

Śāntideva: Utilitarian or Eudaimonist?

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Utilitarianism: The view that the point of ethics is to promote the welfare of sentient beings. For a utilitarian, “to promote” means to maximize in an aggregative way.

1. On this topic, for those who have taken the vow, a universal characteristic of downfalls will be stated, so that whenever they perceive anything that has that characteristic, they should abandon it, and so that they will not become confused by merely apparent downfalls, or things that merely appear not to be downfalls.

If a bodhisattva does not make a sincere, unwavering effort in thought, word, and deed to stop all the present and future pain and suffering of all sentient beings, and to bring about all present and future pleasure and happiness, or does not seek the collection of conditions for that, or does not strive to prevent what is opposed to that, or does not bring about small pain and suffering as a way of preventing great pain and suffering, or does not abandon a small benefit in order to accomplish a greater benefit, if he neglects to do these things even for a moment, he undergoes a downfall.

tad-evaṃ samānta-saṃvarasya sāmānyam-āpatti-lakṣaṇam-ucyate, yena-āpatti-lakṣaṇena yukta vastu svayam-apy-utprekṣya pariharet, na ca-āpatti-rūpakeṣv-anāpatti-pratirūpakeṣu ca saṃmuhyet

bodhisattvaḥ sarvasattvānāṃ vartamāna-anāgata-sarva-duḥkha-daurmanasya-upaśamāya vartamāna-anāgata-sukha-saumanasya-utpādāya ca niḥśāhyataḥ kāyavān manaḥ-parākramaiḥ prayatnaṃ karoti / yadi tu pratyaya-sāmagrīṃ na-anveṣate, tad-antarāya-pratikārāya na ghaṭate, alpa-duḥkha-daurmanasyaṃ bahu-duḥkha-daurmanasya-pratikāra-bhūtaṃ na-utpādayati, mahā-artha-siddhy-arthaṃ ca-alpa-artha-hāniṃ na karoti, kṣaṇam-apy-upekṣate, sāpattiko bhavati.

(*Śikṣā-samuccaya* [ŚS] 15, Goodman trans. 2016, p. 17)

2. This body serves the True Dharma. One should not harm it for some inferior reason. For it is the only way that one can quickly fulfill the hopes of living beings.

Therefore one should not relinquish one's life for someone whose disposition to compassion is not as pure. But for someone whose disposition is comparable, one should relinquish it. That way, there is no overall loss.

(*Bodhicaryāvatāra [BCA]* V.86-87. Crosby and Skilton trans., p. 41.)

3. And if renouncing, or not renouncing, would create obstacles to the achievement of an equal or greater good by a bodhisattva of greater power to help sentient beings, or equal power, you should not do it.

*adhika-sattva-artha-śaktes-tulya-śakter-vā bodhisattvasya adhika-tulya-kuśala-antarāyaka-
karau tyāga-atyāgau na kāryāv ...*

(ŚS 144, Goodman 2016, p. 139.)

4. Realizing this, one should always be striving for others' well-being. Even what is proscribed is permitted for a compassionate person who sees it will be of benefit.

(BCA V.84. Crosby and Skilton trans., p. 41.)

5. Suppose that a bodhisattva could cause one sentient being to engage in wholesome actions, but in doing so would undergo a downfall that would lead to burning in hell for a hundred thousand aeons. Blessed One, the bodhisattva should enthusiastically undergo that downfall and experience the pain of hell, rather than sacrifice the welfare of that one sentient being.

*yadi bodhisattva ekasya sattvasya kuśala-mūlaṃ samjanayet-tathā-rūpāṃ ca-āpattim-
āpadyeta yathā-rūpayā āpattyā āpannayā kalpa-śata-sahasraṃ niraye pacyeta,
utsaḍhavyam-eva bhagavan bodhisattvena-āpattim-āpattum tac-ca nairayikaṃ
duḥkhaṃ / na tvena tasya-ekasya sattvasya kuśalaṃ parityaktum-iti*

(ŚS 167, quoting *Upāya-kauśalya-sūtra*. Goodman 2016, p. 165.)

6. As the bodhisattva Sārvavāha said in the *Sūtra on Chanting the Dharma Together*, “Blessed One, when a bodhisattva longs for Awakening first of all for all sentient beings, not for himself ... this, Blessed One, is chanting the Dharma together.”

It is only by giving things up that his own welfare is accomplished. Nevertheless, for fear of losing benefits for sentient beings, he does not place his own burden on unworthy sentient

beings. But where no benefits to sentient beings will be lost, what difference does it make if the welfare of the world is promoted by him or by somebody else?

Suppose that he fails to discard what is wholesome of his own in order to bring about what is wholesome for other bodhisattvas. Well, if he fears the suffering of the lower realms for himself, what others fear is also suffering. If he is indifferent, thinking “That suffering has nothing to do with me,” then as the sūtras say, he undergoes a downfall.

(ŚS 145-46, Goodman 2016, p. 141)

7. When happiness is dear to myself and others equally, what is so special about me that I strive after happiness only for myself?

When fear and suffering are disliked by me and others equally, what is so special about me, so that I protect myself and not others?

(BCA VIII.95-96. Translation by the author, drawing on Crosby and Skilton.)

8. Those who have developed their personality in this way, to whom the suffering of others is as important as the things they themselves hold dear, plunge down into the Avīci hell as geese into a cluster of lotus blossoms.

(BCA VIII)

9. Without exception, no sufferings belong to anyone. They must be warded off simply because they are suffering. Why is any limitation put on this?

If one asks why suffering should be prevented, no one disputes that! If it must be prevented, then all of it must be. If not, this goes for oneself as for everyone.

(BCA VIII.102-103. Crosby and Skilton, trans.)

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