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READINGS OF ŚĀNTIDEVA'S *GUIDE TO BODHISATTVA PRACTICE* (*BODHICARYĀVATĀRA*)

Edited by Jonathan C. Gold and
Douglas S. Duckworth

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Cover image: Bronze and silver image of the bodhisattva Manjushri, Bengal, Pala Dynasty,
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In memory of
Luis O. Gómez (1943–2017)

ABBREVIATIONS

B Bendall, ed.
G Goodman, trans.

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[2]

REASON AND KNOWLEDGE ON THE PATH

A PROTREPTIC READING OF THE *GUIDE*

Amber Carpenter

> The Guide enjoins giving only vegetables and the like at first. Later, by degrees, one acts in such a way that one is even able to give up one's own flesh!
>
> When the understanding arises that one's own flesh is no more than a vegetable, what difficulty is there in giving away one's flesh and bones? (7.25–26)[1]

MECHANISMS OF PROTREPTIC

The Greco-Roman philosophical tradition had a genre of literature called "protreptic." *Protrepsis* means "turning toward," and while the genre might broadly be taken as a call to turn toward a different form of life,[2] the metaphor embedded in this term for it comes from Plato's *Republic*, where at issue is specifically a turning of the soul toward reality:

> The power to learn is present in everyone's soul, and the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body. This instrument cannot be turned around from that which is coming into being without turning the whole soul until it is able to study that which is and the brightest thing that is . . . education is the craft concerned with doing this very thing, this turning around, and with how the soul can most easily and effectively be made to do it. It isn't the craft of putting sight into the soul. Education takes for granted that sight is there but that it isn't turned the right way or

> looking where it ought to look, and it tries to redirect it appropriately . . . the virtue of reason . . . never loses its power but is either useful and beneficial or useless and harmful, depending on the way it is turned.
>
> (*REPUBLIC* VII.518C–519A)[3]

Insofar as talk of "turning souls" refers to souls, such a phrase may seem singularly inappropriate to a Buddhist context. But there are deeper affinities in the metaphor. The very notion of protreptic as a genre contains a sense of literature that does not just say something but *does* something. It does something to the audience; and what it does is transform their outlook wholesale. More specifically, protreptic aims, as Plato puts it, to turn us toward reality, or reorient us toward a comprehension of reality.

There is a further, related affinity in the presumption that such reorientation—grasping reality aright, in a way one ordinarily does not—is a moral matter. Such transformation is no mere accumulation of facts; turning toward reality transforms one's engagement with the world. Thus, for Śāntideva,[4] all virtues are essentially and primarily mental. For instance, "The perfection of generosity is said to result from the mental attitude of relinquishing all that one has to all people, together with the fruit of that act. *Therefore the perfection is the mental attitude itself*" (5.10, *emphasis mine*).

And similarly with *śīla* (discipline, or restraint):[5] "Where can fish and other creatures be taken where I might not kill them? Yet when the mental attitude to cease from worldly acts is achieved, that is agreed to be the perfection of *śīla*" (5.11).

And so with anger and the rest.[6]

Such reorientation implies a revised conception of what is possible, necessary, and appropriate, which in turn issues in feelings and actions. Actions and individual choices carry moral weight, of course—in the Buddhist idiom, they have karmic consequences. But they carry these because of the intentionality and ways of seeing that they contain, express, and perpetuate. It is our ways of seeing reality that inform our conceiving of intentions to act; and so it is through seeing reality that we transform ourselves, and the quality and nature of our actions.[7] This process of coming to see reality does not, for Śāntideva at least, arise suddenly and all at once.[8] It arises rather through several more minor or local revisionings, which it is the work of the *Guide* and other such texts and related exercises to effect.[9] The transformation of outlook, the perspective thus attained, are the core and substance of the moral life—as epitomized in

the perfection of wisdom or insight (*prajñā*) standing at the culmination of the path.

While a great deal of modern moral theory attends to action, decision, and the principles underlying correct choice, by the time we reach the point of choosing an action we are already fairly well down the road of ethical formation and ethical thought. All the truly decisive elements occur upstream, as it were, where the world is characterized in a certain way and categorized, where meanings take shape and options emerge. At the point of choice among a few well-articulated options, we might say with Sartre, *les jeux sont faits*.[10]

Buddhist ethical thought, reflective and hortatory, respects this fact implicitly, and Śāntideva's *Guide to Bodhisattva Practice* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*, hereafter *Guide*) exemplarily so. Rather than argue for this or that ultimate ground of normativity, the *Guide* aims to change the categories in which we experience the world, the perspective we take on our own experiences, and to modify quite comprehensively what is "on our minds." This emphasis on transforming experience is what makes so apt Garfield's preferred characterization of Śāntideva's ethics as "phenomenological."[11] This transformation should alter what we see as possible, necessary, and reasonable regarding action and feeling, and leave choice a theoretically quite uninteresting part of the chain of explanation.

Such protreptic texts appeal to reason and offer arguments—because after all, it is a feature of human creatures that they do also recognize and respond to these in distinctive ways. But it belongs to the very nature of the genre that such rational appeals do not swing free in some rarefied logical space (as claims like $2 + 2 = 4$ seem to do). For protreptic attempts to alter what one recognizes as a reason; the "turning of the soul" consists in the recognition that what you took before to be a good reason is no reason at all, while something you had never properly seen is now appreciated as the salient rational consideration. Exactly this shifting appreciation of what counts as a reason makes the genre of protreptic an apt point of reference for a Mādhyamika like Śāntideva.[12] For it allows categories and conceptualizations to be evaluated as progressively more apt, without implying commitment to any one set of categories as capturing the final and ultimate truth of the matter.

The difficulty for any Mādhyamika is how to eschew any reference (or commitment) to ultimate reality and yet retain teleological notions of progress and path. Any Buddhist thinks our ordinary ways of looking at the world are terribly flawed and the cause of persistent suffering, but without recourse to some sort of "seeing things as they actually are" (in the

metaphysical sense that a Mādhyamika eschews), it is difficult to evaluate any ordinary conceptions as better and worse. They cannot be rejected on account of their being wrong or false, nor can changes in ordinary views be validated on the basis of being correct or closer to correct. A protreptic understanding of how Śāntideva is working here addresses the difficulty inasmuch as protreptic arguments do not aim to—and do not need to—prove that alternative positions are just plain false (in the way that $2 + 2 = 5$ is just plain false), nor need they demonstrate that the preferred outlook is the *only* intelligible one. The everyday outlook is superseded and replaced, not proved wrong; the opening of the mind to new things as reasons counts as an improvement primarily on moral grounds (such ways of looking make us better persons and are better at ending suffering), but also on peri-epistemological grounds such as the ability of the new ways of seeing to shed more light on more of our moral lives, or to accommodate and explain the old ways of seeing and their inferiority.

To illustrate what it means to say that the *Guide*, like any protreptic text, deliberately alters what we recognize and respond to as a reason or argument, we will look closely at two such transformations: the first, working on the audience of the text through the course of chapters 2 to 4, transforms how we conceive of ourselves and our situation; the second examines the way a transformation of outlook is effected through the depiction of the mind as menagerie in chapter 5, and how this prepares the audience for understanding an argument in chapter 6 in the right way. While these two instances are significant, they are primarily offered as illustrative: tracing their workings should give us tools for approaching the *Guide* as protreptic and articulating much of the rational work done implicitly through choice of categories and metaphor, which determine where and how to focus the audience's attention.

A SAMPLE TRANSFORMATION: HUMAN LIFE AS A FANTASTIC CHANCE TO DO GOOD DEEDS

We begin by tracing out a movement through chapters 2 to 4 by which the text uses reason and argument to bring us along the path.[13] In chapter 2, after a general and fairly anodyne "confession of faults," the text begins leveraging the anxiety we can all be presumed to have about death, and about what we conceive of as "our own" future suffering. Death is tacitly presented as something fearful *in virtue of the prospect of future suffering it implies*. (The audience is clearly not thought to be of the ancient Epicurean sort, where death is by definition the end of all

sentience, painful or pleasant.) To the ordinary way of thinking, there is no need to ask whether avoiding my own intense future suffering is a good reason to act, think, or feel. Of course it is.

The text works by taking this natural presumption and, first, intensifying it:

> How can I escape it? I am continually in a state of alarm, O leaders. Let death not come too soon to me, before my mass of evil is destroyed. (2.32)
>
> How can I escape it? Rescue me quickly, lest death come swiftly, before my evil is destroyed. (2.33)

There may be—in the abstract—many reasons to fear death: fear of the unknown, loss of relationships, and projects unfinished. But we are not "in the abstract." Here it is not just death that is fearful, but an early or sudden death—specifically, death before the "mass of evil is destroyed." To an audience that takes death to be the end, there is nothing particularly terrifying in this. Only with the background conviction that evil is suffered after death, proportionate to evil done before, does fear arise, for then such a death entails unspeakable suffering for the deceased. The text does not make this latter claim explicitly here but rather relies on it as a suppressed premise, so obvious and commonly shared that there is no need to state it in order for it to be present in the hearer's mind at the mere suggestion of dying with evil deeds unexpiated. The presentation of death as terrifying *because of the evil that will persist* through that transformation should already effect an initial reorientation, should bring us to see the world in a completely different way: "Even someone taken away today to have a limb cut off withers, throat parched, gaze wretched. He sees the world in a completely different way. But that is nothing to the feverish horror which grips me . . . as Death's terrifying messengers stand over me" (2.44–45).

The line of reasoning invokes a kind of parallelism: someone facing the prospect of lesser suffering (merely a limb cut off) sees the world differently; therefore, the prospect of much greater suffering ought certainly to cause one to see the world differently.

In what way differently? Enlivening our sense of the implications of death without atonement, life no longer appears as a field of potential self-fulfillment through projects and relationships, which would be sadly cut short when death comes. Instead it appears suddenly a minefield, an omnipresent danger—life itself is a chance at every turn to create more

suffering by "clinging to this transient life" (2.43), with all the negative actions that entails, and to incur more future suffering for oneself rather than less.

This is an appeal to pure pragmatic thinking, within categories that we could assume to be available to everyone, presenting specific considerations—intelligible from that perspective—that cast our situation in a specific light. It leads with the stick rather than the carrot. It causes me to see my situation differently, but by using all the same categories and presumed values.

But the next major move, in chapter 3, presents something entirely new. There is no balancing list of all the charms and advantages of timely expiation of evils, so that we may weigh the available alternatives and make a rational choice from among the options as we already understand them. Instead we get something quite different—something that does not figure in the calculative, self-interested reasoning motivating the great fear, and the reconception of everyday life as fraught with danger. Chapter 3 invites us to envisage morally perfect beings (accomplished bodhisattvas, buddhas), and at first simply to "rejoice" (3.1–3) in how marvelous they are.

This taking joy in a perfectly *and effectively* benevolent being is inspiring. Once the option is presented as a possibility, one wants to be *like that*. By 3.6, the "I" of the text is not content to rejoice at the someone who is an ocean "bearing happiness to every being" (3.3); "I" want to be like that too: "may I allay all the suffering of every living being" (3.6)—a series of ardent wishes to alleviate the suffering of others follows (3.7–23). All talk of fear for self has vanished, drawing our attention to another dimension of the picture to which we had been hitherto oblivious. Notice what the text does *not* do: the buddhas and bodhisattvas are not presented as themselves perfectly happy and fearless—though they surely are—and so they are not being presented as a straightforward solution to the predicament as made vivid in chapter 3 on its own terms ("Want to relieve your suffering? Try caring for others!"). The will to emulate does not spring out as a solution to my fear of my own suffering. It is rather a reasonable form of recognition of a sort of goodness hitherto unacknowledged—the world does not have to be a system of traps, fraught with danger, in which my best hope is to escape with less suffering than happiness. The world can be a glorious opportunity to alleviate all suffering; and I can participate in that.

Merely adducing the possibility may add a new dimension to our understanding of reality and the possibilities for action within the human condition; it may even be inspiring. But glimpsing the world as the buddhas

and bodhisattvas see it does not suffice for us to inhabit that outlook. The mere introduction of new categories, associations, and possibilities does not yet stably transform our orientation toward reality, or ensure the sustained effort required to live it consistently over time. Still, the sharp contrast between the two does give us a basis for confidence to undertake the painstaking, piecemeal labor of undoing our default ways of thinking that are incompatible with that perspective. Chapter 4 acknowledges the tension, or rather the vacillation, between these two perspectives—"Swinging back and forth like this in cyclic existence, now under the sway of errors, now under the sway of Awakening Mind" (4.11)—and attempts to use the resources of our default perspective to reason us into inhabiting the bodhisattva perspective.

To work us from one perspective into the other, calculating reasons are offered for persisting in our inspired undertaking. "How much worse will it be for me, having proclaimed aloud the unsurpassed happiness with great enthusiasm," if I renege on my promise? "After breaking my word to the entire world, what would be my future birth?" (4.6). But over the course of the chapter, we see that the recollection of hell is deployed for a different purpose. Instead of terrorizing us, the recollection of hell aims to reveal our current human circumstances to us in a certain light. Now this could amount to the familiar thought—familiar in the European tradition—that earthly life, and humans in particular, are in-between beings, no saints perhaps, but not as badly off as some are. Think, for instance, of Odysseus's conversation with Achilles in the underworld: "I'd rather slave on earth for another man—/ Some dirt-poor tenant farmer who scrapes to keep alive—than rule down here over all the breathless dead" (*Odyssey* 11.467–564). The main thrust of such a reflection on inferior rebirths is that we should stop grumbling—however bad it is here, it's not as bad as it could be.

This is decidedly not the view taken in *Guide* chapter 4. Achilles misses passion in the underworld, human contact and society, zest for life; dwellers in Śāntideva's hell, by contrast, miss chances to behave morally (4.18, 4.22)—*this* is what we should notice about them, this is the lack that constitutes their real misery. What makes the human condition stand out from all others is the rare chance to be virtuous: "There is no greater waste of time than this, nor is there greater folly: that after attaining such a fleeting opportunity I do not practice good deeds" (4.23; cf. 4.15).

Human life is precious *because it allows one to do good deeds*. Consider for a moment how odd that thought is, stripped naked of any context. When extolling life, some people speak of each human life being precious,

or life being a gift; some speak of the dignity of human beings; some of gratitude for life or for being alive. None of them is alluding to the marvelous chance to practice virtue. Even the Greeks, for whom morality was uniquely human, did not therefore think of human life as an exciting opportunity for practicing virtue that we must urgently take up with all our energy.

But because chapter 3 already introduced the radical possibility of participating in ending all suffering for all beings, we are primed to see *just this aspect* of hell-dwelling as particularly hellish: namely, that this marvelous alternative is unavailable. This contrast allows us to appreciate keenly *just this difference* between the human condition and *all others*—hellish or divine: namely, that a mode of being beyond all calculation of selfish pleasures, the complete dedication to the removal of all suffering, is possible.[14] In the light of this possibility, the consideration of our own fears and pains becomes something paltry—inconsequential, when one keeps well in view the great, inspiring goal.

> Without cause, they display the wounds from the enemy on their limbs as if they were decorations. Why then, when I am striving to fulfil the Great Cause, do I let my sufferings oppress me? (4.39)
>
> Their minds set only on their own livelihoods, fishermen . . . and the like withstand such distress and extreme cold. Why have I no endurance though it is for the advantage and well-being of the universe? (4.40)

The argument buried in here is simple and—thus abstracted—unconvincing. Other people are proud of their wounds incurred for lesser causes; therefore, I should not be bothered by my own suffering for a greater cause. Thus abstracted, the argument tendentiously neglects the fact that my sufferings may be much greater, that the fishermen have no choice, that we are all naturally more motivated by our own immediate welfare. Taken independently of any context or commitments, this is so far from being compelling argumentation that it might be accused of begging the question against the egoist.

But the whole point is that neither the argument nor we who must consider and evaluate it are abstracted from context—and if we were, we would not be any better able to make sense of considerations offered as a reason. Contrasting the greater goal, and the conception of my own activity and possibilities, with the goals of fisherman and soldiers gives me good reason to seek endurance and fortitude in my own endeavors *because* I have already seen what the world could look like from the bodhisattva's

perspective—where ending all suffering *is* a goal, where the world appears as the joyful opportunity of generating joy, rather than as an arduous, unending task of accounting pleasures and pains, defending the bottom line so it comes out more favorable than otherwise.

We must not mistake the character of the *Guide* as offering irrational appeals masquerading as bad arguments. Śāntideva is reasoning in the mode of invitation, offering new aspects to be considered as relevant and salient—which is a perfectly legitimate mode of reasoning; and the arguments work, just as any arguments do, by taking their meaning and connotations from a surrounding network of categories, possibilities, and values. Protreptic joins these by using our current commitments and categories to introduce the salience and value of new possibilities that come to replace the initial outlook.

A SECOND TRANSFORMATION: THE MENAGERIE MIND

A second strand of reorientation may be traced from chapter 5, which opens by likening the undisciplined mind to a rutting elephant. It is a fun and familiar image. It is also a mechanism for engendering a distinctive and pragmatically efficacious model of mind. In 5.2–4, our inner life is likened to so many wayward forces, to "tigers, lions, elephants, bears, serpents" (5.4). The simile draws us to regard mental life in a certain way: as a menagerie of arbitrary, willful creatures in need of discipline. I introspect and discover aliens.

Contrast this with a Freudian-type way of regarding the emotions and the mind. On the Freudian picture, emotions and compulsions are eruptions to the surface of the buried truth of our real desires, our real fears, our *real selves*. We are encouraged to "own" our darkest impulses, to make sense of our seemingly irrational whims, by connecting them to deep sources within ourselves. Perhaps we will eliminate some unwanted impulses, but only by explaining them, tracing them back to something more true in us, more lasting, stable, real. On this familiar picture (and it *is* a picture), I introspect, and—like so many followers of the Vedas—I find my true self.

Śāntideva's menagerie mind cuts against this notion that if I just dig deeper, I will strike the real truth about myself. Śāntideva's use of wild animals to figure our mental lives has us externalize the mind *tout court*, setting in place an attitude toward it that makes disidentification obvious and natural. It picks up on work already under way in chapter 4, where

the various vices are depicted as The Enemy Within, which we are roused to eliminate. In 4.28–34 and 4.43, the defilements are us and are also *in us*—fifth columnists so firmly entrenched that we must be ready to battle them every day, on every front. The menagerie mind of chapter 5 builds on this externalization of mental factors, but it goes further. Its more specific characterization of mind carries with it more helpful expectations about appropriate attitudes and actions to take toward our mental states, and promises surprising results from introspection. It also thereby lays the groundwork for a correct apprehension of no-self. No-self as it arises for the first time in the middle of the chapter is not so much the conclusion of a mereological argument as it is the implication of an outlook dominated by the metaphor of the menagerie, rather than the metaphor of archaeology.

Instead of the real truth about who we really are, deep down, what goes on in the mind is an "it," an "other"—and not some tame, docile Other, but some thing to be restrained and disciplined. Lions, tigers, and bears are not my true essence,[15] and I do not come to know myself better by coming to know *them* better, identifying with or affirming them. Nor does one seek deep explanations for why the tiger roars or the elephant ruts—that is just what tigers and elephants do. Characterizing our mental life as menagerie is an invitation to attend to the waywardness, the wildness, the vehemence of the mental events arising. This menagerie mind is, moreover, what *everyone* sees upon introspection (that is, every unawakened ordinary person)—there is nothing special about *me* here. The simile, while encouraging disidentification with introspected reality, encourages at the same time the implicit recognition of commonality with others.

This simile suggests a different response to the mental life, and the further verses of chapter 5 follow this up—for a wild animal is not tamed through behavior equally wild, nor through deep understanding of its childhood traumas. It is tamed through restraint. What, in this case, however, is the appropriate restraint? Should we think of nooses and cages and other violent forms of restraint, as the battle language of chapter 4 suggests? On the contrary, in this discourse on Guarding Awareness (and mindfulness, 5.23), it is mindfulness itself that should be the restraining tether of these wild beasts (5.3).

Mindfulness may seem a paltry device for such labor. How indeed does mere mindfulness operate as a *restraint* at all? The chapter does not offer an explicit account. But we may discover a clue by considering *what it is* that we should be mindful *of*. In verse 29, we are admonished to

"remember the torment of hell"—but this is in order to generate the motivation to reinstate mindfulness, if it has slipped. One should also "recollect the Buddhas in this way," namely "meditating thus . . . possessed of shame, respect, and fear" (5.32). But what we recollect about the Buddhas is that they "have unobstructed vision in all directions" (5.31)—so this is again using a recollected object to inspire the motivation to *remain mindful*; it is not that *of which* we are mindful.[16] We are not told to bear in mind the perfection of the Buddha, or his many examples of perfect living in his previous lives as a bodhisattva; nor are we instructed to be mindful of the precepts—or of Rules to be Obeyed. Indeed, we are not told so much as we are *shown* what we are to be mindful of—and that is *our own minds*, all the random stuff arising, and in particular (to start with) the unreasoning, groundless impetuosity and harmfulness of our menagerie minds. Being constantly mindful that our desires, impulses, fears, ambitions, and frustrations are just so many willful forces arising to no purpose—they are not a need of the soul, or my true self, or demanded by reason—prevents them setting in motion manifold further unwholesome mental events and actions. It enables us to guard awareness (5.27) of right and wrong, and thus avoid inadvertent offenses (5.26).

This is why "mindfulness remain[ing] at the door of the mind in order to act as guard" suggests the much-reiterated advice to be "like a block of wood" (5.34, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53)—unyieldingly firm and still. This is terrible moral advice *in the end*, as the final statement on how we should be in the world. Its implicit unresponsiveness is even inconsistent with the bodhisattva vow. But if ordinary mental life is a confusion of wild, ungrounded pushes and pulls, then "be like a block of wood" is terrific advice for what to do with the unruly mind "at first" (5.33), in order to get oneself into a condition to be able to act morally at all. I can only have the responsiveness of the bodhisattva when the wild cacophony of strident voices composing my mental life is no longer clamoring for attention (this is why "the thief, lack of awareness . . . *comes after* the theft of mindfulness," 5.27); and the clamoring only stops when I refuse to go along with their demands, or as the metaphor from 5.33 suggests, when I turn them away at the door.

Although the mind-as-menagerie image discourages seeking deep and meaningful sources of mental events, which would enable us to "own them" (as the current jargon has it), Śāntideva *can* of course adopt the Freudian—or (less anachronistically) let us call it the Yogācāra *ālayavijñāna* (store consciousness)—approach to the mind, tracing current experiences

to earlier causes. He must do so, in fact, for precisely such tracing will be necessary to undermine anger. But this tracing of effect back to cause will be importantly impersonal or detached, and it will be so precisely in virtue of the work done by the menagerie mind metaphor.

Consider for a moment a concern we might have with chapter 6, if we read it in isolation. In order to diffuse anger and cultivate patience, the "I" of the *Guide* draws upon his unspecified misdeeds in a previous life to undermine any sense of righteous indignation he might feel at his own "unjust" suffering. How, we might wonder, is Śāntideva entitled to do this? Surely such tracking of karma and fruit, and attributions of belonging and identity, reinforces the "I"-thinking we are supposed to abandon. *In the abstract*, this is a common and not unwarranted anxiety about the compatibility of karmic thinking with the pragmatics of no-self.[17] But we need not be worried, because chapter 6 is not context free (indeed nothing is!). The advice in chapter 6 is, in particular, directed to someone who has been through chapter 5's exercises in disidentification and disavowal of seeking meaning in the activity of tracing out the genesis of emotions. The use of the menagerie mind image has inoculated us against engaging in the activity of tracing cause and consequence in the wrong sort of way, as an act of appropriation.

More precisely, the reorientation of chapter 5 means that by the time we come to chapter 6, we are already approaching what we call "our own lives" as impersonal, even alien events, and using I-attributions in the purely locative and pragmatic sense. Practiced in regarding our minds as dangerous and also vulnerable (5.20), alien and willful ("when the mind" does this or that, 5.49–54), to be watched over and guarded, we are no longer in any danger of making the genetic fallacy—of mistaking the (conventionally discriminated) cause of effects for the identification of any real essence or truth. To accomplish this, Śāntideva does not need to point out that the mind is "not me"—indeed, explicitly declaring *some* things "not I" can implicitly strongly suggest that some *other* unnamed thing is the real me, failing completely to perform any of the vital work of reorientation. Śāntideva's whole procedure and whole way of speaking, by contrast—the metaphors (mind as menagerie, but also mind as wound, 5.19), the distancing locutions ("the mind" does this or that), the block of wood—reorient our outlook so that "What is *really* the Real Me?" is simply not a question on the table. When no-self is finally explicitly introduced (5.60–64, regarding the body; not generalized until 6.25–32), it simply falls into the place prepared for it, working rather as a *reminder* of what was already implicit.

CONCLUSION

Other such transformations could be traced through the progress of the *Guide*. Śāntideva's implausible claim that suffering makes one compassionate (6.21), for instance, is to be understood not as an assertion but as an invitation to make it so—and indeed, an invitation efficacious in the production of the invited effect. My suffering may shock me into compassion for those in cyclic existence, *when* I have a framework for experiencing suffering as a portion of an interconnected network without any loci of overall command. And this is the framework Śāntideva goes on to give in the verses that follow (6.24–26, 31), picking up on the impersonal orientation to reality set up in chapter 5, and showing how this leads to an opening toward others' suffering (6.34). Chapter 8 then takes this further, showing how our habit of creating unity where there is none can be turned to good effect: we know what it is to think of our hands and feet as parts of a single whole (8.91, 99); although *believing* this would be unhelpful, we are by now far enough from such an outlook that we can draw on our previous experience to isolate the activity of whole-making itself. This activity succeeds not by tracking truth, but by composing wholes in such a way that suffering is diminished (8.115). Many other instances could be identified, once we revise our understanding of the genre of the *Guide* and our expectations of how reason works.

To approach the *Guide* as protreptic is to ask, in each case, how are we being reoriented *here*? What are the particular elements of the mode of presentation that enable a thought to be compelling *here*? When we identify these, we will have seen how it is that our souls have been turned, as Plato would put it; we will make explicit what changes in attention, in categories and classifications, in possibilities and relevances, enable the meaningfulness of the reasons offered to come into view.

If image and metaphor are among the tools deployed to effect this change, this does not make the text irrationalist, or the means of persuasion underhanded. On the contrary, we should ask why we ever expected in the first place that reason should be an appeal to some thin, pure, wholly indeterminate "rational being." This conception of reason, and what counts as a reason, is itself a moral matter; the shared unquestioned assumption that this is the gold standard of a good reason has a history, and it is political.[18] To understand the use of reason and argument in the *Guide*, we must lose the frankly bizarre expectation that this will look like an abstract appeal to pure rational beings, and be more honest—as Śāntideva was—about what reason is actually like. Rational appeals and arguments are only

compelling because of the way they draw their meaning from a wide range of tacitly accepted presumptions, categories, and perspectives. The whole is what must be targeted and adjusted, piecemeal, if we are to be reasoned into a different point of view.

NOTES

1. Translations taken from Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, trans. Crosby and Skilton, with occasional minor emendations.
2. Stowers, "Letters of Exhortation and Advice," 92.
3. Grube's translation, rev. Reeve as in Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works*.
4. For the purposes of this essay, I use the name "Śāntideva" as indicating the author or authors combined with any unknown editors responsible for the text currently received under the name *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.
5. Often translated, as in Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, trans. Crosby and Skilton, as "morality."
6. Patience in 5.12; the famous verse at 5.13 ("where would there be leather enough to cover the entire world?") targets *vīrya* (zeal, resoluteness, diligence); 5.14 highlights controlling the mind in the manner of mental cultivation; and 5.15 describes the perfection of wisdom with its "no fruit comes from a dull mind that bears comparison with a sharp mind on its own."
7. This reverses the consequentialist interpretation of Goodman in *Consequences of Compassion*, which takes action to be the means of character transformation; on the view taken here, if there is to be talk of means and ends, it will be transformations of seeing or understanding that are the means of transforming action. However, the character transformation (consisting, as it does, in increasing insight into reality) is the only part of this that could claim to be good in itself; the improved actions that follow are themselves instrumentally useful so long as one is but imperfectly enlightened, and dry up altogether (in some sense) when one has attained full understanding of reality.
8. The question was apparently the great point of dispute at the legendary "Council of Lhasa" debate (supposed to have taken place at Samye Monastery in Tibet, in the late eighth century CE), as a consequence of which (so the legend goes) the Chan view of sudden enlightenment was banished from Tibet in favor of the position of the Indian faction (represented by Kamalaśīla) that enlightenment is gradual.
9. See for instance Buddhaghosa's *Path of Purification*, which details exercises for effecting revisions of reality in specific ways, suited to specific characters. Buddhaghosa often recounts or refers to Buddhist tales to illustrate his points—that is, to get the audience to see things as he is recommending we see them. Such tales are a vast store of literature used to shape outlook and categories for experiencing the world differently.
10. Not for nothing do latter-day Buddhists such as Stephen Batchelor see a common cause between existentialist and Buddhist ethics.
11. See Garfield, "What It Is Like to Be a Bodhisattva," and Garfield, *Engaging Buddhism*, ch. 9; also, this volume.

12. Śāntideva is working within the Mahāyāna tradition inaugurated by Nāgārjuna, called Madhyamaka. One hallmark of Nāgārjuna's approach is a thoroughgoing anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism, which nevertheless makes use of ordinary claims and conceptions for advancing along the path toward enlightenment.
13. There are many ways to parse these chapters, and the *Guide* as a whole; for instance, the way that Śāntideva is here picking up on and reworking the Mahāyāna "Supreme Worship" liturgy is surely revealing of text and context. To read it protreptically need not exclude multiple other approaches revealing different vital insights into the text.
14. To say straight out "think of human life this way" would be no more effective than simply telling someone, "think of yourself as a unique child of a unique and loving God." You have to *show* the person the world in which that is the case.
15. Contrast Plato's use of the man-lion-beast image in *Republic* IX, where he aims to show precisely that this *is* our real nature.
16. This description of the buddhas follows the observation that mindfulness "comes easily to those . . . [who] live with their teacher" (5.30). We are to make our teachers and their all-seeing powers present to us ("before them I stand" 5.31) through recollection, in order to make mindfulness easy to maintain.
17. This moral "no-self/karma" difficulty is more difficult to address than the more familiar, metaphysical "no-self/karma" compatibility concern (as I argue in *Indian Buddhist Philosophy*, 105–107).
18. For concrete details of one historical manifestation, see McCumber, *The Politics of Reason in the Early Cold War*; short read at https://aeon.co/essays/how-cold-war-philosophy-permeates-us-society-to-this-day.

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