

Study in Cognitive Science and the Philosophy of Perception.”

00:06.12

His new book, “Mind In Life: Biology, Phenomenology and the Sciences of Mind,” will be published at Harvard University Press in 2007. I’d like to now turn things over to Professor Thompson. Thank you.

APPLAUSE

EVAN THOMPSON

00:06.33

Thank you, Chris. It’s a great pleasure to welcome you back to our final thematic panel on a very important subject, the subject of ethics. This subject has been really implicit throughout the earlier panels and I’m hoping that now, in its explicitness, we’re going to be able to close circle and revisit some of the issues that have come up so far in the other panels, but from an explicitly ethical and normative perspective.

00:07.03

If we’re squinting up here it’s because this is a very luminous panel. It’s not particularly

blissful up here, it's actually quite hot, but perhaps the sun will go behind some clouds eventually. It's my pleasure to introduce our target essayist, as he or she has come to be known. And, Jay Garfield is a Professor of Philosophy on three continents. I think, maybe the only Professor of Philosophy on three continents.

00:07.35

He's at the Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, the Department of Philosophy at the University of Melbourne and closer to us here, the Department of Philosophy at Smith College. Jay.

JAY GARFIELD

00:07.49

Ok.

APPLAUSE

00:07.53

So, I'm the final target for the day and I seem to be well illuminated, though I can't see any of you, so it's kind of like facing a firing squad. Sunglasses? No, then I won't be able to read.

00:08.04

This is a no-win situation. I'm just gonna stand like this, ok. But, so, first I just wanted to once again, on behalf of, I think, everybody who's been participating in this thank Chris and Annabella for running a fabulous conference, the Fetzer Foundation for making this possible, Bob Pollack and the CSSR for making all of this happen. It's really been a terrific conference. I've learned a lot. I'm guessing that probably at least one other person may have learned a lot, too. So thank you, all of you, for making this happen.

00:08.35

So, anyway, I'm gonna talk about Buddhist ethics and before I start, I wanted to give two other bits of personal thanks and that's to Bob Thurman and Mark Siderits because I realize they're the two people I've learned the most about Buddhist ethics from. So, if anything I say sounds vaguely familiar, I have shamelessly ripped them off.

00:08.53

And the last thing I wanted to do is to apologize that I'm kind of at the tail end of an Indian cold, so if I start coughing, just direct all the compassion to other people in the audience, because I- trust me, it doesn't feel nearly as bad as it sounds. It'll be much worse for you than it will be for me.

00:09.13

As Alan emphasized, very often in the Buddhist tradition, especially in the Tibetan tradition, we think of ethics as an important preliminary practice before attaining meditation insight and other realizations, but as Thubten Jinpa-la pointed out, we also think of ethics as the goal of practice.

00:09.30

And so, there's a sense in which we come full circle. We work our way up to ethics as we've been doing in this workshop, but also, ethics forms a kind of foundation for any serious practice and any serious contemplation. So, I have been also asked to say that assuming that we

all attain ethical perfection this afternoon,
we're gonna re-begin the entire program
immediately following this panel from scratch.
They don't call it cyclic existence for nothing.

00:09.56

So, my- I'm not going to read the whole paper.
It's all available on the Web. I'm gonna be kind
of jumping around in it and skipping parts in
order to try to stay on schedule. So, first
part's called Ethics and Interdependence.
There're two temptations to be resisted when
approaching Buddhist moral theory. The first is
to assimilate Buddhist ethics to some system of
Western ethics.

00:10.18

And that's usually done to some form of
utilitarianism or some kind of virtue ethics. The
second is to portray Buddhist ethical thought as
constituting some grand system resembling the
systems of meta-ethics that populate Western
philosophy. In Buddhist philosophical and

religious literature, we do find many texts that address moral topics.

00:10.38 However, we find very little direct attention to the articulation of sets of principles that determine which actions, states of character or motives are morally virtuous or vicious and no articulations of the kind of familiar sets of obligations and rights that we come to expect from Western ethical theory.

00:10.55 This is not because Buddhist moral theorists were not sufficiently sophisticated to think about moral principles or the structure of ethical life. And it's not because Buddhists theorists think that ethics isn't important enough to do systematically. It's instead because, from a Buddhist perspective, there are simply too many dimensions of moral life and moral assessment to admit of clean moral theory.

00:11.17

Buddhist ethical thought has instead been concerned with understanding how the actions of sentient beings are located and to locate those beings within the web of dependent origination or pratitya samutpada. This web of dependent origination's quite complex and so there's a lot to be said. And so, as a consequence, Buddhist ethicists have had a lot to say. But the web is also untidy and so what Buddhists have had to say resists easy systemization.

00:11.42

There's last- one last temptation to resist and that's to see the various Buddhist philosophical and religious traditions as constituting a homogenous whole. As many people have emphasized today, Buddhism's a really big place and there's lots of stuff said and we're not gonna try to cover the entire ground. I'm going to confine my remarks to one strand of Buddhist moral thought - that beginning with the articulation of the four noble truths at Sarnath and running through the anti-intellectual work of Nagarjuna, in

Ratnavali, of Chandrakirti and Madhyamakavatara
and Shantideva in Bodhicharyavatara.

00:12.13

I've always been known as an anti-intellectual
and so, thanks David. So, I hope I'm gonna be
able to show that this strand of Buddhist moral
thought represents a reasonable alternative way
of thinking about a moral life - one that can
engage Western moral theory in a profitable
dialogue by being close enough to be talking
about the same subject matter, but by being
different enough to actually have something to
cont- to bring to the table on its own.

00:12.40

Thinking about the good from a Buddhist
perspective begins from the first principle of
Buddhist metaphysics - the fact of thoroughgoing
interdependence. Every event, every phenomenon is
causally and constitutively dependent upon
countless other events and phenomena and in turn,
is part of causal ancestries and constitutive
bases of countless other phenomena.

00:12.58

Moral reflection and action must take all of these dimensions of interdependence into account. To focus merely on motivation or on character or on the action itself or on consequences would be to ignore much that's important. Nagarjuna reminds us that to understand dependent origination is the same thing as to understand the four noble truths. In Mulamadhyamakakarika he famously says, "Whoever sees dependent arising also sees suffering, its arising, its cessation, as well as the path." I think Nagarjuna's right about that.

00:13.27

The truth of suffering sets the problem that Buddhism sets out to solve. The universe is pervaded by suffering and the causes of suffering. The Buddhists- the Buddha did not set out to prove this at Sarnath. He took it as a datum. One that is obvious to anyone on serious reflection, though one that escapes most of us most of the time precisely because of our evasion

of serious reflection in order not to face this fact.

00:13.51

The Buddha also assumed that suffering's a bad thing. If you disagree with that assessment, then moral discourse doesn't have any basis. Sometimes I have students who say, well maybe all this is suffering, but who cares. I like suffering. And my response is, well, then you don't need Buddhism. You don't have the problem that Buddhism is all about solving.

00:14.07

But if you kind of agree that suffering's a bad thing and if you think that on reflection there's a lot of it in the world, then you think that Buddhism has an interesting problem to solve. The Buddha then argued - popular bumper stickers and our Vice President to the contrary notwithstanding - that suffering does not just happen. It arises as a consequence of actions, conditioned by attachment and aversion.

00:14.29 Each of which, in turn, is engendered by confusion regarding the true nature of reality. Attention to the second noble truth allows us to begin to see how very different Buddhist moral thought is from most Western moral thought. The three roots of suffering are each regarded as moral defilements and are not seen as especially heterogeneous in character.

00:14.48 None of them is seen as especially problematic in most Western moral theory. And indeed, the first two - attachment and aversion - are each valorized at least to some context in some systems. Think, for instance, of Aristotle in this regard. The third - confusion - is rarely seen in the West as a moral matter, unless it's in a context where one has a duty to be clear about something or other.

00:15.09 But this is far from the way it's seen in Buddhist moral theory. Buddhism is about solving a problem. The problem is suffering. The three

root vices are vices because they engender the problem. The problem is that the world is pervaded by unwanted suffering. The diagnosis sets the agenda for the solution. The third truth articulated at Sarnath is that because suffering depends upon confusion, attraction and aversion, it can be eliminated by eliminating these causes.

00:15.36

And the fourth, which starts getting ethics spelled out in a more determinant form, presents the path to that solution. The eight-fold path is central to an articulation of the moral domain as it's seen in Buddhist theory and careful attention to it reveals additional respects in which Buddhists develop ethics in a different way than do Western moral theorists.

00:15.53

The eight-fold path comprises a correct view, correct intention, correct speech, correct action, correct livelihood, correct mindfulness and correct meditation. While many following the traditional Tibetan classification of the three

trainings focus specifically on speech, action and livelihood as the specifically ethical content of the path, in fact that is much too narrow.

00:16.14

The eight-fold path identifies not a set of rights or duties, but a whole set of areas of concern, of dimensions of conduct and the path, in all of its eight-fold complexity, indicates the complexity of human moral life and the complexity of the sources of suffering. To lead a life conducive to the solution of the problem of suffering is to pay close heed to each of these many dimensions of conduct.

00:16.37

Our views matter morally. It's not simply an epistemic fault to think that material goods guarantee happiness, that narrow self-interest is a most obvious rational motivation or that women are incapable of rational thought. These views aren't just irrational, they're morally problematic.

00:16.52

It's not only what we do that matters, but what we intend, as well. Intention grounds action even when it misfires and it matters to us who we are—to who we are and to what we become, what we intend to do. And we could spell this out in detail for each of the eight dimensions. The eight-fold path which represents the earliest foundation of Buddhist ethical thought must always be thought of precisely as a path and not as a set of prescriptions.

00:17.17

It indicates areas of concern, not specific duties. It does not involve a calculus of pleasure and pain. The account of the good is far more abstract, far more distant from sensation. Moreover, the doctrine is consequentialist only in a rather thin sense. I mean, Mark Siderits has pointed out, correctly, there's something deeply consequentialist about Buddhist ethics. But it's not a kind of consequentialism that you find in Western ethics. It's a different version.

00:17.41

The consequence that matters is liberation from suffering. Not some particular set of mundane experiences. There's no boundary drawn on the eight-fold path that circumscribes the ethical dimensions of life. There's no distinction between the obligatory, the permissible and the forbidden. There's no distinction between the moral and the prudential. Between the public and the private, between the self-regarding and the other-regarding. Instead, there's a broad indication of a complexity of the solution to this very deep problem of suffering.

00:18.07

Part two - action, theory and karma. The term karma plays a central role in any Buddhist moral discussion. It's a term of great semantic complexity and must be handled with care. Most centrally, karma means action. Derivatively, it means the consequences of action. Given the Buddhist commitment to the universality of dependent origination, all action arises from the

karmic consequences of past actions and all action has karmic consequences.

00:18.31

Karma is not a cosmic bank account on this view or a calculus of rewards and punishments in this or some other life. It's an entirely misleading way to think about karma. It's simply the natural, causal sequeli (ph) of any of our actions, whether they're actions of physical actions, vocal actions or cognitive actions. Karma accrues to any action, simply in virtue of causal interdependence and karmic consequences include those for oneself and for others, as well as both the individual and collective karma.

00:19.01

There's nothing mystical about this, there's nothing cosmic about this. This is just the fact that what we do actually has consequences. Think about it for a minute. And what we do is the consequence of other things that have happened to us. Think about that for a minute. Karma's not a crazy doctrine. Buddhist action theory approaches

human action, and hence ethics, in a way slightly divergent from that found in any Western action theory.

00:19.20

And it's impossible to understand moral assessment without attention to action theory. Buddhist philosophers distinguish in any action the intention, the act itself - whether it's mental, verbal or non-verbally physical - and the completion or the final state of affairs resulting directly from the action itself. If I intend to give \$10 to CARE, hand over the \$10 to a CARE worker who then uses it to bribe a policeman, then official karma accrues from the intention. Beneficial karma from the act, but non-beneficial karma from the completion.

00:19.50

If I intend to steal your medicine, but instead pocket the poison that had been placed on your bed stand by your malicious nurse, thereby saving your life, negative karma accrues from the intention, but positive karma from the act and

the completion. And so forth. It's just causation. There's not reward or punishment, here.

00:20.05

Note, as well, that the relevant kinds of karma include the impact on my character and on that of others, as well as the tendency to reinforce or to undermine generosity or malice and the degree to which action promotes general well-being. There's hence attention both to virtue and to consequence here and attention to the character of and consequences for anyone affected by actions.

00:20.26

We cannot in this framework, then, ask whether a particular action is good or evil simpliciter. Nor can we ask what our obligations or permissions are. Instead, we ask about the states of character reflected by and consequent to our intentions, our words and our motor acts and their consequences. The fact that a terrible

outcome ensues from a good intention does not make that outcome morally acceptable.

00:20.47

Nor does a good outcome somehow cancel malicious intent. They're all in play, they all have consequences, they all have explanations. Each component of action has consequences and reflects morally relevant features of its genesis. Motivations that appear to be immoral but prudential, are on a deeper analysis from a Buddhist standpoint, simply confused. There's no kind of nice boundary between the moral and the prudential for this reason.

00:21.12

Nor is there any limit to the domain of the ethical. Karma is ubiquitous, interdependence is endless and so, responsibility - as His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, constantly reminds us - can only be thought of as universal. Part three. Virtue, consequence and obligation.

00:21.27

We can now see that Buddhist moral theory is neither purely consequentialist nor purely areteic nor purely deontological. Elements of each kind of evaluation are present, but there are no- there's no overarching concern for a unified form of moral assessment. Suffering is both caused and constituted by fundamental states of character, including preeminently egocentric attraction, egocentric aversion and confusion regarding the nature of reality and our place in it.

00:21.54

Hence, the cultivation of virtues that undermine these vices is morally desirable. Suffering is perpetuated by our intentions, acts and consequences. Hence, attention to all of these is necessary for its eradication. Our own happiness and suffering are intimately bound up with those of others. Hence, we're responsible for others and obligated to take their interests into account.

00:22.13

But Buddhist ethics is not simply an amalgamation of Aristotle, Mill and Kant into some kind of incoherent jumble. Instead, it represents a distinct moral framework addressed to problem-solving that takes action not to issue from a free-will bound by laws, but from a dependently originated, conditioned continuum of causally interdependent psychophysical processes. It takes the relevant consequences of action not to be pleasure and pain – conceived of as introspectable experiences of persons – but to be states of sentient continua of genuine suffering that to which- which conduces to suffering, genuine liberation or that which conduces to genuine liberation.

00:22.53

Whether or not those happen to be desired or detested or experienced as desirable or detestable by the sentient beings imputed on the basis of those continua. So we're not kind of looking sensations, experiences and desires here in a kind of calculus of consequences, but rather

looking at suffering in a very broad and very deep sense and liberation from suffering in a very broad and deep sense when we pay attention to consequences.

00:23.16

That's why I say it doesn't look like Western consequentialism. The worst thing you can do is look at Buddhist moral theory and say this is Western ethics being pursued in a slightly different language. It really is a somewhat different framework for thinking about things, but it's a framework that has something to tell us.

00:23.31

The relevant categories of assessment, the relevant considerations and deliberation are unified by a distinct overarching vision of the complexity of ethical life, by a distinct overarching vision of the purpose of moral reflection and moral cultivation, and by a distinct overarching vision of the nature of

agency and the nature of life. If we fail to attend to this framework, we see a patchwork.

00:23.52

When we attend to the framework, we see a unitary alternative way of taking up moral life. Finally, Buddhist moral theory takes the relevant virtues to be cultivated to be those that conduce to the alleviation of suffering. The adumbration of those virtues begins in the Pali literature, but it's addressed most completely in the Mahayana tradition, as developed in such texts as Bodhicharyavatara and Madhyamakavatara.

00:24.13

I'm now gonna turn to an examination of the Buddhist moral psychology developed in this Mahayana tradition. So, part four - Bodhisattva path and Buddhist moral psychology. Ahem - excuse me. There's nothing special about the suffering of any particular sentient being that gives it pride of place in moral consideration.

00:24.30

And this is one of the fundamental insights of Buddhist philosophy - my own suffering doesn't play any special role in my moral calculus, nor does yours, by the way. I hate to break this news to each of you. But rather, suffering is a perfectly general phenomenon and the more you look around the world, the more of it you see. And all of it turns out to matter just as much from a moral point of view.

00:24.51

It's an important fact about human beings in particular, but more generally about any beings with sufficient sentience to have moral standing that their cognitive, affective, and motivational states are linked inextricably with those of indefinitely many others in a vast causal nexus. For present purposes, let's just focus on the case of the social animals we know best - homo sapiens.

00:25.11

Our happiness, suffering and moral progress depends at all times on the actions and attitudes

of others, as well as on their welfare. If others cooperate and support our projects and our development, success is far more likely. If their attitudes are hostile, happiness and progress are both difficult to obtain. If we know of others weal and woe, we are either motivated to celebrate or to regret. Celebration of others' welfare benefits both ourselves and others.

00:25.36

Schadenfreude is not only detrimental to those around us, but ultimately through undermining the relations that sustain us to ourselves, as well. Similarly our own actions - mental, verbal and physical - have endless ramifications both for our own affective and moral well-being and for that of those around us. These are just natural facts. This is just, you know, plain old empirical reality. To ignore them is to ignore the nature of action, the nature of our interdependence and the relevance of action and causal interdependence to our moral, psychological and social lives.

00:26.06 Confusion regarding- excuse me - I promised you I'd cough. Confusion regarding the nature of reality in the moral realm manifests itself most directly in the grasping of one's self and of that which is most- which most immediately pertains to oneself as having special importance and justifiable particular motivational force.

00:26.25 In the Buddhist literature, this is referred to as the two-fold self-grasping, involving the grasping of "I" and of being mine and issues directly in the moral- the apparent moral duality of self and other where somehow my own considerations have more prima facie weight than considerations relevant to somebody else.

00:26.43 Such duality is what leads to the apparent distinction between prudential and moral concern that plays such a major role in Western ethical theory and action theory. The distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding acts and the

distinction between those to whom one owes special regard and those to whom one does not. All of these are taken by Buddhist philosophers to be utterly spurious and in general, to conduce to a view of the world that's kind of- that I always characterize as the world of me, et al.

00:27.10

A view that's not rationally sustainable once one sees that it's equally available and so equally unjustifiable for any moral subject. This is a point that Bob made very forcefully yesterday. If I try to see the world as kind of Jay, et al., it becomes immediately apparent that everybody else has got the same right to that one and moral life kind of collapses.

00:27.30

It's for this reason at bottom that this kind of fundamental metaphysical confusion is at root moral delusion and not simply an epistemological problem. That's just really important to nail down there. This is a moral problem, not just an epistemological problem from a Buddhist point of

view. In the Mahayana, moral attention is focused on the cultivation of a set of perfections or virtues, including those of generosity, patience, propriety, effort, meditation and wisdom. Once again, this list might seem odd to a Western ethicist in virtue of the inclusion of such prima facie non-moral virtues as those of effort, meditation and wisdom on the same list as generosity, patience and propriety.

00:28.11

Once again, though, attention to the focus of Buddhist ethics on solving the problem of suffering and attention to the role of inattention, failure to develop insights and traits of character that are cultivated in meditation and ignorance of causes and maintainers of suffering, the relevance of all of those to suffering itself should dispel this initial sense of oddness.

00:28.33

Excuse me. It's also important to recognize that this Mahayana revolution as it's sometimes

called, it's not really a revolution. It's not an abandonment of the more basic framework of the eight-fold path, but rather an enrichment and a refocus. The eight-fold path remains a central guide to the domains in which the perfections figure. And the perfections are manifested in the propensity to perform cognitive, verbal and physical actions of the kind assessable in the familiar framework of Buddhist action theory.

00:29.01

The framework of the perfections, hence only represents an approach to morality more focused on states of character than on their manifestations as the fundamental goals of moral practice. The most important innovation in Mahayana moral theory is the instatement of compassion as the central moral value and the model of the Bodhisattva's compassionate engagement with the world as a moral ideal.

00:29.23

Chandrakirti begins his wonderful text Madhyamakavatara by saying a compassionate mind,

non-dualistic awareness and the aspiration for enlightenment are the causes of the Bodhisattvas. However, chief among these is compassion. Like nurturing a seed with water, in time it ripens the causes of the victors. So I praise compassion above all else. The compassionate issue is not a passive, emotional response and not a mere desire that everybody kind of be happy.

00:29.52

Instead, it's a genuine commitment manifested in thought, speech and physical action to act for the welfare of all sentient beings. It is in this most sophisticated flowering of Buddhist ethics, with the anticipation of such moral theorists as Hume and Schopenhauer in the West that Buddhist moral theory makes its closest contact, I think, with Western ethics.

00:30.10

Compassion in this tradition is founded on the fundamental insight the Buddha announced in Sarnath, that suffering is bad, per se, regardless of whose it is. To fail to take

another's suffering as seriously as a motivation for action as one's own is itself a form of suffering and is entirely irrational. Compassion often, you know, one way of putting this is there's two ways of suffering when somebody else is suffering. Either you can suffer because they're suffering or you can fail to suffer because they're suffering, in which case you suffer from being an asshole, right?

00:30.42

Compassion, hence, is the wellspring of the motivation for the development of all perfections and the most reliable motivation for morally decent actions. Compassion is also in this view, the direct result of a genuine appreciation of the emptiness and interdependence of all sentient beings. Once one sees oneself as non-substantial and existing only in interdependence and once one sees that the happiness and suffering of all sentient beings is entirely causally conditioned, egoism ceases even to be rationally motivated.

00:31.14 And the only rational attitude one can adopt towards others is the compassionate one. Chandrakirti continues in this beginning of Madhyamakavatara - "I prostrate to this compassion arising for all living beings, who have first generated self-grasping through thinking I, then attachment to things through thinking being mine, so that they're driven around like a water wheel."

00:31.32 So the idea is that once you begin to see that the suffering of sentient beings and one's own suffering is driven by the force of this delusion, attachment and aversion into this kind of endless helplessness the only rational approach is a desire to alleviate that suffering and its causes.

00:31.49 Compassion is the ground of all of the perfections. The enabler of the pursuit of the path. It's fundamental to Mahayana ethics that one cannot adequately cultivate the perfections

or pursue the path successfully without a foundation in compassion. Excuse me. This is a point made emphatically by Shantideva in *Bodhicharyavatara*, as well as in our own time by people like the venerable Thich Nhat Hanh when he asserts that all Buddhism is engaged Buddhism.

00:32.16

Now, while the Mahayana schools- Let me just one more sentence on that. On this view, on the Mahayana view, Buddhist practice can never be a retreat from, but is always a committed active engagement with the world. So the idea that somehow Buddhist moral practice requires retreat, I think is fundamentally at odds with everything going on in Mahayana ethics. Well, the Mahayana schools of Buddhism put special emphasis on the role of compassion and ethics.

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It's certainly also the case that the Shravaka accounts of Buddhist ethics, as well, including those of contemporary engaged Buddhists in the Theravad tradition, including followers of Dr.

Ambedkar in India, emphasize the social import of the four truths and the social articulation of the Buddha's path. Ambedkar in particular argue that suffering is social in character, that its causes- Oh good, because I'm right there- that its causes are political and economic, that its alleviation requires social action to remove those causes and that each stage of the eight-fold path is thoroughly social in nature.

00:33.13

Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhadasa in Thailand argues that without social engagement, the Buddha's path makes no sense at all. While some have argued that these interpretations by engaged or socially active Buddhists distort the essentially personal message of the Buddha, it's clear both that this is a reasonable and frequently developed reading of Buddhist ethics and one that however socially oriented, retains the fundamental Buddhist ethical outlook.

00:33.37 Ethics is about solving a problem. That problem is the pervasiveness of suffering. That suffering is rooted in confusion, attachment and aversion that fabricates the independent, unique and especially valuable ego and the special relations of some things to that ego. The solution to that problem on this view, like any other Buddhist view, requires the extirpation of these roots.

00:33.59 So whatever your views about Buddhism as personal versus social, when you look at it from this abstract ethical framework, engaged Buddhism is Buddhism. Compassionate engagement requires one to develop upaya, or skillful means, in order to realize these objectives. Compassionate attention, intention is only genuine if it involves a real commitment to action and to the successful completion of action.

00:34.22 It's in the domain of upaya that Buddhist and Western ethics converge in practice. And it's in this domain that each can learn from another. So,

I just want to do two quick paragraphs about upaya and the junction. Often, the best way to ensure that minimal human needs are met, for instance, is to establish rights to basic goods in legal frameworks. To enshrine those rights in our collective moral and political practice. Often the best way to ensure that human dignity is respected is to enshrine values that treat persons as individual bearers of value and to construct constitutions that reflect that.

00:34.54

Often, the best way to ensure plenty is to develop social welfare policies and often the best way to develop flourishing citizens is to articulate in education a robust theory of human virtue. Western moral theorists have been good at each of these things. Liberal democratic theory in a framework of human rights has been a very effective device for the reduction of suffering, though hardly perfect or unproblematic.

00:35.16

So is utilitarian social welfare theory. And Aristotelian, Humean, Schopenhauerian virtue theories have been immensely useful in moral education.

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These Western articulations of the right, the good and the decent provide a great deal of specific help to anyone seriously engaged in the Bodhisattva path. On the other hand, Buddhist moral theory provides a larger context in which to set these moral programs and one, perhaps, more consonant with a plausible metaphysics of personhood and action and with the genuine complexity of our moral lives.

00:35.46

To the extent that our world is characterized by omnipresent suffering, to extent that that's a real problem and perhaps the fundamental problem for a morally concerned being, Buddhist moral theory may provide the best way to conceptualize the problem in toto. But Buddhist moral theory and Western moral theory can meet profitably when

we ask how to solve that problem in concrete human circumstances. And it's in concrete human circumstances that we live our lives and in which we must solve it. Thank you.

APPLAUSE

EVAN THOMPSON

00:36.21

Thank you very much, Jay, for that very stimulating and fast-paced presentation. Very good - finished on time. Our first respondent is Professor Edith Wyschogrod. Professor Wyschogrod has been the Croghan Visiting Professor of Religion at Williams College, a guest Professor of Philosophy at Villanova and is currently the J. Newton Rayzor Professor of Philosophy and Religious Thought at Rice University.

EDITH WYSCHOGROD

00:36.47

Emerita.

EVAN THOMPSON

Emerita at Rice University.

EDITH WYSCHOGROD

00:36.51

Ok, thank you. I'm going to speak about the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, who's not exactly