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Buddhist Hard Determinism: No Self, No Free Will, No Responsibility

Riccardo Repetti¹

Abstract

This is the third article in a four-article series that examines Buddhist responses to the Western philosophical problem of whether free will is compatible with “determinism,” the doctrine of universal causation. The first article (“Earlier”) focused on the first publications on this issue in the 1970s, the “early period.” The second (“Paleo-compatibilism”) and the present articles examine key responses published in the last part of the Twentieth and the first part of the Twenty-first centuries, the “middle period.” The fourth article (“Recent”) examines responses published in the last few years, the “recent period.” Whereas early-period scholars endorsed a compatibilism between free will and determinism, in the middle period the pendulum moved the other way: Mark Siderits argued for a two tiered compatibilism/incompatibilism (or semi-

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compatibilism) that he dubs “paleo-compatibilism,” grounded in the early Buddhist reductionist notion of “two truths”: conventional truth and ultimate truth; and Charles Goodman argued that Buddhists accept hard determinism—the view that because determinism is true, there can be no free will—because in the absence of a real self determinism leaves no room for morally responsible agency. In “Paleo-compatibilism,” I focused on Siderits’s reductionist account. The present article focuses on Goodman’s hard determinism, and the fourth article will examine the most recent publications expressing Buddhist views of free will. Together with my own meditation based Buddhist account of free will (“Meditation”), this series of articles provides a comprehensive review of the leading extant writings on this subject.

Buddhist Scholarship on Free Will: An Introduction²

Buddhist scholarship on the question of the compatibility of free will and determinism is a relatively new phenomenon. Throughout the bulk of Buddhist history, apart from a few fragments of early Buddhism in which the Buddha explicitly rejects a then prevalent form of fatalism (Federman “Buddha”), there has been almost no explicit discussion of the issue. Only recently, encounters with Western philosophy and science raise the question of what Buddhism, in light of its rich philosophies of mind and action, has to offer to this—perhaps the most enduring—question in the Western philosophical tradition.

² I would like to thank Dan Cozort, Charles Goodman, Claire Gaynor, Suzanne O’Neill, Eva Kokoris, and two anonymous reviewers at the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* for comments to this article.

Let me first review the free will and determinism dilemma, and then how various Buddhist scholars have weighed in on the issue. Determinism implies that every event is causally necessitated by previous events in inviolable accordance with immutable laws of nature. Belief in free will implies that some of our deliberative efforts, choices, and actions are sufficiently self-authored or “up to us,” such that they ground attributions of moral responsibility, such as praise and blame, related reactive attitudes, such as remorse and punishment, and the variety of our normative institutions that presuppose that much of our behavior flows from our autonomous agency. The dilemma here is that either determinism is true or false. If determinism is true, then the causes of our actions predate our existence and are unalterable, in which case our behavior, though it appears to be our free choice, is really rigidly fixed in advance, in which case we are not morally responsible. However, if determinism is false, the causes of our choices are utterly random and chaotic, and thus they are no more “up to us” than a seizure or the toss of a coin. Either way, we seem to lack free will and ultimate moral responsibility.

I divide the extant Buddhist scholarship on this issue into three chronological periods—early, middle, and recent—but the writings from each also exhibit certain conceptual affinities. Let me first review the results of my own analyses of the writings of each period, as reflected in my earlier articles,³ in order to frame the arguments of the present article.

³ See Repetti (“Earlier”; “Paleo-compatibilism”). The review in the text ought to provide a sufficient framework for readers who prefer not to read those articles prior to reading this one.

Early-period scholarship

In the early period, there was a flurry of initial scholarship on the issue. In the first article in this series (“Earlier”), I examined the writings of most major early-period Buddhist scholars—Frances Story, Walpola Rāhula, Luis Gómez, and David Kalupahana—regarding the free will and determinism/indeterminism dilemma. Determinism, it should be noted, resembles the Buddhist causal doctrine of “dependent origination” (*pratītya samutpāda*). Dependent origination theory asserts the dependence of all conditioned/composite phenomena on previous (and/or simultaneous) impartite microphenomena.

Most scholars of this period attempted to show that Buddhism was not vulnerable to the dilemma that consists of the *prima facie* incompatibility between determinism (or its Buddhist cousin, dependent origination) and free will. Early-period scholars attempted to circumvent this dilemma by arguing for some sort of middle path position that avoids both “rigid” determinism and “chaotic” indeterminism, but their attempts insufficiently articulated just what sort of causation could occupy this middle ground.

As I noted in “Paleo-compatibilism,” some such Buddhists (including one from the middle period, Siderits) hold that David Hume’s deflationary error theory of causation, wherein causation is no more than a conceptual construction and projection based on the perceived *constant conjunction* of contingent event types, precisely provides the middle path Buddhists would need for a Buddhist compatibilism between free will and both determinism and indeterminism. However promising this appears at first, on analysis it is insufficient for the task at hand, because determinism presupposes *necessary* causal relations, not contingent ones; therefore, determinism is not Humean. Buddhists are certainly entitled to embrace the Humean error theory about causation, as

some do, but if dependent origination is Humean, then the Buddhist reply to the free will problem is simply to claim that determinism is false.

The Humean middle path option comes at too great a cost for Buddhists for two reasons. First, because it undermines the idea that dependent origination is genuinely causal, rather than a conceptual construction about event pairings that is best explained by an error theory, all of the explanatory work that causality does in the rest of Buddhism would be deflated. Second, it impales Buddhists on the other horn of the dilemma, chaotic indeterminism.

Early-period scholars failed to notice another middle path option, one that is sufficiently articulated and fairly transparent in meaning among Western philosophers, namely, *soft* determinism. Soft determinism is the idea that determined behavior need not be rigid and need not be incompatible with a certain nonchaotic conception of free will and moral responsibility, because one may satisfy certain determinism friendly agent proximal conditions that might be sufficient for responsible agency. For example, to mention just two such agent proximal conditions, the knowledge of cause and effect renders undesirable events evitable (and thus nonrigid), and mindfulness of the way volition generates action helps to cultivate control over one's volitions—and control is nonchaotic.

Buddhists first encountering the dilemma of free will and determinism/indeterminism tend to automatically regard all determinism as though it is *hard* determinism, but as the preceding line of thought makes clear, not all interpretations of determinism require such a (hard) reading. *Hard* determinism is the idea that determinism is true and, because of its nomological implication of an unalterable series of events, it is incompatible with responsible agency (mainly because its ultimate causes are distal and preagential); therefore, it precludes moral responsibility or free will. Obviously, soft and hard *determinists* agree that *de-*

terminism is true. Fatalism and hard determinism share the idea that nothing anyone does can make any difference to what—*already*—will be, but the former is an acausal doctrine, whereas the latter is causal.⁴ The Buddha rejected the fatalistic attitude of agential impotence, precisely on the ground that it would lead to what may be described as a form of volitional catatonia (Harvey “Buddhist”; Federman “Buddha”). Instead, the Buddha emphasized the knowledge of cause and effect and the cultivation of mindfulness of beliefs, volitions, and actions as his basic prescription for what an agent may do to foster her own liberation and bring about the end of her suffering. Thus, if dependent origination is deterministic, the Buddha would arguably be more likely to accept a *soft* over a *hard* interpretation of determinism (Repetti “Meditation”).

Middle-period scholarship

Whereas early-period scholars tried (unsuccessfully) to circumvent the dilemma between determinism and free will, middle-period scholars begin to embrace the dilemma and move—partly, in the case of Mark Siderits, and fully, in the case of Charles Goodman—toward an incompatibilist interpretation of its determinist horn.⁵ However, they shift the fo-

⁴ See Repetti (“Paleo-compatibilism”) for a more nuanced analysis of the differences between fatalism and hard determinism, and between hard and soft determinism; see Repetti (*Counterfactual*) for an extensive argument in favor of soft over hard determinism.

⁵ It should be noted that “incompatibilism” has traditionally until recently referred solely to hard determinists, on one hand, and “libertarians,” on the other. Libertarians and hard determinists are both incompatibilists, because they agree that determinism and free will cannot both be true simultaneously. But whereas hard determinists add “and determinism is true; therefore, there is no free will,” libertarians add “and we obviously have free will; therefore, determinism is false.” More recently, “hard incompatibilism” has been used to refer to the more inclusive view that free will is incompatible with both determinism and with indeterminism. We will discuss this view below, as Goodman is a hard incompatibilist. I respond in depth to all these views elsewhere (“Meditation”; *Counterfactual*).

cus to an element of Buddhist thought that should figure prominently in any Buddhist discussion of the issue, that of the Buddhist's general resistance to the existence of a real self. Siderits and Goodman, the two leading scholars in this period, take different tacks here. Siderits argues that although the self-presupposing notion of a responsible agent makes sense on the pragmatic or conventional level, determinism is a doctrine that makes sense on the level of ultimate reality, in which case the two *prima facie* incompatible ideas are "compatible," but only by virtue of being elements of different discourse domains. Goodman argues essentially that free will is straightforwardly incompatible with determinism from the Buddhist's eliminative perspective of the self because without any such entity as a self, if all behavior is impersonally determined there can be no such entity as a responsible agent.

The writings of middle-period scholars reveal them to be keen about the role of the self for the free will and determinism dilemma. In my first review of this period ("Paleo-compatibilism"), I focused on several papers published and/or presented by one leading scholar, Mark Siderits. These papers proved difficult to interpret properly without reference to Siderits's larger treatise on the Buddhist understanding of the concept of a person.⁶ Siderits formulates a "paleo-compatibilist" thesis that he does not actually assert, but that he offers simply as a possible early Buddhist view that is philosophically interesting.⁷ That thesis is that the Buddhist "two truths" distinction, between conventional reality level discourse and ultimate reality level discourse, parses free will and moral responsibility (responsible agency) as items of conventional dis-

⁶ Siderits's papers include "Beyond," "Buddhism," "Buddhist," "Reductionism," and "Expressible," and his recent conference presentation (Panel); his treatise is *Persons*.

⁷ Siderits takes this general posture—of offering Buddhist ideas as items of potential interest to Western philosophers, without asserting them himself—not only in his articles on free will, but in his major monographs, such as *Persons* and *Philosophy*. His writings on free will, therefore, must be understood within his larger *curriculum vitae*, using that phrase in the broadest sense.

course, and determinism as an item of more ultimate discourse. (For a rough idea of the differences between these two levels, consider an analogous distinction in Western thought by comparing “weight,” from conventional discourse, and “mass,” from scientific discourse.) Because they do not occur in the same domain of discourse, there can be no real incompatibility between the notions of responsible agency and determinism. The claim of incompatibilism, therefore, in erroneously construing the items alleged to be incompatible as if they obtain in the same universe of discourse, commits a kind of syntax error. The reductionist element of paleo-compatibilism consists in the claim that facts that obtain at the ultimate level ground our use of conventional level concepts, so the latter reduce to the former. (Again, think of “weight” and “mass.”) Both, therefore, are “sort of” true, so to speak—one straightforwardly, literally, or fully, and the other in a pragmatic, perhaps nonliteral sense.

Siderits offers paleo-compatibilism as a theory that may be extracted from the reductionism of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism. But it should be noted that in his larger account of Buddhist metaphysics (*Persons*) Siderits treats Buddhist reductionism as an early stage in a larger dialectic that led first to Buddhist antirealism and then to a synthesis of both in what he calls “semantic non-dualism.” This view comes close to common sense realism—almost returning full circle—but avoids its erroneous elements. In between these two points along the circle, the dialectical progression Siderits develops—which I will oversimplify greatly—proceeds as follows.

Analysis suggests first that common sense realism about the reality of partite wholes—the appearance/reality gap-denying view that partite wholes are just as real as they appear to be—is naïve. This recognition leads to mereological (part/whole) reductionism, the view that less real conventional reality discourse level wholes like “chariot” and “person” turn out on analysis to be reducible to more real ultimate reality

discourse level parts, the faulty apprehension or understanding of which as wholes is an illusory conceptual construction. Ontological nature, so to speak, does not carve conceptualization-independent ultimate reality at the joints in such a way as to reveal such things as chariots or persons; rather, these are at best pragmatically justified conceptual constructions and/or projections that make communication and other pragmatic elements of life practical, relative to our interests and cognitive limitations: we typically function as macrolevel beings and interact with the macrolevel features of the world.

Reductionism at first makes more sense than common sense realism. On further analysis, however, reductionism is revealed to have its own difficulties. Although Siderits focuses on more subtle examples of such difficulties, I will illustrate the difficulties of reductionism by way of examples that strike me as more pressing, intuitively problematic, and didactically transparent. For example, the reductionist faces a logical dilemma to the effect that when we “go micro,” so to speak, the analysis must either come to an end with impartite indivisibles (genuine “atoms”) or else reduction to smaller levels continues *ad infinitum*—that is, reductive analysis leads either to atomism or to nonatomism. But nonatomism arrives at no ultimate ground level reality, so there can be no support for reductionism’s inegalitarian ontology about wholes in favor of parts, on the one hand, and atomism is paradoxical insofar as whatever has magnitude is divisible *ad infinitum* (which leads to nonatomism). But whatever is impartite and indivisible must therefore lack magnitude and thus cannot aggregate to form anything with magnitude, in which case there can be no perceivable macrolevel reality (even one that is partly illusory), on the other hand.

Mereological reductionism may be shown (even by the simplistic reasoning above) to lead logically to the next stage in the dialectical progression, antirealism. For mereological reductionism implies that atoms

are required for ultimate reality, but the logical analysis just rehearsed implies that there are not any atoms. And if there are not, then nothing really exists. Obviously, we experience something, but whatever it is, it is not objectively real. Antirealism accepts the nonatomistic implication that parts are just as unreal as wholes, all the way down, whereby we arrive at an initially more egalitarian ontology—albeit a nihilistic one—in which everything is considered equally unreal.

Finally, further analysis reveals that even this seemingly ontologically egalitarian view nonetheless implies the same semantic dualism implied by reductionism (insofar as *real* and *unreal* remain basic categories, with the reductionist assigning things to both of them and the anti-realist assigning everything to just one of them). But the dualism of reductionism and the nihilistic and other difficulties of antirealism are both evaded by semantic nondualism, the view that because everything is ontologically equal, there is no more basis for ascribing an ontologically negative value of *unreal* to everything than there is for ascribing an ontologically positive value of *real* to everything, thereby eliminating any and all inegalitarian semantics.

As I mentioned earlier, Siderits gives the impression that this last stage brings us full circle because it implies that common sense realism is—from the enlightened perspective of semantic nondualism—somewhat correct, insofar as parts are no less unreal (or more real) than wholes, which implies that wholes are no less unreal (or more real) than parts. This completed circle, so to speak, is somewhat reminiscent of, if not poetically captured by, the Zen Buddhist adage about behavior being ostensibly indistinguishable before and after enlightenment:

Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood, carry water. (Blackmore 23)

But Siderits also suggests that the “enlightened” element of this perspective absorbs, retains, and is constituted by the insights of each stage along the dialectical progression, in such a way that there is an increasing wisdom and explanatory purchase that attends the progression: common sense realism is not as enlightened or explanatory as reductionism, which is not as enlightened or explanatory as antirealism, which is not as enlightened or explanatory as semantic nondualism.

As for paleo-compatibilism, I mentioned that Siderits offers it only as a possibly philosophically interesting view based on the reductionist phase of this larger dialectic. It would be interesting to hear more specifically how the antirealist and the semantic nondualist conceive of, and articulate their understanding of, free will and determinism. For the above synopsis implies that they would do so in increasingly enlightened and explanatory ways. However, Siderits has not developed the dialectical implications of antirealism or semantic nondualism for the view of free will and determinism held by the paleo-compatibilist.

In the present article, I continue to examine the writings of major middle-period Buddhist scholars regarding the compatibility of free will and determinism, focusing here on the writings of Charles Goodman. Most of what Goodman has said about the subject appears in his impressive treatise on Buddhist consequentialism, *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation & Defense of Buddhist Ethics*, and ought to be understood within the context of Goodman’s larger project in that work, which aims to prove that Buddhist ethics is best conceived as a form of consequentialism. There is an intuitive sense in which anyone who accepts hard determinism would be pressed in their ethical views either to reject any objective basis for ethics, insofar as hard determinism implies nobody is ever ultimately morally responsible for what they do, or to embrace some form of consequentialism.

The former option—rejecting any objective basis for ethics altogether—is not only *prima facie* but *a fortiori* unavailable to Buddhists, given the ubiquity of moral judgments and moral teachings in most forms of Buddhism. The latter option—consequentialism—is consistent with hard determinism, given that nothing about consequentialism requires that agents be construed as ultimately responsible for their behavior, and further given that Skinnerian conditioning and related forms of autonomy-neutral or even autonomy-undermining forms of conditioning are obviously consistent with determinism. But the converse is not so obvious: that is, despite the nice fit for hard determinists to be found in consequentialism, it is not so obvious that being a consequentialist, say, entails hard determinism. Goodman’s reasoning, on occasion, threatens to blur the lines between these two directions of support, or so I will argue.

Let me paint Goodman’s argument here first in broad strokes. In short, Goodman thinks Buddhism accepts hard determinism, the view that because determinism is true, there is no free will. He adds a Buddhist twist to this otherwise simple equation by interjecting an intermediary premise into the inference: because determinism is true *and Buddhism rejects the reality of the self*, there is no free will. The idea is that because there is no “*auto*” (self), there can be no “*nomos*” (rule) that can govern it—no “*autonomos*” (self-rule, or autonomy). Given such impersonal determinism, there is nobody who can be a genuinely morally responsible agent.

This is, admittedly, quite a plausible argument on its face, one that ought to trouble anyone who believes in the reality of free will and who is also inclined to accept much of what seems sensible in Buddhist philosophy. However, subsequent Buddhist scholars have apparently not been troubled by it. Before we delve into the particulars of Goodman’s argument, then, let us continue with the last element of this general in-

roduction to the literature on Buddhism and free will, by briefly discussing recent-period scholarship.

Recent-period scholarship

In the next and final article in this series, I focus on major recent-period Buddhist scholarship on free will, as reflected in the writings of Federman (“Buddha”), Harvey (“Freedom”), Gier and Kjellberg (“Buddhism”), and Wallace (“Buddhist”). Recent-period scholars seem to agree, contrary to Goodman, that the Buddhist view of self does not necessarily undermine free will. However, whereas in the early period, scholars avoided hard or soft determinism, and in the middle period they began to move toward partial compatibilism/incompatibilism or full incompatibilism, recent-period scholars separate along doctrinal lines. Thus, recent-period scholars who address non-Mahāyāna sources embrace determinism and compatibilism, whereas Mahāyāna-oriented recent-period scholars embrace indeterminism and incompatibilism (Repetti “Recent”). But all such recent-period scholars nonetheless embrace some form of deflated conception of the empirical or processual self—contrary to Goodman’s straightforward eliminative stance toward the self—and thus endorse a minimalistic conception of free will.

Having summarized the bulk of the extant literature on Buddhism and free will, we are now in a better position to assess what the other leading middle-period scholar, Charles Goodman, has to say about it. Again, Goodman thinks that because Buddhism flatly rejects the reality of the self, it is consequentialist and deterministic; and because it rejects the applicability of attributions of moral responsibility, it is hard determinist.

Buddhist Hard Determinism

In the context of his well-argued, comprehensive treatise on Buddhist consequentialism, Goodman presents his main argument about free will (*Consequences* chapter eight).⁸ I focus on this chapter and on some related remarks about punishment in chapter nine, in two stages. First, I will state Goodman's view as it originally appears in his text and, in the course of so doing, will examine its problematic elements; second, I will quote Goodman's response to my analysis of his account, which generated from him a more refined version of his views,⁹ together with my counterpoints, followed by my conclusion.

Goodman's original argument

I *grant* Goodman's arguments for Buddhist determinism, *arguendo*, but I dispute his arguments for Buddhist *hard* determinism. Goodman argues that Buddhism is hard determinist because dependent origination is determinist and on his interpretation of Buddhism there is no self: "If there is no autonomous self, there is no autonomy" (149).¹⁰ Consider this analogy, however: "If there is no red apple, there is no red." Even if composite wholes like apples do not *really* exist *as wholes*, there may be nonapple red (composite, partite) things—including whatever it is that we conventionally call "apples."¹¹

⁸ This chapter originally appeared as an independent paper (Goodman "Resentment"); I discern no substantive difference between the two versions.

⁹ Goodman read my objections in a draft of this article and offered his responses to those objections; these responses reveal his more refined view (personal communications, February 2012).

¹⁰ Compare Siderits: "And concerning what, if not persons, could the question of freedom be raised?" ("Beyond" 155)

¹¹ Here I am implicitly appealing to Siderits's and other Buddhists' "two truths" (or semantic dualist) distinction between conventional reality level and ultimate reality level

Perhaps what Goodman meant to say is that only a *substantive* self can have *substantive* autonomy: because there is no substantive self, there is no *substantive* autonomy. In evaluating Siderits’s argument about persons and the impersonal “person-series” he argues they reduce to (Repetti “Paleo-compatibilism”), however, I concluded that if there are no *substantive* persons (or apples, shoes, and so forth), it is not because there are no such entities, but because they are regarded in Buddhist philosophy as being ultimately *empty*. To say that something is *empty* in this sense is to say that it lacks an independent nature, an essential or intrinsic nature, or a self-nature. But this means only that it is dependent on the existence of other things—for example, the way my body is dependent on the bodies of other organisms—it does not mean that it does not exist at all. This interpretation is consistent with both early (pre-Mahāyāna, Pāli) and later (Mahāyāna, mostly Sanskrit) Buddhism, as seen, respectively, in the Buddha’s (SN 44.10)¹² and Nāgārjuna’s (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā, passim*) refusal to either affirm or deny the self. The first objection I have to Goodman’s account, then, has to do with his unqualified eliminativism about the self or person, whereas, as Siderits makes clear (Repetti “Paleo-compatibilism”), and with whom all recent-period Buddhist scholars seem to agree (Repetti “Recent”), Buddhism has a more nuanced, deflationary view of the reductive (and/or semantically nondualist)—but not eliminative—reality of the person.

To bring out the nuanced complexity of the Buddhist understanding of the unreality of the self somewhat more intuitively, consider the analogous issue of the unreality of simple, everyday objects, like red

discourses, as discussed at length in the previous article in this series (“Paleo-compatibilism”).

¹² “SN” abbreviates the *Samyutta Nikāya*. All references to SN and other elements of the Pāli Canon are available free online at the Access to Insight website at www.accesstoinsight.com (accessed February 21, 2012) and also the Pali Canon Online: The Original Words of the Buddha website available free online at <http://www.palikanon.org/> (accessed March 26, 2012).

apples. Suppose there are no red apples in Buddhist ontology because red apples are composite and in Buddhist philosophy composites are conceptual fictions because (a) they are constructed from the aggregation or conjunction of their parts, and (b) what is genuinely real is only what exists outside or independent of our conceptualizations. So, in red apples' stead, suppose that what actually exists and gives rise to the technically faulty impression or apprehension of red apples may be described by an indefinitely long conjunction of quantum level, or *dhamma* level,¹³ propositions about all the microlevel phenomena that account for the faulty red-apple-apprehension-producing-series or "ultimate red apple" (shorthand for *whatever it is* that is presumably more correctly described by that indefinitely long conjunction that properly replaces the erroneously concept-laden, composite-fiction-involving apprehension and description of a "red apple"). But it certainly does not follow from *this kind* of implication of the unreality of *red apples* that there is *no redness*; the inference that suggests that it does follow is invalid. But Goodman's analogous argument—that because there is no autonomous self, there is no autonomy—shares this invalid logical form and is therefore also invalid.

If all perceivable features of *whatever it is that we call "red apples"* appear in the indefinitely long ultimate-red-apple conjunction, there is nothing illusory about *red apples*, properly understood. It is *the improper understanding* of the red apple as a *mereological whole*—with an independent nature or essence as such—that is delusory. Absent that sort of misconception, however, it is unproblematic that *there are red apples*. After all, Zen masters eat them after chopping wood, carrying water, and asking their disciples to fetch them red apples:

¹³ The lower case term "*dhamma*" refers to elementary micro constituents of aggregates, in Pāli; "*dharma*" is Sanskrit. I use "*dhamma*" only to (acoustically) differentiate between it and the upper case "*Dharma*," only because "*Dharma*" is more widely used among Anglophone speakers.

Before enlightenment, fetch and eat red apples. After enlightenment, fetch and eat red apples.

Here red apples *do* reduce to ultimate red apples, so mereological *eliminativism*—declaring the utter *nonexistence* of apples *because* they are reductively partite and so forth—is unjustified and excessive, unless the claim is made equally about *all things'* utter nonexistence. But Goodman does not treat everything as equally unreal. He certainly does not treat the items that are, so to speak, the central posits in his Buddhist consequentialism—sentience, pleasure, pain, wellbeing, suffering, consequences, and so forth—as utterly nonexistent. If he did, it would be difficult for him to assert Buddhist consequentialism without contradicting himself.

This difficulty is not *sui generis* to Goodman's account, although its underlying basis does seem somewhat widespread—if not endemic—in Buddhist thought. What is sometimes misleading in Buddhist discourse is the pronounced, if not emphatic, vociferous, and unqualified denial of the existence of the self, and the *sotto voce* acknowledgment of the sometimes purely technical nonexistence of everything else as well. Contrary to this uneven handedness, however unintentional, the issue of conventional *illusion* obtains, properly (univocally) speaking, not *tout court*, but only when certain macrolevel claims about, or properties of, certain conventional phenomena do not appear, in effect, as constituted by microcomponents in the indefinitely long ultimate reality level conjunction; for instance, illusion obtains to those features invalidly, but conventionally, thought to constitute the essence of a macrolevel entity, say, such as *ātman*, the pre-Buddhist concept of the self as a nonphysical soul, where “soul” is itself construed as an otherwise indistinguishable element of the infinite, eternally changeless deity of pre-Buddhist Indian (Vedanta) philosophy, *Brahman*.

Siderits claimed that early Buddhist psychology treats conventional mental concepts like *volition*, *belief*, and *desire* as reducing to ultimate phenomena, hence as valid, and he claims that on that sort of analysis the person also reduces to an ultimately impersonal “person-series” that consists of ultimately real phenomena as well. However, although technically all phenomena are ultimately illusory, the illusory nature of the person is given greater emphasis. I propose that the reason for this inegalitarian emphasis on the unreality of only one unreal thing among all other unreal things is that the erroneous conception of the self as real is, according to most—if not all—forms of Buddhism, more deeply implicated in all our pathology. However, the Buddha’s rejection of *self* was not unqualified; rather, it was aimed specifically at the *inflated* Indian concept, *ātman*.¹⁴ The Buddha accepted the deflated, changing, dependent mind (SN 44.10), what Gier and Kjellberg describe as the “empirical” or “processual self” (“Buddhism”), without attributing to it any characteristic that could serve as the basis for an essential, independent identity or unchanging subject of experience that endures unchanged through the series of temporal changes that it necessarily undergoes—that is, without accepting any false views about its dependently originating, ultimately empty nature.

Why can we not just say that the empirical/processual person reduces to the ultimate person-series, just as the red apple reduces to the ultimate red-apple-series? Although neither Siderits nor Goodman straightforwardly take this approach, it seems Siderits does take it somewhat circuitously, insofar as he does say the person reduces to the person-series. But most recent-period scholars directly take it for granted that there is obviously an empirical self, so they seem to bypass the

¹⁴ See Federman (“Buddha”) for support of this claim. Federman insightfully compares the Cartesian notion of the self with the pre-Buddhist Indian notion of *ātman*.

need for reductionism as a way to get from here to here, so to speak (Repetti “Recent”).¹⁵

Mereological reductionism is not always used in Buddhism to reject the reality of mind, consciousness, belief, volition, craving, action, reflection, concentration, mindfulness, compassion, generosity, or any of the other (conventional) concepts that are the *posits* in Buddhist psychology, even though each is significantly conventional but ultimately empty. As I intimated earlier, Goodman does not use mereological reductionism to eliminate sentience, pleasure, pain, wellbeing, suffering, consequences, and so forth, what may be understood as the *posits* in his Buddhist consequentialism. I have examined this asymmetry in connection with paleo-compatibilism (“Paleo-compatibilism”), but an analogy may easily convey the objection. It would seem odd if a Buddhist were to make the analogous sort of eliminative argument—*there are no Xs in Buddhism; Y presupposes X; therefore, there are no Ys in Buddhism*—for any of these *posits* of Buddhist psychology, or if a Buddhist consequentialist were to make an analogous sort of eliminative argument for the *posits* of that theory. The analogy is with Goodman’s no-self argument:

There are no selves in Buddhism; free will presupposes a self; thus there is no free will in Buddhism.

For example, consider the following:

Nothing in Buddhism is more than momentary; the notion of karmic merit presupposes an accumulation by an entity that bears fruit over time and that accumulation implies something diachronic; thus, there is no karmic merit in Buddhism.

¹⁵ See also Harvey (“Freedom”) and Federman (“Buddha”) for Theravāda supports for this interpretation, and see Gier and Kjellberg (“Buddhism”) for both Theravāda and Mahāyāna supports for this interpretation.

Consider another example:

Nothing in Buddhism is more than momentary; the notion of a path to enlightenment implies that one undergoes a shift from being unenlightened at one instant to being enlightened at another point and that presupposes something diachronic; thus, there is no path to enlightenment in Buddhism.

A more Goodman-specific instance would be, for example:

Nothing in Buddhism is more than momentary; the concept of a consequence presupposes a causal connection between two events over time and that presupposes something diachronic; thus, there is no such thing as a consequence in Buddhism.

Buddhists do not normally make these sorts of arguments for the posits of Buddhist psychology, and Goodman does not make them for the posits of his Buddhist consequentialism, so the mere fact that all such items—including the self—are conventional cannot be what explains why some of them are treated eliminatively and others merely reductively. This is a problem for Buddhism in general, but whereas paleo-compatibilism treats the person reductively, Goodman treats the self eliminatively, so it seems more of an issue for him.

As I suggested above, a plausible explanation for the nonunivocal treatment of the self, relative to the other posits of Buddhist psychology or Buddhist ethics that presumably share the self's mereological emptiness, is that because Buddhist psychology attributes the entire nexus of *dukkha* (the disease of suffering that warrants Buddhism as the prescriptive cure) to the self, the self plays a central role in both of the two greatest positions in Buddhism—it is the warrant for the path and the path is precisely a path to the self's eradication. That, I conjecture, is the

main reason the unreality of the self is overemphasized relative to the less important unreality of the analogous posits of Buddhist psychology.¹⁶

However, as I have argued before (“Paleo-compatibilism”), Buddhist causal arguments for the ultimate *reality* of any entity arguably also apply to the self: Any entity that plays a genuine causal role is ultimately real. The (false conception of) self plays *the chief causal role* in Buddhism’s salvific narrative: It is the chief cause of suffering in Buddhism and by eliminating this powerful cause the greatest effect in Buddhism—enlightenment—is achieved. As Loy put it: “It’s no exaggeration to say that for Buddhism the self *is dukkha*” (“Healing” 254). One cannot remove a cause, or eradicate something, moreover, that *does not exist*. Of course, these objections are not *sui generis* for Goodman’s account, but generic to Buddhism’s nonunivocal treatment of the unreality of the self as opposed to the lesser emphasized unreality of everything else.

In any event, it is within the causal network of these dependently originated psychological entities—beliefs, volitions, karma (technically, both actions and their consequences), and so forth—that Buddhist practitioners operate when they struggle on the Buddhist path. For them, the free will question is not whether person talk translates to ultimate discourse,¹⁷ but rather how—within that causal nexus (of beliefs, volitions,

¹⁶ I also suspect that in the same way rituals take on a life of their own over time, we tend to moralize issues of purity (codifying puritanical norms into morals and vice versa), as Pinker suggests (“Instinct”). Because Buddhists see the self as the Buddhist equivalent of the biblical devil, it is to be expected that the self would receive unequal treatment among all other relatively illusory items.

¹⁷ This line of thought is not meant to imply that the question of person to person-series reduction is not philosophically or soteriologically important. To the extent that any correct or incorrect philosophical view, just as any other true or false belief, is a guide to felicitous or infelicitous action, respectively, the answer to this philosophical question can have serious implications for soteriological practice. It is for this reason, I take it, that the Buddha rejected the then prevalent abstract philosophical doctrine of fatalism, on the ground that adherence to that doctrine threatened volitional impotence and would undermine the path to enlightenment (Federman “Buddha”).

actions)—the right sort of self-regulating abilities needed for the Buddhist path may be cultivated. In the previous article in this series (“Paleo-compatibilism”), I listed twenty such items of agent proximal self-regulating abilities and identified seven among them (numbered 14–20), specifically implicit in the pan-Buddhist Eightfold Path, that intuitively favor a soft over a hard Buddhist interpretation of determinism. Because *even if* there is no ultimate “person,” my deflationary arguments for a Buddhist soft determinism, involving a self-regulating empirical or processual self, are plausible, Goodman’s “no self, thus no autonomous self” argument is not as persuasive as his presentation of it suggests.

Goodman offers another argument against autonomy based on the Buddhist rejection of the self: “If there is no genuine boundary between self and other, there can be no genuine distinction between actions that flow from the self and motions imposed on the self from outside” (*Consequences* 149–150). Let’s call this “Goodman’s no-boundary argument.” But the same reasoning may be used to reject talk of someone’s karma and reincarnation. If Goodman’s no-boundary argument were correct, there can be nothing upon which to differentiate between what is exogenous and endogenous in order to identify any beings’ merit or reincarnational histories—nothing to differentiate between the two interdependent self/other poles in what Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt psychotherapy (influenced heavily by Buddhism), called the “organism/environmental field” (*Ego* 287).

Writing on Gestalt theory, Yontef and Jacobs argue that even totally interdependent entities—the kind of entities that Buddhism asserts—need identifiable boundaries, in a way that is instructive here:

In Gestalt theory, there is no self separate from one’s organism/environmental field; more specifically, self does not exist without other The field is differentiated by boundaries. The contact boundary has dual functions: It

connects people with each other but also maintains separation Connecting meets biological, social, and psychological needs; separation creates and maintains autonomy and protects against harmful intrusion or overload. (“Gestalt” 352)

The “contact boundary” is where the organism and its environment meet in experience, similar to the Buddhist notion of consciousness as a function of perceptual contact between sense organs and objects of perception. Gestalt theory may or may not offer the best account of the organism/environment distinction or of the analogous self/not-self distinction, but what is intuitive in its analysis is consistent with dependent origination theory and supports the idea that Goodman’s flatly eliminative view of the self and his denial of any distinction whatsoever between organism and nonorganismic environment is too strong.

Thus, to the extent that the self is in an interdependent league with such things as beliefs, volitions, and other mental processes and phenomena that are, so to speak, on the organism side of the organism/environment field and, more importantly, among the central explanatory posits of Buddhist psychology, Buddhist psychology seems to require a more nuanced view of the person than the flatly eliminative view on offer in Goodman’s account. My objections to some of its incompletely articulated elements notwithstanding, such a nuanced view of the person may be found already significantly developed along the lines proposed by Siderits in *Persons*.¹⁸

On another note, Goodman critiques Paul Griffiths’s libertarian reading of Buddhism (“Notes”). According to Goodman, Griffiths’s reading rests erroneously on the notion of the imprecise predictability of

¹⁸ See Repetti (“Paleo-compatibilism”) for a critical review of Siderits’s noneliminative model of the person as it relates to the issue of free will.

karma. Goodman suggests that Griffiths's argument is that because the predictability of karma is depicted in Buddhist documents in ways that are imprecise, Buddhism is not deterministic (because determinism is precise, but karma is not). To counter the idea that Buddhism is not deterministic, Goodman appeals to certain Buddhist claims about the Buddha's omniscience, for a Buddha's omniscience would imply precise predictability. Because omniscience implies precise predictability, there is no inconsistency between the precision predictability implied by determinism and Buddhism. Goodman says if Griffiths is right (to think that Buddhism rejects the notion of precise predictability), then Mahāyāna views of the Buddha's omniscience would "give rise to a serious philosophical problem exactly analogous to the conflict between divine foreknowledge and human freedom The fact that Mahāyāna Buddhists never . . . mention this problem suggests that . . . they are determinists of some kind" (*Consequences* 151). But the idea that *if a belief system has not acknowledged a possibly latent inconsistency, it is not latent in that system* approximates Barnhart's fallacy.¹⁹ Because Mahāyāna metaphysics arguably avoids the realism presupposed by the determinism/indeterminism dichotomy,²⁰ Mahāyāna nonresistance to the precise predictability of omniscience *alone* does not support determinism any more than it supports indeterminism, and some Mahāyāna scholars, such as Wallace ("Buddhist") seem to favor indeterminism over determinism, if pressed to favor one rather than reject the determinism/indeterminism dichotomy.

¹⁹ As Michael Barnhart noted (in conversation), Asian philosophers sometimes exhibit a "blissful maintenance of contradiction," so we cannot assume that anyone maintaining two beliefs has a *belief about their compatibility*. I have dubbed the violation of this insight "Barnhart's fallacy," and the sort of "compatibilism" inferred simply because two beliefs obtain in the same belief system "Barnhart compatibilism" ("Earlier").

²⁰ See Gier and Kjellberg ("Buddhism"), and Wallace ("Buddhist"), for an explanation of, and some support for, this claim.

Goodman rejects Siderits's claim that *early Buddhists were compatibilists* on the grounds that what the early Buddhists rejected was fatalism: because fatalism is not hard determinism, early Buddhists did not reject hard determinism (*Consequences* 152-153). But even if they did not reject hard determinism *on that ground* that would not imply that they did not or would not reject it *on some other ground*, say, if they accepted some principle that implies that they would reject hard determinism. And arguably they did accept a principle with that implication. Although hard determinism and fatalism do differ in certain key respects,²¹ both doctrines nonetheless share a consequence that formed the basis of the Buddha's explicit rejection of fatalism, the only one of those two doctrines that was in the then prevalent philosophical vocabulary. The problem is that belief in inevitabilism engenders volitional impotence. The implicit principle that early Buddhists accepted—which implies they would reject hard determinism—is this: Reject any doctrine that engenders volitional impotence.²²

Despite Goodman's reliance on his strong interpretation of the no-self doctrine, he arguably presupposes a deflated person concept, and soft determinist reasoning about it, when he says that if "through mindfulness meditation, a *person* attains the ability to focus on and reflect on

²¹ Fatalists think that if an event is fated, nothing anyone does can prevent it. *Local* fatalists think *some* events are so; *global* fatalists think *all* events are so. Fatalism is *acausal*, but determinism is *causally* necessitated by laws. Global fatalists and determinists agree about the one unalterable event series, but for different reasons. Most determinists agree that the invariable series runs through causally effective choices, but hard and soft determinists disagree about whether agent proximal activities (such as belief, volition, and so forth) are "up to" the agent enough to count as "free will in the moral-responsibility-entailing sense," although some hard determinists doubt mental states have causal powers at all; see Caruso (*Illusion*). Some soft determinists assert counterfactually that, had prior conditions (volitions, say) been otherwise, then the agent could have done otherwise; hard determinists insist conditions can never be otherwise, so the alleged ability is never able to be exercised.

²² For explication and support of this claim, see Harvey ("Freedom") and Federman ("Buddha").

her passing thoughts,” then “she might, over a long time, be able to weaken or even eliminate her angry impulses” (*Consequences* 156; emphases added). Goodman’s “person” must be a conventional vernacular for something like “processual-person-series,” who he says “can” alter her impulses—implicitly attributing to a processual-person-series a person-series-regulating ability: free will without a real self. Given this presupposition of a deflated construal of self-regulating power, she is arguably autonomous in a *soft* determinist sense, for if she “can” do X, she presumably “can” also do not-X,²³ and if her reasoning, volitions, etc. regarding X versus not-X are handled a certain way, such that she satisfies a sufficient amount of the sort of agent proximal criteria soft determinists consider constitutive of deterministic autonomy,²⁴ then she arguably has agent proximal abilities soft determinists construe as sufficient for free will.

The debate between hard and soft interpretations of determinism is not going to be resolved here, and I do not intend my criticisms to be proofs against hard determinism. Rather, my remarks here are meant simply to ground the claim that the evidence Goodman appeals to is insufficient to favor a hard over a soft determinist view, and thus that from a plausible vantage, Buddhism favors a soft interpretation of de-

²³ Goodman would not necessarily resist this reasoning, for as we shall see below, he states that determinism is not anticounterfactual; that is, he thinks it is consistent with determinism that, had antecedent conditions been otherwise, choices would also have been otherwise, in which case the notion that alternative courses of action “can” be chosen, under alternate circumstances, is not incoherent. But despite this nod in the direction of the sort of counterfactual abilities many soft determinists consider constitutive of soft deterministic free will, most hard determinists—Goodman likely included—think such abilities can never be instantiated in a deterministic world because in such a world alternate conditions never actually occur, in which case his nod in the direction of counterfactual abilities is only nominal.

²⁴ See Repetti (“Paleo-compatibilism”) for a list of these criteria; see Repetti (“Meditation”; *Counterfactual*) for an expanded articulation of these criteria and a defense of their character as constitutive of free will.

terminism over a hard one. Such favor is clearly disputed by hard determinists.

Like Siderits (Repetti “Paleo-compatibilism”), Goodman argues that because Śāntideva asserts the *impersonality* of anger (in his *Bodhicāryavatāra* chapter 6),²⁵ Buddhism is hard determinist. Śāntideva’s reasoning is that just as we do not get angered by the impersonal production of bile, we ought not to get angered by other people’s ultimately impersonally caused behavior. Śāntideva goes on to suggest that although worldling behavior resembles bile, the Buddhist aspirant ought nonetheless to adopt the stance of effective agency for soteriological purposes. Goodman goes further in the other direction (away from what appears to be Śāntideva’s move toward soft determinism), however, when he reasons that Śāntideva’s statements about worldlings’ bile resembling behavior support the rejection of moral responsibility.²⁶ Because Goodman thinks moral responsibility is interdependent with free will (*Consequences* 154) he concludes that because Buddhism rejects moral responsibility (on the ground that there is no self who can be responsible), it implicitly rejects free will.

It is not at all obvious, however, that Buddhism rejects moral responsibility, as too much of Buddhist doxology ties karma intimately to (implicit and often explicit) notions of moral responsibility or desert. Buddhist interest in free will is not contingent upon responsibility, or vice versa, but rather on soteriology. The key questions here are: How can I eliminate suffering? How can I cultivate *bodhicitta* (universal altru-

²⁵ Śāntideva’s *Bodhicāryavatāra* is referenced in the bibliography as Shantideva and Padmakara (*Bodhisattva*); there Śāntideva discusses the impersonal nature of anger in his advice on anger control for soteriological purposes.

²⁶ In Buddhism, a “worldling” is a person who has not attained the first level of direct spiritual realization (“stream entry”) through meditative discipline. I use the term loosely to refer to most worldly folks and/or all who are not stream entrants, including many Buddhists.

ism)? Śāntideva's treatment of the distinction between the bile resembling behavior of worldlings and the agent-stance-adopting (self-regulating) behavior of Buddhist practitioners is not intended to ground a rejection of moral responsibility, but as soteriological advice. As I argued above, such self-regulating abilities favor *soft* over *hard* determinism.

Let us summarize Goodman's (responsibility/autonomy) "interdependence argument." Goodman argues:

1. Moral responsibility and free will are interdependent;
2. Buddhism rejects moral responsibility; therefore,
3. Buddhism rejects free will.

Only premise 2 and the conclusion involve the propositional attitude "rejects"; premise 1 is an unembedded (propositional-attitude-free) proposition. This argument is invalid because its first premise assumes that Buddhists *accept* its claim that moral responsibility and free will are interdependent; if they do not, it is possible that Buddhists do not have reason to draw its conclusion. It is not obvious that Buddhism has conceived moral responsibility and free will as interdependent, much less as incompatible, because neither idea has been explicit historically in Buddhism. But even if premise 1 were based upon wide Buddhist acceptance of its interdependence claim, apart from the fact that Goodman would have his work cut out for him to support that claim, the argument would involve something—but not exactly—like a Barnhart fallacy. That is because this argument attributes an inference to someone on the basis of their accepting beliefs that have an implication they may not have realized (especially if they do not accept premise 1), beliefs they might reject upon recognition of their incompatibility with a belief they do accept (such as free will). There may be weaker, and thus more defensible, ver-

sions of the claims and conclusion in this argument, but those remain to be seen.

Consider an analogical “identity argument” with a first premise *stronger* than 1’s *interdependence* claim, that of *identity*.

1. Clark Kent and Superman are identical;
2. Jimmy Olsen thinks Superman flies; therefore,
3. Jimmy thinks Clark flies.

Like the interdependence argument, in the identity argument only premises 2 and 3 involve a propositional attitude, “thinks”; identity argument premise 1 is an unembedded (propositional-attitude-free) proposition. Jimmy does not accept identity argument premise 1, however, so he does not accept identity argument conclusion 3. This argument is equally, but more transparently, invalid. Because both arguments share the same general argument form, Goodman’s interdependence argument is invalid.

Goodman’s argument is not only invalid, something that could likely be easily remedied with some appropriately modified language, but his premises are also weak. Western semicompatibilists, for instance, like Fischer (*Way*), definitively reject premise 1 of the interdependence argument. They think determinism rules out autonomy because determinism—in its implication of an unalterable single series of causally necessitated events—rules out an agent’s access to the sorts of *alternatives* that are connected with the idea of the agent’s literally being able to do otherwise than she does, even under the exact same causal conditions. They insist that these alternatives are required for the traditional metaphysical conception of autonomy, according to which it really is ultimately up to the agent (and not prior, nomologically necessitated causes) what the agent will do, but they are only possible in indeterministic

worlds. However, they also argue that determinism is nonetheless compatible with moral responsibility because determined agents may be sufficiently reason-responsive, that is, responsive to moral reasons, to ground morally appropriate attributions of moral responsibility, as opposed to attributions justified only on Skinnerian or other consequentialist grounds.²⁷

To support interdependence argument premise 2, Goodman appeals to authoritative philosophers Śāntideva and Buddhaghosa, who, Goodman says, exemplify “a tradition of philosophical arguments being used as instructions for meditation” (*Consequences* 156).²⁸ I am sympathetic to the dual usefulness of meditations and arguments,²⁹ but Siderits (“Buddhist”) and I (“Paleo-compatibilism”) disagree with Goodman’s interpretation of the claims of these philosophers, for slightly different reasons.

Goodman thinks that Śāntideva, in advising Buddhists on the appropriate attitude to take toward the anger-provoking, bile-resembling behavior of worldlings, evidences a Buddhist attitude of hard determinism. Goodman thinks that Śāntideva’s advice here is meant to serve as the grounds for meditative reflection on the impersonality of all behavior, to serve as the basis for the sort of meditatively grounded experien-

²⁷ Elsewhere, I have adduced a philosophical fiction or “phi-fi” (pronounced like “sci-fi”) counterexample of autonomous cyborgs that are incapable of moral reasoning that bears on elements of this line of semicompatibilist thought; see Repetti (“Paleo-compatibilism”).

²⁸ Here Goodman refers to Śāntideva’s *Bodhicāryavatāra* (*The Way of the Bodhisattva*) and Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*). A *bodhisattva* is one who vows to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

²⁹ See Repetti (“Meditation”) for a meditation theoretic account of a Buddhist conception of free will; see Repetti (“Contemplative”) for a defense of a contemplative education that uses in-class meditations as the basis for philosophical arguments, and vice versa.

tial/philosophical insight that will reduce the Buddhist aspirant's own anger. I would agree with this much, but not with the claim that this evidences a hard determinist attitude. Goodman's interpretation is that the production or causation of human behavior is no different from the production or causation of bile, and because we are not free to produce or not produce bile, we are not morally responsible for doing so, nor for our intentional, anger provoking behavior, behavior that we likewise are not free to produce or not produce.

As I argued regarding Siderits's appeal to the same passages in Śāntideva ("Paleo-compatibilism"), Śāntideva's soteriological instructions more plausibly favor a *soft* over a *hard* deterministic interpretation. For, just after Śāntideva's remarks about the impersonal causation of bile resembling behavior (*Bodhicāryavatāra* 6:22), Śāntideva goes on to consider a hypothetical objection about anger prevention to the effect that if all behavior is impersonally caused, it is problematic to suppose that the Buddhist can control his own anger at the anger provoking behavior of other worldlings. To this objection, Śāntideva replies that the aspirant must, in effect, adopt the stance of effective agency in order to make soteriological progress along the Buddhist path (6:30). That stance is better explained by a *soft* interpretation of determinism. Thus, there is no obvious implication of the absence of moral responsibility that Goodman sees in these passages from Śāntideva. Goodman's references to Buddhaghosa are similar to those he makes to Śāntideva, so the same argument applies to them.

Goodman offers independent reasons to think there is no moral responsibility in Buddhism when he analyzes a canonical example used to illustrate how karma connects earlier and later person-series-stages in the absence of identity between them. That example involved a question that King Milinda and the Buddhist sage Nāgasena consider: whether or not a man whose candle (held lit in his hand) inadvertently started

a fire that burnt down a row of houses was responsible for the damage, despite the fact that the candle flame in his hand is not identical to the fire it ignited. The point Nāgasena makes is that just as there is an appropriate relationship of causal continuity between the series of flames without any identity between them, but responsibility for the burnt homes may be traced through the series to the candle flame, so too karma appropriately connects earlier and later stages in a person-series without any enduring person identity that persists throughout the series. It is odd that Goodman uses this example to argue that there is no moral responsibility in Buddhism, insofar as the example seems *prima facie* to have the opposite implication.

Perhaps Goodman is exhibiting a strategy of tackling the opposing evidence here, but this would be a questionable strategy in light of the ubiquitous evidence that apparently suggests that Buddhism has a robust conception of moral responsibility that is intimately intertwined with its equally ubiquitous assertions about the operations of karma. What Goodman says in defense of his conclusion (that this case supports the idea that Buddhism rejects moral responsibility) is that this canonical example illustrates *legal* rather than *moral* responsibility (*Consequences* 160). This case *may* focus on legal responsibility, but that does not make it devoid of elements of moral responsibility. Besides, Buddhists believe that immoral laws ought to be repealed.

Of course, even if this case *was* devoid of an individual's moral responsibility, merely offering a case that *does not* assign moral responsibility is a far cry, logically speaking, from presenting an argument that there are no cases illustrating Buddhist commitment to the concept of moral responsibility. Most Buddhists think that examples of this sort show that when we experience the karmic repercussions of our former behavior, the karmic mechanics that link them ground the claim that we *deserve* those consequences, though we are not exactly the same person

that caused the karma. In fact, Siderits makes this claim using just this sort of example (“Beyond”). Because desert is arguably a form of moral responsibility, Buddhism does not reject moral responsibility, even if Buddhist sages advise us to embrace exculpatory attitudes of understanding and compassion toward a worldling’s misdeeds, for both that being’s sake and our own.

Further defending his claim that Buddhism rejects moral responsibility, Goodman argues that the law of karma is an impersonal *causal* law, not a *moral* law (*Consequences* 161). This is correct, technically, because if it really is a “law,” akin to the law of the conservation of energy, then it is a *causal*—not a *moral*—item *as such*, but that does not mean it cannot be both a causal law in one sense and a moral law in another. Karmic causation and karmic morals, so to speak, are compatible, and the above reasoning suggests that we deserve—are *morally* responsible for—the consequences for which our actions are *causally* responsible. Likewise, causal laws and legal laws are compatible, insofar as my intentionally performing an action that is causally responsible for someone’s death makes me legally responsible for their death.

Moreover, numerous canonical cases depict the Buddha explaining current misfortunes, or predicting karmic effects, in terms that are *prima facie* morally retributive for immoral actions.³⁰ Against this line of thought, Goodman also argues (*Consequences* chapter nine) that Buddhist attitudes toward punishment are not retributive, on the general ground that there is no autonomous self that can be responsible for its deeds or thus serve as an appropriate target for attributions of desert. Goodman may have reason to ignore or discount the Buddha’s many transparently retributive karmic remarks or to endorse a radically revisionist reading of early Buddhism, but what grounds either option is not obvious in

³⁰ See Harvey (*Introduction*) for an in-depth review of these sorts of cases.

what he says. Karmic law *functions* causally, but its normative components dovetail its causal components with far greater precision than common sense would predict. Both of these components are, according to the Buddha, volitional. The Buddha's equation of karma with *cetanā* (volition) is congruent with Aristotle's equation of the praiseworthy and blameworthy with the voluntary. Volitions are causally effective (action and karma engendering) behaviors that agents at least semivoluntarily endorse, whether instinctively or as part of the highly reflective acceptance of the vow to cultivate *bodhicitta*.

Śāntideva also exemplifies a tradition that emphasizes the *altruistic* enlightenment imperative (*bodhicitta*) built into the ideal of the *bodhisattva*, one who vows to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.³¹ Buddhist instruction about reducing anger must be interpreted by reference to that Mahāyāna ideal, and Goodman rests much of his argument for Buddhist consequentialism on the element of that ideal seen in the axiomatic Buddhist view that the wellbeing of all sentient beings is morally fundamental. Throughout *Consequences*, Goodman uses consequentialist reasoning to support the idea that whatever promotes that good has positive moral value. Thus, the main—if not only—ground on which a Buddhist consequentialist should reject moral responsibility would, presumably, be if holding people morally responsible caused more harm than good. Goodman exhibits this reasoning when he says that “blameworthy actions are not those that are wrong, but those that it would have good consequences to blame” (154).

If this is so, then the question of whether Buddhism rejects moral responsibility is no longer a question with metaphysical presuppositions about whether or not agents are sufficiently *causally* responsible for their actions in ways that would ground attributions of *moral* responsibility. If

³¹ His text, which Goodman focuses on, *Bodhicāryavatāra* (*The Way of the Bodhisattva*), is a manual for aspiring *bodhisattvas*.

their deliberative, volition regulating and other behaviors exhibit features rendering them competent as legally sane agents, on Goodman's view the question instead would be about the likelihood of overall well-being attending the institution of holding people morally responsible. But the answer to that kind of question does not seem to be something entailed by or even extractable from Buddhist doctrine, notwithstanding however interested in that answer Buddhists might be.

By my lights, in guaranteeing precision retribution for wrong actions, the law of karma undermines the idea that "blameworthy actions are not those that are wrong." It would be odd if karmic law—something Goodman insists is causal, which implies it is built into the fabric of the way things are universally—was precisely retributive, as it appears in Buddhist doxography to revolve explicitly around *merit*, but Buddhism rejected *desert*. It seems a priori that there can be no merit without desert. Presuppositions of desert also reach far into related notions, such as *entitlement* to acquire possessions, as opposed to theft, for example, as in the Buddhist prohibition against taking what is not given. Intuitively, nobody deserves what is neither theirs nor freely given, sold or appropriately transferred to them by someone else.

Consequentialists tend to avoid backward looking, desert based notions like merit, blame, and so forth, and to embrace forward looking considerations like rehabilitation, deterrence, and the like. Goodman is explicit about this in the case of Buddhist consequentialism (*Consequences* chapter nine). But it seems problematic for a Buddhist consequentialist to prefer deterrence to blameworthiness (which is based on desert), but to retain praiseworthiness (which is based on merit)—not that there are never reasons to ignore backward looking considerations or to embrace forward looking ones. Rather, the problem is with the asymmetry in the Buddhist consequentialist's rejection of blame and the like in the face of the Buddhist acceptance of praise and the like, when both types

of reactive attitudes presuppose desert. Either can have forward looking consequences; positive and negative conditioning in the form of praise or blame presumably have symmetrical likelihoods of reinforcing what is praised and preventing what is blamed, respectively, and thus they ought to be regarded equally from a Buddhist consequentialist perspective, other things being equal.

Sometimes other things are unequal, no doubt. Thus, there are conceivably cases where better consequences attend the practice of not holding some blameworthy people morally responsible, or of praising people who do not merit praise, but it is doubtful that all (or even most) cases have or would have that result. Certainly, no act utilitarian has a priori grounds for thinking any particular action type is necessarily antithetical to a good consequentialist outcome, for there will always be an imaginable hypothetical scenario in which that action type can be rigged so its performance brings about the greater good. On the rule utilitarian side, the *institution* of holding people morally responsible—both positively and negatively, as in praise and blame—has the *prima facie* credentials that accrue to almost any institution that exists ubiquitously as such for millennia across all cultures, as well as its massively intuitive appeal in preserving social order.

It is no accident that the majority of people throughout history, Buddhists included, believed that we deserve the repercussions of our deeds. For character consequentialists (such as Goodman), who accord certain character traits positive value (*qua* virtues) as well as pride of place in their consequentialism, the disposition of holding ourselves and others morally responsible is arguably supportive of character cultivation (which arguably involves autonomy theoretic self-regulation), which promotes the overall good of sentient beings. If we couple Goodman's absolute rejection of the self and of autonomy with his rejection of reactive attitudes and the institution of moral responsibility, a pressing

question comes to the fore: If we are all just *along for the ride* (nonautonomous), if there are no real self/other boundaries, and if the institution of holding ourselves morally responsible is irrational, then what is to prevent anyone—rationally or morally—from doing anything they feel like doing?

However, on Goodman's behalf, it should be noted that Wolf (*Freedom*) defends a praise/blame asymmetry—not on consequentialist grounds, but *precisely* on grounds of *desert*. Because agents that commit wrong actions *are not* reason-responsive (if they were, she argues, they would commit right actions), they are not responsible or blameworthy for their deeds; but agents who perform good deeds *are* reason-responsive, so they are responsible and praiseworthy for their deeds. Though both types of behaviors are equally determined, only reason-responsive, right action involving deeds ground desert presupposing reactive attitudes, such as praiseworthiness. This argument might fit in well with Goodman's theoretical framework, but it may not get him everything he seems to want.

The asymmetry in Wolf's argument revealingly parallels the asymmetry in Śāntideva's treatment of those nonblameworthy, anger provoking, bile resembling (not self-controlling) worldlings versus those praiseworthy, anger transcending, not bile resembling (self-controlling) Buddhists. Numerous authoritative Buddhist texts assign karmic punishments in hells to the former and karmic rewards in heavens to the latter. Granted, the skillful use of hyperbole is itself justified on consequentialist grounds, as is the use of the whiplash of fear and of the carrot of enticement. But the association between these positive and negative values and their backward looking bases in an agent's actions that ground their desert are more difficult to explain away.

This asymmetry may still be justifiable on Buddhist consequentialist grounds. As I have argued in connection with Wolf's asymmetry

thesis (*Counterfactual*): (a) blame generally causes suffering; (b) praise generally causes wellbeing; (c) perceived undeserved blame generally causes more pain than perceived undeserved praise (whether those perceptions are correct or not); (d) undeserved praise generally supports happiness and wellbeing; and (e) undeserved blame generally causes far more pain and suffering than any that may be caused by deserved or perceived blame or by deserved, perceived, or undeserved praise. No Buddhist should be unhappy about the idea of spreading joy to all sentient beings, regardless of their merit. Thus, it very well may be justifiable for Buddhists to eliminate blame but retain praise.

Be that as it may, however, none of this speaks to whether or not desert is a cognitive error, and unless that can be shown, the mere fact that it may be palatable—if not, ironically, praiseworthy—to generously ascribe praise to the undeserving, if people generally are appropriate targets of ascriptions of desert, then the distribution of judgments regarding some of the items (a) through (e) above will come out differently. In that case, deserved praise and blame alone are straightforwardly justified, whereas perceived or undeserved praise and blame are not.

There may be another way to avoid the asymmetry problem, by rejecting not only negative reactive attitude responses to behavior, such as blame, but also positive reactive attitude responses, such as praise. In fact, Goodman seems to move in that direction when he asserts that from an enlightened perspective, “all the reactive attitudes are entirely irrational and unjustified” (*Consequences* 159). Arguably, however, gratitude, appreciation, and certain other reactive attitudes seem just as rational and justified from an enlightened perspective as the appropriate reactive attitude responses of *mudita* (sympathetic joy or appreciation) and *bodhicitta* toward the happiness and suffering experienced, respectively, in connection with the experiences of all sentient beings.

Perhaps anticipating and speaking against this possible line of reasoning, Goodman adds (in the same paragraph) that the Buddha would not be “tormented by remorse.” But this is a misleading exaggeration, for two reasons. First, it suggests that the Buddha lacked any elements of remorse whatsoever, but it is difficult to suppose that the Buddha lacked the sympathetic appreciation of the pain he may have caused others in his previous births or prior to his enlightenment, which appreciation is arguably an element of a type of wholesome, balanced remorse toward which Buddhists seem committed. After all, the altruistic element of *bodhicitta* seems to require a sympathetic appreciation of others’ pain. Second, it misleadingly couples—if not conflates—the notion of the Buddha’s balanced, wholesome remorse with the implicit idea that if the Buddha had any remorse at all, he would be “tormented” by it, but that is equally difficult to imagine, given that the Buddha is by definition free of pathology and thus immune to self-torment. I am pretty sure the Buddha experienced *wholesome* remorse, but not the unwholesome extremes of being “tormented” by remorse, on one hand, or of heartless indifference, on the other, upon realization of the *dukkha* inflicted by him on sentient beings during his many previous incarnations—his ironically “praiseworthy” most recent incarnations as an exceedingly self-sacrificing *bodhisattva* notwithstanding.

Goodman reasons that the radical nature of this revisionism about reactive attitudes suggests *hard* determinism (*Consequences* 158). But it is not inconsistent with *soft* determinism. Goodman also argues that no doctrine that presupposes the legitimacy of reactive attitudes and is thus so opposed to compassion (which is so central to Buddhism) “should be regarded as a part of Buddhism” (162). But this “no true Scotsman” type reasoning ignores the many respected Buddhists who embrace desert, thinking that cosmic (karmic) law turns on and thus *guarantees* the reality of desert. It also implicitly mischaracterizes Buddhist soft determinists as rejecting compassion because they accept

moral responsibility; surely there are those with such beliefs whose primary meditation techniques include *metta* (loving kindness meditation). Among them would be Theravāda Buddhists (the only surviving tradition of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhists), who practice *metta* regularly, for Theravāda scholars who have written on the Buddhist view of free will favor a compatibilist or soft determinist reading. Goodman's "no true Scotsman" move, therefore, seems to imply that Theravāda Buddhists are not true Buddhists, ignoring the fact that *metta* itself—not unlike *mudita*, *karuṇā* (compassion), and *bodhicitta*—is an appropriate reactive attitude.

Let us pause to contemplate the claim that these latter items are reactive attitudes. Although these virtuous dispositions—*metta*, *mudita*, *karuṇā*, and *bodhicitta*—are not typically thought of as "reactive attitudes" within Buddhism, this is merely because Buddhism does not typically use this relatively recent Western philosophical jargon. The difference between these kinds of reactive attitudes and those typically discussed in Western philosophy—envy, resentment, regret, and the like—involves a contingency of two different universes of philosophical discourse. Western philosophers are not primarily concerned with Buddhist soteriology, so it is just not the case that they are likely to use loving kindness, sympathetic joy, or infinite compassion as examples of reactive attitudes when they are using casuistry to bolster their theoretical agendas. The term "reactive" also seems antithetical to how Buddhism would prescribe how we respond to worldlings and their behavior—namely, mindfully, compassionately, and so forth. But these accidents of usage aside, the main thing that separates envy, vengeance, and so forth from generosity, altruism, and their like is that the former are negative and the latter positive.

Buddhists might, in fact, go a step further and say that *metta*, *mudita*, *karuṇā*, *bodhicitta* and the like are more than just positive; they are arguably what the enlightened advocate as the most appropriate re-

active attitudes, and what makes them most appropriate from the enlightened perspective is their implicit recognition of the underlying metaphysical unreality of the self. Because this is at least the case when enlightened beings exhibit or advocate these attitudes, they may be considered *enlightened* reactive attitudes, or at least *enlightenment-approximating* reactive attitudes. But if such enlightened attitudes are grounded in an underlying metaphysical truth (namely, ultimate reality, as perceived by the enlightened), then they are appropriately targeted at all beings that lack a self, in which case they are—however enlightened—still reactive attitudes, although perhaps it would be more appropriate to call them “responsive” attitudes. In other words, those to whom responsive attitudes are appropriately directed *deserve* to be responded to in these ways, on the metaphysical grounds that they lack a self.

I have argued in some detail for a Buddhist view of free will and responsibility that is grounded in this sort of perspective (“Meditation”), which I sum up as what may be described as *Dharma*-responsiveness.³² *Dharma*-responsiveness is analogous to the semicompatibilist’s notion of reason-responsiveness. On that model, as one increasingly approximates *Dharma*-responsiveness (only enlightened beings are fully *Dharma*-responsive), both one’s relative autonomy and responsibility increase, although—paradoxically—upon enlightenment, one transcends both because one ceases to exist as a separate entity (Repetti “Meditation”). Accordingly, a “true” Buddhist may hold that desert rationally grounds the responsive attitudes that, together with other factors, constitute the appropriate Buddhist stance of *Dharma*-responsiveness in general.

³² “*Dharma*” (Sanskrit; Pāli: *Dhamma*) is difficult to translate, and has many different meanings based on usage, but may mean any of the following: the way things are; the teachings of the Buddha(s); the universal pattern or way; the truth or the path to its realization; and so on. In light of the definition of this term to describe *the way things are*, and in light of the fact that the law of karma is part of *the way things are*, it is all the more difficult to avoid the Buddhist implication that desert is part of *the way things are*.

Near the conclusion of his chapter on free will, referring to the hopes of Buddhists for reaching enlightenment, Goodman adds:

The confidence Buddhists have in the power of their meditative practices leads them to be very optimistic about the practical possibility of such a transformation, despite the obvious difficulty of the task. (163)

True, but as I hope my arguments have made plausible, such talk about the power we have to intentionally change our futures seems intuitively more supportive of a soft rather than a hard deterministic interpretation of Buddhist thought. I have argued this elsewhere (“Paleo-compatibilism”; “Meditation”) and it is also what Peter Harvey (“Freedom”) and Asaf Federman (“Buddha”) seem to think.³³

In his chapter on punishment (*Consequences* chapter nine), Goodman argues that Buddhist consequentialism does well without the backward looking, retributive notion of punishment, which rests on the autonomy assuming notion of desert he rejects. He thinks that it can accommodate all the essentially desert-free intuitions required of a forward looking (deterrent, rehabilitative, and incapacitation involving) notion of punishment capable of preserving social order (168). It does not follow, however, that there is no room in Buddhist consequentialism for a wholesome, desert based interpretation of retributivism, as I argued above. Insofar as the law of karma guarantees that everyone gets what they deserve, it is arguably part of the *Dharma*; it is the way things are; it is the cosmic law of desert.

Goodman makes some interesting remarks about punishment that are directly related to free will. Goodman asserts:

³³ See also Repetti (“Recent”), for my critical review of Federman’s and Harvey’s arguments, along with those of Gier and Kjellberg, and of Wallace.

In particular, the view about free will that seems to be most consistent with the retributivist account of punishment is . . . libertarianism Since . . . they reject libertarianism, hard determinists would have reason to oppose a retributive conception of punishment. (168)

Perhaps hard determinists would have *some* reason thereby, but just because retributivism is consistent with libertarianism does not mean that all who reject libertarianism must also reject retributive models. That is because retributivism is consistent with Western compatibilism (which includes soft determinism) and semicompatibilism, both of which reject libertarianism. Thus, Buddhist aversion to retributivism need not favor hard determinism over soft.

Goodman offers another argument for Buddhist hard determinism on reactive attitude grounds:

Buddhists are specifically hard determinists, not compatibilists, because they claim that anger and resentment are never justified, and that these negative emotions can be undermined by reflection on the impersonal causal processes that underlie the production of other people's harmful actions. (169)

But Buddhist compatibilists and semicompatibilists may make the same claims about the unjustifiability or soteriological inappropriateness of anger and resentment, and they are arguably in a better position to account for such self-transformative abilities, as I have argued briefly above and extensively elsewhere (“Paleo-compatibilism”; “Meditation”).

Goodman reviews several authoritative sources that support the idea that we ought to have compassion for evildoers because they are afflicted (*Consequences* 169-171). Here he repeats Nāgārjuna's remark: “Those of fallen nature are receptacles [of] compassion from those

whose natures are magnanimous” (*Consequences* 171). Arguably, those fallen natures are receptacles of compassion because their self-inflicted bondage and suffering-fostering actions created the metaphorical receptacle into which compassion appropriately may be poured. But then, as I argued above, such pathologically determined actions ground sympathetic reactive attitudes and thus they *deserve* the compassion that the magnanimous, being *Dharma*-responsive, naturally extend.³⁴

Goodman presupposes this sort of implicit notion of karmic desert when he argues that “both Plato and the Buddhists maintain that there will be future lives in which our fate will be determined by the moral quality of our actions in this one” (175). This betrays, as I have been arguing, the tacit presence of desert if not also of retributivism in the universality of karmic law. If the law of karma guarantees retribution and desert, then a form of moral responsibility is built into the fabric of reality. The Buddhist can point to this as grounds for there being no need for *our* engaging in *superfluous* retributive practices, also because these generate more bad karma for everyone, ourselves included. Because these arguments provide Buddhists sufficient reason to reject *human* retributive behavior without rejecting desert or moral responsibility, we do not need hard determinist premises to support the rejection of retributive *behavior*. But we also do not wind up with what Goodman

³⁴ This line of reasoning evokes a deeper, more problematic asymmetry: If the universal karmic law—part of the way things are—guarantees retribution, and enlightened beings are not separate from the way things are, then why does one part of the *Dharma* respond with retributive karmic consequences and another with compassion and the like? One possible way to go about answering this would be to say that the *Dharma* is impersonal, just as Goodman argued insofar as it is on that level purely causal. Whereas the magnanimous, seeing and knowing that this retributive suffering is built into the natural progression of sentient beings along the path to enlightenment, all the more offer their compassion to those pathologically self-torturing beings. Although this initially sounds like a possible direction of explanation for this asymmetry, on further analysis the difficulty remains: Why is it that enlightened beings are more compassionate than the *Dharma*, if there is no self/other boundary—as Goodman suggests earlier—and therefore no difference between them and the *Dharma*?

needs to support his interdependence argument, and that is a Buddhist rejection of moral responsibility. On the contrary, moral responsibility appears to be part of the *Dharma*.

In responding to the objection that consequentialism permits punishment of the innocent, Goodman differentiates between earlier (mainly Theravāda, but also Śāntideva) and later sources (mainly Asaṅga) to dodge this problem. However, in so doing he seems to presuppose intuitions based on desert when he says the “innocent are in no need of reform,” that deterrence “cannot work if people believe they are in danger of punishment whether or not they break the law,” or that “we can rule out the possibility of punishing the innocent without having to accept that the guilty deserve punishment” (176). For if *hard* determinism is true, nobody is truly guilty—responsible—for anything they do, because all relevant causal explanation is agent exogenous or agent indifferent. Therefore, if everyone is “innocent,” then nobody is “in need of reform” and deterrence “cannot work . . . whether or not they break the law” (defining “the law” in the broader sense of the moral law of karma and, even more generally, the *Dharma*). This is arguably an indirect proof of the superiority of soft over hard determinism, for the former can more coherently distinguish between the guilty and the innocent, as well as ground desert based retributivism. For if hard determinism is true, no one is guilty and everyone is innocent.

Goodman’s refined argument

Let me now reveal Goodman’s replies to these objections, along with my rebuttals.³⁵ Goodman insists that a proper reading of his view must take into consideration the fact that, as he sees it, the hard determinist view does not conflict with deterrence working, with people being able to

³⁵ The claims to follow about Goodman’s replies to my objections, as well as about his more refined position, derive from personal communication (Goodman February 2012).

change, with anger being evitable, or with some people being in need of reform. Any criticism that consists of pointing out these seeming contradictions does not, he thinks, reach the view he intended to put forward and defend. But the force of my objections was not directed at showing that these ideas were *inconsistent with hard determinism*, but rather at assessing the individual plausibility of various elements or their collective coherence. Goodman's overall Buddhist position contains not only a hard determinist component, but also his strongly eliminative view of the self, his consequentialism, certain inferences that seem not to stand up under scrutiny, and some presuppositions he is not entitled to hold. Let us take a closer look at these claims, then.

As Goodman sees it, the hard determinist position that he attributes to the Buddhist tradition consists of the following "three theses":

1. Determinism is true: that is, whatever happens is completely determined by previous causes.
2. Because determinism is true, there is no such thing as basic desert, that is, desert of good or bad treatment that is justified by retributivist, backward looking considerations and not by consequentialist considerations.
3. Because determinism is true and there is no basic desert, all reactive attitudes are cognitively mistaken and always inappropriate, though they might sometimes happen to have good consequences in special situations. (Goodman personal communication, February 2012)

However, I think either thesis 1 begs the question insofar as it equates determinism with *hard* determinism or else the inference from thesis 1 to thesis 2 is invalid, as soft determinists accept thesis 1 but doubt thesis

2. This line of thought also seems to presuppose two ideas Siderits numbers as “(3)” and “(4)” and lists among four statements that he describes as paleo-compatibilist theses:

(3) Nothing could be an originating cause in the required sense.

(4) All psychological states are the effects of prior causes.
(Siderits “Buddhist”)

I have argued that (3) and (4) are false (“Paleo-compatibilism”).

I have two responses to Goodman’s reasoning here. First, the fact that agent proximal causes are traceable back to causes that are themselves ultimately exogenous does not necessarily undermine the possibility that agents are originating causes in the responsibility-entailing sense. Second, Goodman holds that the issue between hard and soft determinists is normative, not metaphysical. Given this assumption, however, Goodman seems required to accept the semicompatibilist view that determinism is inconsistent with the metaphysical conception of autonomy (that consists in the ability to do otherwise, an ability arguably only able to be manifest in indeterministic worlds), but consistent with the normative requirements of moral responsibility (that consist simply of an agent’s exhibiting reason-responsiveness).

Goodman thinks that nothing about his three theses (1-3) conflicts with the conventional truth of the claim that people can change their lives. Goodman argues that theses 1-3 do not conflict with a claim like “It is possible for X to arise, and if X is present, X causes psychological state Z to arise,” or “It is possible for X to arise, and if X is present, X causes psychological state Y not to arise”; according to Goodman, claims like these, when correct, can make claims like “George can change his wicked ways” conventionally true. What theses 2 and 3 imply, for Goodman, is that if George changes his wicked ways, he will not deserve (in

the basic sense) any praise or reward for this, though he might deserve them in the consequentialist sense that it would make things better (for both George and the world) to praise and reward him. Likewise, if George does not change his wicked ways, theses 2 and 3 imply that George will not deserve (in the basic sense) blame or punishment for this, though we might be required to blame or punish him for consequentialist reasons, to avoid further harm to society; and that if we get angry at George for not changing, our anger will be mistaken.

However, although nothing in theses 1-3 conflicts with Goodman's examples, his examples (as described) avoid the issue—crucial to the discussion of whether George deserves to be held responsible for his deeds—of whether it is in *George's* power to bring it about that X arises. For 1-3 conflict with other examples that do draw in elements of this feature of the discussion, such as, “George did not do his philosophy essay on time, but he could have, so he deserves the late penalty,” a sentence that can also be conventionally true (not just in the consequentialist sense) if George satisfies enough of the soft determinist's agent proximal criteria and thus has the ability to bring it about that X arises, which implies that George can behave in ways that ground normative attributions of praise, blame, desert, and so forth.

Frankfurt considered the case of a determined agent who intuitively seems morally responsible for what he did because he would have done what he did even if he was not determined to do it (that is, even if he was able to do otherwise). He famously argued that being determined to do what one does need not undermine attributions of moral responsibility.³⁶ Although some metaphysical issues are not relevant in the

³⁶ See Frankfurt (“Alternate”) for the *locus classicus* of this sort of case that has been so duplicated in the Western discussion of free will that they are now called “Frankfurt Cases.” In the original case, an agent, Jones, is under the remote control of a neuroscientist, Black, who has secretly implanted a chip in Jones's brain, and who will intervene only if Jones attempts to behave in a way that goes against Black's preferences, say, in the voting booth. Supposing that Black wants Jones to vote for the Democrat, and that

Frankfurt Case, such as the truth or falsity of determinism, others are relevant, such as the fact that the agent in the case satisfies the following criterion: he would have done likewise even if he was able to do otherwise (Repetti “Paleo-compatibilism” 80). This is a metaphysical issue insofar as it raises the question of whether counterfactuals ground ability statements, and in this sense the normative issues can rest on the metaphysics. Semicompatibilists implicitly agree, as their entire argument—that determined reason-responsiveness can ground moral responsibility—presupposes it, for the only way to understand attributions of reason-responsiveness (along with all other dispositions) is by way of counterfactual analyses, something semicompatibilists have coming out of their ears.³⁷

Goodman admits that the conventional truth of at least some interpretations of the sentence “George can change his wicked ways” is compatible with determinism, and that determinism is not “actualism” (the view that only what actually ever occurs is *possible*).³⁸ As Goodman

Jones votes for the Democrat “of his own accord,” that is, without Black intervening at all, Frankfurt reasons that Jones would have voted for the Democrat even if he was able to vote otherwise, in which case the fact that Black stands by ready to prevent that from ever happening and thus that Jones cannot do otherwise (and thus that Jones lacks genuine alternatives) is irrelevant to Jones’s moral responsibility. Jones acted freely, in the moral-responsibility-entailing sense, despite being determined.

³⁷ See Repetti (*Counterfactual*) for the full analysis that supports this claim, and the related objection to the effect that the same counterfactual analyses that ground reason-responsiveness ground related soft determinist (thus *full* compatibilist, not merely semicompatibilist) conceptions of autonomous agency, such as the criterion just mentioned: the agent would have done likewise even if she was able to do otherwise. Agents that satisfy this and related criteria arguably may possess autonomy even in deterministic worlds. Therefore, on careful analysis of the counterfactual grounds of semicompatibilism, the need to restrict compatibilism to only the moral responsibility element—while holding the autonomy element incompatible—collapses, and thus the warrant for the “semi-” qualifier collapses with it.

³⁸ See Repetti (“Meditation”; “Paleo-compatibilism”) for an explanation of actualism and how actualism is incompatible with determinism; see Repetti (*Counterfactual*) for a full explication of actualism and a proof of how it undermines the incompatibilist’s main argument, the so called “consequence argument” to the effect that determinism rules out alternatives and thus also rules out alternatives-requiring metaphysical con-

has it, everything that happens is determined, but if the conditions had been different, a different result would have emerged. And changing conditions, both internal and external, produce changes in people's characters all the time. This is a common strategy of late among hard determinists: Accept all the claims about local, agent proximal features of action that soft determinists associate with moral-responsibility-entailing free will, but insist that because all of that is ultimately exogenously and thus impersonally determined (adding, typically, "long before the agent was conceived"), none of it is agential enough, so to speak, to properly ground attributions of responsible agency. The clincher is the added observation to the effect that because determinism is true, antecedent conditions never are otherwise, in which case the technical truth of agent proximal counterfactuals about how choices could have been otherwise had their antecedents been otherwise does not amount to anything the agent can get her hands on in order to alter her (anciently determined) experience.

But this general hard determinist strategy strikes me as simply taking the distal, preagential vantage of ancient causes that lead like unalterable dominoes to the agent's choice, from which vantage one cannot see clearly (and thus ignores) the relevant features of those agent proximal facts that ground the idea that the agent exhibits the sort of volitional regulation that soft determinists consider sufficient for autonomous, responsible agency. And because we do not see those facts clearly we say they do not really make a difference. But this is fallacious. Certainly, if we stand far enough away from something, we will not see it clearly enough to discern its important features; but that does not mean

ceptions of autonomy that imply that agents can do otherwise than they do. Because the incompatibilist element is what differentiates semicompatibilism from full compatibilism, and that element is grounded in the consequence argument, the semicompatibilist is implicitly committed to the actualism of the consequence argument, and thus technically not entitled to counterfactual (nonactualist) analyses.

that they do not exist. A distant tower that looks from afar as though it were topped by a stationary cross might actually be topped by a functional weathervane, the structural features of which matter because they render it wind-responsive, unlike the cross.

These ideas are more in the general background of hard determinism than in the specific foreground of Goodman's Buddhist version. But I think Goodman's version contains an inconsistency insofar as he thinks the conventional truth of the statement "George is guilty of murder" is compatible with hard determinism. What Goodman denies is that, given that George *is guilty* of murder, George is ultimately responsible for murder in a sense that would make anger or resentment an appropriate response to his actions, or in a sense that would generate basic desert. But here is where soft determinist intuitions seem to have the lead over hard determinist ones: if George *is guilty* of murder (which requires malice aforethought and so on), then he *is* deserving of punishment, and an appropriate target of our reactive attitudes; conversely, if he is *not* deserving of punishment or an appropriate target of our reactive attitudes, then he is *not* guilty of murder. That is, if George's agent proximal behavior is gobbled up by distal prenatal forces, as the hard determinist thinks it is, then the hard determinist cannot really consider "George" to be "guilty" of anciently caused events that merely occur in the vicinity or through the conduit of his agent proximal conditions. For "George" is no more of a real agent, on Goodman's strongly eliminative view, than a snowball is, and a snowball cannot be "guilty" of hitting something to which forces beyond its control propel it.

If—by analogy with hard determinism—one attributes all causal explanatory force for everything that happens within, and in the wake of, an avalanche *to the avalanche* (or to its immediate cause), then that explanatory apparatus will gobble up local causal conditions that nonetheless might explain how features of one relatively small chunk of snow

in the avalanche (that suffice to identify that snow chunk as an entity that may be called “Frosty”) are thereby “guilty” of helplessly rolling over a skier, causing the skier’s demise. From such a “hard avalanche” type perspective, the claim *that Frosty is guilty of homicide* is implausible, particularly if the hard avalanche theorist is committed to the view that nothing really distinguishes Frosty from the rest of the avalanche—that is, if Frosty lacks a real self or self/other (Frosty/avalanche) boundary. The Buddhist hard determinist eliminativist about the self cannot have it both ways.

Goodman thinks it makes no sense to say, as I say above, that in a hard determinist picture, deterrence cannot work. For a social science study that showed that harsher laws sometimes reduced the frequency of crimes obviously would not refute determinism. Fear of punishment can be a causally efficacious factor that reduces the frequency of decisions to commit crimes. And both theses 2 and 3, Goodman emphasizes, are normative claims; thus, they cannot conflict with the factual assertion that the fear of punishment reduces the frequency of decisions to commit crimes. So, Goodman reasons, no part of the position expressed in theses 1-3 conflicts with the efficacy of deterrence.

However, my claim that “deterrence will not work” did not mean deterrence is incompatible with hard determinism *per se*, but with Goodman’s more comprehensive Buddhist hard determinist eliminativism about the self. In his immediately preceding line of reasoning, Goodman had said, you will recall, that the innocent are in no need of reform, that “deterrence cannot work if people believe they are in danger of punishment whether or not they break the law,” and that we can rule out the possibility of punishing the innocent without having to accept that the guilty deserve punishment. What I am arguing is that if hard determinist eliminativism about the self is true, then nobody is truly guilty or responsible for anything they do, like Frosty, because all rel-

evant causal explanation is agent exogenous or agent indifferent. In that case, everyone is innocent, nobody is in need of reform, and there is nobody for whom deterrence can work. Deterrence also cannot work because, as Goodman notes, “Deterrence cannot work if people believe they are in danger of punishment whether or not they break the law”; if nobody is “guilty” of breaking the law, but deterrence is implemented at all, then people will “believe they are in danger of punishment whether or not they break the law.”

There is an intuitive sense of desert in the idea that there is such a thing as “the innocent” (who, Goodman claims, are “in no need of reform,” as opposed to “the guilty,” who presumably are), and this notion makes sense, but is a bit more difficult for hard determinists to accommodate than it is for soft determinists. So, if there is no real distinction between self and other or guilt and innocence, then deterrence does punish people whether or not they are responsible for actions that from a legal standpoint break the law. In this context, deterrence cannot be *morally* justified and so “cannot work” in the way Goodman needs it to, even if it can be pragmatically justified on Skinnerian, consequentialist grounds. For if everyone is equally innocent and punishment morally arbitrary, there are no moral grounds for determining who deserves punishment. In this case, as Goodman notes, “Deterrence cannot work if people believe they are in danger of punishment whether or not they break the law.”

Again, according to his theory, it is not really George or Frosty who “breaks” the law, but prenatal causal streams flowing through the conduits we have labeled “George” or “Frosty.” A snowball’s rolls, caused by an event prior to its rolling, such as an avalanche, might push a skier, causing her death. But here the word “push” involves an ambiguity, with both an intentional and an unintentional meaning, only the former of which counts for actions, as opposed to mere events. On what may be

described as “snowball eliminativist hard avalanche theory,” there are no real snowballs and thus there are no snowball proximal actions—there is only avalanche level event causation. Thus, it is an equivocation to claim that some analogues of the snowball can be guilty of breaking the law and others innocent; this would imply that the latter are not in need of reform, and the former are guilty of their actions and thus in need of reform.

Goodman agrees with some elements of my analysis, but insists that, given the context of his argument (his extended argument for Buddhist consequentialism), what he said should be understood in a consequentialist way. He admits that what I can legitimately press against his argument is that those who are punished are still “innocent” in the sense that they do not deserve to be punished, or that they have done nothing for which they can be held morally responsible. So even if the system he advocates would punish only those who have “done wrong,” it still seems morally objectionable. But he denies that there is any internal inconsistency in his view, either normative or descriptive, and holds that mine is an external critique.

I maintain, however, that his claim that the system he advocates would punish only those who have done wrong reveals an internal inconsistency. He cannot consistently claim that anyone has “done wrong” because, in his view, it is not *George* who has “done” anything. If our best account of the action we attribute to George is that he has actually performed (done) the action, rather than simply served as a conduit through which distal causal forces have manifested, however, then it seems that all the soft determinist’s intuitions of normativity are in the immediate offing. It is my contention that this same bump is in the rug in many forms of incompatibilism—not only hard determinism, but also semicompatibilism—and that when confronted by these objections these

theorists simply get around the problem by pushing the bump one way rather than another.³⁹

Speaking to my repeated claim that the ability to explain agent proximal abilities is better handled by soft rather than hard determinism, but inadvertently supporting what I have claimed is the hard determinist's strategy of late (to acknowledge but deem irrelevant all the agent proximal features of action on which soft determinists dote), Goodman claims that Śāntideva clearly thinks anger is evitable; certain kinds of meditation reduce or eliminate anger. This is a claim, Goodman emphasizes, about the causal efficacy of meditation, and it is compatible with hard determinism, as Goodman understands it, as with other claims about the causal efficacy of certain kinds of practices to change human behavior. Goodman suggests that I seem to see the issue more as he does when I say that all determinists agree that many of us often possess agent proximal abilities (in "Paleo-compatibilism" [79-81], I list these abilities as twenty items, numbered 1-20), but that hard determinists likely accept a "generic hard determinist principle":

No matter what agent proximal causal conditions are satisfied, agents never exhibit free will in the responsibility-entailing sense (Repetti "Paleo-compatibilism" 80).

Goodman wonders, if what I say here is correct, how I could possibly refute hard determinism by showing that agents sometimes satisfy certain agent proximal causal conditions. But I do not say that hard determinists are correct, nor do I intend to refute hard determinism just by showing that agents sometimes satisfy agent proximal conditions (although the considerations about Frosty come close). Rather, my reference to agent proximal items is merely to press the fact that Goodman seems to equate

³⁹ In my monograph on free will (*Counterfactual*), I try to comprehensively expose the bump in the rug and trace it through all its evasive maneuvers.

all determinism with hard determinism, but that determinism, per se, may be construed as hard or soft, and there are some plausible grounds for construing it as soft.

Soft determinists disagree over which agent proximal conditions constitute responsible agency, but, contrary to hard determinists, as I have claimed, they likely accept a “generic soft determinist principle”:

If certain agent proximal conditions are satisfied, agents exhibit free will in the responsibility-entailing sense (80).

Thus, determinism clearly admits to both readings, so the question here is: Which of the two readings is more plausible for the Buddhist? And inasmuch as there is a sense in which some agent proximal conditions pose a greater problem for Buddhist hard determinist eliminativists about the self, as the Frosty case reveals, it seems clear that from a non-eliminativist Buddhist perspective, soft determinism seems more plausible.

Recall that the difference between hard and soft determinism, as Goodman understands these ideas, is not a metaphysical difference. For Goodman, it is a normative difference about what follows logically about desert and about the rational or moral appropriateness of attitudes from the standpoint of certain metaphysical premises. So the fact that Śāntideva accepts an agent proximal condition (which I identify as item 14, “Paleo-compatibilism”)⁴⁰ cannot, in Goodman’s view, undermine the claim that he is a hard determinist in the sense Goodman suggests.

⁴⁰ That condition is: The agent is aware of agent proximal causal factors and general karmic and/or causal conditions/processes that shape her choice parameters, she can reflect on which choice is *Dharma*-responsive, and she can make and effectively act on that choice, even in the face of phenomenologically powerful dispositional tendencies in the opposite direction (Repetti “Paleo-compatibilism” 81).

I disagree. Goodman acknowledges that normative claims may be morally justified on certain metaphysical grounds but not on others. But one such metaphysical ground on which the normative ascription, say, of guilt is appropriately applied may be the case in which *George* is sufficiently *causally* responsible for bringing about the action. But on certain other metaphysical grounds the same normative claim may not be morally justified, such as it not being the case that it is (Frosty resembling) *George* who is sufficiently *causally* responsible for bringing about the action. Given that the former is entailed by soft determinist noneliminativism about the self but the latter by hard determinist eliminativism about the self, it follows that free will, in the responsibility-entailing or responsible agency sense, is both a metaphysical and a normative matter, and one whose determining explanatory factor is *causal*, metaphysical. Thus, it is inaccurate to assume that the soft versus hard determinist debate over the responsible agency question is primarily a normative matter; that assumption begs the question in favor of the hard determinist eliminativism about the self and about moral responsibility that is at issue in free will inquiry.

If I agree that Buddhists such as Śāntideva reject the legitimacy of anger and resentment, then according to Goodman I am accepting that they hold that an accurate understanding of the way things are will be incompatible with a very significant part of our ordinary system of reactive attitudes. To that extent, we agree, but the reason we agree is not the same: he sees anger and resentment as illegitimate because he sees all reactive attitudes as predicated on the illusion of agency, but I see them as such because they are soteriologically unskillful, and I do not see all reactive attitudes as predicated on the illusion of agency. Recall that, in my view, compassion, sympathetic joy, and the like are at least enlightenment-approximating *Dharma*-responsive attitudes, and at best the most appropriate *Dharma*-responsive attitudes of the enlightened, those who lack any illusions about the existence of the self.

The interesting issue for Goodman—one he admits he may be wrong about—is about certain positive reactive attitudes such as gratitude, what I called “wholesome remorse” (in connection with the Buddha’s feeling remorse but not being “tormented” by it), and perhaps forgiveness. I would add that my reasoning about all the virtuous *Dharma*-responsive attitudes fall into this problematic category. Goodman admits that it is far harder for Buddhists to show that the appropriateness of these attitudes is compatible with understanding the way things are. Goodman thinks I have not yet shown this or the contrary, but I think I have given some reason to show it is true. If such attitudes are appropriate, Goodman acknowledges, Buddhists might have to adopt an asymmetric position like Wolf’s, though he thinks this position may also be vulnerable to the sort of objections I raised regarding whether it makes sense to think George has “done” wrong. Despite certain exceptions, the Kantian intuition persists: “Ought” implies “can.”

Although Goodman attributes hard determinism to Buddhists, the view he actually holds is hard incompatibilism. This is the view that there can be no responsible agency regardless of whether determinism or indeterminism is true. Goodman acknowledges that he does not know whether determinism is true, but he asserts that so long as there is no self, both determinism and indeterminism are incompatible with basic desert and the appropriateness of the reactive attitudes.

I have argued the opposite of hard incompatibilism elsewhere, what may be called “soft compatibilism,” the claim that there can be responsible agency regardless of whether determinism or indeterminism is true (Repetti “Meditation”). In short, I argue that Buddhists ought to be soft compatibilists because advanced meditators can so successfully detach themselves from the push and pull of phenomenologically powerful mental states or their contents, whether they are deterministically or indeterministically generated, that they cannot only sufficiently self-

regulate (*auto-nomos*) for purposes of *Dharma*-responsive responsible agency, but also attain the highest states of mental freedom from all volitional dispositions (*cetanā*)—liberated states Buddhists cannot deny because the whole of Buddhism revolves around them.

Here, however, Goodman would press his claim that there is no self in the advanced meditator's process who can be the autonomous agent of any of what the meditator does (or should he say, of what *happens* to the meditator?), presumably including enlightenment. Goodman claims a proper interpretation of his position ought to acknowledge that etymologically, "autonomy" comes from "*auto*" and "*nomos*," indicating "self-law." Thus, the general argument would be:

- A1. Only a self could be autonomous.
- A2. There is no self; therefore,
- A3. There is no autonomy. (Goodman personal communication, February 2012)

The more specifically Buddhist argument would be:

- B1. Only a self could be autonomous.
- B2. According to Buddhism, there is no self; therefore,
- B3. According to Buddhism, there is no autonomy. (Goodman personal communication, February 2012)

Goodman admits that he has not shown that Buddhists accept B1. But he continues to read Śāntideva (6:29-6:31) as expressing the kind of view he is arguing for, with the additional twist that the whole idea of a soul is incoherent; it would not be able to act even if it did exist. But the self and the soul are two different things; according to Buddhism, both George and Frosty lack a soul, but George clearly has the sort of agent proximal

abilities we associate with a conventional self—however ultimately construed—that Frosty clearly lacks.

Goodman admits the “self” needed to make B1 true may differ from the “self” needed to make B2 true. He is referring to my earlier claim that the Buddha’s rejection of self was not unqualified, but aimed specifically at the inflated Indian concept, *ātman*, and that the Buddha accepted the deflated, changing, dependent mind. Goodman disagrees, however, and notes that there are passages in the *Majjhima Nikāya* and elsewhere in which the Buddha did not only deny that there was an *ātman*, but advocated the accuracy and usefulness of disidentifying from physical and mental aggregates and processes, of not regarding them as self. Part of this disidentification, Goodman thinks, implicitly rejects the concept of free will as it appears in Western philosophy, even in its compatibilist version.

This is a subtle matter of interpretation. Just to indicate how the context may contribute different shades of meaning to the Buddha’s remarks on this subject, let me quote one. A disciple asks the Buddha how the identity view does not come to be—which question reveals the context—and the Buddha replies:

Here, bhikkhu, a well-taught noble disciple . . . does not regard material form as self, or self as possessed of material form, or material form as in self, or self as in material form. He does not regard feeling as self . . . perception as self . . . formations as self . . . consciousness as self, or self as possessed of consciousness, or consciousness as in self, or self as in consciousness. That is how identity view does not come to be. (MN 109:11)⁴¹

⁴¹ “MN” abbreviates the *Majjhima Nikāya*, available free online at <http://www.palicanon.org/en/sutta-pitaka/transcribed-suttas/majjhima-nikaya/72->

The point is that the Buddha is advising a disciple how it is that faulty conceptions of identity do not arise, presumably to help the disciple rehabilitate any fault conception the disciple may maintain, so that the disciple may avoid feeding the conditions that fuel the arising of the faulty self-conception. This does imply that a conception of self that does identify self with any of the aggregates is faulty and/or implicated in suffering. But all of this is consistent with the claim that I make and that Goodman denies, which is that the Buddha did not reject the processual-self system, its efficacious role in agency, or its grounding of attributions of desert and moral responsibility. Arguably, all the Buddha rejected here was *faulty identification with it as one's self*.

Referring to my meditation practice, Goodman asks: When I'm sitting and thoughts or feelings arise, despite my efforts to return my attention to the breath, do these thoughts and feelings exhibit autonomy? And what, he asks, about my efforts to return attention to the breath? I will see them as autonomous, on his account, only if I identify with them, but this identification is a mistake. Identification with any items is, from a Buddhist perspective, undoubtedly a mistake. However, one need not *identify* with one's efforts (or any other items associated with autonomy) for it to be true or false that one satisfies autonomy conditions, on my view. For one may acknowledge that one's views, intentions, speech, actions, efforts, one-pointedness, and mindfulness are ultimately impersonal in origin, on the one hand, but that together they constitute a tightly clustered causal system that exhibits system reflexive features (system monitoring, system approving or disapproving, system revising, and so forth) that ground conventional or pragmatic attributions of responsible agency to the system, on the other hand, *without erroneously identifying with them*.

mn-109-mahpuama-sutta-the-greater-discourse-on-the-full-moon-night.html (accessed March 22, 2012).

As I have argued (“Meditation”), the metaphorical raft that the Buddhist constructs to cross the sea of existence to “the other shore” of enlightenment is such a *Dharma*-responsive reflexive (self-monitoring, self-controlling, self-revising) system. That system is built out of items especially in the latter part of my more general list of twenty items of autonomy criteria (items 14-20), that may be extracted from the Eight-fold Path.

Conclusion

In closing, I shall first summarize Goodman’s main argument for Buddhist hard determinism, and then my own assessment thereof. The argument had two main components, a no-self component and a no-responsibility component, each of which had an original version and a more refined version.⁴²

Goodman’s original no-self argument alleges that because there is no self, there is no autonomy. The original version of this no-self argument was shown to be logically flawed, like the no-red-apples argument, and the later “*auto-nomos*” version, although sensitive to the more nuanced Buddhist distinctions between inflated and deflated conceptions of the self, seems to erroneously equate system level satisfaction of system-reflexive (autonomy) criteria with faulty identification with the system as the self—that is, systems may be self-regulating (*auto-nomos*) without erroneous conceptions of self-identity. (Compare: some heating systems may be self-regulating if they possess the right sort of thermostat, without any faulty sense of identity.)

⁴² The original versions are from Goodman’s *Consequences*; the more refined versions are from personal communications (February 2012).

Goodman's original no-responsibility argument alleges that responsibility and free will are interdependent, but because Buddhists reject responsibility, they also reject free will. This argument is invalid (as revealed in the analogous inference that Jimmy thinks Clark can fly), and its premises are implausible (because it is not obvious that Buddhism rejects moral responsibility). His later version, as illustrated in his claims about George, avoids these difficulties, but encounters others: namely, the asymmetry objection and the inconsistency charge regarding the idea that George has "done" wrong. Therefore, despite the impressive arguments Goodman offers for Buddhist consequentialism, his arguments for Buddhist hard determinism—although mostly consistent with his larger consequentialist project—are not entirely convincing in their current formulation.

Let us now place this summary of Goodman's argument in the larger context of a summary of Buddhist scholarship on the issue of free will. Although early-period scholars sought a middle path between "rigid" hard determinist and "chaotic" indeterminist libertarian extremes, but failed to clearly articulate their positions, middle-period scholars Siderits and Goodman shift in the direction of partial incompatibilism or semicompatibilism, in Siderits's case, or full incompatibilism, in Goodman's.

Siderits's paleo-compatibilism seeks to salvage elements of both extremes by locating them on different levels of discourse, one of which, the conventional (in which persons exist and have free will), reduces to the other, the ultimate (in which there are no persons but only person-series that are entirely determined by impersonal causes), but his particular reductionism is mostly limited to pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism and unlikely to impress Mahāyānists, compatibilists, or incompatibilists without further refinements. However, if those refinements develop (perhaps along traditional semicompatibilist lines as well as along the

lines of the progression Siderits traces from reductionism through anti-realism to semantic nondualism), his general strategy seems promising. Goodman embraces incompatibilism in the form of hard determinism, arguing that Buddhism rejects *autonomous* agency because it rejects agency or selfhood as well as moral responsibility, the latter of which presupposes an autonomous self. But his arguments are not entirely persuasive, despite the richness of his Buddhist consequentialist theory. Siderits and Goodman may be said to embrace hard determinism in different ways, reflecting different reactions to the *anātman* (no-self) doctrine.

Looking forward, in recent-period scholarship (Repetti “Recent”), these divisions run more acutely along doctrinal lines, where scholars relying mostly on Pāli (pre-Mahāyāna) sources mostly accept determinism, but scholars relying mostly on Sanskrit (Mahāyāna) sources seem to embrace indeterminism. Both such groups agree, however, that Buddhism is compatible with free will even in the absence of a real self.

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