response, Śāntideva argues that realizing emptiness is necessary for liberation:

[Śrāvakayānist]: From seeing the truth, there is liberation. What is the use of seeing emptiness?

[Mādhyamika]: According to scripture: “without the path [of emptiness], there is no

awakening.”⁷⁰³

Prajñākaramati explains that “seeing the truth” refers to understanding the four noble truths.⁷⁰⁴

The critique argues that understanding and following the four noble truths is sufficient for attaining enlightenment; therefore, there is no need to realize emptiness. Śāntideva’s response is that emptiness is the very foundation for the four noble truths and their consequent path to awakening. That is, the four noble truths are only possible because of emptiness. The Śrāvakayānist’s critique should be understood as questioning the purpose of attaining the wisdom that the Mādhyamika argues is necessary for enlightenment. Namely, for the Śrāvakayānist, the wisdom of emptiness is not necessary, as it adds nothing of value to an individual’s goal of attaining enlightenment. The goal of the bodhisattva path is the obvious response to this critique – the four noble truths are insufficient because the bodhisattva aims to alleviate *all* beings’ suffering rather than just his own. So, merely following the four noble truths will not lead to the bodhisattva’s goal.

Beyond this, however, the point that the four noble truths cannot exist without emptiness is important to consider. In this verse, Śāntideva argues that the individual who follows the four noble truths without understanding emptiness will not attain liberation. The same argument is made by Nāgārjuna in *MMK* XXIV, where he argues that the four noble truths are only possible due to emptiness:

If all this is not empty, then there is no arising and no ceasing.
It follows for you that the four noble truths are nonexistent.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰³ *BCA* IX.41: “*satyadarśanato muktiḥ śūnyatādarśanena kim | na vinānena mārgaṇa bodhirityāgamo yataḥ.*”

⁷⁰⁴ *BCA* P 425.

⁷⁰⁵ *MMK* XXIV.20: “*yadyaśūnyamidaṃ sarvamudayo nāsti na vyayaḥ | caturṇāmāryasatyānāmbhāvaste prasajyate.*”

Specifically, if suffering is not empty, it cannot change; without being able to change, suffering cannot end. The four noble truths discuss the arising and ceasing of suffering; for something to arise and cease, it must be empty.⁷⁰⁶ To understand and follow the four noble truths, then, one requires an understanding of emptiness. Thus, even if one's goal is to attain personal enlightenment, this would not be possible without realizing emptiness. This therefore shows the necessity of emptiness on the path to enlightenment.

While not identical, a similar critique is raised by some scholars, namely Siderits in his semantic interpretation of emptiness. He argues that the semantic interpretation, "takes the claim that all things are empty to mean that the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth – there is only conventional truth."⁷⁰⁷ This view, according to Rafal K. Stepien, is an anti-realist position, specifically a Madhyamaka anti-realism:

For Siderits, "The doctrine of metaphysical realism has three key theses: (1) truth is correspondence between proposition and reality; (2) reality is mind independent; (3) there is one true theory that correctly describes reality." Nāgārjuna, he rightly shows, undermines all three theses, and on Siderits's reading Nāgārjuna is thus to be accounted an anti-realist.⁷⁰⁸

This anti-realist position is that a separate and independent ultimate truth does not exist and that there is only the conventional truth – however, the conventional truth is seen correctly as a convention rather than an inherently real existence. The ultimate truth is that conventions are only conventions. This implies that the world of appearances is the only level of reality. Siderits explains elsewhere:

The doctrine of emptiness makes no claim whatsoever about how things, strictly speaking, are – not even the claim that they cannot be spoken of. Instead, it deflates truth, stripping it of its pretensions to point the superlative states of affairs [...] Nothing is

⁷⁰⁶ *MMK* XXIV.21-27.

⁷⁰⁷ Siderits 2017, 11.

⁷⁰⁸ Stepien 2024, 68.

thereby revealed about how things are. Instead, something is taken away from our understanding of what it means to say that things are thus-and-so: *we cease superimposing ultimately real natures on the world that is said to be thus-and-so.*⁷⁰⁹

Siderits's point is that there is simply no *thing* or *essence* that can be determined or identified as the ultimate truth. The ultimate truth does not, then, present a particular account of the nature of reality. The role of ultimate truth – indeed, emptiness – is to cease one's superimpositions onto appearances; it is to enable appearances to be seen as appearances rather than inherently real.

Garfield argues similarly:

Ultimate truths are those about ultimate reality. But since everything is empty, there is no ultimate reality. There are, therefore, no ultimate truths [...] All truths, then, are merely conventional.⁷¹⁰

Since phenomena are empty, “there is no such thing as the ultimate nature of reality.”⁷¹¹ The ultimate truth shows that apart from the appearances, there is no reality to be ascertained.⁷¹²

Sikka raises a similar point. She argues that when analyzing phenomena, an ultimate truth of emptiness is not required. Specifically, she argues that facts about things like chariots have a *real* meaning:

Some existing people did actually design the chariot to serve an end, after all, and hammered it together out of wood and metal and other natural materials. These are facts about the chariot, not conventions, and the existence of the chariot's makers and users, along with their goals and the place of such instruments in relation to these goals, is also

⁷⁰⁹ Siderits 2015, 207, emphasis added.

⁷¹⁰ Garfield 2002, 96.

⁷¹¹ Ibid.

⁷¹² We will respond to the semantic interpretation shortly and argue that there is indeed an ultimate truth, but we can note that this reading has also faced criticism from other scholars. For instance, Stepien argues that despite Siderits's claim that nothing is ultimately true, he considers rationality as a universal truthmaker: “For Nāgārjuna, “philosophical rationality” is a “metaphysical theory.” To posit it as anything other than a convenient and conventional means (an *upāya*); to rely on it as some transcendent tool used for the construction – or the deconstruction – of theories, is already to embrace rationality itself as a metaphysical absolute” (Stepien 2024, 68). In Stepien's view, Siderits's anti-realist position is self-defeating, as Nāgārjuna would have to “commit himself to philosophical rationality” as the method of demonstrating that there is no ultimate truth (ibid., 69; see also Ferraro 2013, 199). That is, to claim that “the ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth” requires postulating reason as an ultimate truth. Hence, according to Stepien, Siderits's argument is self-defeating.

a fact. To suppose that the truth about the being of the chariot must be determined independently of these facts, as if no human beings existed in the world and as if chariots were not actually constructed things within that world, is an odd and objectionable move.⁷¹³

According to this analysis, there is no need to consider the chariot's ultimate standpoint separate from the characteristics and function of the chariot, as such a standpoint does not even exist to be considered. In this regard, what the Mādhyamika would consider the "conventional truth" of the chariot is simply the sole truth of the phenomena. Sikka specifically denies the *conventional* status of the truth of the chariot, and this consequently denies the existence of an ultimate truth separate from the facts of the chariot. That is, emptiness – the nature of phenomena beyond an ordinary human perspective – is not necessary here, nor does it capture something relevant about the chariot itself.

The critiques from the Śrāvakayānist, Siderits, and Sikka are not identical, but they share the general point of questioning the necessity of emptiness as something that must be discovered. We can focus on Sikka's argument to highlight the Madhyamaka response to the general point. Specifically, we can revisit the meaning of "conventional" presented in the previous chapter. The conventional truth is a truth that is based on the intellectual understanding of ordinary human beings, which indicates that it is knowledge conditioned by certain factors. Sikka's explanation of the facts of a chariot are based on certain conditions – that they have parts which are made by humans for a certain function. The facts of the chariot, then, depend on the humans who made

⁷¹³ Sikka 2018, 185. It is interesting to note that Sikka's argument has some similarities with the Vaiśeṣika argument for realism – that is, there is indeed such thing as "chariot-ness" or "cow-ness." As Long explains, "We see cows because there *are* cows, and we can call them cows and understand what the word 'cow' means, because there is such a thing as 'cowness' – the quality of being a cow which inheres in the beings we (therefore) call cows" (Long 2024, 175). The Vaiśeṣika needed to affirm the reality of the world for accuracy in rituals, whereas Buddhists aimed to undermine the reality of the world to eliminate grasping and suffering. As we will see shortly, Mādhyamikas deny the reality of phenomena not merely for soteriological purposes, but because phenomena truly do not have any ultimate reality.

the chariot. These are indeed truths about a chariot, but the Mādhyamika would assert that these are merely *conventional* truths about the chariot. When considering the chariot's nature separate from its human use, we can see that there is none; in reality, the chariot is empty of any nature due to its facts being dependent on various factors. Hence, the analysis of a chariot as something made by humans for a specific purpose is a conventional truth. This, however, is where Sikka's objection arises: to postulate a truth beyond the appearances, she claims, "is an odd and objectionable move." That is, she rejects the very idea of a *conventional* truth and argues that the truth of appearances is the only truth. Hence, the Madhyamaka response arguing that the facts of the chariot are merely conventional facts – indeed, that they reflect the conventional nature of phenomena – does not adequately respond to her argument.

8.2.2 *A Defense of the Ultimate Truth*

To respond to this critique, we must show that the ultimate truth is indeed present and that appearances depict a conventional standpoint rather than the sole truth of phenomena. To show that the appearances are indeed conventional, we can reconsider our explanation of *BCA* IX.6 in section 8.1.3, where Śāntideva argues that phenomenal appearances are only taken to be true due to a lack of analysis. That is, when phenomena are analyzed, one can see that they are dependent – the dependent nature of facts is not denied by Sikka: facts about the chariot depend on their being created for a purpose, being created by humans, and so forth. However, the Mādhyamika goes further: we noted in the previous chapter that to be dependent entails the lack of a self-nature, that is, emptiness. Therefore, a thorough analysis of phenomena will reveal that they are empty: when phenomena are analyzed, their facts will be seen to indicate emptiness, thereby resulting in the two truths distinction between appearances and reality. Since

dependently arising facts entail emptiness, the ultimate truth of emptiness is indicated by the dependently arising facts of the chariot.

Furthermore, we argued in the previous chapter that the two truths are two perspectives on phenomena rather than two natures. In Sikka's passage, she questions the existence of a truth separate from the worldly facts of a chariot. Siderits similarly argues that the ultimate truth cannot be another level of reality.⁷¹⁴ Based on the two-perspective reading of the two truths, the Mādhyamika would agree with this point: the ultimate truth of a chariot is not separate from the conventional truth. Instead, the ultimate truth is simply another way of viewing the conventional world of appearances. Dependently arising facts are seen through one way of viewing phenomena, and the emptiness of their self-nature is seen through another perspective. The former concerns the conventional truth, and the latter concerns the ultimate truth. Since the dependent nature indicates that phenomena are empty, there is no ultimate truth *beyond* the conventions that make the chariot. That is, it is nothing determined *independently* of the conventional facts of phenomena.⁷¹⁵ The emptiness of the chariot can only be established due to the particular nature of the facts of the chariot that Sikka highlights. That is, by examining the very facts of the chariot that Sikka mentions, emptiness is found. The Mādhyamika, then, accepts the same facts of the chariot that Sikka outlines. The Mādhyamika merely does not stop his analysis with the transactional, functional usage of the chariot. When the facts of the chariot are seen in a different way – when they are ascertained with *pramāṇa* – they are seen to be empty.

One can respond to this point by accepting that all phenomena arise dependently but then argue that this is what it means for phenomena to exist, as no other mode of existence is possible.

⁷¹⁴ See Ferraro 2013, 203.

⁷¹⁵ See Gyatso and Chodron 2023. 66.

In this view, no ultimate truth is required or postulated, since existence is fully captured through ascertaining appearances. That is, while it may be the case that emptiness is implied, this does not present another level of truth – indeed an account of *reality* as opposed to *appearances*. In this regard, the dependent nature of the facts of the chariot is its real *existence*. In response to this point, the Mādhyamika can again emphasize that, as mentioned above, the ultimate truth is implied by the very “existence” of the facts of a chariot. That is, if one claims that conventional facts are the only way of existing – indeed, the only truth – the Madhyamaka response is to analyze reality further. Upon further analysis, the implication of emptiness will be evident.

Siderits is indeed correct that there is no separate, individual nature that amounts to the ultimate truth and that there is only one level of truth. Nonetheless, this level of truth can be viewed in two different ways. These two ways of viewing the level of truth indicate the conventional and ultimate truths. Hence, there is indeed such thing as an ultimate truth; it is merely an unobstructed perspective of the phenomenon, which amounts to its reality. Moreover, we will see shortly that a correct perspective of the conventional truth – seeing the conventions as conventions – is one *result* of viewing the ultimate truth. Importantly, however, this purpose is not the sole function of the ultimate truth. The perspective of ultimate truth is not just a correct view of appearances, but a view of emptiness which then enables the appearances to be seen as they are.

Furthermore, the perspective that ascertains emptiness is not conditioned by an ordinary human perspective, which indicates that it is a less-obstructed view of phenomena when compared to an ordinary human perspective – indeed, the view of emptiness is a perspective without any obstructions. In this regard, this perspective better captures the nature of phenomena: phenomena when seen as they are, without any veils or obstructions, are empty.

Since other forms of knowing are obstructed by – that is, influenced by – the ordinary human perspective, they do not represent the true nature of phenomena. Hence, this form of knowledge is conventional – it is dependent on the ordinary human perspective and does not represent reality beyond all filters of knowledge. These filters of knowledge amount to an ignorant perspective; conversely, the perspective of the yogi is unobstructed and thus without filters, which amounts to a wise perspective that ascertains reality. The nature of phenomena, then, are such that an ultimate nature is implied by the conventional facts; that is, since phenomena are dependent, their empty nature is implied.

In this reading, the Mādhyamika does indeed accept that the characteristics of a chariot are facts of its existence. However, because these characteristics exist in dependence on an ordinary human perspective, they are not considered to reflect its *true* existence. For Mādhyamikas, as mentioned in the previous chapter, existence implies something permanent and independent. This cannot be accorded to the dependently arising facts of a chariot; hence, the characteristics of a chariot cannot be said to “truly exist” from a Madhyamaka standpoint. Nonetheless, since the phenomena are indeed present as they appear – for instance, a chariot is built by people with a certain end in mind – these phenomena do have a mode of existing; this mode of existing is simply said to be conventional, that is, dependent on various causes and conditions. Overall, by seeing the way the characteristics exist, one should also see that they are, from another perspective, empty. This implies the existence of an ultimate truth.

8.2.3 *The Necessity of Emptiness for the Perfection of Generosity*

Building on the arguments from these scholars, we can now turn to an argument from Keown. He does not specifically argue against the existence of the ultimate truth, but he instead argues against the need for the ultimate truth in ethics:

The discipline of ethics requires only that one individual can be distinguished from another: to pursue the issue of the ultimate ontological constitution of individual natures in this context is to confuse ethics with metaphysics, and does not make for a fruitful line of enquiry.⁷¹⁶

In Keown's view, emptiness is not necessary for ethics. Indeed, since there is no ultimate truth, as the above scholars argue, there is no need to consider it in a study on ethics. In Keown's view, then, one only needs to consider the conventional truth for ethics; emptiness, as a metaphysical view, is irrelevant. The conventional truth which sees individual beings as separate individuals is the only necessary aspect for ethics; hence, in this view, there is no need to identify the true nature of these individuals. Keown further argues that, "Buddhism provides sufficient criteria for personal identity to allow the identification of subjects within the moral nexus."⁷¹⁷ This further shows that, in Keown's view, an investigation into emptiness is not necessary for ethics.⁷¹⁸

Keown's point is critiqued by other scholars who highlight the importance of metaphysics for Buddhist ethics, as discussed in Chapter 3. Moreover, we presented there an argument from Śāntideva which shows that compassion is based on understanding the lack of one's self-nature, that is, the selflessness of persons; in this case, we have an example of ethics – compassion – following from the metaphysical view of the nature of the self.⁷¹⁹ Thus, contrary to Keown's point, the bodhisattva's ethics goes beyond merely distinguishing one individual from another.

⁷¹⁶ Keown 2001, 19.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Consider also the Buddha's discussion in *Cūḷamālunkya Sutta* (MN 63), where the Buddha provides the parable of a hunter struck by an arrow. The hunter should not engage in unnecessary questions such as the nature of the arrow, the type of bow that shot the arrow, and so forth, and instead only focus on the pertinent question of how he should heal himself (MN 63.5). Likewise, individuals should not engage in questions concerning the nature of the world, such as if it is finite, infinite, and so forth. However, the Buddha states that the reason these metaphysical questions are ignored is because they do not lead to peace, to enlightenment, or nirvana (MN 63.8). Thus, metaphysical questions are only necessary as long as they are pursued not for their own sake, but for the sake of eliminating suffering. Thus, an inquiry into emptiness is a necessary investigation, not only because realizing emptiness leads to nirvana, but also because it strengthens the bodhisattva's ethics and allows him to best benefit other beings.

⁷¹⁹ See also Lele 2015, 267-273 for this argument.

The bodhisattva must realize that he and all beings and phenomena ultimately lack *svabhāva*; this way of viewing the world produces a certain ethical comportment. Specifically, as a result of attaining this realization, the bodhisattva will be able to arrive at a correct understanding of the conventional self, which thus enables an ethical comportment that is consistent with the nature of phenomena.

However, perhaps Keown's argument is only meant to refer to the general principles of Buddhist ethics – that one must be generous, and so forth. To be generous may not require a study of metaphysics, since the ethical principles are sufficient by themselves: one can be generous regardless of whether or not he understands emptiness, or if he even believes this to be the true nature of reality. However, this understanding has some difficulties, especially for the bodhisattva whose generosity goes beyond mere actions. We discussed in Chapter 2 that the perfections are not the action alone but the mental disposition. To attain this disposition requires attaining wisdom, that is, possessing an understanding of metaphysics. Consequently, a certain type of action will follow – there is, in this regard, a difference between worldly generosity and the perfected perfection of generosity. Building on this point, we will show in this section that it is not sufficient merely to distinguish one individual from another, as Keown argues; the bodhisattva must understand the nature of beings – including himself – as empty. When the bodhisattva realizes the ultimate truth of emptiness, he is able to appreciate the conventional truth as conventional. Consequently, he is able to engage with the conventional world in the most effective way – indeed, in the *correct* way. That is, his compassion – which includes his ensuing generosity – is able to benefit other beings most effectively when it is infused with the wisdom

of emptiness.⁷²⁰ In this regard, metaphysics is indeed important for ethics since it produces a certain type of ethics.

In this regard, the realization of emptiness strengthens one's ethical behaviours, as it allows one to engage with the world in accordance with its nature. This general idea is presented by Garfield:

Karuṇā [compassion] is also, on the Mahāyāna view, the direct result of a genuine appreciation of the essencelessness and interdependence of all sentient beings. And this is so simply because *egoism* – its contrary – is rational if, and only if, there is something very special, very independent about the self, something that could justify the distinction between my suffering or well-being and that of others as a motive for action.⁷²¹

In this passage, Garfield emphasizes that compassion is grounded in realizing the interdependence and emptiness of all beings. Importantly, however, interdependence must be understood correctly. This requires knowing that interdependence entails emptiness. It is possible that while ascertaining the dependent nature of phenomena, one does not understand the implication that they are empty. Here, dependent arising is not understood correctly, which can consequently affect the ethical comportment that ensues from this understanding. When emptiness is understood correctly, however, compassion follows.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the bodhisattva's ethics is rooted in compassion. However, a pure compassionate disposition – great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*) – only follows when

⁷²⁰ Additionally, though we will not develop this point here, wisdom entails knowing the *Dharma*. Giving the *Dharma* is the greatest gift that one can give to others, as it directly frees other beings from suffering, as discussed in Chapter 2. Hence, wisdom not only strengthens generosity, but equips the bodhisattva with an important gift that he can give.

⁷²¹ Garfield 2016, 89-90. See also the discussion in Chapter 5, where the example of the rope and the snake was presented. Incorrectly seeing the object as a snake will cause a certain response; correctly seeing the object as a coiled rope will produce another response. The former response is based on an incorrect understanding of the world, whereas the latter is based on a correct understanding of the world.

interdependence is understood properly, and this requires an understanding of emptiness.⁷²² Conversely, one can only defend an egoistic standpoint if one believes a self truly exists; to have a view of self-benefit requires that one does not understand the emptiness of all persons and phenomena. For example, to see oneself as having something to gain from others entails that one views oneself as someone who *exists* to obtain benefit. In this case, there is the view that one truly exists as an interdependent entity. This view is based on misunderstanding the implication of what it means to be a dependently arising phenomenon. To avoid this misunderstanding, the wisdom of emptiness is required, as this solidifies the understanding of interdependence and thus completes one's understanding of the nature of phenomena. This will consequently affect how one engages with phenomena and other individuals. To demonstrate this, we can revisit the analogy mentioned above concerning an actor in a play. An actor who knows that the play is merely a play and not real will not be caught up with what happens in the play. The actor will not be angered at the actions of other characters, nor will he be attached to the possessions of his character. He will be able to engage with the fictional world as a fiction rather than as a reality. Thus, if one reifies the dependently arising phenomena, he will engage with them in a way that is not in accordance with their nature – he will not engage with a true account of reality, but a false understanding based on his ignorance of the nature of phenomena.

This idea can further be seen through an example from Graham Priest.⁷²³ Priest draws on a point raised by the Huayan school of Buddhism. He presents the nature of emptiness and argues that the Huayan school expounded on its meaning, noting that, “If something is empty, its

⁷²² Regular, mundane compassion can follow from ascertaining interdependence, and great compassion follows upon realizing non-self (Wetlesen 2002, 76). We will explain great compassion shortly.

⁷²³ Priest's argument refers specifically to *interconnectedness* and not *dependent origination*. However, we can apply the implications of his argument to dependent origination: phenomena being connected to each other entails that they depend on each other. In this regard, interconnectedness can be understood synonymously with dependent origination.

nature depends on *some* other things. According to the Huayan, it depends on *all* other things.”⁷²⁴ A general example of this is one’s own existence.⁷²⁵ One can see that he exists in dependence on his parents. This accounts for his physical existence. He can further see that his upbringing – his environment – further contributes to developing his personality, temperament, and so forth. If he investigates further, he can see that the reason he has grown up in a particular environment is due to various factors that has led him to be born and raised where he has. For example, we can see throughout history that countries engage in war. During this time, some individuals leave their war-torn country and move to a country where there is no war. Someone who is born in this new country will be raised in a particular environment due to the condition of war. Moreover, the war itself will have conditions – such as ethnic conflict, linguistic conflict, and so forth. These, then, reveal that there are various conditions that produce a single individual and enable him to be who he is.⁷²⁶ We can examine this further and identify a complete web of interdependence: one’s existence is not limited to certain points of dependence, but rather a dependence on *all* things, as the Huayan school claims.⁷²⁷

Priest argues that understanding interdependence alone is not sufficient to ground the bodhisattva’s compassion.⁷²⁸ Instead, the principle of interdependence can lead an individual to

⁷²⁴ Priest 2016, 224. Though this is primarily presented with reference to the Huayan school, Priest mentions that some Mādhyamikas also defend this view. He cites the Dalai Lama’s claim that the whole universe can be understood as a living organism, in which each cell works with every other cell (ibid.). We can thus use this idea, though propagated by the Huayan school, to understand Madhyamaka thought. We can find traces of this idea in Śāntideva specifically, with reference to *BCA* VIII.90-103 (see our discussion in Chapter 3).

⁷²⁵ See Jinpa 2015, 166: “As we delve into this thoroughly interconnected identity that is our existence, we realize how there is literally nothing that is part of our lives – our existence, our welfare, and even our identity as an individual – that does not depend on others.” While Jinpa focuses on the relation with other beings, the same analysis can be extended to encompass all phenomena – our very identity cannot exist without other phenomena.

⁷²⁶ As discussed in Chapter 3, following Wetlesen 2002, this refers to one’s conventional existence.

⁷²⁷ See also Jinpa 2015, 164-166. Jinpa provides a few examples noting the various conditions that bring about events, such as how a T-shirt comes to be in a shop – farmers have to produce cotton, animals have to help plough the field, people have to market the products, and so forth. In this regard, we can understand that a single phenomenon depends on a web of conditions.

⁷²⁸ Priest 2016, 228.

care for others simply because the individual recognizes that he can obtain benefit through benefitting others. In this regard, the principle that one's personal interest and well-being depends on the well-being of others is maintained. Though this principle is correct – one's well-being will affect others' well-being, and vice-versa – interconnectedness cannot justify compassion. Indeed, the mere fact that all phenomena are connected can be used to justify personal gain. Priest provides an example, noting that the mere recognition that a slave depends on a slave owner does not entail that the slave owner will have compassion for his slave; the owner may aim to exploit his slave for personal gain, realizing that the slave's welfare produces benefit for the owner himself.⁷²⁹ In this regard, an understanding of interdependence may still lead to the view that one can privilege the well-being of some individuals in order to gain personal benefit; it can also be used to justify exploitation for self-benefit.

Therefore, Priest argues that a further step is required; one must realize emptiness, not just interdependence. This, following Wetlesen's argument discussed in Chapter 3, is the transition from the "big self" to "no self."⁷³⁰ That is, the big self represents a state in which all beings are understood as interdependent. To realize non-self, or the emptiness of one's self specifically, one must realize that interdependence entails that one does not exist inherently. If, continuing Priest's example of the mutual dependence of the slave and slave owner, the slave owner only sees himself as someone who can be benefitted from the work of his slave, then he has not gone far enough in his understanding of his true nature. The slave owner should realize that since his sustenance depends on someone else, his very nature depends on someone else. Indeed, his identity as a "slave owner" depends on him having a slave; his identity also depends

⁷²⁹ Ibid., 229. That is, the slave owner supports the slave for the overall purpose of benefitting himself.

⁷³⁰ Wetlesen 2002, 79.

on the conditions that enable him to be a slave owner. This indicates, then, that the slave owner lacks an independent existence, a self-nature that makes him who he is. Consequently, upon realizing that he and all other beings are empty, he cannot justify privileging the well-being of some individuals, such as himself, over others – as there are no single individuals to benefit at the expense of others. In this regard, one must not make the mistake that one *inherently exists* as an interdependent entity. A correct understanding of the conventional world of interdependence requires knowing that it entails emptiness. Hence, a pure compassionate attitude is only possible when it is grounded in an understanding of emptiness.

The most evident result of realizing the lack of self-nature is that the bodhisattva does not value himself over other beings. In this regard, the bodhisattva has great compassion, which is compassion without a sense of self and has all beings in its scope. Understanding emptiness undermines egoism and the belief that one must aim at self-benefit. The bodhisattva's ensuing actions will therefore focus solely on the benefit of other beings rather than his own well-being. Even if he does aim to develop himself – such as by aiming to attain enlightenment – he does so with the aim of benefitting others. When one believes oneself to exist inherently, as an independent entity, one will give precedence to himself, which thus hinders his compassionate attitude with other beings. Thus, when generosity is obstructed by the view of a self-nature, one is unable to be generous most effectively. The problem of self-benefit in generosity has been raised by the Buddha when he notes that a gift given with expectations for rewards – that is, with a mind that aims to receive self-benefit – does not produce good results.⁷³¹ In this regard, the bodhisattva will not develop the good result of merit, which is required to progress on the path to enlightenment, nor will he produce good results when it comes to helping others – other beings

⁷³¹ AN VII.52.

will not be benefitted effectively. Thus, when obstructed by self-grasping, the bodhisattva still has some greed, even if it is lessened. Greed, as mentioned in Chapter 4, is based on self-grasping, which consequently prevents the bodhisattva's generosity from helping others. To be generous without this obstruction – to have great compassion – therefore requires the wisdom of emptiness.

Another related result is that the bodhisattva does not value possessions such that he develops attachment to them, as he realizes that possessions also lack self-nature:

The bodhisattva's development of wisdom enables her to continue to interact with the ordinary commonsense world of objects, persons, and social relations, but to relate to these items differently; by seeing them as empty of intrinsic existence, she does not crave them, nor become angry when they are lost and so on.⁷³²

If, on the other hand, the bodhisattva had a metaphysical view which caused him to see items as inherently valuable, then not only will he have grounds to care for them, but he may also perhaps develop an attachment towards them. Indeed, as Lele argues, by seeing the emptiness of objects, the bodhisattva can eliminate his attachment to them.⁷³³ Moreover, following Ohnuma, we can highlight that this is why the bodhisattva must cultivate a dispassion and revulsion towards his body.⁷³⁴ Doing so enables the bodhisattva to focus his attention on developing his mind and living a life focused on caring for others rather than caring for his own body – ultimately, he aims no longer to care for himself at the expense of others. Thus, the metaphysics which underpins one's ethics is important. We can accordingly reject Keown's point that metaphysics is not essential for ethics, as the metaphysical view one has indeed affects one's ethics.

⁷³² Harris 2024, 176.

⁷³³ Lele 2015, 273-274.

⁷³⁴ Ohnuma 2019, 119.

If an objection is raised noting that grounding generosity in wisdom is unnecessary since the recipient is benefited regardless, the bodhisattva can respond by highlighting that this is in fact not the case. Specifically, the recipient of the gift does not receive the best items, nor does he always receive something. In this regard, though there may be the presence of regular, mundane generosity, it is not *perfected* generosity.⁷³⁵ We briefly addressed this issue in Chapter 6, where Śāntideva states that there are many beings whose suffering must be alleviated, and the bodhisattva's gifts are not in their best condition to help others. Thus, the bodhisattva cannot simply give without first developing his possessions and mind to ensure that other beings derive value from what they receive. To accomplish his goal of freeing other beings from suffering, the bodhisattva's generosity must be infused with wisdom. When wisdom is attained, not only will the bodhisattva give without obstructions, but the best version of the gifts can also be given – gifts that have been protected and are in good condition – thus entailing that other beings can benefit from them in the best possible way. Hence, while generosity without wisdom does provide some benefit to the recipient, it is not the best possible benefit that one can receive. An ordinary generosity that is not grounded in emptiness is therefore insufficient for the bodhisattva's ethics of alleviating others' suffering.

In this way, we can see the effect of the perfected perfection of generosity. This involves giving without grasping at the self-nature of the giver, the recipient, and the gift. The bodhisattva

⁷³⁵ See Parthasarathy 2008, 15-19 for an example of the *wrong* type of generosity. Parthasarathy wrote a drama depicting the life and philosophy of the 11th century Vedānta philosopher, Rāmānuja. In this story, Rāmānuja is shown to reject caste-based distinctions and discrimination; however, his wife maintains these distinctions and acts accordingly. Consequently, when a beggar comes to their house and asks for food, she lies to the beggar and tells him that there is no food available to be given. Rāmānuja, however, soon discovers that there was indeed food available; his wife, when questioned about this, cites the beggar's caste as a reason to lie and not be generous. In this regard, Rāmānuja's wife is unable to be generous effectively because she has not realized the selflessness of the beggar: she does not realize that he is not inherently a low-caste individual but simply someone who needs food. In another example, the wife gives bad food to a beggar instead of good, fresh food. She again sees the beggar as unworthy of the good food, so she does not help him in the best possible way. Though she is generous, her generosity is obstructed by views of self-nature, which prevents her from acting in a way that best benefits others.

must understand not only that he and others do not exist as independent entities, but also that the gift he gives is merely an assemblance of causes and conditions. An exploration of the nature of this type of generosity is beyond the scope of this thesis, as it covers the nature of generosity from the standpoint of engaged *bodhicitta*. However, we can see in the above discussion that this type of generosity is better than regular, worldly generosity. Hence, we can see why the bodhisattva aims to develop this form of generosity. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 2, not only is this form of generosity more beneficial for other beings, but it also enables the bodhisattva to proceed towards full enlightenment, as he is able to deepen and solidify his understanding and realization of emptiness.

Overall, in response to the critique questioning the necessity of emptiness, we can see that it is required to enable a perfect form of generosity. Indeed, it allows for an enhanced form of generosity – a generosity that is unobstructed and based on a true account of phenomena and individuals. The purpose of realizing emptiness, then, is to enable a correct engagement with the world. When the world is seen to be empty, compassion follows. The bodhisattva engages with the phenomenal world with an understanding that the interdependent nature of the world implies its emptiness. In this regard, he engages with a correct understanding of the world. Importantly, this compassion is not based on any self-benefit, since the self is also understood to be empty; it can be understood as *great* compassion instead of regular, mundane compassion. A direct response to the critique in this section is that the bodhisattva does indeed engage with the phenomenal world, but he does so with a further developed view of the phenomenal world. That is, to understand the facts of the world, the bodhisattva must also understand and realize emptiness. The conventional world is indeed sufficient for ethics, but the conventional world must be understood correctly – this requires the wisdom of emptiness.

8.3 *Conclusion*

We have addressed the necessity of emptiness for the perfection of generosity. The bodhisattva cannot be generous simply because he wishes to be; he requires an understanding of emptiness in order to be generous in a way that best benefits other beings, that is, alleviates their suffering. We demonstrated this with reference to two critiques that argue against the necessity of emptiness for ethics. The first critique examined the necessity of a personal self for ethics: we showed that the Mādhyamika also accepts this criterion, but he does so in a way that follows the two truths distinction. The second critique expanded on this point and questioned the need for emptiness if the phenomenal, personal self – the conventional self – is sufficient for ethics. Here too, our response highlighted the two truths distinction, which showed the necessity of wisdom for ethics. While it is indeed possible to be generous without an understanding and realization of emptiness, only a wisdom-infused-generosity is most effective in helping other beings. This chapter therefore completes the presentation of the mind-training framework of Śāntideva's ethics. We have shown in the previous chapters that as the bodhisattva cultivates generosity, he aims at the attainment of wisdom. This chapter has shown why wisdom is necessary: it enables the perfected perfection of generosity. In this way, we have seen that there is an interdependence between ethics and wisdom, which thereby shows the mind-training framework.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Śāntideva's ethics have been interpreted in different ways, but the interpretation that best captures its nature is the mind-training framework. To train the mind entails aiming at the attainment of wisdom. The goal of attaining wisdom must therefore be incorporated into the bodhisattva's ethics. We began this study with an introduction to an important concept in Śāntideva's ethics, *bodhicitta*, in Chapter 2. After providing this contextual background, we engaged with other interpretations of his work: in Chapter 3, we discussed the consequentialist interpretation, in Chapter 4, the virtue ethics interpretation, and in Chapter 5, a moral phenomenological framework. These interpretations do indeed address some aspects of Śāntideva's ethics, but they neglect the essential point of his work: there must be a cultivation that aims to attain the wisdom of reality, that is, emptiness. To incorporate this aspect, we argued for the mind-training interpretation, which we first introduced in Chapter 5. Then, in Chapter 6, we presented the mind-training framework by drawing on ŚS and the threefold training. To complete the mind-training framework, we examined the nature of wisdom and its relation to the perfection of generosity in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8. This therefore demonstrated the mind-training framework: the bodhisattva trains his mind to attain wisdom, which consequently transforms his mind and enables better actions in the world. Specifically, the bodhisattva has great compassion and performs actions associated with the perfected perfection of generosity. In this regard, the bodhisattva is able to act according to the bodhisattva vow.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the basis for the mind-training interpretation lies in taking seriously the fact that Śāntideva's ethics are written from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*. This standpoint entails that the bodhisattva is in the early stages of his quest to attain freedom from suffering and to free other beings from suffering. The bodhisattva requires wisdom

in order to act according to his vow to alleviate others' suffering; hence, he must first transform his mind and attain wisdom. Since Śāntideva's ethics are written for a bodhisattva – specifically, a bodhisattva who has yet to attain wisdom – it is evident that the bodhisattva's ethics incorporates a cultivation to attain wisdom. Thus, the mind-training framework is necessary in order to incorporate the essential aspects of the bodhisattva's ethics.

In this thesis, we examined scholars' arguments on possible interpretations of Śāntideva. In some cases, when necessary, we have also tried to present a stronger version of the interpretation by addressing critiques to these interpretations raised by other scholars. We have also considered critiques in light of a general consideration on ethics as opposed to a specific focus on Buddhist ethics or Śāntideva. For instance, we address the conflict between agent-neutral and agent-relative consequentialism in Chapter 3. This enables us to consider a stronger form of these ethical theories when used to interpret Śāntideva. As a result, we are able to see aspects of these theories in Śāntideva's work, which can be studied to develop our understanding of his ethics. However, as highlighted throughout this thesis, the primary difficulty of these interpretations is that they do not incorporate the path to attain wisdom. They thus do not address the full scope of Śāntideva's work. It is therefore necessary to incorporate the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta* in a study on Śāntideva's ethics, as this incorporates the path to wisdom.

In our study of Śāntideva, we have drawn on two areas of Buddhism: the early tradition as found in the Pāli canon, and the later Tibetan tradition, which builds on Śāntideva's philosophy. This has allowed us to contextualize Śāntideva's philosophy and understand his work in light of the greater Buddhist tradition. Early Buddhist philosophy allows us to see where Śāntideva's ideas come from. While he does not fully follow early Buddhist ideas, as seen in his critiques of the Śrāvakayāna in *BCA IX*, the ideas present in the Pāli canon are indeed present in

his work. So, to understand Śāntideva's ideas, it has been helpful to reference the Pāli canon. Moreover, as a Mādhyamika philosopher, Śāntideva also draws on Mahāyāna sutras and develops the work of earlier Mahāyāna philosophers, such as Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. Moreover, by examining the analysis of Tibetan philosophers, we are able to see an exposition of Śāntideva's ideas. The Tibetan tradition is vast, and importantly, it is not monolithic. There are differences among the various Tibetan interpretations of Madhyamaka thought, so drawing on Tibetan philosophers and commentators of Śāntideva does not definitively provide an accurate reading of Śāntideva, but it provides a helpful analysis that we used to develop our understanding of Śāntideva's philosophy.

This thesis provides a groundwork for future studies on Śāntideva. We noted in Chapter 7 that the debate concerning the correct interpretation of Madhyamaka philosophy has a long history and is still ongoing. Notably, our interpretation of the two truths is based on a particular reading of the conventional truth as illusion-like. This illusion-like appearance is taken seriously for ethical concepts such as compassion and generosity. Other Tibetan philosophers have presented different interpretations of the two truths; it is therefore possible to provide an interpretation of Śāntideva in light of the other interpretations of the two truths, as the metaphysical underpinnings of Śāntideva's ethics will be different. While we hold that Śāntideva's philosophy is best presented through the interpretation followed in this thesis, contrasting positions and continuing dialogue with existing interpretations will indeed continue.

Furthermore, another basis for future studies is our analysis of *bodhicitta*. In addition to presenting Śāntideva's ethics from the standpoint of aspirational *bodhicitta*, we also contextualized Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics within the parameters of *bodhicitta*. Notably, we presented the distinction between two types of *bodhicitta*, relative and absolute. Within relative

bodhicitta, we presented the two well-known distinctions, aspirational and engaged. Though this thesis focused on aspirational *bodhicitta*, we have ultimately presented a foundation for a study of ethics in engaged *bodhicitta* by noting that it is an ethics infused with the wisdom of emptiness. That is, a study of the bodhisattva's ethics *after* attaining wisdom is an avenue for future studies. While this idea was introduced in Chapter 8, an in-depth study can be made by exploring the nature of generosity when there is ultimately no giver, no gift, and so forth. Furthermore, the perfections in the stage of engaged *bodhicitta* are interdependent; thus, not only is generosity infused with wisdom, but also with the respective mental dispositions of the other perfections. Thus, generosity from the standpoint of engaged *bodhicitta* consists of a generosity while disciplined, patient, and so forth. Examining this nature of generosity is a possibility for future studies.

Moreover, we have also established a foundation for an examination of ethics from the standpoint of absolute *bodhicitta*. By noting that this standpoint requires a full understanding and realization of emptiness, we established that ethics from this standpoint is restricted to a buddha, that is, a fully awakened being. The ethics from this standpoint consists of spontaneous activity. Due to distinguishing different standpoints of *bodhicitta*, we can examine the nature of this activity without confusing it with actions found in relative *bodhicitta*. This allows us to understand different ideas found in Buddhist literature: some ideas in ethics might only be suited for some individuals, whereas other ideas are suited for others, depending on where the individual is on his path to awakening.

An important contribution we make to studies on Śāntideva is our use of *ŚS* to present the mind-training framework. This text does not receive much attention compared to *BCA*; the arguments in this thesis can encourage future studies on Śāntideva to take seriously the points

mentioned in his lesser discussed work. The contents of *ŚS* are not identical to *BCA* despite having some key similarities. Moreover, a study of this text can allow scholars to contextualize Śāntideva's philosophy, as Śāntideva expounds the bodhisattva's ethics in greater detail here. Furthermore, due to the numerous sutra references in the text, we can understand the source for many of Śāntideva's arguments. Hence, an examination of *ŚS* can allow for a better understanding of Śāntideva's philosophy – indeed, to see that his ethics is best read through a mind-training framework.

This thesis also establishes a foundation for future comparative studies with Western philosophy. By presenting Śāntideva's philosophy as a mind-training, we open the door for comparative studies with other non-Buddhist philosophers who may also have a mind-training framework. So, for instance, instead of a comparative study between Śāntideva and Aristotle, which examines an interpretation of Śāntideva's ethics in light of Aristotle's virtue ethics, we can consider other philosophers who instead incorporate the wisdom of reality into a study on ethics. By comparing Śāntideva and Buddhist ethics with these frameworks, we can prevent misunderstandings or narrow presentations of Buddhist ethics. We can compare Buddhist ethics with philosophical frameworks that incorporate pertinent aspects of Buddhism. This will therefore allow for a better cross-cultural dialogue, as essential features of one school will not be neglected. Furthermore, concepts in contemporary philosophy were also highlighted throughout this thesis, such as in ethics – for example, the discussion on agent-neutral and agent-relative consequentialism – and metaphysics – for example, the parallel with fictionalism. This allows for comparative studies between Śāntideva and contemporary concepts in Western philosophy.

Overall, a presentation of Śāntideva's ethics as working to transform the mind provides an interpretation that incorporates Śāntideva's context as a Mādhyamika philosopher: he writes

for bodhisattvas who are on the stage of aspirational *bodhicitta*, which must be incorporated in our understanding of his work. Defending this interpretation allows us to critique other interpretations and add to the existing scholarship on Śāntideva's ethics. We have also established a foundation for future studies on Śāntideva. By following the framework presented in this thesis, future studies can continue to examine the nature of Śāntideva's ethics, though, it is hoped, with a better understanding regarding its nature: it is not just concerned with actions or developing virtues, but with attaining the wisdom of emptiness. A better understanding of Śāntideva is also aimed at by incorporating ŚS. We have also provided a particular reading of key Buddhist concepts in order to present a particular interpretation of Śāntideva. It is nonetheless possible that other interpretations can be devised and used to present a different reading of Śāntideva's ethics, such as an interpretation of the two truths that does not imply a fictionalist worldview. However, an interpretation that incorporates the salient elements of the bodhisattva path leads to a reading of Śāntideva as providing an ethics that aims to transform the mind. This interpretation entails a mind-training framework in which there is an interdependence between ethics and wisdom.

Abbreviations

<i>AN</i>	<i>Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>
<i>Aṣṭa</i>	<i>Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra</i>
<i>BCA</i>	<i>Bodhicaryāvatāra</i>
<i>BCA P</i>	<i>Bodhicaryāvatāra Pañjikā</i>
<i>DN</i>	<i>Dīgha Nikāya</i>
<i>MĀ</i>	<i>Madhyamakāvatāra</i>
<i>MMK</i>	<i>Mūlamadhyamakakārika</i>
<i>MN</i>	<i>Majjhima Nikāya</i>
<i>NE</i>	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
<i>RĀ</i>	<i>Ratnāvalī</i>
<i>SN</i>	<i>Samyutta Nikāya</i>
<i>Sn</i>	<i>Suttanipāta</i>
<i>ŚS</i>	<i>Śikṣāsamuccaya</i>

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