

Ideas of the good in Buddhist philosophy

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One of the problems usually encountered in comparative studies on systems of thought belonging to cultures far removed in space and time is the difference in the manner in which they conceptualize their experience. This difference in conceptualization is reflected in the difference in the words and other linguistic forms adopted in articulating their experience. Studying the thought of a specific social group involves studying the concepts special and peculiar to that group through the language that mirrors their mode of thinking, their peculiar conceptual categories and forms of life. These facts have to be borne in mind in any attempt to search for the ideas of the good in Buddhism from the perspective of comparative philosophy.

In common English usage, it is meaningful and philosophically significant to ask the question "What is good?" Indeed, Western philosophy has traditionally been understood as an inquiry into the nature of truth, goodness and beauty. But one runs into difficulties if one raises this question in the same way in relation to Buddhist philosophy, because it does not seem to have used a term which corresponds exactly to the English term "good." This does not mean, however, that there is no place for the concept of goodness in Buddhism. Buddhism has other ways of expressing its concerns about the nature of the good.

Buddhism raises the question "What is *kusala*?" or "What is *puñña*?" and the range of application of the terms "*kusala*" and "*puñña*" is narrower than that of the term "good" in English. For one could, in Buddhist usage, speak of a *kusala* or a *puñña* deed, but not of a *kusala* or a *puñña* knife, whereas in English one can speak of both a good deed and a good knife. What is evident is that Buddhism also has used numerous terms for both moral and non-moral evaluation. The two most important terms used in Buddhism to commend human behavior are *kusala* and *puñña*. Both are sometimes translated into English as "good." Although it can be admitted that there is a commendatory sense built into the meaning of both terms, the concept of *kusala* and the concept of *puñña* are distinct. If they are interpreted as having the same meaning, some statements made about the role of *kusala* will turn out to be incompatible with those made about the role of *puñña* in Buddhism. Buddhism does not seem to have raised the question "What is good?" at the level of abstraction that could lead to an answer in terms of a Platonic Form of the Good. Nor has Buddhism shown an interest in discussing the logic of the term "good." For

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)Buddhist thought is concerned less with the abstract and the general and more with the specific and the concrete, the experientially real and the practically relevant.

The Buddha says in his discourse on the noble search, the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, that as a young man he renounced all the pleasures of life in search of what is *kusala* (*ki?*? *Ikusalagavesf*) (*Majjhimanikiiya*, Vol. 1, p. 163). The Buddhist search for *kusala* can be seen as a search for what is good for man. Therefore, an examination of the concept of *kusala* in Buddhism is likely to clarify the Buddhist idea of the nature of the good.

The term *kusala* is used in Buddhism to qualify human performances. Whatever action a person performs, if it is performed skilfully the person who performs it is described as one who is skilled (*kusalo*) in that kind of act. In this wide sense of the term "*kusala*," it is applied mostly in non-moral contexts. In this sense one could speak of a skilled (*kusalo*) horse trainer, a skilled archer, and so on. *Kusala* is also

used in the general sense of the good of mankind, and in the sense of the merit of actions that human beings perform. The more significant and frequent use of the term "*kusala*" in Buddhism is in the sense of "good" qualifying human action. Buddhism classifies all phenomena in terms of what is *kusala* (good), *akusala* (bad), and *avyiikata* (undetermined). According to this classification, thoughts, actions and character traits or any voluntary attainment of a human being could be *kusala* or *akusala*, but material things and processes could not. Thus although the term "*kusala*" in Buddhism does not have the same connotations as the English term "good," it is used to cover a wide area of activity to which the term "good" may meaningfully be applied.

Kusala is used in the sense of what is worthy of being pursued by human beings as an intrinsic good or as an end in itself. Buddhism has the notion of a supreme good (*paramakusala*) which all human beings ought to aim at attaining. It is believed to be the end (*nitthii*) to be attained by all right conduct specified in the Noble Eightfold Way of Buddhism (*ariyattha/lgikamagga*). An examination of what this ultimate end or good is, and why it is considered as the ultimate end or good in Buddhism can throw much light on the Buddhist idea of the good.

The highest *kusala* or the *summum bonum* according to Buddhism is *nibbiina*. It is not a good to be attained after death, but a good to be attained in this life itself (*dittheva dhamme*). Among all things that are *kusala*, it is said that the personal realization through one's own supercognition of the undefiled state of emancipation of mind and emancipation through wisdom, an attainment which is free from any future tendency to defilement, is the highest (*Dlghanikiiya*, Vol. 3, p. 102). The ultimate goal of living the good life (*brahmacariya*) under the Buddha was considered to be the attainment of *parinibbiina*, with no further latent tendency to attachment, grasping or clinging (*Majjhimanikiiya*, Vol. 1, p. 148). All other states to *kusala* are said to lead to this final goal and to serve as a means to it. *Nibbiina* is defined as the destruction of lust, hatred and delusion (*SaJ?Iyuttanikiiya*, Vol. 4, p. 251; Vol. 5, p. 8). The implication of this Buddhist position is that the highest good involves the transformation of the psychological constitution of personality. It is a twofold transformation involving the elimination of certain emotional

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traits of personality and a transformation involving one's understanding of the nature of reality.

The entire system of values in Buddhism can be seen to be structured on the basis of the above assertion that the highest good of man is the attainment of *nibblina*. In the Buddhist evaluation of persons, those who have attained the goal of *nibbana* are considered to be the most praiseworthy persons. Such persons are to be commended as those who are fully endowed with *kusala* (*Majjhimanikaya*, Vol. 2, p. 29).

A person who has attained *nibbana* is referred to as a worthy one (*arahanta*). A disciple of the Buddha who follows his instructions with a view to attaining this goal is referred to as a noble disciple (*ariyasavaka*). Among men and gods it is the person endowed with understanding and good conduct who deserves to be called the most excellent (*Dfghanikaya*, Vol. 1, p. 99). It is said that as far as the abodes of living beings extend, as far as the end of the realm of becoming, those who have realized the goal of *nibbana*, the *arahanta*, are the highest and the most supreme beings (*SaJ?Iyuttanikaya*, Vol. 3, p. 83). The Buddha is sometimes referred to as the highest being to be born in the world because he was the founder of the supreme goal of *nibbiina* and the person most competent to guide others in their attempt to attain this noble end (*SaJ?Iyuttanikaya*, Vol. 5, p. 66).

The life that conduces to the attainment of *nibbiina* is called *brahmacariya* (the good life). The truths, the understanding and realization of which ensure this attainment, are called *ariyasacciini* (noble truths). The path to its attainment is called *ariyamagga* (the noble path). Each item of the path is qualified as *sammii* (right).

The reason for taking *nibbiina* as the highest good or the supreme goal that all rational beings ought to attain is, according to Buddhism, that it is the ending of all unhappiness and misery and the attainment of the highest happiness. One might consider the implication of this position to be that Buddhism holds a hedonistic theory regarding the nature of the good. The first Noble Truth of Buddhism is the truth of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*). All unenlightened beings are, according to Buddhism, destined to suffer the cyclic process of repeated births and deaths, involving an immense quantity of disappointment, frustration, and misery. The very existence of a personality consisting of five aggregates to which one clings with a notion of self-identity is said to lead to the continuance of this cyclic process of *dukkha*. *Nibbiina* is the antithesis of *dukkha*, for its attainment amounts to the ending of all *dukkha*. It follows that it is also the highest happiness. If *nibbiina* is the highest good, or what is good in itself, and if it is the highest happiness (*paramarr sukharra*), it is reasonable to conclude that happiness is what is good in itself. One may even attribute to Buddhism the view that happiness alone is what is good in itself.

There are three terms which usually occur together in Buddhist usage. They are "*attha*," "*hUa*" and "*sukha*." These terms seem to merge logically into each other. The terms "*attha*" and "*hUa*" correspond more closely to the English terms "welfare" and "well-being," whereas "*sukha*" corresponds more closely to the term "happiness." In spite of the importance of these concepts, it would be misleading to consider Buddhism as a system that subscribes to a hedonistic theory of the nature

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of the good without qualification. Buddhism clearly acknowledges that the good of man consists in being free from both physical and mental pain. This is clear from the statement of the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism. The Buddhist concession to a hedonistic thesis about the nature of the good applies only to this negative aspect of recognizing the desirability of attaining freedom from physical and mental pain. But Buddhism does not conceive of its ultimate goal as the maximization of pleasure. The ultimate attainment does not consist of the experience of pleasure (*vedayita sukha*), but rather a state of well-being, tranquility and equanimity, free from defiling desires and impulses, from clinging to the notion of selfhood and thirst for sensuous gratification. *Nibbiina* is therefore described by the apparently self-contradictory expression *avedayita sukha* (happiness which does not involve sensing).

Buddhism uses the term "*sukha*" to refer to ordinary sense pleasures as well as more refined experiences of a sense of well-being which are usually the consequence of transcending the ordinary experience of sense pleasures. Ordinary sense pleasures are described as *kiimasukha*. *Kiimasukha* is considered to be the lowest form of happiness that a human being can experience. Buddhism seems to recognize qualitative distinctions between different kinds of *sukha*. The Buddha says for instance.

There are these five strands of sensuous desire. There are material shapes cognizable by the eye. delightful. agreeable. pleasant. lovely. associated with sensuous desire and alluring. sounds cognizable by the ear. . . smells cognizable by the nose . . . tastes cognizable by the tongue. . . touches cognizable by the body. . . . These are the five strands of sensuous desire. Whatever pleasure, happiness arises due to these

five strands of sensuous desire, this is called the happiness of sensuous desires (*kiimasukhll, ?1*). But with regard to those who may say thus: "This is the highest pleasure. the highest happiness that living beings experience." I do not agree with that view of theirs. What is the reason for this? . . . For there is a happiness which is more delightful and more pleasant than this. (Sa~yuttanikaya. Vol. 4. pp. 225fT)

In this context the more delightful and pleasant forms of happiness are explained by the Buddha as resulting from the withdrawal of the mind from sense pleasures and the attaining of higher levels of mental composure (*samiidhi*). In these higher levels of meditative consciousness, the happiness experienced at each level of the mind's progression is said to be more delightful and pleasant than that experienced at the preceding level. Pleasures that do not involve harmful consequences are considered to be intrinsically good. However, the Buddhist position is that sense pleasures involve more harm than good because of their tendency to enslave the person by their enchanting nature. The Buddha's reasons for assigning a low status to sense pleasures are given in the Magandhiyasutta of the Majjhimanikaya. Here the Buddha says:

Magandhiya, when I was formerly a householder. I lived endowed with and provided with the five strands of sensuous desire, with material shapes cognizable by the eye agreeable. pleasamt. . . . But later having known as it really is. the origin, the cessa-
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tion. the enjoyment. the harmful consequence of and the emancipation from sensuous desires themselves. I abandoned the thirst for sensuous pleasures. got rid of the amiction from sensuous desires. and having become devoid of thirst I live with a mind inwardly calmed. I see other beings who are not free from passion for sensuous enjoyment being consumed by the amiction of sense desires. excited by sense desires. I do not envy them. I do not delight therein. And why is that so? Magandhiya. this delight which is free from sensuous desires. and free from *akusala* states. stays even surpassing the divine *sukha*. Delighting in this delight I do not envy the lower. nor do I delight therein. (*Majjhimanikiya*. Vol. 1. p. 506)

According to the Buddha. the true good of man does not consist in indulgence in sense pleasures (*kiimasukhallikiinuyoga*). It is condemned as one extreme life-style which an intelligent person ought to avoid. Although there is some aspect of pleasure (*sukha*) in the gratification of sense desires. in terms of a wider perspective it conduces to more harm than good. It results in enslavement to passions giving rise to frustration. anxiety. dissatisfaction. mental confusion. and instability. A thorough comprehension (*parififiii*) of the nature of sense pleasures and the realization of a happiness which transcends the meager happiness found in sensuous delight leads the Buddha to view them as evil rather than good. The Buddha declares as a universal fact. true in the past. present. and future. that indulgence in sensuous desires eventually gives rise to unpleasant experience.

In the past sense desires gave rise to unpleasant sensation. they were immensely amicting. immensely painful; in the present they are. . . and in the future they will be. . . . These beings. not free from their passions for sensuous things being consumed by the thirst for sensuous things. being amicted by the amiction of sensuous things with their sense-organs adversely affected. take a perverted notion of sensuous things whose contact is painful by taking them as pleasurable. Magandhiya. it is like a leper. a man with his limbs all ravaged and festering. and who. being eaten by vermin. tearing his open sores with his nails. heats his body over a charcoal pit. . . . But the more those open sores of his become septic. foul smelling. and putrefying. . . . there is only a meager relief and satisfaction to be had from scratching the open sores. (*Majjhimanikiya*. Vol. 1. p. 507)

The Buddha makes the claim that the happiness and well-being that a person who

has eliminated greed, hatred and delusion, experiences is stable. A person who has experienced such a state of well-being will under no circumstance fall back on the transient pleasures of ordinary life. Speaking of his own experience of other pleasures that life could afford, the Buddha says that, viewed from the standpoint of the experience of *nibbāna*, the enjoyment of the pleasures of a sensuous kind is comparable to an infant's play with his own excrement.

"Just as Upali, an infant, feeble and lying on his back, plays with his own excrement, what do you think Upihi, is this not fully and entirely a childish sport?"

"It is, Sir."

"Well then, Upali, that boy, on another occasion, when he has grown

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older, with the maturity of the sense faculties, plays with whatever may be the playthings of such children. . . . Now what do you think, Upali? Does not this sport come to be finer and more valued than the former?"

"It does, Sir." (*Ahuttaranikāya*, Vol. 5, p. 203)

Having made these remarks, the Buddha describes the spiritual attainments of the person who leads the holy life, as it was laid down by him, and assures Upali that in each of the higher stages of spiritual attainment there is a more refined form of happiness and sense of well-being.

The Buddha, like Mill, who attempted to explain the good in terms of happiness, appears to have made qualitative distinctions between different forms of happiness. The Buddha also made moral distinctions, dividing happiness itself into noble happiness (*ariyasukha*) and ignoble happiness (*anariyasukha*). This shows that Buddhism, on the one hand, determines *kusala* and *akusala* on the basis of *sukha* and *dukkha*. On the other hand, *sukha* and *dukkha* are themselves evaluated as *kusala* and *akusala*. This problem is raised in the *Milindapañña* where Milinda asks Nagasena whether *sukha* is *kusala*, *akusala*, or *avyākāta*. Nagasena's reply is that it could be characterized as anyone of the three. Milinda put this question perhaps because he was aware of the fact that the Buddha used *sukha* and *dukkha* as grounds for determining *kusala* and *akusala*. He therefore observes: "If *kusala* is not *dukkha*, and *dukkha* is not *kusala*, then there cannot be *kusala* which is *dukkha*."

Nagasena's explanation here does not seem to answer satisfactorily the question raised by Milinda. What Buddhism seems to recognize is that some conditions under which *sukha* is experienced can be productive of much greater *dukkha* when considered from the point of view of their long-range consequences. The pleasures of a sensuous nature may give immediate and momentary satisfaction. But a prudent person abandons the momentary pleasures which are associated with harmful long-term consequences and performs certain deeds which conduce to one's wellbeing and happiness in the long run of events. Such conduct, although it may involve displeasure for the moment, is called *kusala* in Buddhism.

Buddhism sees a close relationship between the reality of change or transience (*anicca*) and the absence of happiness or the reality of *dukkha*. Anything that changes from being an object of satisfaction to an object of pain and anxiety cannot be conducive to the good of man. For this reason, Buddhism does not attach ultimate value to any of the objects of grasping, including even one's own personality.

Whatever is subject to change gives rise to unhappiness (*yadaniccārtarr dukkhā*). Our own individual personality is believed in Buddhism to consist of five transient aggregates. Thus the Buddha says that the typical case of unsatisfactoriness is to be found in the very personality which we grasp with attachment (*saḷkhittena pañcupiḍḍiṇakkhandhī dukkhī*). The ultimate good to be achieved by man, therefore, does not consist in anything connected with transient objects of desire. The peace of

mind attained by the very removal of the thirst and desire, the destruction of the notions of "I" and "mine" is considered in Buddhism to be the highest good. The Buddhist value system appears to take a monistic approach with regard to the nature of what is good as an end. Buddhism seems to value no other human

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achievement as a good end other than *nibbana*. There are many things that the Buddha considered to be good as means to the attainment of the goal of *nibbana* - for example, knowledge, learning, beliefs, and some forms of ritual. But none of these are considered as ultimate goods. In fact, Buddhism warns that some things which are good as means may sometimes become a hindrance to the realization of the ultimate good, if one develops a clinging to them and the progression towards the full destruction of the cankers of mind is impeded. It will become clear later that the Buddha also insisted on the transcendence of *papa* for the same reason.

The epistemology of value has been one of the principal philosophical issues in the West. Some philosophers, such as Plato and more recently G. E. Moore and H. A. Prichard, have held a non-naturalist or idealist theory of the nature of the good. According to such a theory, "good" and related words are names of objects or properties that have a real existence. However, they are not sensible properties, and hence are non-natural objects or properties that can only be apprehended by means of intuition. Naturalism maintains that "good" refers to scientifically determinable relations between things. According to naturalism, the concept of the good can be analyzed in terms of some empirically ascertainable property or set of properties. Naturalism also attempts to explain the good in terms of human needs. According to teleological naturalism, all things in nature are endowed with inner tendencies toward an ideal state and "good" signifies whatever is conducive to the attainment of that ideal state. Hedonistic utilitarianism identifies the good with pleasure and maintains that anything is good to the extent that it produces a greater balance of pleasure over pain. According to evolutionary naturalism, "good" stands for all traits that help to realize the process of evolution. The epistemological position common to all naturalistic theories is that questions regarding what is good could be settled like all other scientifically significant issues by means of empirical observation. Naturalism and intuitive non-naturalism are committed to cognitivist theories about the nature of the good. Two major non-cognitivist theories about the nature of the good are emotivism and prescriptivism. According to emotivism, "good" and other related terms do not state facts. Their function is not description, but evincing and redirecting of emotion. The primary meaning of "good" is thus not descriptive, but emotive. According to prescriptivism, the term "good" performs the function of prescribing ultimate principles of choice. Such prescriptions in moral contexts are distinguished by the criterion of universalizability.

Although Buddhism does not discuss issues concerning the epistemology of the good with the rigor characteristic of Western Philosophy, it is possible to identify the basic Buddhist position with regard to such issues. The true good is, according to Buddhism, identical with happiness and the ending of unhappiness. The goodness of the volitional activity of human beings is determined in Buddhism in relation to this true goodness. Since we have so far concentrated on the Buddhist notion of *kusala* in attempting to elucidate the Buddhist theory of the nature of the good, it will be appropriate at this point to examine the epistemology of *kusala*. According to the Buddha, those who lack knowledge of what is *kusala* and *akusala*

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suffer from a deficiency. For knowledge of the distinction between *kusala* and *akusala* was considered by the Buddha as an essential component of the knowledge of an enlightened person. That abstention from actions such as stealing and killing or causing injury to living beings is *kusala* is part of the knowledge that is essential in the ethical life of the individual. A person is said to be ignorant and deluded if he or she does not know the distinction between *kusala* and *akusala*. (The cognitivist stand of Buddhism with regard to the nature of the good is substantiated by the ideas expressed in the following passages: *Saṅgīyuttanikāya*, Vol. 5. p. 106; *Majjhimanikāya*. Vol. 1, pp. 47. 310; *Anguttaranikāya*. Vol. 3. p. 165.) In speaking of knowledge of *kusala*, Buddhism uses forms of the verbal root *ñā*, which means "to know" (mostly *paññā* and *ñā*). This too shows that Buddhism holds a cognitivist view about the nature of *kusala*. Buddhism does not seem to have made a distinction between fact and value. The Buddhist term "*paññā*" is used to refer to knowledge of matters of fact as well as knowledge of value. The distinction which is emphasized in modern Western thought between fact and value raises an important logical problem for the moral philosopher. The emphasis on this distinction has led recent Western moral philosophers to hold that knowledge and truth are confined to descriptive scientific statements or to logical or mathematical statements, but are inapplicable in the realm of ethical evaluation. How could Buddhism overcome the objection that a contemporary analytical moral philosopher might raise regarding the impossibility of deriving a value judgement from descriptive premises?

In the *Kiṅṅiṅgīyuttā* the Buddha rejects an authoritarian basis for moral beliefs, and affirms that "personal knowledge" of *kusala* and *akusala* is possible (*Ahṅguttaranikāya*. Vol. 1, p. 189). It is clear that in the context of the *Kiṅṅiṅgīyuttā* the Buddha is speaking of knowing what is *kusala* and *akusala* and hence speaking of ethical knowledge. But how is such knowledge to be explained in such a way that it could escape the objection raised by those who draw a distinction between fact and value?

Can it be maintained that Buddhism admitted a realm of ethical facts which can be objectively known? The Buddha sometimes maintains that there are things which are *kusala* and *akusala* (*atthi bhikkhave kusaliikusala dhammā*). Mrs Rhys Davids, in *Buddhist Psychology*, suggests that Buddhism, as opposed to Western philosophy, recognized a realm of ethical qualities. But the analysis of the means of knowledge admitted in Buddhism does not reveal that early Buddhism ever acknowledged the existence of an objective realm of ethical qualities which can be directly known by means of any sensory, extrasensory or intuitive faculty. Even Rhys Davids is not attributing to Buddhism a theory about directly intuitable moral qualities. She interprets the Buddhist view as a naturalistic one. For she says that according to Buddhism, "A good moral or meritorious act means that a desirable result will follow such an act sooner or later, inevitably." By a desirable result, she means a happy result or a result associated with happiness rather than suffering. Unlike in the cognitivist and objectivist doctrine of Plato, Buddhism does not seem to accept the metaphysical notion of a transcendental realm of Ideas in which the Ideal Form of the Good is to be discovered. One might mistakenly think that

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the Buddhist recognition of paranormal perceptions puts Buddhism on the same epistemological footing as Platonism. But there is clearly a difference between what the Buddha claims to know by means of paranormal vision and what Plato claims to know by means of rational intuition. Buddhism does not reject the validity of sense experience in preference to a higher order of knowledge to be gained by means of rational intuition. The data of paranormal experience in Buddhism are

not different in kind from the data of normal sense experience. Paranormal experience only enables a person to transcend the limitations of normal sense experience. The data of paranormal experience cannot be anything other than forms (*rilpa*), sounds (*sadda*), and so on. Therefore, one cannot maintain that Buddhism directly recognizes a kind of metaphysical order of values which could be known by means of paranormal experience (*abhifzfi*).

Instances dealing with the epistemology of *kusala* in Buddhism show that some aspects of naturalist theories of the good are implicit in the Buddhist theory. For Buddhism seems to move with facility from statements about *kusala* to statements about what is beneficial, advantageous and what is conducive to a person's wellbeing and happiness. We have already observed that the terms *attha*, *hila*, and *sukha* usually occur together in Buddhist usage. In the Kalama sutta where the Buddha explains how one could personally know the distinction between *kusala* and *akusala*, the following dialogue between the Kalamas and the Buddha occurs: "Now what do you think, Kalamas, when greed arises within a man, does it arise to his benefit or harm?"

"To his harm, Sir."

"Now, Kalamas, this man, thus become greedy, overcome by greed, with his mind completely filled with greed, does he not kill a living creature, take what is not given, commit adultery, tell lies and induce others too to commit deeds as those which would conduce to disadvantage and unhappiness for a long time?"

"He does, Sir." (*Anguttaranikaya*, Vol. 1, p. 189)

A similar movement from evaluation of behavior as *kusala* to observation of behaviour as not productive of harm to oneself, harm to others and harm to both oneself and others and as productive of happiness and well-being is to be found in the *Bhikkhavasutta* and the *Ambalatthikii-Riivulovidasutta* of the *Majjhimanikaya* (Vol. 2, p. 114; Vol. 1, p. 415).

The Buddhist view implicit in all judgments regarding what is *kusala* and *akusala* is that considerations of human happiness and well-being are logically relevant to such judgments. One cannot describe an action as good unless it is in some way connected with human happiness. One cannot logically produce any arbitrary reason for maintaining that some course of action is good. A possible objection to this view is that what constitutes human happiness itself is an evaluative question and that it cannot be determined in the way an empirical fact is determined. Buddhism, however, appears to take questions regarding what constitutes human happiness and unhappiness as questions to be determined objectively by the examination of all the relevant facts. Buddhism admits that one may be mistaken

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about what constitutes happiness due to perversion of perception, belief and thinking (*safivipallasa*, *dilthivipallasa*, *cittavipallasa*) (*Anguttaranikaya*, Vol. 2, p. 52). It is due to the possibility of such mistaken notions about happiness that the Buddha admits that what is called *sukha* by others (that is, by ordinary people) is called *dukkha* by the noble ones (that is, by those who have attained enlightenment), while what is conceived as *dukkha* by the former is conceived as *sukha* by the latter (*SaJ?lyuttanikaya*, Vol. 4, p. 127). Buddhism clearly commits itself to the view that what is good from the point of view of one's own self is the eradication of all unhappiness along with all future prospect of its recurrence, and the attainment of mental stability, tranquility and calm by the destruction of all psychological cankers (*asavell*). It is the good to be sought by each and everyone. From the Buddhist point of view, a person who says that the good of man consists in suffering the extremities of physical and mental pain for its own sake is misusing

the term "good."

Regarding such a notion of the good, one might point out that it is concerned with self-interest and that it promotes an egoistic attitude. One might maintain that it is open to serious moral objections. It may be argued that such a conception accords with a prudential morality, but not with true morality as such. True morality demands concern for the interests of other people more than for one's own interest. Hence one may argue that the ultimate good which the Buddhist seeks to attain has nothing to do with morality. However, Buddhism does not take this as a serious objection against its conception of the ultimate good. For according to Buddhism, the self-transformation which leads to the ending of all unhappiness is conducive to the promotion of the happiness of others as well. Such enlightened beings, free from all inner and outer conflicts and bonds, have reached a state of moral perfection that enables them to express their true humanness in their relationships with other people. The very existence of such human beings in society promotes the happiness and well-being of many others (*bahuno janassa atthiyya hitiyya sukhiyya sm!lvattati*). Buddhism conceives of man's effort to get rid of all moral evil rooted in greed, hatred and delusion as the most commendable kind of social commitment. Those who devote themselves to this task are referred to as the doers of the greatest action (*kammasetthassa kiirakii*). This explains the great veneration shown in Buddhist communities to those individuals who supposedly devote themselves entirely to the attainment of the Buddhist goal of *nibbana*.

As we noted earlier in this discussion, Buddhism also uses the terms "*puñña*" and "*papa*" to signify particularly the goodness or badness of human conduct. We also noted that although these terms have an evaluative function, they cannot, without qualification, be translated as "good" and "evil." The term "*punfia*" is used in Buddhism to signify the good in terms of the happy consequences to be determined under the law of *kamma*. *Pufina* has the tendency to produce the repeated cycle of births and deaths and thereby is opposed to the attainment of passionless *nibbana*. Therefore, although *punrla* may be conceived as the good for those who remain in the life of *sa, !sara*, because it is productive of desirable consequences, such as rebirth in heavenly spheres of existence where there is a preponderance of pleasure over pain, for full freedom from the sufferings of *sa? Isara* even *puññahas* to be

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transcended. The real good consists not in the maximization of *puñña*, but in its final abandonment and the perfection of *kusala*. Some scholars have mistakenly attributed to the Buddha the view that the final goal of Buddhism is beyond both good and evil on the ground that the Buddha recommends the giving up of both *puñña* and *papa* (a view which I have critically examined in "Interpretation of Two Principal Ethical Terms in Early Buddhism," *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. 7, nos 1 and 2, pp. 62-81).

In the foregoing discussion, we have attempted to examine the ideas of the good in Buddhist philosophy on the basis of an examination of the Buddhist value system. The main focus of attention was on the Buddhist notion of *kusaJa*, which is the primary ethical notion of Buddhism. It was noted that Buddhism takes a cognitivist position with regard to the idea of the good expressed in terms of the notion of *kusala*. Buddhist cognitivism is based on an affirmation of a logical relation between the idea of the good and the concept of happiness. The happiness which Buddhism speaks about in this connection is not identical with sensuous pleasure. It is the happiness consisting of the calming of all passions resulting from the attainment of emancipating wisdom. The highest good of man is liberation or emancipation from *saf? Isaric* suffering. The Buddhist position may be compared in its form, though not in its content, with the Aristotelian notion of the human good as *eudaemonia*. To

this extent it may also be concluded that Buddhism takes a teleological position regarding the idea of the good rather than a deontological position.

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