No self, no free will, no problem

Implications of the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* for a perennial philosophical issue

Martin T. Adam

The free will problem

Are we free agents? The free will problem remains one of the great ongoing debates of western philosophy. This paper investigates the Buddha's views on human freedom. It suggests that the Buddha's position is a unique one, implying a negative response to the question of a metaphysically free will but a positive response to the question of moral responsibility and the possibility of human freedom in a spiritual sense.

The problem of free will in its most general terms can be formulated as follows. All events are caused. A full understanding of the causes of any particular event and of the laws of nature would allow for the accurate prediction of that event. The actions we perform, including the choices we make, are events. Therefore they are all predictable in principle, if not in fact. Therefore the idea that one can do other than one actually does is false. If one cannot do other than one actually does, one cannot be morally responsible for one's actions. Therefore human beings cannot be justifiably held morally responsible for their actions.[1]

[1] This is a modified version of the argument presented by Van Inwagen (1982), who frames the issue in terms of knowledge of the state of the physical world and the laws of physics. Here I have generalized the formulation to exclude such ontological considerations. Strictly speaking they are irrelevant to the deterministic thesis, which depends only on the notion that all events have causes, past and present, sufficient to bring them about (irrespective of

Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies
Volume 33 • Number 1–2 • 2010 (2011) pp. 239–265

A common counterargument to this line of thinking is as follows. While it is true that all events are caused, human actions are a special case in that among their causes is the individual's own will or choice. Because individuals are the causes of their own actions they can be justifiably held morally responsible for them. So free will and determinism are compatible. This is the 'compatibilist' position: within a deterministic universe we are nevertheless free in a sense sufficient to justify holding one another morally to account. We do, in fact, hold one another morally responsible when certain specified conditions of freedom are met; a failure to acknowledge this would be to empty the notion of freedom of all meaning. There must be some instances in which we are free. And these instances, by and large, are precisely those in which we recognize each other as being morally responsible.[2] Thus the compatibilist argues from the fact of moral responsibility to the assertion of freedom and the irrelevance of the deterministic thesis. The incompatibilist determinist on the other hand, argues from determinism to a lack of freedom and the irrelevance of conventions of moral accountability. Both positions are persuasive; our intuitions seem torn.

Before examining what Buddhist teachings might have to offer in connection with this dilemma, it will be helpful to explicitly set out, in brief, its key terms of reference. In discussing the concept of freedom, one of the most basic distinctions philosophers

---

whether they are physical, mental, spiritual or otherwise). In recent years the argument has been framed in scientific terms: the notion of an action being 'predictable in principle' is understood in terms of an imagined third-person observer possessing a complete knowledge of the state of the world at a given point in time and a complete knowledge of the laws of nature. The fact that no one possesses such complete knowledge does not affect the argument, for what we are concerned with is predictability *in principle*. The *classical* problem of free will was, of course, framed in terms of God's foreknowledge: if God knows everything that will happen ahead of time, then everything must happen exactly as God knows it will happen. In spite of the present-day replacement of God by an imaginary super-scientific observer, the basic argument is the same.

[2] Clear cases would be those in which one is rational, knows what one is doing, has reflected on the alternatives, is not being coerced, and approves of the action without doubt or hesitation.

have drawn is that between *empirical* and *metaphysical* freedom. Empirical freedom can be understood in a number of ways, but in its most general positive conception it refers to the ability of an individual to act as she wants, or to do as she wills. Philosophers have, of course, offered varying accounts of what such a positively conceived freedom actually means once it is spelled out in detail – for example politically, in term of specific rights and freedoms ('freedoms *to*' do one thing or another). It is, however, beyond the scope of the present study to explore such differences; for our purposes it is enough to note the general concept.

We must also observe that the concept of empirical freedom can be formulated negatively, in terms of an absence of constraints or impediments that might potentially obstruct an individual's ability to act as she wants ('freedoms *from*' one condition or another). In this case clarity would demand that a particular set or sets of constraints be specified. Here we should note that the notion of a 'constraint' may be conceived of as either *external* or *internal* to a person. Philosophers have considered various sets of external and internal constraints in spelling out their own particular understandings of freedom. Political philosophers, for example, have tended to focus on restrictions placed upon the individual by external forces such as other persons, governments, political classes, or even material conditions. Psychologically minded thinkers, on the other hand, have focused on internal constraints such as compulsions, obsessive thoughts, depression, confusion and so forth.

But for philosophers working in the area of metaethics, concerned as they are with establishing foundations for our judgments of moral responsibility, it has usually been the idea of *metaphysical* freedom that has been called upon to do the work. Metaphysical freedom, like empirical freedom, can be conceived negatively as an absence of constraints. But in this case, the constraints are regarded as those of *causality itself.* Moral responsibility is thought to require some kind of freedom from, or exception to the necessity that characterizes the normal cause and effect operations of nature. Attaching a clear meaning to this idea of freedom is problematic, but in general either one of two basic approaches is taken. On the one hand, to say that a person is metaphysically free is interpreted

as asserting that at least some of her actions or decisions are *uncaused*.[3] On the other hand, to make this statement is taken as asserting that at least some of her actions or decisions are *self-caused*.

One final distinction needs to be recognized, even though it is not one that is often explicitly drawn. A broad distinction can be drawn among the kinds of object to which the concept of freedom is applied. For our purposes we can enumerate three: actions, wills, and persons (or individuals).[4] Freedom of *the will* is sometimes equated with freedom of *action* and sometimes with freedom of *the person*. In fact, authors often slide between these three ways of speaking about freedom, assuming that to talk of one is to talk of the others, and that the predication of freedom in one these categories *ipso facto* implies a statement of the same truth value in the others. But as we shall see, this assumption is worth questioning. At a minimum it must be ensured that the same set of constraints in terms of which freedom is understood is being applied across categories. Further, each of these categories themselves admit of various conceptions and therefore require careful analyses.

In this paper I will argue that the Buddha's teachings do not allow for the possibility of a metaphysical freedom of the will. Nevertheless persons are regarded as morally responsible for their actions. In order to explain this view I will examine the implications of the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*, comparing these with an influential account of free will provided by the western philosopher, Harry Frankfurt. The overall discussion is framed with reference to Harvey (2007), which is probably the most comprehensive individual survey of Theravāda Buddhist teachings on this topic to

[3] We shall not explore this possibility in great detail in this paper. It has commonly been observed that such indeterminism does not appear to be of much use when it comes to the grounding of moral responsibility. If a decision or action were uncaused, would it not then be random? How can a person be justifiably held responsible for a random decision or act? Such a conception of freedom would actually seem to undermine the foundations of moral responsibility.

[4] A fourth possibility can here only be mentioned in passing, namely, freedom of a group or society.

date. This is where we begin our own exploration of Buddhism and free will.

Buddhism and free will

Harvey's review of the primary and secondary sources on this topic is extensive and it cannot be my aim here to provide a detailed critique of the account he provides. The conclusions he derives are complex, but by and large fall into two parts. Initially he concludes that Buddhism accepts a form of compatibilism.[5]

> "On the whole, it can be said that the implied position of Theravāda Buddhism on the issue of 'freedom of the will' is a middle way between seeing a person's actions as completely rigidly determined, and seeing them as totally and unconditionally free […] It accepts a variable degree of freedom within a complex of interacting mental and physical conditions. This freedom of action is such that present awareness always offers the possibility of not being wholly determined by past patterns of internal or external conditioning […]" (Harvey 2007: 86)

Nevertheless he also maintains that there is a second sense in which the Buddha's teachings imply that neither free will nor determinism can be true:

> "In a different way […] if a person is wrongly seen as an essential, permanent self, it is an 'undetermined question' as to whether 'a person's acts of will are determined' or 'a person's acts of will are free.' If there is no essential person-entity 'it' can not be said to be either determined or free." (Harvey 2007: 86)

Harvey's answer is difficult conceptually. In this paper I will mainly take issue with its second part: I will argue that if there is no essential person-entity, the implication is not that the will is neither free

[5] This would also appear to be the view of Thanissaro Bhikkhu who speaks of "some room for free will" in Buddhism (1996: 13). This author also provides a similar rationale for the attribution of freedom, in terms of the reflective capacity of present awareness – or what he calls "feedback loops" (1996: 40–42). This is indeed an important factor in understanding the human capacity for freedom. We will return to it below.

nor determined, but rather that there is no metaphysical freedom of the will, which is to say no will that is free of ordinary causality.[6]

At least two general points arise from Harvey's conclusions. First, with regard to its first part, it is important to note the qualification that Theravāda Buddhism has an 'implied' position on the free will debate. This needs to be emphasized. While I differ with Harvey as to what that implied position is, he is undoubtedly correct in this. The problem of moral responsibility *in relation to the deterministic thesis* has never been a burning issue in traditional Buddhism.[7] This is not to suggest that the issue is not important to Buddhists today, nor is it to say that the question of human freedom was not important in early Buddhism. It is simply to suggest that the problem presented to the foundations of morality by determinism is not a 'live' problem in the Buddha's teachings.[8] There are reasons for this, which we shall examine below.[9]

The second point relates to the first part of Harvey's conclusion as well. In what sense are we to understand the notion of a

[6] The impulse to read Buddhism as a form of compatibilism possibly stems from the assumption that moral responsibility *must be* regarded as contingent upon some kind of metaphysical freedom of the will. (Note, however, that Harvey does not himself make this assumption). In the present paper I argue that this is not the case for the Buddhist tradition at least.

[7] We shall see however that there may have been a *peripheral* awareness of this tension on the part of the compilers of the Pali Canon.

[8] While the Buddha was concerned, on occasion, with the refutation of fatalism, this cannot be equated with a rejection of determinism. Oddly Harvey seems to make this equation at one point, in his discussion of the Buddha's response to the Ājīvikas (2007: 40). Fatalism is the view that individuals do not have control over what happens to them, in the sense that certain events will happen to them irrespective of what they decide to do. In some versions of fatalism this is attributed to the design of an outside power or Fate. Determinism is simply the view that every event has causes sufficient to bring it about; our choices are both causes of the events that occur to us as well as caused events themselves. Thus one can consistently deny that there is any external force of destiny, such as the Ājīvikas' *niyati*, and still be a determinist.

[9] The explanation, we shall see, lies in the fact that freedom was principally understood as a quality of persons, dependent on their knowledge and mental purity, rather than as a quality of volitions or actions.

Buddhist "middle way" in this context? Harvey seems to suggest that Buddhism adheres to a compromise position, i.e. one that lies "between" strict determinism and complete freedom from causality (or as he puts it "between seeing a person's actions as completely rigidly determined, and seeing them as totally and unconditionally free"). But how can this be so? Surely, the two positions are mutually exclusive. And what might it mean to say that persons possess a "variable degree" of freedom? Is freedom the kind of quality that admits of degrees? This needs explanation. It would appear that this middle way solution runs the risk of incoherence (a charge often leveled at compatibilist accounts).

It may be that each of Harvey's statements is correct, and that in point of fact the Buddha's various teachings do imply these rather different positions at different places in the scriptures. If so, one might be inclined to conclude that the Buddha of the Pali scriptures is simply inconsistent and that his teachings on freedom constitute a colourful, but philosophically unprofitable area of investigation. More charitably, one might wish to suggest that the Buddhist concept of freedom is one of religious or mystical paradox, beyond rational comprehension. Here, however, I will argue that there is a systematic and consistent rationale underlying the Buddha's teachings concerning freedom. The concept of freedom plays a critical role within what is a highly sophisticated soteriological system. The Buddha's implied position on freedom of the will cannot be properly understood outside the confines of this framework.

Free will and the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*

To investigate these matters, I will now turn to an examination of one of the most famous of the Buddha's discourses, the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*.[10] This is the Buddha's second sermon, delivered to his first five disciples at the Deer Park in Sārnāth. In this *sutta* the Buddha systematically argues for the impossibility of identifying a Self with any of the five aggregates that together constitute a person. While the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* is not normally considered

[10] For another interpretation of this *sutta* in relation to the issue of free will, see Federman 2010.

as addressing the matter of free will, the teachings it contains do have implications that bear on this topic. The Buddha offers two distinct arguments to support the thesis that no aspect of a person is a wholly autonomous, essential, permanent Self; the first of these is directly relevant to our present concerns. In this argument, the Buddha suggests that none among the five aggregates that together constitute a person can be identified with such a Self because none among them is *subject to control*.[11] Beginning with the body or form (*rūpa*) the Buddha makes his case:

> "Bhikkhus, form is nonself. For if, bhikkhus, form were self, this form would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of form: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.' But because form is nonself, form leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of form: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus'."[12] (SN III 66)

A similar line of reasoning is offered for each of the five aggregates. To appreciate the implications of this argument for the question of free will, we need to see that the Buddha is relying on a conceptual connection between the notion of Self and the notion of *control*. If there were a Self, he asserts, it would be that aspect of the person over which one has control.[13] We do not have control over any of

---

[11] The second argument reasons from the impermanence of each of the aggregates to the fact that they are each *dukkha*. From these two considerations the conclusion is drawn that none among the aggregates are fit to be regarded as 'Self.'

[12] *Rūpam bhikkhave anattā // rūpañ ca bhikkhave attā abhavissa nayidaṃ rūpaṃ ābādhāya saṃvatteyya // labbhetha ca rūpe Evaṃ me rūpaṃ hotu evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā ahosīti // Yasmā ca kho bhikkhave rūpaṃ anattā tasmā rūpam ābādhāya saṃvattati // na ca labbhati rūpe Evam me rūpaṃ hotu evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā ahosīti // //* Translations are those of Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000).

[13] In a paper delivered to the annual meeting of the UKABS (2009) Tse-fu Kuan has argued that this way of conceiving the self as "what comes under control" constitutes a deliberate "twisting" of the classical Brahmanic concept of the self as "inner controller" found in in the *Upaniṣād*s. His argument is principally focused on a comparison of Majjhima-Nikāya Sutta 35 and two Chinese versions of this text, where the same argument is found. According to the author, an earlier version of the argument, employing the concept of Self as inner controller, can be found in Chinese *Ekottarika-āgama* version.

the five aggregates. The five aggregates are all that a person is. The implication is clear: there is no self.[14]

In his notes on this *sutta*, Bhikkhu Bodhi makes some insightful observations about the basis of this argument. The five aggregates' lack of selfhood is demonstrated, he says:

> "on the ground that they are insusceptible to the exercise of mastery (*avassavattitā*). If anything is to count as our 'self' it must be subject to our volitional control; since, however, we cannot bend the five aggregates to our will, they are all subject to affliction and therefore cannot be our self." (Bodhi 2000: 1066-1067)[15]

From these comments we can see how the Buddha's argument can be connected to the issue of free will – there is a conceptual link

---

While I cannot evaluate this argument here, the need to establish an explanation for the apparent oddity of conceiving the Self as "what comes under control" would appear to be eliminated if one recalls that the fourth aggregate, the *saṅkhāra*s, encompasses the function of directing or controlling one's actions (*cetanā*). Thus the phrase "what comes under control" includes the "inner controller." This very function, the only candidate for inner controller that there is, is *itself* not subject to control. See below. Kuan's paper has recently been published (2009).

[14] The initial argument structure is *Modus Tollens* and is formally valid. If there were Self, it would be controllable. None among the five aggregates are controllable. Therefore none among the five aggregates are Self. There is an additional, unstated assumption required to reach the conclusion that there is no Self, *viz*., that the five aggregates are all that there is. This is a safe enough assumption from the Buddhist perspective. The complete argument also involves one other assumption, *viz*., if we could control our states we would choose those that are not afflicted by suffering and its causes. This seems a safe enough assumption, for all but the masochist. I bring it up because it reveals an important teleological aspect to the Buddha's thinking, which is not argued for here: we are naturally oriented away from suffering and towards happiness. In point of fact it is this aspect of our constitutions that makes it possible to attain spiritual freedom, the realization of *nibbāna*. The general point that we are naturally predisposed towards wanting to be free from suffering is explicitly taken up in the following *sutta*, *Mahāli* (SN III 68–71). We will return to it below.

[15] Elsewhere he writes that "[…] the aggregates are suffering because they tend to affliction and cannot be made to conform to our desires." (Bodhi 2000: 842)

between the idea of 'Self' and the idea of 'volitional control.' If there were a Self, whatever else it might be, we would be able to control its states.

Thus in the above passage, concerning *rūpa*, the idea is that we would all choose not to suffer and to be well in our bodies if we could; indeed this is our natural wish and predisposition. In spite of this, we remain afflicted and disposed to affliction. Suffering is inherent to *rūpa*. It is not possible to simply wish it away. If *rūpa* were Self we would be able to do this. It is important to notice that the sense in which it is said that we do not have control over *rūpa* seems to be one of *direct* control over its *states*, in particular its state of being subject to *affliction*. In the passage above, there is no denial of the idea that we *can do* as we wish with respect to the actions we perform with and through our bodies; the denial is of the notion that we *can be* as we wish with respect to the presence or absence of affliction. The wish that the Buddha describes as impossible to fulfill is "Let my form *be* thus, let my form *not be* thus," not "Let my form *do* thus, let my form *not do* thus." If free will is simply understood as the empirical ability of persons to act voluntarily or to do as they want within a specified set of constraints, then the Buddha's position does not here imply any denial of this. All it suggests is that we cannot directly wish away the suffering associated with the first aggregate. In point of fact, the Buddha's teachings are premised on the idea that *it is* possible *to do* something about suffering, and indeed to eliminate it. But we cannot simply do away with it directly.

Are we then to conclude that the Buddha's doctrine implies a limited or qualified free will, one in which we can *do* as we will if not actually *be* as we will with respect to suffering? Is this the end of the story? Actually, the Buddha's position turns out to be considerably more complex than this. This can be seen if we pause to analyze the notion of 'will' a bit more carefully.

Buddhism and the will

What is the will? What do we mean to refer to when we employ this word? From a Theravāda Buddhist perspective, if the five aggre-

gates are all that a person is, we must locate the idea of 'will' within them. The problem of matching concepts is, of course, always a difficult one for those engaged in the enterprise of cross-cultural philosophy. That being said, whatever aspect of the human person we might consider the will to be, in the Buddhist context it will have to correspond to some aspect or aspects of the five aggregates – for this is all that a person is considered to be.

Among Pali terms, the most obvious candidate for 'will' is *cetanā*. This word is usually translated as 'intention' or 'volition.' Keown (1992: 212–221) has also rendered it as 'choice.' These English words each carry very different implications, a few of which can be brought out here. The term 'volition' implies an actual effort, an impulse towards action, perhaps even a 'trying' or exertion; the English word 'intention' does not. It simply indicates a plan or desire to act, but not necessarily one that has been initiated or set in motion. The notion of 'choice' implies the conscious entertaining of alternatives and an actual mental event in which one alternative is favoured over the others. Of these terms, 'will' seems to be the most general, encompassing all of the others in its potential meaning.

We will have more to say concerning some of the western variations of the notion of the will in the next section of this paper; but for the moment let us accept the tentative identification of the English language concept 'will' with the Pali concept of *cetanā*.[16] However inexact the match may be, the concept of the will must correspond to *some* aspect or aspects of the five aggregates – and this is actually all we need for our argument to proceed. Here it is necessary to observe that *cetanā* is considered part of the fourth aggregate, the *saṅkhāra*s. The latter term has commonly been translated as 'volitional formations,' a heading meant to capture those mental events that direct one's actions – physical, mental and

[16] From a more Mahāyāna perspective, the will might be viewed as an abstraction, a reification of diverse events, possessing no inherent nature of its own. There are, of course, many ways to pick out and group these events into a concept of 'will' (e.g. desires we are moved by, desires we identify with, our intentions, etc).

vocal.[17] It would appear, then, that volitional formations, qua *volitional* formations, constitute the very aggregate in virtue of which action can be said to be *voluntary*. Keeping this understanding in mind allows us to raise a deeper question regarding the freedom of the will. For, as mentioned, in the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* an analysis identical to that carried out on *rūpa* is carried out on each of the aggregates in turn, including that of the *saṅkhāra*s.

> "Volitional formations are nonself. For if, bhikkhus, volitional formations were self, they would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of volitional formations: 'Let my volitional formations be thus; let my volitional formations not be thus.' But because volitional formations are nonself, volitional formations lead to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of volitional formations: 'Let my volitional formations be thus; let my volitional formations not be thus'."[18] (SN III 67)

In effect, then, this analysis suggests that the very aggregate that includes the will is itself unfree; it is not subject to control. What could this mean? If we follow our earlier analysis with respect to *rūpa*, the lack of freedom here would simply amount to our inabili-

---

[17] Mahasi Sayadaw provides the following explanation. "*Saṅkhāra*s are the mental states headed by *cetanā*, volition. There are fifty two kinds of mental states. With the exception of feeling and perception, the remaining fifty constitute the aggregate of volitional formations, *saṅkhārakkhandha*. In *Sutta* discourses, only *cetanā*, volition, is specified as representing the *saṅkhāra* activities, but according to the *Abhidhamma*, we have other volitional formations that can produce *kamma*, such as attention (*manasikāra*), initial application of thought (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest (*pīti*), greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), nongreed, nonhatred, and nondelusion. These fifty kinds of volitional formations are responsible for all kinds of activities, such as going, standing, sitting, sleeping, bending, stretching, smiling, and speaking. These actions, as well as mental activities such as thinking, visual consciousness and auditory consciousness, are carried out and directed by *saṅkhārā*." (1996: 49–50)

[18] *Saṅkhārā anattā // saṅkhārā ca hidaṁ bhikkhave attā abhavissaṃsu // na yidaṃ saṅkhārā ābādhāya saṃvatteyyuṃ // labbhetha ca saṅkhāresu Evaṃ me saṅkhārā hontu evaṃ me saṅkhārā mā ahesunti // yasmā ca kho bhikkhave saṅkhārā anattā tasmā saṅkhārā ābādhāya saṃvattanti // na ca labbhati saṅkhāresu Evaṃ me saṅkhārā hontu evaṃ me saṅkhārā mā ahesunti // //*

ty to make *saṅkhāra*s unafflicted directly by wishing them to be so. In glossing this passage, Mahasi Sayadaw indicates the manner in which we would change our volitional formations if we only could: we would make them all wholesome (*kusala*) and not unwholesome (*akusala*) respectively.[19] Unfortunately this is impossible. This is a critical consideration, for it suggests that the very mental factors determining the morality of action are not subject to control.

If the *saṅkhāra*s are not subject to control, this means that we are unable to directly determine their *composition*. The mental states that direct our actions – the very desires, attitudes, and values we identify with and which determine the morality of our actions – are *themselves* not under control. In this case, it might be said that we are unfree with respect to the volitional aspect of 'who or what we *are*,' rather than with regard to the aspect of what we *do*.

If this is indeed the implication, then it would appear that the Buddha probably would not have disagreed with the following assertion, famously attributed to Schopenhauer: "A man can do what he wants, but not want what he wants."[20] The Buddhist analysis suggests that the problem of free will is not simply first-order issue as to whether we can do what we want. There is a much deeper problem – one that turns on second-order considerations as to whether we can be what we want to be, or, put another way, whether we can have the wills we want to have. The issue of the freedom of the will is a question regarding whether we have freedom with respect to our own constitutions. The Buddha's answer appears to be negative. While it may be the case that we can be judged empirically free to the extent that we can do as we want, we are not metaphysically free in the sense of being able to directly

[19] "Monks, were volitional factors self, they would not inflict suffering and it should be possible to say of them, 'Let volitional formations be thus (all wholesome), let volitional formations be not thus (unwholesome),' and manage them accordingly." (Sayadaw 1996: 49)

[20] Quoted in Einstein 1982: 8. Although I cannot locate an exact, original source for this quotation, Schopenhauer's position is expressed throughout his essay *On The Freedom of The Will* (1985). See note 25 below. Along the same lines, Bertrand Russell is also reputed to have quipped that while we can do as we please, we can not please as we please.

determine the constellation of factors we identify with, and out of which our actions proceed. In the context of this *sutta*, the reasons for this assertion are clear: the will is not subject to control in this way, because, quite simply, there is no independent entity over and above the shifting configuration of mental factors to do the controlling. There is no self-controlling controller. There is no one (i.e. no single unified being) holding the reins. There is no Self.

Harry Frankfurt and the Buddha

The Buddha's implied position on the freedom of the will can be fruitfully analyzed by comparing it with a recent and influential account of the will's freedom provided by the philosopher Harry Frankfurt. As is the case for Buddhism, in Frankfurt's analysis second-order considerations are the critical factor in assessing the will's freedom. Frankfurt notes what he takes to be a unique feature about human beings:

> "Besides wanting and choosing and being moved *to do* this or that, men may also want to have (or not to have) certain desires and motives. They are capable of wanting to be different, in their preferences and purposes, from what they are. Many animals appear to have the capacity for […] 'desires of the first order,' which are simply desires to do or not to do one thing or another. No animal other than man, however, appears to have the capacity for reflective self-evaluation that is manifested in the formation of second-order desires." (Frankfurt 1982: 82–83)

These observations concerning the self-reflective capacities of human beings are directly pertinent to the Buddhist analysis, where they find an obvious resonance in the capacity of human beings to reflect on the nature and composition of the aggregates themselves. Interestingly, however, the conclusions Frankfurt arrives at are rather different from those we have just reached.

In brief, Frankfurt argues that a coherent account of free will can be given in terms of the capacity of human beings to form second-order desires and volitions about their first-order desires. To understand Frankfurt's account we must note that he identifies the

will with the first-order desire that actually moves, or would move, an individual to act.[21] This he terms the agent's *effective* desire.

> (The notion of the will) is the notion of an *effective* desire – one that moves (or will or would move) a person all the way to action. Thus the notion of the will is not coextensive with what an agent intends to do. For even though an agent may have a settled intention to do X, he may none the less do something else instead of doing X because, despite his intention, his desire to do X proves to be weaker or less effective than some conflicting desire.[22] (Frankfurt 1982: 84)

Frankfurt's account of free will turns on the notion that one is free only if one wants to be moved by the desire that actually does move

---

[21] This conception of the will is not entirely dissimilar to the general Buddhist understanding of *cetanā* as the mental factor lying behind voluntary behaviour, in virtue of which such behaviour is considered action (*kamma*). It should be noted, however, that the Buddhist has a broader conception of action, one that encompasses acts of mind as well as those of body and speech. *Cetanā* is itself a mental action; it might therefore be said that in its case, its being *is* its doing. *Cetanā* is 'intention' in the sense of being the 'intention' that occurs while doing an action (i.e. a volition or mental impulse). However, as Buddhism accepts the idea of mental action, the activity of planning/intending-to-do a future action is itself a current mental action, with its own *cetanā*. Thanks to Peter Harvey for the latter observation.

[22] In identifying the will with effective desire, Frankfurt is adhering to a conception of the will and willing that goes back at least as far as John Locke (1632–1704). Locke defines 'the Will' as the power to command and to prefer one option over another. Interestingly, from a Buddhist perspective, Locke warns his readers not to fall prey to the tendency of thinking of this power as an actual faculty that has autonomous and real being in the souls of men (1959: 314–15). This 'power' is distinguishable from the *instances* in which an individual exercises his will. Instances of 'willing' or 'volition' are those in which a desire actually moves a person to act.

> "This power which the mind has thus to order the consideration of any idea, or the forbearing to consider it; or to prefer the motion of any part of the body to its rest, and *vice versa*, in any particular instance, is that which we call the *Will*. The actual exercise of that power, by directing any particular action, or its forbearance, is that which we call *volition* or *willing*." (Locke 1959: 313–314)

Thus Locke draws a distinction between the Will and the activity of willing. To will is to be moved to act in some manner.

one to act. If one does not want to be moved to act by that desire but is nevertheless moved by it then the will is unfree.

The example Frankfurt employs as an illustration is that of an unwilling drug addict. Frankfurt's analysis of the condition of such a person is that he is the subject of conflicting first-order desires and a second-order volition towards one of these. He both wants and does not want to take the drug. But in taking the drug he is being moved to act in a way that he desires not to. His desire to take the drug on these occasions, because it moves him to act, may be identified with his will. And in this case it is unfree. It is unfree because the agent does not want it.[23]

---

[23] In refining his account Frankfurt employs the notion of second-order *volitions* as a special kind of second-order desire. Second-order desires, in the most general sense, are simply desires for desires. A second-order volition is a second-order desire that has as its object the *efficacy* of a particular first-order desire. This is an important distinction, insofar as it is possible for someone to want to possess a particular first-order desire without wanting it to be effective. To see this we can imagine the case of another addict, a gambler, who is actually quite happy with his habit, who yet wants to have the desire to give it up, but who does not want this latter desire to be effective. "If I didn't want to give it up at least a little bit," he might reason, "then my friends wouldn't be sympathetic and lend me the money I need." This person has a second-order desire (a desire for a desire), but not a second-order volition.

If, contra Frankfurt (and Locke), we choose to conceive of the will as the desire we *identify with*, then for this case we could maintain that the unwilling addict's will is free while his *action* is not. This is, in fact, another well-attested usage of the term 'will;' in saying that one wills something, there is no necessary implication of effort by the agent. Rather, the notion of will is linked with our deepest wishes or values, or even our self-concept. The manner in which Bhikkhu Bodhi speaks of the will (see above) seems to reflect this usage: the will is identified with a very deep desire, in this case the desire to be free from affliction – ineffective though this may be. Augustine could be taken as another example of someone who thinks of the will in this way. In general, most philosophical discussions of free will can be usefully divided along the lines of these two different ways of conceiving the will. It is important to be clear about which concept is being presupposed in any case where free will is being discussed; obviously, these two different conceptions of the will will lead to two very different ways of talking about *free* will.

But it is clear that most cases in life are not like that of the unwilling addict. Most of us, most of the time, are moved to act by ordinary desires that we want to have move us to act. In such cases we can be said to possess second-order volitions directed towards our wills. We approve of our will. Hence for the most part, on Frankfurt's analysis, our actions are freely willed. In fact, this way of thinking about free will provides a good explanation for these cases, in which we 'feel free' in acting and are therefore willing to take responsibility for what we do. Our actions reflect our choices and the values we identify with. In brief, they reflect 'who we are' (or at least who we take ourselves to be).

In spite of the refreshing clarity of Frankfurt's account of free will, it is not without its difficulties. Here I will mention only two that are particularly relevant to our present concerns. The first difficulty is that an individual's second-order desires and volitions are not consistent through time. A person's deeper values and wishes are subject to change depending on a great variety of internal and external conditions. In Frankfurt's terms, we may say that we are inconsistent as to what we want our will to be. Which of one's various 'selves' does one identify as being one's 'true self'? On what basis? This issue is clearly relevant in the context of Buddhism.

A second and more serious problem stems from a basic ambiguity in Frankfurt's conception of freedom. While it is clear that Frankfurt regards the will's freedom as contingent on the presence of a second-order volition it not is not at all clear that this is a sufficient condition. It would appear that while Frankfurt's account may provide a good analysis of those actions we feel free in undertaking and for which we *feel* responsible, it may not actually address the deeper metaphysical problem presented by determinism.[24]

This problem can be brought out through the following considerations. A moment's reflection reveals an infinite regress that threatens to result when the predication of freedom is made to turn

[24] A close reading of Frankfurt suggests that he holds that it must also be the case that the agent 'could have done otherwise' than constitute his will as he did (1982: 94). If this is indeed Frankfurt's view, then his account might best be seen as providing insight into the psychology of freedom, rather than addressing its metaphysics.

on the presence of higher-order volitions. If the freedom of the will is dependent on the presence of a second-order volition towards it, are we free with respect to that second-order volition? Do we not then require a third-order volition to ensure the freedom of the second? Once this sequence gets started we are quickly faced with the prospect of requiring an infinite number of higher-order volitions, each needed to guarantee the freedom of the one below it; ultimately an infinite series of volitions would be required to guarantee the freedom of the will. But this is impossible.[25]

Perhaps this difficulty could be dealt with by arguing that, as a point of empirical fact, all we ever really do have are desires of the first and second-order or, at most, of the third order. If we choose to speak of even further, higher-order desires and volitions, it is not really clear that we would be referring to anything at all. The third-order statement, "I want to have the desire to have the effective desire to do X" seems rather dubious in terms of its possible point of reference. And it certainly does not appear that by adding another "I want" to the beginning of the sentence we would be adding any new information about the subject's actual mental life. At some point there is no further "I want;" the causes for one's desires are *impersonal*. One's desires just *are*, they arise without any choice, or even reflection, being involved.

---

[25] Cf. Schopenhauer 1985: 6: "The empirical concept of freedom signifies: 'I am free when I can do what I will.' Here in the phrase 'what I will' the freedom is already affirmed. But when we now inquire about the freedom of the willing itself, the question would now take this form: 'Can you also will your volitions?,' as if a volition depended on another volition which lay behind it. Suppose that this question is answered in the affirmative, what then? Another question would arise: 'Can you also will that which you will to will?' Thus we would be pushed back indefinitely, since we would think that a volition depended on a previous, deeper lying volition. In vain would we try to arrive in this way finally at a volition which we must think of and accept as dependent on nothing else. But if we were willing to accept such a volition, we could as well accept the first as the one we happened to make the last. Consequently, the question would be reduced to a simple: 'Can you will?' But whether a mere affirmation of this question decides the problem of the freedom of the will, is what we wanted to know. So the problem remains unresolved."

These considerations serve to underline the limitations of Frankfurt's account of free will. They return us squarely to our earlier observations, in the Buddhist context, regarding the freedom of the mental states upon which actions are based. As we have seen, it is indeed possible to sensibly ask whether a person has the will they want to have. A determinist will argue that the causes that give rise to the mental states upon which one's actions are based are not subject to control; they are, when one traces them back, ultimately *impersonal* in nature (in the sense of being e.g. historical, genetic, cultural, etc). Determinists take the fact that choices are caused events very seriously; even if our present awareness can reflect on and evaluate our choices, the thoughts and values entering into these evaluations are, in the last analysis, themselves beyond control – at some point they just *are*; we do not choose them or their causes. The Buddhist position accords with such considerations. There is no final, independent Self at which point the chain of causes and conditions magically comes to a halt. In the last analysis it is not possible to have it of the will, 'Let my will be thus, let my will not be thus.'

The foundations of morality

If this is so, should it then be concluded that the Buddhist position, like that of the incompatiblist determinist, undermines the foundations for moral responsibility? If there is no essential Self to which responsibility may ultimately be attributed, is there then no moral responsibility at all? Interestingly, from the Buddhist perspective the answer would appear to be no. In fact the Buddha appears to have held the unusual view (from the western philosophical perspective) that while the will is not metaphysically free, moral responsibility is just a fact about the way things are. Although ultimately there is no autonomous, permanent self-essence or Self, persons' actions do have results that accord with the moral character of those actions. Moral causality is simply one kind of causality operational in the universe. So moral *responsibility* is simply one kind of causal responsibility. Like it or not, results flow from actions; happiness and suffering are the inevitable results of moral (*kusala*) and immoral (*akusala*) action. Such action (*kamma*) is dis-

tinguishable as mental, physical, and vocal behaviour that is voluntarily performed or willingly done (i.e. accompanied by *cetanā*); this is the key factor in determining moral responsibility. *Freedom* of the will is not. The point is that the action is voluntary, not that the will is free.[26] In any case, it can be seen that the problem of the compatibility of universal causality and moral responsibility does not appear to have been a concern to the Buddha. Causality – in terms of such things as motivations, and karmic results – itself is a necessary correlate of morality from the Buddhist perspective.[27]

What did seem to concern the Buddha, however, was perhaps a not altogether unrelated problem, which may be stated as follows. If a person is ultimately only a series of causally interrelated events, some of which are identified with, how is it that freedom, *qua liberation* (*nibbāna*) is possible? Put another way: if the five aggregates are ultimately beyond our ability to control, how is it possible that we would ever begin to strive for, much less reach, the goal which is the end of suffering?

In the *Mahāli Sutta*, the Buddha provides an answer. The context is a question posed by one Mahali, who has been listening to the teachings of the *samaṇa* Pūraṇa Kassapa. The latter has been espousing the view that beings are defiled and purified without

[26] A case might be made that it is precisely in these instances of willingly performed behaviour that the will may be said to be free. Thus the will is empirically free, rather than metaphysically free, and this is, from the Buddhist perspective, the only kind of freedom necessary for moral responsibility. But this position is problematic. The notion that *kamma* is free by definition or nature does not correspond to the manner in which it is actually treated in the Buddhist tradition. It does not rest easily with the basic Buddhist orientation that one should aim to become *free from kamma*, and indeed that one does become progressively more free from it as one advances on the spiritual path. The idea of free action in Buddhism can probably be best understood as action that is performed when there is freedom from delusion on the part of the agent. Such freedom is, however, not usually attributable to the ordinary person (see below).

[27] Buddhism differs from western compatibilist theories that seek to ground judgments of moral responsibility in some kind of intersubjective agreement or social consensus. Morality is objectively grounded in the way things are. *Dhamma*, qua moral order, is not conventional.

cause or condition. Such a view would seem parallel that of the indeterminist described at the outset of this paper. The Buddha's explanation as to how it is that one is purified *with* cause and condition runs as follows:

> "If Mahali, this form were exclusively pleasurable, immersed in pleasure, steeped in pleasure, and if it were not [also] steeped in suffering, beings would not experience revulsion towards it. But because form is suffering, immersed in suffering, steeped in suffering, and is not steeped [only] in pleasure, beings experience revulsion towards it. Experiencing revulsion, they become dispassionate, and through dispassion they are purified. This, Mahali, is a cause and condition for the purification of beings; it is thus that beings are purified with cause and condition."[28] (SN III 70)

The Buddha goes on to give identical analyses with regard to each of the other four aggregates. It is, perhaps, merely fortuitous that this *sutta* is placed in the Saṃyutta-Nikāya immediately following the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*. On the other hand, its placement there could suggest that the early compilers of the canon were aware of the issue raised by the preceding *sutta*. They may well have sensed the possibility of doubt arising with regard to the compatibility of spiritual freedom and universal causality, given the extraordinary claim that none among the five aggregates are subject to control. This is admittedly speculative, but it is not, perhaps, entirely implausible.

In any case, we can see that the Buddha taught that beings are actually constituted in such a way as to allow for the possible at-

---

[28] *Rūpaṃ ca hidam Mahāli ekantasukhaṃ abhavissa sukkānupatitaṃ sukhāvakkantam anavakkantaṃ dukkhena // nayidaṃ sattā rūpasmiṃ nibbindeyyuṃ // // Yasmā ca kho Mahāli rūpaṃ dukkhaṃ dukkhānupattitaṃ dukkhāvakkantam anavakkantam sukhena // tasmā sattā rupāsmiṃ nibbindanti nibbindaṃ virajjanti virāgā visujjhanti // // Ayaṃ kho Mahāli hetu ayam paccayo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā // evam pi sahetu-sapaccayā sattā vissujjhanti // //* Essentially the same sequence of causes can be found in the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*, with the difference that rather than beginning with suffering it begins with the recognition, for each of the aggregates, 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' A further difference is that the *Mahāli Sutta* explicitly frames the discussion in terms of causes and conditions.

tainment of purification and liberation. Among the possible realms of rebirth, it is the realm of human beings in particular that is considered to have just the right balance of pleasure and suffering as to generate the motivation to aspire for freedom. We are lucky!

Towards an account of freedom in Buddhism.

Freedom in Buddhism is not conceived of as a quality of the *will*. If there is no independent originary source over and above our mental, physical and vocal actions, then there certainly cannot be any free will. Thus the assertion that from a higher perspective the will cannot be said to be either free or unfree is, it seems to me, off the mark. It is precisely from the higher perspective that the will can be seen to be, in truth, unfree. Our lack of free will in this case exactly parallels the Buddhist understanding of personal identity. While it makes sense to talk of persons, there is no Self. It is not the case that such a Self neither exists nor does not exist. From a Theravāda Buddhist perspective, this formulation is mistaken. The notion of free will is conceptually bound up with the notion of Self. Just as the Self is ultimately seen to be a delusion, so too is the will's freedom. No Self, no free will.

This is a difficult point. It is interesting to note that the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* is not addressed to ordinary persons. It is a discourse directed to an audience of learners or disciples in higher training (*sekha*s), individuals who have attained the higher perspective that sees things as they really are. There is an important sense in which these individuals, beginning with the stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), are understood to be free already – in a way that is not true of ordinary people (*puthujjana*s). They are free from the false view of Self.[29] The very notion of the s*ekha* as a kind of agent is defined in terms of having undergone a moment of transformative insight into the truth of nonself. There is nothing that it is right

[29] They are free of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, ie beliefs or views that see any of the aggregates as Self, owned by a Self, in Self, or containing Self. *Sekha*s are not, however, free of the more diffuse, non-specific 'I am' conceit (*asmimāna*). This only disappears when one reaches *arahat*hood. Thanks to Peter Harvey for this observation. See Harvey 2004: 32.

to view as in some way related to 'Self.' The first five disciples are said to have experienced this insight some days earlier, upon hearing the Buddha's first sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.[30] Upon hearing the second it is said that they became *arahat*s (Bodhi 2000: 1066).[31]

In closing this essay I would suggest that these considerations concerning the reported audience of the Buddha's second sermon offer us a clue as to how freedom in Buddhism may be best understood. Freedom is principally a predicate of persons and consists in an absence of suffering and its causes. It is thus dependent on the state of knowledge and purity of the awareness of the agent. The ultimate aim of Buddhism is, of course, freedom from suffering. Suffering is a reality that, first and foremost, is to be *understood*. Thus freedom means understanding, and then abandoning, the causes and conditions of suffering within oneself. It is this very knowledge of causality (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) that allows the mind to become liberated. Because different degrees of insight and mental purity may be attributed to the various kinds of spiritual actor described by the Buddha, so too corresponding levels of freedom may be attributed to them.

The ordinary person (*puthujjana*) is not a free person, operating as she does from within the deluded perspective of being an independent actor in control of her life in *saṃsāra*. Although such an agent may be reflexively aware of her actions, and although such actions may be voluntary, or empirically free in some other sense, they occur in the context of the basic delusion of an underlying 'I,' whence they are regarded as originating independently. Being out of touch with reality in this way, such a person's mind will inevi-

---

[30] This would explain the argument's apparent presupposition that the five aggregates are all that a person is.

[31] In earlier articles I have argued that early Buddhist ethics can best be understood as a kind of agent based moral contextualism, in which the key classes of agent are the *puthujjana*, the *sekha* and the *arahat*. Rather than beginning with an examination of the nature of moral action *per se*, this approach to Buddhist ethics begins by investigating the phenomenology of moral experience belonging to each kind of person. See Adam 2005 and 2008.

tably be trapped in confusion, inconsistent and conflicting desires, and suffering. From the Buddhist perspective this kind of person must be regarded as unfree.

The *sekha*, on the other hand, is a free person in a certain way, having rid herself of the basic delusion of self (and with it, we should add, any notion of an independent will). Being irreversibly oriented away from suffering and its causes and towards *nibbāna*, such a person can be characterized as more consistently having the desires she wants to have and on a firmer basis than is the case for ordinary persons.[32] An internal order has been irreversibly established in such a person and she cannot do otherwise than act from within a psychological orientation that is turned towards *nibbāna*. Although the mind of the *sekha* remains obscured to some extent, afflicted by residual defilements, the complete freedom of *nibbāna* is assured.

The *arahat* has realized *nibbāna*; she has attained spiritual freedom.[33] She is a completely free person, being free from all mental defilements including any trace of self-centred desire; indeed because of this she is free from *kamma* itself.[34] In fact, because the *arahat* is entirely free from desire that she identifies with, she might

---

[32] Different gradations of freedom can be associated with each of the various subdivisions of *sekha* i.e. the stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmin*), and non-returner (*anāgāmin*). In general, although their *sīla* is perfect, they remain subject to various fetters (*samyojana*), including such unskillful desires as craving for subtle *rūpa* and *arūpa* states. Stream-enterers and once-returners are still subject to sense-desires and ill-will.

[33] See Harvey 2007: 81–84 for a more detailed discussion of the qualities associated with the *arahat*'s spiritual freedom.

[34] In an earlier article (2005) I have attempted to spell out these distinctions among kinds of persons in relation to some of the key vocabulary of morality employed in the texts, principally the antonymous pairs of *kusala-akusala*, *puñña-apuñña*, and *sukka-kaṇha*. I have argued that the latter dyad serves as a conceptual bridge between the former two pairs, carrying connotations of each. Whereas *kusala* is a term with strong epistemic implications, *puñña* principally indicates moral goodness. The two are coextensive. More recently (2008) I have moved towards providing a phenomenological account of the same distinctions. I characterize the action of the *sekha* as principally (or teleologically) *kusala* and secondarily (or intrumentally) *puñña*.

even be described as being free *from* the will. To put the matter in this way depends, of course, on a conception of the will as 'desire one identifies with.' On the other hand, if we follow Frankfurt and identify the will with the 'desire that moves one to act' then the *arahat* can also be described as having the will she wants to have, and therefore a 'free' will.[35] While no agent can be said to possess freedom of the will in the *metaphysical* sense of self-causation sought by some western philosophers, the *arahat* can be said to have a free will, indeed a perfectly free will, in the empirical sense of this expression proposed by Frankfurt.

More generally, freedom in Buddhism can be regarded negatively as a freedom from constraints upon a person – either internal or external depending on one's focus. That is to say, just as the ordinary person, the learner and the liberated being are free from mental defilements to varying degrees, so too they are free from *saṃsāra*. The *sekha* may be contrasted with the ordinary person in that while the latter wanders aimlessly in *saṃsāra*, the former is consistently oriented towards *nibbāna* – a goal she is destined to attain. Alternatively, if we wish to characterize their respective states in positive terms, one may say that each type of person possesses a different degree of knowledge and mental purity.

Thinking of freedom principally as a quality of these ideal types, dependent on their respective levels of spiritual realization,

---

[35] One may also say that they *conduct themselves freely*, in a way that isn't true of the ordinary person – their conduct is informed by a veridical awareness of the way things really are. As a consequence their activities are accompanied by a natural sense of freedom. Similar feelings would be associated with the experience of the *sekha*. As well, we would expect to find in the *sekha* a new sense of freedom qua *relief* at being so recently rid of the burden of a belief in Self.

Although we cannot examine the idea in any detail in this essay, it should be noted that Buddhism is not unique in maintaining a teleological conception of freedom, one in which freedom is at least in part conceived in terms of conduct that is in accord with one's higher nature. In the case of Buddhism, of course, the paradoxical aspect is that there is no one, ultimately, who possesses such a nature. A case can be made that because there is no Self to serve as a repository of hidden desires, the Buddhist position avoids the dangers associated with such an idea – on which see Berlin 1984: 22–25.

allows us to gain a clearer understanding of some of Harvey's observations, mentioned at the outset of this paper. We can now see how it is that freedom may be thought of as possessing varying "degrees." The suggestion here is that such variation may best be regarded as occurring among *kinds of person* and not (or at least not principally) within an individual person over the short term (although, of course, an ordinary person may *become* a *sekha* and so on). Thus the Buddha's teachings do in fact suggest that freedom admits of degrees. But they do not imply that human beings are possessed of a will that is metaphysically free, or one that is both metaphysically free and unfree, or even one that is neither. From a Theravāda Buddhist perspective it would be more accurate to say that while a person's will may be judged empirically free in one sense or another, it definitely is not possible for anyone to possess a metaphysically free will. But for the Buddhist this presents no problem.

Abbreviations

SN Saṃyutta-Nikāya, ed. L. Feer. 5 vols. London 1884–1898 (Pali Text Society). English translation: see Bodhi (2000).

Bibliography

Adam, Martin T. (2005) "Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Buddhist Morals: A New Analysis of *puñña* and *kusala*, in light of *sukka*." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 12, 62–85.

Adam, Martin T. (2008) "Classes of Agent and the Moral Logic of the Pali Canon." *Argumentation* 22, 115–124.

Berlin, Isiah. (1984) "Two Concepts of Liberty." In *Liberalism and Its Critics*. Ed. Michael Sandel. New York: New York University Press, 15–36.

Bodhi, Bhikkhu. (2000) *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. 2 vols., Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Einstein, Albert. (1982) *Ideas and Opinions*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Federman, Asaf. (2010) "What Kind of Free Will did the Buddha Teach?" *Philosophy East and West* 60, 1–19.

Frankfurt, Harry. (1982) "Freedom of the Will and The Concept of a Person." In *Free Will*. Ed. Gary Watson. New York: Oxford University Press, 81–95.

Harvey, Peter (2004) *The Selfless Mind*. Oxon: RoutedgeCurzon.

Harvey, Peter (2007) "'Freedom of the Will' in Light of Theravāda Buddhist Teachings." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 14, 35–98.

Keown, Damien. (1992) *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*. London: Macmillan Press.

Kuan, Tse-fu. (2009) "Rethinking Non-Self: A New Perspective from the *Ekottarika-āgama*." *Buddhist Studies Review* 26.2, 155–175.

Locke, John. (1959) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. A.C. Fraser. New York: Dover Publications, Inc.

Sayadaw, Ven. Mahasi. (1996) *The Great Discourse on Not Self*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. (1985) *On the Freedom of the Will*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Thanissaro, Bhikkhu. (1996) *The Wings to Awakening*. Barre: Dhamma Dana Publications. Also available at: http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/index.html, last visited 02-06-2011

Van Inwagen, Peter. (1982) "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism." In *Free Will*. Ed. Gary Watson. New York: Oxford University Press, 46–58.

JIABS

Journal of the International
Association of Buddhist Studies

Volume 33 Number 1–2 2010 (2011)

The *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (ISSN 0193-600XX) is the organ of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Inc. As a peer-reviewed journal, it welcomes scholarly contributions pertaining to all facets of Buddhist Studies. JIABS is published twice yearly.

As announced at the XVIth IABS Congress in Taiwan, the JIABS is now available online in open access at http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/ojs/index.php/jiabs/index. Articles become available online for free 60 months after their appearance in print. Current articles are not accessible online. Subscribers can choose between receiving new issues in print or as PDF. We are kindly requesting all authors that could be opposed to this decision to inform the Editors by June 2012.

Manuscripts should preferably be submitted as e-mail attachments to: *editors@iabsinfo.net* as one single file, complete with footnotes and references, in two different formats: in PDF-format, and in Rich-Text-Format (RTF) or Open-Document-Format (created e.g. by Open Office).

Address books for review to:

JIABS Editors, Institut für Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, Apostelgasse 23, A-1030 Wien, AUSTRIA

Address subscription orders and dues, changes of address, and business correspondence (including advertising orders) to:

Dr Jérôme Ducor, IABS Treasurer
Dept of Oriental Languages and Cultures Anthropole
University of Lausanne
CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland
email: *iabs.treasurer@unil.ch*
Web: http://www.iabsinfo.net
Fax: +41 21 692 29 35

Subscriptions to JIABS are USD 55 per year for individuals and USD 90 per year for libraries and other institutions. For informations on membership in IABS, see back cover.

Cover: Cristina Scherrer-Schaub

Font: "Gandhari Unicode" designed by Andrew Glass (http://andrewglass.org/fonts.php)

Print: Ferdinand Berger & Söhne GesmbH, A-3580 Horn

JIABS

Journal of the International
Association of Buddhist Studies

Volume 33 Number 1–2 2010 (2011)

Articles

Indian Buddhist metaethics

Contributions to a panel at the XV[th] Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Atlanta, 23–28 June 2008

Guest editor: Martin T. Adam

Miracles and superhuman powers in South and Southeast Asian Buddhist traditions

Contributions to a panel at the XV[th] Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Atlanta, 23–28 June 2008

Guest editor: David V. Fiordalis