Buddhist Moral Reason: Morality or (and) Virtue*

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Abstract

The research method of Buddhist ethics is contemporary ethical theory, which focuses on precepts (*Sila*) and disciplines (*Vinaya*) in experience, rather than transcendental moral ideals (*Nirvana* or wisdom). Precepts are seen as external norms, while disciplines are internal norms. The former belongs to rule ethics and the latter belongs to virtue ethics. Although the exposition of duty and responsibility can be discovered in Buddhist ethics, there is no sufficient reason to interpret Buddhist ethics as deontology. Views on the consequences of actions can also be found in Buddhist classics, but it is hard to say that Buddhist ethics is the theory of consequences or utilitarianism. The method of rule ethics in the discussion of Buddhist ethics has failed, and Buddhist virtue ethics is a feasible alternative. However, previous research on Buddhist virtue ethics was not perfect, and the teleology of Aristotelian was reasonably criticized. Influenced by

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caring ethics, emotionalism virtue ethics is a more suitable way to understand Buddhist ethics. The moral reason for Buddhism is a whole argumentation system, including moral rules and moral virtues.

Keywords: Buddhist ethics, precepts, rules, virtue ethics, care ethics

Before starting the real study of Buddhist ethics, there are two kinds of topics that need to be distinguished: (i) texts of moral thought or other related texts in Buddhist classics, and the collection, sorting, and classification of these texts by people; (ii) the interpretation and analysis of the core concepts, propositions, and arguments (if any) in Buddhist ethics with modern ethical theory. For the first kind of content, its research method is descriptive ethics, and the research results belong to the Buddhist ethical thoughts (or history of thought); As for the second type, its research methods include meta-ethics and normative ethics, and the latter is mainly discussed in this paper. Most of the previous studies have been titled Buddhist Ethics, but the results of the study are limited to the first one. Thankfully, with the revival of virtue ethics, more and more scholars began to use this new method to deeply analyze the ethical thoughts of Buddhism, to explain the viewpoints, reasons, and arguments provided by Buddhism on moral issues. Thus, in the process of criticizing and drawing lessons

from various ethical theories, preliminary Buddhist ethical research results have been formed.

In this article, I will raise some questions worth thinking about: What are the basic concepts of Buddhist ethics? What kind of modern normative ethics can Buddhist ethics be understood as? Is Buddhism closer to deontology or utilitarianism? What positive significance does the emerging virtue ethics have for the study of Buddhist ethics? In the sense of normative ethics, is Buddhist ethics an ethical universalism or an ethical particularism? After analyzing the above questions, how can we understand the moral reasons for Buddhism? There have been some outstanding scholars who have more or less discussed these issues, and I will respect their results and put forward my views and arguments on this basis. I expect that these analyses will help contemporary people better understand Buddhism and its ethics.

The Relationship between Precepts (*Sila*) and Disciplines (*Vinaya*): the Basic Issues of Buddhist Ethics

When we look at Buddhism as a whole, we will find that it has spanned more than two thousand years and formed many classics, complicated sectarian systems, and different theories. It has spread all over the world in space, with diverse development patterns in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, China, and North America (since the 20th century). Since the beginning of the 20th

century, some Buddhist scriptures have been translated and introduced to the west. As one of the oriental cultural forms, they still have a far-reaching influence on western society. The complexity of Buddhism itself determines that it seems difficult to be a part of a particular system. However, in the historical development of Buddhism, we can still find some resources of Buddhist ethical thought that can be unanimously recognized, which are mainly embodied in precepts (*Sila*) and disciplines (*Vinaya*).

Most of the foregoing studies were to summarize, classify, and summarize Buddhist ethics. Through the research method of intellectual history, these studies tend to call precepts and disciplines as commandments (*Jie Lü* [戒律] in Mandarin), without further analyzing their meanings. The precept is the translation of Sanskrit *Sila* and discipline is the translation of Sanskrit *Vinaya*, which are not completely equivalent in early Buddhism. Generally speaking, 'precepts have an active character, while disciplines have a passive character' (Zhang Huaicheng, 1999, p. 244). Differences between precepts and disciplines match the meaning of these two Sanskrit words, the previous studies have not extended the etymological differences to the ethical differences.

The purpose of distinguishing precepts from disciplines within the framework of ethical theory is to find a feasible basis for the discussion of Buddhist ethics, thus clarifying the position, viewpoint, and reasons of Buddhism on

moral issues through contemporary theories. The reason why Buddhist ethics is based on precepts and disciplines rather than 'moral ideals' such as *Prajna* or *Nirvana*, is that more and more scholars are starting to consciously get rid of 'the transcendental trap' in theoretical research. The so-called transcendental trap means that people always unconsciously put the Buddhist 'moral ideals' in the position of conditions and premise in the process of argumentation. People caught in the transcendental trap will be led by mistake into 'portraying the perfected moral life as a nonrational expressiveness, something natural, spontaneous, non-linguistic, and uncalculating' (James Whitehill, 2000. Chapter 1).[1] *Prajna* and *Nirvana* are of course important to Buddhist doctrine and ethics, but as a transcendental and metaphysical concept, they can neither be logically analyzed nor verified by experience, so it is difficult to be placed in the basic and prerequisite position of modern ethical theory. Considering the anti-metaphysics and logical empiricism of contemporary ethical theory, scholars have turned their perspective to the precepts and

1 Through analyzing the popular irrational interpretation of *Zen* thought in the west, James Whitehill pointed out that some writers and even scholars were trapped in the transcendence trap when interpreting *Zen* and Buddhist ethics, and believed that this ideological tendency reflected the westerners' rebellion against the Victorian rationalist morality and its legacy. See James Whitehill, 2000. Chapter 1.

disciplines of empiricism when looking for the theoretical foundation of Buddhist ethics. As Damien Keown puts it, 'when approached through *Sila* Buddhism appears in a different light than when approached through *Panna*: in terms of the stock characterisations it is more "positive", "optimistic" and "life-affirming"'(Damien Keown, 1992. p 20).[1]

Charles Prebish made a clear distinction between *Sila* and *Vinaya*, 'unlike the *Vinaya*, which is externally enforced, *Sila* refers to the internally enforced ethical framework by which the monk or nun structures his or her life. Taken in this light, we can see that *Sila* is an incredibly rich concept for understanding individual ethical conduct' (2000. Chapter 2). Since *Sila* and *Vinaya* play different roles in the spiritual life of monks and the ethical life of temples, which one can become the foundation of Buddhist ethics, that is, can help explain the moral reasons of Buddhism? Or do they together form the basis of Buddhist ethics? To solve this problem, we should not only examine the internal relationship between *Sila* and *Vinaya* but also

1 Given that Damien Keown's discussion focused too much on the relationship between *Sila* and *Panna*, L. S. Cousins pointed out in a book review that Damien Keown ignored the ethical status of Meditation (*Samadhi*) in Three training (*Tisrah Siksah*), and he thought that most Buddhist moral thinking was in *Samadhi*, but *Samadhi* was only regarded as an instrumental existence by Damien Keown. See L. S. Cousins, 1994, pp. 252-254.

examine the relationship between *Sila*, *Samadhi*, and *Prajna*. According to the teachings of Buddhism and people's diverse viewpoints, Damien Keown classified and summarized the relationships among *Sila*, *Samadhi*, and *Prajna*. He believed that these relationships can be divided into three categories: (i) *Sila* is a tool to achieve wisdom, and wisdom is *Nirvana*. *Sila* is the initial stage or springboard of wisdom. The sequence is from *Sila* to *Samadhi* to wisdom or *Nirvana*. *Sila* is a temporary or derivative existence in the process of obtaining wisdom. After *Nirvana*, it is necessary to surpass *Sila*, and *Nirvana* is the state of transcending good and evil. (ii) Although *Sila* was a tool before reaching *Nirvana*, *Sila* remained as a real form after *Nirvana*, because Arahant who reached Nirvana can truly hold the precepts. (iii) *Sila* and wisdom are the ultimate goals of *Nirvana*. Keown classifies the first two into one category, because in the first two cases, 'ethics is extrinsic to *Nibbana*, dispensable, and subsidiary to *Panna*. In the third it is intrinsic to *Nibbana*, essential, and equal in value to *Panna*' (1992, pp. 10-11).

The above analysis focuses on the relationship between *Sila*, *Samadhi*, and *Prajna*. For the sake of *Nirvana*, is *Sila* a tool or the ultimate goal? That is to say, what is the position of morality (*Sila*) in Buddhist doctrine, and can we make a satisfactory explanation or criticism of Buddhist doctrine through ethical theory? If the answers to these questions are all affirmative, then we will come back to the basic question of Buddhist ethics: what are the

different conclusions that will be drawn by constructing Buddhist ethics through external norms (*Vinaya*) and internal norms (*Sila*)? Obviously, in the construction of the above two Buddhist ethics, we use different methods. One is rule ethics, and the other is virtue ethics. If we can reasonably explain and defend the ethical thoughts of Buddhism through some ethical theory, then Buddhism, in turn, can not only provide a viewpoint or position for practical moral issues through this theoretical framework but also provide satisfactory arguments and defenses for modern people. First of all, I will roughly describe the achievements of past academic circles in building Buddhist ethics utilizing rule ethics and virtue ethics. Secondly, I will make a preliminary evaluation of the two methods, and finally, I will make an overall prediction of the moral reasons that Buddhism can provide.

Moral Rules of Buddhist Ethics

If it is not limited to strict ethical theory, it can be said that Buddhist doctrines present some moral rules in different forms. The Five Precepts (*Panca-sila*), Eight Precepts (*Astanga-sila*), and Ten Precepts (*Dasa-sila*) stipulate in imperative sentences what practitioners and monks at home are banned from doing. The Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and *karma samsara* also express the relationship between morality and wisdom with various perspectives. Faced with moral rules in Buddhist teachings, we need to analyze them with the theory of

modern ethics to explain the rules in Buddhist ethics from the rational level.

Since the 1970s, some Sri Lankan scholars, especially Jayatilleke and Premasiri, began to analyze Buddhist ethics with the theory of modern ethics. Given Buddhist ethics, their questions include: 'Is it egoistic or altruistic? Is it relativistic or absolutistic? Is it objective or subjective? Is it deontological or teleological? Is it naturalistic or non-naturalistic?' (Damien Keown, 2005, p. 30) Although it will be difficult to find accurate answers to these questions from Buddhist ethics and related texts, it still does not prevent us from analyzing Buddhist ethics as a whole. These problems prompt us to pay attention to the nature of Buddhist ethical rules. That is to say, when we reconstruct the moral reasons and reasoning process of Buddhism through modern ethical theory, can Buddhism provide some moral reasons based on behavioral rules?

Buddhist Ethics and Deontology

Buddhism does put forward some duties and responsibilities that monks and practitioners should fulfill, such as not killing (the duty to respect life), not stealing (the duty to respect others' property rights), not committing adultery (the duty to respect others' self-esteem), not talking nonsense (the duty to be honest and tell the truth), and not drinking, as well as *sad-paramita*'s giving (the obligation of generosity and altruism) and keeping

precepts (the obligation of observing rules). Monks do have compassion for the suffering of all beings and have the responsibility and mission to help all beings to relieve their suffering. So can we say that Buddhist ethics is a kind of deontology? That is to say, can Buddhism provide concrete moral reasons in the form of deontology?

At present, the mainstream view in the academic community holds that although Buddhist ethics is related to obligation, it is not deontology in essence. Giving reasons and arguments is more important than just putting forward a point of view. The reason given by Michael G. Barnhart is convincing. He thinks that Buddhism lacks Kantian metaphysical thinking on the one hand and fails to clarify the decisive position and role of precepts in moral thinking on the other hand. In this regard, Buddhist ethics and Kantian ethics are not comparable. 'Kant's categorical imperative, whatever else it does, determines the structure of all duties. It provides the form that moral maxims must take if they are to count normatively. No analogous concept exists in Buddhism that I am aware of.' (Michael G. Barnhart, 2012, p. 19). He believes that the rules in the precepts are similar to Ross's *prima facie* duties. According to Ross's analysis, prima facie duty is only an obligation unrelated to the actual situation, and it can not accept the challenge that all kinds of obligations in moral behavior are equally reasonable but mutually contrary to the actual situation. Therefore, prima facie duty is only some abstract obligations, but not appropriate obligations

and conditional obligations which are meaningful to moral thinking and behavior. *Prima facie* duty is not a real obligation (Chen Zhen, 2006, p. 140). According to Barnhardt, skillful means (*upaya*) meant that the agent might violate or amend the precepts of Buddhism. The tension between the *upaya* and observance of precepts does prove that precepts are only initial obligations unrelated to actual moral conduct. If so, then we have no reason to believe that Buddhist ethics is deontology.

Buddhist Ethics and Utilitarianism

The teachings of Buddhism clearly state that all living things are suffering. The purpose of the Buddha and his followers in carrying forward the Dharma is to gather all the lives and liberate them from the sea of suffering (Mahayana). Those who master the wisdom of *Prajna* and attain the state of Nirvana can obtain the ultimate joy (Theravada). All this appears to be similar to the basic principle of utilitarianism: a moral act/rule is correct only if it can help to achieve the greatest happiness for most people (Bentham), or the highest quality of happiness (Mill). So, whether there is a principle of utilitarianism in Buddhist ethics, or, Buddhist ethics, overall, can be regarded as utilitarianism?

Built on the conceptual analysis of act utilitarianism, rule utilitarianism, and negative utilitarianism, Damien Keown believes that Buddhist ethics is similar to (but not equal

to) negative rule utilitarianism (1992, p. 177). Whether the so-called universal salvation of Buddhism can become a reality remains a question to be tested by experience. We can not be sure that Buddhism can maximize happiness according to the metaphysical vision promised by the doctrine itself. It seems that Buddhist ethics can only be understood from the perspective of negative utilitarianism. According to negative utilitarianism, an action is justified only if it helps to alleviate and minimize pain. Buddhist ethics can reduce people's suffering within the scope of experience and the world (Buddhism, especially Mahayana, has played a certain role in ethical education and soothing the soul, etc.), and the Four Noble Truths describe the universality of suffering and the feasibility of getting rid of suffering, so at least within the scope of experience and verifiability, it can be said that Buddhist ethics conforms to the basic proposition of negative utilitarianism. Besides, the normative function of precepts helps people get rid of pain when obeying precepts (e.g., getting rid of obsession, delusion, greed, namely three poisons, etc.). In this sense, it can be stated that the role of precepts is similar to rule utilitarianism. Then, Buddhist ethics can be seen as a combination of negative utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism, namely negative rule utilitarianism.

Also, Charles Goodman, by studying Shantideva's the *Bodhicaryavatara* (*The Way of the Bodhisattva*) in Mahayana, thinks that Shantideva, as the representative of

Mahayana Buddhism ethics, is similar to a kind of ideal utilitarianism or perfect utilitarianism which belongs to the type of consequentialism. On the issue of explaining Buddhist ethics, Goodman holds that consequentialism is superior to virtue ethics. 'Aristotelian virtue ethics is an agent-relative theory, meaning that it gives different aims to different agents. The view gives each agent the aim of that agent's own flourishing, where the flourishing of each agent involves the flourishing of the small group of people that the agent cares about. But all versions of universalist consequentialism are agent-neutral: they give one common aim to all agents. This common aim is that the lives of all sentient beings go as well as possible. Agent-neutrality is a very powerful assumption that can have quite striking consequences' (Charles Goodman, 2008, p. 20). Goodman actually gave a utilitarian explanation of virtue, and whether this explanation conforms to the virtue theory itself still needs further clarification. Even though utilitarianism is allowed to explain virtue, is Goodman's view that utilitarianism is superior to virtue ethics in explaining Buddhist ethics enough to withstand further reflection? How can utilitarianism prove that happiness is a value word? Utilitarianism only proves that an act is correct as long as it can help one achieve the greatest happiness. Moreover, unconditional happiness itself is not a moral fact, but a natural feeling of all beings. If happiness is only a natural fact, then how to logically deduce moral facts from the premise of appreciating natural facts? By

contrast, virtue ethics defines flourishing as a kind of honorable life. Even though utilitarianism claims that it aims to realize the happiness of all sentient beings, can this aim be fully realized, or is it just a theoretical assumption? Actually, utilitarianism can't guarantee that the happiness of all sentient beings can be realized (the realization of happiness of all sentient beings belongs to the actual social life and political problems, which is beyond the competence of ethics), and allows agents to achieve certain results at the expense of themselves or others' interests. At this point, virtue ethics promise should not only improve the character and ability of agents but also benefit others. This view of 'unity of self-interest and altruism' is more demanding than utilitarian 'altruism'.

Therefore, after all, the rules of Buddhist ethics and negative utilitarianism or ideal utilitarianism can only be external similarities, not internal equality. Utilitarianism, as a moral evaluation standard, does not consider the motivation of the actor, but only considers the result of the behavior, and the result can be measured by some immoral standards. However, Buddhist ethics seems to pay more attention to the motive of behavior or the meaning of behavior itself. 'While utilitarianism relies solely on consequences for moral justification, Buddhism also places great weight on intention (*cetana*). Another difference is that whereas Buddhism teaches that acts have good consequences because they are good acts, utilitarianism holds that acts are good because they have

good consequences' (Damien Keown, 2005. p. 26-27). In addition, Barnhardt pointed out that 'the real test as to whether one is a bottom-line utilitarian consists in whether one would be willing to throw overboard everything that one believes in and values to minimize harm or suffering or to promote the greater good' (Barnhart, 2012, p 25). For example, in the trolley dilemma, Are Buddhists willing to risk breaking the precepts of not killing, giving up one life, and saving five? Obviously, if the Buddhists are forced to become utilitarianism, it will produce more evil to Buddhist teachings and ethics, which is precisely contrary to utilitarianism. Based on the above some brief analysis, it can be observed that Buddhist ethics are even very similar to utilitarianism, but in essence, is not utilitarianism. It is difficult for us from the perspective of utilitarianism to clarify the moral reasons for Buddhism.

Virtues in Buddhist Ethics

As mentioned above, rule ethics, including the theory of deontology and utilitarianism, is not enough to give a consistent explanation of Buddhist ethics. As a diagnostic or revised theory of rule ethics, can virtue ethics successfully explain Buddhist ethics? On this issue, Damien Keown's point of view has a certain representative. He believes that 'Buddhist morality as a whole may be likened to a coin with two faces: on one side are the precepts and on the other the virtues' (2005, p. 12), and "Buddhist ethics bears a greater resemblance

to virtue ethics than any other Western theory" (2005, p. 25). Whitehill also agrees with this view (2000). Buddhist ethics does have a wealth of views on virtue, such as *Sad-paramita*, also known as the six perfections and six virtues (generosity [*Dana*], morality [*Sila*], patience [*Ksanti*], perseverance [*Virya*], meditation [*Samadhi*], insight [*Prajna*]), Brahmavihara (loving-kindness [*Metta*], compassion [*Karuna*], sympathetic joy [*Mudita*] and equanimity [*Upekkha*]), the Eight Right Path, Five Precepts, Three Training (*Tisrah siksah*), etc. All of these methodical practices or guidelines can be understood as a list of Buddhist virtues. It's easy for a qualified Buddhist or practitioner to have or express these qualities. In practice, he or she needs to be able to internalize the external rules (*Vinaya*) into the internal moral will and consciousness of rules (*Sila*) and to consciously abide by the precepts and improvise in specific situations. Even if deviating from or breaking the precepts, he or she will not fundamentally violate the sacred beliefs. If the concept of virtue can be used to explain Buddhism's viewpoint on correct behavior satisfactorily, then Buddhist virtue ethics can be put forward and confirmed, which is a theory beneficial to Buddhism and modern ethics. However, is it really like this?

The Consistency of Buddhist Ethics and Virtue Ethics

First, both Buddhist ethics and Aristotle's ethics are teleological ethics. *Nirvana's* teleological position

in Buddhist ethics is similar to Aristotle's view of *eudaemonia* (namely happiness, welfare, well-being). When defining *Nirvana's* teleological status, we should pay heed to the distinction between teleology and consequentialism (such as utilitarianism). In the view of consequentialism, happiness and *Nirvana* play a leading role as the purpose of the behavior and may even allow the actors to use any means to attain their goals. It is precisely this point that distinguishes teleology from the consequentiality theory, and both Buddhism and Aristotle's teleology hold that means and ends are equally important, and they are the criteria for measuring whether a behavior is justified or not, as well as right and wrong.

Second, regarding the composition of the soul, both Buddhism and Aristotle hold a dualistic view. In Aristotle's theory, the mind is divided into rational nous and irrational desires, and nous can be divided into theoretical wisdom (*Sophia*) and practical wisdom (*Phronesis*) in form. Damien Keown suggests that 'there is a close similarity between *Sophia* and *Panna*' (1992, p. 205). And both Buddhism and Aristotle regard human nature as the combination of material and spirit. *Rupa*, the first of the Five Aggregates (*Skandhas*), refers to the material form. The second is *Vedana*, related to the body, which refers to feelings and sensations. The remaining three to some degrees are related to the mind, respectively, are the perceptions (*Samjna*), volitions (*Samskara*), and consciousness (*Vijnana*). 'For both Buddhism and

Aristotle human perfection lies in the balanced operation of the cognitive and affective aspects of the psyche, in other words in the correct operation and harmonious interpenetration of reason and emotion' (Damien Keown, 1992, p. 209).

The third similarity is the moral choice, which is related to but distinct from the second one. Both Buddhism and Aristotle believe that the choice of moral behavior is the result of the interaction of reason and emotion. In Aristotle's ethics, *Prohairesis* is the expression of wisdom with moral significance, which is usually translated as an ethical choice and understood as virtue character, intention, or will. A person has done something morally correct, which often means that he has made a *Prohairesis* out of wisdom. '*Cetana* is very much like *Prohairesis* and stands at the crossroads of reason and emotion. …In short, *Cetana* describes not merely intention but the total posture of the personality, both cognitive and affective' (Damien Keown, 1992, p. 213). Either *Prohairesis* or *Cetana* is a description of the mechanism of moral choice or behavioral motivation. In Aristotle and Buddhism, moral choice or behavior motivation comes from the synergistic effect of reason and emotion.

Fourth, it is particularly worth emphasizing the status of emotion. Both Buddhism and Aristotle realized the importance of emotion in the pursuit of perfection. The conventional view is that Buddhism holds a pessimistic

attitude towards emotions (such as greed, attachment, etc.) but this view may not be completely consistent with Buddhist ideas. 'It is an oversimplification of the Buddhist position to assume that it seeks an end of all desire. Such a view, however, is not uncommon. …Buddhism does not seek this suppression of feeling: what Buddhism seeks an end of is the desire for what is not good, namely things which cripple rather than promote spiritual growth. It seeks the end only of desires which are perverted by ignorance (*Avidya*)' (Damien Keown, 1992, p. 222). To overcome such illegitimate emotions as an attachment (*Tanha*), we need prudent rational ability on the one hand, and legitimate desire and emotion on the other. Only in this way can we recognize that the things they are attached to are not worth it and put their emotions into the objects that are really worth it.

Keown's comparative study of Buddhist ethics and Aristotle's ethics provides a sound reference for our further study. Although these comparisons are too superficial today, they still put forward some questions worthy of consideration in the key concepts and logical structures of Buddhist virtue ethics.

Buddhism and Care Ethics

The comparative study of Keown did not really address the issue of Buddhist ethics. Especially the relationship between Buddhism and virtue ethics, Barnhardt puts

forward some meaningful criticisms and provides a better way to explain the Buddhist ethics he thought, namely care ethics, which is a theory of ethical particularism. Because care ethics questioned the decisive role of the rules on the one hand and emphasized the cultivation of caring ability for agents, on the other hand, care ethics and virtue ethics achieved the same goal in different ways.

Barnhardt's criticism is mainly aimed at explaining the teleological method of Buddhist ethics. Firstly, Given the deductive relationship between basic value (goods) and purpose,[1] does Buddhism itself have any evidence to show the legitimacy of deductive reasoning from basic goodness to value judgement(precepts)? Barnhardt believes that deductive reasoning in Buddhist literature is rather lacking. Secondly, another dilemma of teleology is that it puts forward some decisive position of goodness, such as not killing, *Prajna*, compassion, and so on. Barnhardt does not think that Buddhism provides some basic premises

1 Concerning Buddhism and using the First Precept against the taking of life as an example, Keown understands that Buddhist moral scaffolding works in the following ways. 'If we take the good of life as an example the steps in the argument which would lead us to derive the first precept would be: (i) life is a basic good; (ii) it is always wrong to choose against a basic good; therefore (iii) one should never choose against life. The most obvious way in which one might choose against life is by acting so as to intentionally bring about its destruction, and this is exactly how the first precept is formulated.' See Damien Keown, 1995, pp. 54-55.

for the teleological deduction, 'if these are "goods", then they are not clearly as ultimate as Keown claims, and if they are not "goods", then there is really no reason to continue the Aristotelian analogy' (2012, p. 28). Thirdly, Buddhism believes that *Tanha* and attachment are traps to avoid. The method of teleology may lead to a kind of purpose-oriented mentality in the process of pursuing goodness, which seems to have no fundamental difference from *Tanha* and attachment. Fourth, it is about the tension between nonattachment and teleology. Barnhardt suggests that 'one of the great paradoxes within Buddhism itself is the claim that to make Buddhism into a goal or purpose is to undermine the path of Buddhist enlightenment' (2012, p. 29). Even though we think that the arahant's satori is Aristotle's *Eudaemonia*, it is difficult to become a concrete ideal because of its lack of clarity. 'Just as the literature exhibits skillful means through example and not through the provision of rules, so the perfection of wisdom as grasped by the arahant remains purposefully vague' (2012, p. 29). In a word, Barnhardt thinks that Buddhist enlightenment and Aristotle's *Eudaemonia* can be interdependent and mutually generated, but it is hard to say that they are the same ones.

Barnhardt's criticism is of high value. Whether we can provide a satisfactory defense for Buddhist virtue ethics depends to some extent on whether we can get to make a reasonable response to the above criticism.

Since traditional rule ethics logically puts rule before moral action, it always takes a more or less universalist view in the decisive sense of rules to action. Ethical particularism, on the other hand, holds that rules do not exist before moral action, but first out of particular moral events, and then provide limited guidance when we encounter new moral events. The question of traditional rule ethics is 'what should I do' or 'how should I behave', while the question of ethical particularism is 'what should I care', which is exactly the starting point of care ethics. According to Barnhardt, Buddhist ethics meets the latter problems. The core claim of ethical particularism can be summarized as morality is self-consistent even without rules.

Buddhist literature not only lacks the argument of the determinateness and stability of discipline in moral behavior but also lacks the prudent reflection on the rules of behavior. Sometimes, it even argues that non-attachment and skillful means are more important. Even if Buddhism mentions normative issues such as 'what should I do' and 'how should I do', it is mostly vague and concise descriptions. Although care ethics does not deny that the cultivation of the actor's moral reasoning ability is necessarily conducive to his moral behavior, it believes that the cultivation of the agent's caring ability (what to care about and how to care about) can better achieve the moral purpose. *Karuna* in Buddhist ethics is completely consistent with care ethics.

Although Barnhardt believed that Buddhist ethics was closer to that of care ethics, this view was not contrary to virtue ethics in nature. For example, Michael Slote absorbed the beneficial elements from care ethics and applied them in the construction of emotional virtue ethics (2007). This is a good example, which can inspire us to put the discussion of virtue ethics in a wider and more inclusive context, including rules, virtue, caring for emotion, etc., to have a dialogue with various moral behaviors and theories of modern society.

Conclusion

I have considered the relationship between Buddhism and deontology, and utilitarianism. My conclusion is: despite the fact that Buddhist precepts and practice methods are similar to the moral laws or imperatives, these imperatives did not like Kantian ethics, thinking of moral metaphysics. The multiple imperatives and commandments are similar to Ross's *prima facie* duty, but nothing more. Buddhist ethics is not deontology. We have further discussed the relationship between Buddhism and utilitarianism. Compared with utilitarianism, Buddhism appears to have been paid more attention to the moral significance of actions itself and the motives of the agents. In addition, utilitarianism themselves meets the challenge of Hume's problem. There is not any sufficient reason to regard Buddhist ethics as utilitarianism or other forms of consequence theory. I think Damien Keown's research

is of great significance. Combined with the analysis of Keown, I re-elaborated the similarities between Buddhism and Aristotelian ethics in four aspects. However, Barnhart criticized the analysis of Keown and thought that Buddhism should be explained by the method of ethical particularism, namely ethics of care. This is a suitable approach for the development of virtue ethics today. Through care ethics or emotional virtue ethics, we gain a better understanding of the basic concepts and logical structure of Buddhist ethics. Finally, I argue that the moral reason for Buddhism is not to choose between rules and virtue but to integrate them. The motivation of self-cultivation depends on moral rules and specific situations, which may pose a higher challenge to the demonstration of virtue ethics, but this is just a fact.

The traditional Buddhist texts do not provide a systematic moral reasoning scheme, which makes modern ethical theory an indispensable methodological prerequisite for Buddhist ethical research. We can interpret Buddhist precepts as external normative rules and internal normative virtues, but these explanations are not enough, because many issues such as the relationship between virtue and care deserve further discussion. Perhaps the moral reason for Buddhism is not this one or that one, but a combination of rules and virtues, which needs to be additional explored. After all, these thoughts are the progressive transformation of traditional Buddhist principles and ethical thoughts. The purpose of thinking is not necessarily to become a Buddha,

but it must be to make people live better and think better, which is favorable to the research of Buddhism and ethics.

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