Praise for *Moral Struggle and Religious Ethics*

"Over the past several years, comparative religious ethics has emerged as a centrally important interdisciplinary line of research, crossing the boundaries among religious studies, history, anthropology, and ethics. David Clairmont's book offers a strikingly original contribution to this emerging field. In contrast to most earlier work, he directs our attention away from the comparative study of texts, toward the moral and religious vision, and also the struggle and frustration, of the individual adherents of a given tradition. Admittedly, we normally have access to individual experience only indirectly, and primarily through texts, but if these texts are approached with an aim to identifying what they say or imply about individual struggles and perceptions, they can teach us a great deal. The person him or herself, mediated through the text, can be regarded as a religious classic, in David Tracy's terms, not so much as a representative of an ideal, but as an exemplar of ongoing struggle with both personal and communal weaknesses and blind spots. The individual is exemplary in his or her struggles, precisely because sustained engagement with one's weaknesses is by no means an optional academic exercise – on the contrary, this kind of ongoing struggle will inevitably characterize the life of any serious and self-aware believer. This focus on individual experiences of personal limitation and moral failure, seen in all their power to disrupt intellectual certainties and moral self-satisfaction, offers a powerful corrective to pervasive tendencies to presuppose that fundamental disagreements on these matters can only reflect the blindness or bad faith of one's interlocutors. On the contrary, Clairmont shows that a serious and deep encounter with the very different religious and moral perspectives that we encounter everyday is not just a matter of courtesy or (much less) a way of instructing 'them' in 'our' values – it is, rather, a reflection of our own urgent need to learn from them."

Jean Porter, John A. O'Brien Professor of Theological Ethics, University of Notre Dame

To Michelle Ann Pinard Clairmont

With love and thanks for your patience and encouragement

As disciples of Jesus we stand side by side with all people. Like them we are burdened by the same struggles and beset by the same weaknesses; like them we are made new by the same Lord's love; like them we hope for a world where justice and love prevail.

Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross (2.12)

Moral Struggle and Religious Ethics

On the Person as Classic in Comparative Theological Contexts

David A. Clairmont

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Abbreviations

A.	*Aṇguttara Nikāya*
Ath.	*Atthasālinī*
Brev.	*Breviloquium*
D.	*Dīgha-nikāya*
Hex.	*Collationes in hexaemeron*
Itin.	*Itinerarium mentis in Deum*
M.	*Majjhima-nikāya*
Op. Om.	*Opera Omnia*
S.	*Saṃyutta- nikāya*
Sent.	*Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*
Soliloq.	*Soliloquium de quatuor mentalibus exercitiis*
S.T.	*Summa Theologiae*
Vsm.	*Visuddhimagga*

Introduction

What is it that finally drives us from the intellectual and social comforts of our own religious traditions to learn about what is unknown, and what might even prove to be irreconcilably different? In summary, this book proposes a twofold answer to this question. What brings us to others is a shared moral struggle to live by what we believe, and what keeps us with others is the humility that emerges when we acknowledge the intellectual struggle involved in understanding our own beliefs and those of other people.

This question is perhaps one of the central moral and religious questions of our time. Adherents and practitioners of religions, as well as those suspicious of or even publicly critical of religions, share at least one common observation: religious people do not always do what their religious communities or leaders teach them to do, even when they agree (despite some divisions) about which common values ought to be pursued and which actions ought to be done. Critics of religion take this fact as preliminary justification for judging that religion is at best an innocuous consolation in a confusing world, with no real power to form people into responsible citizens in the global community. At worst, they take the very extremes of religious intolerance and violence as the very best that any religion can hope to achieve over the long term. At a time when people are increasingly frightened by the potential violence that religious teachings might unleash, even as modern people continue to admire and praise the moral exemplars and religious saints throughout the world, religious communities are beginning to examine in more systematic and sustained ways whether inter-religious conversation about moral and other matters might advance the well-being of the human community.

This book unfolds its answer to the foregoing question about motivations for inter-religious dialogue concerning moral matters by inviting into conversation three primary communities or "publics": Christian theologians (especially but not only those from the author's own Catholic Christian community), people affiliated with other religious traditions who are also searching for strong theoretical reasons for such

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discussions and a framework in which to undertake them, and those philosophers and historians of comparative religion who are interested in the moral implications of religious beliefs, ideals, and practices (many of whom work in the field of comparative religious ethics).[1]

In response to the question of what motivates conversation about moral matters across traditions, I argue that *every potentially transformative inter-religious encounter is based, at least to some degree, on mutual acknowledgement of personal weakness and struggle (both moral and intellectual), and as such presupposes that religious traditions carry through time, in multiform exemplars and sustained arguments, tentative answers to fundamental human questions which few if any individual religious persons ever fully answer or embody.* This book signals, by appealing to thinkers from the past, how we might view such potentially transformative inter-religious encounters in the future.

To elaborate this answer, and to develop its guiding question more fully, this study focuses on two interrelated tasks. First, it outlines a model of inter-religious conversation about moral matters by developing the idea of individual persons as classics to be interpreted, persons that call on other persons that they reach through personal contact or through trajectories of thought both spoken and written, to interpret their lives as projects both morally and epistemologically incomplete, in the process of purification and transformation, that nonetheless point beyond themselves, that is to say beyond any one action but also beyond the accumulation of all actions over the course of a life.[2] The arguments advanced here present religious traditions not as insulated historical debates within communities but rather as series of linked questions and partially embodied answers unfolding over time. While such traditions are strongly rooted in both individual projects and the historical narratives of communities, they point finally beyond any individual or community, to what a group of persons might realize together in a morally complex world.

Second, this book takes as its central task setting forth a comparison to illustrate the model of person as classic, calling on two key thinkers in the histories of Buddhism and Christianity: Buddhaghosa, a fifth-century Theravāda Buddhist monk and commentator, and Bonaventure, a thirteenth-century Roman Catholic priest and teacher in the Franciscan order. While I elaborate the specific reasons for the appropriateness and productivity of this particular comparison in the first chapter, I want to note here that these two figures occupy in their respective traditions places both revered and in certain respects forgotten, both by their own communities of practice and among the scholars who study them. Yet what remains so morally compelling about these figures is that they were able to bring to the renewed attention of their communities the deep inter-connectedness of basic religious ideas, practices, and moral exemplars through which these teachings could bear moral fruit.

Any comparison succeeds or fails based on its ability to say something truthful about the subject matter while at the same time interpreting the specific objects of comparison in ways not previously envisioned and showing them to be more relevant and potentially transformative of future actions than we otherwise might have judged them to be. In thinking through my own standards for what ought to mark a successful comparative project, I have drawn inspiration from two sets of sources. The first set includes those studies in the emerging field of comparative religious ethics that have undertaken investigations pairing two religious figures from days past around some

basic moral idea or problem.[3] These studies have helped a new generation of scholars concerned with different religious ideas about virtue, vice, human flourishing, and practical reason to create and maintain a field of study, teaching, and scholarship that focuses on just these questions.

While such studies have been exemplary in their care and detailed examination of primary source materials, and in testing the viability of certain concepts across traditions, I do not believe they have yet enunciated clearly enough the rationales for why such comparisons ought to be advanced and more importantly why the religious communities, who claim and preserve the work of the thinkers these scholars study, ought to care about the scholarly comparisons being developed. This has also resulted, not coincidentally I think, in the delay of an important conversation between those who work in the field of comparative religious ethics and those who work in the field of comparative theology. The present study explores the possibility of a comparative *theological* ethics as a way to advance these conversations, sensitive to the rationales for comparative engagement that emerge as much from the texts and communities that scholars study as from what the scholars themselves find interesting.

To attend to these unexamined issues in comparative theology and ethics, I have drawn inspiration from a second set of sources, the many instances of which can be roughly described as theologies of religious interpretation or, as they are sometimes called, "theological hermeneutics."[4] Among other topics, these sources investigate what happens when one tries to cross over from one's own religious experience, informed by attempts to interpret religious texts, to the religious ideas and practices of other people. This strategy takes seriously that interpretation always occurs from some location characterized by social, historical, and, perhaps most importantly, moral limits. It has become the equivalent of a scholar's "home plate" to acknowledge the limits of one's cultural perspective, the boundaries of one's scholarly project, and the prejudices embedded in one's own patterns of learning in order not to risk intellectual violence on other scholars or on the subject matter one is studying. However, as important as such precautions are, they do not by themselves address what it is like to be inside the mind of the interpreter, to confront what is new and potentially life-altering, to move beyond one's initial fears and confront a world seemingly without meaning and marked only by chaotic if interesting coincidence. In other words, the life of the scholar of comparative religion need not (although it may) be as dangerous and disorienting as the life of the believer confronting the history of her or his own tradition, in love and anger, fear and hope. This book approaches comparative ethics from a "theological" perspective, that is a perspective within a religious tradition, while admitting that such a perspective might be challenged and reformulated by engagement with comparative ethics.

Not only individuals but religious traditions too have initiated periods of substantial, sustained self-examination and have started to take a serious look at their own impact on other religious traditions and on global political, cultural, and ecological realities. While this period of self-examination (occasionally with attendant reformulation and correction) may have drawn initial inspiration, at least in the West, from the challenges to religious authority exemplified in the Protestant Reformers such as Martin Luther and in the search for a realm of critical, autonomous reason characteristic of Enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, the motivation and energy for

sustained self-examination now comes from the religious communities themselves. Religious persons have their own reasons for entering into dialogue about moral issues, not the least of which is the desire to become more truly what they are called or envision themselves to be. These reasons may differ from religion to religion, and they may not mirror the reasons that scholars have for studying religious ethics comparatively, although mapping out those areas of overlap is certainly a worthwhile task. Whatever motivations scholars may have in studying religious ethics, with ever greater frequency religious persons and their communities are coming to see that the depth of understanding they seek for their own traditions is bound up with their knowledge of other traditions and the questions asked to them from outside their own communities. Perhaps more importantly, religious and secular people alike are beginning to recognize that the very horizons for their thoughts and actions, that is to say the very range of moral options they envision and about which they think themselves capable of choosing freely, are closely related to how their self-understandings, their understandings of their own religious histories (with the suspicions often attached to these), and their understandings of other religious persons and their imperfect histories all interact.

A level of practical humility emerges in religious traditions when persons in those communities realize that there are final human limits both to their own understandings about what they believe most deeply and to their own freedom in a complex world affected and at times constrained by their own past choices. This dynamic – the constraints of self-understanding and action placed on us by our own histories and by other incomplete, as yet unfinished persons and their histories – forms the basic concern of this book.

Part I of this book deals with basic issues in comparison and outlines the religious cosmologies and historical contexts for the thinkers examined here. In Chapter 1, I explore the basic question mentioned earlier about what finally drives us out of our own traditions and into the world of differing views and behaviors. I emphasize that it is of recurring interest to religious persons across cultures and times, but particularly to thinkers in Buddhism and Christianity, why people fail to live up to their own best moral guidance. I then examine how this basic facet of human experience – moral struggle – which I variously term a perennial human problem or classic question, helps us to think about the motivations for comparative engagement. Motivations for comparison emerging from a religious tradition might differ from, even as they helpfully supplement, motivations for comparison that emerge from the comparative philosophy of religious ethics, highlighting the importance of moral transformation within rather than across traditions as a central rationale for comparison. To that end, I develop the notion of "person as classic" in order to point out the fundamental level of humility about personal moral weakness and religious knowledge that must be presupposed if such a transformative rationale for comparison is to be both plausible and meaningful. I conclude the first chapter with a more detailed introduction of the two figures that will be the subject of the remainder of the book, suggesting their particular appropriateness as classic persons, calling for our interpretation. In Chapter 2, I lay out the important connection between religious ideas and their function in the moral life and how religious ideas are both

bound to and yet point outside of particular religious cosmologies or thought worlds. For Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, ideas are not fanciful speculations of minds freed from material concerns. They provide the conditions necessary for productive religious practices to occur. I present the symbolic religious cosmologies through which Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa wrote by examining the contours of Bonaventure's Trinitarian symbolism and Buddhaghosa's use of the analytic tools of Abhidhamma. In Chapter 3, I turn to the topic of materiality and practices of material simplicity, examining how Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's answers to the question of moral struggle emerge from (indeed, cannot be fully understood apart from) their practical instructions about how to engage in moral formation through interactions with the material world. I suggest how for each thinker the material world, variously interpreted, represents both the condition for moral progress even as it also forms the first and most profound obstacle to that progress. Together these two chapters present the two sides of these thinkers' historical contexts: ideas and practices.

Part II of the book moves the study forward into the substance of the comparison, beginning with a discussion of the classic question of moral struggle and then examining the particular concepts and practical strategies used by Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa to address this question. In Chapter 4, I compare Bonaventure's account of how participation in the sacramental life of the church provides the conditions for the development of Christian virtue with Buddhaghosa's account of how preparatory practices that cultivate virtue provide the conditions for the possibility of successful meditation. In Chapter 5, I undertake a comparison between Bonaventure's account of the relation of theology to prayer and the place that conceptual and symbolic language plays in understanding the limits of such activities and Buddhaghosa's account of the transition between calming or preparatory meditation and the meditation that fosters insight into the true nature of the world. This chapter concludes by examining the similarities and differences in the two accounts by focusing on what kinds of limits religious practices and ideas reveal for each thinker, thereby suggesting the importance of moral exemplars (that is, those through whom ideas and practices are related) for each account. Here I also examine the place that moral exemplars hold in each account, arguing for the important role that persons play in helping individuals persevere in their struggles despite often discouraging instances of moral failure. In Chapter 6, I conclude by summarizing my observations about moral struggle in my treatments of Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, suggesting different ways that persons can function as classics for each thinker, as well as how we might think about the person as a shared concern for both comparative ethics and comparative theology (as yet, a largely unexplored conversation between these groups of scholars). I revisit why I think that future work in comparative ethics must take seriously that abiding by moral convictions is just as important as (and perhaps, in this age of religious suspicion, even more important than) fostering shared moral convictions and establishing minimum standards of behavior across cultures. The study concludes with five vignettes from recent work in comparative ethics intended to suggest analogies between what I am describing as "persons as classics" and other ways that personal struggle has appeared in recent comparative studies.

Notes

1 The language of scholarly "publics" used here reformulates for the community of theological ethics and comparative religion the three publics of theology proposed by David Tracy, namely the academy, the church, and the wider society. For a description of the three publics of theology, see his *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), especially 1–46.

2 This idea of the classic, as well as the more specific language of the religious classic, has its roots in certain theological appropriations of philosophical hermeneutics, literary theory, and philosophy of language. The central figures used to develop this method are the Roman Catholic systematic theologian David Tracy, as well as the continental philosophers Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur on whose work Tracy relies to develop his idea of the religious classic. Because the model I develop here is designed to advance inter-religious discussions on *moral* matters, I have also drawn on recent work in Roman Catholic moral theology, especially intra-Catholic debates about the idea of "basic" or "fundamental" freedom which seeks to explain, among other things, how it is that human actions can be both morally imperfect while at the same time still expressions of a person oriented toward God. See especially Klaus Demmer, MSC, *Shaping the Moral Life: An Approach to Moral Theology*, James F. Keenan, ed. Roberto Dell'Oro, trans. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000); Josef Fuchs, SJ, *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena*, Bernard Hoose and Brian McNeil, trans. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1984) and *Human Values and Christian Morality* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970). This form of hermeneutics, employed as an approach to comparative ethics, therefore, most closely resembles the multidimensional approach outlined by William Schweiker. See especially his essay "On Religious Ethics," in *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, William Schweiker, ed. (Malden: Blackwell, 2005) as well as his *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004).

3 See Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990) and Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil: Human Nature and Spiritual Exercises in Xunzi and Augustine* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006).

4 As will become clear in the subsequent chapter, I limit this source to those thinkers that focus on the necessity of and reason for interpreting one's own and other religious traditions.

Part I
Questions and Contexts

1

Person as Classic: Questions, Limits, and Religious Motivations

Ethics covers those areas of life where our basic human questions meet our limits. Ethics is commonly understood as a form of critical discourse concerned with morality (that is, with the mores – the customs, values, laws, and other social standards – of various human communities).[1] Moralities emerge from many places: families, cultural groups, religious communities, academic debates, and so on. Critical discourse can also come from many of the same places. In each case, we see individuals and communities asking questions such as: How should I live? How are we to live together? How are we to live with people who do not share our values and standards? When we offer answers to these questions, or offer further questions to challenge the prevailing answers, we are involved (even if sometimes implicitly) in the work of ethics.

In a very basic sense, we ask and answer these questions in a world characterized by limits. Clearly, we live in a world of physical limits, marked above all by our bodies and the geographical range of our personal interactions and relationships. We also live in a world of social limits. Our communities impose limits, as we are born into families, structures of authority, and cultures we do not choose. Many people are also raised in religious traditions, the influence of which often develops so gradually that we often do not realize the extent of their formative power on us. Religious communities too exist within historical and cultural limits, even as they offer forms of discourse and model forms of life that challenge their members, to a certain degree, to pass beyond those same limits.

Yet we also live in a world of moral limits expressed in terms of a basic human problem: we do not seem to be able to live in accordance with our own best moral counsel, standards which may or may not be those advocated by the communities of which we are a part. We come to realize these moral limits when, for example, we start to examine our own self-destructive and other-destroying habits in new ways, or by reflecting on our culturally influenced patterns of moral rationalization, or our own blindness to the needs of those who are outside the daily course of our personal relationships and social obligations.

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To admit that we live in a world characterized by the need to return constantly to our own most profound questions, questions that arise within a world of limits, does not mean living in a constant state of doubt and confusion. Nor does it mean that we are caught in a vicious relativism. Rather, it means that we seek to deepen our understanding by posing questions to ourselves and others about our personal histories and the histories of our communities. How communities carry on these conversations (what is sometimes referred to as the "logic" or "implicitly normative" dimension of "discursive practices"), while an important and necessary dimension in understanding what it means to pose questions about moral matters across different culturally specific moral "vocabularies," does not necessarily capture the depth, motivations, or complexity of asking such questions.[2]

Indeed, when we consider these same questions and limits from the perspectives of religious communities, we have moved into somewhat different terrain. Certainly discourse about religious ethics is characterized not only by different sources for moral reflection, culturally specific concepts, and endemic patterns for thinking, but also by a distinctively complex way of construing basic human problems. Religious communities carry on their own internal debates, not only about the meaning of basic human problems but also about which sources and modes of discourse are even appropriate to describe the problems at hand. While these debates can certainly devolve into violent sectarian conflicts, they can also over time help communities gain perspective on their own histories, their beliefs, and their moral standards. Put differently, behind each religious debate about moral norms is an equally difficult debate about mediating the community's past and present, its texts and practices, and its own way of balancing what is possible for human life and the vision of moral excellence for which the community strives.

There are many approaches to religious ethics, the variety of which reflects a legitimate array of prudent scholarly judgments (and disagreements) about what methods are most appropriate for the topics and traditions under consideration. This book develops one possible approach, a comparative theological ethics, grounded in the discourse, motivations, and methods of one religious tradition (Roman Catholic Christianity), in dialogue with the discourse, motivations, and methods of another religious tradition (Theravāda Buddhism). The comparison focuses on the phenomenon of persons in religious communities struggling with the meaning and implications of their own communities' claims: about what ought to be regarded as the tradition's central ideas, material and discursive practices, and the complex role of moral exemplars in traditions. For although questions about the nature of religious traditions, identities, and authorities are distinctly modern preoccupations, the negotiation of what is true and compelling within traditions, amidst the internal plurality of their activities, is a deep and longstanding religious puzzle.

In what follows, I argue for a strategy of engaging in inter-religious conversations about moral matters based in a renewed notion of human persons as classics calling for moral interpretation. The notions (if not the precise terms) "person" and "personhood" have a long history in Greek and Roman philosophy, as well as South and Southeast Asian philosophy, in Christian theological debates, as well as in contemporary sociological, anthropological, and legal discourse. While I will refer to these debates occasionally, my contribution to the discussion about the place of persons in

ethics will be confined to a particular topic: namely how persons can be understood as places for the interpretation and integration of the sometimes overlapping, sometimes mutually critical, questions and practices in the moral life. I use the term person to denote a distinctive kind of space where moral thinking occurs, where questions are posed and meaning is constructed and discerned, as individual human beings converse about their own ideals and experiences of moral frailty and struggle.

Such conversations might be realized conversations, as when two persons from different religious communities speak together, or hypothetical conversations, as when scholars select two or more thinkers for sustained examination around a particular issue. While this book engages in the latter kind of conversation by selecting classic figures from Catholic Christianity and Theravāda Buddhism (the thirteenth-century Franciscan priest Bonaventure, and the fifth-century Theravāda monk Buddhaghosa), it does so with an eye toward understanding the dynamics of the religious lives of believers that are frequently both more open-ended, and more complex and self-critical, than surface judgments about the ideological uniformity of religious traditions sometimes assume.[3]

Two assumptions guide my approach to this study. First, I assume that people who spend their lives associated, to varying degrees, with religious traditions try to live ever more closely by what they judge to be the best moral insights their traditions provide, even if they might be involved in a lifelong process of examining the truth claims of the tradition to which they have committed themselves. There may sometimes be disagreement about what is the preeminent value for an individual or community to realize at any particular time, or a particular course of action that ought or ought not to be taken, given current circumstances. There may also be long periods of time in which people live comfortably and without much sustained critical thought about the truth of their religious traditions. However, once such judgments have been formed, we are likely to find a strong level of agreement among people, religious and secular alike, that people ought to follow their own best judgments about what course of action will result in realizing those values that give life purpose and coherence. In other words, as philosophers from ancient to modern times have questioned, can we really imagine that a person can go through life with the singular ambition of becoming morally worse? Such attempts certainly take different forms in present-day religious communities than in pre-modern traditions, but some desire for reflectiveness and moral consistency are common features of any attempt to live a moral life.

The second assumption is that we have not yet begun to think deeply enough about the capacity possessed by what has sometimes been called the religious "alien" or religious "other" to inspire reflectiveness and moral consistency within a given religious community or discourse. Although this hypothesis cannot, strictly speaking, be tested in this study, I offer this study in part to suggest how such inter-religious engagement, even at the level of reading classic authors of another tradition, might shed light on a community's own struggle with moral consistency and deeper levels of self-awareness and reflectiveness. Efforts at inter-religious conversation about moral matters often proceed from the assumption that once one has decided what one ought to do in dialogue with other people who are concerned about the same or similar moral problems, the motivation or inspiration to live according to that judgment will come *exclusively* from one's own religious or cultural tradition. In other words, the

assumption is that the real problem in inter-religious conversation about moral matters is to agree on what meaning a particular religious discourse assigns to key moral terms and then to understand how people in that tradition employ these terms in their moral reasoning.[4]

On the contrary, as I argue in this chapter and throughout the remainder of this book, we might helpfully expand our thinking about our own traditions and the nature and purpose of comparative engagements if we hold as a preliminary hypothesis nearly the opposite assumption from the one most frequently made in cross-cultural discussions about ethics. Rather than focusing only on how moral ideas are embedded in particular cultural-linguistic or religious frameworks,[5] or on the patterns of moral reasoning that provide particular justifications for moral actions commended or condemned in varied religious discourse,[6] we ought first to look at what is involved in trying to interpret individuals as moral works-in-progress, as broken, incomplete, morally blind persons trying to understand and live with other broken, incomplete, morally blind persons. Such efforts will not sidestep the important questions of differing world views or justifications of truth claims, but they will rather embed these questions within the broader trajectory of moral agents struggling to know themselves, what they care about, and what they ought to do.

Put most sharply, if the struggle to understand oneself and one's moral existence (however this is expressed) is taken to be reducible in the final analysis to some other single mode of discourse, then the notion of struggle itself vanishes and the moral life will soon and easily be ceded to those who prize comfort and certainty above all else. Moreover, without some notion of intellectual and moral struggle at play in the work of interpreting other religious traditions, it becomes difficult to envision what if any rationale there could be for undertaking deliberate comparative engagements in the first place. For consciously theological comparative engagements, there must be some way of envisioning the unity between *how* we approach traditions other than our own and *why* we approach them.

While each religious interpreter of moral discourse draws her or his primary interpretive framework from one particular tradition, one must rely on analogues of moral and intellectual struggle in other traditions, precisely to keep particular elements of one's own tradition intellectually vibrant and morally compelling in one's own mind. What Jacques Maritain called "practical atheism," if not taken dismissively but as an honest expression of intellectual and moral struggle, may provide an important point of contact among people of different religious views and those who hold no such views.[7] It is for this reason that I want to suggest that final motivations for acting are not bound exclusively to the framework of one's own religious tradition, precisely because one's own religious tradition can become too comfortable, too familiar – at best, a dull goad requiring the moral whetstone of comparison. To understand one's self and one's tradition deeply and clearly, one needs comparative engagement.

Drawing on these assumptions, and illustrated though a comparison of two classic religious thinkers, Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, this book proposes that persons can be understood as classics in the sense of being *temporary coordinations or carriers of tradition-rooted questions and partially exemplified answers, which call for interpretation and critique precisely insofar as their expressions of epistemological humility relate to their moral limitedness.* In other words, every person exists in the world as

an unfinished project, as an attempt to come to terms with their own community's most profound questions by testing in their lives the community's answers to these questions.

To set the stage for the comparison I shall undertake, this chapter has two principal aims. First, I introduce the notion of person as classic by examining the idea of the religious classic as it appears in the work of the Catholic theologian David Tracy, attending also to the theories of religion and interpretation from which this idea draws inspiration. Second, I introduce the two figures – Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa – whose writings will be the primary subject matter of this comparison, noting how each holds the place of a classic figure in the respective histories of each tradition's moral thought. Each thinker works with the classic ideas and practices of their respective communities, sometimes in innovative and integrative ways, in ways that highlight the struggle of persons to know the nature of the moral world they confront and the practices that facilitate this knowledge. Moreover, each figure helps us to advance our own thinking about what might be termed a "classic human question," namely the problem of moral struggle.

Persons, Limits, and Religious Classics

Classics are ambivalent cultural phenomena because they traverse the best and worst of the past, calling our attention to the best and worst of our present. It is easy to dismiss the importance of classics because they would seem to bind us too strongly to the past, to an over-determined view of history that constrains our future choices, as they link us in various ways to what has gone before us. Yet it is precisely this linking to the past that signals their initial appeal. Classic books, paintings, films, music, automobiles all roughly fit this understanding of classic. Debates surrounding the place of literary classics in primary, secondary, and college education persist to this day, as does the question of what qualifies as a classic and whether the criteria used to establish certain artifacts of human creativity as classics are inevitably bound to particular expressions of cultural power wielded by the social groups that produced them.[8] This debate about what constitutes the proper "canon" for liberal education has become even more complicated as teachers, students, and administrators think through what, if any, place classic texts (especially religious texts) ought to have in a liberal arts curriculum.

Related to these debates are two important questions that inspire the use of the term "classic" as it is employed here. First, are there general features of classics that help us to understand how particular cultures single out and elevate for sustained critical attention certain transformative elements of that culture, whether literary, musical, or visual? Second, what moral functions do classics serve and is it proper to draw an analogy between how people interpret classics and how people interpret themselves (or, put differently, how people are themselves classics)? To answer these questions, I want to examine several aspects of the notion of the classic developed by David Tracy and then extend Tracy's idea (in a suggestion he makes only briefly and does not develop) that it might be possible to think about persons as classics worthy of sustained interpretation.

Classics: questions and limits in thought and action

At the beginning of his discussion of the "nonclassicist notion of the classic"[9] in his 1981 book, *The Analogical Imagination*, David Tracy provides the following summary statement on the importance of examining the theory and practice of interpretation for contemporary Christian theology, as well as for the religious thought of other communities: "The heart of any hermeneutical position," he says, "is the recognition that all interpretation is a mediation of past and present, a translation carried on within the effective history of a tradition to retrieve its sometimes strange, sometimes familiar meanings."[10] The goal of such interpretation is a particular kind of understanding. The understanding that arises in a conversation that addresses a particular question or area of common concern (what Tracy calls the "subject matter") is something that happens as the result of the event of conversation rather than something one wills as the outcome of a conversation or a single pre-determined result that one wants to achieve. What is the nature of this happening? As Tracy puts it, "every event of understanding, in order to produce a new interpretation, mediates between our past experience and the understanding embodied in our linguistic tradition and the present event of understanding occasioned by a fidelity to the logic of the question in the back-and-forth movement of the conversation."[11]

While the tradition of theological and philosophical hermeneutics on which Tracy draws is too long to summarize here, there are certain elements of this line of thinking that ground Tracy's views on conversation, interpretation, and understanding which are necessary in order to make sense of his notion of the classic, as well as the moral implications I draw from it. For Tracy, a close connection exists between the phenomenon of reading a text and the phenomenon of entering into a conversation with another person. Drawing on the account of language and discourse in the generation of meaning in Paul Ricoeur's *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Tracy reviews three options available to readers approaching a text in the moment when we judge the text to be relevant to our questions and concerns, that is to say as a text that might be meaningful to us: in terms of the "author's original intention," in terms of the "original discourse situation," and in terms of the "first historical addressee of the text."[12]

All three of these interpretive options presuppose, as Tracy states following Ricoeur, "the process of linguistic 'distanciation'" whereby "a written text, precisely as written, is distanced both from the original intention of the author and from the original reception by its first addressees."[13] For Ricoeur, the process of distanciation was not only an interpretive problem for readers but more profoundly a problem of the struggle to understand oneself. Distanciation is "a dialectical trait, the principle of a struggle between the otherness that transforms all spatial and temporal distance into cultural estrangement and the ownness by which all understanding aims at the extension of self-understanding … [it is] the dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest, and our effort to overcome cultural estrangement."[14] Recognizing distanciation invites us to consider how we prioritize and balance what we can know of the author's horizon with what we can know of our own.[15]

For Tracy, to answer the question of horizons requires that we examine a fourth and more dynamic option for interpretation. "[T]he contemporary interpreter," he says,

> must distinguish clearly between the "sense" and the "referents" of the text and hence between the methods needed to explicate each. The "sense" of the text means the internal structure and meaning of the text as that structure can be determined through the ordinary methods of semantic and literary-critical inquiries. The "referents" of the text do not pertain to the meaning "behind" the text (e.g. the author's *real* intention or socio-cultural situation of the text). Rather, to shift metaphors, "referent" basically manifests the meaning "in front of the text," i.e., that way of perceiving reality, that mode of being-in-the-world which the text opens up for the intelligent reader. Although this understanding of "referent" is not divorced from either prior historical or semantic investigations, still "referent" here is clearly distinct from those prior factors. Further, the referents of the text, on this understanding, are *the* factors demanding a properly hermeneutical as distinct from either an historical or a semantic exercise.[16]

So for Tracy, whenever one is interpreting a text, especially one that has demonstrated a long history of transformative influence on a community, one needs to be aware of both what the text is suggesting might be a different vision of the world or a new way of living (whether or not the author is explicit about such moral alternatives) and also how and why one embraces (or rejects) the challenge the text puts forward. In other words, reading a text requires us to examine both how the writer views the world and what questions and concerns she or he brings before us and also how we view the world, an exercise that is never complete, even if we remain mostly content with our own prior judgments about how properly to interpret our world, our current situation, and our responsibilities therein.

Tracy contends that there exists a certain kind of text, by merit of its perennial appeal within a culture *as well as* its appeal outside its culture of origin, that demands attention to the questions carried forward through its written form. By the term "classic," Tracy means primarily a creative work of literature or visual art that speaks to succeeding generations of people within a culture, yet also has the potential (once one expends the requisite effort to begin collecting the basic linguistic skills and patterns of thinking at work in a new cultural-linguistic framework) to communicate with people outside of the culture and historical time in which it was created.

> When a text is a classic, I am also recognizing that its "excess of meaning" both demands constant interpretation and bears a certain kind of timelessness – namely, the timeliness of a classic expression, radically rooted in its own historical time and calling to my own historicity. That is, the classical text is not in some timeless moment which needs mere repetition. Rather, its kind of timelessness as permanent timeliness is the only one proper to any expression of the finite, temporal, historical beings we are. The classic text's real disclosure is its claim to attention on the ground that an event of understanding proper to finite human beings has here found expression.[17]

A classic achieves its status as such not merely because it has been around for a long time, or because one or another person or group of people revere it as culturally significant. Rather, for Tracy, a classic holds such status because of its unique way of

engaging the questions of human life that arise when people contemplate their own limitedness in the limits of their historical and cultural situations.

Try as we might, we are not able to escape our own personal histories, the prejudgments embedded in our own cultures' institutions and priorities, or the limits imposed on us by our gradually developing and decaying bodies and minds. For Tracy, the classic is important because it meets us where we live – in our own moral and cultural limits, in our best (sometimes heroic) attempts to live well and also in our most scandalous instances of human viciousness. The reason the classic has what Tracy describes as a "permanent timeliness" is that its questions are anchored in, rather than freed from, its own confines. It speaks from a position of limitedness. The classic is bound by the limits of being created in a specific historical, cultural, and linguistic situation and communicates something about our own limits to knowledge and to our own moral perfectibility. In this way, the classic is a form of discourse that nonetheless resists interpretive reduction of its claim to truth to a particular justified claim about the way the world is or how we should act in particular situations, even if the classic carries on questions that probe the nature of truth and morality.

One important trait of classics that Tracy emphasizes is that they intend a wide public reception, that their meanings arise in public questioning, discussion, and disputation. In other words, classics are responses to the basic human questions, "What is true?" and "How shall I live my life?" As Tracy says, "We all find ourselves compelled both to recognize and on occasion to articulate our reasons for the recognition that certain expressions of the human spirit so disclose a compelling truth about our lives that we cannot deny them some kind of normative status. Thus do we name these expressions, and these alone, 'classics.' "[18] One reason why, for Tracy, classics call for public interpretation is that they express a common human struggle to understand the meaning of our existence, especially at those times when we are led to reflect on the particularity or uniqueness of our experience.

Tracy contends that any longstanding tradition of thought, especially a religious tradition, examines these moments of personal alienation, of eventual self-discovery and insight, and that it is precisely the classics of that tradition that link a person's sense of irreducible uniqueness to questions and answers that *are* shared by others struggling to find their place in that tradition. "Any person's intensification of particularity via a struggle with the fundamental questions of existence in a particular tradition, if that struggle is somehow united to the logos of appropriate expression, will yield a form of authentically sharable, public discourse."[19] To put the issue differently, each tradition of thought exhibits a pattern of reasoning about what Tracy calls the "fundamental questions of existence." By engaging with the classics of a particular tradition, one makes a value judgment that mediates between each person's unique experience of confronting the world in her or his individuality – a perspective not identical in all respects with any other individual perspective – while at the same time acknowledging that others, in the tradition that person knows best and in other traditions not as well known, have asked themselves the same or similar questions. This is what Tracy means by the "intensification of particularity," wherein one is brought further into oneself as one confronts the realization that one is both unquestionably unique and nonetheless continuous with the rest of the human community. The status of the classic depends on those all too rare instances of "appropriate expression"

(Tracy uses "logos" although his list of candidates for classic status seems to imply any creation crafted with the precision of deliberate word selection) where we glimpse both our individuality and our continuity through the momentary phrase, plot, or picture presented to us.

Religious ethics: interpreting limited persons

Tracy's fondness for the model of the classic prompts another important question. Does a classic have some special status relative to questions human beings have understood as basically religious or moral questions? To approach this question productively, it is important to keep in mind how contested the term "religion" is both in scholarly discourse and popular culture. Neither Tracy, nor his ideas about the classic presented later in this book, assume that it is possible to give an exhaustive definition of religion. However, I follow Tracy in suggesting that one important (although not the only) quality of distinctly religious discourse, or of what Tracy calls the "religious dimension" of common human experience and language, is that it probes the *limits* of human thought and of possible human actions.

> [T]he concept "limit" can be used as a key (but not exhaustive) category for describing certain signal characteristics peculiar to any language or experience with a properly religious dimension. Whether that dimension be explicit or implicit is not, in fact, the central issue … all significant explicitly religious language and experience (the "religions") and all significant implicitly religious characteristics of our common experience (the "religious dimension") will bear at least the "family resemblance" of articulating or implying a limit-experience, a limit-language, or a limit-dimension.[20]

According to Tracy, limit-language comes in two basic kinds: "limit-to" and "limit-of."[21] Some limit-language is used to communicate the limits to our own actions, given that we are free to act (in the common sense of this phrase) only within the confines of social groups, their patterns of obligation and institutions, and within our own range of naturally occurring physical and intellectual capacities. As Tracy points out, we experience bodily finitude (we cannot do all the things we would like to do, even if these goods pass uncontested in our communities, if for no other reason than that we cannot be in two places at once), contingency (we cannot predict or prepare for all the things that will happen to us and so we cannot plot with absolute certainty the course of our social interactions), and "radical transience" (we are limited by our natural life spans and the death and decay that pervade even the most laudable public and private efforts to lead a morally exemplary life).[22] These conditions are "limits-to" our action in the sense that they impose boundaries, physical or near-physical barriers, that constrain our actual efforts or what we envision to be possible for our future.

However, for Tracy, the experience of these limits demands a second level of limit discourse, namely "limit-of." On this reading, when we confront the experience of having such limits, it prompts us to ask the conditions or grounding or horizon for experiencing these conditions of life *as limits* and not just as uninterpretable givens. This forces, Tracy thinks, a basic evaluative judgment about the "limit-to" condition, a judgment that we do not find easy to express in language, which nonetheless calls us

to provide some opinion on the ultimate worth or worthlessness of our predicament and on what could make such a predicament possible.

What is important for this study, and what Tracy leaves tantalizingly unresolved, is how the experience of human limitedness that he identifies (both in the processes of writing and reading, as well as in experiencing the limits of life in community) unites what he calls the "religious dimension" of human experience and its linguistic attempts to render such experience meaningful with the aspirations and failures attendant upon all such moral striving. And it is here, I believe, that we begin to discern the moral dimension of Tracy's understanding of the classic. We also can begin to see how we might understand persons as classics for the purposes of inter-religious conversation about moral matters.

Tracy's discussion of ethics is actually quite limited and centers on the problem of how to differentiate characteristically religious language from characteristically moral language. He is aware of the charge leveled frequently against "classical liberal and modernist theologians" that they have reduced religion to morality, a transgression committed even by some members of his own Christian community for whom Jesus has become no more than a moral exemplar, a sage guide to the practical problems of this world. This same view of religion, he thinks, permeates secular attempts to discern a useful function for religion, such that he notes, "For the conventional wisdom in the secularist culture at large, it seems fair to observe, religion is widely considered a reasonably useful if somewhat primitive way of being moral."[23] In order to sort out in his own mind the difference between the moral and the religious, Tracy examines two aspects of how the moral is connected to the religious, both centering on the nature of religious language: the meta-ethical (what he calls "limit-questions in morality") and the existential (what he calls "limit-situations in the world of the everyday").

For Tracy, the moral domain of life is, as indicated earlier, the realm of limits to action. In other words, the moral is that area of life where we experience being obliged to do this or that; we experience the sense of what we *ought* to do, as a limit to the fully autonomous exercise of freedom. This moral domain is linked to the religious domain because both pertain to human limits, in the sense that for the former, we are limited by the constraints of social life as well as our own inability through body, intellect, or some other set of factors to carry through our highest ideals, while for the latter, we are limited by our ability to cognize and express our experiences of limits to thought and action.[24]

It is unfortunate that Tracy appears to confine his explicit discussion of the moral to what has come to be termed the meta-ethical aspect of moral thinking, that is the grounds we have for arguing about the specific goods we ought to pursue or the specific obligations we must discharge (an indication, perhaps, that Tracy's description of the moral domain has strong Kantian roots). On this account, the "limit-questions of morality" are those that cannot be answered on strictly moral grounds but demand a reason extrinsic to properly moral considerations (he gives the example of promise-keeping, noting that to ask the question of why one should keep one's promise, one cannot answer it convincingly based on criteria internal to the activity), namely on religious grounds. A religious answer to the limit-question of morality is required, Tracy thinks, just as a religious dimension to human experience and language is required at the edge of everyday life, that is at those moments when

momentous events such as love and death, ecstasy and alienation open us up to questioning the ultimate grounding, if any, that we feel is necessary to make sense of our lives.

Yet I think there is more to Tracy's discussion of limits and its relation to his discussion of classics than Tracy himself acknowledges. What I want to suggest in the next section is that there is an element of moral thinking, namely the human confrontation with the phenomenon of moral struggle (which accounts for but is not limited to a Kantian account of autonomy), both in failure and in triumph, that is the proper counterpart to what Tracy describes as the religious dimension to human experience and language. The real limit-question of morality, I suggest, is not the meta-ethical (the defensibility of moral claims) that Tracy supposes, but rather the motivational (the "livability" of moral claims) or the realm of moral psychology.

The model of person as classic

This brings us to a final question about classics that also returns us to the central problem of this chapter: *Can persons rightly be understood as classics and, if so, how?* My suggestion is that persons have the capacity to serve as moral classics for each other throughout their intellectual and moral struggles. They do this not only by serving as moral exemplars, that is as paragons of virtue or models for prudential decision-making, but also and more importantly as instantiations of moral struggle that highlight the particular interactions between ideas and practices. This is the correlate in the area of the moral life to what Tracy suggested about the relation between the writer of a text and its interpreter. It is only through the experience of reading in our own situation that we can discern the place where the questions of author meet the questions of our time. Yet it is of primary importance that the author of a text passes on the questions as well as the tentative formulations of the answers. So too we might say of the moral life that it is important that moral struggle as question is passed along with the answer provided by the moral life of the person. For the answer, of the text and of a life, highlights only one aspect or temporary illustration of a life. The person serves as the lived correlate to the literary classic when she or he passes on in their particular form of life the question that prompts their lived response.

As I suggested above, what has sometimes hampered contemporary appreciation of classics for moral instruction is nearly the same problem that prevents us from realizing the ways that real struggling, striving, imperfectly educated, imperfectly moral, unevenly religious people can serve as our classics in our own time. It is all too easy to assume that it is the ideas of the good, or the models of right behavior, that are the only useful ones. Yet Tracy's notion of the classic as opening up an interpretive space that discloses for the reader new possibilities for her or his life in community must assume that persons find, in their activities of reading and interpreting, a resonant dynamic, a trace of what they are in the transformative processes of what they undergo. Put differently, just as the processes of thinking, reading, experiencing, and questioning are essentially incomplete at any moment in a person's life, so too is the extent to which any one person exhibits her or his character in any one decision.

Tracy hints that the option I have just suggested might be a legitimate development of his understanding of classics, especially religious classics, although he seems to have in mind most especially persons who live ideals or lofty exemplifications of virtue.

> [W]hat we mean in naming certain texts, events, images, rituals, symbols, and persons "classics" is that here we recognize nothing less than the disclosure of a reality we cannot but name truth … here we find something valuable, something "important"; some disclosure of reality in a moment that must be called one of "recognition" which surprises, provokes, challenges, shocks and eventually transforms us; an experience that upsets conventional opinions and expands the sense of the possible; indeed a realized experience of that which is essential, that which endures.[25]

In other words, classics have three characteristics: (1) they are somehow disclosive of truth (whether personal, social, or ultimate, but in all cases something that is beyond what is immediately observable); (2) they focus our attention on interpreting something that is important or meaningful to us even if we are often too distracted to notice it; and (3) they are emotionally or morally unsettling, calling us to a deeper examination of what we are and how we live. To reorder these elements slightly, the classic presents itself to the interpreter in the form of certain basic *questions* (the classic's claim to our attention, which shocks us out of our habits and mental complacencies); the classic challenges us with the truthfulness of its *ideas* (even if the ideas proposed require substantial effort on our part to interpret in light of our own cultural context, and even if those ideas are imperfectly exemplified by those who first claimed our attention); and the classic suggests that even its own claims to truth are imperfectly understood if they remain at the level of thought without an equally important dimension of *practice* (an emphasis, we shall see, that is central to both the Buddhist and Christian thinkers that will be examined).

I want to end this section of the chapter by suggesting that these three dimensions of the classic – *question*, *idea*, and *practice* – if interpreted correctly, provide substantial evidence for linking the idea of the classic text with the notion of person as classic. Now certainly, the language of "person" or "personhood" cuts across disciplines of thought without losing any of its ability to inspire or provoke. In contemporary philosophy, the category of person has been linked to questions about the status of individual bodily entities and their capacities for socialization, self-reflection, and valuation, with no universal assent to the proposition that "person" (or any possible linguistic near-equivalent) is a universal and necessary category of human thought.[26] In Christian theology, the effects of Boethius' definition of the person as "an individual substance of a rational nature" became a touchstone for medieval moral theology, even as the language of "person" also figured prominently in the meaning of earlier dogmatic formulations of Trinitarian doctrine in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. In Buddhist philosophy, the relationship of the conventional sense of individual personhood persisted in the face of denials about any ultimate notion of a self apart from the coordination of certain causal factors arising and passing away. (I shall return to Christian and Buddhist ideas of individual persons in much greater detail in later chapters.) Indeed, the possibility that "person" might serve as a "bridge concept" for comparative religious ethics has already been initiated.[27]

While cognizant of these debates, I suggest that it is still helpful to approach individual persons in light of the basic *questions* that call them to attention, the basic *ideas* that help them to make sense of the world and to provide them with a vision of the good life, and the basic *practices* through which those ideas come to realization, even as the practices themselves communicate the limits to the expression of those ideas.[28] Another way to express this same set of categories is in the language of tradition. To think of persons as classics is to ask the question of how individual people struggle to appropriate the moral teachings of their traditions, especially when they come to realize their tradition's own historical contingency as well as its noble but frequently imperfect attempts to advance our life together.

In the next section of this chapter, I offer a brief sketch of two classic religious figures, Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, as thinkers who confront basic human problems, drawing on their own traditions' moral ideas and practices to make sense of the classic question of moral struggle. As we shall see, these two figures ponder this classic question insofar as they uphold their respective traditions' most puzzling ideas – for Bonaventure, the doctrine of the Trinity, and for Buddhaghosa, the mode of analysis known as Abhidhamma – to practical testing and refinement. It is proper to place them alongside others who view moral agents as participating in the lifelong process of discerning the truth of their own traditions precisely because these two central ideas do not appear to have immediate moral applicability, even if in the end these same ideas turn out to be the heart of each thinker's moral reflection. It will remain the work of the rest of the book to illustrate how they might serve as illustrators of classic religious ideas and practices of moral struggle for us.

Classic Persons: Ideas, Practices, and Questions

The reason for choosing these two individuals is really one of initial, apparent comparability in basic spheres of activity. Both thinkers took seriously the need to relate the more theoretical issues about the nature of knowledge and its relationship to action with practical concerns to locate the kinds of activity most conducive to moral transformation. In other words, both Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa were concerned with how basic moral ideas and practices interact in the life of practitioners in their communities. Moreover, each thinker worked at a time when his community was involved in some kind of internal evaluation and renewal and each made contributions that would have profound effects on the future of those communities. In other words, both Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa were concerned with understanding the processes of personal moral formation but were also interested in how their communities interpreted stories about exemplary moral behavior that were both definitive of and challenging to community identity.

It is also significant that the figures selected express certain ambiguities about the transformative power of their own traditions and their exposition of the teachings passed down through these traditions. For example, it is possible to look at Buddhaghosa's treatment of meditation instruction as an elaboration of the Buddha's teachings as preserved in his discourses, or as an attempt to render more explicit through the work of commentary the specific elements of meditation as they pertain

to different personality types, social situations, and stages of achievement in practice. While practitioners in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition take its teachings to be relevant across time and culture, they still require interpretation to demonstrate their relevance to new times, places, and communities. This is most pointedly expressed in Buddhaghosa's style of integrating the technical terminology of the Abhidhamma (the philosophical systematization of the Buddha's teachings) with detailed directives for taking meditation subjects and practicing meditation.

In a similar way, it is possible to view Bonaventure as emphasizing a certain way of interpreting the Christian Gospels through the heritage of Francis of Assisi and his community. While he takes the relevance of Jesus of Nazareth to pertain to all people at all times, he remains ambiguous about exactly how that example should be understood at different times in history and in the context of different styles of life and personal commitments. The ambiguities expressed in these examples are constructive precisely because they illustrate how each thinker encodes indeterminacy and debate in the very traditions they are often taken to present. Even so, both thinkers are concerned with how their particular interpretations are linked with the truth of the traditions they study and in which they have found normative visions of the purpose and meaning of life. I will now offer a brief sketch of each thinker in order to lay out how some of the basic moral ideas, or classic notions, arose in each thinker's historical context and how these ideas point to the classic question of moral struggle.

Bonaventure as mediator of classic ideas and practices

Bonaventure, whose given name was Giovanni di Fidanza, was born in 1217 CE in Bagnoregio, central Italy, somewhere between the present-day towns of Orvieto in the region of Umbria and Viterbo in Tuscany (the original town was destroyed in an earthquake in 1695).[29] The only surviving information about his childhood is the legend that Bonaventure himself recounts in the *Legenda minor* of Francis of Assisi that he was a very sick child who was saved from an early death by the miraculous intercession of Francis.[30]

Modern scholarship on Bonaventure's professional biography has tended to divide it into three periods marked by his significant institutional transitions and responsibilities.[31] Some have correlated these three periods with a classification of Bonaventure's writings based on differences in style and audience.[32] The first period (roughly 1235–1257 CE) spans the time from the beginning of his studies at the University of Paris in the newly established Franciscan school to the beginning of his service as minister general of the Franciscan order. During this period, most of his time was spent in schools, initially as a student and later as a teacher, and his writings were suitably directed to his responsibilities in this area. Among these writings are his biblical commentaries on the books of Ecclesiastes and Wisdom and on the Gospels of John and Luke (1248–1254 CE), his Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard (1250–1254 CE), as well as a series of disputed questions which examined the topics of Christ, the Trinity, and evangelical perfection (1254–56 CE).[33] While he entered the Franciscan order in 1243/4, he was not ordained a priest until 1253, which means that, although the vast majority of this portion of his writings occurred within the theological trajectory of the Franciscan order's university community, it occurred prior

to Bonaventure's institution as an official member of the class of Catholic clerics. Bonaventure's intellectual concerns were, therefore, mostly similar to the prevailing academic concerns of his institution and his religious community. Among these concerns were discussions about the proper place of members of the mendicant religious orders (the Franciscans and the Dominicans) and the secular teachers who were not affiliated with those orders at the University of Paris. This period coincided with the transition from the papacy of Innocent IV (1243–1254 CE), who sided against the mendicants for the reason that their strong imitation of the poverty of Christ was considered an improper interpretation of Christian discipleship and a threat to ecclesiastical authority, to the more supportive papacy of Alexander IV (1254–1261 CE).[34]

The second period (roughly 1257–1268 CE) spans the time from the beginning of Bonaventure's service as leader of the Franciscans to the end of the papacy of Clement IV (1265–1268 CE) who had been a strong supporter of the Franciscans and their position in the medieval universities. Upon his election as minister general of the Franciscans, Bonaventure began a series of visits to Franciscan communities throughout Europe during which he became more concerned that the order was in need of serious reform in its commitment to evangelical poverty. This period also marks a shift from his more academic writings to his pastoral and liturgical writings. His well-known *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, his *De triplici via*, as well as his major and minor biographies of Francis, all date from this period. Here the historical record becomes important for this study, not so much because Bonaventure pushed the order to assess its adherence to Francis' example, but rather because he chose to write a combination of biographies and mystical treatises to accomplish this reformist goal. This distinguished him markedly from his predecessor as minister general, John of Parma, who found support for the Franciscans' efforts at self-reform in the apocalyptic writings of Joachim of Fiore.

The third period (roughly 1268–1274 CE) spans the time from the cessation of papal support for the Franciscans to Bonaventure's death just before the conclusion of the Second Council of Lyons. In his writings during this period, he returned to commenting on the Franciscan life of evangelical poverty and also began to engage more fervently with those who challenged the presence of the Franciscans in the universities, even though he was still occupied with administration of the order and its internal division between the Spiritual and Community factions which continued up to and after his death. While his *Apologia pauperum* dates from this period, most of his writings during this period survive in the form of transcriptions of his lectures, including some delivered at the University of Paris where he had previously taught. These *Collationes* exhibit his sustained response to the influence of Aristotle on medieval philosophy and theology and his highly nuanced theology of history, especially in the *Collationes in hexaemeron*. However, Pope Gregory X (1271–1276) put an end to his further engagement with these issues by elevating him to the rank of cardinal in the last year of his life.

We can identify three recurring themes in Bonaventure's life and times based on this short biographical sketch. First, he was a trained academic who seems to have spent much of his energy later in life as an institutional leader focused on internal reform. His travel schedule and his writing style both adapted to the needs of his ministry. Second, he was fortunate to be living at a time of deep personal and institutional coincidence.

By this I mean that his particular talents and institutional priorities were precisely coordinated to make the most of the political events of his time. The challenges to the papacy by the monarchies were played out through the symbols of territorial and monetary wealth, and it was precisely these symbols that Bonaventure employed in his exegetical and speculative mystical writings. Third, he valued the importance of personal examples for exploring both theological and institutional trajectories. As we will see later, much of Bonaventure's theology can be viewed as an act of balancing two emphases: the exemplary persons of Jesus of Nazareth and Francis of Assisi on the one hand, and the theological doctrine of the Trinity on the other. What is noteworthy is that Bonaventure valued a rereading of the personal examples of past lives, combined with rigorous argumentation, rather than doctrinal assertions (and occasionally violence) from authoritarian heights, as a remedy for religious disagreements.

Buddhaghosa as mediator of classic ideas and practices

The life and times of Buddhaghosa are not as easy to summarize as those of Bonaventure precisely because summary historical details and a good deal of legend are all modern scholars possess. Much more is known about his writings than about his life, and the effect of these writings on later Buddhist thought is enormous. Yet despite his demonstrable centrality in Theravāda Buddhist thought (that form of Buddhism still practiced in the Southeast Asian countries of Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, and Thailand), contemporary Buddhist scholarship in Europe and the United States has produced no sustained scholarly treatment of Buddhaghosa's writings, much less any treatment of his moral thought.[35]

Contemporary scholarship still knows very little about the period in which he wrote or what brought him from a presumably comfortable upbringing as an Indian Brahmin to join the monks in Ceylon.[36] Because the works attributed to him are so voluminous, and for reasons of stylistic difference and commentarial structure, there is now substantial agreement that many of the writings associated with his name (though not the ones of central concern to this study) should be classified as pseudonymous. One such hypothesis about authorship suggests that Buddhaghosa was really the name of a committee of monks working under a single name, which perhaps was the name of a certain historical individual.[37]

In addition to his *Visuddhimagga* (or "path of purification"), he is alleged to have written commentaries on the entire Pāli Tipiṭaka which includes the Suttas (or discourses of the Buddha), the Vinaya (the code regulating monastic life including stories surrounding the institution of its various rules), and the Abhidhamma (the detailed elaboration and systematization of Buddhist psychology). Many of these commentaries could be redactions of Sinhalese commentaries which Buddhaghosa then edited and translated into Pāli (the language in which the central texts of Theravāda Buddhism are preserved). In any case, the *Visuddhimagga* is the primary text by Buddhaghosa used in this study, although it is important to note that many other texts attributed to him which are commentarial in form would need to be consulted if one wished to give a comprehensive account of his moral philosophy.

The same kind of biographical sketch given for Bonaventure above is simply not possible for Buddhaghosa's life. An attempt to study this person known as "the

Buddha's voice"[38] is particularly difficult, especially since he says virtually nothing about himself in his writings, and even the postscripts to his writings say only that they were made by one "who bears the name Buddhaghosa conferred by the venerable ones, and who should be called 'of Moraṇḍaceṭaka.'"[39] He arrived in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) sometime during the reign of Mahānāma which spanned the period 412–434 CE, but beyond that the chronology of events breaks down. However, the legend of Buddhaghosa's arrival in Ceylon from Jambudīpa (India) is a story well worth relating, short though it is.[40]

He was an educated youth of the Brahmin class, born in the late fourth or the early fifth century CE in a town said to have contained the tree under which the historical Buddha attained his enlightenment, and having mastered the Vedas by the age of 11, became renowned for his skill in argument. Though a neighbor to the famous Bodhi tree, he was not yet familiar with the teachings of its namesake. A wise man of the town, Revata, learning of the boy and aware of the arrogance lurking just beneath his fine arguments, commented "Who is this who is braying like an ass?" After speaking to him about the Dhamma ("teachings") of the Buddha, and rendering the boy silent in the process, he encouraged him to enter the order of monks to learn more about these teachings, to journey to the leading community of Sinhalese monks at the Mahāvihāra ("great monastery"), and to write a commentary on the Pāli Tipiṭaka ("three baskets"). Upon arriving at the monastery, the still headstrong young man was refused access to the monastic library until he could prove himself worthy of undertaking a commentary, at which point he would then be allowed to begin his monastic education. So he was commanded by the *thera* ("elder") of the community to comment on one verse of one book of the *Suttapiṭaka*, and that effort, so the story goes, produced the 700-plus pages of the *Visuddhimaggga*. Almost all of Buddhaghosa's career as a monk in the Mahāvihāra coincided with a significant dispute between that monastery and its rival, the more populous Abhayagiri (in northern Ceylon), and while that dispute was over what would appear to be relatively small matters (emphasizing certain passages over others in the Suttas, expressing preference for the Buddha's expression of the Dhamma in his long discourses rather than his shorter discourses, disagreement over the proper order in which meditation techniques should be approached), the payoff for the winner was enormous: the patronage of the winner's monastery by King Mahānāma.

While we know relatively little about the details of Buddhaghosa's life, we do know something (though still relatively little) about the political context in which his monastic career developed. The Buddhist history of Ceylon is helpful in isolating certain themes through which to read Buddhaghosa's text. This period in the island's history is known as the Anurādhapura period, from roughly the fourth century BCE to the ninth century CE, transitioning to the Poḷonnaruva period which carries through to the beginning of the modern era with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505.[41]

The first "great monastery" on the island was the Mahāvihāra, said to be established by Mahinda, son of the famous Buddhist king, Aśoka,[42] who was alleged to have been the driving force behind the spread of Buddhism from India to Ceylon. The monastery had benefited from exclusive royal patronage from the time of its founding during the reign of Devānaṃpiya Tissa (307–267 BCE), coming into greater prominence with the building of the Mahāthūpa ("great shrine") by the succeeding king, Duṭṭhagāmanī

(161–137 BCE), and the rooting of the Bo tree branch from the original enlightenment tree at Bodh Gaya in India. Although the island was subject to foreign occupation for a good portion of the next 150 years, the Mahāvihāra remained the sole institution of Buddhist learning and ordination lineage.[43]

During the reign of Vaṭṭagāmani (104–88 BCE), two important events occurred. First, the Pāli Tipiṭaka was committed to writing for the first time (by traditional dating, and current scholarship judges that at least some portions of it were probably this early). The monks of the Mahāvihāra prioritized the care and preaching of these texts and became resistant to the innovations offered by alternative accounts of the Buddha's teaching coming to the monastery from other communities.[44] Second, King Vaṭṭagāmani founded the Abhayagiri monastery and soon afterwards disagreements erupted between the Abhayagiri and the Mahāvihāra. The Abhayagiri was itself home to its own Buddhist artifacts – the Buddha's tooth and his alms bowl – which lent it prestige and legitimacy.

The exact origins of the Abhayagiri are not clear. Gunawardana traces one possible interpretation to the violation of Vinaya rules by a specific monk: "Mahātissa, for whom Vaṭṭagāmani built the Abhayagiri monastery, was accused by the monks of the Mahāvihāra of a breach of discipline and consequently was expelled from the order. It is not improbable that Mahātissa's popularity and the favored treatment he received from the king aroused jealousy in his fellow monks."[45] While there is some chance that the Abhayagiri had a slightly different version of the Vinaya, the Pāli Vinaya as we have it today lists only four causes for expulsion: sexual misconduct, stealing, murder, and lying about meditative attainments, so presumably Mahātissa's breach of discipline was one of these four. Yet it is also possible that the split arose as a result of the relative weight given to new Sanskrit texts coming to the island from other countries. Since none of the Abhayagiri texts survive, the only evidence for their opinions on certain matters comes from texts of the Mahāvihāra Theravāda (Buddhaghosa's among them). Some of these views exhibit similarities to later Mahāyāna teachings (implying the coordinate hypothesis that new texts which would later be called Mahāyāna had made their way to Ceylon), but many appear to be matters of differing emphases based on alternate interpretations of the same Pāli texts. Among these differences were the ultimate profitability of ascetic practices, when a practitioner moves from one stage along the Buddhist path to the next, in what sense an object can be said to be present in consciousness, and other such problems.[46]

In the nearly 500 years between the establishment of the Abhayagiri monastery and the arrival of Buddhaghosa in Ceylon, royal patronage alternated between one monastery and the other. The Abhayagiri leveled its own attacks against the Mahāvihāra. As Gunawardana again reports, only 150 years or so before Buddhaghosa, the Mahāvihāra was critiqued for "being undisciplined, citing their use of ivory fans, their practice of conferring the Ordination by messenger and their practice of reckoning the qualifying age for Ordination from the date of conception. … [and] on their method of fixing ceremonial boundaries (*sīmā*) and the propriety of spitting on the ground during morning ablutions."[47] Even at the time of Buddhaghosa himself, the Abhayagiri was still disputing "the propriety of using a stand (*ādhāraka*) to accept offerings of food," asserting that "the use of a stand limited physical participation in the act of acceptance."[48]

The Mahāvihāra's need to reestablish its once unquestioned primacy, after periods of the Abhayagiri receiving royal patronage, lends an important element to our understanding of the events to which Buddhaghosa's writings were a response. Not only were his writings a response in terms of content, wherein he provided a manual for meditation as a way to reassert and clarify the practical implications of the Theravāda teachings of the Mahāvihāra, but they were also a response in style. As Ñāṇamoli argues,

> The Abhayagiri Monastery would naturally have been busy studying and advocating some of these weighty developments [in Sanskrit Buddhism] while the Great Monastery had nothing new to offer: the rival was thus able, at some risk, to appear go-ahead and up-to-date while the old institution perhaps began to fall behind for want of new material, new inspiration and international connections, because its studies being restricted to the orthodox presentation in the Sinhalese language, it had already done what it could in developing Tipiṭaka learning.[49]

However, these very same contextual factors make it difficult to find a defensible starting point because we risk attributing too much to Buddhaghosa as a spokesperson for the community and not enough to his insights into the particularities and problems of Buddhist practice. Alternatively, we can say that it is important to appreciate his place as a distinctive voice in the Buddhist Abhidhamma tradition, as a commentator whose work on canonical literature was not necessarily coterminous with the position of his monastic community.

For several reasons, then, it is difficult to discern a *pattern* in Buddhaghosa's moral thinking. First, because all of Buddhaghosa's writings (and those attributed to him) are in some sense commentarial, it is difficult to know where the authoritative text ends and the authoritative commentator begins. On many occasions, he refers to both the authoritative text under consideration and the commentaries to which he had access. While the Sinhalese commentaries Buddhaghosa was working with are no longer available in their entirety to modern scholars, sections of them can be reliably reconstructed through careful examination of passages cited by Buddhaghosa and other medieval monastic figures. Second, the written tradition of Abhidhamma literature, and its distinctive method for interpreting the other texts of the Pāli Tipiṭaka (to be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter), informs all aspects of Buddhaghosa's writing. Buddhaghosa's synthesis of Abhidhammic psychology and meditation instruction balances these equally important but stylistically diverse aspects of Theravāda teaching. Decoding what Buddhaghosa has to say about any particular topic requires at least some attempt to restate issues in the language of Abhidhammic psychology. Third, if Buddhaghosa were to have defined the English terms "morality" or "ethics," his definitions would likely have yielded a network of concepts that would not have any precise correlate in Western ethical theory.[50] The structure of *Visuddhimagga*, for example, weaves together a section detailing the precepts of socially acceptable behavior (reflecting also the content of the traditional Ten Precepts), considered necessary preparation for engaging in meditation, with a section on meditation practices, which is followed by an examination of the nature of insight wisdom.[51] Finally, the audience and the literary form he invoked for its benefit

were probably exclusively monastic and his writing is focused on practical usefulness in facilitating meditation. However, despite the intended audience, there are several places in which Buddhaghosa is aware of the possibility that lay Buddhists will find certain techniques beneficial and, under proper supervision, should be encouraged to practice them.[52]

Moral struggle as classic question

For both Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, approaching the classic question of moral struggle involves one in some construal of the way the world is and how it ought to be (what I describe in the next chapter with the language of symbolic religious cosmologies) as well as a particular set of practices through which one tests these construals as to their truthfulness and their ability to motivate and guide moral practice (what I describe in Chapter 3 as practices of material simplicity). In order for us to understand these thinkers as analyzing a similar moral problem, it will be necessary to establish guidelines for how to use these concepts comparatively. The method of conceptual expansion employed to analyze a moral problem (or what I am calling the classic question of moral struggle), acknowledges that there are many expressions of religious life and discourse and that it is not always easy to pick out those elements that most closely resemble ethical concerns that might be familiar to us. For that reason, this study is guided by a desire to provide an answer to those critics of comparative religious ethics who judge recent projects in the field as having developed insufficiently the distinctly religious dimension of their subject matter. The method I employ here presents Christian Trinitarian theology and Buddhist Abhidhammic psychology as distinctly religious comparative categories, indeed as symbolic religious cosmologies, in which particular concepts expressing moral struggle are situated and develop. While I am aware of the disputes that have arisen in calling Buddhist systems of thought "religious" cosmologies, I try to demonstrate in the next chapter and in the later chapters that Theravāda Buddhism's comprehensive view of reality and the depth of analysis that it brings to human experience characterize it in a way that claims to answer many of the basic questions of human experience with which religious discourse is concerned. Focusing on practices of material simplicity is intended to limit the investigation into the broad range of materials that touch on moral struggle by focusing on those portions of the evidence that appear relevant to the question of moral struggle.[53] Although a comparison of institutional contexts will not dominate this comparison, the focus on material simplicity will give us an occasion to examine how these social practices were bound up with particular institutional concerns in the histories of these traditions.

As the foregoing accounts readily admit, Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa are by no means obvious choices for a project in the comparative study of religious ethics, but neither are they so disparate as to preclude an intelligible and fruitful conversation between them. There are, of course, many difficulties and potential incongruities in any comparative study, and I want to acknowledge three such difficulties at the outset: the incongruity of source material, the incongruity of religious traditions, and the incongruity of secondary scholarship.

The incongruity of source material comes in several varieties. One variety is literary genre and on this score we must quickly admit that Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa were writing for different audiences and therefore chose writing styles to meet the needs of their communities. Both thinkers were writing in ways they judged accessible to their audiences' very practical concerns, even if at times their styles are intended to challenge their readers to think differently and thereby to live in new ways. There is a correlative incongruity that arises from the scholar's selection of source material, an incongruity I have attempted to minimize in this study. For example, I draw evidence from roughly equivalent portions of each thinker's corpus. The texts I use from Bonaventure (for example selections from his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, the *Breviloquium*, the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, and certain writings on evangelical poverty in the Franciscan life) roughly parallel the amount of text in a single larger work of Buddhaghosa (*Visuddhimagga*). Another incongruity in source material has to do with the availability of counter positions to those of Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, and this problem is not so easily dismissed for this study. While we have, for example, a rich sense of the debate between the Franciscans and the secular masters at Paris, or between the Spiritual and Community groups within the Franciscans, or the different styles and positions of Bonaventure and his contemporary Thomas Aquinas, we have no record of such detailed debates for Buddhaghosa and his contemporaries. As mentioned previously, Buddhaghosa was probably involved in the disagreement between the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri, but we have no record of developed counter positions. Although some scholars have attempted to reconstruct the position of the Abhayagiri, including its similarities to some later Mahāyāna teachings, we are left only with Buddhaghosa's side comments about his opponents and with the writings of those who commented on his work.[54]

A related problem affecting this study has to do with how one can speak about moral behaviors from written descriptions, or, put differently, whether it is possible to speak about what I am calling classic practices based on an analysis of texts rather than on ethnographic observations. This study is primarily an investigation into texts and has no observational component which means that, whatever its conclusions, its ultimate usefulness can only be measured if its theoretical contribution to the understanding of moral struggle and comparative ethics is supplemented by future investigations into the dynamics of moral struggle in communities of practice, especially as these might be discerned in first-person accounts of religious conversation (a topic I return to at the end of the book). Insofar as texts encode background questions to which the texts themselves are answers, as Gadamer noted, we are justified in using them to understand our own questions about moral struggle as these texts share a subject matter with our questions. Part of the burden of this study is to show that, in William Schweiker's description, we inhabit a shared moral space – that the questions to which Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's texts are answers are related in many ways to the questions that form our notions of moral struggle and our experiences of moral weakness. This is the force of suggesting that moral struggle is a classic question and that the perennial timeliness of the answers Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa give, through their examination of ideas and practices, renders them classics as well.

Incongruity in religious traditions poses a different kind of problem. Some scholars have argued that differences among religious communities in terms of both beliefs

and practices are so extreme that the term religion itself begins to lose its meaning. On this reading, then, most if not all comparisons peddle their artificiality by forcing dissimilar things into similar classifications. I do not intend to enter this general debate about what is and what is not a religion in any detail, but rather I only want to note that the term "religious" (whether or not it describes anything "essential" in what have historically come to be called the "religions") is still a helpful place marker for that aspect of human activity that cannot be reduced to other more specific individual or social human phenomena. Even so, contemporary theorists are wise to point out the ease with which a scholar can assimilate disparate elements of actual religious thought and practice into a master theory that revels in the unity brought about by drawing cursory similarities at the expense of acknowledging deep differences.

A subspecies of this danger, equally problematic, is the tendency to take a particular strand of thought in a religious tradition as representative of the entire tradition. We are also faced with the problem of whether traditions are the sorts of things that can be represented at all. If traditions are, as some have argued, dynamic and always in a state of flux, then they cannot be represented by any single, static set of beliefs or codes of conduct; neither can they be fully or best interpreted by only one thinker. We cannot, on this reading, locate an essence to a religious tradition, whether this essence is to be found in the oldest expression of a tradition or its orthodox and authoritative teachings, from which we then might judge variations and deviations. Most contemporary scholars in religious studies recognize these pitfalls and do their best to avoid them. However, these problems do bring up an important concern for this study, namely the fact of methodological asymmetry based on the history of scholarly engagement with the sources. This study places at its center the claim that there are distinctly religious comparative categories for the study of ethics which nonetheless support sufficiently dissimilar accounts about what it means to be religious from the perspective of different communities.

The third kind of incongruity is the incongruity in secondary scholarship. In terms of the amount of information available, there are many more accessible secondary sources to guide the study of Bonaventure's thought than there are to guide the study of Buddhaghosa's thought. In terms of the kind of information that is available, Bonaventure studies are mostly the work of Christian theologians for the purpose of advancing projects in Christian theology (which are, it must be said, carried on with a high degree of historical and sociological sensitivity). While the few existing studies on Buddhaghosa are projects primarily concerned with the translation and historical development of his writings, few of these focus on Buddhaghosa as a distinct line of interpretation within Theravāda Buddhism, and far fewer as the expositor of claims to truth that demand a public hearing. Within the study of ethics, we see variations on this asymmetry. For example, within Christian ethics more broadly and Roman Catholic ethics more specifically, Bonaventure has received paltry consideration compared to such thinkers as Augustine of Hippo or Thomas Aquinas. Within Buddhist ethics, significantly more time has been spent attempting to decode particular Buddhist concepts, to translate Buddhist teachings and the practices of Buddhist communities into terms familiar to contemporary philosophical and theological ethics, and probing the moral implications of Buddhist narrative forms than has been spent analyzing the thinking of individual Buddhists (even influential ones such as Buddhaghosa). A few recent exceptions to this will be noted further along.

While there is very little secondary scholarship on the moral thought of either Bonaventure or Buddhaghosa, the few available sources display divergent academic agendas. In most cases, scholarship on Bonaventure's ethics has been carried out by Roman Catholic scholars primarily for an audience working within the discipline of Catholic moral theology. This is not to say that such scholarship seeks a narrow audience, for it presents its work, in the wording of the papal encyclical salutation, to "all persons of goodwill." I mean only that such writings acknowledge that other Christians are the most likely persons to care about and engage these writings. Western scholarship about Buddhaghosa and his moral thought, on the other hand, has been carried out mostly by North American and European academics who are writing largely for other academics. While they tend to acknowledge that their work will have some bearing on the thought and practice of Buddhist communities, many of them are not working from within Buddhist communities, envisioning Buddhist practitioners as their intended audience. For this reason, there are potential methodological and ideological incongruities in the secondary literature, the acknowledgement of which guides much of the interpretation offered here. However, insofar as this book is primarily a constructive project in comparative religious ethics and moral psychology, and not an historical or linguistic study of either thinker, I employ this secondary literature cautiously with an eye toward its use in deciphering the complex normative implications of each thinker's writings.

Notes

1 Here I follow William Schweiker's formulation that ethics be viewed as "critical and constructive reflection on moral existence." See his *Responsibility and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.

2 On the notion of vocabularies, see Robert Brandom, "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Holism," in Robert Brandom, ed., *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 167, cited in Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil: Human Nature and Spiritual Exercises in Xunzi and Augustine* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 9. I would pose the relevant question differently: Is it possible for the forms of religious discourse that inform comparative studies of moral topics to challenge or at least augment the operative notions about discursive practices on which some recent comparative studies (and many critiques of comparative study) are based?

3 On the notion of tradition, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 12:

> A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretive debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted.

I would want to extend the notion of tradition, however, beyond those formally equipped for engaging in its debates. MacIntyre's tale of the interaction between his own Roman Catholic Christian communion and modernity neglects what is arguably one of the central

ideas of that tradition, namely the silent witness of believers whose voices are frequently spoken for rather than listened to in a tradition's philosophical debates about its moral distinctiveness and coherence ("the power of the poor in history" as Gustavo Gutiérrez called it).

4 See Ronald M. Green, *Religious Reason: The Rational and Moral Basis of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) and David Little and Sumner Twiss in *Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Method* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978).

5 See Robin Lovin and Frank Reynolds, eds., *Cosmogony and Ethical Order: New Studies in Comparative Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), influencing subsequent studies such as Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990), in turn inspiring scholars such as Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil.*

6 On the tradition-bounded character of moral reasoning and meta-ethical justification, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, challenged by those focusing on the performative-deliberative justifications of moral claims, within religious traditions and modern democratic polities, as in Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and their Discontents* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) and *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

7 For an early formulation of this idea, see Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 96–100.

8 For the outlines of this debate, see Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) and Lawrence W. Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture and History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). On the place of classics in the critical study of religion and liberal arts education, see Frank E. Reynolds and Sheryl Burkhalter, eds. *Beyond the Classics? Essays in Religious Studies and Liberal Education* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

9 David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 100.

10 Ibid., 99.

11 Ibid., 101.

12 These three options for textual interpretation, as well as the fourth that Tracy views as a correction, appear in various forms throughout Tracy's work, but they are most clearly formulated in two places in his *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 50–52 and 74–7.

13 Ibid., 50–1.

14 Ricoeur's longer description of this process is helpful:

> The problem of writing becomes a hermeneutical problem when it is referred to its complementary pole, which is reading. A new dialectic then emerges, that of distanciation and appropriation. By appropriation I mean the counterpart of the semantic autonomy, which detached the text from its writer. To appropriate is to make "one's own" what was "alien." Because there is a general need for making our own what is foreign to us, there is a general problem of distanciation. Distance, then, is not simply a fact, a given, just the actual spatial and temporal gap between us and the appearance of such and such work of art or discourse. It is a dialectical trait, the principle of a struggle between the otherness that transforms all spatial and temporal distance into cultural estrangement and the ownness by which all understanding aims at the extension of self-understanding. Distanciation is not a qualitative phenomenon; it is the dynamic counterpart of our need, our interest, and our effort to overcome cultural estrangement.

> Writing and reading take place in this cultural struggle. Reading is the *pharmakon*, the "remedy," by which the meaning of the text is rescued from the estrangement of distanciation and put in a new proximity, a proximity which suppresses and preserves the cultural distance and includes the otherness with the ownness. (Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth, TX: The Texas Christian University Press, 1976, 43)

On the notion of personal action as text, see Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, John B. Thompson, ed. and trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 197–221.

15 I adopt and extend Gadamer's use of the term:

> Husserl is obviously seeking to capture the way all limited intentionality of meaning merges into the fundamental continuity of the whole. A horizon is not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further. Thus the horizon intentionality which constitutes the unity of the flow of experience is paralleled by an equally comprehensive horizon intentionality on the objective side. For everything that is given as existent is given in terms of a world and hence brings the world horizon with it. (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. edn., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, trans., New York: Continuum, 1998, 245)

16 Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 51. Here, Tracy is following Paul Ricoeur,

> The subjective–objective dialectic does not exhaust the meaning of meaning and therefore does not exhaust the structure of discourse. The "objective" side of discourse itself may itself be taken in two different ways. We may mean the "what" of discourse or the "about what" of discourse. The "what" of discourse is its "sense," the "about what" is its "reference." … Whereas the sense is immanent to the discourse, and objective in the sense of ideal, the reference expresses the movement in which language transcends itself. In other words, the sense correlates the identification function and the predicative function within the sentence, and the reference relates language to the world. It is another name for discourse's claim to be true. (Paul Ricoeur, "Language as Discourse," in *Interpretation Theory*, 19–20)

17 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination,* 102.

18 Ibid., 108.

19 Ibid., 134.

20 Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 93. Tracy is careful to note that not all limit-language is necessarily religious. As he says,

> First, "limit" is argued to be *a* characteristic, not a universal definition of religion. Indeed such further characteristics as the "dialectical" character of religious experience and language involve further questions implied but not treated here. … Second, the argument is not that *all* limit-language is *eo ipso* religious, but rather that all religious (dimension or explicit) experience and language has a limit-character. In general terms, there can be "limit-to" language which is not disclosive of a final "limit-of" dimension. (p. 111, n. 11)

21 Tracy cites two sources for his employment of limit language: again, Paul Ricoeur (this time from an unpublished 1974 lecture "The Specificity of Religious Language" which appears in revised form in the first two chapters of Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion,*

Narrative and Imagination, David Pellauer, trans. [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 35–72) and also Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language: An Empirical Placing of Theological Phrases* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), especially where Ramsey singles out, in Tracy's words, "the kind of situation which religious languages discloses is a situation which involves both 'an odd discernment' and a 'total commitment.' More exactly, religious language points to the kind of highly personal situation which cannot be described in straightforward indicative language. Like poetic metaphors, religious language discloses an odd personal discernment which cannot be described literally but whose reality cannot be denied." David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 160–5.

22 Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 93.

23 Ibid., 101.

24 It would be fair to say that, insofar as Tracy's implied ethical theory does not depart explicitly from Ricoeur's, it too is a form of "mixed deontology." See Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 111, n. 11. For a summary of Ricoeur's approach, see his "The Teleological and Deontological Structures of Action: Aristotle and/or Kant?" in *Contemporary French Philosophy*, A. Phillips Griffiths, ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 99–111.

25 Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination*, 108.

26 For a helpful review of these positions, see *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins, and Steven Lukes, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

27 I view the notion of persons developed here as related to but distinct from Aaron Stalnaker's effort to establish "person" as one of a series of useful "bridge concepts" for comparative ethics. Stalnaker takes his lead from the recent discussions between Harry Frankfurt and Charles Taylor about the necessity of reflexivity and strong evaluations for an authentic notion of personhood (pp. 44–9). Stalnaker's use of "person" as a "bridge concept" stems from his judgment about where one ought to locate the greatest danger and most likely pitfalls in comparative ethics projects. As he says,

> the theoretical impetus behind the use of bridge concepts is the desire to bring culturally distinct religious figures into an imagined dialogue, to relate their distinctive bodies of thought and associated practices by describing them around certain shared themes. The paradigmatic danger of such a move is to obscure or confuse differences. Thus, when choosing bridge concepts, we should strive to take nothing for granted that may be at issue between the two, and in general to be as spare as possible … This concept of personhood takes little for granted about how exactly to understand "human nature," what the constituent elements of a person are (i.e., what sort of general account of the human person ought to be given), why spiritual exercises are necessary, what they are, what their ultimate *telos* might be, or how they produce their effects. In other words, this bridge concept is compatible with the desired comparative questions, without smuggling in answers ahead of time or focusing on extraneous or misleading issues. (Aaron Stalnaker, *Overcoming Our Evil*, 48–9)

28 On the range of hermeneutics beyond texts, see Lawrence E. Sullivan, "Sound and Senses: Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance," *History of Religions* 26.1 (1986): 1–33, and "'Seeking an End to the Primary Text' or 'Putting an End to the Text as Primary,'" in Reynolds and Burkhalter, *Beyond the Classics?* 41–59. The notion of person as classic suggested here, following Tracy, includes activities and entities not formed as or directly by texts.

29 Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 15.

30 Hayes cites Bonaventure's, *Legenda minor,* which details the following story:

> Because of him [Francis] innumerable benefits from God do not cease to abound in different parts of the world as even I [Bonaventure] myself who wrote the above have experienced in my own life. When I was just a child and very seriously ill, my mother made a vow on my behalf to the blessed father Francis. I was snatched from the very jaws of death and restored to the vigor of a healthy life. Since I hold this vividly in my memory, I now publically proclaim it as true, lest keeping silent about such a benefit I would be accused of being ungrateful. Accept, therefore, blessed father, my thanks however meager and unequal to your merits and benefits. As you accept our desires, excuse, too, our faults through prayer, so that you may both rescue those faithfully devoted to you from present evils, and lead them to everlasting blessings. (Bonaventure, "The Minor Legend of Saint Francis," VII.8 in *Francis of Assisi: The Founder*, Vol. II of *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William Short, eds., New York: New City Press, 2000, 717)

31 For examples of these chronologies and for more detailed accounts of the events summarized here, see Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, 15–35; Ewert Cousins, ed. and trans. *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 1–18; J. M. Hammond, "St. Bonaventure," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edn., vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Thomson Gale/The Catholic University of America, 2003), 479–93.

32 Cousins, *Bonaventure*, 9–11.

33 This chronology is adapted from Hammond, "St. Bonaventure," 479–93.

34 While not in any way determining the papal judgments on the mendicant orders, one must note that the papacy of Innocent IV followed closely on the papacies of Innocent III (1198–1216 CE), Honorius III (1216–1227 CE) and Gregory IX (1227–1241 CE), all of whom were in continual conflict with the German monarch Frederick II. The give-and-take of excommunication and invasion, mostly between Pope Gregory and Frederick, must certainly have left its mark on succeeding papacies. As threats to papal secular power were mounting, any models of reform internal to the church, including the voluntary simplicity of the mendicants' example, could certainly have been viewed as aligned with, or at the very least substantially similar to, secular critiques of the papacy. For a good summary of these events, including the dramatic events of the "first formal papal conclave," see Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, 2nd edn. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, [1997] 2001), 151–8.

35 This is surely complicated by problems of authorship, commentarial style, the massive size of the works attributed to him, and the apparent inconsistencies in perspective that the attributed works suggest. The most helpful summary of the range of Buddhaghosa's writings is found in the introduction to the most recent translation of his *Visuddhimagga* by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli [Osbert Moore] (Seattle: Buddhist Publication Society Pariyatti Editions, [1975] 1991), xxi–l. The major sources for biographical information about Buddhaghosa are the Pāli chronicles, *Mahāvaṃsa* and *Cūlavaṃsa*.

36 A significant study of this region and the period of time immediately after the life of Buddhaghosa is R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1979).

37 Ñāṇamoli offers the following hypothesis in his introduction to *Visuddhimagga*: "It may not unreasonably be supposed that he did not work alone, without help, and that he had competent assistants. If so, he may well have delegated the drafting of the Khuddaka

Nikāya commentaries – those of the Khuddakapāṭha and Suttanipāta, Dhammapada and the Jātaka –, or part of them, supervising and completing them himself, after which the official 'postscript' was appended." (p. xxxi)

38 Literal translation of the Pāli name: the voice (*ghosa*) of the "enlightened one" (Buddha). See also the legend surrounding the rebirth of the *deva* prince named "Ghosa", as related in the Sinhalese text translated by James Gray, *Buddhaghosuppatti, or, The Historical Romance of the Rise and Career of Buddhaghosa* (New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, [1892] 1998).

39 Ñāṇamoli, *Visuddhimaggga*, 742.

40 This account is summarized from three texts: Ñāṇamoli's introduction to *Visuddhimaggga*; the only English monograph on Buddhaghosa's life and work, Bimala Charan Law, *The Life and Work of Buddhaghosa* (Calcutta and Simla: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1923); and the translation cited in n. 38 of the Sinhalese legend about Buddhaghosa and his arrival in Ceylon, Gray *Buddhaghosuppatti*. Most of Buddhaghosa's story appears in the *Mahāvaṁsa* ("great chronicle") which records somewhat historically the events surrounding the rise of Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) which is still to this day a predominantly Theravāda country.

41 Richard F. Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Highlands of Ceylon* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1995 [1971]), 23–4.

42 For a good summary of the historical background, and the translation of one of the more widely known versions of Aśoka's fame, see John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Asoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

43 The ordination lineage is an important aspect of Buddhist monastic life. For example, whether or not Mahinda actually came to Ceylon, it was very important to succeeding generations of monks that he traveled there with five companions to ensure the proper institution of the *sāsana* (message, tradition). As Gombrich relates it,

> To Ceylon was sent one of Aśoka's own sons, Mahinda. According to the chronicle he was accompanied by four other monks, a novice, and a lay disciple. A single monk performs the lower ordination ceremony, by which a layman enters the Order as a novice, but five monks are the quorum needed to perform the higher ordination ceremony (*upasampadā*) by which a novice becomes a monk; if such a quorum cannot be mustered, no ordination can take place, the line of succession is broken, and after a time there are no more monks. Mahinda's group was therefore the smallest possible paradigm community of male Buddhists. (*Buddhist Precept and Practice*, 32)

44 Ñāṇamoli, *Visuddhimaggga*, xxiv.

45 Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough*, 24.

46 A helpful summary of the positions attributed by the Mahāvihārins to the Abhayagirins is given in Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough,* 27–30.

47 Ibid., 25.

48 Ibid.

49 Ñāṇamoli, *Visuddhimaggga*, xxvii.

50 This claim, and indeed the method of this study, is largely a test of what one can do with moral concepts across traditions. The use and reformulation of various moral concepts is related to, but not identical with, the problem of using broad theoretical classifications of ethics in Western discourse to situate religious thinking about moral matters. On this issue see Charles Hallisey, "Ethical Particularism in Theravada Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, vol. 3 (1996): 32–43.

51 For a study to this effect, which focuses on the primacy of insight wisdom (*paññā*) in *Visuddhimaggа*, see Km. Vyanjana, *Theravāda Buddhist Ethics with Special Reference to Visuddhimaggа* (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1992).

52 See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of this topic. In several places in *Visuddhimaggа*, Buddhaghosa gives the example of one who should benefit from his instructions as *kulaputto*, which means something like "a young man of good social standing". See, for example, Vsm. I.68, VIII.190. This could be an indication of those who were likely to become monks, or those who were not monks but were envisioned by the author as people who might still benefit from the practices advocated.

53 In Chapter 3, I refer to material simplicity as both a practice (something that people perform which is a kind of active approximation) as well as a context in which ideas are examined and tested for their transformative power. I understand material simplicity as a problem that points to or can be reformulated as a prior question or set of questions, as my approach to moral struggle (or "the problem of the weak will") attests. Following Gadamer on this point, we can say that "Reflection on hermeneutical experience transforms problems back to questions that arise and that derive their sense from their motivation." See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 377.

54 The closest source we have to an alternative interpretation of the issues Buddhaghosa was addressing is the commentary of his *Visuddhimaggа* (*Visuddhimaggа-mahāṭīkā*) called the *Paramattha-mañjūsā*, written by the eighth-century monk, Dhammapāla. The brothers Asaṇga and Vasubandhu are among the most revered Buddhist scholars of roughly this same period (fifth century CE). They began as monks in the Indian Sarvāstivāda (afterwards one of the originators of the Yogācāra school). See James Duerlinger, *Indian Buddhist Theories of Persons: Vasubandhu's Refutation of a Theory of a Self* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

2

Context: The Symbolic Religious Cosmologies of Roman Catholicism and Theravāda Buddhism

In the previous chapter, I suggested that moral struggle can be understood as a classic question of human existence. While I cannot chart all of the various cultural permutations of this question among the variety of the world's religions, I shall nonetheless attempt to demonstrate that analogous forms of this classic question arose in the trajectories of thought and practice inherited by Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa. This chapter makes two interrelated points: first, that there existed clear yet significantly different trajectories of thinking about the question of moral struggle in Theravāda Buddhist and Catholic Christian thought inherited by Buddhaghosa and Bonaventure respectively; and second, that reflection on two central ideas within these trajectories, namely the Buddhist philosophical analysis known as Abhidhamma and the central Christian doctrine of the Trinity, while at first glance deeply theoretical and perhaps disconnected from daily religious practice life, actually contain deep moral insights that highlight the different approaches to the question of moral struggle as it arises in these two traditions.

For example, in order to understand how Bonaventure's account of moral struggle represents an alternative to other medieval treatments of the will as an independent faculty bridging intellect and emotion, we must examine his theological treatment of the topic which draws on the explicitly Christian language of the Trinity to explain personal moral change and development. Similarly, in order to understand how Buddhaghosa views the relationship between the acquisition of right knowledge and the transformation of the Buddhist practitioner through the practice of meditation, we must understand something about the system of Buddhist Abhidhamma through which he links the practice of meditation with a systematic exposition of mental states drawn from the Buddha's teachings. Because the purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the accounts of Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa that will be examined in greater detail further along, the rough trajectories I chart here end with the time periods in which these two figures were writing. My exposition of Christian Trinitarian and Buddhist Abhidhammic discourse is meant to provide a provisional affirmative answer

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to the question "Is it sensible to speak about moral struggle, and to speak of it as a classic question, in these thinkers' own contexts?"

Two additional cautionary notes are in order. First, in this chapter I am not trying to advance an argument about why, for example, Buddhist Abhidhamma ought to be considered a specifically religious mode of thinking. This topic has been discussed at great length in many places and I do not wish to enter into that debate, only to signal that for this study's purposes I take it to be a form of religious discourse because of the organizing and unifying role it plays in Buddhaghosa's view of the moral life. If it is not specifically religious because it does not refer to some particular conception of the divine, it is at least operatively religious as the dominant organizing framework for his thought. Second, I have chosen to call Trinitarian and Abhidhammic discourse "symbolic religious cosmologies," because I want to signal the contributions that these modes of discourse play in the constructing of what William Schweiker has described as the "new shared world of meaning" that arises when the comparativist "enters this dialogical space through the unique effort of interpretation."[1]

By focusing on Abhidhamma and Trinity as central to my comparison, I hope, so far as possible, to allow the method of the comparison itself – the how and why of comparison – to be guided by the substance of the traditions under examination. Even so, choosing to label these modes of discourse "cosmologies" signals my conviction that comparative ethics must maintain its strong focus on the internal logic of religious and cultural systems of thought and practice (as in the focus on "ethical naturalism" suggested by Lovin, Reynolds, and their collaborators), even as I argue that comparative ethics must go further in allowing its methods to be informed by the traditions it studies. What Francis Clooney has taken as a guideline for comparative theology I offer as a resource for comparative ethics: that a legitimate component of the comparativist's work is to reflect on how the comparativist is transformed through the process of "interiorizing comparative study."[2]

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first examines the problem of moral struggle as it has come to us through the tradition of Greek, Roman, and Christian philosophy, especially as expressed in longstanding philosophical and theological debates in Western discourse about what has come to be called the "weakness of will." In the second section, I outline a series of ideas and debates leading up to and contemporary with Buddhaghosa that communicate the diversity of ways that the questions of moral and intellectual struggle were addressed in the religious history of ancient India. While this section does not pretend to be a comprehensive account of such matters, it still serves to introduce readers to the different interpretive approaches that were live options in Buddhaghosa's time. These sections consider the problem of weakness of will as one (but certainly not the only) way of thinking about moral struggle, although recent contributions to comparative studies have also explored closely related problems such as self-deception.[3] In the third section, I offer some thoughts on Bonaventure's views about how and why discussions about the Trinity are important for the moral life of the Christian community. In the final section, I provide a summary of some basic teachings of Theravāda Buddhist thought and introduce some of the technical terminology of Buddhist Abhidhamma that will be necessary to make sense of Buddhaghosa's approach to the question of moral struggle. These four sections form the general background to my treatment of material

simplicity in the following chapter, and together form two aspects of the historical contexts relevant for this comparison.

Moral Struggle in Greek, Roman, and Christian Philosophy

The problem of moral struggle has a long, interdisciplinary history in Western discourse. From the seminal discussions in Greek and Roman thought, to Christian theological formulations, to contemporary discussions in moral psychology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of language, moral struggle and especially the idea of moral weakness remain intriguing and puzzling topics. The history of this problem in Western discourse is too long to chart in full, but certain issues are important to have before us if we are to understand how Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's perspectives on these issues are both distinctive and perhaps even instructive in our own day.[4]

Weakness of will and volition in classical philosophy

Greek and Roman responses to the question of moral struggle provide us with a useful preliminary catalog of issues with which to begin examining this topic. The basic problem for the Greeks was whether our actions should be understood as undetermined, partially determined, or wholly determined by the use of reason. Certainly some actions of human beings, such as reflexes, are human actions only in a weak sense. A truly human act, for most ancient Greek philosophers, was one that was the result of rational deliberation and a purposive decision. A subordinate but related problem was whether, in order to understand the phenomenon of moral struggle properly, it was necessary to postulate the existence of a separable faculty which moderated the influence of desire and the influence of reason in the dynamics of action. In other words, was there a separable faculty (traditionally called the problem of the *will*), was it reducible to reason, or to emotion, or to neither?[5]

This basic problem in Western discourse dates at least to Aristotle's scrutiny of Socrates, the latter insisting that, if one knows the right thing to do in a particular situation, it is not possible (unless compelled by some external force or threat) to do otherwise than to follow one's own best judgment. Aristotle proposed a label for this problem: *akrasia*. The word is usually translated as "weakness of will" or "moral weakness."[6] The Aristotelian reading of moral weakness has been well summarized by Risto Saarinen:

> Aristotle presents the following dilemma: The existence of *akrasia* seems to be very common among human beings. Socrates, however, thought that nothing is stronger than knowledge of the good or of what is just or best. But, if Socrates is right, then no real *akrasia* can exist, because then only the ignorant person could violate reason. The counter-evidence or the apparent performance of *akrasia* makes the Socratic position impossible to maintain without resolution of the dilemma it produces. Thus, because of this dilemma Aristotle must inquire into the real nature of seemingly incontinent behavior.[7]

This summary, while helpful, does leave two important points unclear. First, should reason and ignorance be taken as attributes that one either possesses fully or lacks

completely, rather than attributes that one possesses in some measure, indicating a capacity to increase or develop them over time? This would appear to be a particularly important point, because we might very well imagine that certain behaviors may occasionally occur without suggesting that the person in question always behaves in this way. Second, on what basis do we know that *akrasia* exists at all? If we use our own experiences as initial indication that some such instances of moral weakness exist, we can identify such dilemmas in decision-making without thereby committing ourselves to the additional claim that all such instances possess the same structure and content.

One way of addressing these points is to formulate the question along the following lines: What would constitute a proper balance between the rational and emotional influences on an agent when making an analysis of that agent's action? Aristotle takes up this problem in Book VII of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, but he approaches the problem in a slightly different way. He is interested, rather, in how moral strength and moral weakness are related to virtue and vice respectively. He begins by stating the position of Socrates as outlined in Plato's *Protagoras*:

> Socrates, for example, believed that it would be strange if, when a man possesses knowledge, something else should overpower it and drag it about like a slave. In fact, Socrates was completely opposed to the view [that a man may know what is right but do what is wrong], and did not believe that moral weakness exists. He claimed that no one acts contrary to what is best in the conviction [that what he is doing is bad], but through ignorance [of the fact that it is bad].[8]

Aristotle goes on to list options for how one could agree with one aspect of Socrates' position, that moral weakness is really a weakness in knowledge of what is good in any situation, without saying that moral weakness is exclusively a matter of knowledge. For example, one can possess knowledge and use it, or one can possess knowledge and not use it, either because context requires one subset of what one knows rather than another, or because one is prevented from employing the knowledge one has because of some distraction or impediment.

Similarly, one can possess knowledge, in the sense of being able to repeat some proposition or describe how to do something, without understanding it or knowing how to employ it in practice. In another example, Aristotle considers how the form of a practical syllogism itself illustrates that there can be different readings of moral weakness, all of which still place the reason for moral weakness fully in the aspect of knowledge. In the first example, Aristotle considers that it is possible for one to entertain two possible major premises to begin a practical syllogism, either of which may be paired with a minor premise. For instance, Aristotle gives the example:

> [I]f the premises are: "Everything sweet ought to be tasted" and "This thing before me is sweet" ("this thing" perceived as an individual particular object), a man who is able to taste and is not prevented is bound to act accordingly at once. Now suppose that there is within us one universal opinion forbidding us to taste things of this kind, and another universal opinion which tells us that everything sweet is pleasant, and also a concrete perception, determining our activity, that the particular thing before us is sweet; and suppose further that the appetite for pleasure happens to be present. The result is that one

> opinion tells us to avoid that thing, while appetite, capable as it is of setting in motion each part of our body, drives us to it. This is the case we have been looking for, the defeat of reason in moral weakness. Thus it turns out that a morally weak man acts under the influence of some kind of reason and opinion, an opinion which is not intrinsically but only incidentally opposed to right reason; for it is not opinion but appetite that is opposed to right reason.[9]

Note what is going on in this example. Aristotle suggests that two general principles (one practical, one theoretical) are in conflict: that we should not eat sweets and that sweets are pleasant. The first does generate a practical syllogism, strictly speaking. The second generates only an opinion about the desirability of a class of objects. Aristotle is suggesting that a certain level of appetite actually gives the force of a practical syllogism's conclusion to a different kind of conclusion which is actually only a judgment about a state of affairs. This would seem to be a unique kind of moral weakness.

The problem Aristotle is trying to illustrate is that one may have conflicting universal major premises, both of which are defensible. These major premises may not be in conflict if analyzed by themselves, but if one tries to rely on both at the same time in formulating a course of action, that is to say in coming to one particular decision, conflicts will arise. An agent's desires may direct him or her to give more attention to one universal rather than another, but this does not mean (and here Aristotle is in agreement with Socrates) that the *akrates* is somehow devoid of rational reflection in the moment of choice. Rather one is choosing to formulate a general opinion about the desirability of a state of affairs into a rational guide for action which conflicts with some other rationally generated conclusion. Broadly speaking then, two notions of moral weakness emerge from Aristotle's account. The first kind takes as its exemplary case a person who is overridden with passions and in whom a conscious analysis about the good is made but the choice to pursue the good is not followed. The second kind is characterized by an incomplete or interrupted judgment about the nature of the good to be pursued.

Certainly if one or another passion were overwhelming a person so completely that he or she could do nothing other than obey it, we might be tempted to call such actions determined. The reason why Aristotle would not consider his psychological description determinist has been addressed. The passions have the ability to effect a practical action without our having to postulate the existence of a separable faculty. Moral weakness is explainable in terms of various emphases or priorities that we give to both universals and specific practical directives, so no "faculty" need be "overrun." However, there certainly were ancient examples of those who did posit a separable, fully functioning faculty that itself enables action.

Some have suggested that the first attempt at conceiving a separable faculty capable of controlling human action emerged at the intersection of Greek and Roman thought. For example, under the label of "will" (*voluntas*), Cicero places those experiences in which our nature causes us to be attracted to what befits us. In his *Tusculan Disputations* he says:

> for by a law of nature all men pursue apparent good and shun its opposite; for which reason, as soon as the semblance of any apparent good presents itself, nature of itself prompts them to secure it. Where this takes place in an equable and wise way the Stoics employ the term *βούλήσις* for this sort of longing, we should employ the term *voluntas*.[10]

Here we see a general agreement with the Aristotelian teleological structure of action, that all people seek what is good for them and avoid what is not, at least insofar as they are able to make this determination.

Within Cicero's understanding of *voluntas*, there appears to be both a naturalistic element (people have a natural proclivity to what appears good) as well as a diagnostic element (that natural proclivity or wish to have what is in fact good may be a wish for only that which appears to be good). Some of this certainly can be traced back to the debate between the Epicureans who understood the good as defined by pleasure and the Stoics who understood pleasure as a consequence of pursuing what is good. However, Cicero's point seems to be that the relationship between what we desire and what is good for us happens under the aspect of an attraction, whether the good is real or apparent. Even so, *voluntas* as a naturally conditioned response does not take us very far in assessing whether or not this term specifies an independent faculty.

One way to approach the problem of will as faculty is to distinguish, as Brad Inwood has done, between the "traditional will" and the "summary will" where the latter refers to "a set of *explananda* and it indexes a theory defined in part by the denial that there is any such single mental item as traditional will that coherently accounts for them. The word 'will' as used in this project is an instrumental summary reference to a more complex set of *explanantia*."[11] Although many have argued that the traditional understanding of the will originated with Seneca, based on such statements as "The *pars magna* of goodness is wanting (*velle)* to become good," or "The *pars magna* of moral progress is wanting (*velle*) to make progress," or "And what *do* you need to become good? The desire." Instead of viewing *velle* as the necessary and sufficient condition to motivate (and thereby as a separable faculty with the power to motivate), Inwood argues that Seneca is making a rhetorical point that one recognizes one's "inner self-sufficiency" based on the ability to find within oneself "the resolution to improve." Moreover, he suggests that:

> [W]e should look for Seneca's indirect and unintended contribution to thinking about traditional will in his reflections on mental causation, self-control, self-awareness, and self-shaping. … Seneca emphasizes our relationship to our own selves, when he focuses on how we treat our own character and temperament as things on which we can reflect and act, on which we can have causal impact … It is this second-order quality of our mental lives (i.e. when the mind takes itself as its own object) that plays the most important role in constructing the will.[12]

Seneca certainly is not the first one to emphasize the importance of self-reflection, but he may indeed be, as Inwood suggests, responsible for isolating our ability to reflect on the process of decision-making as motivationally important for the process of carrying out a decision. This is an important point that we will see developed in very different ways by Buddhaghosa and Bonaventure.

Law, love, and wisdom in Christian scriptures

An exclusive focus on the practical irrationality of an individual agent tends to obscure the role that wider communities play in moral formation. Traditionally, communities play

a significant role in forming and elaborating the standards for conduct of the people living in them (the realm of law) but also in helping people to imagine how broad a view they should take in determining the scope of their responsibility and navigating conflicts among goods (the realm of justice). Moreover, a community has the capacity to strengthen or weaken the actions of individuals as well as its own social power, depending on the constancy and orientation of the moral direction of the community. Certainly Cicero and Seneca highlighted the importance of moral communities and of finding moral exemplars on whom one might model one's behavior. So too for Aristotle: on the place of the example of other good people in cultivating the life of virtue and Plato's warning about the danger the Sophists posed to the life of the polis. The ability of the wider social order to form moral agents is an important aspect of the question of moral struggle, but the wider society is only one among many possible communal contexts (many of them smaller communities) that can serve as training grounds for moral rectitude.

Early Christians also reflected on the question of moral struggle. Many thinkers, such as the apostle Paul, came to the Christian life from Jewish communities whose discourse about fidelity to God and their status as a chosen people in covenant with God gave primary place to the human community's fidelity to God and God's fidelity to the covenant.[13] In other words, the experiences of moral struggle and the struggle for faithfulness were at once individual and social problems. Later thinkers such as Augustine of Hippo, even though he was not formed in the covenantal life of Jewish society, nonetheless lived in close conversation with groups who understood moral training within the group to be a necessary condition for the possibility of successful action.

What was different about these Christian thinkers was that they inquired into the nature of moral failure by examining the importance of social formation and the possibility of failure in personal effort within orienting commitments about the creative and redemptive work of God. The interpretations they employed to generate answers to this problem refined the concepts that would orient subsequent reflections, most notably in the medieval period of Bonaventure and his contemporaries. Three sources figured prominently into these interpretations. The first was Aristotle, whose account we discussed above; the second was Paul's letters; and the third was Augustine's examination of the nature of conflicting loves. These latter two sources were not the only sources for later medieval reflections on *akrasia/incontinentia* (moral weakness or weakness of will), but they were certainly influential and commonly accepted points of departure.

In Romans 7, for example, Paul is concerned with the relation between law and sin, proclaiming that the dictates of the Mosaic law while not themselves sinful make sin known to those who violate the law.

> For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.[14]

There has been much debate about exactly how to take these comments, especially whether Paul intended them to refer to his own struggle or whether his use of the first-person pronoun refers rather to a more general perception of what Paul thought his readers might have experienced.[15] Yet medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas understood Paul to mean that there were indeed instances where his own physical tendencies overwhelmed his mind's ability to direct itself and the tendencies it should govern, thereby linking Paul to the accounts Aristotle considered.[16] At least it seems safe to say that Paul, even if he did not suffer such things himself, acknowledged the possibility that moral struggle was not *only* a problem of practical irrationality, that, as Socrates says in Plato's *Protagoras*, one would think of "knowledge as a slave, pushed around by all the other affections."[17]

Perhaps Paul's own experience of struggle, even if we follow Krister Stendahl's argument that "Paul never feels guilty about being weak… Never does Paul equate weakness with sin,"[18] may prove helpful in thinking about the expansiveness of the idea of moral struggle in the Christian West. For Paul, according to Stendhal, was engaged in a legitimate struggle to understand his own mission and how a physically weak person could be called to such an arduous mission. Commenting on what he calls Paul's "martyrological weakness" in 2 Corinthians 12, he says:

> At no point in his main correspondence do we find an intimation that Paul had any kind of bad conscience in relation to this weakness. He never said, "I am weak, I am wretched; humanity is weak; weak and sinful is my existence." There is no identification of the weakness or illness of the apostle with sin, and Paul has no inclination to search his innermost conscience about some secret sin which might be the cause of this weakness or sickness. On the contrary, he finds his weakness one of those things which makes him one with the Lord, and which makes his ministry a true ministry of Jesus Christ who was crucified in weakness.[19]

While for some human beings Paul acknowledged struggle in the moral life more closely associated with a conflict between passion and reason, in his own case he gave to the Christian tradition a notion of moral struggle that also included a dimension of intellectual struggle to know one's purpose in God's work of salvation. Through the biblical witness, the tradition preserved a broad notion of moral struggle that included attention to the varied challenges that human beings face in living by what they believe. We also see in Paul's example the Christian possibility that certain kinds of struggle may in fact play a constructive part in religious striving.

Love, sin, and self-examination in Patristic theology

The notion of struggle poses a slightly different problem for Augustine than it did for Paul. For Augustine, struggle was manifest in the prioritization and direction of love. Failure as well as success in love depended on selecting an appropriate object for one's love. He understood willing to be an activity of the entire person, not just an activity of the intellect or of any of the passions considered singularly. Indeed, the ability of people to love ranks as both the central faculty and the primary analytic category for Augustine's reflections on the relationship of people to God, his account of evil, and his moral theology. The question of what the will is and how it could be conformed

to the divine good rests in the same domain as the question of evil (as desire bent downward and curved in on itself). In his *Confessions*, Augustine admits to suffering the pains of a will at cross-purposes.

> I struggled to raise my mental gaze from the depths, but sank back again; I strove repeatedly, but again and again sank back. I was as sure of having a will as I was of being alive, and this it was that lifted me into your light. When I wanted something, or did not want it, I was absolutely certain that no one else but I was wanting or not wanting it, and I was beginning to perceive that the root of my sin lay there. Any involuntary act I regarded as something I suffered rather than as something I did, and I judged it to be a penalty rather than a fault, being quick to acknowledge that I was not unjustly punished in this way, since I held you to be just.[20]

In his extended argument about the relationship between love and the moral life in *The City of God*, Augustine argues that evil is a perverse form of love. Indeed, when he goes on to specify the beginning of the evil will in human beings, he attributes it to the sin of pride understood as loving one's own person where one should instead love God.

> It was in secret that the first human beings began to be evil; and the result was that they slipped into open disobedience. For they would not have arrived at the evil act if an evil will had not preceded it. Now, could anything but pride have been the start of the evil will? For "pride is the start of every kind of sin." And what is pride except a longing for a perverse kind of exaltation? For it is a perverse kind of exaltation to abandon the basis on which the mind should be firmly fixed, and to become, as it were, based on oneself, and so remain.[21]

For Augustine, willing is best understood as a dynamic activity of focusing on that to which one is drawn rather than, strictly speaking, a faculty that is exercised and thereby habituated to act. It involves the rational dimension of the person insofar as the intellect has the ability to perceive the good to which one is drawn. It involves the affective dimension because willing is a form of desiring. Yet this perverse form of will also involves an ordering and prioritizing, an analysis of components that goes on within the will itself. Indeed this ordering of values, properly or improperly, is part of what we should understand by the will as a dynamic capacity.

The intellectual and affective are closely connected for Augustine because, as he notes in his treatise *On the Trinity*, "only things known can be loved."[22] Augustine argues for the close connection among intellect, memory, and will as three activities of the soul which have in common the soul's ability to perceive unevenly an ideal that cannot be known completely. This very perception supports Augustine's further specification of the human possibility to will evil. He says, "Now the mind goes astray through uniting itself to these images by love so intense as to make it suppose its own nature to be like theirs. It becomes as it were conformed to them, not in reality but by supposition: supposing itself to be, not an image, but the actual thing of which it carries the image in itself."[23] As V. J. Bourke puts it, "will (*voluntas*) means the whole soul as active … The Augustinian will is not a faculty but the soul itself as loving: indeed, will is but love in its strongest form."[24] So the idea of the will as separate

faculty, as opposed to a unity of personality that acts in a directed way, seems not yet to have emerged in Christian discourse. However, it also seems safe to say that by this time, the question of moral struggle could no longer be understood solely from the perspective of failed practical rationality but rather was expanded to include both intellectual struggle to understand one's own challenges in the context of one's calling as well as a distinctly moral struggle of the entire orientation of one's desires and commitments.

The notion of the will as a separate faculty, whether or not such a thing existed in ancient Greek and Roman discourse, seems to have been introduced into the Christian discussion by Maximus the Confessor (580–662 CE) in rudimentary form and later refined by John of Damascus (645–750 CE). In his *Opuscula theologica ad marinum*, Maximus defines will (here using the word *θέλησις*) as "a rational and vital appetite attached solely to natural things,"[25] differentiating it from desire simply stated which is instinctual rather than reflective. John of Damascus gives a similar definition, but then elaborates it through an analysis of action based on the individuation of its elements. "Wishing (*βούλησις*) is a sort of natural willing, that is to say, a natural and rational appetite for something. For inherent in the human soul, there is a faculty for rationally desiring. And so, when this rational appetite is moved toward something, it is called volition, for wishing is a rational appetition and desire for something."[26] John of Damascus notes that this natural willing is followed by other identifiable moments in the process of carrying out an action: inquiry and consideration, deliberation, judgment, opinion, choice, impulse, and use.[27] According to John, after all these occur the appetite that initiated the process of willing ceases at the conclusion of action. Yet the will stands as a separate faculty which initiates the sequence of mental occurrences that together bring about a completed action.

Natural law and rational appetite in medieval theology

This notion of the will as a rational appetite was picked up in the medieval period by Bonaventure's Dominican contemporary Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 CE). Thomas' discussion of the will drew on John of Damascus' understanding of the will as both rational and appetitive and on its status as a separate faculty. "'Will' means rational appetite," says Thomas, "and so cannot be present in things devoid of reason. 'Voluntary,' however, is a derivative term and can be extended to things where there is some share in volition through activity which is really like it. Accordingly, voluntary activity is attributed to animals in so far as they are moved towards an end through some knowledge of it."[28] We see here an allusion to Augustine's emphasis on the connection between desire and knowledge but also the need for Thomas to link responsibility for action (the force of the term "voluntary") with the will as a separate faculty. What one wills is, strictly speaking, a state of affairs that one can rationally determine as an object of action ordered to some perceived good.

To some degree, the reason for this distinction emerges from the shape of Thomas' theological program which had to account for the mutual action of both God and human beings in and through each human act. But we also see Thomas' appreciation for Aristotle's insight into the prominence of rationality in volition. While Thomas clearly wants to maintain the will's rational character in specifying what a choice

consists in, he is forced to balance two particular assessments. On the one hand, if reason and desire are in some sense united in the faculty of will, one must provide a form according to which the other is shaped. This is the force behind his description that knowledge shapes (form) while appetite provides the matter (which has texture).[29] On the other hand, even though reason takes this formative role, the act of choice, because it elects something external to the agent, is displaying the image of movement and is therefore classified as appetitive.

When Thomas takes up the topic of moral struggle, an interesting question arises which we do not find in earlier authors. How do we talk about the will with respect to its active capacity when the immediate problem is how to prompt one out of a state of inertia toward action? Thomas notes that:

> [T]here are cases when by its resolve and action the will can intervene to break the inertia with respect to willing and acting, and sometimes ought to do so. Then it can be held responsible, for the not willing and not acting are in its charge. Thus there can be voluntariness without an act, sometimes without an external act though with an internal act, as when a person wills not to act, sometimes, however, without even an internal act, as when he does not will to act.[30]

With respect to the problem of failure to act, the will is, strictly speaking by this definition, not the will insofar as it fails to act as it should. If will is a rational appetite, and the event under consideration is the event of not willing to act, there is very little to say about this kind of failure except to label it a form of insufficient motivation. The image usually used to explain this instance is that of an impediment or obstacle. For example, one does not act because fear prevents one from acting. But even this image does account for what the event of not acting would mean, precisely because the entire phenomenon of volition appears to be an activity internal to the agent. Indeed, a purely rational account of the will, such as Socrates espoused, would be much more helpful in explaining such an instance.

In each of the sections just outlined, we begin to see broad trajectories of thought emerge that indicate a demand to respond to the question of moral struggle, understood as the possibility of failure in or incompleteness of action. So far, we have seen three kinds of response: (1) some version of practical irrationality (Aristotle's legacy); (2) orientation of the whole person (understood as a form of desire directed at the grounding of one's commitment, under its Stoic form as the pursuit of natural goods and the self's ability to reflect on this process, or in the Augustinian language of orienting loves); or (3) a separable faculty interpreted as a rational appetite (the legacy culminating in Thomas Aquinas). While these accounts have the advantage of isolating certain important psychological aspects, particularly with respect to the balance rather than the rigid opposition of reason and desire, there is still much that needs to be explored. To examine the possibility that prior doctrinal formulations, communal activity, exemplary imitation, and experiences of mental and physical failure might actually contribute to our understanding of moral struggle, we will need to consider Bonaventure's reflections on the Trinity. However, we must first turn to developments in early Indian philosophical and religious thought to see whether or not the ideas of practical irrationality, the orientation of persons, and the will as an independent

faculty are considered, in whole or in part, in approaches to moral struggle from a different context. More importantly, we will need to examine whether our preliminary list of approaches needs to be expanded.

Moral Struggle in Indian and Buddhist Philosophy

The span of history from the earliest expressions of what has become known, broadly speaking, as Indian religion, to the time of Buddhaghosa in the fifth century CE, presents a series of ideas and practices too detailed to summarize. However, we can isolate certain ongoing problems or puzzles, what we might call the tradition's expression of the classic question of moral struggle. I will therefore examine selected texts and commentaries up through the time when Buddhaghosa was writing, grouping these into four bodies of literature from which approaches to the question may be drawn: (1) the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas (by scholarly estimation, dating from roughly 1200–900 BCE); (2) the Upaniṣads (c. 700 BCE); (3) the epics (the *Mahābhārata* and the *Ramāyana*, c. 300 BCE–300 CE);[31] and (4) the Buddhist *Nikāyas* (300 BCE–500 CE).[32]

In the following sections, I want to analyze five conceptual markers (or as Steven Collins terms them, "fundamental categories of thinking") that help us to expand our earlier catalog of approaches to the classic question of moral struggle: these are *dharma*, *karma*, *saṃsāra*, *mokṣa*, and *ātman*.[33] To be sure, these are not the only relevant concepts to shed light on the classic question of moral struggle, but they are recurring ones that indicate, for example, the interplay of religious practices and moral exemplars (two subjects that will organize the second half of the book), from the earliest recorded expressions of religious and philosophical thought in northern India to Buddhaghosa's time. These five ideas help to ascertain the place of order in moral struggle, as well as the notion of the fittingness or appropriateness of particular kinds of human striving to live in a world characterized by change. These ideas also illustrate some of the basic differences between Buddhist views (*diṭṭhi*) of moral struggle, broadly speaking, and the views of their non-Buddhist contemporaries.

Universal *dharma* and individual *dharma* in the Vedas and epics

Many scholars have argued that *dharma* (Pāli, *dhamma*) ought to be central to any presentation of Buddhist moral thought as well as the other religious and philosophical traditions of South and Southeast Asia, even as there has proved to be no agreement about the appropriate range of meanings this term denotes.[34] For example, when one speaks of *dharma,* one must specify its demands for the particular social group (*varṇa*) in question,[35] "but also the four *āśramas* (stages of life): the pupil (*brahmacārin*), the married householder (*gṛhastha*), the forest dweller (*vānaprastha*) and the ascetic (*sannyāsin*)."[36] In other words, one has particular obligations or duties based on one's place in the "life cycle," yet those obligations accrue to one based on the particular timing of choices made in connection with one's efforts to move from one stage to the next. Within the *dharma* of each stage of life, one must also evaluate the relative emphasis that one is placing on the so-called "four aims of life."[37]

The first aim – *artha*, or success with respect to worldly goods – denotes a goal in which the prudent exercise of practical reason (how do I best achieve the goods I have identified as worth pursuing) is combined with a normative judgment about what sorts of things are worth pursuing in light of one's particular obligations. As Heinrich Zimmer explains:

> Literally, the word *artha* means "thing, object, substance" and comprises the whole range of tangible objects that can be possessed, enjoyed, and lost, and which we recognize in daily life for the upkeep of a household, raising a family, and discharge of religious duties, i.e. for the virtuous fulfillment of life's obligations. Objects contribute also to sensuous enjoyment, gratification of the feelings, and satisfaction of the legitimate requirement of human nature: love, beautiful works of art, flowers, jewels, fine clothing, comfortable housing, and the pleasures of the table.[38]

Or as Zimmer summarizes, "the term bundles together all the images of 1. the object of human pursuit, 2. the means of this pursuit, and 3. the needs and the desire suggesting this pursuit."[39]

Within this range of meanings, one also finds a connection between *artha* and the next two aims of life, *kāma* and *dharma*. *Kāma* is the realm of love and physical pleasure.[40] As one of the four aims of life, *dharma* refers to the universal obligation attendant on each person that is expressed in different kinds of actions: those appropriate to a particular person given her or his situation and those appropriate to all persons no matter what situation or calling in life. Wendy Doniger explains the traditional distinction in terms of "two different levels of duty: relative (*svadharma*, one's own particular duty) and absolute (*sanātana*, eternal), also called *sāmānya* (equal, the same for everyone) or *sādhāraṇa* (common, general)."[41] The fourth aim of life, added to the *trivarga* of *artha*, *kāma*, and *dharma* (the "pursuits of the world"[42]), is the aim pertaining to release from this world (*mokṣa*, or liberation). *Mokṣa* denotes an aim suitable for the final stage of life, but also a process that one may attempt to cultivate in various ways throughout life, to the degree appropriate to one's situation.

In what ways do these ideas about *dharmas*, both universal and appropriate to certain times of life even if these are sometimes in conflict with each other, give us some insight into how the classic question of moral struggle is addressed? In the earliest period of north Indian literature, namely the period of the Vedas (up to around 900 BCE), it is possible to see a distinction that helps us to appreciate how different trajectories of thinking about moral struggle developed. The Vedas contain a series of hymns that teach about the nature of the universe, the creation of the world, the particular gods of Indian religious cosmology, as well as the rationales and ritual instructions of the sacrificial duties of the Brahmin priests. The term *veda* means knowledge, broadly speaking, and so can be used to speak of the wider tradition of early Indian religious knowledge about creation myths and ritual instructions on sacrifice (*yajñaḥ*) and the exegesis of these, the *saṃhitās* (union or combination, referring to the collection of ritual formulae), the *brāhmaṇas* (meaning "that which is appropriate to a Brahmin," referring to the texts that interpret the ritual instructions, especially the *Āraṇyakas* or commentaries on ritual treatises [those to be studied in solitude, as if in a forest]), and the *Upaniṣads* (which link the interpretation of these rituals to their possible metaphorical cosmological significance). However, most commonly the

Vedas are taken to refer to those early stories and hymns appropriate to the sacrifice, with the *Upaniṣads* taken to be a later theological development of themes established in the Vedas. As we shall see, the notion of moral struggle and its connection to the struggle involved in pursuing deep understanding varies depending on which body of literature one interprets.

On the one hand, these earliest texts bearing on Buddhist views suggest an ordered universe that was created through the primeval sacrifice of the original man (*puruṣa*), as were the great gods Indra and Agni and all human beings.[43] To them was the form of the sacrificial ritual given which perpetuated the effects of the original cosmic sacrifice through time in the ongoing performance of that sacrifice: "From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the verses and the chants were born, the metres were born from it, and from it the formulas were born."[44]

On the other hand, the Vedas are not only catalogs of creation stories and ritual directives; they also appear in the form of questions to which sacrificial activity is the answer. For example, the Nāsadīya creation hymn is, in the words of one translator, "meant to puzzle and challenge, to raise unanswerable questions, to pile up paradoxes."[45] At the opening of the hymn, we hear: "There was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, bottomlessly deep?" And at its closing: "Where this creation has arisen – perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not – the one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows – or perhaps he does not know."[46] Yet it is precisely in these enigmatic passages of the Vedas that later texts claim to be teaching the same truths as what is found in the wisdom of the unidentified authors of the Vedas. As J. C. Heesterman explains:

> Both gods and men have to exert themselves mutually to achieve the vision of transcendent truth … Given this apparently intended and, one might add, quite meaningful ambiguity the road towards the revelatory vision remains in principle open. In this perspective the Vedas are indeed unbounded, not limited to a particular time, place or seer. This then means that, as a matter of principle, new ideas, doctrines, usages and "visions" cannot be barred from claiming Vedic or Vedic-like authority.[47]

Traditionally, it was understood that the Brahmins were responsible for the ritual activity of the community, for conducting the sacrifice (the materials for which were provided by *kṣatriyas* or warrior-kings) that made possible the continuation of the cosmic order (one sense of the word *dharma*). The *kṣatriyas* were understood as guardians of another kind of *dharma* related to the first, namely *dharma* of their kingdoms' just functioning. In each case, the duties of those responsible for maintaining the ritual or cosmic *dharma* and the *dharma* of the kingdom (which would afford people the opportunity for moderate *kāma* derived from their pursuit of appropriate *artha*) implied a certain trajectory of moral struggle with respect to duties. The Brahmins, although claiming their position and duties from the authority of the Vedas, were also responsible for the struggle of interpretation in the face of puzzling texts which nonetheless needed to be addressed in order to perform their duties.[48] Put differently, we have in the Vedas and the later tradition of exegesis a rich trajectory of *interpretive struggle* bound to the discharge of social duty, both to understand the

elaborate texts and to relate their specific duties as Brahmins to the duties of the other members of society but in each case as a struggle to uphold *dharma*.

If we move from this all-too-brief consideration of the Vedas to a consideration of the great Sanskrit epics, we find a different but not less significant vision of dharmic struggle. These struggles are, again broadly speaking, of two kinds: on the one hand what have come to be known as classic moral dilemmas (as in Doniger's description of the occasionally irreconcilable demands of relative and absolute duty); on the other hand, we see a variant of the kind of interpretive struggle just mentioned about the relation of *dharma* to the other aims of life. While both of these can take the form of real moral struggle, they can also each be understood in reference to our previous model of problems in the development and exercise of practical reason. It is not until the later investigation in the *Upaniṣads* that something like a classical account of the will arises.

Bimal Krishna Matilal charts the contours of this problem by identifying two of the moral dilemmas emerging in the great Sanskrit epics. Both examples come from the *Mahābhārata*, the story of the intra-familial struggles between the Pāṇḍava brothers and their cousins, the Kauravas.[49] At the height of the final battle, at the beginning of that portion of the text known as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the military virtuoso Arjuna, riding in a chariot guided by the god Kṛṣṇa, considers the destruction that will come about from the battle in which he will need to attack members of his extended family. Arjuna struggles to make sense of a conflict between his particular duty as a *kṣatriya*, so to speak the dictates of his calling as a ruler and his singular talent as an archer, and a more general revulsion at the thought of killing his relatives in battle, for what is arguably a legitimate duty to his people to attempt to recover his brother Yudhiṣṭhira's kingdom. As is well known, Arjuna's dilemma is not so much resolved at the level of practical wisdom, but rather in the response to Kṛṣṇa's divine manifestation as creator and destroyer, or the inevitable unity of the course of the created world. As Matilal describes it:

> Arjuna, by showing this side of his mind, becomes before our eyes more of a human being, not a gigantic killing machine. He had to do the killing, for the die was already cast and all was over, but he had to weep for those he was killing. His dilemma was genuine, but the resolution was only through a pragmatic concern forced upon him by the situation in which he found himself, and for which he was also partly, if not fully, responsible. "Justice reaches its noblest height when, in meting out punishment to a wrongdoer, the punisher sheds tears, being as much hurt as the one punished."[50]

While we have no clear indication that a specific faculty like the will plays a mediating role in this dilemma, we do appear to have something analogous to a person of unified character still struggling to make sense of an impossible situation. Similarities with Paul, and in a different way with Augustine, are suggestive.

The dilemma that Arjuna faces later in the *Mahābhārata* is more familiar in its illustration of promise-keeping. In this situation, Arjuna's brother Yudhiṣṭhira, in a fit of humiliation, insults Arjuna's divinely gifted weapon, the Gāṇḍīva bow, which Arjuna has vowed to defend by killing anyone who would speak against it. He knows that he must now face the problem,

> "Should I lie and not kill Yudhiṣṭhira, or should I kill him and be faithful to my promise?" … So Kṛṣṇa tells a story, that of a sage, Kauśika. He had taken a vow of telling the truth always. A group of gangsters, in hot pursuit of some innocent men, came to ask him which way they had fled. Should he break his vow and tell a lie to save the men's lives, or should he not? … He told the truth, and the men were chased and killed. Kṛṣṇa now has the last word. He said that when Kauśika died, he did not go to heaven or to his *sādhanocita dhāma*, for he had put his selfish religious dogma over the selfless, morally admirable action.[51]

Whereas the first dilemma dealt more with the general topics of conflicting duties each drawing from a different evaluative narrative, in this dilemma the struggle becomes manifest in how a past action (a promise) can complicate a present situation (the possibility of saving life).

These two instances of moral struggle have, on occasion, been characterized as really unproblematic or not real dilemmas in the final analysis. Of course one does not kill one's relatives; of course one does not keep promises that would lead to the death of innocent people. Yet even if one wishes to preserve the moral ambiguity of these epic decisions, as I would, we might at least note two aspects of moral struggle that become recast for us in this story. The first is that we encounter a description of the varying qualities and intensities of moral struggle different from but related to those we encountered in the traditions of Greek and Roman discourse that was passed down to Christian thinkers. The characters of the *Mahābhārata* are faced with real moral struggles as they adjudicate conflicts between the duties assigned to them by their social callings and their common calling to uphold the universal dimensions of *dharma* which emphasize honesty and protection of the innocent by the powerful (something which the Paṇḍavas' cousins clearly violate in their treatment of Draupadī, for example).[52] Moreover, these studies present characters of legendary heroism as nonetheless real persons, struggling in ways differently situated but similarly poignant to those faced by ordinary people. King Yudhiṣṭhira, otherwise the story's paragon of dharmic behavior, cannot control his compulsion for dice gambling which costs him the freedom of his family and his kingdom. Moral weakness is, so to speak, the beginning and the end of each struggle.

The second aspect of these struggles is that they are, to a significant degree, struggles to interpret the relevance and immediate applicability of the tradition's religious ideas and moral exemplars that the tradition itself preserves and holds up for guidance and inspiration. It is significant that Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna do not cease to be exemplary *kṣatriyas* despite their compulsions and careless promises, nor does Kṛṣṇa cease to be god of the universe despite his unsatisfactory resolution of Arjuna's dilemma, an appeal to the inscrutability of the ways of the creator and destroyer of all things. Even so, we must note that in each case, freedom to act persists and is revered in spite of these dilemmas. Neither the Vedas nor the epics put the problem of personal faculties at the heart of their meditations on moral struggle. It is enough that important questions are raised and preserved, that the struggles are told and handed on, even if identification of what or who it is that struggles remains at the borders. For these developments, and for a different sense of what these traditions have to say about the question of moral struggle, we must turn to some examples from the *Upaniṣads*.

Self and world in the *Upaniṣads*

As with the Vedas and the epics, so with the *Upaniṣads* we investigate texts that assumed their current form only gradually, after the interplay of generations of oral transmission and disputation. As with the previous two selections, we can give only a few examples to illustrate the contours. These are, as Aloka Parasher-Sen says, "texts within which were left deliberate, open spaces of interpretation," or as Jonardon Ganeri says commenting on Parasher-Sen, "the back-reference within the tradition [has] a function similar to that of *ressourcement*."[53]

Indeed, debates about what exactly the *Upaniṣads* teach on each matter gave rise to the various interpretive schools of Indian philosophy, concerned as they were with "secret" knowledge, how the early and later *Upaniṣads* are related to each other and to the Vedas, and how the forms of the texts themselves are related to the content of their teaching. One could argue, for example, that the texts are concerned with communicating the unity of *ātman* with *Brahman*, that is between the self as experienced with the ground of all reality. Yet the simplicity with which one can state this point makes such a statement an unlikely candidate for the insight the form of the text suggests might be at stake. If the central problem of the *Upaniṣads* is how to understand the true nature of the self and how the self is freed or released from the cycle of rebirth, we must consider the interpretation frequently offered that the *Upaniṣads* represent a tradition of teaching about how the Vedic sacrifice is internalized. As Surama Dasgupta describes,

> The fact that certain conceptions and meditations should be regarded as being able to produce wonderfully beneficial results both in this and other worlds leads to the theory of the omnipotence of thought and meditation. We have a new conception of *karma*, a *karma* which need not be performed by hand, a *karma* in which no movement of the body and no articles or materials of any kind, were necessary, but which consisted in the prolonged meditation of the mind. Not external action, but internal thought, is regarded here as capable, by virtue of its own immutable laws, of producing changes in the physical world here as well as in the other supra-physical worlds. Such a notion naturally involved some vague belief regarding the identity of thought and being which later became corner-stone of the *Upaniṣadic* idealism.[54]

Indeed, much of Hindu philosophy after the *Upaniṣads* may be helpfully understood as a more precise specification of this "vague belief." Specifying involved asking, among many other questions: (1) What is the nature of the self and its connection to the body? and (2) What is the relation between the sacrificial logic of the Vedas and the sacrificial logic of meditation or internal action? Is it the case, for example, as *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1 states, that "man is undoubtedly made of resolve. What a man becomes on departing from here after death is in accordance with his resolve in this world,"[55] where the term "resolve" translates *krātu* indicating a desire, will, or intention but more specifically the original purpose of performing a sacrifice (especially as specified in the *Ṛg Veda*). Given that the range of uses of the term *karma* in the *Upaniṣads* can refer either to "the ordinary sense of work as is done by the hands; secondly, in the sense of Vedic sacrifices; and thirdly, in the sense of virtuous and

vicious deeds (*puṇya* and *pāpa*),"[56] how is *karma* related to the self (*ātman*)? What kind of struggle is involved in the attempt to determine the real relation of one's self to one's action?

Jonardon Ganeri offers an instructive way into the *Upaniṣadic* struggle to answer this question. He relates the story of Naciketas in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, a boy whose father Uśan gives his son to Yama, the god of death, after Naciketas challenges the quality of the gifts his father gives as part of the *sarvamedha* (a final gift that unfortunately included cows that had already given their last milk). Yama, having delayed his return and thereby not having shown proper respect to his guest, grants Naciketas three requests. After Yama discharges the first two (that Naciketas be returned to his father's house, and that his performance of the fire sacrifice should bring about long-lasting results), Naciketas asks him what happens to people after they die, to which Yama responds, "As to this even the gods of old have doubts, for it's hard to understand, it's a subtle doctrine. Make, Naciketas, another wish. Do not press me! Release me from this."[57] As Ganeri notes,

> Yama's extreme reluctance to speak of death has a beseeching, desperate note, but of what can he be so afraid? It is that Yama, the god of death, is being forced to speak about himself, to tell the secret of his own name? … The cumulative effect of the frame narrative is to box Yama into a corner where he has no option but to give his speech in spite of all his trepidation.[58]

Similarly, in the story presented in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8 of the quest by Indra and Virocana to understand the nature of the self, the god Prajāpati puts the god and the demon through 32-year periods of manual labor, each time giving an incomplete answer that ultimately leads only Indra to return time and again for clarification and Prajāpati to remark, "There they go, without learning about the self, without discovering the self!"[59] Yet as Ganeri notes,

> careful attention to the narrative form here gives much insight into the nature of the "self-knowledge" being sought … in which progressively more sophisticated accounts of the self are presented as the grudging concessions of a recalcitrant god. … [F]or one doctrine about the self to be a preparatory condition of another, it must not merely be understood that it is false, but this understanding must be the result of one's own personal investigation and discovery.[60]

This proposal, which illustrates by reference to the *Upaniṣads* the question of personal struggle that guides this study, suggests that "the self is caught in the phenomenological quality of thinking, in the flavour of the experience of 'what it is like' to think. There is something that it feels like, from within, to be thinking, and in focusing upon this one is participating in a non-objectual awareness of the self."[61] I want to emphasize this observation by Ganeri about the *Upaniṣads* because I do not think its relevance is limited to that text alone. Rather, I want to suggest that this gradual and reflexive approach is one unifying element that enables us to see how a trajectory of thinking about moral struggle (which includes the intellectual struggle to understand texts and to understand oneself in relation to the grounding of reality) runs from the *Vedas*, through the epics and the *Upaniṣads*, to the time of

the Buddha. Moreover, as I will discuss again further along, it is this trajectory of the quality of persons struggling to make sense of themselves in the midst of their attempts to make sense of the difficult teachings of their traditions that marks an important religious sensibility that links the work of comparative ethics to the work of comparative theology.

Moral perfection in the Buddhist *Nikāyas*

What we have seen thus far, in the examples from the *Ṛg Veda*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Upaniṣads*, while it does not represent the full spectrum of positions or nuance on the phenomenon of moral struggle, at least gives a sense of the contours and key issues that arise in Indian religious and philosophical thought. They are, so to speak, classics of Indian religious thought even if they are not a representative sample; more would certainly need to be said about the great Indian philosophers and the debates among the different schools. However, based on the foregoing examples, what emerges with respect to moral struggle is a slightly different yet related set of concerns than we saw from the review of positions emerging from the Christian trajectory. We find less emphasis on struggle rooted in an account of the will or as a failure of practical irrationality.

There are certainly a number of operative equivalents to the notion of "will" as a faculty that directs and coordinates action. Nalini Devdas notes that three terms in the *Ṛg Veda* "signify consciousness as a whole: *hṛd* (heart), *manas* (mind) and *citta* (thought, state of mind)," and that these same terms capture the sense of coordinate action in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Aitareya Upaniṣads*, with *Aitareya Upaniṣad* 3.1.2 providing the most expansive catalog of operations of the heart, most prominently among those communicating "intention and the capacity to initiate action" being *saṃkalpa* ("conceptualization, intention"), *kratu* ("purpose, resolve"), and *kāma* ("desire").[62] Indeed the term *cetanā*, which would become prominent in Buddhist accounts, is relatively rare in the *Upaniṣads*. What does seem to be more prominent, however, is the struggle to understand the nature of the world, oneself, and the relation of these to each other, especially as these relate to one's distinctive obligations. While the particulars of moral psychology did emerge, perhaps most pointedly with Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, we do see precursors in the *Upaniṣads* and early Buddhist theories of the constitution of persons.

As we progress then to this last stretch of terrain leading up to Buddhaghosa, namely the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama (Pāli, Siddhattha Gotama) as recounted in the *Nikāyas*, we encounter many of the same questions that confronted the Buddha in his own life but which reveal roots in the earlier discussions just outlined. What was the nature of the moral struggle the Buddha identified and about which he sought to offer a practical solution?

On the more general level, as stated in the formulation of the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha discerned a quality of unsatisfactoriness characterizing all phenomenal reality (most especially the material world) and our engagement with it (*dukkha*). This judgment about phenomenal reality links closely with the picture of the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) and the various realms into which one might be born, some more unsatisfactory and full of real physical suffering than others. Here, moral struggle is

best viewed in terms of liberation from the unsatisfactoriness attendant upon a life that is uncertain and full of changes, linking this view with the Upaniṣadic goal of liberation from lower reality toward higher forms of life. What one does in this life makes a great deal of difference for what one has to endure now and in future lives, as well as how one must face future challenges in this life. A strict karmic connection exists between the particularities of one's action and their ripening fruit, applicable as much (though differently) for the Buddha as for the ancient Vedic sacrificers. Whether *karma* denotes the strict connection between ritual action and results of the Brahmin, or the *tapas*-producing (heat-producing) meditation by the forest sage, or the path of the Buddha, one's actions mediated through the labors of meditation produce effects that ripen on multiple levels.

Yet there is also a more particular kind of moral struggle central to the Buddha's teaching – the struggle against craving (*taṇhā*) that leads to attachment (*upādāna*). These struggles or efforts (denoted by the term *viriya* [effort, energy]), are in one sense the same for all people, even if the particular object of craving and the means by which we seek to grasp it differs from person to person. Indeed, thinkers such as Buddhaghosa even instructed meditation teachers to identify particular temperaments of those they were instructing, mapping each of these to a predominant characteristic among the three root ills – lust or greed (*rāga/lobha*), anger/aversion (*dosa*), or delusion (*moha*). Each of these instances of craving gives rise to attachment, both to the object of craving but also, most problematically, to the illusion of an eternal or permanent self.

While there is evidence that moral struggle in the senses I am developing it here is a subject of concern in the *Nikāyas*, it must be noted that the Buddha, at least what we know of him through traditional texts, does not seem himself to exhibit moral struggle – indeed moral struggle is something that happens before enlightenment. For example, in the *Mārasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, the lead demon Māra and his three daughters, Taṇhā (craving), Arati (aversion) and Rāga (lust), visit the Buddha in an attempt to disturb his tranquility, but in each case meet only calm resolve; as the discourse says, "They had come to him, glittering with beauty … but the Teacher swept them away right there, as the wind [blows away] a fallen cotton tuft."[63] Yet his disciples do experience the difficulty of living by the Buddha's teaching, and the Buddha frequently notes that his teaching is complex, subtle, and difficult to follow.

Perhaps the closest one comes to seeing the Buddha's own struggle emerges from his own decision about whether or not to teach the Dhamma once he attained liberation. In the *Brahmasaṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, in the *Ayacana Sutta*, the Buddha despairs of the challenges he would face in teaching the Dhamma to the people of his time:

> This Dhamma that I have discovered is deep, hard to see, hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, not within the sphere of reasoning, subtle, to be expounded by the wise. But this generation delights in adhesion … For such a generation this state is hard to see, that is, specific conditionality, dependent origination … If I were to teach the Dhamma and if others would not understand me, that would be wearisome for me, that would be troublesome.[64]

Only at the urging of the Brahmā Sahampati – with his appeal that "there are beings with little dust in their eyes who are falling away because they do not hear the

Dhamma" – does the Buddha consent, out of compassion, to share the subtle and difficult teaching he has discovered.

While the question of moral struggle in Western philosophical and Christian theological traditional writings did center on the problem of practical irrationality and the possibility of a single coordinating faculty of the will, it was by no means limited to these terms (as the discussion by Augustine, noted earlier, of the orientation of the whole person indicated). Yet there were also discussions, in the *Nikāyas* and among later philosophers, about the place of will or intention (the various terms used to translate *cetanā*). While a more detailed examination of the early Buddhist psychological constitution will be considered further along, we may note here that the term *cetanā* does become central to the *Nikāya* discussion of proper and improper action. The frequently cited *Upāli Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* relates the Buddha's discussion with the Nigaṇṭha householder Upāli, whose own teacher Nātaputta had instructed that the primary determinant of the moral quality of an action was its physical quality (rather than the mental or verbal quality). The Buddha instructed Upāli, "I describe mental action as the most reprehensible for the performance of evil action, for the perpetration of evil action, and not so much bodily action and verbal action."[65] The primacy of mental action figures prominently in the determination of whether actions are to be judged good or evil. As Peter Harvey explains, citing the well-known quotation of the Buddha in the Aṅguttara Nikāya:

> What determines the nature of a karmic "seed" is the will behind the act: "It is will [*cetanā*], O monks, that I call *karma*; having willed, one acts through body, speech, and mind" (A.III.415). *Cetanā* encompasses the motive for which an action is done, its immediate intention (directed at a specific objective, as part of fulfilling a motive), and the immediate mental impulse which sets it going and sustains it … "Karma" is the overall psychological impulse being an action, that which sets going a chain of causes culminating in a karmic fruit.[66]

Or as Damien Keown notes, "In short, *cetanā* describes not merely intention but the total posture of personality, both cognitive and affective. *Cetanā*, then, is not distinct from thought and feeling – it is the particular configuration or deployment of psychic potential which is found within the individual human subject."[67] In the later Abhidhamma literature and in Buddhaghosa's account, the meaning of *cetanā* will be specified more precisely by noting its interplay with other mental factors that arise in each instance of consciousness. Although the notion of moral struggle as a problem of practical rationality is central to the Christian account leading up to Bonaventure, something analogous to this is not altogether absent from the Buddhist account.

In order to draw from these general observations about moral struggle a more focused path by which to approach Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, I now want to say something about their distinctive conceptual frameworks, what I am here labeling their symbolic religious cosmologies. These highlight what at first might appear to be the most significant differences between these two accounts, but for each thinker these elements are also central to their respective ways of approaching the problem of moral struggle: for Bonaventure, the central Christian doctrine of the Trinitarian God

and, for Buddhaghosa, the mode of analysis known as Abhidhamma (the highest law or truth). For only through the most seemingly divergent elements of these accounts must the comparison pass, if it is to draw forth helpful observations that do not conflate the accounts but rather express a unity in the diversity of perspectives about the moral struggle of persons.

The Symbolic Religious Cosmology of the Trinity

The Trinity, as the central doctrine of Christian faith, is the subject of a long and difficult history. Its central question has been expressed by William G. Rusch in the following words: "how is the church, in an intellectually satisfying manner, to integrate the doctrine of one God, Father and Creator, inherited from the Old Testament and Judaism, with the revelation that this God had disclosed himself uniquely in Jesus and had given the Holy Spirit to the church?"[68] Many Christian theologians, Bonaventure among them, struggled to understand the moral implications of the doctrine of the Trinity. What difference should it make to the moral lives of Christians that the God they worship is one God in three persons rather than a God of some other sort? Bonaventure was notable, at least among his contemporaries, in letting the form of Trinitarian thought and its potential for creating interlocking number symbolisms guide every aspect of his writing. Appreciating his moral thought requires us to ask how and why this most particular of Christian doctrines inspires the pattern of his thinking. In the discussion that follows, I want to outline the elements that are characteristic of Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology broadly conceived, as well as those aspects he employs to decipher particular problems of personal and communal moral transformation, especially in light of complicated institutional reforms in the Franciscan order which I explore in the next chapter.

Trinitarian doctrine

For Bonaventure, to begin with the Trinity as the central doctrine of faith means to commit oneself to a certain symbolic structure of theological thinking which in turn affects what kind of approaches to the Christian life one has the capacity to see. This should strike us as a strong claim, since there is no immediately obvious connection between which element of Christian doctrine establishes one's theological departure point and how one experiences moral struggle in a community of faith. Yet as Catherine LaCugna explains, "the fundamental insight of the doctrine of the Trinity [is] that God is not far from us but lives among us in a community of persons."[69]

Early discussions about the persons of the Trinity – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – emerged from prior questions about the meaning of the person of Jesus Christ. Rooted in the response codified at the Council of Nicea (325 CE) that Jesus Christ was *homoousios* (of the same substance) with God the Father, rather than "subordinate to God and therefore a different 'substance,'" Christians probed the question of how to speak about Jesus as truly God and truly human.[70] The debates between Eunomius and the great Cappadocian fathers Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, settled for Christians that, while the Council stated that the Son was

"begotten not made," this meant, as LaCugna explains, that "unbegottenness is not the property of the unknowable divine essence. Rather, unbegottenness is the property of a divine *person*, namely the person of the Father. Begottenness is the property of another divine person, namely the Son. Therefore Father and Son *can share* the same substance, even though they are altogether different hypostatically (in personhood)."[71] This formulation has some important implications, as LaCugna suggests.

First, "*person rather than substance* [becomes] the primary ontological category" where "persons are defined by their 'relation of origin' from whence they come."[72] Second, this way of understanding the nature of God focuses one on the existence of God expressed in the relationship of God to history, and of human persons to each other, in a way that can be obscured when one focuses on God as God is in Godself, as separate and apart from creation; or as LaCugna states, "Love for and relationship with another is primary over autonomy, ecstasis over stasis, fecundity over self-sufficiency … If God were not personal, God would not exist at all."[73] Third, it was this focus on the personal nature of God, expressed in the Trinitarian discussion, that came through most strongly in Bonaventure's theology many years later.

Drawing out a theme that I shall examine in more detail in the next section, LaCugna observes that:

> Bonaventure follows the early creedal and Greek Patristic tradition that sees God the Father as the *fons divinitatis*… Bonaventure sees reality at its deepest and highest level as dynamic and "centrifugal" or diffusive and fruitful. God creates because God the Father – this particular person, not God in general – is by nature self-diffusive Good. Creation, while absolutely free, is a "natural" egress from the self-diffusive God. Thus, in Bonaventure's thought, God is not identified with self-sufficiency but with plentitude overflowing. Bonaventure's reason is simple: If God were not self-communicating, God would not be the highest God. The most perfect is the most diffusive.[74]

For Bonaventure, the Trinity marks both the center of his theology and the stylistic quality of his writing. If the goodness of God works through all of creation, and creation means, as LaCugna explains, not just the fact of material reality but a particular relation to an origin, then one should be able to identify and track these emanations of God's goodness through even the smallest and seemingly most insignificant relations to the world and its people – even within one's own person. Because the personal relation rather than the transcendent separateness of God is central to Bonaventure's theology, the struggle of the human being to know and return to God holds a primary place in Bonaventure's thought. In this way, Trinitarian doctrine gives rise to the next two aspects of Bonaventure's symbolic religious cosmology: Trinitarian symbolism and Trinitarian exemplarity.

Trinitarian symbolism

Bonaventure's thought is structured by thoroughly Christian, most especially Trinitarian, symbolism. The symbols he employs serve both to configure sections of his work and also to communicate the dynamics of human struggle and the complexities of thought. For example, not only does he begin certain works with an exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, but he also uses the number three stylistically

to draw intellectually important distinctions (as in parts 1, 5, and 6 of his *Breviloquium* for example) and to develop interlocking sets of lists (as he does in the treatise, *De triplici via*).

These choices must not be seen as incidental or as mere medieval cultural conventions. This way of writing, I suggest, displays a particular moral intention that communicates how symbols both give rise to possibilities for action and prompt agents to act in ways they judge to be good. Bonaventure selects one among many possible modes of Christian exposition, and the Trinitarian language must be viewed not as an arbitrary rhetorical tool bound to an ideological agenda or a cultural convention, but rather as a technique by which a thinker's attempt to give a systematic exposition of Christian faith helps to illuminate his equally fragile attempts to understand human moral failure. A trust in the patterns of Triune enumerations leads Bonaventure to a certain reading of the world that views God's nearness as guiding and enabling the possibility of moral activity.

Bonaventure balances his structural prioritization of Trinitarian questions with an abiding concern for how to understand the proper imitation of Christ. Addressing this concern, he draws on three distinct but related sources. First, Bonaventure was deeply influenced by those images of God that communicated the manner by which God's Spirit came into the world and continues to abide with humankind to lead the way back to God. The basic metaphysical categories that communicate this pattern are *emanation*, *exemplification*, and *consummation*. Zachary Hayes provides a neat summary statement of the way that Trinity and Christology are both implied in the pivotal category of exemplification:

> In the most basic sense, it is God in His own self-knowledge who is the Exemplar of all else; and since God exists only as a trinity, exemplarity refers at one level to the entire trinity. However, in a special manner, the mystery of the trinity itself is reflected in the mystery of the second person. As the full and total expression of God's primal fruitfulness, the Son is simultaneously the expression of all that God can be in relation to the finite.[75]

On this account, the concrete figure of Jesus of Nazareth exemplifies the fullest possible expression of God in the world and so assumes the place of the primary and most excellent moral exemplar.

Second, Bonaventure relates the activity of Jesus as Son to the *activity of grace* in the world that is the effective presence of God which reorders the disordered soul and brings all created things back to their source through the process of consummation. Bonaventure describes this process whereby:

> No man is worthy to attain this supreme Good which exceeds the limits of human nature in every way, unless he is lifted up beyond himself through the action of God coming down into him. But God does not come down in His immutable essence. Rather, He comes through an influence that emanates from Him. Neither does the soul rise above itself in a physical sense. Rather, it is lifted up through a God-conforming habit. If, then, the rational spirit is to be worthy of eternal beatitude, it must partake of this God-conforming influence. Since this influence which renders the soul deiform comes from God, conforms to God, and leads to God as to our end, it restores our soul as the image of the most blessed trinity, affecting it not only as a part of the order of creation, but also in terms of righteousness of will and repose of beatitude.[76]

In this description of the activity of grace, Bonaventure emphasizes how the ineffability of God's essence requires that grace be active, descending, likened to a vehicle that picks up its traveler for a return to her point of departure. Note also that the influence of God emanates from its source and reorders the creature both to its natural state but moreover in its desires and its ability to elect its proper end. The activity of the specific emanation of God is one which is squarely centered on transforming a person's own ability to conform herself to her proper end.

The third element in this series, the *imitation of Christ*, relates the prior two with respect to how the agent lives out the Trinitarian pattern of emanation, exemplification, and consummation through the dynamics of grace. The Trinity mirrors in its own internal activity the processes whereby creation comes from its creator and returns to it again. The rational creation mirrors the activity of the Trinity through the threefold stage of development on two levels. With respect to the immaterial aspect of the person, the traditional division of purgation, illumination, and union provides the foundation by means of a prayerful ascent of the human spirit to God. With respect to the person as a unity of body and soul, the individual seeks to imitate Christ which requires, as Bonaventure points out on numerous occasions, the ability to differentiate between those aspects of Jesus' life that are meant for our inspiration and instruction and those that are meant more strictly for our imitation.[77] Here the life of Francis becomes central as a model for how to discern the difference between inspiration and example. There were certain kinds of actions which Jesus performed that his followers are called to imitate strictly, while others were meant to inspire Christians in the trials they encounter in their attempts to imitate Christ. While this will become clearer in the next chapter when we examine Bonaventure's intervention in the debates about Franciscan interpretations of voluntary poverty, we must note that each of these features falls within the broader Trinitarian framework and therefore must be analyzed in that context.

Trinitarian exemplarity

Bonaventure also drew inspiration from the Trinity as a strategy for reading the books of scripture and the "book" of the created order. Indeed, Bonaventure understood theology as a way of reading the world through the perspective of sacred scripture, for the purpose of moral improvement in this world and eventual union with God in the next. Consider the following passages, first from early in Bonaventure's career and then from a later time, about what constitutes a proper end for theology. In his early *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* (1250–1254 CE), Bonaventure says that theology is an "affective habit" understood as "midway between the speculative and the practical and embracing both," having as its principal end "that we may become good," and that this habit is best characterized by "wisdom, which means at the same time both knowledge and love."[78] Theology is conceived more on the model of wisdom (*sapientia*) than on the model of a science (*scientia*), and this distinction echoes an important comparative point. For Bonaventure (and for Buddhaghosa, as we shall soon see), the act of study and learning combines the affective and the cognitive dimensions of the human person. The end of knowledge in this world is the critique of proper and improper objects of attachments.

In his treatise *On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology*, probably written around 1270 CE, only a few years prior to his death (recalling that the term *reductione* means a "leading back" or "retracing"), Bonaventure argues for a view of theology based on the traditional four senses of scripture. Bonaventure argues that:

> in all the books of Sacred Scripture, beyond the literal meaning expressed externally by the words, there is a threefold spiritual sense: the allegorical, by which we are taught what to believe concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ, the tropological, by which we are taught how to live, and the anagogical, by which we are taught how to cleave to God. Hence the whole of Sacred Scripture teaches these three things: the eternal generation and the incarnation of Christ, the norm of life, and the union of the soul with God. The first concerns faith, the second morals, and the third the final outcome of both.[79]

Analogous to the difficulty of distinguishing between those aspects of Jesus' life that are meant for inspiration and those meant for imitation, scripture requires discernment, and this in turn requires commentary. Bonaventure works from the assumption that Christian scripture as a whole is unified to reveal the Trinitarian nature of God, the plan of cosmic history, and the proper actions and ends of human life. Scripture, therefore, reveals three things: faith, morals, and how the two are related with respect to the ultimate destiny of human beings.

This same basic structure is at work in his mystical treatise, the *Journey of the Mind into God*. He notes that the mind makes a "threefold progress" to coordinate it with its "three principal aspects." As he says, "One refers to the external body, wherefore it is called animality or sensuality; the second looks inward and into itself, wherefore it is called spirit; the third looks above itself, wherefore it is called mind."[80] In complementary fashion, Bonaventure notes that a theological reading of the natural world and our place in it requires a progression from literal, to symbolic, to mystical understanding.[81] Likewise, one's efforts in this world should be structured into three parts: prayer, holy living, and reflecting on the connection between our own thinking and its relationship to the source of truth which promises rest for the soul.[82]

In addition to these particular doctrinal implications and the symbolic form of Bonaventure's writing, he also uses a Trinitarian strategy to understand the events of history in his late collection of lectures called the *Collations on the Six Days [of Creation]*. While this text is, broadly speaking, a work focusing on salvation history, he constructs it from a particular social-historical motivation, namely the emergence of prophesies by the Cistercian Joachim of Fiore concerning the nature of the Trinity and the coming of the Age of the Spirit. Joachim's close linking of the Trinity as a symbolic technique for interpreting the stages of history played on the tension between the church established by Christ in the Age of the Son, with its empirical flaws and corruption, and the perfected church of the future that would supersede, he supposed, the present church in the Age of the Spirit. "For even if, with the substitution of the things that are new," Joachim says, "the things that are old were to pass away, this was not as though these things had not in their own time been instituted by God for righteousness, but rather because lesser

things are to be left behind so that more powerful mysteries might be given to the faithful for their salvation."[83]

This tension, which will resurface in the next chapter's discussion of the Franciscan debates about the meaning of Jesus' poverty, was a constant source of inspiration for Bonaventure. For not only did he puzzle about the immanence of God's plan for humanity in the historical events of his age, but throughout his later years he was working through a debate about the meaning of Christian poverty that would itself figure into this wider discussion about how cosmic history was unfolding.[84]

For Bonaventure then, the Trinity structures a wide metaphysical view through which the events of history derive meaning and according to which the moral development of persons should be modeled. The love of God expressed in the life of the Trinity flows out to creation and eventually returns to God. Moral thought, on Bonaventure's account, ought to bear a Trinitarian shape, both because it teaches people to contemplate the dynamics of God's interpersonal love and because it calls people to form their own thinking in an identifiably Trinitarian symbolic structure and pattern. It is this comprehensive view of the effect of Trinitarian theology on moral thought that I refer to when I speak about Bonaventure's "symbolic religious cosmology." It is this same broad sense of the term that I use to interpret the influence of Buddhist Abhidhamma on Buddhaghosa's thought outlined in the next section.[85]

The Symbolic Religious Cosmology of Buddhist Abhidhamma

The Pāli Tipiṭaka (or "three baskets" of teaching) marks the reference point from which Buddhaghosa's interpretation of his tradition begins. The earliest of these stories and teachings of the Buddha were not set down in writing until roughly the first century BCE by traditional estimate, in their current form sometime prior to the fifth century CE.[86] Modern scholarship suggests that the first of these written efforts were the rules of the Vinaya (regulations for monastic life and the stories surrounding their institution), followed by the Suttas (literally "threads," referring to the dialogues between the Buddha and his early community of followers), followed by the books of the Abhidhamma (the *abhi* [higher] Dhamma [teaching or law], referring to the systemic examination of Buddhist concepts and their use in giving a proper interpretation to all phenomena of experience). The Suttas present most of the central ideas that form the basis for the later investigations in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka and Buddhaghosa's commentarial works, which were roughly 500 years older than the first written exegesis and elaboration of Buddhist teachings.[87] The version of the Pāli canon that we have today is more or less the same version that Buddhaghosa was using when he wrote *Visuddhimagga* and his Tipiṭaka commentaries. Because Abhidhamma study requires the generation of and charting connections between exhaustive lists, I examine those that I judge to be central to understanding the Abhidhammic account of human psychology and its symbolic power in transforming behavior. To follow the discussion below, it will be helpful to consult the basic form of Abhidhamma lists provided in the Appendix.

Constitution of persons: aggregates, characteristics, and ultimate realities

The significance of the Abhidhamma tradition among the varieties of Buddhist thought is that it seeks to give an exhaustive account of all possible phenomena by rendering the most precise possible specification of its component parts. As Rupert Gethin describes it, "Abhidharma [Sanskrit] represents the theoretical counterpart to what the meditator actually experiences in meditation. It can be summed up as the attempt to give a systematic and exhaustive account of the world in terms of its constituent physical and mental events."[88] It is a system of classifying experiences wherein the processes of analysis and classification themselves have the power to motivate and transform intentional actions. Because Abhidhammic claims about the proper way to analyze reality comprehensively represent strong judgments about the real rather than the illusory world, I suggest viewing it as an operative parallel to Bonaventure's Trinitarian analysis.

Any attempt to summarize the Abhidhamma, because it moves toward ever increasing levels of complexity, frustrates the system's intention and momentum. As Bhikkhu Bodhi puts it, "From the standpoint of Theravada orthodoxy the system that they expound is not a figment of speculative thought, not a mosaic put together out of metaphysical hypotheses, but a disclosure of the true nature of existence as apprehended by a mind that has penetrated the totality of things both in depth and in the finest detail."[89] It therefore seems reasonable to approximate a summary by posing to the system three preliminary questions: (1) What is it that constitutes a person? (2) Are there any qualities that can be said to characterize all persons? (3) How, if at all, do these characteristics persist in persons as they change through time? These questions are intended only to isolate that portion of this symbolic religious world that is necessary for understanding how Buddhaghosa frames his response to the problem of moral struggle.

The first question addresses how persons are constituted by appeal to the enumeration *khandhas* or aggregates. Rupert Gethin explains that "Any individual being's physical and psychological make-up comprises five groups of conditions and functions: a physical body normally endowed with five senses, feelings that are pleasant, unpleasant and neutral; ideas and concepts; various desires and volitions; and self-consciousness."[90] James McDermott clarifies:

> At any given time a man is but a temporary combination of these aggregates; for *khandhas* are subject to continual change. A person does not remain the same for any two consecutive instants. The Buddhists deny that any of the aggregates individually or in combination may be considered to be an ego, self, or soul (*attā*). Indeed, it is erroneous to postulate any real, lasting unity behind the elements that make up an individual. The Buddha taught that belief in a self behind the *khandhas* results in egoism, attachment, craving, and hence in suffering. Thus he taught the doctrine of *anattā*, that is, the doctrine that there is no permanent self, in order to draw people away from egoistic attachments.[91]

Khandha is a term for a collection or mass of particular things and, as a technical term, has the sense of an element or factor constituting some phenomenal reality. The five

Pāli words for the listing just given are *rūpa* (variously body, matter, or form), *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (disposition/mental formation), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). On this view, these five factors in various combinations constitute all the mental and physical phenomena that a person can experience, and whatever arises in a person must be a result of some combination of these factors.[92]

However, the *khandhas,* while explaining the constituents of the human person, do not provide the most detailed possible picture of the ultimate components of all reality. Not only can they be variously subdivided, but insofar as they are components, they are components resulting from the interrelated networks of causal influence. While the enumeration of the *khandhas* is found in the Suttas,[93] the Abhidhamma tradition posits that it is the *dhammas* (the smallest possible units of analysis)[94] that form the most exact specification of analyzable units of experience. Whereas common subdivisions of the surrounding environment such as plants, animals, human beings, and divine beings apply to conventional (*sammuti*) reality, the distinction of *khandhas* or *dhammas* applies to ultimate (*paramattha*) realities.

These are the things which finally and really are, things that have their own identifiable nature or essence (*sabhāva*), in distinction from those things which "are products of mental construction (*parikappanā*)."[95] Theravāda tradition posits that *dhammas* can have their own way of being (*sabhāva*) understood as identifiable mark or characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) without possessing a persisting self or soul (*attā*), thereby allowing Theravādins to deflect the criticism that the theory of *dhammas* betrays the Buddha's teaching on *anattā.*

The basic pattern of analysis in Theravāda Abhidhamma requires one to assess the variety of possible phenomena (*dhammā*) – that is, those states arising from the interaction of the mind with external objects or events – and then to make a basic ethical classification of them according to what is wholesome, what is unwholesome, and what is morally neutral. Figure 2.1 relates these two ways of analyzing ultimate realities.

As Nyanatiloka describes it, "Consciousness and mental concomitants may be either karmically wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral, whilst corporeality is always karmically

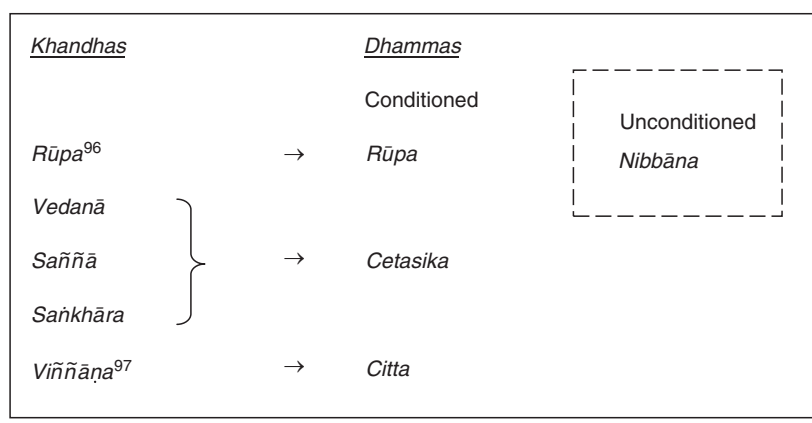

Figure 2.1 Relationship of *khandhas* to *dhammas*

neutral; and so is the fourth reality, Nibbāna."[98] In the Abhidhamma, the *khandhas* are related to a more detailed analysis of states of mind or consciousness (*cittas*) and the particular mental "concomitants" or factors (*cetasikas*) that influence them. (For the full list of these factors, please see the Appendix.) *Cetasikas*[99] and *cittas*[100] are related in various ways, but are always understood to be inseparable in any particular mental act such that one cannot be said to lead or follow the other. Theravāda Abhidhamma enumerates the *cittas* according to whether they are wholesome or unwholesome, resultant or functional, and whether they pertain to the world of sense or to the fine-material, immaterial, or supra-mundane spheres.

The *cittas* (states of mind or kinds of consciousness) are of 89 or 121 different kinds (depending on how one enumerates divine states of mind in the supra-mundane sphere). The 52 *cetasikas* are accounted for by the 2 *khandhas* of *vedanā* and *saññā*, and a 50-part division of the *khandha* of *saṅkhāra*. The *cetasikas* are divided into four broad categories: those that occur in all acts of consciousness and are, so to speak, morally indifferent (7);[101] those that are morally indifferent but occur in only some acts of consciousness (6),[102] those that are pronounced definitively unwholesome (14), and those that are pronounced definitively wholesome (25).[103]

Dhamma, while used to classify mental states, is also used to comprise phenomena more broadly. In this way, we can speak of qualities of the material world as being *dhamma* when we analyze these as to their most basic elements. In the traditional Theravāda view, there are 82 *dhammas* (one, *nibbāna*, which is taken to be an unconditioned phenomenon, and 81 conditioned *dhammas*). The conditioned *dhammas* comprise the 52 *cetasika* (the more specific enumeration of the *khandhas* of *vedanā*, *saññā*, and *saṇkhāra*) and the 28 kinds of materiality (the specific division of the *rūpa-khandha*, which is further subdivided into the 4 primary elements [*mahābhūta*][104] and 24 kinds of derived materiality [*upādā-rūpa*]). Buddhaghosa offers a broad range of meanings for *dhammas*, noting their range of uses in the Suttas and in the Abhidhamma.[105] While he uses the term in the Abhidhamma senses just noted, he also uses it for specifically moral evaluations to distinguish what assists from what distracts from progress along the path. Therefore, if we look to the Abhidhamma's and Buddhaghosa's exposition of it for an answer to the question of moral struggle, we are likely to find it only to the extent that it appears within the framework of the *khandhas* and *dhammas*.

The nature of reality and the structure of causality

To answer the second question concerning whether there are characteristics common to all persons, Buddhist thinkers state that all reality exhibits three qualities (*tilakkhaṇa*): impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). These qualities characterize all the *khandhas*, which means that they apply to all persons equally because all persons are equally and universally accounted for by the *khandhas*. These characteristics are supported by the Buddhist account of the nature of causality and the mutually dependent relationship among causes. As Mark Siderits notes, for the Buddhist it is "possible for every part to be subject to control without there being any part that always fills the role of controller (and so is the self). On some occasions a given part might fall on the controller side, while on other occasions it might fall on the side of the controlled."[106]

The central formulation of this insight and its relationship to human action is the teaching on *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination). The twelve factors are: ignorance (*avijjā*), mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), consciousness (*viññāṇa*), mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*), six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*), contact (*phassa*), sensation (*vedanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), becoming (*bhava*), birth (*jāti*), decay and death (*jarā-maraṇa*). The traditional formulation of this doctrine is presented as a reflection on the nature of what one "sees" through the experience of meditation. However, the Buddhist tradition, even down to the present day, has exhibited some disagreement about whether the factors of *paṭiccasamuppāda* are meant to describe the conditioned connection and movement from past to present to future lives or whether the factors are meant to describe the particular coordination of factors that give rise to any single moment of experience.[107] Some contemporary Buddhists have even read this doctrine to refer to a general sense of biological and moral interconnection that would undergird a global ecological ethic.[108]

In one sense, the twelve links in the chain explain the continuity of the convention of the person over three lifetimes. The first two elements (ignorance [*avijjā*] and mental formations [*saṅkhāra*]) suggest how ignorance of the three conditions gives rise to mental formations that have karmic momentum giving rise to consciousness that is reborn in the next life. The next eight conditions (consciousness [*viññāṇa*], mentality-materiality [*nāma-rūpa*], six sense bases [*saḷāyatana*], contact [*phassa*], sensation [*vedanā*], craving [*taṇhā*], clinging [*upadāna*], becoming [*bhava*]) account for the next rebirth, because rebirth consciousness takes root only in dependence upon an available material body. Moreover, the progression through these eight conditions explains how our bodies and minds become attached to impermanent realities which lead to the desire for further becoming in a future rebirth. The final two conditions denote the third lifetime, which begins in birth [*jāti*] and ends in decay and death [*jarā-maraṇa*]. It is this tradition that Buddhaghosa exemplifies among early Buddhist interpreters of this doctrine, even as he seeks to reconcile the traditional understanding with the Abhidhamma claim that we might understand the casual process of dependent origination occurring in each moment of consciousness.[109]

A person's ignorance of the true nature of conditioned existence gives rise to particular mental formations that arise when a person is born, which in turn affect his or her actions in the present. How a person approaches these formations as he or she interacts with the material world gives rise to and shapes the experience of pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral states of mind (*dhammas*) which in turn affect one's future possibilities.[110]

Gethin offers a helpful formulation of the traditional view's moral implications:

> our previous ignorance and formations represent the "past cause" of the "present fruit" which consists of consciousness, mind and body, six senses, sense-contact, and feeling which we presently experience; the way we react to this fruit in the present, by way of craving, grasping and becoming, constitutes the "present cause" that will bear fruit in the form of the conditions of our future birth, aging, and death.[111]

In other words, what we are willing and able to do at any particular time is at least partially dependent on how we have come to think about things in the past (*saṅkhāra*) and also on those ways of thinking about things that we have either purposely ignored or have not yet had the opportunity to consider (*avijjā*).

Intention, volition, and personal continuity in Buddhist Abhidhamma

The last of the three questions noted above concerns how the constitution of persons and the characteristics of their phenomenal experience relate to their ability to act. The theory of causality explains how people are influenced by past events, but additional factors are required if we are to understand how, on the Buddhist account, a particular set of mental phenomena experienced now is related to a series of mental phenomena experienced later. In other words, how, if at all, do these characteristics persist in persons as they change through time? Only through a proper understanding of the interdependence of causal factors can one accurately assess how one's actions are affected but not determined by past actions, divine intervention, or pure accident.[112] *Kamma* also addresses the important question of how intentions are connected with actions and how actions are connected with consequences.

Buddhist tradition takes there to be three expressions of *kamma* – bodily, verbal, and mental – each of which is subject to enumeration through different senses in which the term is used. On the one hand, *kamma* is a word denoting any action. This action can be understood either as an expression of the intention of the agent, or as an expression of the character or habit of the agent, or as a deed of the agent denoting certain consequences.[113] On the other hand, *kamma* denotes the accumulated effects of an action that influence, but do not determine, future choices. As McDermott interprets the problem, "According to the Buddhist conception, there is a continual stream of renewed existences produced in accordance with the action of kamma. This is the cycle of saṃsāra. Belief in the doctrine of kamma presupposes belief in saṃsāra."[114] *Kamma* is also frequently described in terms of the fruit (*phala*) of past action and the maturing (*vipāka*) of present action in the future in terms of its effects.

The debate in contemporary Buddhist ethics about the place of intentionality in the moral life signals the problems involved in interpreting *kamma*, as we saw earlier. One of the most frequently cited and occasionally debated citations concerning *kamma*, mentioned earlier in the chapter, comes from the Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.415: "O monks, I say that volition [*cetanā*] is action [*kamma*]. Having thought, one does an action by means of body, speech, and mind."[115] The controversy around this passage focuses on whether intention (a frequent translation for *cetanā*, also rendered "will") has the same kammic results as the actual performance of an action. Put differently, is an action moral only because of the intention behind it or does the actualization of an intention (that is, the consequence) define the morality of an action?[116]

For example, Richard Gombrich relates that, in his conversations with monks in contemporary Sri Lanka, he observed an inconsistency between their praise of intention as that which determines the morality of an act and their admission that the consequences of an act (the size of a donation for example) were in fact quite significant. Gombrich suggests that "the list of Ten Good Deeds, which is post-canonical, is the doctrinal come-back after experience had shown that the doctrine of pure intentionality was not fully accepted in practice."[117] Damien Keown has suggested that *cetanā* is used in Buddhist discourse to mean a basic orientation of the entire person that unites the intellectual and affective aspects of acting (making his reading of *cetanā* very close to what we described earlier as the Augustinian heritage in debates about

the will). He complains that translations of *cetanā* as "intention" or "volition" tend to overemphasize the intellectual aspect of its workings:

> *[C]etanā* is best pictured as the matrix in which the push and pull of the rational and emotional aspects of the psyche are funneled in the direction of moral choice. It is therefore a function of the total personality and not merely its cognitive operations. … *Cetanā*, then, is not distinct from thought and feeling – it is the particular configuration or deployment of psychic potential which is found within the individual human subject.[118]

Both of these observations point to the need to consider the importance of intentionality in the mental formations that have karmic effects.

In her study of *cetanā* in Theravāda Buddhism, Nalini Devdas suggests four meanings of *cetanā* in the Sutta literature.

> The first of these features is that *cetanā* functions as a factor of basic sentience (*nāma*). A second feature of *cetanā* is its role as intention or purposive thought. The association of *cetanā* with *patthāna* (aspiration towards a specific goal) and *paṇidhi* (resolve) is emphasized in this context. A third feature of *cetanā*… is the identification of *cetanā* with *kamma*. … The term *cetanā* also occurs only rarely in passages where the Buddha speaks of a type of *cetanā* that renounces *kamma* and the fruits of *kamma*. This relationship to the Eightfold Path is the fourth feature of *cetanā*.[119]

The second two features that she mentions are the same ones that Gombrich and Keown suggest require either a modification of Buddhist doctrine by practice or a clarification of *cetanā* as a factor of the whole person, rational and affective, rather than as a purely mental factor. Yet with the fourth feature, she points out an important aspect that I will return to later in this study, namely the connection between the language of Abhidhamma analysis and the practical progression between this nuanced philosophical knowledge and the experiential knowledge gained through Buddhist meditation.[120]

The Abhidhamma enumerates 52 mental factors (*cetasikas*) that can occur in various instances of consciousness, and these are divided into the ethically variable, the kammically unwholesome, and the kammically wholesome or beautiful. (See the Appendix for the explanation that follows.) The first 13 factors are ethically variable and are subdivided into two groups: the universal (those that occur in each instance of consciousness) and the occasional (those that occur only in some instances of consciousness). *Cetanā* holds the fourth position among the universal factors, requiring as preconditions such things as contact, feeling, and perception, and itself serving as a condition for universal factors such as initial mental attention and occasional factors such as sustained mental attention and decision.

Buddhaghosa describes the distinctive work of this universal ethically variable factor, when he says of *cetanā* that:

> It wills, thus it is volition; it collects, is the meaning. Its characteristic is the state of willing. Its function is to accumulate. It is manifested as coordinating. It accomplishes its own and others' functions, as a senior pupil, a head carpenter, etc., do. But it is evident when it occurs in the marshalling (driving) of associated states in connection with urgent work, remembering, and so one.[121]

The image here is one of an actor (pupil, carpenter) that has the distinct ability to hold a plan of its own which simultaneously coordinates the plans of others, an image which roughly matches Keown's interpretation. In his *Atthasālinī*, his commentary on the first book of the Abhidhamma, Buddhaghosa explains that, "*Cetanā* is that which intends: the meaning is that it arranges the associated (mental) states as objects in line with itself."[122] *Cetanā* is therefore a kind of *kamma* in the sense that it performs an ordering or arranging function that allows the coordination of mental states which in turn produces the result of a coordinated mental action (a decision) or a externally observable action.

Cetanā, in Buddhaghosa's description, both cognizes an end but also accumulates and weaves it together with other ends. This also echoes the concern stated above that *cetanā* is an integrating function of the personality that orders acts of mind, speech, and body. We appear to have at least an initial similarity between Buddhaghosa's reading of *cetanā* as a collecting and integrating function and Augustine's view of the will as combining both affective and rational aspects that orient the whole person, a trajectory that Bonaventure will adopt as well.

Abhidhamma and Trinity as Comparative Contexts and Categories

In the preceding exposition, I have summarized the Trinitarian theology and the Abhidhammic analysis as these provide the necessary background to understanding Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's respective notions of and approaches to moral struggle that will be the subject of the later chapters of this book. I have labeled these "symbolic religious cosmologies" because I want to indicate how their distinctive modes of religious discourse conceptualize the classic question of moral struggle. Buddhaghosa's and Bonaventure's respective accounts are, each in its own way, distinctive in relation to the other thinker's account but also distinctive within their own traditions. While reference to the Trinity is certainly not unique to Bonaventure, and neither is the Abhidhamma unique to Buddhaghosa, their approaches to reading these religious cosmologies chart particular patterns for thinking about the relationship among ideas, practices, and persons in Part II of the book.

This comparative presentation of symbolic religious cosmologies has provided an introduction to the intellectual contexts of these thinkers. But this is only half of the context. The other half requires attention to the particular social problems and practices (both material practices and the conversations through which ideas were tested and refined). We must ask whether it really makes sense to say that each of these thinkers is starting with theoretical reflection on moral struggle. What we find is actually an approach that begins in the middle of actual moral struggles seeking practical resolution, not with a question outside of particular human interactions looking in but one that arises in reflecting on moral problems peculiar to a particular time and place. For Buddhaghosa and Bonaventure, I suggest that the practical problem they were dealing with was how to live lives of material simplicity that provide the training necessary to understand the deepest insights of their traditions about the nature and destination of the material world. One might call this, to grasp a well-worn term in Christian

theology, another investigation into comparative "praxis," that is, a dialogue among theoretical insights that arises from a dialogue among practices.

Notes

1 William Schweiker, "Responsibility and Comparative Ethics," in *Power, Value, and Conviction: Theological Ethics in the Postmodern Age* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998), 126. As Schweiker notes, "interpretation in comparative ethics is best seen as a performative activity analogous to the ritual and dramatic practices of religious communities. Interpretation is a human action; it is a praxis … the reflexive process through which communities and individuals are constituted by the enactment of a world of symbolic meaning" (113).

2 Francis X. Clooney, SJ "Comparative Theology: A Review of Recent Books (1989–1995)," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995): 529–30.

3 See Richard P. Hayes, "Ritual, Self-Deception, and Make-Believe," in Roger T. Ames and Wimal Dissanayake, eds. *Self and Deception: A Cross-Cultural Philosophical Enquiry* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 349–63; and Tom J. F. Tillemans, "Reason, Irrationality and Akrasia (Weakness of Will) in Buddhism: Reflections upon Śāntideva's Arguments with Himself," *Argumentation* 22 (2008): 149–63. On Buddhist notions of intentionality, see Dan Arnold, "Svasaṃvitti as Methodological Solipsism: 'Narrow Content' and the Problem of Intentionality in Buddhist Philosophy of Mind," in *Pointing at the Moon: Buddhism, Logic, Analytic Philosophy*, Mario D'Amato, Jay L. Garfield, and Tom J. F. Tillemans, eds. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 135–59.

4 See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1949). Of the many responses to Ryle, see R. S. Peters, *The Concept of Motivation* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958). On moral struggle as weakness, see Donald Davidson, "How is Weakness of Will Possible?" in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1980] 2001), 21–42. On interdisciplinary studies on moral weakness, see Sarah Stroud and Christine Tappolet, eds., *Weakness of Will and Practical Irrationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). Recent historical surveys include Justin Gosling, *Weakness of the Will* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) and, specifically on the medieval period, Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought: From Augustine to Buridan* (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1994).

5 See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

6 The person to whom the word *akrasia* is applied is called the *akratēs* or morally weak person. The word can mean either one who does not have power to control something else (an outcome, an instrument for activity) or, in a specifically ethical sense, not to have control over oneself, particularly one's passions. In his translation to Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962), Martin Oswald provides a useful contrast of the *akretēs* to his or her opposites:

> A *sōphrōn* is a person aware of his limitations in a positive as well as a negative sense: he knows what his abilities and nature do and do not permit him to do. He is a self-controlled man in the sense that he will never want to do what he knows he cannot or should not. Aristotle differentiates him from the *enkratēs*, a man who also knows what his abilities and nature permit and do not permit, but who, though feeling drawn to what he cannot or should not do, has the moral fiber to resist temptation and follow the voice of reason instead. (His opposite, the *akratēs*, or "morally weak man," succumbs to temptation.)

> These terms refer not only to different virtues, but also to essentially different types of personality. The *sōphrōn* is well-balanced through and through; he gives the impression of self-control without effort or strain. The *enkratēs*, on the other hand, has an intense and passionate nature which he is, indeed, strong enough to control, but not without a struggle. He is "morally strong" in his victory; the *sōphrōn*, on the other hand, is not even tempted. (313–14)

7 Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of the Will in Medieval Thought*, 8–9.

8 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Martin Oswald, trans. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962), 176 (1145b 24–6).

9 Ibid., 1147a 25–30. This is the situation where two universal premises seem to be in conflict with one another. Aristotle also gives a prior example (1147a 1–10) whereby there is one universal premise and two possible specific premises from which an action might be drawn. In the example, "Dry food is good for all men," the premise makes universal statements about both "dry food" and "all men." The second premise could specify either "the meal before me is dry food" or "I am a man." Neither of these leads to the kind of knowledge which would result in an action. Because a practical syllogism ends with a directive for action, something else must be required in the example Aristotle gives. This points to another important option in Aristotle's account of moral weakness, namely one could know general principles about good action and practical conclusions, but these could be either in conflict or not specific enough to the situation to be of any use.

10 Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *Tusculan disputations*. Loeb Classical Library, J. E. King, trans. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 4.6.

11 Brad Inwood, "The Will in Seneca the Younger," *Classical Philology* 95 (2000), 44–60.

12 Ibid., 51. Here Inwood is citing Seneca's *Letters*, 34.3, 71.36, and 80.4.

13 Although too detailed to review here, an equally important tradition of thought on freedom and moral responsibility exists in Jewish thought, emerging from discussions on the meaning of freedom and moral struggle, and the interpretation of Torah by rabbinic commentators. For examination of struggles in the book of Genesis and Exodus, see David Hartman, *A Living Covenant: The Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), especially 21–41, and 204–28. For Christian interpretations of these books, see Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 86–104, 145–97.

14 Romans 7:14–20.

15 As John Pilch explains,

> The reader must not be misled by Paul's use of "I" in these verses. In the light of his bold affirmation that "I was above reproach when it came to justice based on the law" (Phil 3:6), the "I" cannot be understood in an autobiographical sense. Paul is not talking about himself personally in Rom 7:7 ff. Scholars rather identify the use of the personal pronoun as a rhetorical device in order to describe common human experience, an experience with which the readers could certainly identify. (John J. Pilch, *Galatians and Romans*, Collegeville Bible Commentary 6, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991, 47)

16 St Thomas Aquinas, S.T. IaIIae Q 77, a.2. "On the contrary, The Apostle says (Rom. Vii.23): *I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin*. Now the law that is in the members is concupiscence, of which he had been speaking previously. Since then concupiscence is a passion, it seems that a passion draws the reason counter to its knowledge."

17 Plato, *Protagoras*, 352c.
18 Krister Stendahl, *Final Account: Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 29. Stendahl situates his interpretation of Romans 7 within what he describes as Paul's theology of mission, suggesting two central problems that Paul confronted: first, "Knowing his importance as the apostle to the Gentiles, it troubled him to no end that God did not see fit to keep him healthy and functioning at all times;" and second, "How could it be that, while his mission to the Gentiles on the specific orders of the Messiah grew spectacularly, Israel itself did not respond." Disavowing claims about Paul's moral weakness that figured so prominently in later interpreters such as Augustine and Luther, Stendahl comments about the nature of Paul's struggle: "The Messiah, Jesus Christ, chose this apostle for a specific task, and therefore all his writings are expressions of his ministry, not diaries or journal notes about his inner struggles. There is no private Paul who falls in love with Christ so deeply that he even feels called to ministry. Paul was a Jew, hand-picked to be the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles" (3).
19 Krister Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 43–4.
20 St Augustine, *The Confessions*, Maria Boulding, OSB, trans. (Hyde Park, NT: New City Press, 1997), 161.
21 St Augustine, *The City of God*, Henry Bettenson, trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 571. Recent Christian theologians have critiqued the dominant place that pride has held in Christian notions of sin and struggle. For an early expression, see Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Journal of Religion*, 40.2 (1960): 100–12.
22 St Augustine, *Later Works,* John Burnaby, trans. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 74.
23 Ibid., 81.
24 V. J. Bourke, "Will," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 912.
25 Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theologica ad marinum*, Patrologia Graecae, 91.12c
26 John of Damascus, *Writings* ("The Fount of Knowledge"), Frederic H. Chase, Jr., trans. (New York: The Fathers of the Church, 1958), 248–9. (*Patrologia Graecae*, 94.944–5.)
27 Ibid., 249.
28 St Thomas Aquinas, S.T. I–II, 6.2 (Fathers of the English Dominican Province, trans.).
29 Ibid., S.T. I–II, Q13, a1.
30 Ibid., S.T. I–II, Q6, a3.
31 I offer here the rough chronology provided by Wendy Doniger [O'Flaherty] in *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976), 11. Doniger notes that her treatment of evil in Hindu mythology focuses on the Northern Indian Sanskrit tradition rather than the South Indian tradition of Tamil literature. In what I have summarized here, I too focus on this tradition.
32 For the dating of the Buddhist Nikāyas, I follow Rupert Gethin's estimation. As Gethin states,

> Theravāda Buddhist tradition traces the Pali canon back to a recension of Buddhist scriptures brought from northern India to Sri Lanka in the third century BCE by Mahinda, a Buddhist monk who was the son of the emperor Aśoka. Mahinda and his company brought no books, the texts being in their heads, but the tradition is that the Pali texts were subsequently written down for the first time in the first century BCE. The historical value of this tradition is uncertain. Most scholars would be skeptical of the suggestion that the Pali canon exists exactly as we have it today already in the middle of the first century. We know, however, that what the commentators had before

them in the fifth century CE in Sri Lanka corresponded fairly exactly to what we have now, and the original north Indian provenance and relative antiquity of much of the Pali canon seems to be guaranteed on linguistic grounds. Significant portions of the material it contains must go back to the third century BCE. (Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 42)

33 For further examinations of the importance of these notions in early South and Southeast Asia religious thought, see Doniger [O'Flaherty], *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*; Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Surama Dasgupta, *Development of Moral Philosophy in India* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, [1961] 1965); Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), and David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992). Collins in particular identifies *saṃsara*, *karma*, and *mokṣa* as the three "fundamental categories of thinking" by which Buddhist discourse took up issues in its Indian context (29), especially from the early Brahmanical reflection up to the time of the Buddha.

34 As Wendy Doniger explains, "Dharma is a problem rather than a concept, vague, indeterminable, impossible to define without broadening it into useless generality or narrowing it to exclude valid instances." See Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty and J. Duncan M. Derrett, eds., *The Concept of Duty in South Asia* (School of Oriental and African Studies/South Asia Books, 1978), xiv.

35 The specification of the four *varṇas* has its origin in the Puruṣa hymn in *Ṛg Veda* 10.90.12 in which the creation of the world comes about through the dismemberment of the cosmic man (*puruṣa*). "His mouth became the Brahmin [priest], his arms were made into the Warrior [*kṣatriyas*], his thighs the People [*vaisyas*], and from his feet the servants [*śudras*] were born." See *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, trans. (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 31.

36 Friedrich Wilhelm, "The Concept of Dharma in *Artha* and *Kāma* Literature," in Doniger O'Flaherty and Derrett, *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, 66.

37 Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, 34–41.

38 Ibid., 35.

39 Ibid., 36.

40 Given the prevalent Western portrayals of texts such as Vātsyāyana's *Kāma Sūtra* as "sex manuals," Zimmer makes a very important point about what can only be described, I think, as their moral and emotional sensitivity. Their purpose, he explains, was more broad than the maximization of physical pleasure, dealing rather with the "typology and tapestry of human emotions" and a "psychology of the heart." He focuses, in fact, on an underemphasized contextual feature that such guidance "came into existence to correct and ward off the frustration in married life that must have been all too frequent where marriages of convenience prevailed and marriages of love were the rare exception … No doubt there were many dull and painful households where a little study of the courtesan's science could have been of immense service" (Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, 38–9).

41 Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, "The Clash Between Relative and Absolute Duty: The Dharma of Demons," in Doniger O'Flaherty and Derrett, *The Concept of Duty in South Asia*, 96.

42 Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, 41.

43 *Ṛg Veda* 10.90.12–13. See *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, trans., 30–1.

44 Ibid. 10.90.9 (30).

45 Ibid., 25.

46 Ibid. 10.129.1, 7 (25–6).
47 J. C. Heesterman, "Veda and Dharma" in Doniger O'Flaherty and Derrett, *The Concept of Duty in South Asia,* 82–3.
48 One thinks here especially of the *Asya Vāmasya* in *Ṛg Veda* 1.164. See text and commentary in *The Rig Veda: An Anthology*, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, trans., 71–83.
49 See Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Ethics and Epics: The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*, Jonardon Ganeri, ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6–10.
50 Ibid., 8.
51 Ibid., 9.
52 Ibid., 227.
53 Jonardon Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of The Soul: Theories of Self and Practices of Truth in Indian Ethics and Epistemology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.
54 Dasgupta, *Development of Moral Philosophy in India*, 68.
55 *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1, in Patrick Olivelle, trans. *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 209.
56 Dasgupta, *Development of Moral Philosophy in India*, 65.
57 *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 1.21, in Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*, 379.
58 Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of The Soul,* 17.
59 *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.8.4, in Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads,* 281, cited in Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of The Soul*, 18.
60 Ganeri, *The Concealed Art of The Soul,* 19.
61 Ibid.
62 Nalini Devdas, "A Study of Cetanā and the Dynamics of Volition in Theravada Buddhism," PhD diss., Concordia University, 2004, 46.
63 *Saṃyutta Nikāyā* I.4.518; translated in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāyā*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 220.
64 Ibid., VI.6.1 (231).
65 *Majjhima Nikāya* 56.4; translated in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 479.
66 Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17.
67 Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (New York: Palgrave, 1992), 213.
68 William G. Rusch, ed. and trans., *The Trinitarian Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 2.
69 Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us: The Trinity," in Catherine Mowry LaCugna, ed., *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), 84.
70 For a helpful review of the early Christian debate about the Trinity, from which the following outline is drawn, see Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), especially 53–104 and 143–69.
71 LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us: The Trinity," 86.
72 Ibid., 86–7.
73 Ibid.
74 LaCugna, *God For Us,* 53–104, 164–5.
75 Zachary Hayes, *The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 14.
76 Brev. 5.1.3 (Hayes, trans., *The Hidden Center*, 42–3).
77 Hayes, *The Hidden Center*, 27–35.

78 I Sent., pro., q.3. Translation adapted from Charles Carpenter, *Theology as the Road to Holiness in St Bonaventure*. (New York, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 14.

79 "On Retracing the Arts to Theology," in *The Works of Bonaventure*, vol. 3, Jose de Vinck, trans. (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1966), 19–20. Bonaventure uses the image of a single light, divided into four distinct beams each representing a different search for knowledge: an exterior light which illuminates knowledge of the mechanical arts, an inferior light which illuminates the sense knowledge of natural forms, an interior light which illuminates intellectual truths, and a superior light which illuminates what he calls salutary truths, specifically the knowledge of the activity of grace.

80 Itin., I.4.

81 Itin., I.7.

82 Itin., I.8.

83 Joachim of Fiore, *Concordia novi et veteris testament*, 2.2.7, in Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. Vol. 3, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600–1300)* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 302.

84 This double historical-interpretive structure affected not only interpretations of Jesus but of Francis as well. For example, for the interpreters of Joachim, one important question was whether Francis of Assisi was sent into the world as "not simply another Saint, but as a sign of the final age, as one sent by God" (Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St Bonaventure*, Zachary Hayes, trans., Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971, 31).

85 There have been different approaches to employing the Trinity as central to Buddhist/Christian comparisons. To my knowledge, the two primary modes have analyzed the Trinity by juxtaposing it to *śuññatā* (emptiness) or in a related way by looking at the relationship between the grace of the Holy Spirit and the Mahāyānist notion of "Buddha Nature." See Roger Corless and Paul F. Knitter, eds. *Buddhist Emptiness and Christian Trinity: Essays and Explorations* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990). This is quite different from the approach I am exploring which takes Trinity and Abhidhamma as the most dissimilar and unlikely, yet most productive, comparative categories. The appropriateness of such comparisons depends to a significant degree on how and what one identifies as the most "distinctive" Buddhist and Christian doctrines, and whether one takes the relation of concepts to practices as central, as I attempt to do here.

86 On the status of "Pāli" as language and label, see K. R. Norman, *Pāli Literature including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of all the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism*. Vol. 7 of *A History of Indian Literature*, Jan Gonda, ed. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983), 1.

87 The Sutta literature is divided into four groupings based on the length of texts: the *Dīgha-nikāya* (collection of long discourses), the *Majjhima-nikāya* (collection of middle-length discourses), the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* (collection of connected or grouped discourses) and the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (collection of numbered discourses). On the division of the Abhidhamma, see Appendix.

88 Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 209.

89 Bhikkhu Bodhi, "Introduction" to Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed., *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha* (Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, [1993] 1999), 2–3.

90 Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 31.

91 James P. McDermott, "Karma and Rebirth in Early Buddhism" in Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed., *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 165–6.

92 The extent to which the *khandhas* are, or were understood to be, a kind of moral anthropology, see R. M. Gethin, "Five Khandhas: Their Treatment in the Nikāyas and Early Abhidhamma," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 14 (1986): 35–53.

> To explain the *khandhas* as the Buddhist analysis of man, as has been the tendency of contemporary scholars, may not be incorrect as far as it goes, yet it is to fix upon one facet of the treatment of the *khandhas* at the expense of others. … the five *khandhas*, as treated in the *nikāyas* and early *abhidhamma*, do not exactly take on the character of a formal theory of the nature of man. The concern is not so much the presentation of an analysis of man as object, but rather the understanding of the nature of conditioned existence from the point of view of the experiencing subject. Thus, at the most general level *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāras*, *viññāṇa* are presented as five aspects of an individual being's experience of the world; each *khandha* is seen as representing a complex class of phenomena that is continuously arising and falling away in response to processes of consciousness based on the six spheres of sense. (49)

93 See *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (M. 10.38–9); *Mahahatthipadopama Sutta* (M. 28.28).

94 The Pāli word "dhamma" has a range of meanings. At its most general level, it just means "thing" or "object." In the technical sense being used here, it means those particular things or components that are the smallest possible units for analyzing reality *as experienced*. "Dhamma" is also used to refer to the collection of the Buddha's teaching and so has often been translated as "way," "teaching," "law," or "truth."

95 Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed., *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, 25.

96 Buddhaghosa divides the *rūpa-khandha* into two parts: primary (*bhūta*) and derived (*upādāya*). The former has as its components the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water); the latter has as its components 24 elements, divisible into (1) the *ability of matter to be sensed* by the five parts of the body (according to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and the rest of the physical body which can feel sensation), (2) the actual *data of sense* (including visual input, taste, sound, and odor), and (3) *traits cognizable only by the mind* (of which there are 15: "femininity faculty, masculinity faculty, life faculty, heart-basis, bodily intimation, verbal intimation, space element, lightness of matter, malleability, wieldiness of matter, growth of matter, continuity of matter, ageing of matter, impermanence of matter, and physical nutriment" (Vsm. XIV.36, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, [1975] 1991, 443]). (See Appendix.)

97 Buddhaghosa divides the *viññāṇa-khandha* into 89 specific kinds of consciousness (see Appendix, short enumeration). Buddhaghosa states that, "The words *viññāṇa*, *cittaṃ*, and *mano* are one in meaning [*Viññāṇam, cittaṃ, mano ti atthato ekaṃ*]" (Vsm. XIV.82 [Ñānamoli, 453]). All three of these words relate to mental operations, although *manas* is traditionally enumerated as one of the *six* senses in Indian philosophy (sight, taste, touch, smell, sound, and mind).

98 Nyanatiloka Mahathera, *Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka* (Kandy and Ceylon: Buddhist Publication Society, 1971), 12.

99 The word *cetasika* means mental factors (sometimes translated "consciousness-concomitants" because they are the results of specific actions of cognition). Buddhaghosa enumerates 52 mental factors, classed into three groups: neutral, unwholesome, and wholesome. The *cetasikas* comprise the three *khandhas* of *vedanā*, *saññā*, and *saṅkhāra*. More specifically, *vedanā* and *saññā* each account for one of the *cetasikas* while there are 50 kinds of *saṅkhāras*, yielding a total of 52.

100 The word *citta* means mind, in a general sense, but refers more specifically to states of mind. It tracks to the word *viññāṇa* in the enumeration of *khandhas*. The number 89 is a reduction in distinctions from the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* list of 121.

101 This group of *cittas* (the label for which actually means that which is common [*samāna*] to the other [*aññna*], both wholesome and unwholesome, *cittas*) includes the two *khandhas* just mentioned (*vedanā* [feeling] and *saññā* [perception], as well as the factor of *cetanā* (the term which is usually translated as intention of volition) which I discuss in more detail below. This group is thought to be common to all kinds of thought.

102 This group of *cittas* includes factors which are common to some but not all kinds of thought. For example, this group of *cittas* includes the different kinds of thought called applied (*vitakka*) and sustained (*vicāra*). It also includes the factors of decision (*adhimokkha*), energy (*viriya*), and desire (*chandha*). These last three would appear to be particularly important in understanding Buddhaghosa's account of moral struggle because they all speak to the aspects of tendency, movement, and momentum that would be relevant consideration in the expression of thought in a particular action. While intention (*cetanā*) is thought to be part of all mental acts, the particular conviction and motivation (*adhimokkha* and *viriya*) that lead to the actualization of an idea in action are factors of only some mental acts.

103 My explanation of the relationship between the *cittas* and *cetasikas* is summarized from the presentation of the topic in Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed., *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*.

104 It is important to note that, even though the elements roughly track to other pre-modern cultural enumerations of elements into earth, air, fire, and water, insofar as these elements are primary in a system which posits no persisting, unchangeable essence to things, they are not foundational in the same way. The *mahābhūta* (or "primary elements") are *pathavī* ("solidity" or "hardness" which is taken to be a property of earth), *tejo* ("heat" or "maturing" which is taken to be a property of fire), *vāyo* ("distension" and "motion" which is taken to be a property of air), and *āpo* ("liquidity" or "cohesion" which is taken to be a property of water).

105 Buddhaghosa, in his commentary on the book of the Abhidhamma called the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* says,

> In such passages as, "Knowledge of root-conditions is analysis of dhamma" – dhamma means "root condition" or "cause." In such passages as, "Dhamma, adhamma bear not equal fruit: One leads to Heaven, the other leads to Hell" – dhamma means "virtue" or "good quality." In such passages as, "At the time of consciousness coming into existence, there occur dhammas," and again, "he abides watchful over certain dhammas" – dhamma implies "absence of an entity of living soul." (*The Expositor* [Atthasālinī], 49)

106 Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2007), 48.

107 On this point, see Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 149–59. In her "A Study of Dependent Origination: Vasubandhu, Buddhaghosa, and the Interpretation of *Pratītyasamutpāda*" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1987), Susan C. Stalker has considered how Buddhaghosa provides a middle path between an understanding of *pratītyasamutpāda* as a sequence of conditions uniting past and future lives as argued by Vasubandhu and an understanding of the doctrine as accounting for the unification of causal factors in momentary experience advanced in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka by focusing on the way that competing interpretations of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) function as a bridge between these accounts of dependent origination.

108 See for example Joanna R. Macy, *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991) and Joanna Rogers Macy, "Dependent Co-Arising:

The Distinctiveness of Buddhist Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7.1 (1979): 38–52. For critiques of such interpretations by Macy and others, see Nyanatiloka Mahāthera, "Paṭicca-Samuppāda: The Doctrine of Dependent Origination of All Phenomena of Existence," in his *Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka: A Synopsis of the Philosophical Collection of the Theravāda Buddhist Canon*, 5th rev. edn. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 2008 [1938]), 217–41.

109 See Susan C. Stalker, "A Study of Dependent Origination," 3–5.

110 Phra Prayudh Payutto, *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life*, Grant A. Olson, trans. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). He summarizes: "Past causes – ignorance, mental formations or predispositions. Present effects – consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense bases, contact, sensation. Present causes – craving, attachment, becoming. Future effects – birth, decay-and-death" (107).

111 Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, 151.

112 Payutto, *Buddhadhamma*, 146–7.

> [T]here are three mistaken doctrines relating to human sukha and dukkha that we must be careful not to confuse with the true teaching about kamma: 1. *Pubbekatahetuvāda* (past-action determinism) – believing that all sukha and dukkha are related to past kamma … 2. *Issaranimmānahetuvāda* (theistic determinism) – believing that all sukha and dukkha are related to the will of gods … 3. *Ahetu-apaccayavāda* (indeterminism or accidentalism) – believing that all sukha and dukkha go according to uncontrollable luck, good fortune, or fate.

113 T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, in the entry for "kamma" in the *Pali-English Dictionary* of the Pali Text Society, classify *kamma* in this threefold way: "1. the deed expressing the doer's will, i.e. qualified deed, good or bad; 2. the repeated deed as expression of the doer's habit = his character; 3. the deed as having consequences for the doer, as such a source qualified according to good and evil; as deed done accumulated and forming a deposit of the doer's merit and demerit" (191).

114 James Paul McDermott, *Development in the Early Buddhist Concept of Kamma/Karma* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984), 4.

115 "*Cetanā 'hambhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā*" (A. 6.63).

116 We should note, in passing, that this was a very similar question to the one that concerned one of Bonaventure's predecessors, Peter Abelard.

117 Richard F. Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1995 [1971]), 293. The list of "Ten Good Deeds" that Gombrich refers to is the traditional listing that he translates as follows: "Giving (material), keeping morality (i.e. the precepts), meditating, rejoicing in (another's) merit, giving (transferring) merit, giving service, showing respect, preaching, right beliefs," (87). See Appendix for further discussion.

118 Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 213. It would seem that Keown is much closer to contemporary philosophical understandings of intention enunciated by Anscombe, Davidson, and Brandom than is Gombrich. Despite this discrepancy in contemporary Buddhist understandings of ethics of intention, I think that it is important to let the Abhidhamma provide its own account of the general phenomenon before sliding it too quickly into the mutually exclusive judgments "Anscombian" or "outdated." Because the Buddhist Abhidhamma posits *cetanā* as one of 13 ethically variable mental factors associated with all acts of consciousness, an appropriate comparison with Anscombe for

instance would need to account for her judgment of the discursive description of actions in practices in terms that would be recognizable in terms of the Abhidhamma analysis. Anscombe notes that

> in describing intentional actions as such, it will be a mistake to look for the fundamental description of what occurs – such as the movements of muscles or molecules – and then think of intention as something perhaps very complicated, which qualifies this. The only events to consider are intentional actions themselves, and to call an action intentional is to say it is intentional under some description that we give (or could give) of it. (29)

119 Nalini Devdas, "A Study of Cetanā and the Dynamics of Volition in Theravāda Buddhism," 177. Devdas sets these four features of *cetanā* within what she calls "four perspectives on the dynamics of motivation that can be extrapolated from the *Sutta* literature." These are "motivational sequences" (177), "wholesome motivation as a struggle against unwholesome attitudes that prevail in the mind" (178), "how the motivation to change mental processes occurs from the discourses on the cultivation of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)" (178), and "the motivating capacity attributed to understanding (*paññā*)" (179).

120 Devdas points to two passages in the Aṅguttara Nikāya (II.236–7, V.2) that allude to there being a type of *cetanā* that "renounces *kamma* and the fruition of *kamma* [which] has its basis in the frame of mind that is characteristic of a person who cultivates the disciplines of liberation. The training can be described in terms of forming habitual patterns of wholesome acts (*saṅkhāras*) that are distinctive to the Eightfold Path" (227–8).

121 Vsm. XIV.135 (Ñāṇamoli, 466).

122 "*Cetayatī ti cetanā: sadhim attanā sampayuttadhamme ārammaṇe abhisandahatī ti attho*" (Atthasālinī 111, Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 213).

3

Context: Material Simplicity in Christian and Buddhist Life[1]

Living morally, and facing squarely the profound questions that pertain to moral struggle, does not often begin with theoretical considerations of the kind I have offered thus far. It begins rather with a set of practical questions that people face in their own struggles, some of which arise from particular institutional contexts. For Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, moral reflection began with the question "How does one interact appropriately with one's surrounding environment, given what is known about the nature of that world, in the company of other people with whom one lives?" While neither thinker considered what we now understand as the historical and cultural contextualization of moral ideas, they were nonetheless aware that the question of individual moral struggle takes place within communities. Moreover, they understood communities as ambivalent phenomena: they can obstruct individual moral achievements as easily as they can advance them, even when their very purpose *is* to advance them. So we turn now to the social situation of the thirteenth-century Franciscans and to the fifth-century Theravāda communities of Sri Lanka.

While my focus in this chapter will be on individual practices, investigating those that involve meditation on and striving toward ideals of material simplicity, to understand what constitutes the proper interpretation and use of the material world as well as personal and communal possessions has a social dimension as well. I assume that a certain set of religious ideas must stand in proper though not static relation to a body of religious practices which alternately illustrate and inform those ideas.[2] The task of this chapter, therefore, will be to examine the range of practices than can, loosely speaking, be said to indicate a struggle for material simplicity. The writings examined here are not of a single genre and neither are they all equally concerned with a social or theoretical analysis of material simplicity. For Bonaventure,

Moral Struggle and Religious Ethics: On the Person as Classic in Comparative Theological Contexts, by David A. Clairmont

notions of material simplicity are gleaned from sermons and disputations about the lifestyle of the Franciscans, which he relates to his own symbolic analysis of the material world. Attending to an equally complex situation in Buddhaghosa's thought, we can note that notions of material simplicity may be gleaned from his comments about how a person's material possessions and surroundings can contribute to or inhibit progress in meditation, how material reality structures and guides a community's response to the needs of individual practitioners, and how to understand the ideal and actual relationship between monks and lay persons with respect to practices of giving (*dāna*). In other words, their writings on practical matters signal an awareness of what has become known as the reflexive aspect of practices signaling moral struggle.[3]

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I will provide a comparative historical introduction to the topic of material simplicity and the various practices bearing on this topic. In the second and third sections, I undertake a closer examination of a range of writings by both Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa on the topic of material simplicity, concluding with a few comments about the connection between practices of material simplicity and the question of moral struggle that guide the following chapters.

Historical Introduction to Material Simplicity

The sacrifice of one's own material possessions, or the privileges enjoyed by one's familial or social group, is possible (to varying degrees) wherever we find at least some accumulation of money or property. There also exist clear differences between seeking a simpler form of life freed from the distractions of excessive materiality and taking a vow of poverty, individually or in community.[4] It is worth noting, however, that wealth has existed in different ways for different social groups throughout history. Moreover, the notion of material simplicity is going to be relative to the level of material abundance that is possible for a particular society in a particular historical period. To interpret a culturally specific view of material simplicity is in some sense an exercise in approximation, of what simplicity means in a certain society and of what role it plays in that time and place.

Let me give an example of this from the sociological study of wealth and poverty in pre-modern societies. The agricultural surpluses that we experience today in certain areas of the world were not even a possibility in early agrarian societies, partly due to the problem of food preservation and storage and partly due to the problem of the tax or tribute taken by those with control over land from those working to harvest crops on productive parcels. Not only did this mean that radical destitution was a fact of life for all but a few in those societies, but it also requires that we interpret religious understandings of material simplicity with sensitivity toward the empirical background against which religious ideals and aspirations stood. Steven Collins offers a helpful comparative treatment to capture this problem in its pre-modern European and Indian contexts:

> After many a peasant had fulfilled his numerous obligations to the local lord and the Church, there was barely enough left for him and his family to survive … Exposed to the perils of the elements, famine, animal disease and warfare, a large number of Late Medieval peasants lived at the edge of an abyss … [R]ecent investigations in the fields of social and economic history have shown that mass indigence, undernourishment and starvation were basic components of social life prior to the mid-nineteenth century.[5]

> Far less labour was required for agricultural operations [in India]. Moreover, these operations could be spread over a much longer period in the course of a year … [and so there was not] a highly concentrated demand for large amounts of labour in short periods … If the Indian peasant's control of the process of production differentiated him from his medieval European counterpart, there is little reason to believe that he also enjoyed a higher standard of living.… [N]ature in India allowed the peasant to subsist off very meager resources; what nature permitted as a minimum level was made the maximum by social organization. There are continual references in our sources to the heavy demand of revenue and other taxes from the peasants and the consequent miserable level of their existence.[6]

The elimination of destitution was no more a possibility for the medieval Franciscans than it was for fifth-century Sri Lankan monks. Yet Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa each prescribed ways of viewing their material surroundings that honored the role the natural world played in providing material subsistence while holding the material world to be meaningful, even insightful, beyond its utility in meeting basic human needs. Material reality possessed a symbolic significance beyond its immediate appearance.

Poverty and avarice in Bonaventure's Europe

It is a great wonder that Francis Bernardone (1182–1226 CE) of the town of Assisi, who once thought he was called to be a soldier and came from a wealthy family who sold fine cloth, would end up in popular culture as a cement icon adorning the birdbaths and private gardens of many contemporary middle-class American Catholics. But the historical coincidence that a wealthy man would give up everything and embrace radical poverty at the very time when economic changes in Europe brought about the spread of a merchant class to seriously challenge some of the easy accommodations of traditional Christian spirituality is perhaps the greater wonder. Bonaventure, as the one eventually entrusted by his order with assembling the definitive inspirational biography of its founder, was well aware of what the founder's actions meant to Francis' family, to the papacy, and to the new merchant class.

Agrarian feudal societies were experiencing increased levels of trade along costal routes.[7] Greater economic specialization became possible with the development of sea- and river-going trade, because regions no longer had to produce the full variety

of goods they required but could begin to specialize in producing what they were most qualified to produce, broadly divided into "land-intensive" and "labor-intensive" goods. Towns sponsored fairs to bring together this variety of goods at market for a limited time. As Lester Little notes, the middle of the eleventh century, with certain qualifications,

> marked the emergence of a wholly different attitude, one that calculated values to see whether any particular activity or transaction would be profitable. It marked the promotion of commerce and industry from their status as marginal activities to the level of key elements in European economic life. Finally, it marked the recognition and use of money as tool instead of as treasure, the release of new types and of vast quantities of specie into circulation, and the appearance of new techniques for the expeditious handling of money.[8]

The change in economic activities was accompanied by a change in the social constitution of towns, with more people moving to areas of already highly concentrated populations and a corresponding increase in impersonal anonymous interactions.

More importantly, the face of poverty changed with the development of urban centers. While poverty was still the norm for the vast majority of people, the confrontation with nameless or faceless poverty was a new development, and it was this development that the mendicant religious orders confronted in urban settings.

> Even in strictly material terms, the sources of urban poverty differed from those of rural poverty, for the wage-earner in a city was vulnerable to the fluctuations of an uncontrolled market economy. Particularly on the lower levels of the urban economy, work was not only low-paid but irregular. To be sure, some of the urban poor had immigrated from the countryside. The immediate proximity of those who were successful … to those, wherever they came from, who lacked a fixed domicile and a steady supply of food made the problem of urban poverty all the more apparent. Thus the presence of mendicants became a fixture in the city and in the consciousness of city-dwellers.[9]

The mendicants who came to preach met the mendicants who were without hope, and so the problem for the Christian church came into clearer view. More people in the cities who do not know each other and therefore do not feel the bonds of responsibility that bind smaller communities; more people engaged in explicitly economic trading activities as opposed to productive agricultural activities; a higher concentration of poor people who are shut out of, or at least limited in their participation in, urban economic society. The wealth of the monasteries greatly exceeded the wealth of small country parishes and mirrored the disparity between the urban and country communities. Whatever mode of preaching the Christian church might use, it would have to address changing economic conditions and it would have to call attention to itself in a way that would disturb and challenge the social trends.

When Bonaventure put forth his interpretation of voluntary evangelical poverty, he did so within a long tradition of church responses that would attempt to address the growing unease among clergy and laity alike about the secular power and royal trappings of the papacy with individual and institutional examples of simplicity of life and care for the poor. Pope Innocent III, whose papacy dated from 1198 to 1216 CE, responded to the Albigensian heresy of Francis' day in part by affirming the model of

apostolic simplicity in the new mendicant orders borne also by their Albigensian rivals. However, the pope's moderated official approval did not alleviate the institutional tension which was growing between those who embraced the apostolic example and those who did not.[10]

The debate about how properly to interpret the Gospel poverty of Jesus and the apostles gave rise to a number of important ideas in the history of the church, in which the life of the Franciscan order intersected with issues about papal authority in matters of scriptural interpretation and the internal life of religious communities.[11] In addition, the life of the mendicants challenged not only the symbolic aspects of ecclesial life but their source of revenue as well. Insofar as they were beggars, they required the support of the laity but this meant that they were drawing on a limited source of funds that would have otherwise been available for contribution to the church. José de Vinck summarizes the dual threat that the new mendicant orders posed to the academic and ecclesial powers of the time: "Their very existence was a living reproach to the well-appointed scholars; while, on the other hand, their dependence on alms encroached upon revenues that would have normally flowed into the coffers of established ecclesiastic institutions."[12] Both academic and pastoral churchmen relied on the support of the laity so the challenge existed both in the counterexample that evangelical poverty provided but also in the real material challenge to the lifestyle of the institutional church.

This difficulty points to the strange logic at work when one considers both the individual and institutional aspects of material simplicity. On the one hand, the mendicants were drawing money away from ecclesiastical royalty which would likely have a negative effect on those who gave them official church approval, and in so doing they were both embracing Gospel ideals and revealing institutional hypocrisy. On the other hand, insofar as they were beggars of alms, they were taking money away from those other paupers to whom they were ministering and were thereby encoding a kind of limited, though real, individual hypocrisy. When we turn to Bonaventure's remarks on the problem of simplicity of life, it will be important to note how the symbolic aspect of meditating on material possessions allows him to bring some measure of resolution to this problem. Insofar as the Franciscan must embrace poverty in use, he relies on simplicity in his interactions with material possessions. But this embrace is at best symbolic (which does not necessarily mean unreal) if the community maintains ownership and there is no risk of real destitution.

Simplicity and sponsorship in Buddhaghosa's Ceylon

At some point during the third century BCE, the teachings of the Buddha arrived on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), allegedly as the result of the work of Mahinda, the son of the great emperor Aśoka who was in traditional accounts responsible for the spread of Buddhism on a wide scale.[13] The connection between the monastery and the royal family developed through a complicated interplay of allegiances in which the successive kings' support for the Mahāvihāra monastery, of which Buddhaghosa was a part, waxed and waned. A central issue for Buddhist communities in Ceylon was the continuity of an ordination lineage. According to the Buddha's instructions, at least five monks were required to establish a lineage and ordain new monks. Not long after the establishment of Buddhism on the island, a great famine took hold of the country

and wiped out nearly all of the Mahāvihāra, so many in fact that the king was required to bring in monks from another kingdom to reinstate the lineage in Ceylon.

This is one example where the significance of royal sponsorship goes far beyond establishing the range of possible interpretations for monastic teachings on voluntary simplicity. Royal sponsorship was required both to establish monastic security and even, in such cases, to arrange the reinstatement of the monastic life. As with the Franciscans in Bonaventure's Europe, the connection between the religious community and the wealthy landowners extended beyond the fact of sponsorship to the inclusion of persons of significant means in the Saṅgha itself. In *Visuddhimaggа*, for instance, the monk that Buddhaghosa envisions undertaking the course of monastic training is one who is expected to respond to the address of *kulaputta*, a member of an established or well-off family.[14] Monastic communities were drawing many of their members from royal or wealthy land-owning families, and the wealth that was forsaken on an individual level accrued to the monastic properties in great amounts.

As noted in Chapter 1, the two main monastic communities in Ceylon at Buddhaghosa's time were the Mahāvihāra and the Abhayagiri. Because royal patronage alternated between one monastery and the other depending on whose teachings were favored by the current government, both Buddhaghosa's community and their neighboring monastery had to develop commentaries on both monastic rules and those local conventions governing exchange and inheritance of land, laborers, and means of production. As Gunawardana notes:

> The acceptance of property introduced a new concept into the organization of the *saṅgha*. The earliest donations, mostly of caves, were made "to the *saṅgha* of the four directions, present and absent" or, in other words, to the entire *saṅgha*. It is very likely that donations of other types of dwellings, situated in parks, were of a similar character, but donations of sources of income were made from the start to individual monasteries. As a result of this practice the monastery came to represent not merely a group of resident monks but also a corporate property-owning institution. The boundary disputes between the major monasteries at the capital and, in particular, the objections raised by the Mahāvihāra to other monasteries being erected on what it considered its own grounds reveal how strongly the inmates of these monasteries felt that the land attached to their monasteries belonged to them alone.[15]

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the knowledge that monks possessed concerning these business matters was the result of a strict constructionist reading of the Vinaya or whether their notice of such things carried over from their pre-monastic stations in life. Buddhaghosa's comments on these matters do little to resolve the issue.

One final note to set the boundaries of Buddhaghosa's interpretations of monastic simplicity pertains to his understanding of the temporal impermanence of his teaching. In traditional teaching, when a Buddha enters the world to preach the Dhamma, his teaching arises in response to the disappearance of the Dhamma as it was delivered by the Buddha of the previous cosmic age. This is significant for considerations of material simplicity, because it provides the backdrop against which Buddhaghosa understands temperaments and individual attempts to overcome greed. Because people living after a Buddha necessarily live within a devolution of the purity of the Buddha's teaching, their capacities to see and do what the Dhamma requires are at least partially diminished.

Bonaventure on Material Simplicity

There is a delightful (if perhaps apocryphal) story, an icon of which adorns the inside covers of one English translation of Bonaventure's works. When Bonaventure was on his way to the Second Council of Lyons, he stopped along the way at a Franciscan house. The papal delegation intercepted him there to give him the news that Pope Gregory X was to make him a cardinal, whereupon they found him busy washing dishes. When they tried to give him the hat and stole of his new office, he rebuffed them saying that he could not properly receive them at the moment. Supposedly, they left the hat and stole on a bush outside the Franciscan house for him to retrieve when he had finished his housework.[16]

This story gives us reason to imagine that Bonaventure's remarks on the problem of material simplicity should be viewed in light of his changing institutional role in the Catholic church. His university life presented different challenges from those he encountered as the leader of the Franciscans or that he would have experienced at the rank of cardinal (although he did not live long enough to carry out that role). The sacramental, Trinitarian, and mystical dimensions of his thought, which will be examined in more detail in later chapters, suggest that the themes Bonaventure developed in his writings have correlative institutional trajectories expressed in the Franciscan community's debates over the meaning and practice of evangelical poverty.

For Bonaventure, material simplicity actually provides support for a broader theological framework into which his contributions to debates about voluntary poverty must be placed. Bonaventure understood poverty as part of a wider project of evangelical perfection but also as its best and most pointed expression, in part because of the effects that his struggle with poverty produced in his distinctively symbolic theological thinking. For example, his treatise, *Apologia pauperum* (1269 CE) meditates on this problem through a classification of the nature of perfection:

> [P]erfection … is used in three senses. That is perfect by nature which consists in an act both difficult and excellent, for instance, giving up everything, or entering the religious life. That is perfect through circumstances which consists in an act difficult and adorned with favorable conditions, for instance, abandoning wealth joyfully, and for the purpose of edifying the neighbor. That is perfect in itself which consists in an act both difficult and proceeding from the highest charity, for instance, a movement of fervent and ecstatic love for God, or of pure and complete love for the enemy.[17]

On this reading, the extent to which one finds it difficult to perform a particular task anchors an act's degree of perfection. The terms "nature" (*in genere*), "circumstances" (*ex circumstantia*), and "in itself" (*secundum se*) are what differentiate expressions of perfection: its nature indicates its excellence; its circumstances are expressed both in the motivation from which the act springs and in the effect it has on its intended recipient; an act perfect in itself is one that stems from love of God and love of enemy. This is not to say that an act is good based solely on the motivation of the agent, but that the truest or purest expression of that act is determined by the object of its intention.

Bonaventure's comments on imperfection frame this issue, and it is interesting to note how poverty figures into his example:

> Likewise, "imperfection" is used in three senses. That act is imperfect by nature which is easy and toward which human weakness is inclined, for instance, fearing death, or possessing wealth. That act is imperfect through circumstances which receives its qualification from a condition that inclines toward the lowest level of justice, for instance stripping oneself of clothes under duress in order to avoid a greater damage. Finally, that act is imperfect in itself which is absolutely inconsistent with evangelical perfection, for instance … running away from poverty.[18]

Possessing wealth is continuous with human weakness because it is a natural state of affairs, something which is not experienced as difficult, whereas poverty confronts and challenges human weakness, for it would seem strange to speak of having a weakness for poverty. This apparently natural state of affairs (possessing wealth) is rather a state of imagined nature, although it was becoming ever more a possibility for the new urban centers of Europe. The idea of possessing wealth or any store of necessities, much less money, was certainly not a real possibility for most in Bonaventure's time.[19]

Through the organic metaphor of a tree root to which Bonaventure returns time and again, he isolates covetousness as the root of all evils. He observes the use of the positive root language by Paul in Ephesians 3:17 ("that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love") and searches for its corresponding negative use, which he locates in 1 Timothy 6:10 ("for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains"). Leaving aside the mode of biblical interpretation that allows Bonaventure to draw this opposition, we may still note the relative positioning of covetousness and pride in Bonaventure's view.[20] "All evils certainly have their origin, support and increase in this root and in the pride that goes with it."[21] Pride is a complement or accompaniment to greed but is not the root of greed, which is firmly grounded in the accumulation and use of material possessions. Bonaventure clarifies this when he says:

> Because the vice of covetousness and its disorder find their root in a disposition of the mind and their occasion and fuel in what is possessed externally, extirpation of it must apply to both in order that the damaging passion of greed and the alluring possession of earthly wealth may be given up both spiritually and materially. … If this twofold abdication, of the world and of its lusts also called poverty of spirit, is the means by which the root of all evil is perfectly cut off … we may conclude reasonably and certainly that this same poverty of the spirit, because of the analogy and closeness it has to what was said, is the root and foundation of that evangelical perfection by which we are conformed to Christ and planted with Him, and through which we become His dwelling place.[22]

While it is clear that the goal of poverty is to conform the devotee to Christ (the image that one be planted next to Christ suggests growing in the same soil, drawing the same nutrients), poverty itself elicits a complicated two-part response.

Perfection in poverty demands both a withdrawal from the actual physical presence of wealth and a simultaneous exercise to curtail one's desire for such wealth to be

present. The struggle implies both a material component and a cognitive component. For Bonaventure, moral decisions concerning the presence and use of material possessions employ two moments of an affective power: once to resist the lure of material possessions and another time to put material possessions out of reach where these could no longer exert an influence. But this leads to a circularity in the struggle to embrace poverty: on the one hand, a person must be present in the moment for those in need, which implies all the messy exigencies of human encounters; but, on the other hand, that person must be freed from distractions to a sufficient degree in order to view such moments as instances of love and conformity to Christ.

Material sufficiency in institutional life

Evangelical poverty as a goal for an individual's life does not provide the same model for moral discernment by institutions, and yet institutional conditions significantly affect the ability of individuals to make moral progress in accordance with the goals they set. To analyze this problem, Bonaventure carried forward an important distinction, proposed by Pope Gregory IX (1145–1241 CE) in his 1230 Bull *Quo elongati* and invoked again by Pope Nicholas III (1216–1280 CE) in his defense of the Franciscans, between two aspects of a person's interaction with material possessions.[23] "There are two aspects to the possession of temporal goods: ownership and use. Since the use of temporal goods is a necessary condition of the present life, evangelical poverty consists in renouncing the ownership and property of earthly things, but not their use, which must be limited."[24] Bonaventure further specifies this distinction into a four-part division: "Concerning temporal goods four things are to be considered, property, possession, usufruct, and simple use."[25] The phrase that Bonaventure uses here – possession of temporal goods (*temporalium bonorum possessionem*) – indicates that he does differentiate between goods as they are, independent of a person's interaction with them, and what happens during a person's interaction with them. So too does his emphasis on simple use signal the same differentiation. Material possessions are those things that are good, in themselves and as instruments to other goods, in a temporal sense. He considers temporal goods to be good both for individuals and for communities, allowing of course for the possibility that individuals and communities are likely to put them to different uses.

However, Bonaventure speaks of a "double mode and perfection in evangelical poverty," by which one can either (1) "disclaim" private ownership while maintaining communal ownership, or (2) disclaim both private and communal ownership.[26] This bifurcation results from the differentiation of use (*usus*) from ownership (*dominium*), but also from the further differentiation of ownership into private (*determinatem personam*) and communal (*determinatem collegium*) ownership. For Bonaventure, striving toward the ideal of evangelical poverty in either of its forms depends primarily on the nature of ownership rather than on use, even though use could work toward any number of ends. Use is a necessary precondition to any temporal existence which also means that no person can forswear all use.

As Bonaventure understands it, perfection is primarily a matter of the extent to which one's control over possessions can be directed into the future. One's control over material reality is extended temporally when one is in a situation where one can

ensure that what one has will be there at a later time. Institutions, on this model, preserve our future possibilities by preserving the goods and other material conditions we need to live and carry on our projects. In other words, use is a form of determination at a particular point in time or for a relatively short duration; it is task-oriented, whereas ownership has to do with complete and extensive control beyond the moment of use.[27] While the distinction is based on the condition that "it is possible to disclaim [private ownership] while retaining [common ownership],"[28] and that it is also possible to disclaim both private and common ownership, one who maintains private ownership does not approximate perfection (even though one may maintain private use and still pursue this path). It is also important that Bonaventure does not take up what is involved in distinguishing between private and common use, although presumably common spaces for gathering would be his most immediate example of common use.

Bonaventure extends this distinction based on different models that appear in the early church. The early church, as expressed in the accounts recorded in Acts of the Apostles, followed the first mode of evangelical perfection (only common ownership), while Jesus and those who were with him during his public ministry embodied the second mode (neither private nor common ownership), which Bonaventure labels the "exemplar."[29] Admonitions given to the apostles, such as that given by Jesus that they "take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts" (Mark 6:8), "were spoken to the apostles as to the examples of perfection; and thus they are understood in the manner of counsels, which do not oblige as such, but only bind those who voluntarily make profession and vow to observe this form of life."[30] The distinction between those actions incumbent upon all followers and those who have specifically obligated themselves through the act of taking a vow is not new, and neither is it specifically Christian. Yet just as Bonaventure used ownership to distinguish different modes of perfection, he uses a distinction about ownership to mark the characteristics of the exemplar.

Bonaventure clarifies this point by using images of clothing and nakedness to establish three levels in which both the body and the heart can experience nakedness.

> One of them is great, consisting in the rejection of every superfluity and private possession. … There is another and greater nakedness which consists not only in these things, but also in abandoning the right to possess anything privately and in giving up one's own will. … Now, there is also a third nakedness, which consists in what had been said above, and furthermore, in the abandonment of all passing wealth, in penury, and in the lack of the needed sustainment.[31]

The second of these refers both to the actual fact of personal ownership but also to the compromises and flexibility demanded by community life. The will, as used here, is a faculty of personal differentiation, of asserting one's own needs and desires in the context of a community. Strangely, Bonaventure takes the possibility of extreme destitution as a nakedness which builds on or implies the abandonment of the will understood as one's inclinations to form and execute plans.

Note again that what Bonaventure is saying about the proper interaction with material possessions is not new. Christian thinkers throughout the tradition (and Bonaventure cites many of them in arguing his case) distinguish levels of perfection according to the ways in which one uses or owns things, and whether the ownership

is personal or communal. Indeed, as we shall see, there is a similar distinction in Buddhist thought which Buddhaghosa advances in the monastic context. Rather, what is important to recognize is the original way that Bonaventure thinks this interaction takes place, both with respect to individual psychology and with respect to institutional (both Franciscan and larger Christian) priorities.

Voluntary poverty in individual life

The dispute concerning the status of the mendicant religious orders in the context of university teaching in medieval Europe is a long and complex story, as I discussed in Chapter 1 and at the beginning of the present chapter. Among the many interesting problems that confronted the Franciscans when Bonaventure became superior general of the order in 1257 was the issue of historical distance from their moral exemplars.[32] On a formal level, the problem is as follows. If, within the context of a religious community, its members find more than one example of how to live well the basic teachings of that tradition, by what principle do those members choose one exemplar over another? More specifically Bonaventure is concerned to know: If the efforts for Franciscan reform at the time were aimed at understanding how radically to follow the Gospel counsels of evangelical poverty, to whom does the Franciscan look for how to live them: Jesus Christ who commanded them or Francis of Assisi who obeyed the command?

Bonaventure was addressing himself to these concerns when he produced the *Apologia pauperum* in 1269 CE, and he focused specifically on the matter of the exemplification of Christ by the individual members of his order. At issue was the extent to which Christ did defer in certain matters to the reality of human weakness and the challenges of moral struggle. For example, citing the opinion of his interlocutor, Bonaventure notes that,

> This means that he considers as a supreme error, that he abhors and rejects as a poison, the thought that Christ God, whose ways are perfect, ever did anything out of condescension toward the weak and imperfect and that he believes such condescension to be absolutely foreign to the Exemplar of utter perfection because opposed to perfect righteousness. Even though this theory may appear on the surface to uphold the highest perfection of justice in Christ, and hence to redound to His praise, yet, because it refuses to grant Him the possibility of supreme kindness, it amounts to wickedly denying the flow of the Fountain of Mercy, to cutting off the Way of Salvation: it is therefore a certain blasphemy against the condescending compassion of the eternal King.[33]

Bonaventure's portrayal of Christ as moral exemplar includes sensitivity to the weakness of those who look to him for his example. However, it contains an even more important element, for on Bonaventure's reading simplicity in material possessions was not only deference to weakness but an expression of the kindness and love of the source of mercy and salvation, as he makes clear when he says that "the root, form, purpose and bond of perfection is love, to which Christ, the Master of all, reduces the Law and the Prophets, and, consequently, God's whole teaching."[34]

Throughout the *Apologia*, Bonaventure makes use of the image of the diffusion of love and describes material possessions as obstacles that interfere with the process of diffusion. The process of diffusion was one of the central themes through which

Bonaventure explained the meaning of the Trinity, and here he relates this image to his central pastoral concern – making sense of Francis' example of evangelical poverty. He invokes the Dionysian imagery of unity wherein the "perfect love of God perfectly inclines the lover to anything by which he will more readily, personally, and rapidly join the Beloved," the Victorine imagery whereby the beloved is transformed into the object of love, as well as the dynamics of diffusion itself. As he says, reformulating an insight of Richard of St Victor:

> Wherever there is perfect love, there also is perfect diffusion, either actual if the opportunity is present, or fully desired if it is not. Since to deliver oneself to death for the love of someone else is an act of the very highest diffusion, it necessarily follows that a perfect love of charity aspires to it, in accordance with the words in John: "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends."[35]

Bonaventure frequently cites the example of martyrdom as the culmination of the diffusion of love and also as the moment of least attachment to the things of this world. It is interesting that Bonaventure does not cite Francis in this regard, for his life of destitution was not, strictly speaking, a life of martyrdom. This might be explained by the structure of the *Apologia* as a defense of evangelical poverty focused on an interpretation of the level of poverty endured by Jesus of Nazareth. To this end, the majority of references in the *Apologia* are to the example of Jesus, the apostles, and the church fathers.

Bonaventure's desire to mediate the personal examples of Jesus and Francis was equally influential in his sermons, many of which were explicitly concerned with interpreting the life of Francis for individuals while still maintaining the centrality of Francis' charism for the Franciscans. Poverty, as an expression of material simplicity, is the central theme through which Bonaventure advises the Christian to balance the example of the historical Jesus and of Francis, perhaps his most significant and ardent follower. Bonaventure addressed these sermons to an array of audiences on topics throughout the church year. For example, Bonaventure preached five sermons on the feast day of St Francis (October 4) and on the occasion that his body was transferred to the new church built in his honor in Assisi (May 25). These sermons are as much reflections of scholastic reasoning as they are straight exhortations.

In his first sermon on Francis' feast day, Bonaventure meditates on the Gospel of Matthew: "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (11:29). He notes that "learn from me" can have two meanings: on the one hand, it can mean imitate me, do as I do, and form your relationship with me based on your actions; on the other hand, it can mean learn from me so that you can become a teacher of others. One way to interpret this strategy is to say that Bonaventure is expanding the notion of exemplarity to include both an imitative dimension and an instructional dimension. On this account, Jesus is an exemplar more strongly in the first sense (attempts to imitate Jesus are stronger because these attempts are focused on imitating the master rather than the servant), whereas Francis is an exemplar more strongly in the second sense (attempts to teach others by example resonate more closely with Francis than with Jesus because Francis was also involved in learning the example).

Expanding on the first sense of learning, Bonaventure enumerates four qualities of true discipleship: isolation from evil companions, freedom from the anxious cares of

life, freedom from inordinate attachments, and purity of heart. The primary difference, he notes, between the savior and the follower, is that "The essence of true discipleship of Jesus Christ, which was singularly realized and shone in St Francis, consists first of all in separating oneself from the company of evil people. … At the least one must withdraw from evil company, which the call to perfection demands, even if one has no desire to relinquish worldly company."[36] Given Jesus' proclivity for accompanying the weak and needy, particularly those whose weakness was rooted in sin, this seems a very strange thing indeed for a Christian theologian to say. However, Bonaventure seems to mean that in the course of self-examination and preparation, one must withdraw for a time before one can return, which of course does not mean permanent isolation but a form of detachment necessary to embrace and cultivate the advice of the teacher.

The freedom that characterizes a disciple consists in a mental state of ease which is not disturbed from the anxieties of change.

> Anyone who is anxious about useless things cannot give attention to those which are profitable. As St Matthew's Gospel says: *the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word and it proves unfruitful.* Thus it is recorded by St Luke: *Whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.* The Lord says this not because there is sin in having possessions, but because it is impossible or at least very difficult to have great possessions without being preoccupied with them.[37]

Again we note the affirmation of worldly goods alongside the caution of preoccupation. Here Bonaventure is not so much interested in defending the life of the Franciscans as he is in mapping a path through which one progresses in discipleship and by which the propensity to material attachment might be overcome. It is as if there exists a cumulative distraction, which at first just calls attention away from the message momentarily but gradually becomes more and more consuming.

Bonaventure extends the point to include the effort involved in actually discarding one's material possessions. "This is what anyone must do who desires to be a perfect disciple of Christ: he must go, *sell everything he has and give to the poor.* If one does not have the will to do that, one must at least keep oneself from the cares, anxieties, and vanities that go with possessions; otherwise, one will be a disciple not of Christ, but of the Devil."[38] In this comment, Bonaventure clearly recognizes that, even within a general style of life that finds it possible to disregard material possessions, there are degrees of approximation and points of progress. The will, as he states, admits of various degrees of effort, but these degrees when taken together nonetheless constitute a coherent form of life.

In the second sense, Bonaventure interprets "learn from me" as "embrace my teaching because by being a true disciple he became an authentic teacher."[39] He notes that Francis embraced the teaching in four respects: he taught having been directly instructed, he taught without envy, he taught completely without forgetting, and he taught without doubting himself. These are noteworthy observations because they suggest that the effectiveness of the exemplar is due, at least partially, to the proximity of the exemplar to that which is being exemplified. Bonaventure notes that in receiving instruction, Francis responded with actions not accompanied by words.[40] He also

notes that part of his power as an exemplary teacher was that he was an exemplary learner "because he did not acquire his knowledge by reflecting in general terms on a limited number of truths, but by individual experience."[41] Bonaventure understands that Francis' experience has taught him in two ways, in that he learned from his teacher directly through visions but also he experienced the same sufferings as his teacher throughout his life – "derision, beatings, fetters, imprisonment, destitution, nakedness, and adversity."[42] Similarly, Francis teaches by offering to his companions that they should seek to learn through vision and through experience. So too should those who stand in this teaching lineage both learn and teach in this way.[43]

These examples point to the close connection between the individual practice of simplicity and its ability to express the poverty of Francis through practices of imitation. They also show how it is possible for the individual and the community to be inspired to live in accordance with the ideal embodied by an exemplar, even if the community in which this striving occurs does not hold to a single interpretation of the meaning of the exemplar's witness. In the following section, we move to Buddhaghosa's account of material simplicity which, although situated in a discourse about the meaning of bodily meditation and the body's interaction with the material reality that surrounds it, includes a mode of integrating individual and social exemplarity similar to Bonaventure's writing on the poverty of Christ.

Buddhaghosa on Material Simplicity

The material world, about which Buddhaghosa wrote so extensively, was the subject of two basic concerns for Buddhist monks and lay persons. The first concern was the status of the material world itself: What was its true nature, if any? What were its basic characteristics? Was it predictable and reliable? Did it contain levels of meaning beyond what was immediately apparent? How could one survive in it? Did it have any necessary connection to what lay beyond it (if indeed there was anything beyond it)? The second concern dealt more specifically with wealth or material possessions: How should one use wealth as a lay person? As a monk? Was wealth dangerous, the source of pleasure or displeasure? How should people think about how to use their material possessions, to provide for themselves and the Saṅgha, to consolidate political power, to show honor and respect to previous generations, to ensure the continuation of the Buddha's teaching? The answers to the questions about the nature of reality and those about the nature of wealth were related for Buddhists, and those same questions have recurred as sites for ongoing discussions among contemporary scholars of Buddhism. While we cannot cover all of the debates here, let us examine two important ones.

In contemporary scholarship in Buddhist ethics, there has been significant interest in examining the place of intentionality in the Buddha's teaching. These discussions do not track very neatly with contemporary debates in Western philosophy about the nature of intentionality, which has concerned itself primarily with a debate about whether intention is best understood as a causal concept or rather as a way of acting under a certain description, or as Robert Brandon has put it, "Actions are performances that are intentional under some specification."[44] For the Buddhists of Buddhaghosa's community, as we saw in the last chapter, intention (*cetanā*) is counted as one of the

cetasikas or consciousness-concomitants which arise with each instance of consciousness (*viññāṇa*). It is one aspect of the *khandha* aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhāra*). As Noa Ronkin helpfully summarizes,

> According to the post-canonical Abhidhamma the minimum number of associated mental states for any thought process is seven: sense contact (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*), recognition or conceptualization (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*), one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), life-faculty (*jīvitindriya*) and attention (*manasikāra*). These mental occurrences are common to all types of consciousness (*sabbacittasādhāraṇa*) and perform the essential and most basic cognitive function without which the thought process would be impossible.[45] (See Appendix.)

The evaluation of actions in the Abhidhamma is based on an assessment of the wholesome or unwholesome states of consciousness and what kinds of results arise in dependence on previous conditions (i.e., their karmic effects).

So the Buddhist is concerned to answer the question: Is it only the intention of the one acting that ultimately determines the goodness or badness of an act, whether it is profitable or unprofitable in securing a good rebirth (if one is a lay person) or freedom from rebirth (if one is a monk)? Does it matter, for example, when a lay person provides alms to a monk whether she or he does so with an intention of generosity toward the Buddha's community or to gain a good rebirth? Richard Gombrich described an interpretive problem arising from his conversations with Sri Lankan monks in the 1960s,

> There are two kinds of giving: that with thought of worship, which is motivated by respect, and that with thought of favor, which is motivated by pity. The former is exemplified by a gift to the Saṅgha, the latter by a gift to a beggar. For both, the accompanying thought is all-important, but the former is superior, i.e. brings more merit … Merit varies with the virtue of the recipient [the Saṅgha as a collective being more meritorious than the individual monk], but only insofar as that virtue is known to the giver: if the monk practices secret vice this does not diminish the merit of his *dāyakas* [people who give to the Saṅgha].[46]

Gombrich also posited that the Buddha's teaching marked an alternative and strong opposition to its Brahmanic predecessors. "The most important step the Buddha took was to turn the doctrine of *karma* on its head. He ethicized it completely, made morality intrinsic, and so denied all soteriological value to ritual and all ultimate value to social distinctions. In place of a highly particularistic view of duty he propounded a simple and universal ethical dualism of right and wrong."[47]

This stark comparison itself suggests another question. Is not the highly ritualized action, whereby a lay person gives alms to a monk, with respectful gestures and in many cases with knowledge of the monk's virtue, in a performative conflict with the Buddha's teaching about the primacy of intention? Gombrich understood this aspect of lay giving as a corruption of the Buddha's teaching by lay piety, but he also viewed Buddhism as with the other world religions as moving through stages toward full "ethicization," a view not shared by many scholars in contemporary Buddhist ethics.[48] The hinge term in this discussion is the notion of *karma* (*kamma*), and

Gombrich along with Melford Spiro, K. R. Norman, and others have noted that this word often denotes two different things for Buddhist practitioners: on the one hand, it indicates that the effects of one's own actions would be determined by the intention with which they were performed (as the passages quoted above from Gombrich indicate); on the other hand, the actions to which the Buddha's focus on intention was taken as a response were the series of ritual actions pertaining to the Brahmanic fire sacrifice.

Scholars have also considered whether the Buddha was rejecting the early sacrificial model that in some interpretations conflated the moral life with participation in ritual sacrifice, or whether the Buddha was rather reinterpreting and extending that basic sacrificial structure of human action. Referring to Spiro's distinction between the *kammic* and *nibbanic* soteriological systems,[49] James Egge helpfully explains how

> Understandings of meritorious giving and mental purification as distinct ethical practices play an important role in the Theravādin textual tradition, but so do understandings of them as two aspects of a single path. Understandings of giving as distinct from mental purification are most clearly articulated in terms of sacrifice, while ideas of a unitary ethics are most frequently expressed in terms of *kamma*. I refer to these two ways of talking about the effects of action (and particularly of giving) as sacrificial and karmic discourses. Although karma becomes the most important way of talking about action and its effects in Theravāda, sacrifice provides a basic model for understanding giving in Theravādin literature and practice from the earliest period to the present day.[50]

This trajectory identified by Egge, where the mental action of meditation is linked to the physical action of giving, provides the most helpful positioning point for interpreting the various perspectives on moral struggle leading up to and including Buddhaghosa. Material reality is subject to two forms of analysis in Buddhist thought: as the central or hinge element in the purification of thought that occurs in Buddhist meditation but also as the locus for lay practices of generosity which, on many occasions, are performed not just by lay persons but by monks as well. As I will note throughout the remaining chapters, we cannot hope to understand moral struggle in this context if we do not account for the place of material reality in both meditation and donative practices.

While many in Buddhist ethics have not seriously developed this connection, those who have taken seriously the connection between *samādhi* and *dāna* as the touchstones of a practice-centered Buddhist ethics have provided the strongest foundation for a Buddhist account of moral struggle. This same focus on sacrifice and purification together as Egge frames it also goes a long way in reconciling one of the most profound challenges to interpreting the connection between lay and monastic ethics posed by Gregory Schopen. While Schopen's work covers many areas and some not immediately relevant to this discussion, he has been consistently clear in arguing that many of the notions we hold about early Buddhist monastic communities were just that – ideas created by a world of texts – and that we cannot look only to texts if we wish to learn about what he calls Buddhism "on the ground." If we wish to know what monks and nuns actually did in the early years of Buddhist history, we must look to archeology, to the inscriptions on cave temples, imperial rock edicts, burial sites, and so on. As Schopen notes,

> The earliest donative inscriptions that we have come from the railing of Bhārhut [*stūpas* or burial mounds in Madhya Pradesh, India, believed to have been given by the emperor Aśoka] and Sāñcī and date from about 120 to 80 BCE. Here, already, we know for certain that a considerable proportion of the donors – those donors actually involved with establishing and embellishing sacred objects and sacred sites, those donors actively involved with the *stūpa* cult and donative, merit-making activity – were monks or nuns. … None of this accords very well, if at all, with received views on the matter, with the views that maintain that there was a sharp distinction between the kinds of religious activities undertaken by monks and the kinds of religious activity undertaken by laymen, and with the view that cult and religious giving were essentially and overwhelmingly lay concerns in the Indian Buddhist context.[51]

Schopen also points out that this evidence is earlier than any of the Buddhist textual material we have on the subject, for example the Pāli canon in any collected form such as we know it today.[52] Schopen makes this point especially in reference to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, a discourse telling of the Buddha's final days in his community and containing his instructions to his chief attendant, Ānanda, about what should be done with his remains after he dies. Arguing against a common interpretation of this discourse that the Buddha was ordering his followers not to engage in relic veneration or the donative activities involved in the cult of worship at burial sites, Schopen describes how the text itself "seems virtually certain that Ānanda, in his question, was not asking about his or anyone else's participation in the relic cult. He was asking about how the *body* of the Buddha should be treated *immediately* after his death, about that which we would call 'the funeral arrangements.'"[53]

Although these points are provocative and have been influential in contemporary Buddhist studies, I want to use them to illustrate a different but, given the form of Schopen's argument, nonetheless appropriate point. As I mentioned, many of Schopen's articles focus on using archeological evidence to demonstrate that either (1) what early Indian Buddhists were doing was, in fact, not what the texts of their communities said they ought to be doing or (2) the texts have fallen under a series of misinterpretations, perpetuated by both monks and contemporary scholars, based on a certain set of unexamined traditional assumptions (Schopen might even say theological assumptions) about what the texts are supposed to mean, despite what they say. But this is only one side of the problem, if we consider the practices of monks in light of the problem of moral struggle with respect to material reality, especially with respect to wealth.

While Schopen is helpful pointing out the difference between textual ideas and community practices, we might well ask what is going on in the lives of the people whose actions give rise to the inconsistencies Schopen notes. While we know, for example, that monks were significantly involved in the kind of giving practices and relic cults traditionally thought to be part of lay obligations, we do not know the kind of struggle about monastic ideals, textual interpretation, or lay-monastic relations that gave rise to these practices. Why were monks involved in this way? What connection did they see between meditation practice and their practices of merit-making or merit-dedication to parents and others?[54] It is at least reasonable to conclude from Schopen's research that while there certainly existed a history of textual interpretation which was at odds with the text itself or practices that presented a different view of Buddhist ideals than what was commonly assumed, his interpretation does not yet get us inside the struggles of

early Buddhists to make sense of their own tradition, to reconcile its ideals with what Owen Flanagan in another context has called "minimum psychological realism."[55] In one sense, this just illustrates that as close as Schopen gets us to Buddhism on the ground, he still cannot get us inside the lives of practicing Buddhists in the way that, for example, extensive interviews with contemporary practicing Buddhists might. This is not so much a limit to Schopen's method as it is a limit to history in ethics. However, it does point us, I submit, to a set of questions that must return us to texts, namely in what sense can we find evidence of something like moral struggle and struggle to live within and in response to a tradition of teaching – the *sāsana* of the Theravāda.

So if the horizon of moral struggle opens with reference to the distinction between monastic ideals in texts and monastic practices, we must now examine in more detail the practices relating to material reality, especially wealth, and also the final nature of the material world (*rūpa*) as this impacts meditative practice.

While material simplicity is an individual problem, because it deals with how people understand and use objects and resources at their disposal, it is also an institutional problem, because those very same individuals who employ material objects in their mental and physical disciplines, attendant to their potential for attachment or misuse, are also the custodians of traditions or lineages which tend to gather material wealth and privileges as part and parcel of social standing and through gifts by pious followers.[56]

On the individual level, Buddhaghosa is not dealing with a community whose members take lifelong vows with respect to a minimum level of material possessions. The idea of a vow (*votum*) implies a promise or pledge to perform a certain act or to refrain from acting in a certain way in the future, which in turn implies a community of accountability and a responsible monitoring authority. In contrast, the idea of going for refuge (*saranam gacchanto*) in the monastic community implies an agreement to abide by the general rules of the community but does not imply that specific pledges be fulfilled beyond what the community requires at any particular time. This is reflected in a current difference whereby, while members of Roman Catholic religious orders take vows for life, those in Theravādin monastic communities spend a length of time in the monastery (perhaps for life) which is not predetermined.

The Pāli literature exhibits a number of different ways of defining and interpreting material possessions (*āmisa*), where they come to serve as the basis for isolating and evaluating personal characteristics such as greed (*lobha*) and generosity (*dāna*). Material possessions also function to mark a person's area of primary concern or preoccupation, in which one's physical property (*āmisa*) is described in opposition to one's education in the teachings of the path (*dhamma*). Material possessions are also used to distinguish various classifications of ownership, for instance what belongs to an individual (*puggalika*) as opposed to what belongs to the community (*pārisajja*) or more particularly the monastery (*saṅghika*). If we widen the scope further, we encounter the problem of how particular items interact with or are employed in the process of meditative practice as well as the relationship between lay practices of giving to monks (*dāna*) and the various ways that monks reciprocate. In each case, we find instances of struggle by monks and lay persons alike, both to affirm the ideals of the Buddha and to understand the meaning and proper use of material possessions.[57]

Interpreting Buddhaghosa's understanding of material simplicity must attend to different senses of the term in the context of his different writings. There are, of

course, generalized conceptions of wealth operative for Buddhists today and an accepted understanding in the variety of Buddhist traditions about the significance of money or other storehouses of value.[58] There is a general assumption that the Buddha's proclamation of a middle way between extreme asceticism and indulgence in excess ought to govern both lay and monastic practice, and that this ought to be construed by each person in his or her own unique circumstance. In a complementary way, there is an assumption that the laity will have enough wealth, and indeed have a duty, to support the Saṅgha as an institution and its individual monks – the wandering monks on daily alms rounds and the so-called "forest" monks who tended toward a more ascetic lifestyle.

There are a number of Pāli terms which indicate wealth or money which must be considered if one is to investigate the purposive restraint in use of material possessions. Take, for example, those words for money and wealth which appear in the *Sigālaka Sutta*, which details the Buddha's response to a young man paying homage to the traditional six directions (north, south, east, west, up to the heavens, and down below the earth) in honor of his recently deceased father. On its face and in Buddhaghosa's commentary on it, it is a listing of the responsibilities of the lay person which, if fulfilled, will both protect one from harm and facilitate one's mental and physical well-being. *Bhoga* is an interesting word because it can mean both wealth (understood as abundance of material possessions) and enjoyment (physical pleasure from activities performed – sex, eating, drinking, etc.). It is used in this instance to describe what one "of good social standing" might expect to result from material well-being. *Dhana* means wealth more strictly speaking, as in currency, riches, or treasure. *Sāpateyya* means specifically property or possessions (derived from the land or the ruler of the land; one who has control over territory), while *vitta* (derived from the action of knowing or finding) means wealth or possessions in the broad sense of knowing that to which one has a rightful claim. Finally *sannicaya* means accumulation or hoarding, which is used when one is speaking about stockpiling wealth specifically with the purpose of ensuring material sufficiency in the future. So in discussing material simplicity in Buddhaghosa's work, it seems important that we should take account of the diversity of meanings of wealth as well of the diversity of meanings for the purposive renunciation or limitation of wealth.

In Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, passages on wealth can be divided into six categories. First, the existence of material reality and its composition in the theory of the aggregates. Second, the use of material reality as a meditation subject. Third, the use of material reality as a means of bodily sustenance under the theory of the requisites. Fourth, the human disposition toward attachment which has as its source craving (*taṇhā*) which in turn is rooted in a wrong view – the failure to understand the non-substantial nature of the self and the reality of dependent co-origination. Fifth, the characteristic of greed, wanting excess over and above what is required – a problem beyond any immediate instance of craving. Sixth, the need for human beings to live in communities which must be both self- or other-sustaining and have some means of organizing property through individual and community use and/or individual and community ownership.

Material reality holds an interesting position in the *Visuddhimagga* because it bridges the three main structural sections. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is not only conceptually

but structurally central to Buddhaghosa's text. Proper engagement with the building blocks of one's environment which are themselves the subject of meditation produces a fundamental insight-understanding into the non-substantial nature of that materiality. Those things that we hold as possessions are the subject of our preparatory practices (we should eat only certain things, live in a residence of only such and such a size), of our meditation (we might contemplate our food as we look at it, as we ingest it, as we excrete it), and of our liberating wisdom (we come to see that our own bodies and even the continuity of our consciousness is no more permanent than our chair, our bowl, the roof over our heads). In fact, we might go so far as to say that a case study of material simplicity is an object of choice in defining the Buddhist life. It is central to Buddhist communal life, and it is structurally central to the Noble Eightfold Path and therefore to the threefold division of the text.

Certainly other practices could be taken as an exemplary practical manifestation of this problem, but there is something compelling about material possessions to the problem of moral struggle: one's possessions are always intimately close because of their proximity in daily use, yet viewed rightly they also become the prerequisite for acceptable social practice and the subject of meditation. Material possessions are as central in the stories on which Buddhaghosa commented as they are in describing the practice of meditation. For example, the virtue of generosity or giving (*dāna*) is central to the *Vessantara Jātaka*, the story of the Buddha's previous life as a wealthy prince who gave away all of his possessions, even his own wife and children.[59] Yet this story preserves the ambivalence of Buddhist views about material possessions: even those who are perfectly generous in giving them away do not necessarily free themselves, much less their friends and relatives, from the suffering attendant upon such an act.

Wealth, giving, and the sacrifice of purification

The Pāli word for material possessions, *āmisa*, takes on a number of different meanings depending on whether one is talking about materiality as such or the personal interaction with material possessions. This is differentiated from livelihood (*ājīva*) and matter or materiality strictly speaking (*rūpa*). In later chapters, I examine in greater detail the structure of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, particularly its threefold division – *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* – which forms a progression from preparatory actions that habituate the devotee into conventional social morality, to specific meditative practices which prepare the mind, to a reflection on the knowledge characterized by insight into the nature of the life process. In each of these sections, materiality (meaning any material object with which a person interacts) and material possessions (meaning those objects with which one has frequent contact or which one claims as one's own through individual or community use) have particular functions in the process of moral formation. Let us look at some examples of how it is used in each context.

Within his discourse on the precepts of acceptable morality, Buddhaghosa considers the "purification of livelihood" (*ājīvapārisuddhisīla*) and specifically the problems implied by the act of going for alms and accepting gifts from the laity. He notes the activity of monks, commenting on a line from the *Vibhaṅga* of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka:

> Herein, what is pursuing gain with gain? Seeking, seeking for, seeking out, going in search of, searching for, searching out material goods by means of material goods, such as carrying here goods that have been got from there, by one bent on gain, honor and renown, by one with evil wishes, a prey to wishes – this is called pursuing gain with gain.[60]

He comments that this situation should be understood in one of two ways: (1) either a monk is frequently given gifts and, because of this, the laity who have not yet given to him surmise that he must be one who is worthy of receiving gifts, or (2) he purposely refuses gifts, not because he is striving for simplicity and detachment but so that lay persons will think all the more highly of him, thus increasing the pressure they feel to honor him with even more gifts because of his simplicity:

> Herein, [a *bhikkhu*] is invited to accept robes, etc., and precisely because he wants them, he refuses them out of evil wishes. And then, since he knows that those householders believe him implicitly, when they think, "Oh, how few are the lord's wishes! He will not accept a thing!" and they put fine robes, etc., before him by various means, he then accepts, making a show that he wants to be compassionate towards them – it is this hypocrisy of his, which becomes the cause of their subsequently bringing them, even by cartloads, that should be understood as the instance of scheming called rejection of requisites.[61]

This section falls, as I mentioned, within a larger discussion intended to determine how many kinds of morality there are (*katividhañ c'etaṃ sīlan*). It points to the ambivalence of *sīla* as morality in the strict sense precisely because Buddhaghosa uses this example to illustrate that one element of a monk's life such as "fewness of wishes" (*appiccho*), while a desirable quality, must be dissected to reveal its intention and its manifestation in action.

Within the section that covers the specific techniques of meditation, Buddhaghosa discusses the process of specific recollections (*anussati*) and more general efforts at mindfulness (*sati*).[62] Buddhaghosa supposes that recollection of the Buddha should produce a deeper understanding of the Dhamma and also an increase in material benefits. The benefits accrue both to lay persons and to those who have taken ordination, who have "gone forth from home to homelessness." Buddhaghosa notes:

> the excellence of his material body which bears a hundred characteristics of merit; and by his having abolished defects is indicated [by] the excellence of his Dhamma body. Likewise, [by his fortunateness is indicated] the esteem of worldly [people; and by his having abolished defects, the esteem of] those who resemble him. [And by his fortunateness it is indicated] that he is fit to be relied on by laymen; and [by his having abolished defects that he is fit to be relied on by] those gone forth into homelessness; and when both have relied on him, they acquire relief from bodily and mental pain as well as help with both material and Dhamma gifts, and they are rendered capable of finding both mundane and supramundane bliss.[63]

Given that Buddhaghosa noted in his discussion above the propensity of monks to employ both an excess and a deficiency of material possessions in the service of greater wealth and prestige, it seems dangerous to connect the meditative practice of recollecting the Buddha to the material benefits it might produce. The line of acceptability

blurs, however, for under the rhetoric of an ideal response, the monk seeks only the "otherworldly benefits" while the layman is permitted both, though it is presumed he will be primarily interested in the increase of material benefits.

If we turn now to the recollection of generosity (*cajānussati*), we note that Buddhaghosa sees a connection between the ability to perform an act in the present and the possibility of performing similar acts in the future. One's generosity becomes a central factor in one's ability to link past actions to future actions of a similar kind, that is, to form what might be called virtuous habits. The focus of this recollection is on the cultivation of the state of mind of the practitioners in which generosity is reckoned as a form of gain:

> One who wants to develop the recollection of generosity should be naturally devoted to generosity and the constant practice of giving and sharing. Or alternately, if he is one who is starting the development of it, he should make the resolution: "From now on, when there is anyone present to receive, I shall not eat even a single mouthful without having given a gift." And that very day he should give a gift by sharing according to his means and his ability with those who have distinguished qualities. When he has apprehended the sign in that, he should go into solitary retreat and recollect his own generosity in its special qualities of being free from the stain of avarice, etc., as follows: "It is gain for me, it is great gain for me, that in a generation obsessed by the stain of avarice I abide with my heart free from stain by avarice, and am freely generous and open-handed, that I delight in relinquishing, expect to be asked, and rejoice in giving and sharing."[64]

The progression noted above with the recollection of the Buddha continues in this passage. Generosity proceeds from a realization that each practitioner begins with certain natural tendencies (not an original observation) and that certain acts, when executed, must be held purposively in mind or recollected if the effects of those acts are to form a foundation for future knowledge.

Within this progression, Buddhaghosa isolates the ability of all beings to establish generosity whatever their natural inclinations. Greed (*lobha*) or avarice (here he uses the word *maccharaṃ*), which both occur in due course but also can be curtailed, appear as kinds of covering, obstruction, or pollution. He refers to "beings who are overwhelmed with the stain of avarice, which is one of the dark states that corrupt the [natural] transparency of consciousness and which has the characteristic of inability to bear sharing one's own good fortune with others."[65] Consider his use of the term "overwhelmed" (*abhibhūta*).[66] This word illustrates the problem of moral struggle through the example of avarice. One's tendencies emerging through past actions form a cloud or obstruction which has the potential to "overwhelm" one's future intentions.

Another example of the use of material possessions comes in the second section of *Visuddhimagga*, when Buddhaghosa discusses different meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). He reviews a number of different *kasiṇas* (particular objects denoting universals, such as earth, air, water, colors, and the like). The monk is to take a section of earth as the *kasiṇa* for meditation, but he must select it from the surroundings of his monastery. However, the monk may notice that the monastery is subject to various material defects, of which Buddhaghosa enumerates 18: "largeness, newness, dilapidatedness, a nearby road, a pond, leaves, flowers, fruits, famousness, a nearby city, nearby timber trees, nearby arable fields, presence of incompatible persons,

a nearby port of entry, nearness to the border countries, nearness to the frontier of a kingdom, unsuitability, lack of good friends."[67] So depending on its location, there could be too much commotion, too many tempting things to eat, too much interest in the area from surrounding villages, or not enough support for the monastic life. Presumably, monasteries on or near arable land, while they had the capacity to produce sustenance for the monks (through the work and administration of a *kappiyakāraka* – one whose performance (of work) is allowable) were something similarly a distraction to monks who were trying to find a suitable place for meditation.

Even though one's material surroundings must be free from distractions for the most part, people of differing temperaments will require sometimes slight and sometimes drastic modifications from the norm. So for example he says, "A suitable lodging for one of greedy temperament has an unwashed sill and stands level with the ground … It ought to be spattered with dirt, full of bats, dilapidated, too high or too low, in bleak surroundings, threatened with a muddy, uneven path."[68] Or, "a suitable resting place for one of hating temperament is not too high or too low, provided with shade and water, with well-proportioned walls, posts and steps, with well-prepared frieze work and lattice work, brightened with various kinds of painting, with an even, smooth, soft floor, adorned with festoons of flowers and a canopy of many-colored cloth like Brahmā's divine palace."[69] In each case, the point seems to be that material possessions should be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, a minimum level of material possessions is required both to serve as an object of meditation and to ensure that there are no distractions to the one who is meditating. On the other hand, that same minimum level of material possessions depends on the temperament of the one meditating and ought to be viewed in line with the needs of the practitioners.

On the community level, there are also a number of important issues concerning material simplicity. The Pāli Vinaya, or monastic code, is a document that combines stories about the institution of the Saṅgha and its refinement through meetings of Buddhist councils, with stories of the deeds of certain monks that prompted the Buddha to pronounce on certain disciplinary matters. Infractions are grouped into several categories: *pārājikās* (those offenses meriting expulsion from the order), *saṅghādisesa*, (those offenses warranting a formal meeting of the monastery in which the offender is usually given a warning and probation), *nissaggiya* (which involves confession of the offence and the forfeiture of any disputed property), and *pācittiya* (which involves admission of having broken the rule). Other rules form smaller categories with similar punishments. The Vinaya also discusses the many problems ensuing from the ownership and use of property by the monastery.

Of these categories of violation, two in particular seem relevant to understanding Buddhaghosa's view of material simplicity. First, the four *pārājikās*, namely sexual misconduct, theft, murder, and lying about making spiritual attainments, all appear to have some aspect of greed as their root. Most importantly, the story of the monk Sudinna, whose infraction against monastic norms of sexual conduct prompted the Buddha's institution of the first *pārājikā*, gives an interesting account of the connection between family inheritance, sexual conduct, and the duty to one's family to ensure the existence of subsequent generations. Second, the stories concerning the *nissaggiya* deal with various problems concerning material possessions in the context of community life. Here we must look for situations in which the characters in the

story are confronted with situations in which legitimate dilemmas or misunderstandings arise. These will be compared to other stories in which the infraction seems to occur with little or no hesitation, and I will consider how Buddhaghosa treats these cases differently based on the psychological or social status of the monk in question. I will also consider Buddhaghosa's commentaries on the more specific problems of monastic property disputes in order to ascertain something of his baseline positions on these matters. These lines of commentary supplement his discussion of material possessions as aids and distractions to meditation in *Visuddhimagga* and so provide an account of the topic that balances individual concerns as well as the more institutional concerns that the Vinaya describes.

On the twofold nature of materiality

So the twofold nature of materiality may be understood in the following way. A minimum level of material possessions is necessary so the monk in question is not distracted from the work of meditation by the discomfort of strong deprivation, a counsel expressed in the Buddha's advocacy for a middle way between sensual indulgence and extreme self-mortification. At the same time, too much material distraction feeds the fire of craving which leads to clinging, so one's physical surroundings must be both modest and appropriate to temperament. Yet this individual practice of meditation, and the place of material possessions in avoiding craving while also facilitating meditative achievement, must be read against the backgrounds of the monastic community and its lay sponsors who, as we have seen, were not the only ones who were participating in the work of meritorious giving. So it seems at least balanced to say that moral struggle for the monk has both a primary meditational aspect (the struggle for calm and insight) and a secondary but still important donative-sacrificial aspect (the struggle to reconcile the work of meditation with the realities of living in *saṃsāra* (the cycle of rebirths through which one remains bound to this world) prior to an as-yet-unknown time of liberation. These two aspects of moral struggle will return in the second part of the book when we examine the interplay of ideas, practices, and exemplars in the work of moral struggle.

It is worth noting that the physical body and its interaction with other material realities is one important location where these two aspects of moral struggle (the meditational and the donative-sacrificial) converge. Images of wealth and simplicity also govern the practice of meditation on the body that Buddhaghosa describes in the middle section of *Visuddhimagga* as he examines the dynamics of meditation practice. The specific practice of mindfulness occupied with the body (*kāyagatāsati*) is described by Buddhaghosa in accordance with the sources available to him in the equivalent redaction of the Aṅguttara Nikāya:

> It has been commended by the Blessed One in various ways in different suttas thus: "Bhikkhus, when one thing is developed and repeatedly practiced, it leads to a supreme sense of urgency, to supreme benefit, to supreme cessation of bondage, to supreme mindfulness and full awareness, to acquisition of knowledge and vision, to a happy life here and now, to realization of the fruit of clear visions and deliverance. What is that one thing? It is mindfulness occupied with the body."[70]

Mindfulness of the body is framed both in terms of happiness in this world and also in terms of a wisdom that allows one to break free from *saṃsāra*. Only the one who has prepared through an analysis of one's material surroundings as described above, reviewed how one is likely to react to those surroundings based on one's temperament, and inculcated a habit of material simplicity is likely to make progress as a result of meditation on the body.

While Buddhaghosa does suggest that mindfulness occupied with the body will lead one to "a happy life here and now," his way of expressing this happiness departs from many of our contemporary understandings of happiness. This is not the caricature of mindfulness that envisions a slow and steady pace for walking, feeling the good earth on the bottoms of one's feet, or the gentle trickle of warmth down the throat as one sips a cup of tea (both examples used by the contemporary Vietnamese monk, Thich Nhat Hanh in his many instructional books and videos). It is, rather, a stunningly explicit list of the body's components, many derived from its functions.

> What is intended here as mindfulness occupied with the body is the thirty-two aspects. This meditation subject is taught as the direction of attention to repulsiveness thus: "Again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reviews this body, up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair and contained in the skin, as full of many kinds of filth thus: In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidney, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lungs, bowels, entrails, gorge [vomit or digested food], dung, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine," the brain [32] being included in bone marrow.[71]

Lest we think that he is merely giving a pre-modern anatomy lesson, devoid of normative force, Buddhaghosa clarifies his meaning in the following passage:

> No one who searches throughout the whole of this fathom-long carcass, starting upwards from the soles of the feet, starting downwards from the top of the head, and starting from the skin all around, ever finds even the minutest atom at all beautiful in it, such as a pearl, or a gem, or beryl, or aloes, or saffron, or camphor, or talc; on the contrary he finds nothing but the various very malodorous, offensive, drab looking sort of filth consisting of the head hairs, body hairs, and the rest.[72]

The list through which one reviews one's body might be described as the very limit of an analysis based on material simplicity. Shunning all of the emendations that clothing, shelter, food, and medicines bring to the body, Buddhaghosa reduces the body to its materially simplest elements: its biological components and processes.

Meditating on the body in this way is supposed to follow a definite structure or pattern of progression, which Buddhaghosa labels the sevenfold skill in learning: "(1) as verbal recitation [*vacasā*], (2) as mental recitation [*manasā*], (3) as to color [*vaṇṇato*], (4) as to shape [*saṇṭhānato*], (5) as to direction [*disato*], (6) as to location [*okāsato*], (7) as to delimitation [*paricchedato*]."[73] In the exegesis that immediately follows these passages, Buddhaghosa describes how the particular constitution of the body just given must be reviewed in each of these seven ways.

The logic at work here is both reductive and constructive. If one can review one's own body through a process of mental decomposition that accounts for all of the

actual and potential particular occurrences therein, one has been able to experience the quality of desire by the body as fleeting, which leads in turn to the judgment about the insubstantiality of the body. Yet this analytical precision carries within it a normative principle, that these particular subcomponents are subject to change and decay and therefore are to be judged not ultimately the source of value. This judgment about bodily existence must be viewed against the Buddhist teaching, common not only to the Theravāda, that the Buddhist path is, in the final analysis, a middle way between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. The point of meditation on the body, as graphic as it is at times, is not to punish or denigrate the body but to detach oneself from its inclinations and cravings, and from the sense of a permanent self or essence that persists in spite of mental and physiological change.

Mindfulness occupied with the body is structurally central to *Visuddhimaggа* (it appears in the middle section on *samādhi*) and is preceded by meditation on the life and qualities of the Buddha. The master list that organizes all of the other sub-lists of meditation subjects has 40 elements which are classified as follows: 10 totalities (*kasiṇas*, or qualities), 10 kinds of foulness, 10 recollections, 4 divine abidings (the *brahmavihāras*), 4 immaterial states (*arūpa*), 1 perception (namely, the repulsiveness of nutriment, *āhāra*), and 1 defining (*vavaṭṭhāna*, namely the four elements, earth, wind, fire, and water).[74] Within the list of recollections, there are 10 elements: Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, virtue, generosity, deities, death, body, breathing, and peace. The first 6 are grouped together in one exegetical section; the last 4 are grouped together in a subsequent exegetical section.

Recollection of the Buddha is a meditative practice that prioritizes remembering the Buddha's accomplishments over remembering his actual physical form. The process of recollecting the Buddha calls on images of material wealth which provide a stark contrast to the "bare bones" description that Buddhaghosa provides in the recollection of one's own body. While the factors leading to the Buddha's experience of enlightenment are not mentioned, as we might expect based on its position in the text, we do have a list of traits which apply to the Buddha and which are not separable from his physical body. So Buddhaghosa initiates this section by saying:

> Now a meditator with absolute confidence who wants to develop firstly the recollection of the Enlightened One among these ten [recollections] should go into solitary retreat in a favorable abode and recollect the special qualities of the Enlightened One, the Blessed One, as follows: "That Blessed One is such since he is accomplished, fully enlightened, endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct, sublime, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed."[75]

Recollection of the Buddha takes the form of an examination of the predicates applied to him at the end of the passage just cited – accomplished, fully enlightened, endowed with clear vision, etc. – and each term is analyzed for how it applies to the life of the Buddha. For example, using the folk etymology of the term *arahaṃ* ("worthy" or "accomplished," it is also a technical term indicating the highest classification of those who have attained enlightenment), Buddhaghosa instructs the meditator to imagine the Buddha as one who has destroyed (*hata*) the spokes (*ara*) of the wheel of rebirth.[76]

While Buddhaghosa does not describe the body of the Buddha among the factors that the practitioner might recollect, he does describe him as one worthy of certain material requisites, evoking images that remind one of the adorned Buddha statues in temples:

> For when a Perfect One has arisen, important deities and human beings pay homage to none else; for Brahmā Sahampati paid homage to the Perfect One with a jeweled garland as big as Sineru, and other deities did so according to their means, as well as such human beings as King Bimbisāra [of Magadha] and the king of Kosala. And after the Blessed One had finally attained nibbāna, King Aśoka renounced wealth to the amount of ninety-six millions for his sake and founded [many] thousand monasteries through all Jambudīpa.[77]

He also points out, in a summary of the four truths, that each body part is linked to *dukkha*.

> Besides, he has discovered all things rightly by himself step by step thus: The eye is the truth of suffering; the prior craving that originates it by being its root-cause is the truth of origin; the non-occurrence of both is the truth of cessation; the way that is the act of understanding cessation is the truth of the path. And so too in the case of the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind.[78]

The Buddha has experienced all of the particular trials that other living beings have experienced:

> For the Blessed One has experienced, known and penetrated the world in all the ways as to its individual essence, its arising, its cessation, and the means to its cessation, according as it is said: "Friend, that there is a world's end where one neither is born nor ages nor dies nor passes away nor reappears, which is to be known or seen or reached by travel – that I do not say. Yet I do not say that there is ending of suffering without reaching the world's end. Rather, it is in this fathom-long carcass with its perceptions and its consciousness that I make known the world, the arising of the world, the cessation of the world, and the way leading to the cessation of the world."[79]

We are given some more visual images of the body of the Buddha when Buddhaghosa moves to consider the term "blessed" which is explained in reference to one of six factors: lordship, Dhamma, fame, glory, wish, and endeavor. The factor of glory is the only one which is described in physical terms: "he has *glory* of all limbs, perfect in every aspect, which is capable of comforting the eyes of people eager to see his material body."[80] The way to understand how the Buddha is blessed is through images of his physical glory, an image that brings comfort and peace to the one who thinks about it. The contrast between this brief but purified image and the meditation on the body is clear. Even though the Buddha keeps his *rūpa-kāya* (form body) after enlightenment, its corruptibility is not invoked. Rather, a single brief reference to its perfect constitution fills its place.

Despite this minimal description of the Buddha's body in the meditative practice of recollection of the Buddha, we do have a description of what happens to the practitioner who devotes herself intensely to this practice.

> When a *bhikkhu* is devoted to recollection of the Buddha, he is respectful and deferential towards the Master. He attains fullness of faith, mindfulness, understanding, and merit. He has much happiness and gladness. He conquers fear and dread. He is able to endure pain. He comes to feel as if he were living in the Master's presence. And his body, when the recollection of the Buddha's special qualities dwells in it, becomes worthy of veneration as a shrine room. His mind tends towards the plane of the Buddhas. When he encounters an opportunity for transgression, he has awareness of conscience and shame as vivid as though he were face to face with the master. And if he penetrates no higher, he is at least headed for a happy destiny.[81]

Recollection of the Buddha leads to insight into the characteristics of phenomenal existence, and in the process something happens to the body of the practitioner that transforms its physicality, making it subject to different assessment than those normally governing the practitioner's body. Gone are the references to its putrescence and corruptibility; present are references to it as a shrine, worthy of veneration.

The body is subject both to conventional analysis in shape, components, and processes, as well as in the characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self. Buddhaghosa uses these images of material simplicity to communicate what constitutes a proper view of the body, but these same images reinforce the view of the Buddha who is resplendent and worthy of material adornment as a result of this right effort. The body of the practitioner is transformed through meditation from its state of decomposition into something likened to a room holding relics that is worthy of veneration.

However, material possessions and images of material simplicity are not only used to describe the transformations that occur in the process of meditation. Materiality and wealth are also used as images to communicate the essentially incommunicable relationship between knowledge of meditation and knowledge of the Buddhist path. For example, in the third part of *Visuddhimagga*, which examines the nature of insight wisdom (*paññā*), Buddhaghosa employs the following lengthy example in order to illustrate the difference between practices that lead to refined concentration and those that lead to insight:

> Suppose there were three people, a child without discretion, a villager, and a money-changer, who saw a heap of coins lying on a money-changer's counter. The child without discretion knows merely that the coins are figured and ornamented, long, square or round; he does not know that they are reckoned as valuable for human use and enjoyment. And the villager knows that they are figured and ornamented, etc., and that they are reckoned as valuable for human use and enjoyment; but he does not know such distinction as "This one is genuine, this is false, this is half-value." The money-changer knows all those kinds, and he does so by looking at the coin, and by listening to the sound of it when struck, and by smelling its smell, tasting its taste, and weighing it in his hand, and he knows that it was made in a certain village or town or city or on a certain mountain or by a certain master. And this may be understood as an illustration.
>
> Perception is like the child without discretion seeing the coin, because it apprehends the mere mode of appearance of the object as blue and so on. Consciousness is like the villager seeing the coin, because it apprehends the mode of the object as blue, etc., and because it extends further, reaching the penetration of its characteristics. Understanding is like the money-changer seeing the coin, because after apprehending the mode of the object as blue, etc., and extending to the penetration of the characteristics, it extends still further, reaching the manifestation of the path.

> That is why this act of understanding should be understood as "knowing in a particular mode separate from the modes of perceiving and cognizing."[82]

This is a helpful example for a number of reasons. First, the use of the monetary metaphor communicates something about the audience that Buddhaghosa's instruction is intended to reach. It is a kind of parable about the meaning of insight and how it differs from other modes of knowing drawn from the processes of production and trade. It factors elements of the causal chain of dependent origination by describing their activities in terms of common experiences. Second, it employs characters (the child, the villager, the money-changer) as examples of how the accumulation of different kinds of knowledge allows one to think through and between different levels of interpretation. One can see how the child could become the villager, who in turn could become the money-changer, and in this way he is communicating a developmental model. Finally, it raises the question of what aspect of materiality is the best one to convey how, in the process of gaining insight, one understands different kinds of characteristics of a reality.

Both the physical body and its surroundings, which include but are not limited to one's material possessions (that is, possessions in the sense of objects one has access to rather than things one owns), are both part of the *rūpa-khandha* (materiality aggregate). As illustrated above, for the Buddhist practitioner struggling with attachment, the *rūpa-khandha* includes a consideration of one's material surroundings, one's own body, and the interaction between these. Even so, it is not the body itself or the material surroundings that constitute attachment, but rather the craving that arises from the interaction of these. As Karundasa explains,

> The close correlation between the Buddhist analysis of matter and Buddhist ethics is indicated by the oft-recurrent statement, namely, "*rūpaṃ saññojanīyo dhammo*," i.e. matter is something that is favorable to, or productive of, fetters (*saññojana*) – the fetters that bind the living being to "saṃsāric" existence. The description of rūpa as *saññojanīya*, favorable to the creation of fetters, does not mean that it is a *saññojana*, a fetter (in itself) itself. It is the upadāna, the laying hold of, i.e. the craving for or attachment to rūpa that constitutes the *saññojana*.[83]

For Buddhaghosa, material simplicity is a complex problem because it impacts multiple areas of Buddhist practice. It grounds body meditation and the theory of temperaments that precedes it, but material reality also is the touchstone for the bond of desire, even as it functions in the process of ridding oneself of attachments through meditation and the process of the merit-making practices of lay and monastic sacrificial giving, the latter a topic that Buddhaghosa does not treat explicitly. In each case, however, material reality presents a context and incentive to moral struggle through which persons work through the challenges and promises of the Buddha's teachings.

Material Simplicity and the Problem of Moral Struggle

In this chapter, I have developed the pliable category of material simplicity to introduce the historical and institutional contexts in which Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa thought through the challenges to progress along the paths that emerged from the

traditions they inherited. Bonaventure's discussion of Francis' discipleship, and the relation of Francis' example to Jesus' example, illustrate that the process of transformation through imitating the teaching and learning of exemplars speaks to one of the problems of moral struggle discussed earlier, namely that positive moral motivation and instances of its weakness imply both personal and social dimensions. Recall also that, for Buddhaghosa, meditation is clearly experiential in character, developed after certain disciplinary training (*sīla*), and requiring an environment free from distractions. In the exercise of *samādhi*, and in his attempts to describe the relationship between meditation and insight, Buddhaghosa calls upon images of material simplicity and material abundance to break down images of bodily permanence and to inspire the one undertaking meditation to progress through images of the glorified Buddha.

Insofar as we can draw any preliminary observations about moral struggle at this point, we can say that training in concentration provides the precondition for gaining insights into Buddhist truth (*paññā*). The practice of recollecting the life of the Buddha forms a habit of mind that connects the tectonic practices of meditation to personal continuity in the subject. For Bonaventure, it was important to analyze the behavior of Francis as a preeminent example of the imitation of Christ but in a way that is sensitive to the institutional needs of the order. The community needed to balance the effect of Francis on the order's distinctive interpretation of Christian practice with its institutional concerns about its own viability as it was simultaneously critiqued from inside and outside the community. The social dimension of material simplicity was important for Buddhaghosa as well, for it is in the community that one learns how to interact with material possessions so that they facilitate progress rather than foster additional attachments. This required the presence of guides who would counsel junior adepts and provide examples of how to deal with those members of the wider society who wished to reward them with additional material possessions to honor their spiritual attainments.

There are also important comparative points in the connection between death, bodily endurance, and personal striving. Bonaventure took the example of martyrdom as structurally central in his *Apologia* in order to demonstrate the connection between material simplicity and the love that ended in union with Christ. Even so, he was careful to offer reflections on the more proximate model of Francis whose life, while certainly arduous, encoded a different kind of example which gave more nuance to the ways that material simplicity might be modeled. As will become clearer further along, Buddhaghosa took meditation on the body, particularly in its various stages of decay leading up to death, as a central facet of meditation practice that had the capacity to overcome moral weakness and progress through struggles. Yet these examples, while they call upon images of death and destitution, use these images in a temporary and motivational way rather than as ends in themselves.

Bonaventure's understanding of moral struggle shows how his distinctly Trinitarian theology provides an important supplement to other medieval notions of the will as a faculty mediating reason and emotion, and Buddhaghosa's account of moral struggle illustrates how he draws on the resources of Buddhist Abhidhamma to structure the practice of meditation. By probing each thinker's writings for the logics and vocabularies that answer the question of moral struggle proposed at the beginning of this book, we will find their expressions of Trinitarian metaphysics and Abhidhammic

analysis provide also an alternative to a strategy of simple conceptual correlations that finds inter-religious equivalents or strong binary opposites wherever one looks.

Notes

1 Portions of this and subsequent chapters have appeared in my article, "Bonaventure on Moral Motivation: Trajectories of Exemplification in His Treatment of Voluntary Poverty," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25.2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 109–36.

2 My reference to practices is both to material practices and discourse practices, where my relation of ideas to practices and persons in Part II approximates the contemporary usage of the notion of discourse practices. For each Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, material possessions were ambivalent phenomena. While we might suggest that both thinkers share the judgment that attachment to material possessions blocks spiritual progress, they are profoundly dissimilar on the nature and end of that progress. Yet even within this "difference within similarity" (to adopt Tracy's and Yearley's expression), both thinkers admitted that in material possessions may be found a key to understanding the world in deep and profound ways. The historical context I shall give here for each community is important for assessing the similarities and differences, but it must not be allowed to overrun this basic comparative point.

3 For the implications of global reflexivity on the role religious thought should play in contemporary ethical discussions, see William Schweiker, *Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics: In the Time of Many Worlds* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004). "[R]esponsible existence is the capacity to move among 'worlds;' it is the ability to navigate moral spaces that reflexively structure social existence in time" (xvii).

4 For example, the *Journal of Religious Ethics* (26.1, Spring 1998) devoted a focus issue to the theme, "Benevolence, Special Relations, and Voluntary Poverty."

5 W. Rösener, *The Peasantry of Europe* (Blackwell, 1994), 80, 143; cited in Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 90.

6 Harbans Mukhia, "Was there Feudalism in Indian History?" [1981] reprinted in H. Kulke, ed., *The State in India 1000–1400* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 113, 127–8; cited in Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, 90–91.

7 Much of the following account is summarized from the study by Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

8 Ibid., 18.

9 Ibid., 28.

10 It is interesting that even when Innocent III gave approval to Francis' new order, he did not immediately grant them official recognition. At his first meeting with Francis, he hardly took him seriously at all.

> Francis was introduced to Innocent by the Pope's nephew, Cardinal Ugolino, and the Pope was clearly exercised by Francis' eccentricity and uncouth appearance at their first meeting in the Lateran – according to Matthew Paris, he told Francis to go and play with the pigs, where he belonged. To his consternation, Francis chose to take him literally, and reappeared in the Consistory next day caked in pig-dung: the Pope hastily granted his requests. (Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997, 150)

Duffy also notes that at first Francis' order was given no permission to preach on matters of theology, only on issues of morals.

11 Perhaps the two most noteworthy debates in which issues seemingly internal to the Franciscan community gave rise to significant and broad issues in the medieval church are those concerning papal infallibility and the emergence of the understanding of natural rights. These topics are treated in detail by Brian Tierney, the former in his *Origins of Papal Infallibility 1150–1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972) and the latter in *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law and Church Law 1150–1625* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: 1997).

12 Bonaventure, *Defense of the Mendicants*, vol. 4 of *The Works of Bonaventure*, José de Vinck, trans. (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1966), vii.

13 For a critique of later interpretations of Buddhism as a "missionary religion," arguing instead for an account of Buddhism's geographical expansion freed from the Christian theological language of mission, see Jonathan S. Walters, "Rethinking Buddhist Missions" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1992). While I appreciate Walters' terminological distinction, this book maintains the position that one can articulate a basis for putting a thinker from a "missionary" religion and one from a "non-missionary" religion (if we take Walters' distinction) into dialogue, neither for enlightened sensitivity to difference nor for the purpose of proselytization, but for mutual moral transformation. I have explored this distinction in the context of sisteenth-century Franciscan missionaries in Sri Lanka. See David A. Clairmont, "On Hegemonies Within: Franciscan Missions and Buddhist Kings in Comparative Theological Contexts," in *New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation*, Francis X. Clooney, SJ, ed. (New York: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2010), 63–88.

14 *Kulaputta* appears, by itself and in compounds, 24 times in *Visuddhimagga*.

15 R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1979), 56.

16 See J. M. Hammond, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edn. Vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Thomson Gale/The Catholic University of America, 2003), 650.

17 Bonaventure, *Defense of the Mendicants*, 14.

18 Ibid., 14.

19 Lester Little has noted the important issue of the social and economic heritage of the Franciscan and Dominican preachers who preached against material excess:

> Who jointed these orders? As with most other groups under study, we are better informed about leaders than ordinary members. The original members of both orders included some substantially wealthy people … In Germany, the social origins of 168 individual friars (about 6 percent of the estimated total number of German friars) have been ascertain and analyzed. This sample almost certainly represents the leadership circles of the orders rather than the rank-and-file membership. There were no peasants or lower-class workers of any kind, although one must expect such people to be less noticeable in the sources. Besides a large group of nobles (disproportionately in evidence in the sources), the largest groups were made up of ministerials, knights, patricians, and burghers. These were groups that commanded vast material resources but lacked commensurate social prestige and political power. (Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe*, 160–61)

20 In addition, Bonaventure is following a biblical version that cites 1 Timothy 6:10 as "covetousness is *the root of all evils*" (emphasis added) as opposed to the version cited above from

the New Revised Standard Version translation which reads "for the love of money is *a root of all kinds of evils*." The use of the definite article in the former case significantly restricts the possibility of a plurality of roots. The Vulgate reads: "*radix enim omnium malorum est cupiditas quam quidam appetentes erraverunt a fide et inseruerunt se doloribus multis*" (v. 10).

21 Bonaventure, *Defense of the Mendicants*, 125. Bonaventure goes on to portray Augustine as holding this same view, or at least that an excess of material possessions is one aspect of the lust for domination and self-love characterizing the earthly city: "in the earthly city its wise men who live by men's standards have pursued the goods of the body or others of their own mind, or of both." (*City of God*, XIV, 28)

22 Ibid., 126.

23 Brian Tierney notes that for Bonaventure, the debate was as much about care for the members of the order that were struggling rather than a pure defense of the Franciscan standard. "Christ practiced absolute poverty, Bonaventure insisted, when he was showing the way of perfection. When Christ assumed the ownership of any goods he was 'condescending to the weak,' that is graciously imitating to the frailer spirits among his followers, those who could not sustain the rigors of a life of perfection, that ownership of property was not actually sinful." See Brain Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility 1150–1350*, 69–70. For later Franciscan contributions to political thought, see Roberto Lambertini, "Poverty and Power: Franciscans in Later Medieval Political Thought" in *Moral Philosophy on the Threshold of Modernity*, Jill Kraye and Risto Saarinen, eds. (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 141–63. Brain Hamilton has recently argued that Bonaventure's contribution to this debate should be viewed in light of a tension between a "logic of conciliation" and a "logic of perfection," drawn from Bonaventure's different expressions of these ideas in the *Apologia paupurum* and the *Quaestiones disputatae de perfectione evangelica*, a difference which helps to differentiate Bonaventure's political theology from attempts to enunciate expressions of a Franciscan "political theory." See his "Voluntary Poverty and Political Theology: The Case of Bonaventure," unpublished paper delivered at the International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, MI, May 14, 2010.

24 Bonaventure, *Defense of the Mendicants*, 127. "*Cum autem circa temporalium bonorum possessionem duo considere contingat,* dominium *videlicet et* usum, *sitque* usus *necessario annexus vitae praesenti; evangelicae paupertatis est, possessiones terrenas quantum ad* dominium et proprietatem *relinquere*, usum *vero non omnino reiicere, sed* arctare" (Op. Om. VIII, XI, cap. 7, par. 3 [272]).

25 trans. Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility*, 70. "*… quod cum circa res temporales quatuor sit considerare, scilicet proprietatem, possessionem, usumfructum, et simplicem usum*" (Op. Om. VIII, XI, cap. 5, [312]).

26 Bonaventure, *Defense of the Mendicants*, 127. "*paupertatis evangelicae duplex est modus duplex perfectio*" (Op. Om. VIII, XI, cap. 7, par. 4 [272]).

27 For an examination of this distinction, and the notion of temporal extension that it implies, see David A. Clairmont, "Bonaventure on Moral Motivation: Trajectories of Exemplification in his Treatment of Voluntary Poverty," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25.2 (Fall/Winter 2005), 109–36.

28 Bonaventure, *Defense of the Mendicants*, 127.

29 Ibid., 128. "But the exemplar and form of the second mode of poverty appeared even before the apostles, for it is Christ the Master of perfection who instituted it for them when he sent them out to preach [*Secundae autem paupertatis exemplar et forma in vita praecessit Apostolorum, quam perfectionis magister Christus eisdem instituit, quando ipsos ad praedicandum misit*]" (Op. Om. VIII, XI, cap. 7, par. 5 [272]).

30 Ibid., 144.

31 Ibid., 146.

32 For a contemporary treatment of the role of moral exemplars' personal narratives in comparative ethics, see Darrell J. Fasching and Dell de Chant, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001).
33 Bonaventure, *Defense of the Mendicants*, 9–10.
34 Ibid., 37.
35 Ibid., 62–3.
36 Eric Doyle, ed. and trans., *The Disciple and the Master: St Bonaventure's Sermons on St Francis of Assisi* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 60.
37 Ibid., 61.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 63.
40 Ibid., 64. Julian of Speyer describes Francis instructing his brothers in the faith: "Now sufficiently taught in all things perfect by his tutor, the grace of the Holy Spirit, he wished to come to know in himself every kind perfection by experience. And so, he first taught his brothers by his example those things which he later urged on them by frequent sweet words" (385). See "The Life of Saint Francis by Julian of Speyer," in Regis J. Armstrong, William J. Short, and J. A. Wayne Hellmann, eds., *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, *The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1999).
41 Ibid., 65.
42 Ibid.
43 The connection between the silent moral exemplar and the social dimension of moral learning may in fact be the complex that most clearly expresses how moral weakness and hypocrisy are differentiated. For more remarks on the connection between hypocrisy and moral weakness, see the conclusion of this study.
44 Robert B. Brandon, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 82. The force of the claim against traditional notions of intention can also be seen in Anscombe's assertion that "in describing intentional actions as such, it will be a mistake to look for *the* fundamental description of what occurs – such as the movement of muscles or molecules – and then think of intention as something, perhaps very complicated, which qualifies this. The only events to consider are intentional actions themselves, and to call an action intentional is to say it is intentional under some description that we give (or could give) of it." See G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*. 2nd edn. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), 29.
45 Noa Ronkin, *Early Buddhist Metaphysics: The Making of a Philosophical Tradition* (New York: Routledge Cuzon, 2005), 48.
46 Richard F. Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Highlands of Ceylon* (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1995 [1971]), 290.
47 Richard F. Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 66.
48 Perhaps the most critical of this approach are Frank Reynolds and his students who sought to investigate the significance of practices as ethically central to understanding Buddhism properly. See Charles Hallisey, "Ethical Particularism in Theravada Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 3 (1996): 32–43. On the related problem of differentiating "kammic" and "nibbanic" Buddhism as two distinct moral paths, see Charles Hallisey, "Recent Work in Buddhist Ethics," *Religious Studies Review* 18.4 (October 1992), 276–85.
49 Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes* (New York, Harper and Row, 1970), 11–14.
50 James R. Egge, "Sacrifice and Purification: The Meanings of Religious Giving in Theravāda Buddhism," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1998, 5–6.

51 Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 30–1.
52 Ibid., 23–4.
53 Ibid., 103.
54 On the latter, see Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks,* 56–71.
55 Flanagan offers what he calls the "Principle of Minimum Psychological Realism" which states: "Make sure when constructing a moral theory or projecting a moral ideal that the character, decision processing, and behavior prescribed are possible, or at least perceived to be possible, for creatures like us" (Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, 32).
56 Gananath Obeyesekere has used the term the "relentless piety of devotees" to express this idea. See his *Imagining Karma: Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist, and Greek Rebirth* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).
57 The study of "materiality," which must be differentiated from the study of "material possessions," is a complicated one in the examination of Buddhist practice. Modern scholarship on Buddhist practice has approached the issue of materiality from a number of angles. For example, the work of Gregory Schopen focuses on the use of money and the control of extensive material possessions by early Buddhist monks for a wide array of purposes, from the provision for funeral monuments and expenses, to inheritance practices, to the control of large amounts of monastic property. He examines repeatedly how the description of monastic behavior in Buddhist texts does not always match the practice of actual monks, at least based on what we can know of their behavior from the material artifacts and *textual* inscriptions they left behind. To give another example, the studies of Paul Mus on the burial monument, Barabuḍur, illustrate the complicated ways that practitioners' interactions with material artifacts affected their understanding and deployment, indeed even the formation, of basic Buddhist concepts and how these ritual behaviors have deep roots in the early Vedic sacrificial practices. These and other studies on such topics as image consecration and devotion, relic veneration, funeral practices, and the construction and use of buildings and other monuments would all have to be taken into account for a full discussion of Buddhist perceptions of an engagement with materiality. The point I am interested in here is how particular engagements with material reality affect the practice of meditation *insofar as these efforts illustrate Buddhist senses of failed or forestalled moral action*, that is moral struggle toward an ideal.
58 As Phra Rājavaramuni explains about attitudes to wealth in the Pāli canon,

> The term *poverty* may sometimes be misleading. The familiar Buddhist concepts are rather contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) or limited desires (*appicchatā*). Poverty (*daliddiya*) is in no place praised or encouraged in Buddhism … Though monks should be contented and have few wishes, poverty is never encouraged even for the monks … The main theme in these texts is that it is not wealth that is praised or blamed, but the way one acquires and uses it. … Acquisition is acceptable if it is helpful in the practice of the Noble Path or if it benefits one's fellow members of the order. (Phra Rājavaramuni, "Foundations of Buddhist Social Ethics," in Russell F. Sizemore and Donald K. Swearer, eds., *Ethics, Wealth, and Salvation: A Study in Buddhist Social Ethics*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1990, 40–1)

59 For a full translation and commentary on this story, see *The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara: A Buddhist Epic*, Margaret Cone and Richard F. Gombrich, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

60 Vsm. I. 65 (trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, [1975] 1991, 26).
61 Vsm. I.67 (Ñāṇamoli, 26).
62 The recollections are first enumerated at Vsm. III.105: "recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*), recollection of the Dhamma (*dhammānussati*), recollection of the Saṅgha (*saṅghānussati*), recollection of virtue (*sīlānussati*), recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*), recollection of deities (*devatānussati*), recollection of death (*maraṇānussati*), mindfulness occupied with the body (*kāyagatāsati*), mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), and recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*)" (Ñāṇamoli, 110). The first six are grouped together at Vsm. VII under the "six recollections" (*Cha-anussatiniddeso*).
63 Vsm. VII.60 (Ñāṇamoli, 110).
64 Vsm. VII.107 (Ñāṇamoli, 219–20).
65 Vsm. VII.110 (Ñāṇamoli, 220).
66 *Abhibhūta* is the past participle of *abhibhavati*, which has the sense of overcoming or conquering as if in a struggle or fight. Buddhaghosa's use of this word suggests that he does indeed understand the sense of being internally conflicted, experiencing one's desires or greed having more power than one's normative ideals.
67 Vsm. IV.2 (Ñāṇamoli, 220).
68 Vsm. III.97 (Ñāṇamoli, 107–8).
69 Vsm. III.98 (Ñāṇamoli, 108).
70 Vsm. VIII.42 (Ñāṇamoli, 235).
71 Vsm. VIII.44 (Ñāṇamoli, 236).
72 Vsm. VIII.47 (Ñāṇamoli, 237).
73 Vsm. VIII.48 (Ñāṇamoli, 237).
74 See Chapters 4–5 below for a more detailed listing and discussion of the 40 meditation subjects.
75 Vsm. VII.2–3 (Ñāṇamoli, 192).
76 Vsm. VII.5–7 (Ñāṇamoli, 192–3).
77 Vsm. VII.23 (Ñāṇamoli, 195).
78 Vsm. VII.27 (Ñāṇamoli, 196–7).
79 Vsm. VII.36 (Ñāṇamoli 199–200).
80 Vsm. VII.61 (Ñāṇamoli, 207–8).
81 Vsm. VII.67 (Ñāṇamoli, 209).
82 Vsm. XIV.4–5.
83 Y. Karundasa, *Buddhist Analysis of Matter* (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1967), 166.

Part II
Ideas, Practices, and Persons

Moral Struggle and Religious Ethics: On the Person as Classic in Comparative Theological Contexts, by David A. Clairmont

4

Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa: From Ideas to Practices

Persons become classics across times and cultures through their questioning and deepening of received wisdom, as struggling saints and well-intentioned sinners, in the perennial appeal of vulnerable humanity seeking the truth. Such apparently disparate figures as Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa are themselves classic persons, I have argued, not only because of their pivotal roles in the histories of their traditions but also in their capacity to pass on challenging thinking about a common human problem: the phenomenon of moral and intellectual struggle. Indeed, what draws their traditions together for comparative engagement is their insistence that moral struggle is a common human problem, the diagnosis of which can stand up to, and be enriched by, challenges from another tradition.

In this and the following chapter, I explore these approaches by focusing on three topics: tradition-specific moral ideas, material practices in those traditions, and the place of moral exemplars that help us to understand the way that ideas and practices are related in these tradition-specific forms of discourse. Any attempt to reduce the phenomenon of personal moral struggle either to a set of concepts or to a description of practices will fail to deal with the complex relationship of the two and will even eclipse an important aspect of how moral exemplars motivate us from generation to generation, or challenge us with compelling moral examples from outside our own traditions. The second part of this book extends my earlier meditation on what value the study of moral struggle in one tradition has for those who experience moral struggle in another tradition. The answer I have been developing suggests that there are resources in our own tradition that we simply cannot see, or the contemporary significance of which we cannot see, until we place them in dialogue with other traditions. As I argue in the final chapter, this means that the central rationale for comparative engagement in these traditions is hope in the possibility of mutual moral purification where each tradition is transformed into a purer expression of its own classic ideas, which nonetheless leaves intact a strong level of humility about what can be known and attained by confronting the classic questions of human life.

Moral Struggle and Religious Ethics: On the Person as Classic in Comparative Theological Contexts, by David A. Clairmont

In this chapter, I explore in greater detail Bonaventure's account of moral struggle by examining how his distinctly Trinitarian theology influences his views about the moral practices of his community. Especially in his style of linking sacramentality to an understanding of virtue, Bonaventure relates basic religious ideas with practices in the service of personal moral and spiritual development. In turn, I examine Buddhaghosa's account of practices that facilitate perseverance in moral struggle and lead to developing insight wisdom. From the Abhidhammic strategy of developing logically exhaustive lists to explain mental and physical phenomena, Buddhaghosa demonstrates how the mental disciplines of selective focus, constituent disassembly, and verbal and imagistic repetition, form a kind of motivational complex in which the practitioner relates personal effort with the guidelines provided by exemplary instructors in the tradition. Whereas Bonaventure's account points to an integrative and link-making function of the intellect as central to moral struggle, Buddhaghosa's account points to the importance of the mental disassembly of kinds of consciousness in order to render them less substantial and therefore less appealing as objects of craving.

Bonaventure's Continuity with Medieval Debates on the Nature of Will

In Chapter 2, I examined various approaches to the problem of moral struggle, noting that while there appear to be rough parallels to the notion of an independent rational faculty or "will" in both traditions, neither tradition confines itself to these equivalents. Just as we cannot confine Christian theological thinking about moral struggle with exclusive reference to practical irrationality, so too can we not appreciate the fullness of the Buddhist approach to moral struggle by referencing only the relation of action and intention within the karmic system of *saṃsāra*. In both cases, the issue is more complicated and can only be understood by examining the interplay of basic religious ideas with material practices such as meditation and voluntary simplicity.

Medieval theologians frequently discharged questions about moral struggle by attributing all instances of this phenomenon to sin, either original sin (a corrupt tendency that infects all human efforts) or sinful habits or vices. Is a person really and truly free not to sin, or are we rather ultimately bound to sin? What then happens to moral responsibility and to the sovereignty of God's presence in creation and human history (that is, God's grace)? As I indicated in Chapter 2, it was an ongoing concern for these Christian thinkers to understand how the will, as a faculty bridging the rational and affective dimensions of the person, was affected by sin and whether instances of sin were best thought of as intellectual or affective failures. Because most medieval Christian theologians agreed that creation entailed the unity of body and soul (the spirit which animated matter) in each rational creature, both body and soul were implicated in each instance of sinful behavior. Moreover, because the rational soul differentiated human beings from other forms of animal life on account of its mirroring the rational character of its divine source, the rational nature of the human soul was one possible object of corruptibility.[1]

While Bonaventure relied on insights traceable to Paul and Augustine, his reflection on the issue of moral struggle also employed the insights of his predecessors such as

Pseudo-Dionysius, Hugh and Richard of St Victor, and Bernard of Clairvaux. Augustine had emphasized that the Christian life was fundamentally characterized by loving what was true and eternal while using rightly the things of this world. Dionysius had cautioned that God always remains beyond the boundaries of our descriptions, and so theology must proceed by carefully preserving its apophatic dimension, both in word and in action, lest systems of thought about God become themselves objects of reverence.[2] Moreover, Bonaventure's thinking about creation and the doctrine of the Trinity drew upon the Dionysian insight that good is self-diffusive, reflected in his view that the moral life should be approached as series of ascending stages toward unity with God. He also drew on Hugh of St Victor's insight that divine love exhibited a unitive, indeed a transformative, dimension, which could manifest itself in both mystical experience and love of neighbor, whereby the person who loves God becomes more like God.[3] With Richard of St Victor, Bonaventure emphasized that the doctrine of the Trinity flows from the idea that God is love, so that love confined to one person is less grand than love expressed among a plurality of persons,[4] and that biblical sources provide the proper starting point for crafting a symbolic map for contemplative life.[5] Finally, drawing from Bernard of Clairvaux, Bonaventure developed the theme that "Humility, whose act is interior and exterior demeaning of the self, is the foundation of all Christian perfection."[6]

So for Bonaventure, understanding moral struggle properly involved both an analysis of a person's desire for the good, but also a consideration of how one views the surrounding environment, how we speak about it symbolically, and how the images evoked through spoken and written language interact with the voids and limits of silent interiority. In this way he was calling on the insights of his predecessors while advancing his own particular synthesis. Bonaventure begins his analysis of moral struggle with those familiar scholastic topics noted earlier: the nature of intellect and will and their relation to free decisions to act for the good. I examine these topics in this section and the more symbolic aspects of Bonaventure's analysis in the third section and in the next chapter.

Like those of many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Bonaventure's first comments on these matters were made in the course of an analysis of Peter Lombard.[7] They are found in the second book of his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. Bonaventure examines the topic of human nature from two perspectives: from interpretations of the behaviors of more remote figures (the angels and the primeval couple) known through scripture, and from reflection on the nature of human affective and intellectual capacities. It is important to note that these particular reflections are part of Bonaventure's earliest work, and as such they were guided by the social conventions of medieval university life and the requirements of his academic position. Only later does he deepen his reflection about the symbolic nature of writing and reading one's own actions as a kind of text.

The second book of his *Commentary* deals with the creation of all corporeal and spiritual things, angels and demons as well as animals and human beings. Distinction 16 of this book considers the nature of human beings as created in this image and likeness of God. The human being is created in God's image, he says, because to be an image of something is to represent something or person according to its "most noble act" [*nobilissimum actum*] which for the human means to express a rational

understanding of oneself, the world, and its origin.[8] A likeness or similitude, on Bonaventure's account, is related to the image because the image is a likeness actually expressed. The likeness itself denotes, as Bonaventure explains, a proportional consistency or harmony [*convenientia proportionalis*].[9]

Bonaventure considers whether the image of God in the human person is held primarily as an affective or a rational image, since it would seem that the image is based in the "noble act" of reason that the human shares with God. He begins in step with Augustine who enumerated three ways in which the human being can be said to be in the image of God – in memory, intelligence, and will – reflecting in the enumeration of powers the divisions of persons in the Trinity. "The image consists in memory, intelligence, and will; but two of these powers, namely memory and intelligence, reside in the cognitive part: therefore, the image resides more in the cognitive than in the affective part."[10] Indeed, Bonaventure sometimes speaks of intellect and will as the principle powers of the soul, considering memory as an alternate activity of the intellect. In one way, this judgment is a simple matter of proportion: the image is primarily cognitive because two thirds of its elements are cognitive. However, he goes on to say that if we look at the redeemed image as opposed to the created image, it is primarily affective because it is grace that redeems God's image in human beings and grace is affective because God is best understood as the overflowing of merciful love. "The redeemed image responds to the created image; but the redeemed image which certainly is [rooted in] grace, is principally in the affective rather than in the cognitive."[11] So while the human being is created in the image of God in a cognitive way, that is rationally, which distinguishes us from other forms of life, because creation is ordered to a final and redeemed end, the image is best expressed affectively since redemption comes through the love of God.

In Distinction 24 of the *Commentary*, Bonaventure enumerates the powers of the soul drawn from his interpretation of the image and likeness of God, relating this to the human activity of making free choices. For Bonaventure, the two primary powers of the soul are the intellect and the affection [*intellectus et affectus*], which he also calls reason and will [*ratio et voluntas*]. He notes that these two "are diverse powers, yet not diverse essences," signaling his agreement with Aristotle that "since the substantial goodness and truth of a creature is the same through essence, therefore the reason and the will will be the same through essence."[12]

Reason and will are also united, for Bonaventure, in the act of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*). He examines this problem by differentiating between the will as a distinct power of the soul and the act of free choice or decision in Distinction 25 of the second book of his *Commentary*. His aim in drawing this distinction is to understand how it is that God can permit evil acts and how grace can be said to remain in a person despite particular disordered choices. He says that, "Decision [*arbitrium*] belongs to reason, freedom [*libertas*] to will, for the other powers in us have to be moved at the nod [as in a nod of assent] and command of the will."[13] For Bonaventure, although the will is a power which acts in harmony with reason in each free choice, *liberum arbitrium* is not a separate power or faculty of the soul but rather a designation of reason and will acting together which can be seen as having a habitual character. This free choice or decision acquires, as Bonnie Kent explains, the status of a habit "of the kind found in a faculty capable of certain acts in its own right, but only in conjunction

with another faculty. Such are acts of consent or choice. Intellect and will can perform them only when the two join together in operation. Free decision thus adds nothing to reason and will but a mutual relation to each other."[14] As Bonaventure says, "Thus decision is not called a power but a habit. It shows itself as the [ability of] making known."[15] He further specifies this relation by examining the ways the soul can control its own acts, noting that this control has two sides: the ability to reflect on itself, (to consider its acts rationally), and the ability to move itself to bring about events. "Self reflection belongs to reason; self movement, which follows reason, belongs to appetite."[16]

So the will is most strongly traced to the affective dimension of the person, and gives a "nod of assent" to the decision proffered by reason, as it was also considered dominant in the redeemed image. Free decision itself [*liberum arbitrium*] is, for Bonaventure, that term used to indicate those moments of coordination of will and reason, and is not itself a separable power in the soul, although it can be understood as a habit because of coordinating objects of reason and will over time. It is interesting to note that while it was customary to speak of good habits as perfections of certain powers through their repeated and proper use, here we have habit described as a *repetition of the coordination of two other powers*, reason and will. Moreover, this coordination is required if the soul is to bring about actions that are well-considered or reflexive.

In a later work titled *Breviloquium* (c. 1257 CE), Bonaventure offers a condensed version of his argument from the *Commentary*. Discussing the will as one aspect of the created soul, he notes that the will can be understood both "according to natural instinct or according to deliberation and decision," further suggesting that "the affective power is divided into the natural will and the elective will, which is 'will' in the proper sense."[17] Yet he maintains his earlier analysis that "The cooperation of these two powers – reason reading beyond itself and the will accompanying it – give rise to the integrity of freedom, which is the principle of merit or demerit according to whether good or evil is chosen."[18] In its original state, the human creature was free from constraint understood as a constraint experienced when reason and will are in conflict. "Freedom from compulsion," Bonaventure says, "is nothing else than a joint capacity of will and intellect, the principal faculties of the soul."[19] Moral struggle appeared with the corruption of sin. He explains this dynamic in the following way:

> But because this creature was made from nothing and thus imperfect by nature, it could fail to act out of this intrinsic relationship with God. It could instead act for itself rather than for God, by failing to act with God as its source, according to God's norms, or with God as its end. This is precisely what sin is: a corruption of measure, of form, and of order. As a defect, sin has a cause that is not "efficient" but "deficient," for it is nothing other than a defect of the created will. Now corruption can only be the corruption of something good, and only a corruptible being is subject to corruption; therefore sin can exist only in some corruptible good. And so free will, by falling away from the true Good, corrupts its own measure, form and order; hence all sin as such proceeds from the will as its source, and resides in the will as its proper subject. This occurs whenever the will, because of its imperfection, mutability, and fickleness, rejects the Good that is unfailing and immutable, and clings to one which is changeable.[20]

Both sin and its opposite (holiness) "reside in the will," so that even if there can be intellectual defects in the human person, the will as free rather than reason remains truly the place of moral culpability. For although one cannot act without some degree of prior knowledge (accurate or inaccurate), so too the mind cannot act without the will which actively pursues the object through a desire for union with it. Moreover, sin (1) resides most precisely in the clinging to a mutable good in place of something unchanging, and (2) is expressed as the elimination of proper measure, form, and order.

In the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure goes on to examine moral struggle in terms of weakness, which he explains as two ways of understanding the notion of "corruption of sin": as the loss of original justice and as punishment for original sin. Because of the loss of original justice (meaning a proper internal ordering of will and reason), a state in which the good of the mind and the good of the flesh were coordinated, Bonaventure says, in the choice of which "our souls incur a fourfold punishment as regards the soul, namely, weakness, ignorance, perversity, and concupiscence."[21] Moral weakness on his reading (denoted by the term *infirmitas*) as one kind of punishment for sin "implies movement from the changeless good and toward a perishable good; and movement away from the changeless good means forsaking supreme power, truth, and goodness [the Trinity]; and movement toward the perishable good means loving that good excessively."[22] Weakness is a result rather than a cause of the originating infraction against God's goodness, but it is a result that is best seen in the pursuit of what changes. "Actual sin," he says, "finds its origin in everyone's free will by suggestion, entertainment, consent, and action."[23]

Not only does justice denote a person's proper internal ordering where will and reason are united in pursing the unchanging good, it also denotes the ability of reason to communicate order properly to external reality. As Bonaventure states,

> The order of justice is that the immutable good is to be preferred to the changeable good, that the pure good it to be preferred to the useful, that the will of God is to be preferred to one's own will, and that the judgment of an upright reason takes precedence over sensuality. Since the law of God prescribes rightful order and forbids disorder, when the temporal is preferred to the eternal, the advantageous to the virtuous, one's own will to the will of God, and sensual appetite to reason, a mortal sin results.[24]

In other words, justice as right order imposed on an external reality takes the form of that order from a rational judgment about the desirability of the immutable good. Pursuing the order of God implies that people should seek to conform their own wills, which seek changeable objects because they have lost the original unity of internal and external justice, to the will of God which is expressed in the immutable good. The ability to identify the good depends on reason's ability to discern those things that are pure and unchangeable and to discern that attention to these would ensure that the order that God intended for human beings would be pursued. To do this requires a way of seeing the world dependent on a certain set of practices informed by a Trinitarian view of creation, of basic human capacities, and of the relation of people to each other on the model of the inner life of the Trinity.

While Bonaventure does not work out precisely the means by which the reason and will acting together mirror the Trinitarian life until his later works such as the

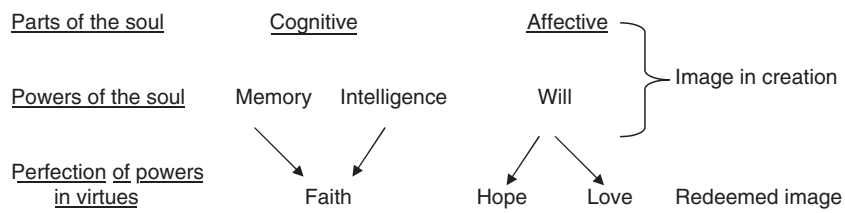

Figure 4.1 Bonaventure on the parts of the soul, its powers and its perfections

Itinerarium mentis in Deum (1259 CE) and *De triplici via* (1260 CE), he does signal this pattern in his comments in the *Breviloquium* about grace through the work of the Holy Spirit.

> If then, the rational spirit it to become worthy of eternal happiness, it must partake of this God-conforming influence. This influence that renders the soul dei-form comes from God, conforms us to God, and leads to God as our end. It therefore restores the image of our mind to likeness with the blessed Trinity – not only in terms of its order of origin, but also in terms of its rectitude of choice and of its rest in enjoying [God].[25]

It is crucial for Bonaventure that the presence of grace not only help the human being persist through instances of moral weakness, but also that this help be given in a way that gradually transforms the mind and will into an image of its source.

Indeed, Bonaventure's suggestion that the will resides principally in the affective rather than in the cognitive part of the soul is closely linked with his understanding of the redeemed image of God noted earlier.

> As to what is in the image of creation, there are two powers among the cognitive, memory and intelligence as is well known, and one in the affective part, namely the will. However, in the redeemed image, which certainly has been established, two virtues are in the affective part, namely hope and love, and one in the cognitive part, namely faith. The image, in fact, principally regards the origin and condition; condition and origin are directed between memory and intelligence, as in the manner of parent and progeny, and between these two the will, following in the manner of derivation without procession.[26]

Bonaventure emphasizes again the closeness between the will and the redeemed image, but this time through a reading of the theological virtues. Figure 4.1 illustrates Bonaventure's way of relating the created and redeemed image of God to the powers of the human being.

The image (*imago*) of God is reflected in what was created by God, and according to Bonaventure differs from likeness (*similitudo*) as an ideal differs from a reality. Bonaventure employs this same distinction between the created and the redeemed image to indicate two different stages in the contemplation of God.

Bonaventure traces a parallel between the powers of memory, intelligence, and will in the created image and the virtues of hope, faith, and love in the redeemed image. However, as the image of God in human beings matures over the course of their lives from their created to their redeemed expressions, each virtue represents not the

perfection of a single power (for example, faith from intellect, hope from memory, love from will), but rather that memory and intellect are perfected in the one theological virtue of faith and the perfection of the power of the will has two expressions, hope and love.[27] So the created power of the will matures into two virtues: hope and love.

Let me now summarize two issues from this analysis that will be important for our comparison with Buddhaghosa in the next section. First, Bonaventure relates the will to free decision in a way that balances the rational and affective dimensions of the human person, emphasizing that such decisions are not so much a separate power as a pattern of reason and will acting cooperatively toward some good. Through free decision, reason and will cooperate to bring about an action, and such actions are of two kinds: mental actions such as internal reflection and prayer, and external actions that relate to the surrounding world and other persons. While both kinds of actions must be ordered to love of God and neighbor, as we shall soon see in more detail the role of symbols (especially Trinitarian ones) in Bonaventure's thought requires that such ordering happen through a process of conforming the mind to the patterns that God has placed in the world for one to discover. It will be important to see how the basic Abhidhamma categories that Buddhaghosa employs allow him to speak about coordinated moral actions and responsibility that does not have recourse to a substantial notion of a self that persists through time.

Second, his discussion of free decision is particularly instructive because it focuses on the temporal dimension of action in a way that is sometimes obscured when we think only about the balance of reason and affection in analyzing how people identify and pursue the good. His point is that free decisions can be understood as possessing a habitual characteristic because they are directed not only to isolated moments but to a coordination of reason and will over one's lifetime. In Buddhaghosa's account of moral struggle, we shall see similar concerns about the coordination of faculties over time, but the focus will be on how specific mental activities have the capacity to break apart phenomenal realities thereby rendering them less appealing to consciousness.

As I noted in Chapter 2, there were many options in his religious context especially in the Suttas' discussion about karma and intention. Yet Buddhaghosa's approach is distinct for at least two reasons: first, he believes that theoretical questions cannot be treated apart from the practice of meditation (an emphasis the Buddha himself made about the practical nature of his teaching); and second, there is a strong connection between the categories of Abhidhamma analysis and meditation practice. This does admittedly give his interpretation of moral struggle a decidedly monastic emphasis, but the larger point about the connection between theoretical and practical concerns remains for all practitioners, a point to which I return in the next chapter.

Buddhaghosa's Manual of Practical Abhidhamma

In Chapter 2, I suggested that three aspects of the Abhidhamma cosmology would be important to position Buddhaghosa's approach to moral struggle. The first was the relationship between the *khandhas* (or aggregates of things that exist) and the *dhammas* (or basic analyzable units of reality). The second was the normative assessment of the three characteristics of all phenomenal existence: *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha*

(unsatisfactoriness), and *anattā* (not-self). And the third was the Buddhist doctrine of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) and its relation to *kamma* (action). If all phenomenal reality bears these three characteristics, and the analytical picture of the human is exhaustively presented by the account of the *dhammas* related through the chain of dependent causality, then we would be well advised to consider moral struggle as a problem to be expressed and answered within these broad contours. To explore this problem, let us turn first to the structure of Buddhaghosa's main text integrating these issues and then examine his more specific responses to moral struggle developed from the Abhidhamma.

Buddhaghosa's first[28] and most widely-known work, the *Visuddhimagga* ("Path of Purification" or "Way of Purity"), is structured as a commentary on a single verse from the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*. The Buddha says, in response to a question asked by a deity concerning who might succeed in "disentangling the tangle" of human craving, "when a wise man, established well in virtue, develops consciousness and understanding, then as a bhikkhu ardent and sagacious, he succeeds in disentangling this tangle."[29] To explain the phrase "established well in virtue" (*sile patiṭṭhāya*), Buddhaghosa says,

> Just as a man standing on the ground and taking up a well-sharpened knife might disentangle a great tangle of bamboos, so too, he – this bhikkhu who possesses the six things, namely, this virtue, and this concentration described under the heading of consciousness, and this threefold understanding [of the characteristics of reality], and this ardor – standing on the ground of virtue and taking up with the hand of protective-understanding executed by the power of energy the knife of insight understanding well-sharpened on the stone of concentration, might disentangle, cut away and demolish the tangle of craving that had overgrown his own life's continuity.[30]

Throughout *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa mixes Sutta commentary with instruction for meditation and explication of Abhidhamma, for the purpose of leading the confused person out from the tangle of inclinations and ideas, likened to being lost in and pressed in upon by the overlaying branches of a bamboo thicket. The book is divided into three sections to reflect the steps of progressing along the Buddhist path. The threefold division – *sīla* (conventional morality), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (insight wisdom) – provides a summary expression for the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path. (See Appendix.)

The tangle (*jaṭan*) to which he refers is understood as the tangle of craving (*taṇhā*),[31] in its inner and outer aspects[32] ("one's own requisites and another's, for one's own person and another's, and for the internal and external bases [for consciousness]").[33] Craving arises through interactions with one's own material surroundings, with other people, and with one's own mental states. The explication of these terms is called the path of purification because, in Buddhaghosa's words, "*purification* should be understood as nibbāna, which being devoid of all stains, is utterly pure. … it is the means of approach that is called the *path*."[34] Purification is the process of cleansing the intentions and rooting out craving but also the state that one arrives at once one has fully internalized the teaching through meditation leading to insight. Purification comes through attention to the mutually reinforcing work of *sīla* and *samādhi*.

Because knowledge does not become complete by knowing about the path but rather emerges gradually through the practice of cultivating precise ways of seeing oneself and the world, we posit here an initial mark of similarity with Bonaventure, for in both thinkers the problem of struggle to see rightly only comes to its fullness through commitment to practices that support and deepen that way of seeing. What one sees (through the employment of a particular pattern of ideas) and how one sees (through a particular set of practices) are two mutually reinforcing aspects of the same path. For Buddhaghosa, although preparation in morality prepares one for carrying on meditation without distraction, insight into the nature of reality is both the product of meditation and a refinement of one's own moral example to others.

Sīla and *samādhi* are both necessary for one to attain *paññā* which is, for Buddhaghosa, synonymous with the Four Noble Truths (*cattāri ariya-saccāni*).[35] In discussing how *paññā* develops, he says:

> Now things classed as aggregates, bases, elements, faculties, truths, dependent origination, etc., are the *soil* of this understanding, and the [first] two purifications, namely, purification of virtue and purification of consciousness, are its *roots*, while the five purifications, namely, purification of view, purification by overcoming doubt, purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path, purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and purification of knowledge and vision, are the *trunk*.[36]

Note that the basic categories of the Abhidhamma are likened to soil, which provides constant nourishment to the practices of morality and concentration that grow in them.

Yet purified knowledge of Abhidhamma is also likened to the solidness of the trunk, also fed from the same nutriment of understanding properly the nature of phenomenal reality. Because he only links the stages of the path to the lower half of the tree, he does not speak about the branches or leaves. The trunk denotes stability and the basis from which the foliage of the tree springs. The foliage is not the path itself but associated with the fruit or result of the path. So we are meant to understand the path as the work of the practitioner and content of the knowledge that it brings, but not the blissful experience that coincides with having traveled the path. The foliage of the tree and its fruit, like *nibbāna* as the goal, are ultimately beyond description. By way of contrast, consider Bonaventure's quite different use of the metaphor of the Tree of Life, its images of Jesus described as fruits placed in three groupings: the origin of Jesus' life, his passion, and his glorification.[37] For Bonaventure, focusing on the fruits in each of 12 sets of branches foregrounds the events in the life of Jesus and links each set of images to a facet of Jesus' character that the Christian is expected to emulate. For Buddhaghosa by contrast, one benefits rather from a certain kind of knowledge, guided by persons who teach the Dhamma; forms of emulation within particular historical events are not themselves a goal. Indeed, the inexpressible to which a person's efforts are ordered is not a goal transcending this life but rather a goal sought but inexpressably in this life.

Buddhaghosa's book offers instruction to a community of *monks* who "although desiring purity have no right knowledge of the sure straight way … though they strive, here gain no purity."[38] He assesses honestly the quality of the community receiving his instructions: not a community of Buddhist saints (or those who have attained liberation) but those who strive or struggle for purity. The text presupposes a

community of reception in which some elder or experienced members are available to consult and direct the younger or more inexperienced members. It is likely that at his time only monks (and probably only male monks) would have had access to the manual.[39] The path described therein is for those who have taken refuge in the Saṅgha (monastic community) in a more deliberate way[40] but who have not yet succeeded in realizing the fruit of the Buddha's teaching in their practice.

One characteristic of Buddhaghosa's strategy for joining meditation instruction with Abhidhamma is the frequent use of interlocking lists. Indeed, one of the most immediately striking features of the structure of *Visuddhimagga* is its combination of interlocking *lists* and precise *definitions*, which parallels the style of the books in the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. Buddhaghosa's use of lists was unique to neither him, nor his Buddhist contemporaries, nor even the religious context from which his discussions emerged. As Ariel Glucklich has noted, for example, one can find lists of significant moral import in the commands for Brahmanic rituals, in ancient medical texts, and in those directing meditation practice. In those contexts, lists give not only exhaustive treatments of factors impinging on practical duties but also clues within the form and constitution of the lists themselves about how they are to be interpreted. Some lists tell us when certain actions are appropriate or not, where "the same principles that allowed ritual specialists to sort out a huge array of rules into proper injunctions also allow us to make sense of ethical principles embodied in puzzling lists of concrete items."[41]

The same general point may be applied to Buddhaghosa's approach to Abhidhamma, I suggest. How exactly do these lists work in the service of moral transformation through meditation? For Buddhaghosa, there is something distinctive and supremely effective about the Buddhist connection between thought and practice. When a monk or nun, meditating, learns to concentrate on his or her breathing or surroundings, that one is focusing the mind in such a way that it prepares the person to focus for a sustained time on the examination of the *components* that make up her or his particular mental state. The steps of listing the separate components of a state – its conditions (*paccaya*), bases *(āyatana*), and elements (*dhātu*) – can actually influence future actions (mental and physical) that might give rise to undesirable qualities. As Paul Williams explains:

> A monk developing insight meditation, wishing to see things the way they really are, develops the ability constantly to analyze his experiences into their constituents. He is said to dwell peacefully, observing the rising and falling of *dharmas*, thereby dissolving the objects of his attachment and cutting at the root of desire. Thus by learning to see things the way they really are he brings his ignorance to an end.[42]

Dissolving objects of attachment requires learning to "read" the patterns of one's thoughts and the kinds of actions they condition, as lists of elements capable of multiple relation and refinement.

The verse initiating the *Visuddhimagga* works out from the master list of the path's threefold division into *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. Employing an Abhidhamma framework for examining each section, Buddhaghosa begins each section by defining the term in question (what is …); describing the sense in which the predicate he uses is applied to the term (in what sense is it …); describing the characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause of the term in question; enumerating its benefits;

Sīla	*Samādhi*	*Paññā*
1 What is virtue?	1 What is concentration?	1 What is understanding?
2 In what sense is it virtue?	2 In what sense is it concentration?	2 In what sense is it understanding?
3 What are its characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause?	3 What are its characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause?	3 What are its characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause?
4 What are the benefits of virtue?	4 How many kinds of concentration are there?	4 How many kinds of understanding are there?
5 How many kinds of virtue are there?	5 What is its defilement?	5 How is it developed?
6 What is the defiling of it?	6 What is its cleansing?	6 What are the benefits of developing understanding?
7 What is the cleansing of it?	7 How should it be developed?	
	8 What are the benefits of the development of concentration?	

Figure 4.2 Division of questions in *Visuddhimaggga*

enumerating the various ways in which the term can be understood; considering how is it defiled and how is it cleansed, and (in the case of *samādhi* and *paññā*) how it is developed (see Figure 4.2).

Several points should be noted, beginning with the differing length of each list. *Samādhi* is the longest list, containing one element more than the *sīla* list and two elements more than the *paññā* list. *Sīla* does not contain the question of development (structurally it is assumed to be a trait or practice that one either has/undertakes or does not have/undertake, despite that fact that Buddhaghosa goes on to describe it with language reminiscent of habituation). *Paññā* does not have elements which inquire into the defiling or cleansing characteristic, suggesting that understanding is somehow different in kind from the practices of *sīla* or *samādhi*. The lists are also not in the same order. *Samādhi* and *paññā* list the questions of development and benefits last, while *sīla* lists the question of benefits earlier.

Buddhaghosa's method of inquiring into each aspect of the path employs another list to define and relate each of the three. Commenting on this method, Bhikkhu Bodhi says that,

> To evaluate the nature of any ultimate reality, the Pali commentators proposed four defining devices by means of which it can be delimited. Those four devices are: (1) its characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*), i.e. the salient quality of each phenomenon; (2) its function (*rasa*), its performance of a concrete task (*kicca*) or achievement of a goal (*sampatti*); (3) its manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*), the way it presents itself in experience; and (4) its proximate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*), the principle condition upon which it depends.[43]

Each division of the path receives this same treatment, employing a method whereby enumerating and distinguishing component parts expresses both a way of viewing reality and a judgment about its simultaneous appeal and impermanence.

Given the structure of *Visuddhimaggga*, various approaches emerge for how to understand its way of addressing the classic problem of moral struggle. One approach

would be to employ a common technique that considers which among the individual mental factors (*cetasikas*) or collection of them, when taken together, most closely resembles the notion of volition to which Bonaventure's account of struggle may also be seen as a response and challenge. This is the approach that I signaled in Chapter 2, and we can return to it now in more detail.

David Kalupahana sorts "the equivalent of the term will" into several categories. "There is," he notes,

> no one single term in the Buddhist texts that could be considered the equivalent of the term *will*. This means that the so-called will is not one single controlling force, but rather a whole group of tendencies. Furthermore, one may discern two slightly different concepts of the will. The first is the immediately felt tendency to act; the other is the gradually developed tendency to act.[44]

In this, we may note an initial similarity with Bonaventure, as he too was careful to point out the difference between the will as a power of the soul and free decision as the temporary coordination of will and reason repeated to form a kind of habit.

Within the first category, he places those terms that denote effort, strength, power, or energy. In this sense, he suggests only those terms that denote some force or movement without an explicit correlative cognitive component, as the examples are drawn primarily from the Suttas. Although some terms such as energy (*viriya*) are used to denote effort or striving in a more general sense in the Suttas, they take on a more technical sense in the Abhidhamma.[45] Some of these terms come from the Sutta narratives, others from the Abhidhamma. In the second category, however, he lists the theory of *khandhas* generally, but also one of the *khandhas* in particular, namely *saṅkhāra* (disposition). From the more general term *saṅkhāra* he distinguishes three separate types: dispositions relating to specific actions of body, speech, and mind; dispositions relating to a general will to live; and dispositions related to very specific kinds of desires such as desires for merit or permanence.[46] Recall that aggregate of *saṅkhāra* is subdivided into 50 kinds of mental factors in the Abhidhamma, which gives a more detailed enumeration of mental factors that perform volitional and directive functions.

If we turn to the *Atthasālinī*, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (first book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka), we see how the term *khandha* can itself be used to mean the aggregates of a person's physical and psychological constitution, as well as a means for analyzing the elements in the more general theory of *khandhas*. Taking as an example the *khandha* of *viññāṇa* (consciousness), he says that:

> The meaning of *khandha* should be taken as group or mass, etc. [For example, in the passage] "It goes by the name of large *khandha* of water" – here *khandha* is used in the sense of mass. In such passages as, "The *khandha* of virtue, or of concentration," it is used in the sense of good quality. [Or in the example] "The Blessed One saw a large piece of wood" – here it is used as "aggregate" symbolically. For in the sense of mass, one (unit of) consciousness is a part (only) of consciousness. Therefore, as one cutting a portion of a tree is said to "cut the tree," so one consciousness, which is only a portion of the aggregate of consciousness, is said symbolically to be the aggregate of consciousness.[47]

While in the obvious sense *khandha* can mean an amount or a measure dividing an amount, in another sense *khandha* can mean the process by which a mental occurrence

can be seen in two ways: as an identifiable feature but also as a principle of further dividing mental processes. This is important because it signals, in Buddhaghosa's terminology, how an entity with no substantial self or essence can nonetheless be said to be the subject of an action. Fostering the ability to identify, isolate, and reflect on mental processes provides a series of additional divisions that bring mental processes under one's control. To analyze a particular phenomenon into its smallest possible subdivisions breaks the mental momentum that leads one to act without deliberation, or out of habit conformed to a random proliferation of desires. To focus the mind on a single, small conceptual unit of its operation means that one is not focusing on the idea of a self that seeks to be satisfied.

For Buddhaghosa, knowing how the aggregates relate to insight wisdom through the pattern of Abhidhamma analysis is central to understanding his views about the dynamics of moral struggle and its resolution. In *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa explains how the *khandhas* relate to the different ways of knowing. He says:

> For though the state of knowing is equally present in *saññā* [perception], in *viññāṇa* [consciousness], and in *paññā* [understanding], nevertheless perception is only the mere perceiving of an object as, say, "blue" or "yellow;" it cannot bring about the penetration of its characteristics as *anicca* [impermanent], *dukkha* [painful], and *anattā* [not-self]. *Viññāṇa* knows the objects as blue or yellow, and it brings about the penetration of its characteristics, but it cannot bring about by endeavoring, the manifestation of the path.[48]

This means that within the operations of particular kinds of consciousness reside a capacity that links knowledge of how thinking about phenomenal reality happens with insight knowledge that relieves attachment to desires for permanence. In other words, the particular *khandha* of *viññāṇa* is a kind of knowing of or about, but it is the various expressions of *viññāṇa* as the kinds of consciousness enumerated in the Abhidhamma list of *cittas* that contribute to the understanding (*paññā*), for example, those kinds of consciousness judged beneficial and leading to liberation and those that reinforce attachment.[49]

How is it that one can know something in one sense conventionally and in another sense ultimately? To have a simple perception (*saññā*)[50] of something is what occurs between the visual faculty, in his example the eye (*cakkhu*), and the characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) of that which is perceived, and that perception is dependent on two other features, namely the part of the body and the characteristic or the object perceived. There is another kind of characteristic, different from such things as colors, that relates to characteristics beyond the immediately sensible. These are the three characteristics (*tilakkhaṇa*) enumerated above: *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), and *anattā* (not-self). Buddhaghosa says of the five aggregates that "their essence is rise and fall and change. *Impermanence* is the rise and fall and change in those same aggregates, or it is their non-existence after having been; the meaning is, it is the breakup of produced aggregates through their momentary dissolution since they do not remain in the same mode."[51] In other words, each of the three ultimate characteristics of a reality is in a way anticipated in the fact of the interlinking mental states.

If all instances of existing things are subject to such changes, and if there is nothing that persists through these changes, how do we talk about personal continuity in such

a way as to understand how to talk about one's deliberation about what to do? Buddhaghosa examines the nature of conditionality and the extent to which conditions inevitably and invariably produce outcomes of certain kinds.

> Because particular states are produced by particular conditions, neither less nor more, it is called *reality* (suchness). Because once the conditions have met in combination there is no non-producing, even for an instant, of the states they generate, it is called *not unreality* (not unsuchness). Because there is no arising of one state with another state's conditions, it is called *not otherness*. Because there is a condition, or because there is a total of conditions, for these states beginning with ageing-and-death as already stated, it is called *specific conditionality*.[52]

A particular state of affairs is so called because a certain number and kind of conditions bring it about, indicated by the use of "thus-ness" (*tatthatā*). Rather than a state of affairs being defined as a reality by a particular essence or trans-temporal substance (as in the substance metaphysics undergirding Bonaventure's account), it is defined by the confluence of conditions that give it its distinctive features. What is distinctive about a given mental process is not that it communicates something beyond itself, or that it is an example of a preexisting perfection (both of which apply to Bonaventure's way of interpreting reality on the model of the Trinity), but rather that it recurs in a recognizable way and that this particular collection of factors accounts for a distinctive mental function. Not only are specific conditions characteristic of specific realities, but if they are present, then the event in question must occur and there can be no other event as a result than the one that occurs.

Because even the conventionalities we call persons exist not in the abstract but with analyzable temperaments and tendencies, persons will come to understand these ultimate realities through individual patterns, what we might call personal "histories" of mental processes. For example, not all people come to see and understand *paṭiccasamuppāda* in the same way. Each of the links in the chain also forms a point of departure for the analysis of the other links and this pattern expresses an orientation to related past, present, and future conditions.

> Two things, ignorance [*avijjā*] and craving [*taṇhā*] should be understood as the root of this Wheel of Becoming. Of the derivation from the past, ignorance is the root and feeling [*vedanā*] the end. And of the continuation into the future, craving is the root and aging-and-death [*jarā-maraṇa*] the end. It is twofold in this way. Herein, the first applies to one whose temperament is [false] view, and the second to one whose temperament is craving. For in the round of rebirths ignorance leads those whose temperament favors [false] views, and craving whose temperament favors craving.[53]

A person's past-orientation, which might include the need to seek a first cause for phenomena observed, is attributable, on this account, to one being inclined to views which are the root of ignorance. Yet this temperament represents not a permanent essence of personality, but a coordination of factors causally related to each other in serving as necessary conditions for future events. A person's future-orientation to seek what he or she desires is attributable to craving which perpetuates itself.

Buddhaghosa calls the 12 links of the chain *dhamma* (states), noting that it is the *paccaya* (conditions) that bring about these states. The conditions that this passage

speaks of are the 24 *paccaya* which are the further specification of the 12 links of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.[54] These conditions combine in various ways to bring about the events of our experience. Certain conditions can combine with one another while others are, so to speak, mutually exclusive. For example, there are 6 root conditions (*hetu-paccaya*): greed (*lobha*),[55] anger (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), and their opposites, non-greed (*alobha*), non-anger (*adosa*), and non-delusion (*amoha*). While the former three are taken to be the root of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), they do not always exist simultaneously; in fact the attractive vector of greed cannot exist simultaneously with and in the same ways as the repulsive vector of anger. These former three root causes also serve to classify particular temperaments of individuals on which specific practical advice in meditation is based.

Buddhaghosa offers an analogy that links the tendencies displayed in various temperaments that lead people to approach *paṭiccasamuppāda* differently. He explains how the Buddha sensitively employed a variety of teaching methods to formulate his insights in the ways most appropriate to his audience. He imagines how four different individuals, seeing a creeping vine, might each grasp at a different part of the vine to trace its length and tear it up. One might grasp it at the end and trace it down to the root; another might grasp it at the root and trace it to the end; another might grasp it at the middle and trace it to the root; while yet another might grasp it at the middle and trace it to the end.[56] So for Buddhaghosa, in short, his use of Abhidhamma language links the explanatory power of the theory of personality and the causal relationship of events with a desire to understand how knowledge transforms the agent and enables one to overcome the obstacles to meditation and insight.

Where then are Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa on the problem of moral struggle? What are the similarities and differences in their frameworks and resources? At this point, we might do well to make a couple of observations. First, if we were to limit the examination of moral struggle in Bonaventure to his early discussions about the nature of the will as a discernable power of the soul and the relationship of that power to the act of free decision, we would be left with a debate that is limited to a particular set of technical questions in medieval scholastic discourse on the relative balance of the will as rational or affective and the other issues I mentioned earlier. This approach, although sensitive in one way to his scholastic context, would sever his discussion of the issue from his deepest theoretical and practical concerns, and thereby from the two most important theological themes in his writing: the meaning of the doctrine of the Trinity and how belief in God so conceived impacts how one lives, and the moral exemplarity and charism of Francis of Assisi, the founder of his order.

Similarly, if we were to limit our investigation of Buddhaghosa's account to the relationship between intention and action, or to separate accounts of preparatory morality, meditation, and insight wisdom, we would miss the full scope of Buddhaghosa's moral concern. He is interested in how the vast body of Abhidhamma literature, which we have only begun to explore here, is related to the actual practices of meditation and the possibility of liberating knowledge. Buddhaghosa recognized, as we have just seen, that his audience was not the fully enlightened ones but those who were in the midst of struggle to make progress on the path toward purity. While the doctrine of the Trinity in Bonaventure's thought occupies a different place than does the Abhidhamma for Buddhaghosa, they share a common

feature, namely teachings that were both central to their communities but also difficult to integrate on a practical level.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, we will examine how some of these basic ideas were taken up with some difficulty into the lives of their respective communities. For Bonaventure, we will see that the sacramental practices of the church became central for linking discussions about the will with the project of ongoing moral and spiritual formation for Christians, sensitive to both contexts mentioned earlier: the symbolic religious cosmology of Trinitarian theology and the Franciscan example of material simplicity. For Buddhaghosa, we will examine how the basic Abhidhammic ideas about the nature of reality are taken up into the practices of meditation, which itself depends to a significant degree on judgments about material reality, basic temperaments and "effective histories" of those who engage in meditation.

Bonaventure on the Connection Between Sacrament and Virtue

Although Bonaventure presents the problem of moral struggle in the familiar scholastic language of faculties and powers uniting the affective and rational dimensions of the human person, he sets this account in a framework whereby each action is directed toward the immutable good, expressed through the image of the active and abundant life that flows from the Trinity. To understand the practical context in which people struggle to form an upright will which pursues the immutable good and is expressed as dynamic and Trinitarian, we must move beyond considering the operations the will and associated factors that account for moral struggle and toward those instruments that, on Bonaventure's account, the Trinitarian God uses to assist human beings in their struggles. Indeed, part of the fruitfulness of Bonaventure's moral vision resides in its use of the categories of virtue and sacrament to understand the orientation of the human will to goodness, and it is to these categories that I now turn.

Bonaventure's earliest discussion of the sacraments again occurs in his *Commentary on the Sentences,* this time in book 4. While an explanation of each of the seven sacraments is the central motivation of the fourth book of his *Commentary*, I limit my discussion to how he defines sacrament and what he takes to be its purpose. In their most general sense, sacraments have three characteristics: they are instruments appropriate to human beings at particular times in their lives; they are real cures or medicines coming as gifts from God and so can be understood as instruments of grace; and they appear as a midpoint in a cosmological continuum between nature and divine glory.

In support of the first characteristic, Bonaventure states that, "The ill one is somewhat more needy than the healthy one. Therefore it was necessary that something more be given to man for his healing, that he might attain salvific health, than if he had not fallen. Such things are none other than the sacraments, because otherwise he would just as well have had grace and virtues and gifts."[57] For Bonaventure, this is a specification of his prior point that while the presence of God in every aspect of created reality remains constant, personal awareness of that presence fluctuates depending on the severity or complexity of circumstances. God has given sacraments because of the different levels of sinfulness of the members of the human family. On

some occasions in a person's life, one's good fortune or character (he speaks about virtue) would carry one through trials well enough, but on other occasions, whether by weakness or bad luck, one's will is challenged and so the sacraments are used by God in these instances as aids or remedies. They are fitting to particular times in life when a person's moral constitution experiences degrees of sickness, and the sacraments are necessary for those more deeply infected by sin.

As to the second characteristic, Bonaventure states that, "Sacraments were principally instituted for the purpose of curing; but as to the purpose of some medicine's being curative, the fact of its signifying a cure accomplishes nothing. Rather, it suffices only that it does cure. Therefore, a sacrament is able to be a perfected medicine even without signification: therefore signification is not of the essence of a sacrament."[58] That is to say, sacraments are not given to signify what is otherwise cured, just so that human beings will have a sign of what has already been cured by some other means. Rather, they are real instruments of grace, not strictly because of what they signify, but are real cures in addition to the spiritual reality which they signify. Sacraments consist in the direct, concrete, and timely specifications of the presence of God in the created order.

To expand upon the third characteristic, Bonaventure says that "Grace is the midpoint between nature and glory: therefore nothing is able to contain grace which is not able to contain glory, since this is, so to speak, an ultimate disposition; but no sacrament is able to contain glory: therefore neither is it able to contain grace."[59] By this he means that, while sacraments are truly efficacious, they do not have the same power as the full glory of God, for this would be to put human beings in control of the fullness of divine power. He means to suggest, I think, only that sacraments are in the realm of grace and that grace really does come to human beings through them, not that they are, strictly speaking, the cause of divine favor.[60]

Bonaventure makes brief allusion in this part of the *Commentary* to the connection between the sacraments and the virtues, arguing that different kinds of divine grace are present in each gift from God. He notes that,

> Everyone who does not approach insincerely has the grace of the virtues; one who, however, enters falsely receives no grace in the sacrament; therefore either a different grace is given to him than the grace of the virtues or the sacraments give nothing at all. Similarly, those things which have diverse differences essentially are essentially diverse; and they are such by grace in sacraments and virtues as in gifts and beatitudes. … Furthermore, there would be gifts and virtues and beatitudes, if there were never sin, but there would not be the grace of the sacraments.[61]

This passage indicates that, for Bonaventure, virtue and sacrament are both forms of grace (as are material good fortune and states of beatitude), and they are meant to assist us in our actions. Sacraments are distinctly connected with the human need for divine assistance, as a cure for weakness, whereas the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the beatitudes, and the virtues would have existed even had the original expression of human weakness not occurred. With these different senses of sacrament before us, we are now closer to the Trinitarian underpinnings of Bonaventure's sacramental theology. However, it must still be demonstrated that the sacraments are properly characterized as the distinctly Trinitarian form of divine moral

assistance and remedy for weakness and that assistance is closely linked with the will understood as a created capacity or power. This Trinitarian reading of sacraments is stated most precisely in the *Breviloquium*.

The sacraments themselves are, says Bonaventure, "sensible signs divinely instituted as remedies through which 'beneath the cloak of material species God's power operates in a hidden manner;' so that, 'being likenesses, they represent; from their mode of institution, they signify; being made holy, they are means of conferring a certain spiritual grace' by which the soul is healed of its weaknesses due to vice."[62] The sacraments are understood as a means (perhaps instruments or tools might convey more specifically the image that Bonaventure has in mind) of conferring God's grace which Bonaventure takes to be the distinct work of the Holy Spirit.

It is interesting to note that Bonaventure provides an alternative threefold schema for understanding grace which employs more recognizably moral language but unites it closely with language that is focused on salvation. First, he states that, "Grace, in its proper sense, consists in the divinely given assistance toward the actual acquiring of merit."[63] Second, he states that grace should be understood as a "remedy for sin."[64] Here we find the most direct link to Bonaventure's discussion of sacrament where the analogy of healing provides the link between the person of the Holy Spirit, the gift of grace, and the human actions entailed in the sacraments which were likewise characterized as remedies where "by divine command, we are to draw the grace of our healing from Christ the supreme Physician through and by these sensible signs … Their origin is Christ the Lord; their function is to produce a prompting, teaching and humbling effect; and their fruit is the healing and salvation of men."[65] Third, Bonaventure refers to "the ramification of grace in the habits of the virtues" and he goes on to enumerate the traditional list of seven: faith, hope, charity (love), prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice.[66]

At this point in the *Breviloquium*, the dominant number symbolism switches from three to seven. In tracing the path from grace to the sacraments, virtue becomes the pivotal concept. Virtue functions as the last item in the triad indicating aspects of God's grace, but the particular virtues are enumerated as seven which, not surprisingly, mirrors the enumeration of the sacraments. To focus the point further, Bonaventure draws the parallel to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit which oppose the seven deadly sins: fear (which opposes pride), piety (which opposes envy), knowledge (which opposes anger), fortitude (which opposes sloth), counsel (which opposes covetousness), understanding (which opposes gluttony), and wisdom (which opposes lust).[67]

When Bonaventure turns to discuss the sacraments explicitly, before commenting on their number and the particularity of each one, he sets the notion of sacrament more generally within the context of salvation history and thereby recapitulates the structure of the *Breviloquium* as a whole. He offers a Trinitarian sense of the word sacrament, depending on the historical epoch in which the word is used. First, sacrament exists as a way of interpreting the world in which all people, places, times, beliefs, and institutions exhibit some aspect or set of aspects of the divine nature. Indeed, Bonaventure notes that for each type of law – the law of nature, the law of scripture, and the new law – a particular enumeration of sacraments applies. "Oblations, sacrifices, and tithes existed under the law of nature," and by the law of nature he means that which human beings could discern without any direct historical involvement of God with human beings but

only by examining the vestiges of God in the natural world.[68] Second, "Then, under the law of Scripture, circumcision was introduced, expiation added, and an elaborate distinction superadded between the various oblations, tithes, and sacrifices," and by the law of scripture he means the presence of God to the Hebrew people in history. Third, under the new law of Christ, the sacraments were given their current (and, Bonaventure believes, correct and final) number of seven.

He also notes that the sacraments are intimately related to the proper practice of the virtues and that their healing power works directly to that end. Each virtue is mapped to a particular sacrament: "Baptism leads to faith, Confirmation to hope, Holy Eucharist to charity, Penance to justice, Extreme Unction to perseverance which is the complement and summit of fortitude, Orders to prudence, and Matrimony to the preservation of temperance."[69] To rephrase this point, the goodness of God which the Spirit communicates reaches human beings sacramentally but is integrated into one's character through the habituation of the virtues. Each sacrament represents a distinct channel of grace meant to heal and to bring order where disorder once reigned.

The basic powers which are healed through the sacraments map to the basic division of the soul, but here we see more clearly the connection between healing as the restitution of proper order and the proper ordering of the soul as it is expressed in virtue. A particularly helpful expression of this connection between sacrament and virtue comes with his discussion of the sacrament of confirmation:

> Now a veracious witness is one who proclaims the whole truth, that is, not simply a truth that is theoretical but also practical. The latter implies not only "conformity between thought, expression, and object," but also the conformity of the whole person to the truth, so the reason understands it, the will consents to it, and the faculties cooperate with it. In this way, one's confession is *with all one's heart*, *all one's soul*, *and all one's mind*: *from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith*.[70]

The significance of this complicated Trinitarian linking of the sacraments to the virtues indicates some of the ways through which Bonaventure employs a Trinitarian metaphysics to express and guide development in the moral life. As people partake of the sacraments offered by God as a cure for human weakness, and as they are habituated in virtue through the performance of upright actions or through the sacraments themselves, human beings ingest and enroot the structure and momentum of God's dynamic love into their own constitution. In this way, people are continuous with created reality in a significant way (grace works in and through bodies and the material sign), even when they have sinned against God. The activity of God's love in the world calls them back to a right view of God's order, immanent and calling them to become more perfect images of it. The sacraments and the virtues are, in a way, the agents and results of properly integrated Trinitarian love.

This is not, of course, the full extent of the Trinitarian aspect of Bonaventure's thought relevant to the question of moral struggle. To this point, I have only tried to illustrate that while Bonaventure initiates his discussion of issues pertaining to moral struggle in a way familiar to his scholastic context, with a discussion about will and free decision, his thoughts on these matters can only be understood properly when examined in light of his Trinitarian theology and, as we shall see in the next chapter, the relation of Francis and Jesus as moral exemplars. Here we have seen how, for

Bonaventure, the struggle of the moral life culminates in virtues that are particular expressions of the moral life of the church to which its sacraments are coordinately directed. We have, in other words, a strong relation between the ritual practices of the community and the moral practices of individuals. Is a similar relation of religious practices and moral formation available in Buddhaghosa's work?

Buddhaghosa on the Connection Between Morality and Meditation

Meditation is perhaps the central, but certainly not the only, practice with which Buddhaghosa is concerned, relating directly to monks and indirectly to those who were not part of the monastic community. As noted earlier, although scholars of Buddhism have long attested to the variety of practices that Buddhist communities took to be important to individual participants and the monastic community, Buddhaghosa focuses primarily on those whose situation affords them ample time and access to meditation and those qualified to guide it. Following the division of the *Visuddhimaggga*, let us begin with *sīla* and then trace its connection to *samādhi* (meditation). I have chosen to translate the word *sīla* as "conventional morality" because Buddhaghosa speaks of it as a prerequisite for meditation and as a set of behaviors that both monks and lay persons would find acceptable and which would be widely regarded as worthy of praise. It is sometimes translated as "virtue," which does capture the idea that *sīla* is cumulative and the locus of gradual character development.

Sīla denotes a range of acceptable even commendable community practices, most especially the *pañcasīla* or five precepts and the first grouping of the Noble Eightfold Path (right speech [*sammāvācā*], right action [*sammākammanta*], and right livelihood [*sammājīva*]). *Samādhi* is the category under which are grouped the second three elements of the path: right effort (*sammāvāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammāsati*), and right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*). (See Appendix.) So there are dimensions of *sīla* that indicate it should be understood with respect to what one ought to do (the elements of the Eightfold Path), what one should refrain from doing (the five precepts), what prepares people for productive meditation (the close connection between *sīla* and *samādhi*), but also something denoting a certain quality of character that grows stronger over time with repeated practice (because of the ability of certain mental states to condition the arising of other mental states and corresponding actions in the future).

It is interesting to consider in turn Buddhaghosa's definitions of *sīla* and *samādhi*. The former Buddhaghosa says is a "state" (*dhamma*) in four ways: in terms of *cetanā* (volition), in terms of *cetasikam* (mental factors), in terms of *samvaro* (restraint), and in terms of *avītikkamo* (non-transgression).[71] For *cetanā* (volition or intention), he gives the example of "one who abstains from killing living things" (one of the five precepts); for *cetasikam* (mental factors), he specifies that it is the "abstinence [*virati*] in one who abstains from killing living things;" for *samvaro*, he gives five examples of restraint: "by the rules of the community (*pātimokkha*) … by mindfulness (*sati*) … by knowledge (*ñaṇa*) … by patience (*khanti*) and … by energy (*viriya*);" and for *avītikkamo* (non-transgression), he gives the example of not violating the precepts

one has taken as part of the community.[72] If we then turn to the definition of *samādhi*, we find a somewhat shorter explanation, "calling concentration profitable unification of mind."[73] Whereas *sīla* combines active factors with the description of it as a state or phenomenon (*dhamma*), it also includes reference to the rules of the community and one's commitment to that community as the guide for one's life. Meditation, on the other hand, while it actively calls to mind various images and recollections of qualities and persons, has as its most central feature unification of the mind which is manifest as "non-distraction."[74]

Buddhaghosa inquires into the sense in which it is *sīla* (*ken'aṭṭhena sīlaṃ*) and suggests that it can be so in two ways: in consistency of action (*kayakamma*) in the sense of coordinating one's actions (*samādhāna*), and as a foundation for action in the sense of maintaining or upholding (*upadhāraṇa*) good states. It is here that we can see the tendency to think about *sīla* in terms of character traits which exhibit "good states" over a long period of time and thereby the reason sometimes to translate it as "virtue." Buddhaghosa derives these two senses of "virtue" from the etymology of the word *sīla*: as having to do with composing/composition (*sīlana*), justifying the word's multiple meanings with reference to doctrine, while the sense of consistency and foundation sets the limits of the ways in which it can be understood. He also specifies the function (*vasa*) of *sīla*: stopping misconduct (*dussīlyaviddhamsanaraṃ*); and the proximate causes (*paḍaṭṭhānānī*) of *sīla*: *ottappa* (remorse or conscience) and *hiri* (shame).[75] *Sīla*, on this account, has the characteristic of training in restraint rather than training in the acquisition of additional particular characteristics. However, it also encompasses active, organizing intention (*cetanā*) and serves as a foundation for conventional morality.

Yet here again, we find an important connection between *sīla* and *samādhi*. Just as *sīla* can be analyzed with respect to the proper coordination of one's actions which provides a level of moral consistency that undergirds good states, so too does the work of the mind in meditation aim at coordination and consistency, of the mind on a unitary point which the practitioner can maintain in focus over a long period of time. In other words, the moral consistency of *sīla* and the mental consistency of *samādhi* are mutually implied, such that it is impossible to think of one progressing in meditation if one cannot first live consistently by the precepts that one has bound oneself to in the community of monks.

Buddhaghosa notes that one of the places in which people are more likely to understand *sīla* properly is in relation to requisites, or those things a person needs for basic survival, harkening back to our earlier discussion of the life of material simplicity for monastic and lay persons. When *sīla* is "dependent on requisites," one must investigate both the nature and proper time for *acquisition* of requisites and the nature and proper time for the *use* of requisites.[76] Proper acquisition (of clothing, for example) consists in taking the garments and looking them over to determine whether or not they are adequately soiled (or can be envisioned to be repulsive when in contact with the body – and thus beneficial for one's advancement in ascetic practice) and then setting them aside for later use. Otherwise, the very action of accepting a gift becomes an occasion for the desire for acquisition.

Proper use (again, he gives the example of clothing and also food collected on alms rounds) is determined by the level of mindfulness of the person who uses the item.

Buddhaghosa outlines four kind of *paribhoga* (meaning either use or enjoyment, dependent on context): *theyya* (theft), *iṇa* (debt), *dāyajja* (inheritance), and *sāmin* (master).[77] Anyone who uses an object without mindfulness is a user "in theft". Anyone who uses an object with the proper mindfulness is a user "in debt" (understood here as a temporary borrowing as if one owed something to the article in question for the privilege of its abiding with one for a time). If material items are passed from one monk to another upon death, then material possessions are used "as inheritance" and no specific mention is made of the mindset of the receiving person. Use "as a master" is curious because it assumes that there exists a certain number of monks who are no longer subject to an analysis of their level of mindfulness in use. Once they have achieved a certain level of spiritual attainment, they become masters over the material objects and the possibility of backsliding to the tangle of craving no longer exists for them. However, as mentioned before, Buddhaghosa identifies striving monks as his primary audience, and so this sense must be understood as an attempt to imagine a full enumeration which also includes the life of *arahants* ("worthy" or "fully enlightened" ones).

It is worth noting how Buddhaghosa explains *sīla* because it illustrates how he uses material reality (requisites, the translation offered above for *paccaya*) as a link between preparatory practices of moral formation and the central practice of meditation. By cultivating *sīla*, the monk establishes a baseline morality, one which structures all daily activities and can be judged by the outside community as righteous and beneficial to that community. As noted above, it is both *lakkhaṇa* (characteristic) and *padaṭṭhāna* (foundation) for future practice. Equally important, *sīla* also grounds proper use of material requisites such as food, clothing, shelter, and the like. These same *paccaya* become the basis for visualization meditation which calms the practitioner and prepares him or her for access to the higher insights about the nature of experience and the interrelationship of causal factors in accounting for that experience. Proper use, for example, exhibits lack of attachment and is useful in cultivating this disposition. This use depends on *sati* (mindfulness), but mindfulness is also cultivated and perfected through meditation on these same material realties.

In no place is this connection presented more clearly than in the transition from the *sīla* to the *samādhi* sections of Buddhaghosa's book, where the last chapter in the *sīla* section deals with ascetic practices (*dhutaṅga*). This is important in part because such practices were capable of being misunderstood and exercised in an extreme form, a path of extreme mortification that the Buddha himself engaged in prior to attaining Enlightenment. Buddhaghosa signals that the practices of preparatory morality do indeed aim at a level of perfection, in the words "For when his *sīla* is thus washed clean of stains by the waters of such special qualities as fewness of wishes, contentment, effacement, seclusion, dispersal, energy and modest needs, it will become quite purified; and his vows will succeed as well."[78]

The means by which one should wash clean impurities is through a series of 13 different practices, each one described in detail but customized to the temperament and past history of the one practicing it.[79] For each practice, Buddhaghosa examines how one should start the practice, the directions about how to continue through the practice, the grade (for example, "strict, medium and mild"), what constitutes a "breach" or break in the practice, and what benefits are to be gained from the practice if done properly.[80]

While temperamental factors take a significant place, so do the examples of other practitioners which Buddhaghosa describes in grades from the Buddha himself to the other monks who have been at the practices themselves. Indeed, it is noteworthy that while Buddhaghosa gives instructions for undertaking each practice, he also notes that there are instructions that are helpful to keep in mind whichever one of the practices is undertaken and these revolve around practitioners who are deemed exemplary. As he describes:

> [D]uring the Blessed One's lifetime, all ascetic practices should be undertaken in the Blessed One's presence. After his attainment of nibbana this should be done in the presence of a principal disciple. When he is not available it should be done in the presence of one whose cankers are destroyed, of a non-returner, of a once-returner, of a stream-enterer, of one who knows the three Pitakas, of one who knows one collection of a teacher of the Commentaries. When he is not available it should be done in the presence of an observer of an ascetic practice. When he is not available, then after one has swept out the shrine terrace they can be undertaken seated in a reverential posture as though pronouncing them in the Fully Enlightened One's presence. Also it is permitted to undertake them by oneself.[81]

The logic of this passage is extremely helpful in understanding Buddhaghosa's views about the connection between ideas and practices, and signals the connection between practices and exemplary persons to be explored in the next chapter. Recall that, for the Buddha, the nature of insight wisdom could not be fully described linguistically and could only be verified in the experience of one who commits herself or himself to practice of the Path. Yet there remains a structural congruence between the ordered consideration of the practices of preparatory morality and the workings of the mind in calming meditation, a characteristic best understood as uninterrupted focus and non-distraction, of repetition that blocks out what is not immediately relevant to the task or mental state under examination. Indeed, it was the logic of the Abhidhammic exposition that the process of producing an exhaustive list of the elements of all mental phenomena was itself capable of producing a quelling of craving and attachment.

Here we see Buddhaghosa providing a similar kind of exhaustive list with respect to those who are able to instruct a novice in the *dhutaṅgas*. The ideal moral exemplar is the Buddha himself; he is that exemplar who is perfected in *sīla*, adept at instructing those engaging in *samādhi*, and himself the summation of *paññā* or insight wisdom. If one is not so fortune as to live at the time of the Buddha, other enlightened beings will be effective guides, but so too would be others who have successfully accessed insight but not perfected it (the once-returners, for example) or even those who are knowledgeable about texts. This pedagogical hierarchy ends with one who has observed ascetic practices and even with oneself, unskilled in the practice but committed *as though* making promises in the Buddha's presence.

This underscores a point I have been making about Buddhaghosa's audience: he is speaking to those who are still in the process of coming to purification in their conventional morality, and those who are learning the practices of meditation. But it is not only the perfected ones, indeed the Buddha or the *arahant*s, who may be taken as instructors. Progress in the midst of moral struggle is possible through the example of those who struggle. The gradual path through which the basic Buddhist ideas

unfold echos the gradual path of Buddhist practices. One needs neither the full experience of liberation nor complete knowledge of the teachings of the tradition to struggle and progress in that tradition. Yet the tradition itself is essential to moral struggle; it is the confluence of the streams of ideas and practices that maintain and support liberating awareness. The Abhidhamma analysis charts the interplay of mental states revealed to the one meditating, a framework into which the one meditating analyzes experience. Yet this very same framework, on Buddhaghosa's account, can also become an object of attachment if its place as a practical device for the alleviation of suffering is obscured by its status as an inflexible system. So too we might say that for Bonaventure, the life of the church in which Christians cultivate virtue is rooted in the gift of the sacraments, which were given for the alleviation of suffering. However, while the Trinity, as the counterpart to the Abhidhamma in this comparison, does not run the same risk of wrong view or attachment for Bonaventure as the Abhidhamma does for Buddhaghosa, the form in which Christians understand and enact Trinitarian love is essential for Bonaventure. For while he sees the perfection of Christian love in imitation of Christ who best expresses the love, such imitation requires a particular ways of seeing as exemplars see. In this way, we arrive at the next stage of our comparison: How do a Buddhist and a Christian learn to see as each tradition's highest exemplars see?

Notes

1 Indeed, Bonaventure's strongest critiques of Christian uses of Aristotelian philosophy came in the occasional talks he gave, toward the end of his life and after his teaching career had ended, presented in the *Collationes in hexaemeron* (Collations on the Six Days of Creation). In this regard, his dispute with Aristotle, or more specifically with those in the universities who made wide use of Aristotle, was much deeper than whether moral weakness was a matter of mind or emotion. Indeed, as I shall elaborate below, Bonaventure's reflection on moral weakness progresses both structurally and substantively as a reflection on the proper or improper interaction of levels of created reality with their divine source.

2 As he says in the treatise *The Divine Names*,

> We use whatever appropriate symbols we can for the things of God. With these analogies we are raised upward toward the truth of the mind's vision, a truth which is simple and one. We leave behind us all our own notions of the divine. We call a halt to the activities of our minds and, to the extent that is proper, we approach the ray which transcends being. Here, in a manner no words can describe, preexisted all the goals of all knowledge and it is of a kind that neither intelligence nor speech can lay hold of it nor can it at all be contemplated since it surpasses everything and is wholly beyond our capacity to know it. (*Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, Colm Luibheid, trans., New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987, 53)

3 Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 30–1.

4 Zachary Hayes, "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure," in David Tracy, ed., *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure*, *The Journal of Religion*, Supplement 58 (1978): S88–9.

5 Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, 32.

6 Bonaventure, *Quaestiones disputatae de perfection evangelica*, Q1, trans. Robert J. Karris, *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection* (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2008), 40.

7 It was customary for those pursuing advanced theological study in the medieval universities to undertake a series of commentaries, first on the books of scripture and subsequently on the Four Books of Sentences of Peter Lombard (*Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*). The latter commentaries were standard in their overarching structure and very similar in style. The four books covered the familiar pattern of philosophical consideration of theological truths and church teachings. Commentaries on the first book considered the proper relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and the unity of God ("De Dei unitate et Trinitate"); commentaries on the second book considered the creation and formation of material and spiritual things ("De rerum creatione et formatione corporalium et spiritualium"); commentaries on the third book considered the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and the reparations paid for human sin through the sacrifice of the cross ("De incarnatione et humani generis reparatione"); commentaries on the fourth book considered the ritual celebrations in the life of the church and the final or ultimate destination of human beings ("De sacramentis et novissimis"). The Sentence Commentaries, therefore, roughly follow the perceived order of theo-cosmic history (known as the "exitus-redditus" [or "there-and-back-again"] structure) – the eternal existence of God, creation of the world and resulting human sin, the redemptive action of God, and the instruments of that redemption used continually until the final reunion of humanity with its divine source. Bonaventure's commentary was likely written between 1250 and 1254 CE. See J. M. Hammond, "St Bonaventure," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. 2nd edn., vol. 2. (Washington, DC: Thomson Gale/The Catholic University of America, 2003).

8 Dist. XVI, a.1, q.1. The online Franciscan Archive contains a partial translation of this section of the Commentaries, by Alexis Bugnolo, OFM, which I have consulted though not followed directly.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., Dist. XVI, a.2, q.3. "*imago consistit in memoria, intelligentia et voluntate; sed duae istarum potentiarum, scilicet memoria et intelligentia, tenent se ex parte cognitivae: ergo et imago plus se tenet ex parte congitivae quam affectivae.*"

11 Ibid. "*Imago reformationis respondet imagini creationis; sed imago reformationis, quae quidem est gratia, principalius est in affectiva quam in cognitiva.*"

12 Ibid., Dist. XXIV, p1, a2, q.1. "*diversae potentiae, non tamen diversae essentiae*" (Bugnolo, trans.)

13 Ibid., Dist XXV, trans. Bonnie Kent, in *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 101.

14 Ibid., 103–4.

15 Bonaventure, II Sent., Dist. XXV, q.4. "*Arbitrium enim non dicit potentiam, sed habitum. Manifestat etiam ipsa notificationem*" (Bugnolo, trans.)

16 Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 104, paraphrasing Bonaventure in II Sent., Dist. XXV, P. I, a. un, q 3. The full citation reads: "*Reflectere autem se super se, hoc est virtutis congnitivae, sublimatae a materia, quae quidem est ratio. Movere autem se, hoc est virtutis appetitivae, rationem consequentis. Ad hoc igitur, ut illud dominium sit in anima, necessere est, quod habeat et rationem et voluntatem.*" Note that this would prohibit a more strictly voluntarist reading, which would in the moment of decision privilege the will totally, which Bonaventure does not do.

17 Brev. II.9.8., trans. Dominic Monti, *Works of Saint Bonaventure: Breviloquium* (St Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 88.

18 Ibid., (89).
19 Ibid., II.9.1 (84–5).
20 Ibid., III.1.3–4 (100–1).
21 Ibid., III.5.2, trans. José de Vinck, *The Works of Bonaventure* (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1960–70), 120.
22 Ibid., III.5.4 (121).
23 Ibid., III.8.1 (128).
24 Ibid., III.8.2 (129).
25 Ibid., V.1.3 (Monti).
26 Ibid., resp.
27 The connection between the naturally occurring faculties of the soul and their elevation and perfection is expressed at the beginning of the *Itinerarium*:

> Therefore, according to the six stages of ascension into God, there are six stages of the soul's powers by which we mount from the depths to the heights, from the external to the internal, from the temporal to the eternal – [namely], sense, the mind, imagination, reason, intellect, intelligence, and the apex of the mind, the illumination of conscience (*Synteresis*). These stages are implanted in us by nature, deformed by sin, reformed by grace, to be purged by justice, exercised by knowledge, perfected by wisdom. (Trans. George Boas, *The Mind's Road to God*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1953)
>
> *Iuxta igitur sex gradus ascensionis in Deum sex sunt gradus potentiarium animae per quos ascendimus ab imis ad summa, ab exterioribus ad intima, a temporalibus conscendimus ad aeterna, scilicet sensus, imagination, ratio, intellectus, intelligentia, et apex mentis seu synderesis scintilla. Hos gradus in nobis habemus plantatos per naturam, deformatos per culpam, reformatos per gratiam; purgandos per iustitiam, exercendos per scientiam, perficiendos per sapientiam.* (Itin. I.6)

28 Ñāṇamoli claims that *Visuddhimaggga* was the first of Buddhaghosa's written and distributed works, followed by his commentary on the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (the *Samantapāsādikā*), with the Sutta and Abhidhamma commentaries following shortly thereafter. However, he entertains the possibility that all of the Tipiṭaka commentaries were composed piecemeal throughout Buddhaghosa's tenure at Mahāvihāra and were then distributed in a definite but not determinable order after all the commentaries were completed. He does not, however, offer an explanation for why this is the case or whether the monastic patronage controversy affected this and in which possible ways. (Ñāṇamoli, xxx–xxi)
29 Vsm. I.1 (trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimaggga)*, Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, [1975] 1991, 5).
30 Vsm. I.7 (Ñāṇamoli, 7–8).
31 *Tassāyam sankhepattho: Jaṭā ti taṇhāya jāliniyā etaṃ adhivacanaṃ.* Tangle is the term for the network of craving. The image of craving here is one of thirst (*taṇhāya* from *tṛṣṇa*). The image for tangle here is of growing up and crowding vision (*jaṭā*) as in the growing up of a bamboo thicket (network – *veḷugumbādīnaṃ*).
32 *Antojaṭā bahijaṭā* (inner tangle and outer tangle)
33 Vsm. I.1–2 (Ñāṇamoli 5).
34 Vsm. I.1.5 (Ñāṇamoli, 6).
35 The formulation of the "Four Noble Truths" has several expressions in the Pāli canon. For the various interpretations of how these should be translated and understood (i.e., "the noble truths," "the truths of the nobles") and the expression of these (i.e. "the truth of pain," "the truth 'this is pain,'" "the truth 'pain;'" also whether the word *sacca* [truth]

was part of the original formulation), see K. R. Norman's, "Why Are the Four Noble Truths Called 'Noble'?" in *Collected Papers* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990).

36 Vsm. XIV, 443.32 (Ñāṇamoli, 442–443).

37 Bonaventure, *Lingum vitae* (The Tree of Life) I.1–6.

38 Vsm. I.4 (Ñāṇamoli, 6).

39 We can know about the likely community in which this text was used in a number of ways. For example, in several places Buddhaghosa gives the example of one who should benefit from his instructions as *kulaputto*, which means something like "a young man of good social standing" (Vsm. I.68, VIII.190). Liz Wilson has also pointed out the likely recipient of directions in *asubha-bhāvanā* (meditation on foulness) directed at the body (particularly decaying female bodies) would have been male monks. See her *Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographic Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

40 While Buddhaghosa probably intended his book for a monastic audience (it was, after all, at the purported prompting of monastic leaders that he prepared his text), the act of "taking the three refuges" (the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha) is common to both lay and monastic Buddhists. Exactly how one takes refuge in the Saṅgha depends on the number of precepts one keeps, one's efforts at study and learning, and one's eventual ordination in the monastic community.

41 Ariel Glucklich, "What's in a List?" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27.3 (Fall 1999): 463.

42 Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 15.

43 *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed. (Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, [1993] 1999), 29.

44 David Kalupahana, *Ethics in Early Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 49. Dividing the former concept, he gives the following list:

> *adhiṭṭhāna*, determination, and so on; *bala*, strength, ability (opposite of *dubbala*, debility); *dhorayha*, "carrying a yoke", the ability to shoulder a burden; *kāra* (always suffixed to *purusa*, man), activity; *padhāna*, striving, exertion, and so on; *parakkama*, "moving ahead," hence exertion, endeavor, and so on; *thāma*, "standing power," stability, strength, and so on; *ussāha*, "lifting up," daring, venture, and so on; *vasa*, influence, authority, control, and so on; *vāyama*, effort, exertion, and so on; *viriya*, vigor, energy, effort, and so on.

Of the second kind, he enumerates the theory of the *khandhas* and points to the centrality of *saṅkhāra* (dispositions) and points out that "the most important function of individuating a person belongs to the dispositions" (51). He further identifies three types of dispositions: the "kammic" dispositions (body [*kāya*], speech [*vacī*], and mind [*mano*]), the "life instinct" dispositions, and the dispositions "for merit, demerit and permanence." Importantly, he identified *cetanā* (or its synonym, *sancetanā*) as analogous with *saṅkhāra*.

45 Ibid., 50.

46 Ibid., 51–3. The first kind, which he labels dispositions of *kamma,* includes those which specifically coordinate volition (*cetanā*) with action and which reflexively inform future dispositions. As he says, "While volition may be an immediate act of decision, dispositions represent the gradually built up character involved in decision making … [which] can take place knowingly (*sampajāna*) or unknowingly (*asampajāna*)" (52). This first kind he derives from the use of *sancetanā* in the *Bhūmija Sutta*. The second kind he takes from *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*'s use of *āyu-saṅkhāra* (disposition to life). The third kind he develops from the examples

of disposition for merit (*puññābhisaṅkhāra*), disposition for demerit (*apuññābhisaṅkhāra*), and disposition for permanence (*āneñjābhisaṅkhāra*) at D. 3.217, S2.82.

47 Ath. 141.343 (trans. Pe Maung Tin. London: Pali Text Society, 1920). "*Tassa rāsiādivasena attho veditabbo.* '*Mahāudakakkhando tveva saṅkhaṃ gacchatī ti*' *ettha rāsaṭṭhena khandhajo vutto. Sīlakkhando samādhikkhando ti ādisu guṇaṭṭhena.* '*Addasa kho bhagavā mahantaṃ dārukkhandhaṃ ti*' *ettha paññattimattaṭṭhena. Idha pana rūḷhito khando vutto. Rāsaṭṭhena hi viññāṇakkhandhassa ekadeso ekaṃ viññāṇaṃ. Tasmā -yathā rukkhassa ekaṃ desaṃ chindanto* '*rukkhaṃ chindatī ti*' *vuccati evam eva viññāṇakkhandhassa ekadesabhūtam ekam pi viññāṇaṃ rūḷhito viññāṇakkhandho ti vuttaṃ.*"

48 Buddhaghosa, Vsm. XIV.3 (Ñāṇamoli, trans. [adapted]). "*Saññā-viññāṇa-paññānaṃ hi samāne pi jānanabhāve saññā, nīlaṃ pītakan ti ārammaṇasañjānanamattam eva hoti, aniccaṃ dukkham anattā ti lakkhaṇapaṭivedhaṃ pāpetuṃ na sakkoti. Viññāṇaṃ, nīlaṃ pītakan ti ārammaṇañ ca jānāti lakkhaṇapaṭivedhañ ca pāpeti, ussakkitvā pana maggapātubhāvaṃ pāpetuṃ na sakkoti.*"

49 When he speaks of having endeavored to do something (*ussakkitvā*), this is another expression of effort. To what extent Buddhaghosa intends the word translated as "endeavor" to be one of sheer effort or whether instead it has a strong cognitive component (if so, what kind of cognitive component) is difficult to know through its etymology. The verb *ussukkati* is a denominative from *ussukka* meaning zeal, energy, hard work, or eagerness. The Sanskrit formation of the cognate *utsuka* (from *ud* [up, away from, apart from] and *su* [well or good]) has these same meanings, and also the sense of restlessness, anxiety, and attachment.

50 I am taking *saññā* in a particular way here in order to get the force of Buddhaghosa's example. The term is used in a number of different ways in the Pāli materials and is derived from the verb √*sañj* meaning to perceive. Sue Hamilton gives a helpful statement on this problem:

> There are six types of *saññā* and, like feelings, they arise through contact of the six subjective senses with their corresponding "external" objects. … one can ascertain that there appear to be two different ways in which *saññā* is understood. On the one hand, it is found in contexts where it is said to have a discriminatory or identificatory role. Though sometimes such a role is indicated in what appears to be a merely token definition of *saññā*, there being no clear understanding on the part of the author as to its precise role, elsewhere the discriminatory role is more clearly defined. On the other hand, it is also clear that conceptual processes of various kinds (ideas, imagination, abstract conceptions, and so on) are part of its role. (Sue Hamilton, *Identity and Experience: The Constitution of the Human Being According to Early Buddhism*, London: Luzac Oriental, 1996, 53)

51 Vsm. VIII.234 (Ñāṇamoli, 283).

52 Vsm. XVII.5–6 (Ñāṇamoli, 526).

53 Vsm. XVII.285–6 (Ñāṇamoli, 596). The Wheel of Becoming (*bhava-cakka*) is a central image used in various Buddhist contexts to communicate the teaching of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It is often rendered in elaborate paintings, most notably in Tibetan Buddhism of the current period. For a summary, see Rupert Gethin, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 159.

54 The last book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, called the *Paṭṭhāna*, is the study of how all of these conditions combine to bring about the various mental events that are the subject matter of experience. The 24 *paccaya* are as follows (employing Nyanatiloka's translation

of the terms): (1) root-condition (*hetu-paccaya*), (2) object-condition (*ārammaṇa-paccaya*), (3) predominance-condition (*adhipati-paccaya*), (4) proximity-condition (*anantara-paccaya*), (5) contiguity-condition (*samanantara-paccaya*), (6) conascence-condition (*sahajāta-paccaya*), (7) mutuality-condition (*aññamaññā-paccaya*), (8) support-condition (*nissaya-paccaya*), (9) decisive support-condition (*upanissaya-paccaya*), (10) prenascence-condition (*purejāta-paccaya*), (11) postnascence-condition (*pacchājāta-paccaya*), (12) frequency-condition (*āsevana-paccaya*), (13) *kamma*-condition (*kamma-paccaya*), (14) kamma result-condition (*vipāka-paccaya*), (15) nutriment-condition (*āhāra-paccaya*), (16) faculty-condition (*indriya-paccaya*), (17) *jhāna*-condition (*jhāna-paccaya*), (18) path-condition (*maggа-paccaya*), (19) association-condition (*sampayutta-paccaya*), (20) dissociation-condition (*vippayutta-paccaya*), (21) presence-condition (*atthi-paccaya*), (22) absence-condition (*natthi-paccaya*), (23) disappearance condition (*vigata-paccaya*), (24) non-disappearance-condition (*avigata-paccaya*). There are two important notes to make on these conditions. First, for each classification of conditions, there are further levels of specification. There are, for example, six kinds of object-conditions (*ārammaṇa-paccaya*), namely visual objects, sounds, tastes, odors, tangible, and mental objects, but there are also infinitely many particular objects of this kind based on a person's activities in the world. Second, those conditions labeled *kamma-paccaya* and *vipāka-paccaya* have to do with the intention (*cetanā*) and result of intention. The former can be both "wholesome or unwholesome bodily, verbal or mental." See Mahathera Nyanatiloka, *Guide through the Abhidhamma Piṭaka: A Synopsis of the Philosophical Collection of the Theravāda Buddhist Canon*, 5th rev. edn. (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, [1938] 2008), 123.

55 Frequently the term *raga* is used as a substitute for *lobha* in this list.

56 Ibid., Vsm. XVII.28–33 (Ñāṇamoli, 532–3)

57 Bonaventure, IV Sent. Dist.1, Art. 1, Q.1. "*Aliquo plus indiget aegrotus quam sanus: ergo aliquid plus oportuit dari homini curando ad perveniendum ad salutem quam si non cecidisset; talia autem non sunt nisi sacramenta, quia alias etiam habuisset gratiam et virtutes et dona*." I am grateful for help received from David Wray (Department of Classics, University of Chicago) in working out appropriate translations for this and passages subsequently cited from Bonaventure's discussion of the sacraments in his *Commentary*.

58 Ibid., Dist.1, Art. 1., Q.2. "*Sacramenta pricipaliter sunt instituta ad curandum; sed as hoc quod aliqua medicina sit surativa, nihil facit quod curationem significet, sed sufficit solum quod curet: ergo sacramentum potest esse perfecta medicina etiam sine significatione; ergo significatio non est de integritate sacramenti*."

59 Ibid., Dist.1, Art. 1., Q.3. "*Gratia est media inter naturam et gloriam: ergo nihil est capax gratiae quod non est capax gloriae, cum ipsa sit tamquam ultima dispositio; sed nullum sacramentum est capax gloriae: ergo nec gratiae*."

60 Later in the same article of the *Commentary*, Bonaventure states that "Every efficient cause is higher than its effect, and no corporal thing is higher than any spiritual thing. Since, therefore, grace is spiritual, and a sacrament corporal … no sacrament is the efficient cause of grace itself." "*Omnis causa efficiens est nobilior suo effectu, et nullum corporale nobilius est aliquo spirituali. Cum igitur gratia sit spiritualis, sacramentum corporale,… nullum sacramentum est causa efficiens ipsius gratiae*." (IV Sent., Dist.1, Art. 1, Q.4) This would indicate that, with respect to the traditional fourfold model of causation, Bonaventure means to locate the causal power of sacraments in the material cause.

61 Ibid., IV Sent., Dist.1, Art.1, Q.6. "*Omnis qui non accedit ficte habet gratiam virtutum: qui autem accedit ficte nullam gratiam receipt in sacramento: ergo aut alia gratia datur ei quam gratia virtutum aut sacramenta nihil dant omnino. Item, quae habent diversas differentias essentialiter sunt essentialiter diversa; sed talia sunt gratia in sacramentis et*

virtutibus et donis et beatitudinibus … Item, dona et virtutes et beatitudines essent, si nunquam esset peccatum, non autem gratia sacramentorum."

62 Brev. VI.1 (de Vinck, 223). Bonaventure's quotations in this definition are interesting because he is clearly on the lookout for relevant triads in the work of his predecessors. The second quotation embedded in this definition – specifying how the sacraments "represent," "signify," and "confer" – is from Hugh of St Victor's treatise *On the Sacraments* (n. 3).

63 Brev. V.2 (de Vinck, 185). The word translated "merit" is the gerund derived from the verb *mereo* which admits of several meanings including "to merit," "deserve," "be worthy of," "earn," or "be entitled to" – all of which suggest some quality in the subject which causes or influences some action by another party. However, the verb can also mean "to acquire, obtain, gain, confer or render service." The heated, centuries-old rhetoric about merit in relation to justification has perhaps obscured the nuanced nature of this term. Following the line just cited, Bonaventure spends several paragraphs clarifying that it is by no action of human beings that grace comes to them from God. He says that "once sanctifying grace is received, if good use is made of it, it merits its own increase in the present life" (187). This indicates a closer alignment with the latter meanings given for *mereo* which suggest a kind of reciprocal or dynamic relationship. Such an interpretation would also fit more neatly with the dynamic or motive nature of the Trinity about which Bonaventure speaks.

64 Brev. V.3 (de Vinck, 189).

65 Brev. VI.1 (de Vinck, 225).

66 The title of the fourth heading of the fifth part of the *Breviloquium* is "De ramificatione in habitus virtutum" which may be translated "concerning the making of branches into the habits of the virtues." The implication is startling: that grace, in a sense, takes root in the human being and grows outward like a tree sending out new branches. The understanding of virtue, then, is different from what Aquinas held, that virtue, in being a habit, is the perfection of a power of the soul occurring naturally in all human beings. For Bonaventure, virtue is God's gift growing through the nourishment provided by God during human life. The possibly of human beings rejecting God's grace can then be read as depriving God's gift of its experience of human life. The same metaphor of vegetation comes up again in his discussion of the sacramental nature of Scripture in the *Collationes in hexaemeron*.

67 Brev. V.5 (de Vinck, 198). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are derived from the fruits of the Spirit given in Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians 5:22 – "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" – and the seven deadly sins are a trimmed down version of St Paul's list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21 – "immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealously, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissentions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like."

68 Brev. VI.2 (de Vinck, 227).

69 Brev. VI.3 (de Vinck, 231).

70 Brev. VI.8 (Monti, 236).

71 Vsm. I.17–20 (Ñāṇamoli, 62–3).

72 Ibid., I.17 (Ñāṇamoli, 62).

73 Ibid., III.2 (Ñāṇamoli, 85).

74 Ibid., III.4 (Ñāṇamoli, 85–6).

75 Ibid., I.22 (Ñāṇamoli, 12). "*Hirotappañ ca pana tassa viññuhi paḍaṭṭhānam ti vaṇṇitam.*" This raises the question of whether, on this account, conscience and shame are the two exhaustive motivators for moral behavior. Concerning the 1/2/3/4/5 division of *sīla*:

there is a legitimate question here about whether this list is logically exhaustive at its current 56 elements. With relation to examples, however, a general structure can be gleaned. The moral is the prevailing category of composing (that is, *sīla* is a composition). The dyads are opposites (with the exception of the second, which deal with degree of purity of life). The triads are really means to acquire virtue or to act virtuously.

76 Ibid., I.123–5 (Ñāṇamoli, 42–3).

77 Ibid., I.125 (Ñāṇamoli, 43).

78 Ibid., II.1 (Ñāṇamoli, 58). "*Evaṃ hi'ssa appicchatā-santuṭṭhitā-sallekha-pavivekāpacaya-viriyārambha-subharatādiguṇasalila-vikkhālitamalaṃ sīlañ c'eva suparisuddhaṃ bhavissati vatāni ca sampajjissanti.*"

79 These practices, summarized in Vsm. II.2 and described in the remainder of the chapter, are: "(1) the refuse-rag wearer's practice, (2) the triple-robe wearer's practice, (3) the alms-food eater's practice, (4) the house-to-house-seeker's practice, (5) the one-sessioner's practice, (6) the bowl food eater's practice, (7) the later-food-refuser's practice, (8) the forest-dweller's practice, (9) the tree-root-dweller's practice, (10) the open-air-dweller's practice, (11) the charnel-ground-dweller's practice, (12) the any-bed-user's practice, (13) the sitter's practice."

80 The format for each is summarized at Vsm. II.14. See the first discussion of grades at Vsm. II.20.

81 Vsm. II.13. Just after the passage cited, Buddhaghosa makes special mention of a story of two elder monks at Cetiyapabbata which is recounted in the *Papañcasūdanī* (the commentary on the *Majjhima Nikāya*), a story that Ñāṇamoli translates as follows:

> That elder, it seems, was a sitter, but no one knew it. Then one night the other saw him by the light of a flash of lightening sitting up in his bed. He asked, 'Are you a sitter, venerable sir?'. Out of fewness of wishes that his ascetic practice should get known, the elder lay down. Afterwards he undertook the practice anew. So the story has come down. (Ñāṇamoli, 755, n. 6)

5

Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa: From Practices to Persons

The final stage of this comparison returns to the central theme of this study: persons in the mist of moral and intellectual struggle. To this point, I have examined how central religious ideas such as Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology and Buddhaghosa's Abhidhamma teachings inform each thinker's perspective on moral struggle. In the previous chapter, I suggested how in different ways Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa arrived at the problem of moral exemplars, persons who provide religious communities with guidance about how to make progress in the moral life, through more careful involvement in the community's practices and in a deeper understanding of its central teachings. In this chapter, I examine the place of moral exemplars – guides and models in the moral life – in each thinker's account. Through this last stage of the comparison, I draw out those ways in which each thinker illustrates and expands the notion of person as classic introduced at the beginning of the study. The person in the process of struggle with the ideas and practices of her or his tradition draws others into that work of contestation, testing and building exemplary lives out of a tradition's resources. Through the particular constellation of resources drawn from a tradition, we shall see how moral exemplars take on the role of classic, not as paragons of virtue but as serious engagements with the traditional resources crafted within human limits.

The purpose of this chapter will be to examine how those practices examined by Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa lead to the refinement and integration of ideas in the lives of persons. This will require, in the first two sections, examining Bonaventure's discussion of prayer, especially contemplation, to discern its relationship to the sacramental practices of the church, and Buddhaghosa's discussion of meditation as this relates to insight wisdom, the third and final part of the Buddhist path. Its general pattern will be to examine how Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa each carry ideas through practices, how these practices reinforce and reformulate those ideas, and how their mutual relation both suggests and challenges the place of exemplars in the moral life. In the first chapter, I suggested that persons also function as classics when they

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call forth our own interpretations, not only because those persons were fully formed or perfected in their moral lives (a mistaken view of the saint), but rather through their struggles, in their recognition of and striving to approximate an ideal that itself is always only partially understood. Following another of Tracy's formulations, in thinking about the person as classic we must come to terms with the reality of persons as moral fragments. For Buddhaghosa and Bonaventure respectively, the persons of Jesus and the Buddha are certainly of primary importance, but so are other struggles in each community to understand the doctrine of the Trinity and the attempts to analyze progress to insight at which the Abhidhamma aims. It will therefore be important to conclude this chapter by acknowledging the place that the person of the Buddha plays in Buddhaghosa's synthesis of Abhidhamma and meditation practice, as well as the place that Jesus plays in the teachings of Bonaventure about prayer and contemplation of the divine Trinity.

Bonaventure on Prayer

Frederick Copleston has helpfully characterized Bonaventure's intellectual program as one which takes theology to be a midpoint between imitation and speculation.[1] As we saw earlier, imitation was central to understanding the relationship between the moral exemplarity of Christ and the proximate exemplarity of Francis' life of voluntary poverty. His focus on the categories of sacrament and virtue also signaled the imitative aspect of his theology, for it is through the sacramental life that the Christian imitates the work of God in the orders of creation, aligning herself ever more closely to the divine will. So too with virtue, the practice of which aligns the believer through repetition of right actions to a life of justice that imitates or mirrors the justice of God. The speculative element that Copleston identifies must be sought in the larger structure of Bonaventure's Trinitarian metaphysics, for it is this element that provides his distinctive vocabulary for understanding moral struggle. This relation between speculation and imitation is a helpful way to present Bonaventure's thought about the nature of prayer as well his view on how ideas and practices are integrated into lives of Christian witness.

For Bonaventure, theological exposition is first and foremost the work of finding the proper interpretation of scripture, guided by the doctrines of the church (taking the Trinity as the most important among these), which one then places in the service of transformation of the person toward love of God. Similarly in his Trinitarian metaphysics, Bonaventure is concerned to give an account of the doctrine of the Trinity which brings together an exegesis of doctrine, the examination of metaphysical predicates such as "goodness" and "being," and the practical consideration of what the *imitatio Christi* means and how it might be lived. In all these areas, I suggest that we can detect what might be termed a motivational proclivity in his theological method. It is this motivational proclivity or complex of motivational ideas that I examine in this section.

For Bonaventure, the Trinity belongs at the center of theology because it is a central article of the Catholic faith and because it teaches the deepest, most profound and mysterious expression of the reality of God. He states this most clearly at the opening

of his treatise *De triplici via* (c. 1259–60 CE): "Since every science, and particularly the science contained in Holy Scripture, is concerned with the Trinity before all else, every science as such must perforce present some trace of this same Trinity."[2] In other words, on his account, the Trinity must guide all properly Christian reflection, and therefore must guide moral reasoning as one specific mode of that reflection.

Hints about how the Trinity structures Bonaventure's thought appear most frequently in the *Breviloquium*. Bonaventure opens that book with the following statement:

> At the outset, we must understand that sacred doctrine, namely, theology, deals principally with the first principle, namely God triune and one, and discusses in the main seven topics: first, the Trinity of God; second, the creation of the world; third, the corruption of sin; fourth, the incarnation of the Word; fifth, the grace of the Holy Spirit; sixth, the sacramental remedy; and seventh, the state of final judgment.[3]

Note that he begins with neither an abstract or a minimalist idea of God, nor even with the centrality of Jesus Christ in the Christian life, but with the specific doctrine (indeed he frequently appeals to *sacra doctrina* as a starting point) of faith in the Trinity. Moreover, the sacraments and their relationship to the virtues, rather than general discussions about the nature of law, the institutional church, or its authority, are detailed as the remedy for humanity stricken by sin and are described in terms of a medicinal cure.

Returning to the *Breviloquium*, we see Bonaventure's summary of how to understand theology as a way of making commentary on the Christian scriptures that illuminates the presence of God in the world so as to dispose people to right action and to bring about in them the ability to act in accordance with what they discern in prayer. Bonaventure suggests that what we say of the doctrine of the Trinity may be said of scriptural interpretation more generally:

> Since [it] exists that we may become good and be saved and this in turn may not be accomplished merely through intellectual considerations but rather through inclinations of the will, divine Scripture ought to be propounded in such a way that we can be the more strengthened in our inclinations. Because our desire is better stimulated through examples than through arguments, better through promises than through reasoning, better through devotions than through definitions, Scripture ought not to have a mode based on definition, division, and integration, for the stimulation of certain powers of the reader in the manner of the other sciences, but ought to have modes proper to itself, following the various inclinations which propel the soul in diverse ways.[4]

In this passage, Bonaventure clearly sets forth his interpretive method by linking the proper interpretation of scripture with the ability of the human person to act in accordance with what he or she knows. When he says that "our desire is better stimulated through examples than through arguments," he means both that the examples in scripture motivate better than abstract arguments about the good life, but also that in order to live well one must become an exemplary reader of scripture, which requires one to be first schooled in the practices of the tradition. Scripture intends, Bonaventure thinks, to form us in a particular way of seeing the world but this requires that we first commit ourselves to a tradition of witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Bonaventure's exposition of the Trinity proceeds in two main stages: first, he analyzes what constitutes proper belief in accordance with tradition, and second, he unfolds the various implications of that belief for Christian life. At *Breviloquium* 1.2, Bonaventure states that, "We must therefore give consideration to three separate aspects of the Trinity of God, namely, how the unity of substance and nature is at the same time compatible first with the plurality of persons, second with the plurality of apparitions, and third with the plurality of appropriations."[5] The plurality of persons deals with the various ways in which the persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are both related and distinct from each other.[6] The plurality of apparitions (or appearances) deals with the way that God appears to human beings in different ways over the course of history and in the various domains of created reality. The plurality of appropriations considers the ways that certain predicates apply to the divine persons of the Trinity with respect to their particular activities in the life of believers.

Interestingly, Bonaventure says that *bonum* (good) is a *conditio* (condition, property, term, demand) of *entis* (being).

> Since the first Principle is utterly exalted and utterly perfect, it follows that in Him are found in utter perfection the highest and most universal properties of being. These properties are oneness, truth, and goodness. They do not narrow the concept of being in terms of distinct supposits, but determine it rationally. For "one" describes being in that it is whole, by reason of inner indivision; "true" in that it is intelligible, by reason of indivision between itself and its proper species; and "good" in that it is communicable, by reason of indivision between itself and its proper operation. The triple indivision has an orderly reference to understanding, in the sense that true presupposes one, and good presuppose both one and true. That is why these three, as being perfect and transcendental, are supremely attributed to the first Principle, and, as having an orderly reference, are attributed to the three Persons. Thus supreme Oneness is attributed to the Father who is the origin of Persons; supreme Truth, to the Son who proceeds from the Father as the Word; supreme Goodness, to the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both as the Love and the Gift.[7]

Even in the explanations of the universal properties of being, through which God is known by the natural intellect, Bonaventure places the majesty and beauty of God at their center by structuring the distinctions according to a tripartite division.[8]

The sacraments, as discussed in the previous chapter, also echo this Trinitarian structure and constitute another, indeed the most important, form of prayer that is the practice of the church. Properly understood, sacrament is the emanation of God's goodness into the world, whereas virtue, properly understood, is the exemplification of God's goodness in the world.[9] God's emanation and exemplification constitute the full expanse of human history insofar as they ground the possibility of ongoing existence.

Bonaventure interprets this history in a particular way, however, by applying to each person of the Trinity a particular property and a corresponding tool or instrument which effects the work appropriate to that person. The Father creates the world with the instrument of a first Principle by means of a threefold causation; the Son redeems the world through the sacrificial instrument of the cross; the Spirit communicates grace to humanity through the healing instrument of the sacraments. The sacraments

are instruments of the Holy Spirit insofar as they are the effective goodness in the world. They are effective insofar as they are descriptive of proper human ends and also insofar as they really do heal those who do not see well or do not pursue properly those ends.

This same pattern remains central to one of Bonaventure's last works, the *Collationes in hexaemeron* (1273 CE), where it takes on a still-more symbolic tone and is more explicitly linked with the images of scripture. We have seen that for Bonaventure, the symbolic structure of creation placed Christ at the center of an historical movement that was to end with the consummation of humanity with its creator. The Trinity provided the model for all human relationships insofar as it modeled the basic two-part structure of movement in the world: exemplification and exemplarity. So too, the cross provides the exemplary and symbolic model for the perfection of spiritual practice.

The *Collationes in hexaemeron* is structured as a series of meditations on the biblical accounts of the six days of creation, and it appears to extend an analogy begun in the *Breviloquium* and continued in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (1259 CE) and the *De triplici via* (1259–60 CE). It situates the virtues and the sacraments as stages along the path of creation, with the former appearing on the first day (as the separation of light from darkness) and the latter appearing on the third day (with the creation of the earth). His discussion of virtue draws an analogy between the emergence of light in the world and the differentiation of three kinds of truth: metaphysical, logical, and moral. Under the illumination of moral truth, Bonaventure sees a serial ordering based on the timed emergence of virtues in the lifecycle.[10] He suggests that scripture is itself a kind of sacrament, and that both the scripture and the church's institutionalized sacraments operate similarly to the way the earth puts forth vegetation as described in the account of the third day of creation. Specifically, they are "alive, generous, and lovely." Alive in the sense that, although the vista may seem incapable of life, life nonetheless emerges; generous in the sense that they are conduits for the generosity of God; lovely in the sense that their physical form hides the beauty yet to emerge. The order of the scriptural sacrament mirrors the order of moral development: "Scripture is supremely orderly, and its order is similar to that of nature in the development of vegetation on earth."[11]

For Bonaventure, all of reality comes into being and is brought to completion by the Trinitarian activity of God. Even though each person of the Trinity is emphasized to varying degrees at certain moments in the history of created nature, the other persons are always simultaneously working and present with the primary person at each stage. This can be seen through the threefold movement of God's interaction with the world. For instance, when Bonaventure discusses the creation of the world, he describes the process in terms of a "triple causality: efficient, through which creatures are given unity, mode and measure; exemplary, through which they are given truth, species and number; and final, through which they are given goodness, order and weight."[12]

The symbolic language employed here can be interpreted in a number of ways. On the one hand, it echoes the wide use of number symbolism in medieval scriptural exegesis and systematic theology. On the other hand, it reflects stylistic preferences of the author and demonstrates Bonaventure's commitment to a unity of theological content with theological style.[13] Yet there is another possibility to explain the use of such strong symbolism in a way that gives us some insight into Bonaventure's understanding of the

practice of prayer. The unity which this consistent number symbolism evokes requires that both the imitative and speculative aspects of theology be held together by a mode of exposition that trains the mind to make certain distinctions through a practice of particular enumeration. As we shall see, a similar but not identical dynamic is in play when Buddhaghosa analyzes how the particular means of analysis of *cittas* (mental states) contributes in part to the realization of insight wisdom. If, as I mentioned earlier, Bonaventure understood theology most fundamentally as a practice which schools those engaged in it in holiness by training them to see, or better to read, the world in a certain way, then it stands to reason that his own expository style would employ techniques that aided that spiritual practice. His Trinitarian mode of expression produces an effect similar to, albeit with reference to a different content than, the process of Abhidhammic decomposition of phenomenal experience about which I will say more below. If one learns to think "triunely" when one carries through the advanced speculations about the nature of the divine life, then one cannot but call upon this same way of thinking when one is analyzing one's own moral striving and failure.

Let me provide an example of what I take to be a moral use of symbolism of the kind just described. In the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure constructs a trinity of ideas and practices out of the Holy Spirit, grace, and the sacraments, and to each of these, he gives a trinity of predicates. In characterizing the Holy Spirit, he says that, "Gift designates Him as the One who is given through the will; Bond or Love, as the One given through the will who is the gift par excellence; and Holy Spirit, as the One given through the will, the Gift par excellence, who is a Person."[14] Grace is defined as a gift with three characteristics: it is "the gift bestowed and infused directly by God;" it is also "a gift by which the soul is perfected and transformed into the bride of Christ, the daughter of the eternal father, and the temple of the Holy Spirit;" finally, it is "a gift that cleanses, enlightens, and perfects the soul; that vivifies, reforms, and strengthens it; that lifts it up, makes it like to God, and unites it with Him."[15] In other words, if one assumes that the basic categories for understanding one's religious life, such as the Holy Spirit, grace, and the sacraments in the foregoing example, can be grouped by threefold enumeration and analyzed according to threefold distinction, one has provided a structure through which one can link claims about the nature of the divine life to the more particular claims about what constitutes a moral response to Christian revelation.

It is logical, therefore, in Bonaventure's system to link the particular work of the Holy Spirit with its particular expression in the sacraments and the virtues. The reason for this connection is that the Trinity of persons in God are related in a single divine unity. As far as I can determine, Bonaventure's reason for establishing morally relevant distinctions among the persons of the Trinity stems from his characterizing a "plurality of appropriations" in the "unity of the divine nature."[16] Oneness/truth/goodness (*unum/verum/bonum*) – the first appropriation – allows one to understand more helpfully *how* God "is."

> Even though all the essential attributes apply equally and without distinction to all the Persons, yet oneness is appropriate to the Father, truth to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Spirit. … For "one" describes being in that it is whole, by reason of inner indivision; "true," in that it is intelligible, by reason of indivision between itself and its proper

> species; and "'good," in that it is communicable, by reason of indivision between itself and its proper operation. … Thus supreme Oneness is attributed to the Father, who is the origin of persons; supreme Truth to the Son who proceeds from the Father as the Word; supreme Goodness to the Holy Spirit who proceeds from both as the Love and the Gift.[17]

Being is a kind of master or most general predicate of God, which suggests God's unity (the force of the term *indivisio*). *Goodness*, however, is the predicate most appropriate to the Holy Spirit for two reasons: primarily because it best characterizes the diffusion or emanation of divine life from God but also because it best characterizes the end toward which people should live. This is made clear in the second appropriation – eternity/splendor/fruition (*aeternitas/species/usus*) – and the third appropriation – efficiency/exemplarity/finality (*efficientiam/exemplaritatem/finalitatem*). "Goodness," the most appropriate label for the Holy Spirit, affords human beings "fruition" in the sense of usefulness, advantage, or fittingness, and affords them "finality" in the sense of directedness toward an appropriate end. God's gifting expression of grace through the Holy Spirit draws together the virtues and the sacraments into the divine life most appropriately understood as the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Or to take another example, one can look at Bonaventure's exercises in biblical exegesis on the meaning of Christ as *Logos*. Zachary Hayes gives an important characterization of this strategy:

> The second person is the expression of all that God is in himself and of the various ways in which God can communicate himself to the world. The speaking of the immanent Word as an expression of the necessary immanent fruitfulness of God is simultaneously the expression of the possible free communication of being to the nondivine. Thus, the Word, as the Father's self-expression, is the openness of the Father to the other in all its forms.[18]

The theological meaning of the *logos*, with respect to its place in the Trinity of persons, has significant implications for the diffusion and fruitfulness that one's own Christian love is called to express.

Bonaventure's remarks on the nature of contemplative prayer also speak to the relevance of symbolic thinking for moral discernment. Examining the opening of his treatise which describes *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, the moral relevance of charting stages of contemplation becomes apparent.

> Since happiness is nothing other than the enjoyment of the highest good and since the highest good is above, no one can be made happy unless he rise above himself, not by an ascent of the body, but of the heart. But we cannot rise above ourselves unless a higher power lift us up. No matter how much our interior progress is ordered, nothing will come of it unless accompanied by divine aid.[19]

This "lifting up to God" Bonaventure describes in six stages of contemplation, each based on a meditation subject taken from the understanding of the appropriations just outlined. The pattern of this contemplative ascent is outlined in Figure 5.1.

Vestiges in universe

Vestige/image
Material/spiritual
Temporal/everlasting
Outside us/inside us

		Substance in Christ	Mind's three principle orientations
Evening →	Matter →	Bodily →	Exterior material object (animal/sensual)
Morning →	Mind →	Spiritual →	Within/into self (spirit)
Moon →	Eternal art →	Divine →	Above self (mind/soul)
	[Word—all forms of creation contained therein]		

Each Doubled by:

Through mirror	In mirror
Independently	Joined to another

	Through mirror/independent	In mirror/joined to another
Eternal art [word]/divine/above self		
Mind/spiritual/within or into self		
Matter/bodily/exterior sensual		

Modes of teaching truth

Symbolic →	Rightly use sensible things
Literal →	Rightly use intelligible things
Mystical →	Lifted above to ecstasy

Figure 5.1 Introductory pattern of *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*

The contemplative begins by looking for the vestiges of God in the sensible world, proceeds then to the image of God in naturally occurring human powers, then to God's image in humanity insofar as it is reformed by grace, then to the Trinitarian nature of God in a recognition of goodness, and finally to spiritual union characterized by the absence of intellectual activity or rest. This process has been labeled a hierarchy of moral development because the ordering of sequential stages in creation provides the template for the same hierarchal progress as the practitioner is conformed to God.[20] This "hierarchization" forms a distinct strategy of moral discipline, which interestingly enough mirrors Bonaventure's earlier insight in the *Breviloquium* that to learn to see the world rightly one must commit oneself to the company of those who first learned to read the world rightly by following after Jesus. While this strategy certainly does not preclude interventions by one's own mind to question the tradition (for example, Bonaventure did not simply reiterate the theology of his predecessors but argued for further conceptual distinctions and exemplified a distinct symbolic method of argument), it does require that one strive to see the world with the tradition and against the prevailing currents of thought.

These orderly and causal attributes of the sensible world are expressions of the being of God. In the fifth stage, Bonaventure explicitly picks up the connection between the existence of God (contemplated in the preceding stages) and the goodness of God made known through a contemplation of the Trinity. "Now just as being itself is the root principle of viewing the essential attributes, and the name through

which the others become known, so the good itself is the principal foundation for contemplating the emanations."[21] God is known in the macrocosm of the universe and in the microcosm of one's own interior life. Therefore, the scope of moral concern begins with human action but expands in concentric circles outward to include the entire universe as moral context, which itself has both a general character and an infinite variety of specific occurrences.[22]

A similar pattern of symbolism connected with the moral development of the contemplative is found in Bonaventure's *Soliloquy on the Four Spiritual Exercises*, which was his attempt to distill the lives and teachings of the saints into an instructional treatise for beginners on the spiritual path. Its counterpart is the treatise *On the Six Wings of the Seraph* which was written to religious superiors for the instruction of those in their charge. In the *Soliloquium*, the symbol of the cross forms the pattern of an interior dialogue between the soul of the person and the image of God residing there (translated as the dialogue between the soul and the conscience or inner man). The four branches of the cross represent four directions toward which the soul must go in its meditation: within, without, below, and above.

In the first direction (within), the soul contemplates the image of God as it exists in the natural state, "how it was formed in the state of nature, deformed in the state of sin, and reformed in the state of grace."[23] In the second direction (without), the soul must "recognize the transiency of worldly riches, the inconstancy of worldly honors, and the poverty of worldly glory."[24] In the third direction (below), the soul contemplates "the inevitability of death for man, the awful severity of final judgment, and the intolerable cruelty of the pains of hell."[25] In the fourth direction (above), the soul aims to "know and taste the priceless worth of heavenly joys, their inexpressible delightfulness, and their everlasting duration."[26]

Bonaventure provides a summary to his approach in the treatise *De triplici via* (c. 1259–1260 CE), a diagram of which I have provided in Figure 5.2.

In the hierarchy of action, we find a rough correlate to the threefold progression in Buddhaghosa's vision. Similarly, we also find a pattern of interlocking lists. However for Bonaventure, the lists function not primarily to divide mental processes but rather to lay out the symbolic connections between moral progress and clearer capacities for contemplating God's goodness in the world.

> For every meditation of a wise person is either about human works reflecting on what humans have done, on what they should do, and on human motivation; or this meditation is about divine works, reflecting on God's generosity to humanity because God has done all things for humanity's sake, and reflecting on how great is God's forgiveness as well as on the great things God has promised – the divine works include the mystery of creation, of reparation, and of glorification; or this meditation is about the principles behind both of the foregoing, namely God and the soul, and considers in what way they ought to be united with each other.[27]

Investigation into "human motivation" is, for Bonaventure, one part of a more comprehensive vision of wisdom. This vision demands attention to both one's own actions but also how those actions conform one to and advance the work of God, leading all creation back to God in loving union with its source. One reads one's own actions, as one reads scripture, noting in each "line" multiple meanings and "links" to other lines

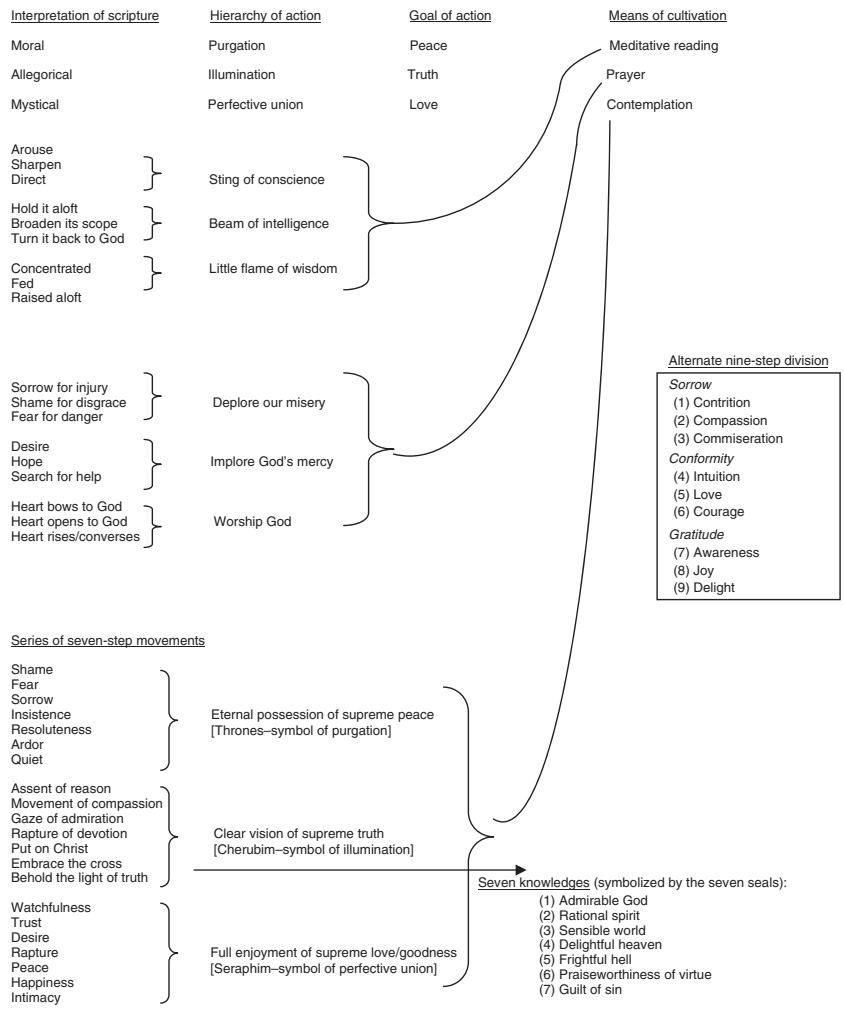

Figure 5.2 Bonaventure's schematic of the threefold way

and meanings. Because each reading in the manner of the threefold way links a feature of one's character to another interlocking list, the effect is to habituate one into patterns of deeper reflection about oneself and one's action, searching all the while for how such action can possibly express love of God and neighbor.

In each of these examples, we can see Bonaventure searching to describe the transformative power of Christian imagery. Recall that in the examples from the *Breviloquium*, he used the Trinitarian enumeration to link the dynamics of divine love to the moral categories of sacrament and virtue in the life of the believer. In his more contemplative treatises, he uses the model of Trinitarian interrelatedness to express the stages and connection among stages of contemplation. In each case, the basic religious doctrine is the example and tool for interpreting experience and for examining the particular challenges and efforts that a confrontation with moral struggle presents.

Bonaventure believed that the Trinity was the fundamental ordering principle of all reality, in both the microcosm of each creation and the macrocosm of a divine order in history. Even down to the level of his language and the distinctions employed in making arguments, his deference to Trinitarian enumeration in the very form of his writing is unmistakable. Yet he recognized that the Trinity does not share the same narrative form as the biography of Jesus of Nazareth and so must remain symbolically motivating, in its ability to capture the diffusive imagery of divine love, a motivation different to some degree in both form and content than what the exemplary struggle of a person provides. As discussed earlier, the charism of his religious community demanded the study and imitation of the life of Francis of Assisi, but the nature of this formation was bound to a character (Francis) who was himself formed in imitation of another (Jesus).

In a telling passage, Bonaventure suggests how the path of theology reveals the problem of moral struggle itself: "[F]aith is related to the intellect in such a way that, great as it is in itself, its nature is to move the affect. And this is clear. For this knowledge that tells us that Christ has died for us, and similar things, moves a person to love unless that person is a hardened sinner. … Therefore, it must be conceded that we do theology so that we may become good people."[28] It strikes me that this passage communicates something very important about Bonaventure's thought, namely that he was far less interested in defending the existence of God than he was in defending what God does for human beings. While he was clearly loyal to the teachings of the church and to the intellectual heritage of his predecessors, he much preferred to help those in the darkness of neglect and despair to see God's love rather than to tell them about it through the indirect formulations of doctrines and systematic analyses. This is another way of saying that *sapientia*, the wisdom which combines the cognitive and affective dimensions of engaging an object, characterizes Bonaventure's view of theology.

Because Bonaventure's theology is also a theology of wisdom which unites affection and cognition, moral struggle and the various factors providing the positive motivation necessary to meet the challenge become central concerns. Although the question of how one ought to live appeals to the intellect, all knowledge is ultimately traceable to the overflowing gifts of God. Therefore, one must form one's mind through reading revelation in order to read properly one's own experience. This means that not only does the knowledge of what one ought to do derive its foundation from revelation, so does the ability to formulate one's own powers of observation and self-analysis.

These examples suggest that the problem of moral struggle, understood as the inquiry of the reason for the discontinuity between thought and action, is central to Bonaventure's theological concerns but in a highly particularized way. The relationship between humanity and God occupies various domains through which human moral development is worked out: in coming to awareness of God's existence, concentrating on God's multiple manifestations in the created order which offer a constant stream of encouragement, and in viewing Christ as the Word through which all human possibility flows and in which it is fulfilled.

Because, for Bonaventure, the will is a thoroughly affective part of the human person, overcoming moral weakness must combine seeing what is external to oneself in

the right way (including seeing rightly the options of choice with which rational deliberation is concerned), which leads to true self-knowledge, with a response to divine love that befits one's created nature. The problem can only be corrected by finding and maintaining the proper balance between personal habituation in virtue, continuous sacramental activity, and the dry thirst for contemplative vision.

Buddhaghosa on Meditation

Before continuing, it bears repeating that examining the Buddhaghosa's presentation of meditation in comparison with Bonaventure's account of contemplative prayer does not mean that the two should be understood as pursuing the same end, or even that they are roughly analogous practices. All I intend here is to signal how each thinker is trying to reconcile the effect of basic religious ideas on a person's practices, while recognizing (as I believe both thinkers do) that ideas and practices are not reducible to each other. This may seem like a commonsense observation, but I think it tends to get lost in comparative discussion, and especially in Buddhist/Christian comparisons. Moreover, I want to reiterate that I think it is not possible to understand what each thinker makes of the phenomenon of moral struggle, and thereby what we might learn about this classic question by employing this and similar comparisons, if one does not recognize that it is the human person in the process of questioning her or his own tradition, and struggling to make sense of its religious ideas in their own practices. This is perhaps another way of stating a rather simple point: religious life is reducible neither to ideas, nor to practices, nor to scholarly exposition of either.

The Abhidhammic explication of Buddhist teaching in the form of multiple interlocking and partially repeated lists provides a clue to how Buddhaghosa might answer the question of moral struggle. Because Buddhist teaching in this particular form mirrors in its structure the content of its teaching on interdependent causality and not-self, one cannot isolate a single faculty that accounts for motivation or a persisting substance in which such a faculty might adhere. By using multiple modes of analysis to examine and explain the dynamics of human action, Buddhaghosa follows his tradition's insight that volition is not a single faculty but a network of interrelated causes. So too in thinking about the moral struggle of persons, the practices in which the conventionally called "person" engages, the insight into the characteristics of phenomenal reality as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self are both the goal of meditation and a realization that one reaches gradually through the very practice of meditation.

So this section will examine the practice of meditation as the central religious practice of Buddhaghosa's text, but the term "meditation" actually denotes several different kinds of practices, or distinctions along a trajectory of practice. For example, one must differentiate between the practice that leads one to calm the mind (*samatha*), from those that result in the achievement of higher and more refined meditative states (*jhānas*), and from those that lead to the insight (*vipassanā*). In calming meditation, for example, one trains the mind with reference to the 40 meditation subjects mentioned earlier, whereas in insight meditation, one meditates on the five *khandhas* or the steps in the causal chain of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In this section, I will examine in greater detail the former set of practices, and in the last section of this chapter I will examine the latter set.

Yet in each case, I will be examining how Buddhaghosa approaches the question of moral struggle by treating (1) the nature of personality and temperament (*sabhāva*) and its effect one's the ability to act, (2) the connection between a practitioner's formation in conventional morality (*sīla*) and his ability to practice meditation (*samādhi*), and (3) the impact of one's view (*diṭṭhi*) on the ability to act with respect to the two basic kinds of meditation: *samatha* (calming meditation directed at development or progress on the path) and *vipassanā* (meditation aimed at insight into the nature of experience). It will be only in reference to the third part that I will argue specifically that Buddhaghosa's answer to the question of moral struggle advances the comparison by demonstrating a unity between the intellectual formulation of the lists just mentioned that analyze reality into a collection of its smallest component parts and the practice of interpreting one's own experience by a separation and repetition of its elements. Through an experiential integration of these multiple modes of analysis, the practitioner is able to overcome his or her failures to act because that person is able to view his or her efforts through a number of different sequential orders and networks of elements. Each order forces the agent to focus attention on the results of past action and on the preconditions of future action. This allows the agent to see his or her efforts not as a failure of a single faculty but rather as a failure to realize the interconnecting factors contributing to an action.

So while the *sīla* section may appear to be the most ethically relevant portion of *Visuddhimagga* – it does, after all, contain language which, in translation, maps most closely to the vocabulary of Western moral discourse – and while *paññā* (insight wisdom) is the central or culminating aspect of the Buddhist path and therefore perhaps somewhat analogous to the notion of a final goal or end, it is the second section on meditative practices (*samādhi* or concentration) that contains the most helpful clues about how Buddhaghosa counsels his community to respond to what I have been calling moral struggle.

Buddhaghosa begins this section, as mentioned before, by noting that "*samādhi* is described under the heading of 'consciousness'" and that "it should be developed by one who has taken his stand on *sīla* that has been purified by means of the special qualities of fewness of wishes, etc., and perfected by observance of ascetic practices."[29] In other words, a proper understanding of *sīla*[30] and the practices that compose it are a necessary prerequisite for "taking a meditation subject" – the starting point of departure for *samādhi*. In reply to the question, "In what sense is it concentration?" Buddhaghosa says

> It is concentration [*samādhi*] in the sense of concentrating [*samādhāna*]. What is this concentrating? It is the centering [*ādhāna*] of the mind [*citta*] and mental factors [*cetasika*] evenly [*samam*] and rightly [*samma*] on a single object; placing, is what is meant. So it is the state in virtue of which mind and its factors remain evenly and rightly on a single object, undistracted and unscattered, that should be understood as concentrating.[31]

Focusing the mind on its proper object is the work of concentration and the process by which this focusing occurs is one of "placing" (*ṭhapanan*). Of all the objects that the mind could focus on, it must select one in particular.

Samādhi exhibits the characteristic of "non-distraction"[32] whereby all of the occurrences which could draw one's attention are pushed aside in favor of the object on which the mind focuses. Etymologically *samādhi* means to come to rest or fix on (saṃ+ā+√dhā). The visual picture at work here is that the eye, and with it the mind, rests or fixes itself on a mental image (the *ārammaṇa*) of an object outside of itself which is its meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

At the beginning of meditation, the mind focuses on certain characteristics or traits of the object under examination called *nimittas* (signs or characteristics). Certain meditation subjects have obvious *nimittas* such as size, shape, and color. For example, the first mediation subjects that Buddhaghosa examines, *kasiṇas*, are a group of 10 visual areas or spaces that exhibit some of these characteristics.[33] In meditation on the *paṭhavi* (earth) *kasiṇa*, for example, which is an area or mound of earth, the one meditating might focus on its size or shape or color. Yet he or she must not keep attention fixed exclusively on those characteristics.

> [A]fter seating himself … [the monk] should review the dangers in sense desires in the way beginning with "Sense desires give little enjoyment" and arouse longing for the escape from sense desires … After that he should open his eyes moderately to apprehend the sign, and so proceed to develop it.
>
> If he opens his eyes too wide, they get fatigued and the [*maṇḍala*] becomes too obvious, which prevents the sign from becoming apparent to him. If he opens them too little, the [*maṇḍala*] is not obvious enough, and his mind becomes drowsy, which also prevents the sign becoming apparent to him. So he should develop it by apprehending the [*nimitta*] keeping his eyes open moderately, as if he were seeing the reflection of his face on the surface of a looking glass.
>
> The color should not be reviewed. The characteristic should not be given attention. But rather, while not ignoring the color, attention should be given by setting the mind on the concept as the most outstanding mental datum, relegating the color to the position of a property of its physical support … It should be adverted to now with the eyes open, now with eyes shut. And he should go on developing it in this way a hundred times, a thousand times, and even more than that, until the learning sign arises.[34]

From this exercise, the one meditating learns to see the object for its characteristics and not for what falsely appears to be its persistence or changelessness over time. After creating the initial sign, the monk leaves behind the actual physical object and then calls to mind a purely mental or conceptual version of the sign called the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* or counterpart sign. In the passage above, Buddhaghosa notes that even before one meditates on the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, the one meditating already learns to see the *dhamma* (concept or quality) that arises with or behind the particular *nimittas*. He describes the difference between the two *nimittas* in the following way:

> As he does so, the hindrances eventually become suppressed, the defilements subside, the mind becomes concentrated with access concentration, and the counterpart sign arises.
>
> The difference between the earlier learning sign and the counterpart sign is this. In the learning sign any fault of the [*kasiṇa*] is apparent. But the counterpart sign appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, a hundred times, a thousand times more purified, like a looking-glass disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like

> the moon's disk coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thundercloud. But it has neither color nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance. But as soon as it arises the hindrances are quite suppressed, the defilements subside, and the mind becomes concentrated in access concentration.[35]

There are three kinds of *samādhi* enumerated by Buddhaghosa: *upacāra-samādhi*, *appanā-samādhi*, and *khaṇika-samādhi*. The first refers to preparatory or "access" concentration, which means the practice of calming and focusing the mind to eliminate distractions. The second kind refers to attainment or "absorption" concentration, which is that advanced form of concentration in which one attains the various meditative states or *jhānas*. The third kind of meditation is momentary or unstable meditation.

This description isolates some of the central features of the transition to access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) where increasingly refined meditative states arise. First, images cultivated in the initial states of meditation are refined to the point where they appear without flaw, just as the one meditating fosters concentration that is without flaw or disturbance. Second, Buddhaghosa observes that the *jhānas* do not arises until certain factors or hindrances have been abandoned. The five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇāni*) in question are (1) lust or sensuality (*kāmacchanda*), (2) desire to injure or ill-will (*vyāpāda*), (3) indifference or rigidity in mind and body (*thīna-middha*), (4) excitement or worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and (5) uncertainty or wavering (*vicikicchā*).[36] Third, the purified mental image remains while the actual object drops away. The actual object, as is true for all instances of reality, is subject to the three characteristics: *anicca* (impermanent), *dukkha* (unsatisfactory), and *anattā* (not-self). Buddhaghosa does not say what distinctive characteristics this purified mental image has.

The notion of *satipaṭṭānas* (intent or mindful concentration)[37] describes the same process leading up to access to *jhānas*. This form of concentration can be focused on the body (*kāya*), sensations (*vedanā*), mind (*citta*), and mental phenomena (*dhamma*). In other words, one can focus the practice of mindfulness on activities of the body, on the workings of one's own mind, or on the individuated mental phenomena that constitute experienced reality.

Buddhaghosa distinguishes between mundane and supramundane concentration, the latter being treated in his explication of *paññā* in the third part.

> Mundane concentration should be developed by one who has taken his stand on virtue that is quite purified in the way already stated. He should sever any of the ten impediments that he may have.[38] He should then approach a good friend, the giver of a meditation subject, and he should apprehend from among the forty meditation subjects one that suits his own temperament. After that he should avoid a monastery unfavorable to the development of concentration and go to live in one that is favorable. Then he should sever the lesser impediments and not overlook any of the directions for development.[39]

This passage is immediately followed by a list of the 10 impediments, and thereafter by explanations of what counts as a member of each of these 10 classes.

Here we begin to see how Buddhaghosa's method of explanation is both extremely practical in his subject matter of moral formation and sensitive to the dynamics of moral struggle, here understood as the interplay of one's desires and the distractions likely to befall one of certain temperaments. First, he defines the point in question, then he specifies it through examples, and he ends each enumeration with a story to illustrate the example. If one is to sever the 10 impediments before taking a meditation subject, one must know what counts as an impediment and what does not. For example, it is a general rule that one's dwelling can be an impediment. But what "counts" as a dwelling must be clarified. "This is not an impediment for everyone. It is only an impediment for anyone whose mind is exercised about the building, etc., that goes on there, or who has many belongings stored there, or whose mind is caught up by some business connected with it. For any other it is not an impediment."[40] As another example, he notes the impediment of family. "Family means consisting of relatives or of supporters. For even a family consisting of supporters is an impediment for someone who lives in close association with it in the way beginning 'he is pleased when they are pleased,' and who does not even go to a neighboring monastery to hear the Dhamma without members of the family."[41] The point is clarification of what counts as a family only insofar as a family might be an impediment.

The list of impediments provides a point of focus to draw attention to the possible distractions that might affect cultivating concentration. It is not the fact of enumeration that affects the process of moral formation but the interaction of the one enumerating with the ordered list of possible influences. At each point that the one meditating might possibly confront an obstacle that would prevent progress along the path, a list of possible obstacles or points of focus exists which transforms the obstacle into a series of possible avenues.

In complementary fashion, the one engaging in meditation must understand how the list of meditation subjects interacts with his or her mental and physical constitution. The monk approaching meditation must choose a subject appropriate to himself, "that suits his own temperament." These can be selected from among the 40 mediation subjects[42] that Buddhaghosa enumerates: "ten kasinas (totalities), ten kinds of foulness, ten recollections, four divine abidings, four immaterial states, one perception, one defining."[43] The remainder (indeed the majority) of the *samādhi* section is devoted to what each of these meditation subjects is, the various ways in which one can think about them, how they are to be taken, and examples of the associated practices.

Consider the following example. A meditator who wants to concentrate on the four *brahma-vihāras* (divine abidings) – that is loving-kindness, compassion, gladness, and equanimity – must know in which order to take these subjects and what would qualify as a proper focus for each subject. Therefore, one must develop loving-kindness first "for the purpose of secluding the mind from hate seen as a danger and introducing it to patience known as an advantage."[44] As to the object of attention, "Loving-kindness should not be developed at first towards the following four kinds of persons: an antipathetic person, a very dearly loved friend, a neutral person, and a hostile person. Also it should not be developed specifically towards the opposite sex, or towards a dead person."[45] In each case, one's meditation might prove counterproductive: the monk might become "fatigued" if the object is antipathetic

or neutral, "angry" if the object is hostile, or "lustful" if the object is of the opposite sex; in each case the object renders the meditation counterproductive. And so one is instructed that, as to loving-kindness, "First of all it should be developed only towards oneself."[46]

Buddhaghosa lists six kinds of temperament (*cariya*): *rāga-cariya* (greedy temperament), *dosa-cariya* (hating temperament), *moha-cariya* (deluded temperament), *saddhā-cariya* (faithful temperament), *buddhi-cariya* (intelligent temperament), and *vitakka-cariya* (speculative temperament).[47] These temperaments affect the likely outcome of meditation.[48] So, for example, one of greedy temperament is advised to surround himself with discomforts in clothing and lodging, people who are physically disfigured or otherwise unpleasing in appearance, and take food that is ill-prepared and impure.[49]

Let us return for a moment to the question of moral struggle and ask what light this exposition of training in concentration, as Buddhaghosa describes it, can shed on this problem. First, instances of moral failure appear to be most likely when meditation practice begins before all the hindrances have been eliminated. As we have seen, these are obstacles that are both within an individual's power to control and also linked to the particular temperament of the one meditating. These also must be considered in a particular order if they are to be effective in producing the intended result. People often fail not because of wrong intention or lack of effort but because these are not coordinated in the right way under the right structures.

Second, instances of moral failure, at least at this stage of concentration, are not so much instances of outright frustration as they are extensions of the trials and difficulties involved in (and to be expected from) such sustained mental practice. While this is emphasized by the environmental conditioning of *saṃsāra*, it is nonetheless a kind of strength and consolation through struggle. To the extent that one experiences something akin to moral weakness, it may be due to the misapplication of meditative technique to the wrong object of meditation, or it may be due to an improper identification of mental states and the mental factors that give rise to them.

Third, the question of how it is that we do not follow the moral knowledge we claim to have is, on this account, partially a function of the experiential nature of moral knowledge. To borrow a concept frequently employed in Christian theology, we might say that Buddhaghosa's view of moral progress situates orthopraxis before orthodoxy, or at least understands these two events to arise together in mutual relation.[50] In each of these three ways, we see the person in the process of moral transformation at the heart of Buddhaghosa's account, yet this is a person that must train to see herself or himself as a momentary constellation of five aggregates, aggregates that are inherently changing, unstable and thereby prone to distractions that breed attachment. However, this still leaves unanswered the question of how successful *samādhi* relates to insight wisdom (*paññā*) which is coterminous with the end of the Buddhist path, as well as the question of how we are to understand moral exemplars in a tradition which posits a convergence between non-self and moral success. Both of these topics I will examine in greater detail in the last section of this chapter. In the meantime, let me offer a couple of comparisons between Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa based on the last two sections dealing with practices.

First, recall that the central elements considered for each thinker were the symbolic religious cosmologies of Christian Trinitarian theology and Theravāda Buddhist Abhidhamma. In Chapter 2, I noted that focusing on these contexts might appear at first to make the figures to be compared look even more irreconcilable than they might initially seem. For the systems in questions most certainly lead to different perspectives about the centrality of God, the meaning of self-cultivation, and the impact that central beliefs have on how one acts responsibly in the community. Yet for their deep differences, Buddhaghosa and Bonaventure are both engaged in a form of symbolic reading of the world around them, in practices intended to help those who engage in them to see the world for something other than it appears to be. And it is precisely these practices that link them strongly to and yet differentiate them from the communities in which they lived. So for Bonaventure, while the Trinity remains a central article of faith for all Christians, its status as the central mystery of the Christian faith is not easily understood as a source for the community's moral life. For Bonaventure, it is the element that links the sacramental life of the church (its central practice) to the formation of a virtuous Christian community which exemplifies the dynamic love of the creator. In order for one to imitate that love, through the more historically remote example of Jesus or through the more historically proximate example of Francis, it requires one first to adopt a particular pattern of watching and reading the world in a triadic structure which Bonaventure understood as the way that one learns to see God in all things. For Buddhaghosa, while the Abhidhamma holds a central place in the life of the community of Buddhist scholastics, it is no easier to speak of the immediate moral implications of this teaching than it is for Bonaventure to point out exactly how profession of a triune God matters for the moral life of the community. Indeed, the substance of the Abhidhammic system is strongly at odds with the Trinitarian confession, and yet it cultivates a way of seeing the world that moves well beyond the cloud of initial appearances. We might say that for both thinkers, their symbolic religious cosmologies help them to reinterpret their experiences of the world in a way that provides a deeper and more integrative view about the person and the person's environment.

Second, for both Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, such a way of reading the world through Trinitarian theology or the Abhidhamma is not possible without an equally strong reflection on the meaning of the material world. In each case, the mode of symbolic analysis moves through, or is tested by, its ability to engage with and free one from attachment to the material world. For Buddhaghosa, Abhidhamma as a tool for analysis warrants two uses. On the one hand, it is a way of categorizing mental states and communicating to the one meditating the dynamic and changing nature of saṃsāric reality. Yet at the same time, it forms the person in question in such a way that the content of what is communicated becomes gradually more integrated into the actions of the person. In other words, as one moves from *samatha* meditation to calm the body and mind to *vipassanā* meditation on the nature of reality as impermanent, unsatisfactory, lacking an unchanging self or essence, that person gradually becomes ever more detached from the fetters of greed, hatred, and delusion. As one progresses further and further in meditation, one risks becoming attached even to the pleasure of fine material states, such that even successful

practice itself has the capacity to become an obstacle to further advancement on the path. While the *arahant* is perfected in this way and loses all hindrances, the progress to that point strongly links knowledge about reality to one's ability to maintain a posture of non-greed toward it. What then of Bonaventure's engagement with the material world? We noted that for Bonaventure, there were really two important issues here: first, the poverty of Christ and the example of Francis in following this, and the practice of prayer, both in contemplation and in the sacramental life of the church. To be fair, a more complete examination of this question would require more evidence about the form of Christian practices and of Buddhist practices at the time of Buddhaghosa. I have tried to signal something of these worlds in Chapter 3, but neither thinker gives us sustained discussions of these issues. We do have some indication that Bonaventure understood the sacramental life of the church to be amenable to the same kind of Trinitarian exposition that he gave for the life of Christian contemplative prayer (as we saw in his linking of the enumeration of sacraments to the enumeration of the virtues). Yet there does not seem to be any sustained reflection on how the triadic structure of contemplative prayer, relates to the Franciscan exemplarity; put differently, how does a habit of Trinitarian seeing relate to a Franciscan habit of renouncing? So with Buddhaghosa, we have some indication that the practices he enumerates, particular in describing *sīla* and the initial acquisition of meditation subjects took as their reference point renunciation of the householder's life. Yet he does not specifically relate this to the donative practices of the laity which, we must remember, were a reality of the life of lay members, as mentioned in Chapter 3, monks as well. Among the 40 meditation subjects, one can see the fruits of lay giving as operative in meditation, but there does not seem to be much awareness of the persons behind those donations, persons who were certainly affected by the characteristics of the life in the round of rebirth in way not entirely dissimilar to those of the monks, especially the novice monks that Buddhaghosa indentifies as his primary audience.

These inconclusive elements of Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's treatments should not be entirely surprising. They are, after all, themselves people trying to describe the trials and highest aspirations of real people. Our question then becomes: What kind of people can serve as moral exemplars and in which ways? Do moral exemplars serve as models for various integrations of ideas and practices or is the form of exemplarity rather always unitary? Is the incompleteness of any exemplar itself a form of motivation in the midst of moral struggle?

Bonaventure on Moral Exemplars[51]

We have already considered in some detail the place of moral exemplars in Bonaventure's thought in Chapter 3, where we examined his writings on evangelical poverty and the centrality of Francis' example, as well as some of the sermons that Bonaventure preached on Francis' feast day. We may compare this to Bonaventure's sermon on *Christus unum omnium magister* (Christ, the one teacher of all). In this sermon, he instructs "that we begin with the firmness of faith and proceed through the serenity of reason so as to arrive at the sweetness of contemplation."[52] Bonaventure posits that

Christ teaches through a "middle way" (*modo medio*) between nature and grace. To explain this, he employs language that he would also use to structure the *Itinerarium* and the *Breviloquium*, namely the difference between recognizing a vestige of God in the lower orders of creation, the image of God in human beings, and the similitude of God in well-functioning rational creatures, where the vestige communicates the source, the image communicates the end, and the similitude communicates the extent of likeness achieved.

Bonaventure extends this account when he notes that,

> Christ teaches us not only in word, but also in example. Therefore, he who hears does not hear perfectly unless he brings understanding to the words and obedience to the deeds. … We are to ask this Teacher about those matters that pertain to science, discipline, and goodness … Science consists in the knowledge of truth; discipline consists in avoiding evil; and goodness consists in choosing the good.[53]

Drawing a parallel between Christ as teacher and those charged with teaching in his own day, Bonaventure insists that all teachers should be concerned with these three topics: truth, discipline, and goodness. Zachary Hayes suggests that one fitting interpretation of this passage is to take Bonaventure's admonition as a statement about the sufficiency of Christian theology without the additional use of Aristotelian explanatory categories.[54] Yet it seems equally likely, given that the questions about the Franciscan way of life formed the background for the events leading up to this sermon, that Bonaventure is also making a point about the proper training for teachers. Not only must teachers follow the example of Christ, but they must conform their methods to the fullest examples of Christian life.

In these two sermons, we encounter an outline of Bonaventure's understanding of moral exemplars. Under the image of the teacher, the ability to follow an exemplar and the ability to teach are closely related. On the one hand, there is a need for isolation and freedom from distraction. This links one's ability to act with the disciplined alternation of engagement and disengagement, activity and rest. Material reality itself plays a dual role. Just as it reflects God and thereby helps one to see clearly the presence of God in the world, so does the accumulation of its artifacts distract and draw attention away from God, making it difficult to hear the words of the teacher. The possibility of personal motivation through the nearness of the teacher's example is obscured by the tendency of wealth to occupy the mind and heart of the individual. This is as close as Bonaventure comes to answering the question noted at the end of the last section, namely how does a habit of Trinitarian seeing relate to a Franciscan habit of renouncing? Bonaventure provides another variation on his answer to this question in a homily from 1267 CE.

Bonaventure continues his remarks on the relationship between Francis and Jesus as this relates to the possibility of imitating Christ in his poverty. Again preaching on Francis' feast day, he shifts from the Gospel of Matthew ("Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart," Matthew 11:29) to the prophet Isaiah ("Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights," Isaiah 42:1). Francis becomes the quintessential faithful servant, for "A faithful man is one who seeks nothing but God's glory in everything that he does. He seeks nothing to his

own advantage, no praise, no favor; his only concern is God's glory and the salvation of others."[55] These are the markers one may look for to discern whether one serves God with purity of heart.

Bonaventure acknowledged the difficulty in preaching about Francis precisely because admonition in Christian life ought to be directed at imitation of Christ himself. He clarifies, however, that:

> my aim … is to describe to you a holy and perfect man so that each of you may strive to imitate him. … [yet] the meaning of these words ["Behold my servant …"] refers primarily to our Lord Jesus Christ. However, what is true of the head may be applied to the members on account of their likeness and closeness to the head. Thus, these words may fittingly be understood of any holy and perfect person. But they highlight in a preeminent way the unique holiness of St Francis with regard to its root, its likeness, and its radiance. The root of perfect holiness lies in deep humility, its loftiness in well-trained virtue, and its radiance in consummate love. … Humility moves God to sustain us, well-tried virtue makes us pleasing to him, but consummate love brings us to be totally rapt in God and to share what we have with others.[56]

Note again the images of dynamic emanation he used to structure his sermon on Christ the teacher: the vestigial root, the virtuous image, and the charitable likeness that enlivens and floods the darkness. Yet the basic difficulty remains: how to praise Francis for his Christ-like qualities and yet maintain a differentiation in how to advise imitation, mindful that he and his fellow friars were striving to live a Christian life on the model of Francis.

Bonaventure finds his solution to this problem in the concept of humility. He identifies three types of humility in Francis, stating that he was "humble through his reverence for God … humbler still in taking care of his neighbor … and humblest of all in despising himself."[57] Francis most closely imitates Christ in his humility, and most precisely expresses humility in despising himself. For Bonaventure, to despise oneself means to downplay one's advantages and to play up one's weaknesses for the purpose of rendering oneself open to God's mercy.

In his sermon for the third Sunday of Advent (c. 1267 CE), Bonaventure speaks about the incarnation as the "great condescension for Christ," meditating on the words of another exemplary character, John the Baptist.[58] "In your midst has stood one whom you do not know. He it is who is to come after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to unfasten" (John 1:26–7). Bonaventure draws together the role of teacher with the role of exemplar: "Jesus stood in the midst of [them] as a model of holiness because men stood in need both of teacher and of example, since example moves more than words. He who is beyond reproach has created man in His own image, and has made Himself capable of being imitated."[59] Later, drawing a parallel between John's audience and his own, Bonaventure singles out avarice as the cause of one's inability to recognize the one whom we should take as exemplar: "you do not recognize Christ because of avarice."[60] Even going so far as to call himself guilty of this sin, he says, "Truly this is ignorance. All of us devote ourselves to this sort of gluttony. And today the task of the priest seems to be to live sumptuously, to gather, and to steal. Therefore Christ is not recognized by the priest."[61]

In a letter to regional superiors of the order, roughly contemporary with these sermons, Bonaventure captures the instances of weakness plaguing his community:

> Too much running about and importunate begging are making us cheap and oppressive. For, you see, when we are no longer content with little and start putting up costly buildings, what we are really doing is directing our whole attention on base things, while foolishly missing out on the truly higher realities. The extravagant construction of walls is breeding the destruction of morals; raising houses on high is causing souls to be cast down to the dust.[62]

The solution to this problem, as Bonaventure sees it, is twofold: prayer and a reexamination of poverty. The first, he says, will draw the members back to the example of Francis and the previously issued administrative rulings of the order; the second will replace disordered desires for material comforts with the laudable desire for the presence of God: "Eliminate the reason for all this running around and begging," he says,

> namely, the increasingly lavish style of our buildings, books, clothing and food. The way that we live ought to be in harmony with the high profession we have made. For it is truly a filthy, base line for someone to claim to have voluntarily professed the highest poverty if he is not willing to put up with want, who at home enjoys the affluence of the rich and yet goes out to beg as poor people do.[63]

Here the connection between poverty and moral exemplarity takes on a stronger and more purifying tone. Yes, poverty is the form through which the exemplar teaches, but it is more than that. It also reveals insidious hypocrisies, the social correlate to unexamined personal weaknesses. Poor approximations of "the highest poverty" reveal that moral struggle is not exclusively a personal problem but a social problem concerned with justice. Moral struggle is social, for Bonaventure, because it invokes the shared discernment of the exemplar's charism by the group and because it is the basis through which those outside the group evaluate its social propriety and its ability to render an example to others.

Buddhaghosa on Moral Exemplars

We return now to the question: What is the place of persons in motivating moral behavior, in assisting people in understanding their own moral struggle, in Buddhaghosa's account? How is the particular style of integrating ideas and practices different in a Buddhist account from what we have seen in Bonaventure's meditation on the connection between Jesus and Francis, particularly in the social dimension of discerning exemplarity? One of the central problems, it seems to me, about understanding persons as moral exemplars in Buddhaghosa's account is that the personal histories, especially the personal stories and sense of what it must have been like to be in the presence of such people, simply has no correlate between Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's accounts. We do have examples of persons serving as exemplary, but we do not have the full account of their struggles in extended narratives. Indeed, it is

the process of mental preparation leading up to the four paths, rather than the individuals' personal narratives, that provides the most compelling examples for Buddhist meditation.

Therefore, we are left with three basic loci for analysis of persons as moral exemplars in Buddhaghosa's account. The first has already been discussed: the person in the process of meditation who relies on other persons for instruction. If the Buddhist life is to be viewed primarily as a practical response to the state of the world as unsatisfactory, impermanent, and non-substantial, then other persons who have quelled craving and who have focused their minds in approach to insight are to be emulated. Yet it is not their stories that are to be emulated, by casting ourselves into their narratives, but rather the actions that take place as a result of the intentions of particular persons. They know themselves, to a significant degree, that is to say their own patterns of mental events and their responses to them, thereby granting them some privileged place from which to help us begin meditation. There are plenty of examples in wider Buddhist culture for the integration of personal narratives, the stories of *arahant*s, *bodhisattas*, and especially Buddhist kings (perhaps preeminently King Aśoka whose struggle to become a dharmic king is recounted in the *Aśokāvadāna*.[64]) Yet these are not the examples that Buddhaghosa uses, and it is noteworthy that the Abhidhamma as a mode of communicating moral formation works as a counterpart to the narrative form of the Buddha's discourses. It is the narrative of mental processes, rather than the narrative of the episode of a life, that this form of discourse sees as most appropriate for communicating how one is formed into the Buddhist community.

The second locus is the person of the Buddha in whose presence or even before whose actual or mental image one can commit oneself to meditation practice, as I indicated earlier in this chapter. There have been many critiques of using the language of the Buddha's "presence" in Buddhist–Christian comparative studies, supported by the argument that a notion of such presence is incompatible with the teaching about the non-substantial self.[65] The Buddha is the paragon practitioner, the one before whom one is best trained in the Buddhist path but also one whose success inspires persistence. As we saw in Chapter 3, the Buddha functioned as a kind of exemplar in the practice of meditation on the body of the Buddha, part of the *samādhi* practices known as the recollections. These qualities of the Buddha were intended to facilitate calming of the body and mind to prepare one for insight.

The difficulty comes when we think about the third locus of the exemplarity of persons. This is the person moving toward insight, or better still the constitution of the person through insight. Recall that persons, like all other phenomenal realities, are understood to be a combination of aggregates (the five *khandhas*), and that the four aggregates denoting the mental factors of persons are nothing but momentary arisings and coordinations of basic factors. This means that even when a person is trusted as a guide in meditation, or as one who has rightly quelled desires and eliminated craving and attachment through *sīla* and *samādhi* practices, what one takes as exemplary is not a finished or completed person, so to say, or even the complex narrative of plot through which we understand a life of moral struggle. There are, as we have seen, certain character traits that come about through practices, but these are not qualities that inhere in a trans-temporal substance but rather a reliable pattern of mental factors, conditioned as they are by prior mental factors.

When we consider how ideas and practices come together in persons, who are themselves exemplary to other persons, we are really dealing with two different kinds of exemplars: *sīla/samādhi*-type exemplars and *paññā*-type exemplars. They are linked, to be sure, just as the elements of the Buddhist path are linked. Although the kind of insight generated in *vipassanā* is knowledge of a fundamentally different type than that generated in *samādhi*, it is still linked as elements in a continuum of the person. The person is still the locus of mental states, and of moral responsibility and *kamma*. Yet we must examine more specifically how the culmination of the Buddhist path might nonetheless be understood as a kind of moral exemplarity.

In *Visuddhimagga*, *paññā* refers both to the process of attaining insight wisdom and the culmination of Buddhist practice in which one realizes experientially the Buddha's assessment of the nature of phenomenal reality. As Rupert Gethin explains,

> Indian Buddhist meditation theory was always precisely concerned with articulating the relationship between the process of stilling the emotions associated with craving (*taṇhā*) and the process of ridding the mind of the distorted view of the world that comes from "delusion" (*moha*) or ignorance (*avijjā*). The relationship between these processes was seen as crucial because of the way in which in actual experience (as opposed to logical abstraction) craving and delusion are confused: in craving we *also* have a distorted view of the world, and in having a distorted view of the world, we *also* crave.[66]

At issue here is a particular view about how a person's view interacts with her or his desires, and it is the distinctive contribution of Buddhist Abhidhamma as Buddhaghosa presents it that craving and ignorance are mutually implicated, such that one who struggles to remove one always simultaneously affects the other, and it is perhaps this insight which the Abhidhammic rather than the narrative form of the Suttas is most adept at communicating.[67]

The relation of true knowledge to the elimination of craving exhibits a kind of temporal circularity with respect to moral struggle. For Bonaventure, the truth of God as Trinity emerges gradually, as one learns to read one's life and the book of creation as an emanation and exemplification of God's love. Buddhaghosa by contrast views learning the truths of the Buddhist path as a continual process of discerning linkages among mental processes, with each process indicating a clear precondition for or the result of another mental process. This process resists the form of reading that Bonaventure suggests ought to guide the mystical ascent, reading levels of values signified by material and human realities. By its very form the Abhidhamma frustrates the possibility of this formulation, even as it is structured to aid the process of memorizing its most important elements, suggesting a certain kind of ascent to higher knowledge.[68] For Bonaventure, an order exists to the emanations of God's love in creation, and these same emanations are exemplified most perfectly in the person of Jesus, whereas for Buddhaghosa the orderly progress of mental processes indicates no such transcendent value to the order itself.

Buddhaghosa answers the question, "In what sense is *paññā* [a kind of insight wisdom]?" by suggesting that this kind of knowing "brings about the penetration of characteristics, and it brings about by endeavoring, the manifestation of the path."[69]

So *paññā* is a way of knowing which has the particular ability to see the non-substantial nature of reality and the dissatisfaction which results from clinging to wrong views. Would it then be possible to view Buddhaghosa's account of insight wisdom as analogous is some ways to Bonaventure's understanding of theology? For Bonaventure, theology is both a way of seeing the world with greater sensitivity to the traces of God's love at every level of creation, but also an activity which, ideally, itself brings about greater love of God. Indeed, for Bonaventure a theology which did not in fact increase the capabilities for love in the one who studies would not deserve such a designation. Like *paññā*, Bonaventure's theology is a kind of knowledge which conforms the knower to the proper object of knowledge, but proper objects of knowledge are related to the traditions' exemplars in different ways. However, for Buddhaghosa, the end proper for insight wisdom comes with a progressive series of purifications to knowledge.

After examining each element in the divisions of *paññā* mentioned above – namely, aggregates (*khandha*), bases (*āyatana*), elements (*dhātu*), faculties (*indriya*), truths (*sacca*), and dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)[70] – he concludes with an analysis of the five purifications: (1) purification of view, (2) purification by overcoming doubt, (3) purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path, (4) purification of knowledge and vision of the way, (5) purification by knowledge and vision. In a way similar to Bonaventure, the conclusion of the path is cast in terms of struggle's cessation and the purity of vision. Let us examine each of these briefly.

Purification of view (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*) consists in "the correct seeing of *nāma-rūpa*,"[71] the same element that appears in the chain of dependent origination. Buddhaghosa notes two ways of seeing *nāma-rūpa* correctly: one is through *samatha* (serenity) and the other is through *vipassanā* (insight). Frequently *samatha* or calming meditation is taken to be equivalent to the term *samādhi*, and *vipassanā* or insight meditation is taken to be an equivalent to *paññā.*[72] However, in this case they are used illustrate two different processes whereby one might purify view (*diṭṭhi).* For the one whose "vehicle is serenity" (*samatha-yāniko*), that one should begin by examining the particular states of mind that occur in the various *jhānas.* "When he has done so, all that should be defined as 'mentality' [*nāma*] in the sense of bending [*namana*] because of its bending on to the object."[73] The person "whose vehicle is pure insight" (*suddhavipassanāyāniko*) perceives the three characteristics immediately in *rūpa* by analyzing the four main elements, and then by examining them for the various ways in which their component parts come together in constitution of *rūpa*. The one practicing *samatha* also follows this latter process after he or she has analyzed *nāma*.

Near the end of this section, Buddhaghosa notes that the process of perceiving the immaterial aspects of reality is one which cannot be frustrated if one has perceived the material aspects properly.

> But if he has discerned materiality in one of these ways, and while he is trying to discern the immaterial it does not become evident to him, then he should not give up but should again and again comprehend, give attention to, discern, and define materiality only. For in proportion as materiality becomes quite definite, disentangled and quite clear to him, so the immaterial states that have that [materiality] as their object become plain of themselves too.[74]

Purification by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*) occurs through analyzing the *paccaya* (conditions) for *nāma-rūpa*.[75] A careful analysis in this mode demonstrates that the conditions for *nāma-rūpa* are neither without cause nor are they attributable to a first cause. If each phenomenon is attributable to multiple conditions, and if each condition is itself attributable not to one but to many other conditions, then no single causal explanation is necessary. Buddhaghosa develops this argument by showing the relationship of the elements of dependent origination in both forward and reverse order.[76] But note that one overcomes doubt through an exhaustive knowledge of the conditions that give rise to certain mental and material states.

The three remaining purifications are related in a series of obstacles and achievements in *paññā.* The first, purification by knowledge and vision of what is and what is not the path (*maggga*), Buddhaghosa says is possible only when one has distinguished among three kinds of knowing: direct knowledge (*ñātapariññā*), knowledge that knows the method of its own investigation (*tīraṇapariññā*), and knowledge that does not become attached to what it knows (*pahānapariññā*).[77] The second, purification of knowledge and vision of the way (*paṭipadā*), has to do with the ninefold division of knowledge based on the objects of insight knowledge rather than on means of knowledge.[78] The third, purification by knowledge and vision, has to do with the classification of being on one of the four paths to liberation: the stream-enterer (*sotāpattin*), the once-returner (*sakadāgāmin*), the non-returner (*anāgāmin*), and the Arahant, where return refers to the definite number of times one will return in a new rebirth before attaining release from *saṃsāra*.

In one sense, it might be helpful to think about moral exemplars of the *paññā* type based on this traditional fourfold division. In the section on purification by knowledge and vision (*Visuddhimaggga*, book 22), Buddhaghosa examines each of the four paths or lineage of ones who have attained insight, each with respect to (1) the progress along the path and (2) fruition of the path. This yields a typology of eight noble persons (*ariyapuggalā*): (1) the stream-enterer (*sotāpattin*) who has successfully surmounted desires and attachments to sense object, (2) the stream-enterer who has realized the fruit of this path traversed so far and now remains only to surmount attachment to immaterial mental states, (3) the once-returner (*sakadāgāmin*), (4) the once-returner who realizes the fruits of further meditation into the characteristics of reality as these apply to her or his own mental states of even more refined quality, (5) the non-returner (*anāgāmin*), (6) the non-returner who realizes the fruit of the path and "attains complete extinction there without ever returning, without ever coming to this world again through rebirth linking,"[79](7) the *arahant*, and (8) the *arahant* who realizes the fruit of the final path.

At the beginning of this progression through eight exemplary persons, the one meditating notes that "his consciousness no longer enters into or settles down on or resolves upon any field of formations at all, or clings, cleaves or clutches on to it, but retreats, retracts and recoils as water does from a lotus leaf, and every sign as object, every occurrence as object, appears as an impediment."[80] Compare this with the description of the *arahant* who has realized the fruit of the path: "He is one of the Great Ones with cankers destroyed, he bears his last body, he has laid down the burden, reached his goal and destroyed the fetter of becoming, he is rightly liberated with [final knowledge] and worthy of their highest offerings of the world with its deities."[81] Each of the eight persons (two of each path) are taken as moral exemplars and are

The list of factors is taken from groupings that appear both in the Suttas and in the Abhidhamma, the later of which Buddhaghosa summarizes in Vsm XXII.33. The following summary is based on Rupert Gethin's presentation in *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (Oxford: Oneworld, [1992] 2001), including his translations of relevant terms.

The initial grouping in the left column is from the order of chapters as presented in the *Mahavagga* ("great division," which is the last section) of the *Saṃutta Nikāya*. In the right column is the enumerations of elements from the groups in the left column that make up the 37 factors contributing to awakening, which are commonly presented as the "seven sets."

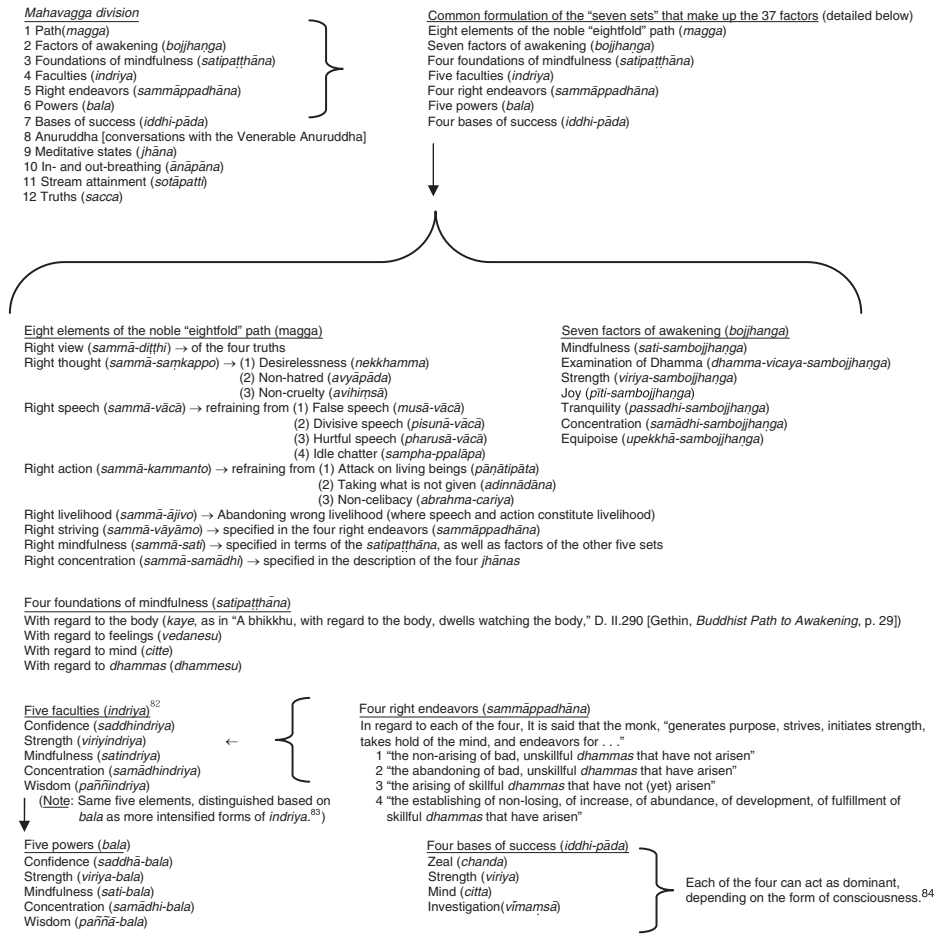

Figure 5.3 Summary of the 37 "factors contributing to awakening" (*bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā*)

differentiated based on their progressively thinner attachments to ever more immaterial spheres of thought, wherein their heightened levels of purity are attained. Yet what is communicated about them as persons is, interestingly, done so by appeal to the particular constellation of their mental factors.

In fact, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the Abhidhamma formulation (found also in the Suttas) of the 37 factors contributing to Enlightenment (*bodhi-pakkhiyā-dhammā*), summarized in the Figure 5.3.

Buddhaghosa notes that "At the time of arising of [any of the] four kinds of [path] knowledge, [all these states] are found in a single consciousness. In the moment of fruition the thirty-three excepting the four right endeavors are found."[85] This is, presumably, because while in the three "lower" paths, there is still some cultivation of

the skillful and warding off of the unskillful mental states, such that there is still progress ahead, so to speak. Yet with the realization of arahantship, no more struggle takes place. Indeed, Buddhaghosa says that "When these [37 factors] are found in a single consciousness in this way, it is the one kind of mindfulness whose object is called nibbana."[86]

Comparing Persons in the Process of Struggle: Two Notions of Person as Classic

How then are we to compare these two approaches to persons as exemplars? Buddhaghosa's guidebook for meditation which examines the practical implications of Abhidhammic psychology provides three important insights into the question of moral struggle. First, the ability to manipulate one's own mental factors is partially dependent on learning how various mental factors are related in one's own mind, that is in one's own thought processes. While particular factors express the energy or momentum (*viriya*) that tends to express our familiar notions of motive and will, there is something original about the Abhidhamma account of human psychology that emphasizes observing and separating out the patterns and relationships among mental factors as itself part of the process of effecting a change in behavior. To recognize causal relationships previously undetected is to open oneself up to focus on those factors that precede and lead to other factors that account for questionable behaviors. One might be tempted to say that, on this view, the moral struggle of persons is best understood as the attempt to see all of one's relations to other beings, one's actions, and one's mental factors (in that order, which is the order of the path) in progressively more detailed and interlocking ways. Persons as finished products function as exemplars only in a secondary sense. A person is a series of relations through time, often in ways that we do not take the time to see, and it is in the patient examination of these processes that one learns to sever one's attachments.

Second, through the procedures of meditation, the Buddhist practitioner opens herself up to a new way of thinking which joins the practices of mental concentration to the conceptual disassembly of mental processes. In other words, processes of meditation mirror the processes of Abhidhamma conceptual analysis and thus allow one to reorder one's actions based on a new model of one's mind. Conceptual analysis, on Buddhaghosa's view, must be carried out in connection with visualizations that alternately narrow and widen the field of examination. As we saw in Chapter 3, that which physically surrounds the one meditating becomes the context in which the final characteristics of reality are to be discerned. In one respect, the tripartite Abhidhammic structure of Buddhaghosa's text illustrates this point. *Sīla* is the foundation for *samādhi* and leads to it; both are the foundation for *paññā*, which in turn reinforces *sīla* and leads to further practices of concentration. But so does the theory of temperaments on which meditation instruction is based.

Third, the use of lists for the acquisition of knowledge and as an aid to meditation resists the codification of the Buddha's teaching into a static, easily obtained set of truths. So too does it prevent one from looking to the Buddha as a teacher in some way other than one who invites one into an experiential process of discernment. In

addressing the problem of moral struggle, this account of struggle for development in the moral life does propose a reading of the way the world really is, but it goes about it in such a way as to keep the mind constantly in motion, never settling on one or another formulation of this truth. This may be why the Buddhist traditions have resisted giving any final descriptions of *nibbāna*, submitting it rather to experiential verification and describing it with an array of images of including peace, serenity, and stillness.

Persons play a decidedly different role in Bonaventure's account. At its most fundamental and admittedly difficult level, Bonaventure calls his readers to probe the implications of God as triune for their way of living with each other. The model for the relations between persons is the relation of the persons of the Godhead to each other, in a perfect self-giving love that flows out into the world as the creative power of the divine. This has a certain internal logic to it, but it can be difficult to see exactly how one would act differently in light of this particular belief, and it is Bonaventure's great contribution to suggest that belief in the Trinity requires a twofold movement: first, to cultivate a way of seeing the world and the relation of human beings to it as if this mysterious Trinitarian love of God were hidden throughout it; and second, to live in humility and openness to God's love in imitation of Jesus, which means adopting a relentless attitude of examining one's own will for its conformity with God's will. One finds this example, most especially, in the intense reflexivity of Francis, who is the teacher because of his ability to imitate Christ.

There exists a rough parallel, I think, between Buddhaghosa's and Bonaventure's treatment of exemplars, despite their obvious divergences. And it is here that I want to provide a lead in to my final chapter on persons as classics. Recall that I argued early on in this book that we might consider that persons function as classics, calling for interpretation, in a way that might at first seem counterintuitive. Each tradition puts persons forth as moral exemplars in a way that is familiar: as paragons of virtue; as people who have achieved what the tradition takes to be its highest wisdom. Yet traditions also put forth as exemplars persons in the process of moral struggle, a struggle that is manifest both in uneven belief and in uneven moral behavior. It is here that I think it is most helpful to focus on the similarities and differences between Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's accounts, not in the final ends that they praise or the particular practices that they outline for their communities, but rather in the differing strategies through which persons in the process of intellectual and moral struggle can motivate adherence to and progress in religious traditions. It is this problem, and how it relates to contemporary studies in comparative ethics, to which we now turn.

Notes

1 See Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*. Vol. 2, *Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Image Books/Doubleday [1946] 1993), 242.
2 Bonaventure, *De triplici via*, Pro. (de Vinck, 63).
3 Bonaventure, *Brev*. I.1 (*The Works of Bonaventure*, trans. José de Vinck, vol. 2, Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1960–70, 33).
4 Ibid., Pro. (de Vinck, 16).
5 Ibid., I.2. (de Vinck, 35).

6 The specifics of Bonaventure's exegesis are not directly relevant, but he does point out that there are basically five ways of viewing how the persons of the Trinity are both related in essence and distinct in personhood. In *Breviloquium* I.3, he lists two emanations, three hypostases, four relations, five notions, and three personal properties. The two emanations appropriate to God, he says, are only those in which perfect emanation is possible: "the modes of emanating perfectly are only two, namely, by the mode of the nature and of the will [*per modum naturae et voluntatis*]," the first by generation and the second by "spiration or procession [*spiratio sive procession*]." This means that, for Bonaventure, in whatever specific mode God emanates into the world, insofar as God is perfect, the general categories under which such an outflowing might happen either have to be rooted in God's nature or in God's will.

7 Brev., I.6 (translation adapted from de Vinck, 53–4).

Quia enim primum principium est nobilissimum et perfectissimum, ideo conditiones entis nobilissimae et generalissimae in eo reperiuntur in summo. Hae autem sunt unum, verum, bonum, quae non contrahunt ens secundum supposita, sed secundum rationem. Nam unum nominat ens ut connumerabile, et hoc habet per indivisionem sui in se; verum, secundum quod cognoscibile, et hoc habet per indivisionem sui a propria specie; bonum, secundum quod communicabile, et hoc habet per indivisionem sui a propria operatione. Et quia haec triplex indivisio se habet secundum ordinem quantum ad rationem intelligendi, ita quod verum praesupponit unum, et bonum praesupponit unum et verum: hinc est, quod haec attribuuntur primo principio in summon, quia perfecta et generalia; et appropriantur tribus personis, quia ordinata; et ideo summe unum Patri, qui est origo personarum; summe verum Filio, qui est a Patre ut verbum; summe bonum Spiritui sancto, qui est ab utroque ut amor et donum.

8 See, for example, Brev., I.2.5 where Bonaventure quotes Augustine from *On the Trinity* (and echoes others) as saying,

> The proof of God's existence is founded not only upon the authority of the divine books, but also upon the entire natural universe around us, to which we ourselves belong, and which proclaims that it has a transcendent Creator: a Creator who granted us natural intelligence and reason, by which we are able to judge that living beings are superior to lifeless, sensitive to insensitive, rational to brute, immortal to mortal, potent to powerless; just to unjust, beautiful to ugly, good to evil; incorruptible to corruptible, changeless to mutable, invisible to visible, incorporeal to bodily, blessed to reprobate. And on this very account, since we certainly place the Creator above His creation, we must proclaim Him as being supremely alive, perceiving all things, and understanding all things; immortal, incorruptible, and immutable; not a bodily being, but a spirit, omnipotent, utterly just, supremely beautiful, perfectly good, and completely happy.

9 This explanation of sacrament relies heavily on the explanation of Bonaventure's theological and philosophical metaphysics provided in Zachary Hayes, "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure," in *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: A Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure*, S87–8. Here Hayes quotes Bonaventure from the *Collationes in hexaemeron*, "Such is the metaphysical center that leads us back, and this is the whole of our metaphysics; namely, it is concerned with emanation, exemplarity, and consummation; that is, to be illumined by means of spiritual light and to be led back to the highest Being. And in this you will be a true metaphysician."

10 Bonaventure, Hex. V (de Vinck, 73–93). Here Bonaventure understands virtues, in line with Aristotle and Aquinas, as means between excess and deficiency. However, he enumerates 12 such means (in distinction to the traditional seven): which he calls "good habits": fortitude, temperance, generosity, lavishness, magnanimity, reasonable honor, patience, truthfulness, refinement, friendship, justified indignation, and moderate reprehension. (74)
11 Ibid., XIV.5 (de Vinck, 201)
12 Brev., II.1 (de Vinck, 70)
13 Aquinas, for instance, chose to follow Aristotle's fourfold casual division: formal, material, efficient, and final, and relied on Aristotle's account of substances as composites of form and matter. Bonaventure relied on the division and movement of reality which mirrored the Trinity in action and number. It is especially important to note here that Bonaventure did not disagree with the causal categories of Aristotle per se, but instead wished to assign them a proper place. Similarly, Bonaventure inherited from his teacher, Alexander of Hales, an understanding of reality rooted in "hylomorphic composition" (the doctrine that all things – material and spiritual – are compositions of form and matter). In this regard, he is using the same distinction employed with such explanatory power by Aquinas. The radical difference, however, is whether – and to what extent – the category of being is fundamentally decisive in understanding God. For a helpful summary of Bonaventure's thinking on this point, see Copleston, *Medieval Philosophy*, 271–7.
14 Bonaventure, Brev. I.3 (de Vinck, 40).
15 Ibid. V.1 (de Vinck, 181).
16 Ibid. I.6 (de Vinck, 53).
17 Ibid. (de Vinck, 53–4).
18 Zachary Hayes, "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure," S89–90. Copleston's interpretation of the same topic is suggestive of the moral dimension of Bonaventure's exegetical strategy.

> As proceeding from the Father the Word is divine, the divine Son (*filius* denotes the *similitudo hypostatica*, the *similitudo connaturalis*), and as representing the Father, as *Imago*, as *similitudo expressa*, the Word expresses also, represents, all that the Father can effect (*quidquid Pater potest*). If anyone could know the Word, he would know all knowable objects (*si igitur intelligis Verbum, intelligis omnia scibilia*). In the Son or Word the Father expressed all that He could make (i.e. all possible beings are ideally or archetypally represented in the Word) and all that He would make. The "ideas" of all creatures, therefore, possible and actual, are contained in the Word, and these ideas extend not only to universals (*genera* and *species*) but also to singular or individual things. They are infinite in number, as representing all possibles, as representing the infinite power of God. (Copleston, *Medieval Philosophy*, 260)

So the Word represents all that the Father can effect in the world but also holds all possibilities for creatures within it, in terms of both types and various concrete realities. Does Bonaventure then mean to suggest that the development of concrete realities through their failings and challenging circumstances are also possibilities contained in the Word?

19 Itin. Pro (*Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of Saint Francis*, Classics of Western Spirituality, trans., Ewert Cousins. New York: Paulist Press, 1978, 54).
20 For a fuller discussion of this idea, see Charles Carpenter, *Theology as the Road to Holiness in St Bonaventure* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 39–57.
21 Itin. VI (Cousins, 102)

22 Bonaventure unfolds these circles of reality by employing the terms "macrocosm" and "microcosm" to indicate how human beings contemplate God both within and outside themselves (see Itin. II.1–5).
23 Soliloq. Pro. (de Vinck, 36).
24 Ibid. (de Vinck, 37).
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Bonaventure, *De triplici via* 1.13, trans. Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 41–2.
28 I Sent. Pro. Q. 3 1.13, trans. Hayes in *Bonaventure: Mystical Writings*, 38. "… *et fides sic est in intellectu, ut, quantum est de sui ratione, nata sit movere affectum. Et hoc patet. Nam haec cognition: quod Christus pro nobis mortuus est, et consimiles, nisi sit homo peccator et durus, movet ad amorem … Concedendum ergo, quod est ut boni fiamus.*"
29 Vsm. III.84.1 (Ñāṇamoli, 85).
30 For a helpful discussion of the many varieties of *sīla* that Buddhaghosa enumerates, see Damien Keown, "Morality in the Visuddhimagga," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 6.1 (1983). Cf. Ñāṇamoli, 61–79.
31 Vsm. III, 84–85.3 (Ñāṇamoli, 85).
32 Ibid., III, 85.4 (Ñāṇamoli, 86) *avikkhepalakkhaṇo.*
33 The ten *kasiṇas* are: *paṭhavi* (earth), *āpo* (water), *tejo* (fire), *vāyo* (air), *nīla* (blue), *pīta* (yellow), *lohita* (red), *odāta* (white), *ākāsa* (space), *viññāṇa* (consciousness).
34 Vsm. IV.27–29 (Ñāṇamoli, 123–4).
35 Ibid. IV.31 (Ñāṇamoli, 125).
36 Ibid., IV.104.
37 Buddhaghosa defines these with respect to the how a person attends on or to something or someone. He uses the word *upaṭṭhāna* (from *upa* [on, by, near, upon] + √*sthā* [stand]) which comprises a range of meanings including attendance, waiting on, looking on after, caring or ministering to. Specifically he says "'Foundation' is because of establishment by going down into, descending upon, such and such objects. Mindfulness itself as foundation is 'foundation of mindfulness.' It is of four kinds because it occurs with respect to the body, feeling, consciousness, and mental objects, taking them as foul, painful, impermanent, and not-self, and because it accomplishes the function of abandoning perception of beauty, pleasure, permanence, and self" Vsm. XXII.34 (Ñāṇamoli, 703).
38 The ten major impediments (*palibodha*), listed at Vsm. III.29, are: *āvaso* (dwelling pace), *kulaṃ* (family), *lābho* (desire for gain), *gaṇo* (class), *kamma* (work, here in the sense of building a dwelling), *addhānaṃ* (travel), *ñāti* (relatives), *ābādho* (physical affliction), *gantho* (books), and *iddhī* (extraordinary powers). He also lists several minor impediments (Vsm. IV.20) which include such things as stained or torn clothing, long hair and fingernails, unwashed or stained begging bowls, and the like.
39 Vsm. III.89.28 (Ñāṇamoli, 90–1). He goes on to enumerate the 10 impediments: "A dwelling, family, and gain, a class, and building too as fifth, and travel, kin, affliction, books, and supernormal powers: ten."
40 Ibid., III.90.30 (Ñāṇamoli, 91).
41 Ibid., III.91.25 (Ñāṇamoli, 92).
42 The 40 meditation subjects are calculated in the following way:

10 *kasiṇas* (totalities): earth, air, water, fire, blue, yellow, red, white, light, limited, space
10 kinds of foulness: bloated, livid, festering, cut, gnawed, scattered, hacked and scattered, bleeding, worm-infested, and a skeleton

10 recollections: Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, virtue, generosity, deities, death, body, breathing, peace
4 divine abidings: loving kindness, compassion, gladness, equanimity
4 immaterial states: base consisting in boundless space, base consisting in boundless consciousness, base consisting in nothingness, base consisting of neither perception nor non-perception
1 perception: repulsiveness in nutriment
1 defining: of the four elements (earth [20 kinds], air [6 kinds], fire [4 kinds], and water [12 kinds])

43 Vsm. III.110.104 (Ñāṇamoli, 110).
44 Ibid., IX.295.3 (Ñāṇamoli, 288).
45 Ibid., IX.296.4 (Ñāṇamoli, 288).
46 Ibid., IX.296.8 (Ñāṇamoli, 289).
47 Ibid., III.74. Later, in Vsm. III.75–7, Buddhaghosa gives an account of how greedy temperament parallels faithful temperament, intelligent temperament parallels hating temperament, and speculative temperament parallels deluded temperament.
48 Vsm. 79–82. The theory behind the source of the various temperaments is intriguing but not central to the question of motivation I am exploring here. Buddhaghosa posits that the former three temperaments (*rāga*, *dosa*, and *moha*) have their source in the pre-modern theory of bodily humors, which are then strengthened or weakened by patterns of habituation. However, habituation is not only the accumulation of actions in this life but in past lives as well. Therefore, one of greedy temperament is thought to have had a past life where he or she had many tasks to do that produced desire or fostered greed or died in one of the heavenly realms where they were used to a world of delights. One of hating temperament is thought to have had a previous life in which he or she was exposed to particularly violent work (presumably military work or hunting), or was reborn from one of the hells where he or she had been subjected to much discomfort.
49 Vsm. III.97.
50 This connection between orthodoxy and orthopraxis calls to mind an important warning given by the Abhidhamma scholar Lance Cousins, who in a review of Carol Anderson's book on the *Four Noble Truths, Pain and Its Ending*, gives the following caution about understanding these formulations of Buddhist teaching as analogous to doctrines: "[I]t is highly doubtful that any form of traditional Buddhism ever thought of belief in or assent to the four noble truths as something in any sense required. Rather they (or at least the first truth) are typically considered something to be investigated, questioned, explored, and discussed." See L. S. Cousins, "Review of *Pain and Its Ending*," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 8 (2001): 40.
51 As indicated in note 1 of Chapter 3, portions of this chapter, especially the section headed "Bonaventure on Moral Exemplars," have appeared in a slightly different form in David A. Clairmont, "Bonaventure on Moral Motivation: Trajectories of Exemplification in His Treatment of Voluntary Poverty," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25.2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 109–136.
52 *De verbo incarnato*, Serm. V.15. Zachary Hayes, *What Manner of Man?: Sermons on Christ by St Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 34–5.
53 Ibid., Serm. V.21–3 (Hayes, 40–1).
54 Hayes, *What Manner of Man?* 55, note 72. "Bonaventure now addresses himself to those who exercise the office of teaching and makes the application of what he has said concerning Christ, the teacher. It is not difficult to read into this text his concern for the confusion

arising from the confrontation of the older theological tradition with the growing influence of Aristotelian thought in university circles."

55 *The Disciple and the Master: St Bonaventure's Sermons on St Francis of Assisi*, ed. and trans. Eric Doyle (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 105.

56 Ibid., 106–7.

57 Ibid., 110.

58 Hayes, *What Manner of Man?* 100.

59 Ibid., 100.

60 Ibid., 107.

61 Ibid., 109.

62 Bonaventure, *Writings Concerning the Franciscan Order*, trans. Dominic Monti (St Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 226–7. Monti notes the inverse wordplay between *murorum* (walls) and *morum* (morals), which captures the sense of connection I am arguing between the categories of poverty and motivation. Challenges to one's attempts at poverty are a kind of barometer to track the pressure under which the striving Christian exists.

63 Ibid., 228.

64 See John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

65 On this point, see especially Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 242–50. Reynolds has challenged this portrayal by suggesting that Collins omits, among his accounts of Buddhist felicities, the tradition of being in the presence of the historical Buddha. "This felicity is constituted by personal contact/engagement with the Gotama Buddha. More than most other non-nirvanic Buddhist felicities, this is a specifically religious, specifically Buddhist 'form of happiness or well-being.' It is also a felicity that is believed to provide a context within which the attainment of other Buddhist felicities – including the ultimate attainment of nirvana – can be greatly facilitated" (Frank Reynolds, "The Medieval Imagination: A New Perspective from Southern Asia," *Journal of Religion* 80 (2000): 111.

66 R. M. L. Gethin, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* (Oxford: Oneworld, [1992] 2001), xiv.

67 While I do not want to press this point too far, I think this is a helpful way of thinking about the Suttas and the Abhidhamma as mutually corrective presentations of the Buddhist path. Here I am thinking about Steven Collins' account of the imagery of nirvana in Pāli text in relation to the narrative form of those texts. Collins' argument is that nirvana represents a twofold principle of closure to Pāli texts. On the one hand, it requires the authors of these texts to resort to images that go part of the way but not all the way in communicating the nature of nirvana (as a state in but not fully expressive through time). So the texts close discussion of nirvana by appealing to images that lead one to further investigation through practice of the Buddhist path. Yet nirvana also functions, Collins says, as a narrative principle of closure because stories in which persons attain nirvana turn out to have this attainment as the final episode of the narrative. I think another way of thinking about Collins' thesis is to replace the idea of closure with the idea of moral exemplarity. Abhidhamma discourse would seem to provide a counterexample of how narratives form people, a complement to rather than in competition with, the narrative form of the Suttas. See Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

68 On the use of lists and memorization in oral and written Buddhist literature, see Rupert Gethin, "The *Mātikas*: Memorization, Mindfulness, and the List," in Janet Gyatso, ed., *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), 149–72.

69 Vsm. XIV.3 (Ñāṇamoli, 435–6).

70 In an earlier chapter, I examined the Abhidhamma teachings about aggregates (*khandhas*), truths (*sacca*), and dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). Here Buddhaghosa also refers to the bases (*āyatana*), elements (*dhātu*), faculties (*indriya*). The *āyatana* are the six internal and the six external bases of sense: *cakkhu* (eye), *sota* (ear), *ghāna* (nose), *jivhā* (tongue), *kāya* (body), and *mano* (mind); and in corresponding order, *rūpa* (visible object), *sadda* (sound), *gandha* (odor), *rasa* (taste), *phoṭṭhabba* (tangible object), and *dhamma* (cognizable object) (PED definitions, also enumerated at Vsm. XV.1). The *dhātu* are the 18 basic elements of experience, derived by multiplying the same six senses by a tripartite distinction into sense, sense-bases and consciousness of the sense (in Ñāṇamoli's translation [Vsm. XV.17]). The *indriya* are the faculties which are operative in everyday experience and which have the potential to be cultivated at the various planes or meditative states. They are different from the *āyatana* and *dhātu* because they represent capacities that *can* be used or developed, rather than events that must necessarily arise in any unit of experience. They are linked to elements in the *cetasika* and *rūpa* lists, however. (See Appendix 1). In Ñāṇamoli's translation: *cakkhundriyaṃ* (eye faculty), *sotindriyaṃ* (ear faculty), *ghānindriyaṃ* (nose faculty), *jivhindriyaṃ* (tongue faculty), *kāyindriyaṃ* (body faculty), *manindriyaṃ* (mind faculty), *itthindriyaṃ* (femininity faculty), *purisindriyam* (masculinity faculty), *jīvitindriyaṃ* (life faculty), *sukhindiyaṃ* (physical pleasure faculty), *dukkhindriyaṃ* (physical pain faculty), *somanassindriyaṃ* (mental joy faculty), *domanassindriyaṃ* (mental grief faculty), *upekkhindriyaṃ* (equanimity faculty), *saddhindriyaṃ* (faith faculty), *viriyindriyaṃ* (energy faculty), *satindriyaṃ* (mindfulness faculty), *samādhindriyaṃ* (concentration faculty), *paññindriyaṃ* (understanding faculty), *anaññātaññassāmītindriyaṃ* (the "I shall come to know the unknown" faculty), *aññindriyaṃ* (final knowledge faculty), *aññātāvindriyaṃ* (final-knower faculty).

71 Ibid., Vsm. XVIII.2 (Ñāṇamoli, 605).

72 This is not an absolute equivalency. As L. S. Cousins notes, there are several instances in the *Nikāyas* where *samatha* is used as an equivalent to *nibbāna*, even though the more common equivalent is between *samatha* and *samādhi* and among *vipassanā*, *paññā* and *nibbāna*. See his "Samatha-yāna and Vipassanā-yāna," in Gatare Dhammapala, Richard Gombrich, and K. R. Norman, eds., *Buddhist Studies in Honour of Hammalava Saddhātissa* (Nugegoda, Sri Lanka: University of Sri Jayewardenepura, 1984), 56–7.

73 Vsm. XVIII.3 (Ñāṇamoli, 605).

74 Ibid., XVIII.15 (Ñāṇamoli, 608).

75 Ibid., XIX.1.

76 Ibid., XIX.11–12.

77 Ibid., XX.3.

78 Buddhaghosa gives nine such kinds of knowledge at Vsm. XXI.1: knowledge of contemplation of rise and fall (*udayabbayānupassanāñāṇaṃ*), knowledge of contemplation of dissolution (*bhaṅgānupassanāñāṇaṃ*), knowledge of appearance as terror (*bhayatupaṭṭhānañāṇaṃ*), knowledge of contemplation of danger (*ādīnavānupassanāñāṇaṃ*), knowledge of contemplation of dispassion (*nibbidānupassanāñāṇaṃ*), knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatāñāṇaṃ*), knowledge of contemplation of reflection (*paṭisaṅkhānupassanāñāṇaṃ*), knowledge about equanimity about formations (*saṅkhārupekkhāñāṇaṃ*), and knowledge in conformity with truth (*saccānulomikaṃ ñāṇaṃ*).

79 Vsm. XXII.27.

80 Vsm. XXII.4.

81 Vsm. XXII.30.

82 The five *indriyas* cited in this set of the *bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā* are a sub-grouping (the "spiritual *indriyas*") of a larger list of 22 enumerated in the *Vibhaṅga* book of the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* (122).

83 I have been unable to locate a definitive statement on the difference between *bala* and *indriya*, and so have retained Gethin's observation that there is no unanimity on this point and that Buddhaghosa favors the interpretation that *bala* is an intensification of *indriya*. See Gethin, 140–5. The derivation of *indriya*, as he notes, suggests that its defining element is control or direction (making it, interestingly, quite close to Bonaventure's discussion of *voluntas*). Yet, as Gethin points out (23), Buddhaghosa also notes that the 37 *bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammā* arise in a single moment of consciousness – "At the time of arising of [any one of] the four kinds of [path] knowledge, [all these states] are found in a single consciousness. In the moment of fruition the thirty-three excepting the four right endeavors are found (Vsm. XXII.39)" – rather than in stages or in ordered succession, as Vasubandhu explains at *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 382. This would mean that the only element that even in the moment of fruition of the factors, where there is no need for the *sammappadhāna*, both an *indriya*-level and a *bala*-level of the fivefold lists would coexist. I would interpret this to mean that, even in perfection there remains a level of movement or dynamism, rather than final rest.

84 This involves Buddhaghosa's discussion about ruling or "predominance" conditions (*adhipati-paccaya*) in Vsm. XVI.72.

> A state that assists in the sense of being foremost is a *predominance condition*. It is of two kinds as conascent and as object. Herein, because of the passage beginning "Predominance of zeal is a condition, as predominance condition, for states associated with zeal and for the kinds of materiality originated thereby (Pṭn. 1,2)," it is the four states called zeal, [purity of] consciousness, energy, and inquiry, that should be understood as predominance condition; but not simultaneously, for when consciousness occurs with emphasis on zeal and putting zeal foremost, then it is zeal and not the others that is predominant. So with the rest. But the state, by giving importance to which, immaterial states occur, is their object-predominance. Hence it is said: "When any states, as states of consciousness and consciousness-concomitants, arise by giving importance to any states, these latter states are condition, as predominance condition, for those [former] states (Pṭn.1,2)."

85 Vsm. XXII.39.

86 Vsm. XXII.40.

6

Personal Horizons: Moral Struggle, Religious Humility, and the Possibility of a Comparative Theological Ethics

While this book has drawn a comparison between two classic figures in the history of religious thought, it has also been indirectly about people who undertake comparisons of the moral worlds of others. It is, admittedly, always dangerous to draw the autobiographical into scholarship (even if this was never perceived as a danger for pre-modern thinkers). Yet it would seem that the viability of comparative studies, at least in theology and religious ethics, must examine honestly the reasons why scholars engage in comparison, even if this means reflecting on one's own motives, what one hopes to accomplish through one's investigations, and how comparativists have the potential to influence the communities they study. In this final chapter, I want to draw some preliminary conclusions about the comparison undertaken here but also to link these conclusions with the rationales and practices of comparative religious ethics today.

Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa on Personal Struggle

This book has examined the problem of moral struggle by placing in dialogue Bonaventure's Trinitarian discourse, which envisions moral struggle through an analysis of connections among symbolically structured material and practical realities, and Buddhaghosa's use of the analytical tools of Abhidhamma to understand how struggle is affected by one's ability to break down one's own mental reality and its physical surroundings into their most basic component parts. Through an interplay of two contexts – the place of Trinitarian theology and Abhidhamma on the one hand, and their communities' uses of practices of material simplicity on the other – I have made an examination of these central symbolic religious cosmologies of medieval Roman Catholicism and pre-modern Theravāda Buddhism, tying them to the basic problem

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of the nature and use of material reality on which these symbolic modes of discourse are based. My goal was to show how descriptions of the problem of moral struggle can be helpfully expanded by meditating on the dynamics of moral formation and transformation posited by these two thinkers. The motive behind this study has been to acknowledge the possibility that expanding one's notion of moral struggle through inter-religious comparison may be useful in examining one's own moral struggles and the intellectual challenges of living in our postmodern age in dialogue with ancient traditions.

As we have seen from our discussions of Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, these religious accounts approach the problem from quite different angles. Even though Bonaventure did engage in a discussion of the will as a faculty in a way similar to his medieval contemporaries, and even though Buddhaghosa carried on the line of thinking about intentionality and causal connections that characterized both the Suttas and the Abhidhamma expositions, these thinkers were more concerned to locate the problem of moral struggle within wider contexts that included considerations of how people interact with material reality through particular symbolic categories of interpretation. How do these modes of thinking informed by the symbolic religious cosmologies of Trinitarian theology and Abhidhammic philosophy help us to think more broadly about the classic problem of moral struggle? First, let us consider how Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's accounts express the problems of moral struggle and the processes of moral transformation; then we will be able to consider how their accounts can be read together for constructive purposes.

First, both of these thinkers conceded a necessary connection between seeing the world in a certain way and being able to act in accordance with one's convictions about it. For Buddhaghosa, this way of seeing is about learning the patterns of connections among the factors of phenomenal experience. If one trains the mind, through concentration, to analyze how ideas rise and fall away in consciousness, then one develops the ability to control one's attachment to the ideas and the world of form which gives rise to them. In other words, insight wisdom is both the result and the illustration of the discipline of seeing rightly, a discipline that is cultivated through the practice of meditation first on material reality and then on one's own mental processes. For Bonaventure, the procedure is somewhat different. One learns to see the world in a particular way by placing oneself in the care of a God who desires one's happiness and this God is revealed through history culminating in His incarnation in Jesus Christ. Practice in the Christian life is strengthened by particular moral exemplars in the tradition, most notably Francis of Assisi, but most centrally through the sacramental structures of the church. Weakness comes to human beings as a result of sin, and so one can never be entirely free from it, as moral struggle is the expression of the effects of sin. However, God is revealed to human beings and assists them in their struggle most perfectly in Jesus, but secondarily in the saints and is even echoed in vestiges in the natural world.

Second, both thinkers acknowledge the inverse of this connection, namely that practice in accordance with a tradition's moral guidelines is necessary if one wishes to see rightly. For Buddhaghosa, not only does one verify teachings through experience, but practice in accordance with the Dhamma prepares one to recognize the teachings' veracity. This is the force of placing *sīla* at the beginning of the path but also returning

to it throughout as the element that grounds meditation and the insight that arises from it. Bonaventure appreciates the same general relationship but emphasizes the particular activity of the Christian community as central and its mediation of the symbolic work of the Trinity, through which its basic commitments are expressed and in whom one learns to conform oneself to the exemplification of the divine in this world. For Buddhaghosa, the community provides the context and instruction needed to encounter moral struggle productively (for example, in commencing meditation) and therein remains a close relationship between the moral struggle of monks and that of lay persons. The sacraments of the church hold a pivotal place for Bonaventure because they are the preeminent location of God's interaction with God's people, bringing them the remedy for sin and the cure for moral weakness. He is careful not to equate the grace received in the sacraments with the fullness of God's glory, but the practice of the sacraments forms the community into a right view about the nature of God and the work of God in the life of God's creation. Both thinkers identify that one must begin within a tradition of practice if one is to appreciate a tradition of thought, yet they are careful to illustrate how these traditions train us in new ways of thinking that feed back to strengthen (and perhaps modify) our behaviors.

Third, engagement with material reality and the insight that leads to strong moral resolve are closely connected for both thinkers but in different ways. Buddhaghosa judges that meditation on material reality opens one up to personal as well as communal reflections. For example, the fittingness of a meditation subject to the temperament of one meditating is a problem which binds one's past engagement with material possessions to the practices that rely upon isolated engagements with descriptions and mental representations of materiality. The community provides the context but also the instructor who situates the novice properly in that context. Here, moral struggle might rightly be read as the mediation between the goals of the individual and the goals of the community. Bonaventure's defense of the Franciscan interpretation of voluntary poverty engages material reality on multiple levels. The created world expresses the bounty and goodness of God, but insofar as it and human beings are corruptible, it cannot be the source of ultimate fulfillment. Human beings' tendencies to excess, to hoarding, and to using material possessions to insulate themselves from suffering and the needs of others display a fundamental ambivalence about the material world. Material reality also functions as a means for spiritual advancement when it is viewed for its echo of divine splendor.

Fourth, Bonaventure's and Buddhaghosa's central patterns of thinking display an interesting convergence despite their apparent dissimilarities. Bonaventure's emphasis in all of his writings on the symbolic importance of the Trinity and on the transformative capacity of the model of Trinitarian love for human life means that he is always looking for ways of seeing the world and particular human endeavors through a system of theological symbols that expresses something about the source of reality that goes beyond initial perceptions of phenomenal reality. In other words, his Trinitarian symbolism connects knowledge of God as Trinity to one's ability to conform oneself to the will of the creator. One cannot interpret one's own actions properly if one is not schooled in a Trinitarian mode of interpretation. Buddhaghosa's mode of analysis demonstrates that the very act of concentration involves the decomposition of reality into components which itself supports the very problem of moral struggle. If, as

suggested above, moral struggle has to do at least in part with the experience of a discontinuity between the knowledge of what one ought to do and the ability to do it, then the analysis of actions into components provides the logical foundation for this question in the arena of practice. Whereas Bonaventure's mode of thinking pushes the Christian to see connections among the components of reality through a Trinitarian synthesis, Buddhaghosa's mode of thinking pushes the Buddhist to separate the world into its components. Yet interestingly, these activities of drawing into a unity and separating into fundamental components are both placed in service of the moral unity of the person, who brings his actions ever more closely into alignment with what he judges to be true and right. This personal unity notwithstanding, we must still acknowledge their significant divergence on matters of the nature of reality and the existence of a persisting self or soul.

Fifth, each thinker highlights certain challenges present in his own exposition, even as each believes deeply in the truth of the teachings that they are interpreting for their communities. One of the hallmarks of Buddhist Abhidhamma is the process of breaking down what would appear to be singular acts into their complex processes and networks of causes. The question which seems to puzzle Buddhaghosa is how exactly we can know this through the act of meditation itself. Put differently, can one have knowledge of something outside of experience through an examination of the processes of experience? Bonaventure would likely agree that this question is important, but he might have offered an alternate formulation: Is there a connection between practical knowledge and ultimate knowledge and, if so, what is the nature of that connection? This points, interestingly, to the central Buddhist problem of the two natures of one's view (*diṭṭhi*). Knowledge is useful in attaining release from the cycle of rebirth, but attachment to knowledge as itself an instantiation of the ultimate ties one again to the reality from which one seeks to be liberated. Moreover, we might ask whether the style of presentation through which a specific set of teachings is communicated affects the ability of the student to learn and follow them?[1] That Buddhaghosa and Bonaventure wrote in ways that were amenable to the development of religious practice, often going to great lengths to interpret portions of their inherited texts in more immediately accessible and practical ways (at least accessible to those in their communities), suggests that they were well aware of the importance of genre and style to writing about moral issues.

Comparative Theology and Comparative Ethics: A Religious-Interpretive Work

Religious ethics frequently encounters the question of why deliberate inter-religious comparisons are important, and sometimes whether such comparisons are even possible given that the thinkers under investigation were not themselves concerned with the problem of cross-cultural understanding and may in fact be irreconcilably different. Occasionally, such comparisons are challenged with the concern that particular thinkers or traditions might be more appropriate for comparison than others.

Elsewhere, I have discussed the various rationales that might exist for studying moral questions cross-culturally.[2] This is related to the question of the extent to which

a religious tradition's rationales for comparative engagement might overlap with the scholars' rationales.[3] To summarize this point, we may place these rationales on a continuum from those aiming at efficient exchange of information that require minimum knowledge of religious others to those that see religious others as central to their own critical self-understanding. Whereas a *facilitative rationale* for comparison fosters the sort of tolerance for and appreciation of difference necessary for frictionless exchange in a global marketplace, a *persuasive rationale* is often linked to efforts at religious proselytization, where the friction produced by comparison is frequently seen as a necessary condition for the appropriation of new religious truth. While engaging in comparison with a *dialectical rationale* aims at the sort of understanding between religious traditions that highlights shared values and practical moral programs, even strong respect without a desire for appropriation, comparisons motivated by a *reconstructive rationale* acknowledge that traditions must use age-old resources to speak to contemporary human problems, while also calling upon the experiences of contemporary communities to form the new moral questions that demand our attention today. While these four rationales all structure different kinds of comparison, it is also important to recognize a *transformative rationale* for comparison, which seeks through its work to bring religious communities to more acute sensitivity to their own past moral failures and future possibilities, precisely through the process of comparisons that emphasize mutual moral transformation within strong religious difference.

The relationship of these comparative rationales actually provides a helpful perspective on the hermeneutical method that has structured this study and remains an important option for comparative religious ethics. Consider, for example, the helpful definition of comparative religious ethics provided by Sumner Twiss and Bruce Grelle:

> [C]omparative religious ethics is a hermeneutical, critical, and practical moral endeavor aimed at, respectively, (1) interpreting moral-religious cultural systems and patterns of reasoning in socio-historical context, including here both cross-cultural and intracultural diversity; (2) analyzing critically the social, political, economic, and institutional influences within and on these systems and patterns; and (3) identifying and developing intracultural and intercultural moral procedures and resources for constructing practical strategies for advancing human well-being.[4]

According to this definition, the hermeneutical aspect of comparison's "moral endeavor" has two parts: seeing the elements of moral-religious cultural systems clearly and understanding the patterns of reasoning that help connect the inner logic of the systems to the world outside, a world characterized by cultural diversity.

To be sure, interpreting well a cultural idea or moral problem outside of one's own context requires sensitivity and fairness, and Twiss would affirm that no inter-religious cooperation on moral matters will last if it is built on religious or cultural misunderstanding. Yet might we not press a further point, asking if that act of interpreting from a comparative perspective may rightly be viewed as a kind of moral and religious striving, as a complement and counterpart for our age to the moral and religious striving that traditions have undertaken for ages? In other words, it is through coming to terms with our own traditions' patterns of interpretation, especially those which have

miscast or ignored religious difference, that we can begin to view ourselves as places for moral transformation inspired by comparison.[5]

This transformative rationale may lead to changes or transformations not anticipated or desired by those in positions of power in religious communities, but it may also bring about changes in the moral lives of their members that more closely align their beliefs and practices with more tradition-conserving forms of life. In other words, the transformative rationale, whenever it guides comparative work, is indeterminate and risky to both the reformers and the guardians of inherited teachings. I understand the language of transformation to mirror a hope that Twiss and Grelle express, when they suggest that comparativists might serve religious communities and the wider society as "transformative intellectuals."[6] Yet the transformative rationale also signals a theological hope, that scholarly and religious humility might someday converge. Here again, the notion of the person as classic proves instructive.

When we view persons as classics, we are admitting that they are works in process, calling out for interpretation by others who also experience their lives as incomplete projects, as synecdoches of the moral and religious journeys undertaken by traditions.[7] Religious persons search for the deepest truths about themselves in dialogue with the questions and partially exemplified answers put forth by their "home" traditions.[8] If the comparativist were to allow for this aspect of dynamic uncertainty in the data under investigation, what would emerge is a very different sense of what is being interpreted and also the kind of act that interpretation is for a religious practitioner. The claim that persons may serve as classics to each other pushes us to ask a different sort of question. Is it possible that religious others can help us to access more honest views of ourselves and our communities' histories, and perhaps even to transform and strengthen us to live by what we profess even as they also call us to deeper knowledge of what our traditions teach?

Indeed, much recent work in comparative theology has proceeded on the conviction that we do not always know how the traditions to which we belong or those that we study will change in the future as they aspire to meet the standards they set for their members, nor can we predict how they will change our own ways of thinking. On this score, the transformative rationale for comparison seems especially helpful in linking the work of comparative religious ethics with the work of comparative theology. Comparison has the potential to transform one who returns to her or his own tradition with new approaches to reading its resources gathered through the comparative study, balancing attention to real and irreconcilable diversity of life with a hope that visions of what is good and fitting for human life are not ultimately incommensurable.

Comparative theology, since it has been significantly prompted by Christian theological self-critique, is a discipline that views itself as explicitly accountable not only to the academy but to others who are thinking about the meaning of their own traditions with a view of those traditions as in need of renewal and recommitment to the intellectual life. Moreover, comparative theology as a field hopes to uncover, in dialogue with members of other traditions, analogous opportunities for growth and discovery about basic religious ideas and practices, and to encourage its adherents in their pursuit of its noblest ideals, just as it requires encouragement and critical assessment from communities foreign to it.

It is unfortunate that the work of comparative theologians has not often been engaged by those working in religious ethics, in part because of the many connotations (some rightly earned, others unwarranted) that come with any use of the term "theology." It is more comfortable, as many working in the field have noted, to think about the field as a subspecies of the comparative philosophy of religions. While comparative theology has generated a significant amount of interest in contemporary academic discussions about religion, it has also been dominated largely by theologians undertaking comparisons between Hindu and Christian ideas about God and theological anthropology.

In regard to Buddhism, for a contrasting example, the term "theology" can simply have no correlate if one takes thought about God as the central focus of one's enterprise. While the lives and influences of divine beings do populate Buddhist literature, such topics are not the central concern of the Theravāda Sutta, Vinaya or Abhidhamma texts. While one could make the case that the term "theology" might be slightly more applicable to a discussion of Buddhist *arahants*, or *bodhisattas* (which have a different status in other forms of Buddhism than in Theravāda), or to forms of Buddhist life other than those discussed in the foundational texts, its problems for comparisons with Buddhism more broadly remain.[9] José Cabezón states the problem most succinctly: "I do not believe that there is a practical equivalent [in Buddhism] to the word 'theology.' A term like philosophy simply will not do, since it, unlike theology, is neutral in regard to the religious affiliation of the agent engaged in the enterprise."[10] However, Cabezón goes on to say that if theology may be understood as "roughly, a normative discourse, self-avowedly rooted in tradition, with certain formal properties," then we should speak of Buddhist theology, "on a par with Christian theology as far as the academy is concerned … and indeed all such forms of discourse, regardless of religious affiliation, should be given a proportionately equal voice in the academy so long as they can subscribe to the norms of open, rational inquiry."[11]

Cabezón's comment provides a helpful initial marker to distinguish comparative theology from the comparative philosophy of religions as an approach to religious ethics. Theology involves some kind of affiliation with and investment in a religious community, an openness to consider its claims about the ultimate nature of things as topics worthy of discussion. Theology also involves, if one takes a definition of theology drawn from the writings of Anselm of Canterbury, "faith seeking understanding,"[12] a judgment that one must accept certain truths as beyond the capacity of the human mind to discover on its own or to explain fully. Faith in this sense involves not only affiliation with a community that shares a common set of beliefs, but also reliance on that community for an accepted formulation of the content of those beliefs, such that theology is an activity whereby one's life becomes a critical review of those beliefs, tilling their veracity, and attempting to live the values communicated in them.

To enter a conversation in comparative religious ethics from a theological perspective does not mean that one is judging other thought-world's from a privileged standard not open to critiques and requests for clarification from those who do not adopt that perspective. It does mean that one who adopts a theological perspective in a comparative conversation is committed to keeping the person who believes in the wisdom of a tradition, despite her or his doubts and inability to live by that tradition's moral judgments, at the center of comparative investigation. Indeed, there may be room to

speak of comparative theology going on even in those spaces where one is questioning the central beliefs of one's own religious tradition. This would mean also that comparative theology, perhaps any theology, is not always helpfully served by supposing that those who speak in the language of a tradition can serve to "represent" that tradition in comparative conversations. Theological voices in comparative discussions often need to raise questions relevant to comparison from within the perspective of questioning one's own tradition. Such questions might helpfully supplement questions that arise from concerns of comparativists who do not maintain affiliation with a tradition.

The comparative ethicist and the comparative theologian may also find themselves converging in a certain set of values that structure comparative inquiry, principally the virtues of intellectual patience and humility. There will certainly be questions which theologians will not be able to resolve to the satisfaction of members of their own community, or to members of other religious communities, or to the wider academy. But such admissions should lead not to the marginalization of comparative perspectives affiliated with traditions but rather to a reminder that those in comparative conversations should be mindful of their effect on, even service to, the communities whose expressions they study. There will continue to be, of course, theologians of different kinds who have no interest in comparison, but those are not the persons who would likely enter such conversations in the first place.

Why have comparative ethics and comparative theology not been more productively related thus far in the short histories of these disciplines? Two assumptions about comparative theology have appeared problematic for comparative ethics. The first has to do with the relation of comparative theology to what have become known as theologies of religious pluralism; the second with the legacy of liberal theology.

Theology of religions may be understood as an activity that reads other religions through the primary lens of Christian soteriology. It has been a central concern of Christian theology to understand the logic of the Christian Gospel's claims about the nature of salvation as this applies to non-Christian religions: Can persons of other religions be saved? If so, does this relativize the uniqueness, even the relevance, of Christian revelation? Are there many paths to God or only one true path? There have been several forms of answer to this question: a pluralist response ("that all religions are equally effective in bringing salvation about"), an exclusivist response ("that belonging to the home religion is necessary for salvation"), and an inclusivist response ("that while belonging to the home religion is advantageous for salvation, belonging to an alien religion may sometimes suffice").[13]

Yet those working in contemporary comparative theology have themselves noted that approaching comparative discussions primarily in soteriological terms has made it difficult in many instances for those of other religious traditions to take seriously Christian overtures about serious comparative investigation. As J. A. DiNoia explains, the more important question to ask is:

> How do soteriological programs of other religious communities promote the pursuit and enjoyment of the distinctive overall goals they propose for human life? Questions about salvation would continue on the menu, so to speak, but they would take second place to questions about the varieties of aims proposed by religious communities, and the patterns of dispositions and actions they call forth.[14]

There does seem to be some progress, within the theological discussions about religious pluralism, to moving the discussion in the direction of description and comparison of multiple religious ends. This has afforded scholars the opportunity to look more expansively at religious texts, to see how they are used in religious practices and in scholastic traditions, as well as to examine more closely the effects on one's own thinking of reading texts other than one's own.[15] While still more needs to be done to develop the area of comparative theology, especially in relation to a comparative examination of the theological foundations for contemporary religious practices, the discussion is certainly moving away from its historical roots in Christian soteriology.

The second issue facing contemporary comparative theology has been situating itself properly in relation to the heritage of liberal theology in the academy, a question which is related in many ways also to the history of theologies of religious pluralism. This problem has roots in attempts to discern a fundamental structure or essential quality to all religious experience, through whichever traditions it is manifest. George Lindbeck took the trajectory of liberal theology to be supported by what he termed an "experiential–expressive model" of understanding religious phenomena.[16] Many have followed Lindbeck in critiquing those who view religion in this way, and comparative theologians especially have been ardent in noting the effects of liberal theology on inter-religious dialogue, even as they acknowledge the growing consensus in comparative religious studies about the inadequacies of this model. As James Fredericks has explained,

> the presumption of a universal religious experience carries with it a mixed legacy for the practice of interreligious dialogue. The fact is obviously more of a problem for comparative theology than for non-theological disciplines which study religions. The ambiguity lies in the fact that, on the one hand, the Liberal notion of religious experience can act as an impetus to engaging in interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, it can also be less than helpful by promoting (a) theological indifference toward doctrinal claims of other religious traditions, (b) a subtle theological imperialism, or (c) an uncritical syncretism which obscures real differences. If all religions are ultimately expressing the same ultimate, ineffable truth, why need theology interest itself in the complexities of other religions? Herein lie the roots of a new kind of theological indifference toward other religions.[17]

While Fredericks' comments adequately characterize the trend of thinking on this issue in comparative theology, he also frames an important issue for other comparativists in theology and ethics. Should we be searching for methods whereby the comparativists' rationales for their work are closely related to the rationales for inter-religious study emerging from the traditions under consideration? By suggesting that one possible rationale for comparative ethics is the moral and intellectual transformation of persons in their religious communities, I wish to highlight one such rationale, that may be said to join Buddhist and Christian comparative theology with a viable rationale for comparative ethics.

The proper subject matter of comparative ethics is not only religious communities' texts, practices, and modes of discourse, but also their people, who integrate, challenge, and struggle with their traditions over time. What I have tried to illustrate throughout this book has been that pre-modern figures in such different communities

as those of Theravāda Buddhists and Catholic Christians, while certainly removed from and unlike their modern counterparts and those who study them in many ways, have not really escaped the common human problem of moral struggle or the intellectual struggle to understand oneself and the truths one professes that inform the quest for a good life. Indeed, the problem of how fragile, incomplete, struggling people will learn to coexist peaceably, even to strive to help each other to live better, might even be more acute and pressing given the ever higher levels of awareness around the world of the disparity between religiously inspired moral ideals and the behaviors of the individuals and communities that promote those ideals. It is precisely on this topic, as I have been arguing in various ways throughout this book, that we might find a new space in which the work of comparative religious ethics could take place.

Even if we were to come to some pragmatically adjudicated consensus about a community's moral norms, or even if (as some today still advocate) there were theocratic rule in certain areas of the world, or a return to a religious culture of times gone by dominated by this or that religious group's sensibilities, we would still not be able to overcome the problem of moral struggle. There would remain a gap between what a community believes and what it does. The question is, it seems to me, how to facilitate a gradual conversation about our own moral failures as a necessary precondition to talking about our common morality. Put differently, what is needed is a way into the religious communities of other persons that views them not as inhabitants of wholly realized thought-worlds (either you are in or you are out; either you believe or you do not) but as persons in the process of coming to know and live by what they hold true. This would be akin to a kind of comparative sensibility which takes as its objects of comparison both alternative religious visions and also a perspective on those living within traditions as moral and intellectual works-in-process. People do not exist wholly inside or wholly outside traditions, but rather on a continuum of learning and practicing. If we are going to seek persons in the process of moral and intellectual struggle, it will be important for people in different religious traditions to devote significant work to the following activity: learning to speak about themselves with and in conversation with the basic conceptual framework of another tradition.

The Methodological Struggles of Comparative Persons: Five Roads of Return

I want to return now to the world of contemporary comparative ethics scholarship to ask where in its present form there might be room for the kind of inter-methodological conversations I have been suggesting between historians and philosophers with comparative interests and theologians committed to a comparative approach to understanding their own and other traditions. To do this, I want to offer five brief vignettes based on autobiographical passages by scholars of comparative ethics, where the person of the scholar peeks through the pages, giving us a glimpse of the kind of questions and struggles that motivate these scholars in their various intellectual pursuits. With these meditations, I mean to suggest only how we see the person in the midst of moral and intellectual struggle appear in comparative ethics and thereby to show possible avenues of future work in the field based on these precedents.

The first vignette comes from an essay by the comparative ethics scholar John Kelsay entitled "Piety, Politics, and the Limits Set by God: Implications of Islamic Political Thought for Christian Theology," which was published in Sumner Twiss's and Bruce Grelle's edited volume, *Explorations of Global Ethics: Comparative Religious Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue*.[18] In this chapter, Kelsay recounts how he came to his interest in Islam. He explains that, while studying at a Protestant seminary, he became interested in the question of "the ways in which ethics might be 'Christian' … [and] the ways Christian faith might be related to moral and political concerns. In a way, the goal was a type of self-understanding."[19] While he admits that a turn to the study of Islam was due in part to some prudent early career advice he received in the early 1980s and his association with a scholar of Islam at the University of Virginia, he explains that

> my two interests – in Islam as a religious tradition and in Islam as a clue in political analysis – belong together, of course. As my interest developed, however, I did experience a change in emphasis. If you like, you may say I found myself recognizing common ground in an Islamic "other." As I tried to understand, and to continue to do so, I came to think of this common ground in terms of piety: a sense that, whatever human beings may be, they are creatures whose existence is characterized by the experience of limits. In Islam, as in Christianity – at least, in the Reformed variety from which my understanding springs – "God" stands as "that which sets the limits" within which we might order our lives. Such is our responsibility, and also our fate.[20]

It is worth noting that Kelsay's discussion in the rest of the article focuses on the relationship between Islamic and Christian political thought, as these are informed by religious persons' self-awareness about their own historically shaped judgments pertaining to morality and political life.

I highlight Kelsay's autobiographical reflection to signal a form by which one's own sense of the intellectual struggle might influence comparative method. Kelsay is interested in the limits and possibilities of Islamic political thought in conversation with liberal democracy. While he is interested in this constructive dimension, he realized that Christianity and Islam share a strong judgment about the response of human beings to their own limits and the limits that God sets in their own best attempts to organize political life toward moral uprightness and a peaceful society. He attributes his description of these insights to a form of piety as this notion is understood in Reformed Christianity. Yet Kelsay's depiction of this form of common ground as a form of piety, comparatively understood – that is, as a humble response of the whole human project, with all its moral struggles and intellectual strivings, to the limits imposed on it by God – is one way that we might examine the struggle of persons to live faithfully but inquisitively within their traditions. Piety as a religious construal of the limits of moral projects, comparative and otherwise, is one way that the persons might return to the center of comparative thought. This consideration of the person in comparative thought maps to both the dialogical and transformative rationales for comparison mentioned earlier.

The second vignette comes from an often-cited lecture by Lee Yearley titled "New Religious Virtues and the Study of Religion" which he delivered at Arizona State

University in 1994. It was in this essay that he outlined his notion of "spiritual regret as a new, corrective virtue." He describes his proposal in the following way:

> Spiritual regret is one of those virtues that concerns the appropriate response to the recognition that extremely varied, legitimate religious ideals exist and that no person can possibly manifest all of them. Like all virtues it is corrective of a corresponding human weakness, in this case the tendency to overlook the challenge produced by the presence of other integral and even tempting religious goods. It is also new in that it both responds to challenges that were not fully understood before and develops capacities that were previously undeveloped … Spiritual regret arises when we recognize three things. First, that various legitimate ideals of religious flourishing exist. Second, that conflict among them means that no single person can come close to exhibiting all of them. Third, that those ideals or states which one can pursue or possess will usually be largely determined by forces either beyond one's immediate control or beyond anyone's control. This regret can arise in different forms at different times in one's life. It seems, however, normally to be limited to maturity, to a well understood fund of experience.[21]

Yearley's suggestion of this new religious virtue has proved challenging to his students and to his other readers. It asks readers to acknowledge a genuinely new moral situation – an awareness of multiple religious goods that cannot all be embraced equally over the course of a life – and a certain vision of the good for the person who encounters and responds appropriately to this new situation, that she or he will learn to cultivate a certain habit of subdued but sincere affirmation of other plans of life and visions of self-cultivation.

This virtue he hopes to cultivate in his students is the same virtue he wishes to exemplify himself as a scholar and student of traditions. He offers his readers the following "striking example":

> … when I spent two hours very early one morning in Korea on a cliff high above the East Sea looking at the Sokkurum Buddha … the figure draws one's attention, or at least drew mine, with a magnetic power and generates a mysterious kind of peace or at least stillness. The spiritual vision presented there was as powerful and tempting as I have ever seen. Yet I wanted it neither for myself nor for those about whom I care most. I wanted the religious goods expressed in the Sokkurum Buddha to exist, and even to be incarnated by many people, and yet did not want the people I cared about most to possess them.[22]

As Yearley goes on to explain, he saw in this statue something like tranquility, and this emotion communicated to him a sense of care for the pain and suffering of this world, yet he was bothered by the distance and detachment that this image of the Buddha expressed to him. Yearley is, as one senses throughout his writings, deeply concerned with the formation of virtue as a response to the problem of understanding one's own selfhood. But this particular insight points to another way that we might envision the person in the process of moral struggle.

For Yearley, the study of comparative ethics must involve, at some point, the interplay of deep familiarity with more than one tradition coupled with a specific form of virtue with respect to judging these traditions as *real options* for the good life of the one studying them. What differentiates the students and the teacher of comparative

ethics is the time spent with the texts of another tradition and a span of life sufficient to examine these texts, or as Yearley calls it, "a well understood fund of experience," but it is a common striving to cultivate the virtue of spiritual regret that unites the person of the scholar and the person of the student in conversation. So spiritual regret, we might say, is a second way that that the person in all her or his striving and struggle might reemerge at the center of comparative ethics.

A third example comes from the emphasis on hermeneutics in the multidimensional approach to religious ethics outlined by William Schweiker. His abiding concern is that comparative religious ethics, as well as theological and philosophical ethics, always runs the risk of reducing the complexity of moral life to one or another dimension of ethics or mode of analysis. Schweiker identifies five dimensions of ethical thinking to which any responsible comparative analysis of religious ethics ought to attend. The descriptive dimension marks the basic hermeneutical question that each scholar must face: "What is going on in the particular situation or mode of life one is addressing?" The normative dimension addresses a related question: "What norms and values ought to guide human life?" The practical dimension addresses a further specification of the normative dimension: "Given the norms and values that govern my life or the life of my community, what ought I or we to do here and now given the immediate problems we face?" The fundamental dimension answers the question "What does it mean to be a moral agent within the wider compass of reality?" thereby providing a link to questions of agency and freedom which are presupposed in all moral claims. Finally, the meta-ethical dimension asks "From what *standpoint* is inquiry carried out and what criteria of adequacy pertain to its work?"[23]

Schweiker returns to this multidimensional analysis because he is concerned that too much ethics scholarship (comparative and otherwise) tends to focus on one or another of these five dimensions to the neglect and integration of the others, yielding as a result forms of ethical analysis that do not speak to the complexity of our experience of the moral life. One can imagine, for example, an approach to comparison so involved in the descriptive dimension that it does not also attend to how our descriptions (historical and contemporary) interact with our normative judgments or our defense of a particular standpoint (including a comparative standpoint). So too, we might imagine an approach to comparison that is so involved with meta-ethical concerns about defending a particular standpoint that it yields insufficient moral descriptions sensitive to cultural and historical context.

It is also important to realize that, for Schweiker, the challenge of a multidimensional approach to comparative ethics is important precisely because it is related to the problem of limited persons (in this case, scholars studying religious forms of moral life) who nonetheless must interpret the religious narratives and activities that confront them. In this case, Schweiker's concern with the limits of perspective is quite close to the form of religious piety noted by Kelsay in his Christian–Islamic comparisons. This is one reason why Schweiker views comparative religious ethics primarily as a hermeneutic enterprise structured by the dynamics of mimesis and the norms of responsibility. As Schweiker describes it, "Interpretation is the scholar's mimetic praxis and as such serves as a form of responsibility for him or her. Interpretation enacts a common world, a world that permits and demands responses to others and accountability for one's actions."[24]

What does Schweiker mean by "mimetic praxis"? Traditionally speaking, mimesis held two primary meanings: (1) imitation of someone else's actions and (2) a representation of the world through art (which is also a kind of imitation).[25] For Schweiker, the problem with mimesis is that whatever the subject expresses about what she or he is observing (the matter of imitation) is always a reduction of the fullness and complexity of the reality. So in the second general definition of mimesis above, the interpretation of the reality in art is both less (in terms of complexity) and more (in terms of the manner of the portrayal) than the surrounding world, and some such reduction and corresponding increase is implied in any act of translating worlds. So for example, the act of translating the moral world of one person (which includes the complex interplay of texts, rituals, personal exemplars) requires a definite constructive work which is nonetheless a kind of intellectual struggle for precision and compelling style. And it is here that we see a connection between Schweiker's emphasis on a non-reductive, multidimensional approach to comparison with an equally strong emphasis on the non-reductive, multidimensional nature of the act of translating one world into another. As he says,

> the problem the comparativist faces is that the images, symbols, and myths religious communities use in interpreting and guiding their lives cannot easily be reduced to the expression of a subject. The aesthetics of expressivism simply fails to account for complex mythic and symbolic systems … Comparative ethics needs to examine the ways in which persons and communities have a world of meaning as this bears on life and conduct. The ethicist approaches this issue by interpreting the images of life that communities make and use in shaping character and conduct through their own performative activities, everything from rituals to methods of interpreting sacred texts to specific ways of life. *What* the comparativist is exploring are the complex practices communities use to symbolize their own lives. The "referent" of those practices is their reception in a specific form of life as well as what they present as possibilities for life.[26]

This description is both striking and instructive about how persons might be brought back to the center of comparative ethics. For Schweiker, while scholars in comparative ethics are (or should be) studying the range of practices that take place in religious communities, the practices are themselves highly involved efforts to express what cannot fully be expressed about the complexity of life.

As Schweiker describes it, that to which those practices refer is (1) their reception in a form of life and (2) their possibilities for how the community might live in the future. Consider then the place of the person in this description – the person is the being who, through language, strains to express the meaning of what they are doing even though a complex expression of this doing is finally impossible; and the person is a being whom mimetic activities force into public consideration and narration of a world of meaning that they both construct and which enables them to act, inviting others into the consideration of shared spaces for discussion about common moral concerns. We might say, then, that Schweiker's call to comparative ethics to exemplify an approach that is both multidimensional and cognizant of the unity between scholar and object of study (persons enacting worlds through moral action) through responsible interpretation is another way that the person returns to comparative ethics.

Let me now turn to a fourth example of how we might see the return of the person to the center of comparative ethics. Recently, Sumner Twiss has examined in great detail the practices of inter-religious dialogue at its intersection with discussions about international human rights (especially in his work with the Project on Religion and Human Rights). He has noted (with his collaborator, Bruce Grelle) the lack of ongoing discussion and collaboration between scholars in comparative ethics and members of religious communities engaged in inter-religious dialogue. He describes the problem as follows:

> On the one hand, we have an area of scholarly inquiry that, despite its sophisticated tools and methods, appears to lack a raison d'être convincing to those within and outside the field. On the other hand, we have a community of dialogue with an enormously persuasive rationale and mission that nonetheless tends to founder in its ability to mount convincing and nonparochial positions and arguments.[27]

Look again at the agenda Twiss and Grelle identify for comparative religious ethics and provide an example from international human rights dialogue:

> comparative religious ethics is a hermeneutical, critical, and practical moral endeavor aimed at, respectively, (1) interpreting moral-religious cultural systems and patterns of reasoning in socio-historical context, including here both cross-cultural and intracultural diversity; (2) analyzing critically the social, political, economic, and institutional influences within and on these systems and patterns; and (3) identifying and developing intracultural and intercultural procedures and resources for constructing practical strategies for advancing human well being.[28]

For Twiss and Grelle, comparative ethics is hermeneutical in a secondary sense, not because the work of comparison reflects the phenomenon of interpretive encounter and religious thinking as it does for Schweiker but because one cannot develop "procedures and resources" for dialogue without contextual sensitivity. So too, a critical analysis of social and political influence is related to resources favorable for conflict resolution. But notice that in this case it is not the person that is the focus of comparative ethics, but the procedures and values to which they commit themselves. It does not address the highly pressing question of what we do with moral failure exhibited by persons despite their stated commitment to internationally or inter-religiously negotiated moral standards, even enacted laws.

Writing 10 years later, however, Twiss adopted a new perspective on this problem. In his 2005 article, "Humanities and Atrocities: Some Reflections," Twiss reports on his experience leading a faculty seminar at his university that began to investigate the hypothesis that "human rights education could be especially enhanced by engagement with humanistic materials ranging across history, literature, philosophy and the arts."[29] Twiss recounts that among the seminar's readings were accounts of the atrocities in both the Congo and Germany, and that Twiss's judgment led him to examine "the distinctive contributions of humanistic expression" and especially "testimonial literature and novelistic explorations" which included Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*, Elie Wiesel's *Night*, and Bernard Schlink's *The Reader*. In response to

teaching Levi's book, for example, Twiss says that "What is remarkable about this type of testimonial literature or inquiry is that it does not appeal to personal experience in any foundational way; instead it chooses to use that experience to illuminate the rules and codes of the concentration camp world as a social reality, concluding by making cautious and restrained judgments about victims and collaborators. It fills a niche between unvarnished testimony to atrocity, historical and social scientific study, and imaginative literary exploration."[30] In response to Schlink's novel, Twiss notes that

> we encounter here some very serious meditation about how the ordinary foibles of people make them vulnerable to being drawn into criminally complicit activity without their full awareness or volition … [and that the] novel is imaginatively exploring new moral psychological territory that the society itself is still resisting … Schlink's novel comes close to sketching a supplementary history that thus far is unwritten, while also extending the temporal and generational boundaries of the moral psychology of complicity with atrocity. In addition, in its own small way, the novel contributes to a truth and reconciliation process that is likely to happen in no other fashion than attempts on the part of individual families to come to terms with their past history.[31]

Consider the place of the person in these descriptions. The point remains, as in Twiss's third goal of comparative ethics, "identifying and developing intracultural and intercultural procedures and resources for constructing practical strategies for advancing human well being." But now the procedures much more closely resemble patterns of personal relation and examination of history through inter-generational reflection, rather than emphasizing a philosophical analysis of action guides. Indeed, addressing human rights discourse appears to require an uncomfortable interplay of victim and perpetrator testimony, which provides us with a different perspective on Twiss's first comparative goal of interpreting moral-religious cultural systems. The question is not only the systems themselves, but the persons who live within these systems insofar as they are influenced by them even as they test and transcend their limits. The kind of moral failure that genocide marks is not a matter of moral incommensurability, such that we have no basis from which to understand and assess those outside of our moral-cultural system, but rather, as Twiss points out, a matter of moral psychology and its interplay with social power dynamics and blindness of collective memory. Here we have, I suggest, a fourth form in which the person has returned to comparative ethics discussions, that is through moral psychology and instances of moral failure.

It is interesting to consider the role that personal experience plays in judgment in Twiss's account. As noted above, for Twiss, it is not that personal experience serves as an insulated and solipsistic source for moral judgments; rather human rights discourse is an effective meeting place for inter-religious dialogue because judgments about moral norms emerge only in part through a recognition of basic foundational human goods that can be recognized cross-culturally. Indeed, as Twiss points out, sometimes these goods can only be recognized over time and through intercultural dialogue, as when the initial Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was developed, which was subsequently expanded to include economic, social, and cultural rights in response to further reflection on this topic in other contexts.[32]

Let me turn now to a fifth and final vignette (more a composite vignette) about the place of the person in comparative religious ethics, which is best understood as a collection of responses to the question: How do we understand the formation of moral selfhood and what place does comparison play in self-cultivation? This is one of the questions that has been explored in some depth in recent work in comparative ethics, especially by Jonathan Schofer and Aaron Stalnaker, most especially in two recent issues of the *Journal of Religious Ethics*, and exhibits two important points.[33] The first point focuses on the ability and responsibility of the comparativist himself or herself to make evaluative judgments about the material he or she compares. As presented by Stalnaker, "the most interesting and perilous issue at present in comparative religious ethics is comparative judgment – when and how to do it, if at all. However, judging those we study is inescapable – it can be suppressed or marginalized but not eliminated. Therefore, the real question is how to judge others (and ourselves) well, not whether to judge."[34] The person in question here is the comparativist, who wonders sincerely what is the proper relation between description and normative evaluation. The second point relates to the powers of comparative description to open up new perspectives on contemporary problems, while locating this work in practices of self-formation. Schofer notes that "the descriptive study of ethics enables us to encounter thought and practices that differ, often greatly, from our ways of framing ethical problems and solutions. This encounter can challenge modern and postmodern outlooks, lead to reflection upon options that are not presently considered, and push academic scholars of ethics to refine our analytic tools."[35] For Schofer, it is the self and its formation as a subject of action that ought to be a central element of comparative analysis, especially insofar as this subject is formed by "social forces that condition dispositions and habits."[36] For Schofer, his "theoretical account of ethics" in general and comparative ethics in particular must pass through four areas of consideration: "the self forming itself as a subject, subordination [to external authorities], internalization [of certain forms of discourse], and the authoritative order."[37]

These two points of emphasis – first, on the centrality and appropriateness of comparative judgments and, second, on subject formation through the agent's engagement with discourses of authority and social structures bearing on the subject – demarcate the most recent suggestions about how the person might return to the center of comparative ethics. This same focus is also implied, as I understand it, in Elizabeth Bucar's focus on rhetorical strategies within dominant forms of religious discourse, command of which allows agents to open space for moral creativity and counter-witness in social structures which otherwise militate against the full realization of their agency.[38] Yet it is important to notice the trajectory of these studies and the direction in which they are moving. While all of them consider the place of the person in comparative ethics, the former three (Kelsay, Yearley, and Schweiker) provide a bridge between the intellectual struggle of the religious person whom the comparativist studies and the comparativist herself or himself. The latter two focus more on changes in sources for comparative reflection and how these sources relate to the comparative ethics scholar's distinctive contribution to comparative study more generally. It will be important for futures studies in the field to consider how these two focus points relate.

There are many directions that such work might take in the future, and I would like to examine in the next section what I take to be the next logical steps in exploring

persons as classics of moral and intellectual struggle. The first would be an examination of the place of moral thinking in religious conversion; the second would be a comparative examination of manifestations of moral and intellectual humility. These two steps might be placed under the descriptions "struggles for a comparative horizon."

Struggles for a Comparative Horizon: Religious Humility and the Problem of Conversion

I began this book by suggesting that we are justified in making comparisons that would initially seem disparate if the questions we ask find a sense of common interest or concern with the questions to which the sources we study are answers. I also noted that the questions we ask, because we posit them as fundamentally open, have the capacity to transform our behavior if we allow them to pose strategic challenges to our own interpretations of our actions. Yet we must also ask what the comparison presented here can offer by way of a reformulated question that itself has the capacity to change us? This is the sense of struggling that the notion of persons as classics was supposed to address – persons as questions passed through time who invite our response to their own struggle by asking us to reflect on our struggles to understand our traditions and to live by their moral wisdom. I suggested that the topic of moral and intellectual struggle draws us into interpreting persons as classics, and that their truthfulness resided not so much in their settled answers to questions but in their commitment to a tradition of thinking which struggles to make sense of new moral challenges.

Bonaventure's answer to the problem of moral struggle makes a strong claim that fostering our ability to analyze reality symbolically presents us with new horizons for action. For Bonaventure, the classic question of moral struggle could not be simply a matter of mapping the psychological faculties that neatly explain the disconnect between one's beliefs and one's actions. Rather, it would have to ask whether, in attempting to act as we think we should, we are attending to the various ways in which our actions might be symbolically construed. In addition, it would have to ask how our ability to act depends on our attentiveness to what is first given to us, and the various ways that we experience this gift in the exemplars of our tradition and in the sacramental mediation of this gift. This gift, in Christian theological language, is the dynamic presence of God's grace which draws us to ever closer meditations on the world which it has created.

Buddhaghosa's answer to the problem of moral struggle makes a strong claim that we cannot overcome instances of attachment and wrong view unless we examine the mental factors that constitute our experiences. By knowing what conditions give rise to certain mental states, we are able to discern patterns in our thinking. We thereby also know how it is that particular actions, given a certain set of mental preconditions, issue in other actions. We are, on this reading, free to act as we focus our minds on certain factors and block out or ignore other factors, and by so doing we are able to link a newly imagined set of preconditions with an action that we intend. The difficulty, of

course, is that our minds tend to skip and wander from one distraction to another, so all such efforts are at best only approximations to the cessation of distractions and cravings that characterize our ultimate goal. For Buddhaghosa, the classic question should not simply inquire into the possible disconnect between one's beliefs and one's actions. Rather, it would have to ask whether, in our attempt to move from a belief to an action, we have adequately considered how it is that attention to the specificity and sequence of our thoughts affects the capacity of those thoughts to condition actions that reduce attachment and facilitate liberation.

Note that both of these formulations of the classic question of moral struggle point to new ways of conceiving the relationship between the cognitive and affective dimensions of motivation. This connection can be seen in how these thinkers deal with the problem of material simplicity. For Bonaventure, the presence of material resources presented opportunities to reflect on the difference between use and control of reality. Likewise, his meditation on the presence of God in the world illustrated that the materiality that could be the occasion for excess was nonetheless the same materiality through which one could perceive, if only as a vestige, the glory of God. The material world calls upon human affectivity as it provides for the satisfaction of basic needs and in our visceral response to the magnificence of its beauty and order. Yet material reality engages the cognitive dimension of the human being as it reflects on its own experiences of attraction and revulsion, longing and satisfaction. For Buddhaghosa, material reality (here, *nāma-rūpa*) is the basis from which sensations, feelings, and ultimately desires and attachments derive. Yet it is only through the processes of selecting a meditation subject, focusing our minds on it with energy and non-distraction, and discerning how mental images arise and fall away, that we come to see its qualities and our own patterns of interacting with it. In other words, the transition from concentration to insight involves a back and forth movement between the cognitive and affective dimensions of the human person, as we examine the reality that surrounds us and then delve again into an examination of how our minds cognize that reality.

So what insight does the comparison I have presented here contribute to the classic question of moral struggle? Taking into consideration the insights of Bonaventure and Buddhaghosa, we would first of all have to take seriously the need to broaden the notion of the will as a separable faculty to include the reciprocal connection between religious symbolism and the practices that inform it. *A revised view of the question of moral struggle would also need to consider the ways that a synthetic assembly of symbolically interpreted realties and, alternately, a precise mapping and disassembly of mental processes, are just as important to understanding moral struggle as the strength of effort and the proper operation of practical reason.* Moral struggle must also be seen as something that happens over the course of a life: that is, as something extended through time and personal history, rather than as something that inheres only in specific isolated decisions. As a person changes in response to events, he or she must be able to see how his or her efforts at one point are related to future efforts that will only become options with the arising of new circumstances. This is another way of saying that in the process of thinking through how persons maintain identity through moral struggle and change, one must take seriously the issue of habituation and of how habits form a significant element in personal identity and continuity.

These different dimensions of moral struggle of persons in tradition are helpful in understanding better the complexity of the moral agent and the religious environments in which many people dwell. However, there is also an important issue about the comparison of these accounts. The process by which religious thinkers wrestle with the problem of moral struggle is important precisely because patterns of religious motivation offer people of goodwill across traditions one of the highest examples of hope that emerges from efforts at dialogue: that the moral example of what is "other" empowers the agent to live faithfully his or her own tradition. The quest for moral integrity may well prove more significant in our age than discussions aiming to establish a lowest-common-denominator morality, because it recognizes that all moral thinking occurs in persons who are flawed or broken, sinful or ridden with attachment to false views. Yet in just this examination of religious others, it is not the saint, the paragon of virtue, that takes central place, but rather the one who struggles despite failure and doubt to live by and understand his or her traditions. In this way comparisons themselves, and not only the content of the figures compared, can have transformative power; as I said earlier, it is proper to think of comparison as having a transformative rationale.

The issues raised by this comparative study are presented here because the present author judges comparison to have a transformative effect on the one who makes the comparison and on the traditions from which the comparison is drawn. The one who reads and thinks about this comparison and the moral tasks implied by the comparative act will have opportunities to test the usefulness of this comparison and the many other comparisons on which this study draws inspiration and builds. Yet the foregoing study has been an instance of imagination, based on a comparative interpretation of texts. It is meant to serve contemporary questions by recalling forgotten ways of thinking; I do not pretend that the subjects of the study would have envisioned how this comparison could have served future generations of their own communities.

Much work remains to be done on the topic of moral struggle. Perhaps most significant in our time will be the relation of moral struggle to what outside observers see as moral hypocrisy. It will be important for future scholarship to produce detailed moral ethnographies in which questions and narratives might be investigated to understand what goes on in that puzzling moral space between true weakness and behavior that is genuinely hypocritical. As religious traditions and their members confront a world that is by turns skeptical of and fascinated by religious motivations for behavior, the question of hypocrisy becomes ever more pronounced.

On the topic of comparison, we have encountered another artificiality in this study. While people might think comparatively, they seldom if ever live comparatively. That is to say, they do not pursue ends and analyze their goals as if from two perspectives at the same time. We do not live as if we were fully acquainted with and, more importantly, formed by two or more traditions of thought and practice. This is another manifestation of person as classic: we live neither fully in the world we occupy comfortably nor in another we seek to occupy.

There are, however, some instances in which something like an approximation of inhabiting two moral worlds simultaneously does happen. When people undergo significant and life-altering changes of vision or priorities, they live as if between worlds. This can happen after the death of a loved one, or amidst alienation from one's friends or religious community. These are the instances in which one questions what one has

come to believe, to consider again the source of one's values and the judgments that flow from them. These are, in other words, times of *conversion*. Conversion is not just the switching of allegiance or affiliation but a thorough reevaluation and reorientation of basic commitments and beliefs. Here is the place (perhaps the only place) where we live comparatively.

As Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out, understanding a different culture "requires knowing the culture, so far as is possible, as a native inhabitant knows it, speaking, hearing, writing, and reading the language as a native inhabitant speaks, hears, writes and reads it… [one has to] become a child all over again and to learn this language – and the corresponding parts of the culture – as a second first language."[39] Conversion, religious or otherwise, is the existential expression of this linguistic problem, and yet more than this. We never do live in both of these worlds at once, but the process of conversion forces us into an approximation, to approach these worlds asymptotically, as Alfred North Whitehead once remarked. If there is a paradigmatic practical case to express this problem, it may be seen in the issue of international adoption, where parents must for the sake of their children chose whether, and to what extent, to educate them in the culture (particularly the religious worlds) of their biological parents. Perhaps, in these instances, comparison leads to a sort of developmental mutual conversion.

In addition, it seems to me that conversion itself, at least at some level, is thoroughly ethical in that it crystallizes an internal and (sometimes) external debate about the kind of person one wants to be and the ways in which people standing in a religious tradition can serve as a kind of model for what one wants to become. My hypotheses about this, which I hope to test at a future time through both textual and ethnographic investigations, would run something like this: while people often convert to a tradition for reasons of finding and abiding in communities of moral rectitude, they remain in the tradition converted to only if the complexity of theological development internal to the tradition sufficiently echoes the complexity of theological development in their own experience. But this is an argument that requires more evidence and another book.

The tasks that are before the comparative study of ethics unite the central concern of this book with the problems that are yet to be resolved. Of the many challenges facing the student of ethics in the future, one will surely be to discern how best to preserve traditions of thought that we do not claim as our own, but that we nevertheless respect, sensitive to how they might transform and enliven our own traditions and our ability to live in them by the challenges that the unfamiliar poses to us. This means that the scholar of ethics must embrace the fragmentary nature of moral knowledge in the present day, but with an underlying hope in the unity that binds together all of the particular expressions of the captivating and motivating good. Before a confusing and fragmented world, we are all perennial students.

Notes

1 See Lee H. Yearley, "Selves, Virtues, Odd Genres, and Alien Guides: An Approach to Religious Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 25.3 25th Anniversary Supplement (1998): 127–55; and his "Genre and the Attempt to Render Pride: Dante and Aquinas," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72.2 (2004): 313–39.

2 I first outlined these rationales in my concluding chapter to an edited volume on discussions about religious diversity in the United States and its implications and influences on American family life. See "Comparative Religion, Ethics, and American Family Life: Concluding Questions and Future Directions," in Don S. Browning and David A. Clairmont, eds. *American Religions and the Family: How Faith Traditions Cope with Modernization and Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 244–58. Labeling these rationales was greatly assisted by conversations with M. Christian Green.

3 Debates about the nature of independent and critical scholarly investigation abound, especially as this is expressed in questions about whether a religious practitioner is capable of looking at her or his religion critically or whether that person must, by the very fact of that affiliation, always be deferential to religious authority of some kind. While I do not intend to offer anything substantial to this debate, I do wish to clarify that the method of comparison I employ here assumes that all religious practitioners are capable of (and in some historical situations, obligated to) assist in the moral discernment of their own religious communities. Indeed, part of the rationale for holding Buddhaghosa and Bonaventure as classics in their traditions is to illustrate how they aid in this discernment. Additionally, while I do not discuss David Tracy's method of critical correlation for a revisionist Christian theology, its basic hypotheses inform my own thinking as a Catholic theologian concerned with morality. For a summary of his method, see David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 32–87.

4 Sumner B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle, "Human Rights and Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Venue," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1995): 23.

5 Thus far, relatively few scholars have grasped the religious dimension of the hermeneutical turn in comparative ethics. So, for example, Twiss suggests that thinkers following a

> hermeneutical-dialogical model … self-consciously start with the fact that we live in a morally and religiously pluralistic world and attempt to design a method of study that can be conceived along the lines of William Schweiker's recent proposal of comparative religious ethics as a type of moral praxis involving the construction of a common moral world (fusion of horizons) between the scholar's own moral tradition on the one hand, and the moral tradition(s) of particular interest on the other … This praxis, according to Schweiker, involves a dialectic of translation from one moral world to another (the other to ours), of receptivity to the other (insight into the other's moral world), and, through continuous dialogue between our world and the other's, a constructive effort to answer the question of how we (ourselves and the other) should live (a distinctive good of this praxis). (Twiss, "Four Paradigms in Teaching Comparative Religious Ethics," in Sumner B. Twiss and Bruce Grelle, eds., *Explorations in Global Ethics: Comparative Religious Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000, 17)

Yet Schweiker and others who follow his suggestions seem to be calling for a different view of the agent than the one Twiss uses to interpret Schweiker's remarks on comparison. For as Schweiker says in a revised version of the essay to which Twiss refers,

> I claim that interpretation in comparative ethics is best seen as a performative activity, analogous to the ritual and dramatic practices of religious communities. Interpretation is a human action; it is a praxis. My argument focuses, then, on what it means to say that for human beings understanding is bound to the exercise of power in action … with the reflexive process through which communities and individuals are constituted by the enactment of a world of symbolic meaning. Action and agency are the home of understanding. If this is so, then ethics becomes a fundamental discipline encompassing the

work of hermeneutics. (William Schweiker, "Responsibility and Comparative Ethics," in *Power, Value, and Conviction: Theological Ethics in the Postmodern Age*, Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1998, 113)

I suggest that what Schweiker is pointing to, in using the language of "performative activity, analogous to the ritual and dramatic practices of religious communities" and then linking this to the processes of understanding as "bound to the exercise of power in action" is that, at least in Schweiker's own Christian community, there exists an incongruity between what human beings, as limited creatures, are able to enact by their exercise of their own power, and the referent to which their enactment occurs. In other words, interpretation always points back to the limits of human symbolic usage and the ability of human beings to carry across their own ideals into their particular exercises of power. This is also, I would submit, the link that many scholars who otherwise praise his comparative method do not see, namely its construal of comparison as itself a kind of religious or world-translating and enacting activity with strong theological insights. See his *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology and Ethics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 211–15.

6 Cited in Twiss and Grelle, "Human Rights and Comparative Religious Ethics," 24. The language of transformative intellectuals comes from Henry Giroux's reflections on schools as "democratic public spheres" rather than as "extensions of the workplace" or as "frontline institutions in the battle of international markets and foreign competition." Rather, schools should be, he argued, "constructed around forms of critical inquiry that dignify meaningful dialogue and human agency. Students learn the discourse of public association and social responsibility. Such a discourse seeks to recapture the idea of critical democracy as a social movement that supports individual freedom and social justice." See Henry A. Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning* (Granby, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1988), xxxii–xxxiv.

7 I am grateful to John Cavadini for this helpful formulation of the problem of how individual striving might be understood as expressing a similar dynamic in the trajectories of religious traditions.

8 Speaking of the work of the comparative theologian working from a home religion, Francis Clooney describes the situation in the following way:

Unwilling to reduce their own tradition's faith claims to mere information which does not require a response, comparative theologians likewise refuse to reduce other traditions' faith to mere, safe information. Knowledge, taken seriously, changes the lives of the knowers; even if research reveals or creates a series of contradictions which make life more difficult for the believing comparativist, to pass over these in silence is only a short-term solution which manages to leave out much of what is most interesting in comparisons, the specific, "thick" details which constitute the substance of communities' religious beliefs and their continuing vitality. (Francis X. Clooney, SJ, *Theology After Vedānta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993, 5)

9 On this count, one might point to the interesting study of spirit possession or the transformation of Indian deities into Buddhist figures. On the former, see Carbine's study in Frank E. Reynolds and Jason A. Carbine, eds. *The Life of Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); on the latter, see John Clifford Holt, *The Buddhist Viṣṇu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

10 José Ignacio Cabezón, "Buddhist Theology in the Academy," in Roger Jackson and John Makransky, ed. *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 25.
11 Ibid., 25–6.
12 In his *Proslogion*, Anselm states that

> I do not try, Lord, to attain Your lofty heights, because my understanding is in no way equal to it. But I do desire to understand Your truth a little, that truth that my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that "unless I believe, I shall not understand [Isa. 7:9]." (*Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, Brian Davies and G. R. Evans, eds., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 87)

13 For the descriptions of these three options, I cite those provided by Paul Griffiths, *Problems of Religious Diversity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), xv.
14 J. A. DiNoia, OP, "Varieties of Religious Aims: Beyond Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism," in *Theology and Dialogue: Essays in Conversation with George Lindbeck* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 254.
15 See for example Francis X. Clooney, *Theology After Vedānta: An Experiment in Comparative Theology* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993) and *Seeing Through Texts: Doing Theology among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996) as well as David Peter Lawrence, *Rediscovering God with Transcendental Argument: A Contemporary Interpretation of Monistic Kashmiri Śaiva Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).
16 George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 31.
17 James L. Fredericks, "A Universal Religious Experience? Comparative Theology as an Alternative to a Theology of Religions," *Horizons* 22.1 (1995): 76.
18 Sumner Twiss and Bruce Grelle, eds. *Explorations of Global Ethics: Comparative Religious Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 217–36.
19 John Kelsay, "Piety, Politics, and the Limits Set by God: Implications of Islamic Political Thought for Christian Theology," in Twiss and Grelle, *Explorations of Global Ethics*, 218.
20 Ibid., 217–8.
21 Lee H. Yearley, "New Religious Virtues and the Study of Religion," 15th Annual University Lecture in Religion, Arizona State University, Department of Religious Studies, 1994, 12–3.
22 Ibid., 13.
23 See William Schweiker, "On Religious Ethics," in William Schweiker, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 3–10.
24 William Schweiker, "Responsibility and Comparative Ethics" in *Power, Value and Conviction: Theological Ethics in the Postmodern Age* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 131.
25 Oxford English Dictionary (online edition); accessed December 15, 2008. http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.library.nd.edu/cgi/entry/00309861?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=mimesis&first=1&max_to_show=10
26 William Schweiker, "Responsibility and Comparative Ethics" in *Power, Value and Conviction: Theological Ethics in the Postmodern Age* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 124–5.
27 Twiss and Grelle, "Human Rights and Comparative Religious Ethics," 22.
28 Ibid., 23.

29 Sumner B. Twiss, "Humanities and Atrocities: Some Reflections," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25.1 (2005): 219.
30 Ibid., 230.
31 Ibid., 231.
32 Twiss and Grelle, "Human Rights and Comparative Religious Ethics," 25.
33 *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33.2 (June 2005) and 36.3 (September 2008).
34 Aaron Stalnaker, "Judging Others: History, Ethics and the Purposes of Comparison," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 36.3 (September 2008), 426.
35 Jonathan Wyn Schofer, "Self, Subject and Chosen Subjection: Rabbinic Ethics and Comparative Possibilities," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 33.2 (June 2005): 287.
36 Ibid., 272.
37 Ibid., 271.
38 Elizabeth Bucar, "Methodological Invention as a Constructive Project: Exploring the Production of Ethical Knowledge through the Interaction of Discursive Logics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 36.3 (September 2008): 355–73.
39 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 374.

Appendix: Some Common Buddhist Lists, Their Relation, and Their Significance in Abhidhamma

Three refuges
1 Buddha
2 Dhamma
3 Saṅgha

Four noble truths
1 Occurrence of suffering (*dukkha*; unsatisfactoriness)
2 Origin of suffering
3 Cessation of suffering
4 Path leading to the cessation of suffering

Noble eightfold path
1 Right speech
2 Right action
3 Right livelihood
4 Right effort
5 Right mindfulness
6 Right concentration
7 Right thought
8 Right understanding

Threefold division of the path
1 Morality
2 Concentration
3 Insight wisdom

Moral Struggle and Religious Ethics: On the Person as Classic in Comparative Theological Contexts, by David A. Clairmont

Three characteristics of all phenomena
1 Impermanence
2 Unsatisfactory/suffering
3 Not-self

Five aggregates constituting all phenomenal reality
1 *Rūpa* (form and modes of physical relation)
2 *Vedanā* (feeling)
3 *Saññā* (perception; identifying ability of the mind)
4 *Sakṅhāra* (mental formations)
5 *Viññāṇa* (consciousness)

Ten precepts
1 Refrain from taking life
2 Refrain from taking what is not given
3 Refrain from wrong conduct in sexual matters
4 Refrain from false speech
5 Refrain from intoxicants that are the occasion for reckless behaviors
6 Refrain from eating at the wrong time [that is, after noon]
7 Refrain from attending musical and theatrical performances and from wearing jewelry and perfumes
8 Refrain from sleeping in large, high, or otherwise fancy beds
9 Refrain from accepting gold and silver
10 Refrain from wearing clothing in an ungraceful or undignified way

Ten good actions (see Gombrich, *Buddhist Precept and Practice*, 1995 [1971], 87, 293)
1 Giving material things
2 Keeping the precepts
3 Meditating
4 Rejoicing in the merit of others
5 Giving through transferring merit
6 Giving service
7 Showing respect
8 Preaching
9 Listening to preaching
10 Having right beliefs

Dependent origination
1 Ignorance
2 Mental formations
3 Consciousness
4 Mind-body
5 Six sense bases
6 Contact
7 Feeling
8 Craving
9 Clinging

10 Becoming
11 Birth
12 Death and decay

Four divine abidings
1 Loving kindness
2 Compassion
3 Joy at others' good fortune
4 Equanimity

Relationships Between Lists: The Example of the *Khandhas* to *Dhammas*

"Ultimate realities [in contrast with conventional (*sammuti*) realties] are things that exist by reason of their own intrinsic nature (*sabhāva*). These are the *dhammas*: the final, irreducible components of existence, the ultimate entities which result from a correctly performed analysis of experience" (*Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, ed. Bodhi, 25).

Division of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka

1. *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* "Enumeration of Phenomena" – lists and comments on all the "ultimate realities" (*paramattha-dhamma*), divided into two groups: the conditioned (52 cetasikas [mental factors] which give rise to 89 *cittas* [kinds of mental activity or "states of consciousness"], 4 primary physical elements and their associated 24 kinds of physical phenomena); and the unconditioned (*namely, nibbāna*). The central means for this enumeration are dyads and triads.
2. *Vibhaṅga* "Analysis" or "Classification" – a detailed analysis or classification of the basic factors into which, it is assumed, the Buddha classified realties based on what he is recorded as having said in the Suttas; each part has a section on the Suttas analysis and then a longer section giving the Abhidhamma analysis.
3. *Dhātukathā* "Discussion about the Elements" – a continuation of the discussion about the basic components of reality focusing on the elements (*dhātu*). It takes the analysis of the *dhammas* in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and relates them to (1) *khandhas* (aggregates), (2) *āyatana* (bases), and (3) *dhātu* (elements).
4. *Puggalapaññatti* "Description of Individual Persons" – contains a description of different kinds of persons, based on a theory of personality types as these would make a difference to success or failure of meditation.
5. *Kathāvatthu* "Points of Controversy" – contains a collection of issues and Abhidhamma positions against rival interpretations. It is roughly in a question-and-answer form (something like a Christian medieval *Summa*.)
6. *Yamaka* "Pairs" – deals with particular aspects of terms by asking how two elements are related.

7. *Paṭṭhāna* "Relations" – examines how the *dhammas* described in the first book are related through 24 laws of conditioned relation (*paccayas*). This represents the logical extension of the program because it attempts a catalog of how all possible phenomena broken down to their smallest units relate to each other in 24 different modes of relating.

Basic fourfold mode of analyzing phenomena (*Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, ed Bodhi, 29)

1 Characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) – salient quality of the phenomenon
2 Function (*rasa*) – performance of a concrete task of achievement of goal
3 Manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*) – way it presents itself to experience
4 Proximate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*) – primary condition on which it depends

Four natures (*jati*)

1 Unwholesome (volitional)
2 Wholesome (volitional)
3 Resultant (non-volitional; results from the first two but has karmic result)
4 Functional (produces no karmic results—indeterminate)

Eighty-nine (or 121) *cittas* (different kinds of consciousness)[1]

Mundane *cittas (81)*

Sense Sphere (54)

Unwholesome (12)

Rooted in Greed (8)

1 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with wrong view, unprompted.
2 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with wrong view, prompted.
3 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from wrong view, unprompted.
4 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from wrong view, prompted.
5 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with wrong view, unprompted.
6 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with wrong view, prompted.
7 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from wrong view, unprompted.
8 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from wrong view, prompted.

Rooted in Hatred (2)

9 One consciousness, accompanied by displeasure, associated with aversion, unprompted.

10 One consciousness, accompanied by displeasure, associated with aversion, prompted.

Rooted in Delusion (2)

11 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with doubt.

12 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with restlessness.

Rootless (18)

Unwholesome resultant (7)

13 Eye-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

14 Ear-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

15 Nose-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

16 Tongue-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

17 Body-consciousness accompanied by pain

18 Receiving-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

19 Investigating consciousness accompanied by equanimity

Wholesome resultant (8)

20 Eye-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

21 Ear-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

22 Nose-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

23 Tongue-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

24 Body-consciousness accompanied by pleasure

25 Receiving-consciousness accompanied by equanimity

26 Investigating consciousness accompanied by joy

27 Investigating consciousness accompanied by equanimity

Rootless functional (3)

28 Five sense-door adverting consciousness accompanied by equanimity

29 Mind-door adverting consciousness accompanied by equanimity

30 Smile-producing consciousness accompanied by joy

Sense-sphere beautiful (24)

Sense-sphere wholesome (8)

31 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with knowledge, unprompted.

32 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with knowledge, prompted.

33 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from knowledge, unprompted.

34 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from knowledge, prompted.

35 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with knowledge, unprompted.

36 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with knowledge, prompted.

37 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from knowledge, unprompted.

38 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from knowledge, prompted.

Sense-sphere resultant (8)

39 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with knowledge, unprompted.
40 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with knowledge, prompted.
41 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from knowledge, unprompted.
42 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from knowledge, prompted.
43 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with knowledge, unprompted.
44 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with knowledge, prompted.
45 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from knowledge, unprompted.
46 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from knowledge, prompted.

Sense-sphere functional (8)

47 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with knowledge, unprompted.
48 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, associated with knowledge, prompted.
49 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from knowledge, unprompted.
50 One consciousness, accompanied by joy, dissociated from knowledge, prompted.
51 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with knowledge, unprompted.
52 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, associated with knowledge, prompted.
53 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from knowledge, unprompted.
54 One consciousness, accompanied by equanimity, dissociated from knowledge, prompted.

Fine-material sphere (15)

Fine-material sphere wholesome (5)

55 First *jhāna* wholesome consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
56 Second *jhāna* wholesome consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
57 Third *jhāna* wholesome consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
58 Fourth *jhāna* wholesome consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
59 Fifth jhāna wholesome consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Fine-material sphere resultant (5)

60 First *jhāna* resultant consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
61 Second *jhāna* resultant consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
62 Third *jhāna* resultant consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
63 Fourth *jhāna* resultant consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
64 Fifth *jhāna* resultant consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Fine-material sphere functional (5)

65 First *jhāna* functional consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
66 Second *jhāna* functional consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
67 Third *jhāna* functional consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
68 Fourth *jhāna* functional consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
69 Fifth *jhāna* functional consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Immaterial-sphere (12)

Immaterial-sphere wholesome (4)

70 Wholesome consciousness pertaining to the base of infinite space.
71 Wholesome consciousness pertaining to the base of infinite consciousness.
72 Wholesome consciousness pertaining to the base of nothingness.
73 Wholesome consciousness pertaining to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Immaterial-sphere resultant (4)

74 Resultant consciousness pertaining to the base of infinite space.
75 Resultant consciousness pertaining to the base of infinite consciousness.
76 Resultant consciousness pertaining to the base of nothingness.
77 Resultant consciousness pertaining to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Immaterial-sphere functional (4)

78 Functional consciousness pertaining to the base of infinite space.
79 Functional consciousness pertaining to the base of infinite consciousness.
80 Functional consciousness pertaining to the base of nothingness.
81 Functional consciousness pertaining to the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Supra-mundane cittas *(8 or 40)*

Supra-mundane wholesome (4 or 20)

Path of stream-entry (5)

82 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

83 Second *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

84 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

85 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.

86 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Path of once-returner (5)

87 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

88 Second *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

89 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

90 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.

91 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Path of non-returner (5)

92 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

93 Second *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

94 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

95 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.

96 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Path of arahatship (5)

97 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

98 Second *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

99 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

100 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
101 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Supra-mundane resultant (4 or 20)

Fruit of stream-entry (5)

102 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
103 Sec ond *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
104 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
105 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
106 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Fruit of once-returner (5)

107 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
108 Second *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
109 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
110 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
111 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Fruit of non-returner (5)

112 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
113 Second *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
114 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
115 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
116 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Fruit of arahatship (5)

117 First *jhāna* path consciousness together with initial application, sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
118 Second *jhāna* path consciousness together with sustained application, zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.
119 Third *jhāna* path consciousness together with zest, happiness, and one-pointedness.

120 Fourth *jhāna* path consciousness together with happiness, and one-pointedness.
121 Fifth *jhāna* path consciousness together with equanimity and one-pointedness.

Fifty-two *cetasikas* (mental factors or consciousness-concomitants)

Ethically variable (13)
Universals (7)
1 Contact
2 Feeling
3 Perception
4 Volition
5 One-pointedness
6 Life-faculty
7 Attention
Occasionals (6)
8 Initial application
9 Sustained application
10 Decision
11 Energy
12 Zest
13 Desire

Unwholesome (14)
Unwholesome universals (4)
14 Delusion
15 Shamelessness
16 Fearlessness of wrong
17 Restlessness
Unwholesome occasionals(10)
18 Greed
19 Wrong View
20 Conceit
21 Hatred
22 Envy
23 Avarice
24 Worry
25 Sloth
26 Torpor
27 Doubt

Beautiful factors (25)
Beautiful universals (19)
28 Faith
29 Mindfulness

30 Shame
31 Fear of wrong
32 Non-greed
33 Non-hatred
34 Neutrality of mind
35 Tranquility of mental body
36 Tranquility of consciousness
37 Lightness of mental body
38 Lightness of consciousness
39 Malleability of mental body
40 Malleability of consciousness
41 Wieldiness of mental body
42 Wieldiness of consciousness
43 Proficiency of mental body
44 Proficiency of consciousness
45 Rectitude of mental body
46 Rectitude of consciousness

Abstinences (3)

47 Right speech
48 Right action
49 Right livelihood

Illimitables (2)

50 Compassion
51 Appreciative joy

Non-delusion (1)

52 Wisdom faculty

Rūpa (form; kinds of material phenomena and relation)

Concretely produced matter (18)

Great essentials

1 Earth element
2 Water element
3 Fire element
4 Air element

Sensitive phenomena

5 Eye-sensitivity
6 Ear-sensitivity
7 Nose-sensitivity
8 Tongue-sensitivity
9 Body-sensitivity

Objective phenomena

10 Visible form
11 Sound

12 Smell
13 Taste

Sexual phenomena
14 Femininity
15 Masculinity

Heart phenomenon
16 Heart-base

Life phenomenon
17 Life-faculty

Nutritional phenomenon
18 Nutriment

Non-concrete matter (10)

Limiting phenomenon
19 Space element

Communicating phenomena
20 Bodily intimation
21 Vocal intimation

Mutable phenomena
22 Lightness
23 Malleability
24 Wieldiness

Characteristic of matter
25 Production
26 Continuity
27 Decay
28 Impermanence

Note

1 This material has been summarized from the charts in Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed., *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Abhidhammattha Sangaha of Ācariya Anuruddha* (Seattle: BPS Pariyatti Editions, [1993] 1999).

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