

Realizing virtues: Plato and Buddhism

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Introduction

Plato and Buddhist thinkers are well known for having opposing metaphysical conceptions: while Plato assumes that reality is permanently structured along the lines of eternal forms that are temporally manifested in impermanent phenomena, for the Buddhist there is no reality other than impermanent phenomena.¹ Yet their conceptions of everyday reality, identity and its transformation have significant commonalities that help us to rethink the very idea of identity. For both, persons and their everyday world are composed of interlinked 'qualities': the interweaving of forms in Plato, and causally connected continua of mental and physical qualities in Buddhism. Further, it is the impermanent and changing character of everyday reality and its ethical and normative features, qua 'qualities', that is the ground of personal identity and its transformation in both perspectives. In this chapter, we attempt to rethink the idea of identity, in view of these features, by recognizing that continuous change is not only our very nature but also the condition of possibility of transformation of self and world; by realizing that we lack reality as separate, independent individuals, but our qualities, in particular our desires, have a reality which can draw us towards the good; and that investigating the good, and its realization as self- and world-transformation, is the very task of philosophy. These three themes help us to reconsider the nature of identity in a way that radically alters the boundaries of what we take to be self and world and allows us to see self-transformation as world-transformation. We show that these themes are discussed by both Plato and the Buddhists, and discuss, first, how each approach conceives of change or impermanence as characteristic of the everyday reality of individuals and their world, and as the source of opportunities for transformation. Secondly, we

show that each, while denying the ultimate reality of the individual,² recognizes that we are always directed by our desires towards what we ordinarily deem good. And that transformation requires the reorientation of desire, as *erós* and *upādāna*,³ respectively, towards the good, which is to be realized as ever-continuing virtuous activity – at least at the level of worldly or conventional life. Finally, we see that both approaches concur that the transformation of self and world, or of self *as* world, is the goal of philosophy as a way of life.

We examine how these three claims are developed and the tools for identity construction and transformation that underwrite them, and demonstrate that metaphysics and ethics as well as epistemology and ethics are closely linked in both perspectives, and this has its foundations in the constitutive role of the virtues in the very construction of identity – as self *and* world. We show that transformation requires, in each approach, a reorientation of desires and intentionalities, which demands that we move beyond our conventional understanding of ourselves as separate individuals. This requires not only that we recognize the nature of reality and the virtues, and realize the virtues in our actions, but that we recognize that ceaseless virtuous activity is what we *are*. We first discuss Plato's conception of identity and identity-transformation as developed in the *Symposium*. This is based on an interpretation of his metaphysics of individuals which sees the individual as consisting of an interweaving of forms, as suggested in the *Sophist*, and on his ethical intellectualism, which is expressed in various dialogues, such as the *Protagoras* (Sections 1–4). This is followed by a discussion of identity and identity-formation in early and Mahāyāna Buddhism that is based on a metaphysics of persons as causally connected – or 'interwoven' – streams of qualities. As in Plato, transformation of these qualities (*dharma*) or 'virtues' requires cognitive insight which is inalienably linked to affective and ethical transformation (Sections 5–9).

Plato's *erós* – How can we extend ourselves, and what we deem good, forever?

Socrates, the teacher of Ancient Greek philosopher Plato, investigated what he considered to be the most important virtues (courage, beauty, justice, goodness, self-restraint etc.) by trying to find a definition of virtue that would apply in all cases. Later Plato became interested in the metaphysical *status* of the objects of the definitions Socrates was looking for. These could not be sensible objects, because such objects are subject to change and therefore cannot be the proper

objects of knowledge. In dialogues such as the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, Plato sketches the outline of a different order of reality: what are known as Plato's forms or ideas. The encounter with these forms is transformative: by becoming acquainted with Beauty or Goodness itself, we become closer to what is godlike (immortal, not subject to time and space). This is what our well-being consists of: the acquisition of wisdom, which is acquaintance with, and assimilation to, the unchanging forms.⁴

Plato offers us a vision of ourselves that, being grounded in the recognition of our constant change, portrays us as potential makers of meaningful transformation in our communities and the world at large. Plato's vision enables us to identify with something greater than our individual mortal body, without neglecting traits we might regard as core to our humanity – such as striving or desire. The role of change in Plato's philosophy is introduced in this section, which discusses the role of desire in achieving the human goal of possessing the good forever. The second section discusses Plato's metaphysics of forms and its relation to personal identity and ethics and in the final section the role played by the reorientation of *erós* in achieving transformation. This first part of the chapter aims to show the relationship between self-transformation and world-transformation in Plato by interpreting a crucial passage in the *Symposium* (211e–212a), to which the third section is devoted. This interpretation, we claim, is more persuasive than alternative interpretations of Plato's project, which we will explore later.⁵ One of the benefits of our interpretation, we see section 'Knowledge of forms results in deeds: Plato, *Symposium* 211e–212a', is that it stays true to Plato's ethical intellectualism – the idea that as soon as one truly knows what is good or virtuous one will behave accordingly.

In a very clear – and quite Buddhist sounding – passage in the *Symposium*, Plato affirms that what we conventionally call a person and regard as being the same throughout the years is actually an impermanent arrangement of psychophysical phenomena that decays and is constantly replaced:

Think of what we call the life-span and identity of an individual creature. For example, a man is said to be the same individual from childhood until old age. The cells in his body are always changing, yet he is still called the same person, despite being perpetually reconstituted [*neos aei gignomenos*] as parts of him decay – hair, flesh, bones, blood, his whole body, in fact. And not just his body, either. Precisely the same happens with mental attributes. Habits, dispositions, beliefs, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains and fears are all varying all the time for everyone. Some disappear, others take their place ... All continuous mortal existence is of this kind. It is not the case that creatures remain always, in every

detail, precisely the same – only the divine does that. It is rather that what is lost, and what decays, always leaves behind a fresh copy of itself. (207d–208b)⁶

For Plato, this is no reason for dismay, but an opportunity; if we constantly change, then education, self-cultivation and world-transformation are possible.

These transformative possibilities – self-cultivation, education and world-transformation – are grounded in our *erôs*, that is, in our constant striving towards what we lack and want, which intentionally directs us towards objects that we regard as good. This human trait must be cherished, yet reoriented through dialogues that enable the young to discover what is really worth striving for, namely, the real good that we want to possess forever. The reorientation of *erôs* has a clear parallel in the reorientation of *upādāna* (grasping instigated by desire and will) in Buddhism.⁷

But why should we want to reorient our striving towards the real good and engage in deeds that will change our world? This project appears too selfless to be acceptable and far too much in conflict with our individual interests. However, Plato explains that it is only by reorienting our striving towards the real good that we can achieve what the Greeks agree is the default human goal, namely, *eudaimonia*: ‘flourishing’, ‘the good life’, ‘well-being’ or ‘happiness’, seen not as a fleeting mood but as a stable achievement. In the *Symposium*, Socrates – usually regarded as Plato’s mouthpiece – argues that our goal is not only achieving *eudaimonia*, or ‘possessing what is good & beautiful’ (202c; 205a) but possessing it forever. ‘Forever’ needs to be qualified: forever for impermanent humans means shedding what is old, replacing it with something new (207d, see previous quotation). Socrates refers to Diotima, a wise woman who explains that it is thanks to *erôs* that human beings can possess the good life forever. *Erôs* is the desire (*epithumia*) that drives us all (including other animals) to fill a lack (200a, 204a). *Erôs* is always intentionally directed: it is of something (199e; 200e) that we lack and we think is good and beautiful (201a) and want to possess forever (200d, 206a). As we will see, the possession of what is good and beautiful forever is only an achievable goal for those who reassess who or what ‘they’ are and what they want to possess or achieve forever. If there is something we turn out to ‘be’, which is good and can be extended forever, our life-project can be regarded as successful.

Nobody can attempt to achieve the good forever as an individual, neither those who have reassessed who they are after philosophical dialogues, nor those who, with no reflection on personal identity, try to possess forever simply the life they deem good by giving birth to new individuals and by caring for them. At 206e *erôs* for the good life forever is reformulated as ‘*erôs tês gennêseôs kai tou tokou en tōi kalōi*’: ‘of engendering and begetting upon the beautiful’ (trans.

Fowler) or ‘the desire to use beauty to beget and bear offspring’ (trans. Griffith). What we translate as ‘beautiful’ – *kalon* – also means ‘noble’; this is how the good appears, and it is this that makes the good attractive and valuable: something anyone would want to possess forever. Since we, and all other things, are constantly changing, we cannot possess anything permanently. We can, however, try to actively replace that which we value and wish to keep for a long time with something similar to it. This is also the natural process described at 207d–208b quoted above: our body continues to exist because our decaying cells leave fresh copies of themselves behind. The human way of possessing anything for a long time is thus to replace the old with the new; which can be reformulated as giving birth to something new (207d–208b). Seen in this way, *erôs* – the desire to possess the good forever – consists in being attracted to what is beautiful and noble, which we regard as good, and in continuously giving birth to more goodness. *Erôs* is ordinarily directed at attractive bodies and results in people giving birth to children: this makes reproduction the germ of immortality (206c–e).

However Plato’s suggestion is that *erôs* can be redirected in such a way that it results in the production of real virtue or goodness that grants true immortality – rather than merely the creation of children. This requires us to consider what the production of real virtue means and the relationship it bears to Plato’s conception of philosophy as a way of life – a conception which stimulates us towards bringing about profound changes in our community. We might think here of Plato’s many descriptions of Socrates’s effort to transform Athens for the better by asking people to examine their beliefs (e.g. *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Laches*), and the description of the just city-state in the *Republic*, which is Plato’s design of a community, based on understanding the good and the forms, especially of the virtues, in which people could flourish. But how should we understand ourselves, if not as stable individuals? And how should we, according to Plato, extend what we deem good in this life? Furthermore, in what way, by constant effort to produce new manifestations of what we deem good, might we transcend our individuality, in space and time, and impact our community and the world we live in?

Plato’s metaphysics: We and the rest of reality are ‘interweavings’ of forms

We need to consider what allows Plato to say that we can transcend our individuality and continue spatially, beyond the boundaries of our skin,

and temporally, beyond death. According to Plato, we are individuals only conventionally.⁸ In the *Sophist*, Plato shows that everything can be understood as an 'inter-weaving of forms'⁹ ('*sumplokê eidôn*', *Sophist* 259e), including humans. When referring to an individual, for example, Chloe, we might say, 'Chloe is beautiful and friendly'. In this case, we are expressing the relation between what we recognize as Chloe and the forms, that is, the qualities or features – beauty and friendliness – that Chloe manifests for a certain time span. Ordinary predications, like the above, express some of the forms that constitute and explain what we take to be an individual.¹⁰ In other words, Chloe is nothing above and beyond the temporal manifestation of a plurality of forms.

We need to ask, however, what the consequences are of conceiving of our identity as a display of features or an interweaving of forms; that is, what ethical potential is disclosed in the realization that we, who might seem independent individuals, are ultimately manifestations of forms. In other words, what do we gain if we accept the suggestion that our being brave, beautiful or friendly can only be understood as a manifestation of the forms of courage, beauty or friendliness, braided together? If we accept that we are impermanent manifestations of *many* different forms, we might realize that it is precisely by being impermanent manifestations of *many* different forms that we can steer the changing display of our plurality of forms. We may display a different array of forms at different moments in our life and the forms we display may well be a consequence of education and self-cultivation.

Knowledge of forms results in deeds:

Plato, *Symposium* 211e–212a

What if, while being a changing manifestation of a plurality of forms, we are not manifesting forms of virtues, such as courage or temperance, but we manifest rather cowardice and greed? Knowledge of forms of virtues or excellences, the manifestation of which constitute the good life, is the necessary and only step that can reorient us towards the good. The *Symposium* explains how someone who is attracted to one beautiful person and engages with him in conversation (209b; 210a; 210c; 210d) can gradually ascend the ladder of *erôs* (211b–212b). Having reached the top, he will look at beauty in itself (*auto to kalon*), which is how the good appears. Thus, at the culmination of what Diotima refers to as the 'higher mysteries' of her revelation, she speaks of how the lover who has contemplated beauty will give birth not to images of virtues, excellences of

goodness (*tiktein ouk eidola aretês*; for example, in love poems or laws) but to true virtue (*aretên alêthê*) (212a):

[I]magine he were able to see divine beauty itself in its uniqueness. Don't you think he would find it a wonderful way to live, looking at it, contemplating it as it should be contemplated, and spending his time in its company? It cannot fail to strike you that only then will it be possible for him, seeing beauty as it should be seen, to produce not likenesses of goodness (since it is not likeness that he has before him), but the real thing (since he has the real thing before him); and that this producing, and caring for, real goodness¹¹ earns him the friendship of the gods and makes him, if anyone, immortal. (211e–212a, italics added)

The question this raises is: What is 'true virtue'? And why do these offspring grant their parents immortality and the friendship of the gods? I argue that giving birth to true virtue means manifesting the virtues we consist of, by carrying out virtuous deeds which will result in community and world-transformation. On some interpretations of this passage (see below), the knower of the good will produce only beautiful discourses or accounts. These interpretations are mistaken in two ways: (1) they neglect Platonic ethical intellectualism which entails that once one knows virtue, one will unfailingly act on it; (2) they are mistakenly preoccupied with the lack of individual immortality for the lover who gives birth to true virtue. These interpretations forget that, for Plato, the lovers can be seen as interweavings of forms, rather than as individuals, and so, the immortality they enjoy need not be individual immortality.

A number of interpretations concentrate on the moment of knowledge of the form of beauty, rather than on what happens after contemplating this form, because the latter is considered less important than contemplation itself. Rosen,¹² for example, considers 'true instances' of virtue or goodness to be speeches and accounts that are representations of the contemplated form. Rosen displays what I call the epistemological assumption. This holds that the relation humans have with beauty, or with any other form, is fundamentally *epistemological*: to enter in relation with forms means that our mind knows forms. Scholars who assume that our relation to forms is fundamentally epistemological see the production of true virtue in terms of good accounts of knowledge.

Much is at stake in understanding what this true virtue that is produced once the lover has seen beauty is. In fact, the real virtue produced by the lover is what earns him the friendship of the gods – not the vision itself. The gods love the production of virtue more than the knowledge that necessarily precedes it because, I maintain, achieving knowledge is fundamental in the Platonic project

in virtue of its transformative aims. Once one knows courage, for example, one cannot fail to be courageous and perform courageous deeds. This follows from Plato's ethical intellectualism: someone who knows what is right will always act on that knowledge. As Socrates, in the *Protagoras* (352b-c) says:

The opinion generally held of knowledge is something of this sort – that it is no strong or guiding or governing thing; it is not regarded as anything of that kind, but people think that, while a man often has knowledge in him, he is not governed by it, but by something else – now by passion, now by pleasure, now by pain, at times by love, and often by fear; their feeling about knowledge [352c] is just what they have about a slave, that it may be dragged about by any other force. Now do you agree with this view of it, or do you consider that knowledge is something noble and able to govern man, and that whoever learns what is good and what is bad will never be swayed by anything to act otherwise than as knowledge bids, and that intelligence is a sufficient succour for mankind? My view, Socrates, he replied, is precisely that which you express.

If one knows the virtues, one will express this knowledge through deeds that cannot be other than virtuous. By dispelling ignorance, wisdom brings forth virtuous deeds. This is philosophy as a way of life, which has an impact on one's world because epistemology and ethics are closely connected not only to each other but also to metaphysics: reality consists of forms and we manifest the forms of virtues once we have real knowledge of them (cf. *Euthydemus* 281d). Before this, we might express thoughtless boldness, rather than realizing and manifesting the form of the wise virtue of courage (cf. also *Meno* 88a).

Returning to our passage (*Symp.* 211e-212a), the following interpretations of this passage do appreciate that 'real' instances of goodness (or virtue) are not merely items of knowledge confined to the 'private' mental state of the one who contemplates beauty. In these interpretations, however, 'real' instances of virtue are *discourses*, not deeds. Kurihara,¹³ for example, argues that 'Plato thinks of the *telos* of the Ladder of Love as living the philosophical life, not merely grasping the Form of Beauty'; and 'The true virtue that the lover delivers must be philosophy itself'¹⁴. Yet philosophy is seen as composed of *discourses*, by means of which a teacher guides his students. And giving birth to true virtue is seen as 'giving birth to beautiful and magnificent words and thoughts'.¹⁵ White¹⁶ argues that the goal of *erôs* does not consist in knowledge or contemplation of virtue, but 'in the philosopher's bringing forth of true virtue and in the immortality that it bestows'. Promisingly, he says that true virtue begotten by the true lover is not something concerning him alone, but 'something brought forth into the world and continuing to exist when the true lover is dead'¹⁷. At the same time,

this 'something' is philosophical discourses. Kraut emphasizes the effect of these discourses 'that will still be in place after we die'¹⁸ on the world, but refers to the 'real virtues' as 'notional children',¹⁹ that is, beautiful discourses that one begets after seeing the form of beauty.

The suggestion at *Symposium* 211e-212a that, by giving birth to true virtue, the lover becomes immortal helps us to refine our question about personal identity as follows: in what way, by *knowing* eternal forms and by *regarding ourselves* as interweavings of forms, can we achieve our goal of possessing the good forever? Some interpreters fear that by understanding and articulating the structure of reality one is annihilated rather than immortalized, because one's understanding of the form, if correct, need not to be different from anyone else's.²⁰ It's difficult to see how one could acquire immortality in this way.²¹ Meinwald defends the possibility that the creation of new discourses or proofs, after having seen the form, might grant one individual immortality, in the same way as someone's articulation of a mathematical theorem can differ from the proof given by others of the same theorem.²² But one may ask, can the creation of discourses about virtues, published in peer-reviewed journals, say, in one's name, be what grants one immortality and the friendship of the gods?

Let's notice that when revealing the 'lower mysteries', Diotima refers to poems and laws as the offspring of the psyche (209b-c) that grant the lovers immortality of the kind that is possible for human beings (207d, 208b). Once she proceeds to the 'higher mysteries', she introduces the new offspring that will not be likenesses of virtues but real virtues. It seems plausible that the likenesses of virtue are the poems and laws referred to as the 'lower mysteries'. Yet the question arises, what is the nature of these offspring that they are superior not only to children of flesh but also to poems and laws?

White maintains that the superior offspring, which bestow immortality on the philosopher, are his philosophical discourses and works, in which he lives on and which are aimed at the virtue of others.²³ White does not mention that these offspring might be virtuous deeds. Interestingly, White refers to Alcibiades's characterization of Socrates, as the true lover, whose discourses can turn the beliefs of his addressees upside down (261a) and help them live a noble and good life (22a). However, White does not mention that Alcibiades talks at great length about Socrates's *deeds* that manifest the most important virtues. Socrates is capable of restraint (*sôphrosune*, 216d) and courage (*andreia*, 219d), which he manifested when resisting the advances of Alcibiades himself, one of the most attractive men in Athens (217a-219e). In war, he manifested toughness, endurance, indifference to weather, excellent conduct in action and selfless

behaviour – when he saved Alcibiades's life after he was wounded – as well as prudence and composedness (219a–221c). Alcibiades's speech shows that, if Socrates is the true lover, his production of real virtues consists not only in his discourses but in his deeds, which manifest the most important virtues and make a deep impression on everyone who witnesses them. Unfortunately Alcibiades did not manage to reorient his *erôs* properly; he did not manage to ascend the ladder of *erôs*, which would have led him to know the good and manifest it in his deeds.

There are however people who, after spending time with a lover who has known the good and manifests the good in his deeds, manage the ascent and the reorientation of their *erôs*. After this, the lover's *erôs* for the beloved does not consist in the desire to possess him (only) as a body. The beloved is *no more identified with a mortal body, but with the manifestation of forms, especially of virtues, which the beloved can now manifest after having known them*. The lover might tell his beloved: 'I desire the courage that you manifest and that you are.' To desire and to want to possess forever the courage (or another virtue) manifested by one's beloved means to want to give birth to more courage. The lover-knower, who was always an interweaving of various forms, is now a manifestation, among other forms, of the form that he has known at the top of his ascent that culminates in transformative knowledge. By *knowing* eternal forms, we will realize that our immortality and our possession of the good forever depend on our capacity to produce the best kind of spiritual offspring: virtuous deeds, which result from our transformative knowledge of the forms of virtues. For example, the spiritual children of a couple of lovers of courage are manifestations of courage – as deeds, not only discourses – in the community, by which more courage will be born and manifested. These offspring do not grant *personal* immortality. We do not become immortal as individuals because, ultimately, we are not individuals. What is passed on is virtues, not one's name.

Plato: From identification with the forms and continuous realization of the virtues to world-transformation

In order to make the good present in the impermanent reality of our community, we need not only to continue engaging in discourses about eternal virtues – such as courage, restraint and wisdom – but also to continue replacing old deeds with new deeds in an open-ended chain of manifestations of the eternal in time. This, in conclusion, is Plato's suggestion. If the possession of the good forever is

the goal of every human being, it cannot be a characteristic or achievement of anyone as an individual. By setting this goal for ourselves, we will not try to hand down what is individual in us, but the virtues or values that are constitutive of us. In order to reach this goal, we need to stop identifying with our idiosyncratic desires and opinions, and with an individuality that terminates at the boundaries of our skin and at the time of our death. Seeing ourselves as interweavings of forms of virtues might urge us to know virtues and freely to choose those virtues we wish to manifest. We might consider regarding a successful life that of the person who – in the face of her own individual mortality – continuously increases both the quantity and the extension in time of the manifestation of virtues in their community. We might see education as exposing the youth to discourses and virtuous deeds, which will reorient their *erôs* towards the good life forever. And they will thus try to achieve immortality by replacing the old with new virtuous deeds, performed either by what one conventionally refers to as 'me' or by other temporary manifestations of virtues. The suggestion is that, by conceptualizing our identity in this way and by untiringly realizing what is good in our discourses and actions, we can transform our world.

From identity to identitylessness: A Buddhist perspective on realizing virtues

Buddhist philosophy denies that persons and objects have identities: substantive cores that may each be called a 'self'.²⁴ Recognizing that phenomena lack identity transforms what we take to be self (*ātman*), person (*pudgala*) and world (*loka*).²⁵ This discussion investigates how the metaphysics of dependent co-arising (*pratīyasamutpāda*) in early and Madhyamaka Buddhism embeds the transformative practices of no-identity (*niḥsvabhāva*) or no-self (*anātman*). Dependent co-arising is the claim that the mental and physical phenomena that constitute everyday reality arise in dependence on other such phenomena, which are the causes and conditions of their arising. In what follows, we demonstrate that, for the Buddhist, metaphysics is an ethical practice.²⁶ And it is the interlinking of metaphysics and ethics that makes it possible that practising no-self or no-identity *is* realizing the normative aims and values that dependent co-arising explicates.

The next section discusses the metaphysical and normative features of dependent co-arising that make Buddhist philosophy a practice of transformation. The following section examines the Madhyamaka notion of self as grasping or

appropriation, and how this underpins the construction of person and world. Then we discuss disappropriate practices of the self, in particular, Śāntideva's path of virtuous transformation as the practice of no-self or, synonymously, the practice of dependent co-arising. It considers the cognitive, emotional and behavioural virtues cultivated on this path in pursuit of its aim: the unceasing realization of virtuous freedom as identitylessness, which is discussed in the final section.²⁷

The normative features of early Buddhist and Madhyamaka metaphysics

It is no exaggeration to say that Buddhist metaphysics is a metaphysics of suffering (*duhkha*). The Four Noble Truths (*satya*) of Buddhism, which also designate the four realities (*satya*) of existence, declare the pervasiveness of suffering, its arising from causes and conditions, its cessation, and the path to its cessation by the elimination of its causes and conditions. The four truths explicate two normative constraints, namely suffering and freedom from suffering. If the human condition is diagnosed as one of suffering by the Buddhist, it is the primary, if not the sole aim of philosophy, to cure the 'dis-ease' of suffering by a programme of eight-fold virtuous cultivation set out in the fourth truth.

The central assumption here is that the metaphysical and the normative, what 'is' and what 'ought' to be, are not separable, and insight into the nature of reality is transformative, cognitively, affectively and ethically.²⁸ This is reminiscent of Plato's assumption that the reality of the forms of virtues, once known, transforms the knower's behaviour so that it cannot but be virtuous. Moreover, Plato's reality consists of forms that, because they are firmly grounded in the form of the good, constitute a good reality – one which can be understood by whosoever understands the good of every aspect of it. In a not dissimilar vein, the Buddha claims that 'He who sees dependent arising (*pratītyasamutpāda*) [of the psychophysical qualities (*dharma*s) that constitute persons and objects] sees *dhamma* (Skt. *dharma*, the truth about how things really are); he who sees *dhamma* (the truth about how things are) sees dependent arising [of the *dharma*s].'²⁹ This says that we come to understand the truth of the Buddha's teachings, or *dharma*, by recognizing the dependent co-arising and passing of the mental and physical qualities or characteristics (*dharma*s) that are constitutive of persons and objects.³⁰ We do so by observing *dharma*s as *dharma*s, that is, by seeing their causal arising and passing as that of impersonal characteristics, rather than of personal attributes.

It is then possible to observe how *dharma*s arise and pass away, and to recognize how those *dharma*s or (virtuous) qualities (cognitive, emotional, dispositional etc.) that one wishes to develop might be cultivated and those (nonvirtuous) qualities one wishes to abandon may be abandoned.³¹ Observing the dependent co-arising of *dharma*s, one comes to understand the four truths they manifest as causally arisen, impermanent (*anitya*) phenomena. Namely, their nature as suffering; the causes of suffering (delusion, attachment and aversion, especially the delusion of a self which leads to identification with the *dharma*s as 'I' or 'mine' and instigates the other two causes of suffering, attachment and aversion to transient phenomena); the cessation of suffering (when delusion and, with it, attachment and aversion cease); and the path to the cessation of suffering (which cultivates the extinguishment of delusion, attachment and aversion). By 'seeing these four truths one realizes the ultimate truth', or *dharma*, namely the extinguishing (*nirvāṇa*) of suffering.³² This mode of metaphysical analysis of the *dharma*s – or of collections of *dharma*s called the aggregates (*skandha*s) – to achieve normative aims (freedom from suffering) underwrites the path of virtuous cultivation, whether in the eight-fold path of early Buddhism or the path of perfections in Madhyamaka Buddhism.

The Madhyamaka ('Middle-Way') philosopher, Nāgārjuna (second century CE) agrees that all phenomena co-arise dependently and that this entails suffering. But dependent co-arising means, he claims, that all phenomena are empty (*śūnya*) of intrinsic nature, that is, of inherent or independent existence (*svabhāva*) – a claim which accords with the Buddha's view that all phenomena, in virtue of being dependently arisen, lack a substantial core, a 'self' (see *MN* 22, for example).³³ Moreover, recognizing that conventional, everyday phenomena, including dependent arising itself, are empty of inherent or substantive existence is recognizing their 'ultimate reality' as unproduced, non-conceptual, peaceful and beyond all suffering: 'Not known through anyone else, peaceful, not expressed by discursive ideas, non-conceptual, not diverse – this is the definition of reality' (*MMK* 18.9). Nāgārjuna's commentator Candrakīrti (seventh century CE) reiterates this claim, 'from the outset, all phenomena are peace, are unproduced, transcending by their nature every pain' (*MA* VI.112b-c).

Madhyamaka philosophers claim that peace ensues with the 'realization' of emptiness, the 'nonconceptual' insight that dependently co-arising phenomena, and dependent co-arising itself, are empty of inherent existence (*svabhāva*). Non-conceptual insight sees phenomena as unproduced (not-arisen) and peaceful (because non-arising leaves no basis for craving or suffering).³⁴ The tranquillity and peace of 'ultimate' reality is the normative aspect of metaphysical insight

which is explained by Śāntideva in the following way: '[w]hen neither entity nor nonentity remains before the mind, since there is no other mode of operation, grasping no objects, it (the mind) becomes tranquil' (BCA IX.34). That is to say, when conceptual grasping of objects ceases, the mind becomes tranquil. How this happens is explained next.

Self as appropriation: The construction of self, person and world

Two interrelated terms in the above set of claims need to be unpacked – 'grasping' and 'conceptuality' – which are interlinked with the concept of 'I'. Nāgārjuna claims:

[A]ll beings have arisen from the conception of I (*aham*)

And are enveloped with the conception of mine (*mama*). (*Ratnāvalī*, I. 27)

As long as the aggregates are conceived [as having intrinsic nature or existence (*svabhāva*)],

So long thereby does the conception of I exist.

Further, when the conception of I exists,

There is action, and from it there also is birth. (*Ratnāvalī*, I. 35)

Nāgārjuna says that conceiving the aggregates as really existent is tied to the conception of 'I' as really existent. And the concept of 'I' is, in some way, the basis from which living beings arise. The notion of 'I' or self is elucidated by Candrakīrti. Self, he claims, is simply the sense of ownership we have of our experiences, emotions, bodies and so on. It is simply the sense of personal existence that we refer to when we say, 'I am'.³⁵ The sense of self is the I-concept or I-object (*ahamkāra*) that is constructed *in* and *by* the activity of conceptually appropriating (*upādāna*) to oneself the stream of psychophysical aggregates: "That which is constructed in the appropriating of them [the psychophysical aggregates] is said to be the appropriator, the thinker, the performing self. In this is generated [the activity of] "I-ing", that is, the activity of appropriating, or laying to claim to, the aggregates which is conceptually constructing a sense of self.³⁶ Appropriating, then, is positing a conceptually constructed subjective object, the I-object or self.

'Self' is an appropriative term here; it is the appropriative activity of 'I-ing', that is, of appropriating or grasping that is conceiving psychophysical objects

as 'I' and 'mine'. It is this 'I-ing' that binds the person-bundle of psychophysical aggregates together as a dependently co-arising continuum (Candrakīrti, *PP B* 350³⁷; *Ratnāvalī* I. 35). What Candrakīrti is pointing to is that the sense of 'I', or ownership, as the subject (or self) and its object, arise in the very activity of grasping as the *feeling* or *sense* that the subject and its object *really* exist. The creation of a subjective sense of 'I' is the creation of a subjective object, the subject of experience who Candrakīrti describes as 'the illusion of the "I" [that] is conceived as in and of [the nature of] personal existence'.³⁸

The creation of the subject and object of experience is explicitly theorized in Yogācāra Buddhism (third century CE), in which appropriation (*upādāna*) is the key aggregate, and it is through *appropriative movement* that the appropriated is constructed in the manner of, or as, *grāhaka* (appropriator) and *grāhya* (appropriated) or subject and object.³⁹ The subject, as grasper or appropriator (*grāhaka*), and its object, as the grasped or appropriated (*grāhya*), describe the structure of intentional consciousness in ordinary, appropriative cognitions, and more generally in actions. It is this dualistic subject-object structure of intentional consciousness that motivates intentional actions (*karman*), which bring into existence appropriated objects, subjective and objective, as a karmic result.

The subject-object structure of intentional consciousness, as appropriator and appropriated, grants the directedness and content of 'I-ing' which informs intentional actions. This karmically consequential grasping (*upādāna*) – as self or ownership – both generates and 'binds together' appropriated *dharma*s in a unified person-continuum. Note that appropriation or grasping mental and physical qualities, as a self, arises in dependence on craving (*trṣṇa*) and feeling (*vedanā*); in turn, dependent on appropriation, the aggregates come together as 'becoming' which leads to birth, the coming into existence of a living being and its world of embodied experience (see *MN* 115.11).⁴⁰ Given the integrative effect on the stream of person-*dharma*s of the sense of ownership or self, it is not surprising that the Buddha proclaims, 'beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions' (*MN* 135.3).

Disappropriative practices of the self: Attenuating ownership

If grasping or appropriation is the conceptual construction of 'I' and 'mine', we might surmise that non-grasping or non-appropriation eliminates the notion

of 'I' because it is 'nonconceptual' in some way. Nāgārjuna explains that when the conceptual appropriation of mental and physical phenomena as 'I' and 'mine' is 'destroyed both Merleau-Ponty within and without appropriation comes to an end; [and] with its demise, rebirth [i.e. the dependent co-arising of a person-continuum of aggregates] ends' (MMK 18.4). Appropriation ends by recognizing 'the aggregates as [ultimately] untrue' (*Ratnāvali* I. 30), that is, as 'empty' of inherent or ultimate existence.⁴¹ The practices which make conceptual disappropriation of the aggregates possible are explicated in Śāntideva's path of the six perfections.

The path of perfections

Śāntideva outlines a path of cultivation of six virtuous perfections (*paramitā*). This is founded on the core commitment of the Buddha-to-be, the *bodhisattva* (awakening-being), to the development of *bodhicitta* (awakening mind) which seeks to alleviate the suffering of all beings – consistent with the four truths of the Buddha. The perfections are giving or generosity (*dāna*), moral discipline (*śīla*) which includes restraint from appropriative activities, patience or forbearance (*kṣānti*), zeal (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajña*). These virtues initiate a series of conceptually disappropriative *movements* of the aggregates that transform the subject-object structure of intentionality from a grasper-grasped relationship of ownership, or 'self-appropriation', to one of disowning or 'other-appropriation', and, finally, non-ownership or 'non-appropriation'.

Behavioural practices at the beginning of the path include generosity towards others, moral conduct and patience which attenuate the sense of ownership by cultivating 'giving away' (see *BCA* III, V.10), or practising mental and moral introspection, and restraint and forbearance in the face of pleasant and unpleasant circumstances (*BCA* V-VI). These practices cultivate 'other-appropriation' which favours other sentient beings over oneself, or otherwise mitigate self-clinging.

Behavioural practices of disowning prepare the ground for meditative practices (*dhyāna*) that cultivate non-appropriation of objects by the senses and mind. Thus, *bodhisattvas* 'do not grasp at signs and do not grasp at characteristics' with the senses, nor do they grasp conscious experiences with the mind (*manas*) (ŚS 199-200). Meditative training, however, also involves more direct practices of 'other-appropriation' or 'other-ing', as opposed to 'I-ing', using metaphysical analysis to develop a wholly non-appropriative stance.

Metaphysical analysis as ethical practice

Metaphysical analysis, Śāntideva claims, is transformative because 'seeing things as they really are' extirpates the notion of 'I'.⁴² As in early Buddhism, '[a]nalysis is created as an antidote to that false notion [of "I" created by conceptual appropriation]' (*BCA* IX.92). It is by analysis that we come to see sentient and non-sentient objects as impersonal bundles of qualities (*dharmas*). For example, by analysing the body into its constituent parts, we come to see the body as simply a mechanical construction of bones and muscles constituted of dependently arising *dharmas* (ŚS 231). Similarly, by analysing a corpse, we come to recognize its putrefied attributes as no different, in reality, from the attributes of our own body (ŚS 206-8). Analysis of this sort is an ethical practice that cultivates an impersonal view of the body to eliminate the attachments and aversions that are associated with it and the afflictive emotions that follow from this. Thus, coming to see the body as an arrangement of dependently arising *dharmas* can help overcome afflictive emotions, such as anger and fear, by realizing that these emotions are not attributable to *someone* (*BCA* IV.47, VI.31-33, VIII.48).

Self as 'other': Cultivating equality and exchange

The most concerted metaphysical practices of conceptual disappropriation are perhaps the equality and exchange of self and other. As before, metaphysical analysis prompts the realization that persons are merely composites of impersonal mental and physical *dharmas*, which qua *dharmas* are 'equal' or the 'same' (*sama*). With this recognition of the sameness of person-bundles comes its normative aspect, namely that the suffering associated with each bundle of *dharmas* is the 'same' and equally worthy of alleviation (*BCA* VIII.90, 94-96). Analysis of this sort seeks to overturn the 'habit' of identifying the suffering associated with *this* psychophysical bundle of *dharmas* as *my own*, and of *that* psychophysical bundle as *other*, and so less worthy of concern (*BCA* VIII.115). It attempts to foster practices that move from appropriating *this* bundle of *dharmas* as self to appropriating *other* person-bundles as self, and finally to appropriating all person-bundles, that is, the social community as a whole as self – to assure its well-being. Epistemic practices are transformative here and have direct ethical and emotional consequences.

But how exactly do epistemic practices transform our emotional and ethical life? The argument appears to run as follows. Recognizing the impersonality of *dharmas* is recognizing their ownerlessness and so, the ownerlessness of the

person-bundles they constitute. It is 'seeing *dharma*s as *dharma*s' and therefore, bundles of *dharma*s as impersonal bundles that (ultimately) do not constitute *someone* nor belong to *someone*. This is also a recognition of the ownerlessness of the suffering that is associated with each bundle of *dharma*s (BCA VIII.101-102) - which is possible on the core assumption that the arising and passing of *dharma*s is suffering. The question remains, How can 'ownerless suffering' elicit compassion or lovingkindness?⁴³

The relationship between ownerlessness and compassion, or benevolence, may be unpacked in the following way. Self or 'I' is the sense of personal existence and ownership that comes from appropriating the aggregates. However, when 'I' is extended to others, becoming other, at least perspectively, it is a disappropriative movement of 'other-ing'. 'I' can extend itself as other only if it sees no difference between *this* bundle and *that* bundle, that is, if it sees aggregate-bundles as impersonal and ownerless. If the movement of grasping is owning, the movement of extending is *disowning*. What appears, however, to tie the recognition of ownerlessness and the movement of disowning with a compassionate attitude rather than one of mere indifference, say, is the assumption that ownerlessness arises as the expansion or universalization of appropriating or 'I-ing', and the 'caring for oneself' that ordinarily goes with this. This says that 'I' can extend itself to any and all person-aggregates and still remain 'I'. And whereas the sense of 'I' as grasping invokes attachment and aversion, the extension and expansion of 'I' to others, its reorientation, invokes benevolence and wholesomeness in the forms of giving, compassion and so on.

So, reorienting the sense of 'I' as 'other-ing', by binding oneself to other ownerless, yet suffering, person-bundles promotes *compassionately* appropriating evermore bundles of *dharma*s as 'I', until one comes to appropriate the social community as a whole as 'I' (see BCA VIII.114-117, 137). The core assumption here is that 'emotional expansiveness' is a constitutive aspect of the expansiveness of 'I' as the *movement* of 'other-ing'. This might arguably follow from the view that if emotional constriction, qua greed and aversion, is a constitutive feature of 'I-ing' as owning, emotional expansiveness as lovingkindness and compassion is a constitutive feature of the *movement* of disowning as 'other-ing'. This appears, plausibly, to be the basis of Śāntideva's view that just as bodily parts function as a unity in ways that contribute to the proper functioning and well-being of each part, presumably because these parts are integrated in the same stream of 'I-ing'; so might persons act 'functionally' for the well-being of the whole - as oneself - by subsuming all *dharma*-streams under the umbrella of 'I' (see BCA VIII.91, 114-117).

At the heart of this view is a claim about intentionality. It says that when 'I' expands and binds itself to other aggregate-bundles, its expansive scope as 'other' transforms its contents and its quality to one of spaciousness or emptiness that has the nature of benevolence and happiness (see BCA VIII.129). The structure and contents of intentionality and intention are reoriented, in this case, as the subject-grasper recedes in favour of the world which is grasped. This appears to be implicit in Śāntideva's assertion that aggregates which are appropriated to oneself, as one's *own*, in a stream of *dharma*s that is associated with a limited or narrow sense of self, generate, by dependent arising, an experientially 'limited' conscious embodiment and world: an embodiment that presents a phenomenology of suffering (BCA VIII.127). Where aggregate-bundles are constituted by a stream of 'I-ing', as 'other-ing', which recognizes the ownerless nature of person-bundles and their suffering, the aggregates act disappropriatively, with compassion. This generates a world of embodied experience that presents, in relevant ways, a phenomenology of happiness (BCA VIII.129).

The unceasing virtues of emptiness: Lovingkindness and the other immeasurables

Practices of 'other-ing', by their expansiveness, attenuate the sense of substantial or objective existence of subject and object that grasping begets. Phenomenologically, this is the experience of de-substantialization or emptiness. Objects now arise as 'bundles or interweavings of qualities' that appear insubstantial; for example, physical forms that arise may have colour, shape, size, taste, smell and so on, but these qualities and the bundle they constitute appear to lack substantial existence, an identity of their own. They appear 'illusory' or 'dream-like', empty of inherent or substantive existence (*svabhāva*).

Once *dharma*s are no longer reified as objective existents, they arise simply as 'doings' that too are empty of inherent existence.⁴⁴ Mental *dharma*s, whether perception and cognition, sensation and feeling, emotion or disposition 'embody' the realization that all *dharma*s, all phenomena lack substantial, objective existence, an identity of their *own*, and are, in this sense, empty. Cognitions, feelings, emotions and behaviour can then arise unobstructed by conceptually constructed substantializations and biases of self and other, subject and object: they can arise as virtuous *dharma*s that are oriented 'equally' towards all (BCA VIII.103, 107-110, 114, 117).

Virtuous activities 'embody', as 'doings', the emptiness or identitylessness, of all *dharma*s because they recognize 'the nonarising' of substantial or reified objectivity, including dependent co-arising itself (§§ 209).⁴⁵ As such, virtuous doings, such as lovingkindness, are not dependent on reified objectivity, as either causes or conditions, for their arising or ceasing. We might say that unobstructed by 'substantial objectivity', they are 'self-arising'.⁴⁶ Virtuous activities or qualities, such as lovingkindness, compassionate caring, sympathetic joy and equanimity, insofar as they do not recognize substantial objectivity or limitations are 'objectless'. They are, for this reason, also 'immeasurable' (*apramāṇa*), that is, unobstructed by the conceptual limitations of substantial objectivity that grasping imposes.⁴⁷

Meditative analysis qua metaphysical analysis brings deepening insight into the emptiness of all phenomena – into 'how things really are' (*yathābhūtam*). It is the basis of wisdom (*prajñā*), the understanding that all phenomena lack inherent existence, because they co-arise dependently. Yet meditative insight itself comes only with the cultivation of virtues such as giving, moral restraint and patience and, in turn, perfects them. The six perfections of generosity and moral discipline, patience and zeal, meditative concentration and wisdom then arise not only sequentially, as presented earlier, they also reinforce each other, and 'bring to completion all the qualities of a Buddha, and ... Awakening' (§§ 290; 316–317). That this should be so is unsurprising because virtuous *dharma*s, behavioural, emotional, dispositional, cognitive and so on co-arise in dependence on each other, so that they are 'mutually cooperative and linked' (*sahitāny-anuprabaddhāni*) (§§ 316–317).⁴⁸ Note, however, that the perfection of virtues and their ceaseless arising continue only as long as dependent co-arising continues and this continues only so long as the aspirations of 'I as other of the *bodhisattva*, that marks a commitment to the welfare of all sentient beings, continues.

Conclusion

Plato suggests that our everyday world is characterized by change, which he describes in terms of the constant replacement of the old with the new. The individual is a constantly changing manifestation of different forms, at different times, so that ultimately there are only forms, which are temporally manifested in our actions. Transformation is possible because, after dialogue leading to knowledge of the forms of virtues, we can start manifesting those forms we did not possess earlier.

In the Buddhist view, there is no self or agent who owns her actions. Instead, there are only 'doings' that are simply qualities (*dharma*s). Transformation of self and world is possible only through knowledge of 'things as they really are', as ever-changing, interdependent qualities (*dharma*s), which in virtue of their dependent co-arising are empty of inherent nature or of independent existence (*svabhāva*). It is insight into the dependent co-arising of phenomena – which is synonymous with this notion of emptiness – that underwrites the path of transformation. It is also on account of the dependent co-arising of phenomena that cultivating one's qualities is transforming the world.

In both Plato and Buddhism, transformation is possible through a reorientation of intentionality, from the individual we conventionally identify with, towards the world, which is a reorientation towards the good. In Buddhism the highest good (*niḥśreyasa*) is neither an object nor a goal. It is rather a reorientation that moves from the habitual appropriation (*upādāna*) of 'self' to the appropriation of 'others' and seeks, in Madhyamaka Buddhism, to remove the suffering of all living beings. Beginning with removing the suffering of the conventional 'other', it moves in ever-widening circles towards sheer virtuous activity that has neither a subject nor an object. In Plato, on the other hand, transformation is fuelled by *erōs*. This is a powerful desire that always orients us towards what we lack but deem good and beautiful and wish to have and possess forever. *Erōs* begins as an attraction to the beautiful other, which allows us to continue forever what we deem good, by creating offspring that replace the old with the new. But *erōs* can be reoriented from desire for the body of the other, which results in physical progeny, to desire for the virtuous qualities the other ultimately consists of. Thanks to a dialogue with the other, we may acquire knowledge of the virtues we are attracted to in the other. If we reach this knowledge we will unfailingly begin to realize these virtues in virtuous behaviour, extending thereby their presence in the everyday life of the community. In both Plato and Mahāyāna Buddhism, this realization is not an end goal to be achieved once and for all. Rather, the reorientation of *erōs* and *upādāna*, respectively, leads to continuous virtuous doing.

Knowledge, or wisdom, is not only insight into reality but also realization of the virtues in both traditions. For Plato, realization consists in knowledge of the forms of the virtues that compose reality, which then results in virtuous deeds. For the Mahāyāna Buddhist, knowledge is understanding the emptiness of all phenomena, which comes through the cultivation of virtues and is realized in ceaseless virtuous doings. In the Buddhist view, a virtuous quality, such as compassion, is simply a conventional reification of virtuous doings, which

co-arise dependently and so are empty of inherent existence. For Plato, on the other hand, every virtuous action is a manifestation of the form of that particular virtue, say courage, which exists in relation to all the other forms that structure a reality ultimately grounded in the form of the good.

In both cases, the impermanence of everyday reality and the human capacity for knowledge provide opportunities for self-transformation. This immediately results in world-transformation, because reality does not consist of separate individuals but of qualities: forms, ultimately grounded in the form of the good for Plato and doings, which can be re-oriented towards the good, as the removal of suffering, for the Buddhist.

Notes

- 1 The impermanence of phenomena is the core metaphysical postulate on which all metaphysical and ethical claims of early Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism rest. However, *nirvāna*, in early Buddhism, is a reality that is not one of impermanence; and ultimate reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism is simply conventional (impermanent) reality understood as being empty of inherent nature. Nevertheless, given the lengths to which both early and Mahāyāna Buddhism avoid presenting *nirvāna* and 'emptiness' as 'ultimate' metaphysical existents, impermanence may rightly be considered to be the only reality that Buddhists emphasize and advocate, if only 'conventionally' or pragmatically.
- 2 This appears to be a controversial claim regarding Plato, especially if we think of the *Phaedo*, where the human soul is described as the stable, self-identical entity, opposed to the body, that we really are. However, Plato argues in various other dialogues that everything consists of forms. We show that, according to Plato, human beings also consist of forms, and this helps to make sense of a crucial passage in the *Symposium*.
- 3 *Upādāna*, is grasping or appropriation instigated by desire and will.
- 4 For an excellent introduction to Plato, see Constance C. Meinwald, *Plato* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
- 5 For example, Stanley Rosen, *Plato's Symposium* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968); Richard Kraut, 'Plato on Love', in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- 6 Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Tom Griffith (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993). We use Griffith's translation unless otherwise specified, when Fowler's translation is offered as a comparison.
- 7 We would like to thank Stephen Harris for suggesting this connection during a lecture on this topic at the 13th Annual Meeting of The Comparative & Continental Philosophy Circle, April 2018, Bath, UK.

- 8 This might seem a bold claim to make about Plato, especially if one thinks of the 'soul versus body' opposition as presented in the *Phaedo*. However, we should keep in mind that Plato has various models of the soul in different dialogues that can be explained as ways to adapt to Socrates's changing interlocutors and the specific topic at hand – rather than as definitive metaphysical accounts. Michael Griffin, 'The Ethics of Self-Knowledge in Platonic and Buddhist Philosophy', in *Ethics without Self, Dharma without Atman*, ed. Gordon F. Davis (Cham: Springer, 2018), 48 refers to the tension between the unified soul of the *Phaedo* and the complex soul of the *Republic*. In the *Republic*, the soul consists of strands or parts (reason, temper, desire) and different motivations and functions, each of which may pull in different directions. Griffin convincingly argues (38–9) that, for Plato, the soul's unity is the goal of *cultivation* rather than a metaphysical given: unity and harmony happen when each of the different principles of the soul engage in their own function and not interfere with each another (*Rep.* 4. 443D–E). In *Rep.* 9. 588C ff. Plato compares the default state of human beings to a manifold: a many-headed beast, which looks like one man from without but like many from within. Whereas the cultivation of justice makes the different parts allies of each other, injustice results in the parts pulling in different directions: 'our ordinary (descriptive) experience of selfhood really is plural, but we can strive (prescriptively) to constitute ourselves as a unity by identifying with our capacity for pure and practical reason' (38).
- 9 Seth Benardete, *The Being of the Beautiful: Plato's Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008), II:57 translates: 'It's on account of the weaving together of the species with one another that (the) speech has come to be for us.' Even if Plato uses this phrase to explain that no *discourse* is possible without the weaving together of forms, he seems to regard the interweaving of forms as reflecting what something ultimately is. When in the *Sophist*, they define what a sophist is, their account includes a range of 'interwoven' forms, including, among others, 'producing', 'imitating' and 'being human'.
- 10 Meinwald, *Plato*, 262.
- 11 The original Greek of the passage I have italicized is: '*tiktein ouk eidola arêtes, ate ouk eidōlou ephaptomenōi, alla alēthē, ate tou alēthous ephaptomenōi: tekonti de aretēn alēthē ...*' Harold N. Fowler, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9 (London: William Heinemann, 1925) translates as follows: 'to breed not illusions but true examples of virtue, since his contact is not with illusion but with truth. So, when he has begotten a true virtue ...'
- 12 Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 276.
- 13 Yuji Kurihara, 'Telos and Philosophical Knowledge in Plato's Symposium', in *X SYMPOSIUM PLATONICUM—THE SYMPOSIUM* (Pisa: Proceedings, 2013), 15.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 18–19.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 17.

- 16 F. C. White, 'Virtue in Plato's Symposium', *Classical Quarterly* 54 (2004): 366.
- 17 Ibid., 374.
- 18 Kraut, 'Plato on Love', 300, 308.
- 19 Ibid., 298.
- 20 For example, Gabriel Richardson Lear, 'Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato's Symposium', in 'Plato's Symposium'. *Issues in Interpretation and Reception*, ed. James Lesher, Debra Nails and Frisbee Sheffield (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*.
- 21 Lear, 'Permanent Beauty and Becoming Happy in Plato's Symposium', 111 n. 20, in Meinwald, *Plato*, 103, finds Plato's suggestion problematic that children of the psyche are better than children of flesh in making 'us' immortal. She refers to the discourses (*logoi*) about virtues, in dialogue with a younger friend, that lead to the generation of offspring of the psyche and comments: 'If the lover's understanding is genuine, then the account he grasps will not differ from the account of anyone else who genuinely understands. But in that case, how will his articulation of the account bring about the quasi-immortality of him rather than of anyone else who understands?' Rosen, *Plato's Symposium*, 228–9, interprets the Socratic remark that philosophy is preparation for dying as implying that noetic unity with the forms involves loss of one's individuality and concludes: 'Man is perpetually intermediate between two species of nothingness: the death of the body and the perfection of the psyche ... perfection of the psyche is a progressive loss of personality, and so a falling away from personal immortality.'
- 22 Meinwald, *Plato*, 104.
- 23 White, 'Virtue in Plato's Symposium', 374–5.
- 24 Buddhists reject the claim that there is such a thing as identity, including personal identity and existence, if this refers to the numerical identity of persons or objects over time (*SN* I.134–135; *MN* 22, 72; *Milindapañha* 25–8, 40–1), or the existence of a substantive self or substantial objects (*MN* 22; *Ratnāvalī* I.27–8, 30).
- 25 See *MN* 22. It is because the practices of no-self attenuate the sense of self and lead to the realization that the idea of self is, in some way, illusory that they prove transformative.
- 26 See, for example, Amber Carpenter, *Indian Buddhist Philosophy* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2014).
- 27 In early Buddhism (third to fourth century BCE), what might be called 'virtues' include in their scope moral conduct (*sīla*), which includes the cultivation of non-afflictive emotions (*akleṣa*), good or meritorious (*punya*) actions, skilful or wholesome (*kuśala*) actions; insight or wisdom (*prajñā*) which recognizes the 'truth' of the Buddha's teachings; and meditative cultivation (*samādhi*). In Mahāyāna Buddhism (from the first century CE onwards), the virtuous perfections (*pāramitā*) include generosity, moral conduct, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom (see § 2.1).

- 28 Rupert Gethin, 'He Who Sees Dhammas Sees Dhamma: Dhamma in Early Buddhism', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32 (2004): 534–6.
- 29 Ibid., 536.
- 30 Note that *dhammas* are the five types of phenomenologically distinct mental and physical qualities that characterize the experience of embodied existence in a world (*loka*), namely the body and senses (*rūpa*); sensations and feelings (*vedanā*); perception and cognition (*saṃjñā*); dispositions, conative impulses and constructive factors (*saṃskāra*); and consciousness (*viññāna*). Collections of each of the five types of *dhammas* are called the five aggregates (*skandhas*).
- 31 Gethin, 'He Who Sees Dhammas Sees Dhamma: Dhamma in Early Buddhism', 536.
- 32 Ibid., 536. The extinguishment of suffering comes from extinguishing its three 'roots', delusion (*moha*), especially the delusion of a self or identity, which leads to desirous attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*).
- 33 Whatever is dependently co-arisen / That is explained to be emptiness. / That, being a dependent designation, / Is itself the middle way [of the Buddha] (*MMK* 24.18).
- 34 This is, of course, akin to the Buddha's description of *nirvāṇa* as 'unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated' (*AN* 4.179) because it is the extinguishment of dependent co-arising. The distinction between early Buddhism and Madhyamaka is that whereas the Buddha's description refers ultimately to *parinirvāṇa* which comes with the death of the aggregates, for Madhyamaka this is a description of ordinary, conventional reality, *saṃsāra*, seen by the enlightened mind. This does not necessarily contradict what the Buddha says, given that the awakened one of course sees the phenomena of ordinary, conventional reality as 'unborn, unbecome, unmade' and so on.
- 35 See Jonardon Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 201–4.
- 36 As Candrakīrti says, 'from the beginning it (appropriating) has in its scope a sense of self' (Candrakīrti, *PP* B 212, 1.25–6, quoted in Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, 201).
- 37 In Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, 204.
- 38 M. Sprung, trans. *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way: The Essential Chapters from the Prasannapadā of Candrakīrti* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), v. 213, 141.
- 39 Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 66, 162.
- 40 We might say that the stream of qualities (*dhammas*) is unified by what Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1962), 157 terms an 'intentional arc' (Matthew MacKenzie, 'Enacting Selves, Enacting Worlds: On the Buddhist Theory of Karma', *Philosophy East and West* 63, no. 2 (2013): 205).

- 41 Candrakīrti, similarly, suggests that abandoning 'all activity of self-appropriation of the psycho-physical ... is the end of the individual self', (*PP B 350* in Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of the Soul*, 201–3).
- 42 See similar claims by the Buddha in *MN 22*. Note that metaphysical analysis is an aspect of meditative practice in the *BCA*.
- 43 See Jay L. Garfield, Stephen Jenkins and Graham Priest, 'The Śāntideva Passage: *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII.90-103', in *Moonpaths: Ethics and Emptiness*, ed. the Cowherds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 44 Gethin, 'He Who Sees Dhammas Sees Dhamma: Dhamma in Early Buddhism', 535.
- 45 We may say of such activities, for example, lovingkindness, that they are 'self-arising', because they are 'self-enlightened', insofar as they embody and actualize – and indeed co-arise ceaselessly and unobstructedly with – the understanding of universal emptiness. See *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti. A Mahāyāna Scripture*, trans. Robert Thurman (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976), 56.
- 46 *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti. A Mahāyāna Scripture*, trans. Thurman, 56.
- 47 Note that altruistic activities such as lovingkindness (*maitrī*) follow three stages of metaphysical-meditative insight, first taking sentient beings as their object, then the *dhammas*, before becoming 'objectless' (*ibid.*).
- 48 As Nāgārjuna (*Ratnāvalī* I.1–I.9, III.30–40, IV.63, 98); see Amber Carpenter, 'Aiming at Happiness, Aiming at Ultimate Truth – in Practice', in *Moonpaths: Ethics and Emptiness*, ed. the Cowherds (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) points out, moral discipline leads to the cultivation of wholesome (*kuśala*) mental states that are conducive to stability of mind. They promote happiness (*sukha*) or flourishing (*abhudaya*) that can function as a motivating factor at the beginning of the path of virtuous cultivation. Mental stability is necessary for mindfulness and meditative concentration that, in turn, foster evermore enduring states of happiness. Progression on the path invites a revision of aims towards evermore enduring states of happiness and goodness that lead to the highest good (*niḥśreyasa*), liberation (*mokṣa*).

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