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THE SELFLESS REMOVAL OF PAIN[1]
A CRITICAL GLANCE AT ŚĀNTIDEVA'S ARGUMENT IN *BODHICARYĀVATĀRA* 8:101-3

1. The verses

I want to undertake a critical examination of the coherence of one of the arguments given by Śāntideva and his commentators on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* – one of the appeals to rationality – for a logical inconsistency in removing the pain, the actual physical pain, of myself alone and ignoring pains of others. First, let us see what Śāntideva himself says:

saṃtānaḥ samudāyaś ca paṅktisenādivan mṛṣā /
yasya duḥkhaṃ sa nāsty asmāt kasya tatsvaṃ bhaviṣyati //
rgyud dang tshogs ces bya ba ni /
phreng ba dmag la sogs bzhin brdzun /
sdug bsngal can gang de med pa /
des 'di su zhig dbang bar 'gyur //

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[1] I would take this opportunity to say how delighted I was to be asked to contribute to a Felicitation Volume for my friend, the distinguished Russian Buddhologist G. Bongard-Levin. May I offer him my very sincere wishes for many more years of scholarship and fun. This paper is a very much shorter version of detailed philosophical study called "The absence of Self and the removal of pain: How Śāntideva destroyed the bodhisattva path", which will appear during 1997 in a volume of my papers on the philosophy of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

A continuant and a collective – such as a [caste] row *(paṅkti)* or an army – are fictions *(mṛṣā)* /

The one of whom there is pain *(duḥkha)* does not exist. Therefore of whom will there be the ownership of that? //101//

asvāmikāni duḥkhāni sarvāny evāviśeṣataḥ /
duḥkhatvād eva vāryāṇi niyamas tatra kiṃ kṛtaḥ //
sdug bsngal bdag po med par ni /
thams cad bye brag med pa nyid /
sdug bsngal yin phyir de bsal bya /
nges pas 'dir ni ci zhig bya //

Pains without an owner are all indeed without distinction /

Because of its quality as pain indeed it is to be prevented. What limitation can be made there? //102//

duḥkhaṃ kasmān nivāryaṃ cet sarveṣām avivādataḥ /
vāryaṃ cet sarvam apy evaṃ na ced ātmāpi sattvavat //
ci phyir kun gyi sdug bsngal ni /
bzlog par bya zhes brtsad du med /
gal te bzlog na 'ang thams cad bzlog /
de min bdag kyang sems can bzhin //

If one asks why pain is to be prevented (Tib.: "the pain of all is to be prevented"), it is [accepted] (Skt.: "by all") without dispute /

If it is to be prevented, all also is thus. If not, oneself also is like [other] beings //103//

On the surface Śāntideva's argument is quite straightforward. There is no such thing as a Self, an independent, enduring and real unchanging referent of the indexical first-person pronoun. We are each of us an ever-changing composite of various radically impermanent psycho-physical components extended in space and

time. But a composite thing is a fiction, in itself it is nothing at all[2]. Thus, Śāntideva wants to argue, we cannot rationally talk of the *owner* of a pain[3]. It follows that Śāntideva wants to hold an extreme version of the no-ownership theory for sensations. Pains are for him quite literally without owners at all. Since under such circumstances we cannot refer to the owners of pains, we can refer only to pains.

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[2] I have chosen in this context to translate *mṛṣā* – more usually "delusory" or "false/falsity" – by "fiction(s)" specifically because it recalls the case well-known in philosophical writing of Hume's treatment of personal identity – since persons clearly change and are therefore not identical – as a fiction superimposed upon a succession of like impressions: "Our chief business, then, must be to prove, that all objects, to which we ascribe identity, without observing their invariableness and uninterruptedness, are such as consist of a succession of related objects" (D. HUME, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited with an introduction by E.G. MOSSNER, Harmondsworth (Penguin Books), 1969, p. 303), "The identity, which we ascribe to the mind of man, is only a fictitious one" (Ibid., p. 306), "Since our attributions of identity result only from the easy transition of the mind from one perception to another, and since resemblance and causation are the only relations that in this case can facilitate such a transition, it follows that resemblance and causation alone must be enough to produce in us the "fiction" or "mistake" of a continuously existing self or mind" (B. STROUD, *Hume*, London, Henley and Boston - Routledge and Kegan Paul - 1977, p. 122).

[3] I have translated *duḥkha* by "pain", and throughout this essay I mean by "pain" what we normally refer to as *physical* pain, the sort of sensation which occurs when we are flayed alive or step with bare feet on a drawing-pin. Putting scepticism about other minds to one side, I take it we all know what that sensation is. I am perfectly aware, however, that "pain" is inadequate in general as a translation of the Buddhist technical term *duḥkha*. There are various types of *duḥkha*, of which pain *(duḥkhaduḥkha)* is only one. Pure sensations of pain form a class of mental events which are a subclass of events occurring under *duḥkha*. Thus my translation of *duḥkha* in the verses as "pain", and my stressing that I intend here the physical sensation of pain, mean that my translation is not intended *in general*, or in isolation, as a precise translation of these verses. The translation is contextualised within the following discussion. I shall argue that the reasoning of Śāntideva and his commentators – for all its praiseworthy and noble motives – is incoherent in that granted Śāntideva's premisses he can no longer make sense of the physical sensation of pain at all, and therefore the removal of pain. Thus since pain-events form a subclass of events occurring under *duḥkha* properly understood, if Śāntideva's account is incoherent for the subclass then it becomes incoherent for the class taken as a whole. In other words, if by his reasoning Śāntideva cannot make sense of physical pain and its removal, he will be unable to make sense of *duḥkha* and its removal even though *duḥkha* is for the Buddhist more than just physical sensations of pain.

But pains *qua* pains cannot be distinguished in terms of which are and which are not to be removed. If a pain is to be removed at all, then all pains are to be removed. And pain *is* to be removed, for pain is unpleasant and no one wants what is unpleasant. The very nature of pain entails that on the no-ownership view if one is to be rationally consistent then in preventing or eradicating any pain at all ('one's own pain') it is not possible to draw a limit at the eradication of just some pains, but one is obliged to eradicate, or strive to eradicate, all pains.

2. *Ontology*

Let us begin by noting one absolutely crucial point. Śāntideva's argument will only work if *mṛṣā,* "fiction" is taken as meaning complete non-existence. This point needs to be stressed, since we are familiar from other sources with the view that *mṛṣā/(b)rdzun pa* in a Madhyamaka context need not mean complete non-existence. Thus Candrakīrti in his famous verses at *Madhyamakāvatāra* 6:23-5 speaks of conventionalities (i.e. everything other than ultimate truths, emptinesses) as being seen by those who perceive "fictions" *(brdzun pa).* All conventionalities are therefore fictions. Perceivers of fictions are of two types, those whose sense-organs are functioning properly and those whose organs are deranged. The fictions seen by the first category are correct in the eyes of the world, they are correct conventionalities (in comparison with the fictions of the second type)[4]. Thus tables, chairs and mountains seen by cognitions which in everyday life are held to be valid (there is no disfunction in the means of cognition) are correct conventionalities but still "fictions'. However, it is common particularly in Tibetan *dGe lugs* sources, to state that while correct conventionalities are

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[4] *M.A.* 6:23-5: *dngos kun yang dag brdzun pa mthong ba yis / dngos rnyed ngo bo gnyis ni 'dzin par 'gyur / yang dag mthong yul de de nyid de / mthong ba brdzun pa kun rdzob bden par gsungs // mthong ba brdzun pa'ang rnam par gnyis 'dod de / dbang po gsal dang dbang po skyon ldan no / skyon ldan dbang can rnams kyi shes pa ni / dbang po legs gyur shes ltos log par 'dod // gnod pa med pa'i dbang po drug rnams kyis / gzung ba gang zhig 'jig rten gyis rtogs te / 'jig rten gnyis las bden yin lhag ma ni / 'jig rten nyid las log par rnam par gzhag //*

indeed fictions, this does not mean that they are utterly non-existent. And this must be the case from what Candrakīrti says, since some very real problems would follow for Madhyamaka if it maintained that even correct conventionalities are completely non-existent, so nonexistent (if one can coherently use such an expression) that even distinctions conventionally valid cannot be made between them. From this perspective (certainly as it is understood in *dGe lugs* texts) Madhyamaka does not claim that conventionalities found by conventionally valid cognisers (i.e. *pramāṇas)* simply do not exist at all. Rather, in this context to be a fiction means "to appear one way and exist another"[5], "conventional phenomena are not truths, but are falsities *(rdzun pa, mṛṣā)* because they do not exist as they appear"[6]. Thus a table as seen by the conventionally correct valid cogniser of an unenlightened being will be a fiction because it will not exist the way it appears (it will appear as if existing from its own side, as independently self-subsistent, "inherently" existent, while actually it exists as a conceptual imputation superimposed upon its "bases of imputation"), but that fiction will nevertheless exist. It can enter perfectly adequately into pragmatic transactional usage and therefore will not be the same as a completely non-existent thing.

It is common at least in *dGe lugs* Madhyamaka to apply the same approach to issues of the Self. It is agreed on all counts that there is no such thing as a Self, some *really* existent ultimate and individual referent for the indexical "I", an inherently existent thing which can be found ineliminably to be there as an identifiable entity even when subjected to most probing of philosophical analysis[7]. But I do clearly nevertheless exist. I am a conventionality, and as a

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[5] E. NAPPER, *Dependent Arising and Emptiness*, Boston (Wisdom), 1989, p. 109.

[6] G. NEWLAND, *The Two Truths*, Ithaca, N.Y. (Snow Lion), 1992, p. 3.

[7] For a detailed study of the different levels of the Self which are uncovered and then refuted in mature *dGe lugs* thought see J. WILSON, *Chandrakīrti's Sevenfold Reasoning: Meditation on the Selflessness of Persons*, Dharamsala (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives), 1980. The Self as a "permanent, partless and independent phenomenon" is merely the coarsest level of *negandum*.

conventional entity I am called in *dGe lugs* texts not the "Self *(bdag)* but the "person" *(gang zag)*[8].

[8] "Person" is often used in philosophical circles in a way which would distinguish a person from merely being an animal or, for the Buddhist perhaps, a sentient being. Thus while there are some philosophers who would accept that there are animals (such as some chimpanzees, possibly) who could turn out to be persons on some acceptable definition of "person", still generally to be a person is a very particular and fairly advanced state of being which could certainly not be identified simply with being self-conscious inasmuch as one has a rudimentary and often innate and preverbal sense of one's own identity. A person is, perhaps, with Locke "a thinking intelligent Being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places" (J. LOCKE, *An Essay Converning Human Understanding*, abridged and edited with an introduction by J. W. YOLTON, London. Melbourne and Toronto (Dent), 1977, p. 162; see also M. AYERS, *Locke: Volume II: Ontology*, London/New York (Routledge), 1991, pp. 254 ff., esp. pp. 290-2; cf. J. CAMPBELL, *Past, Space, and Self*, Cambridge, Mass./London (MIT Press), 1994, p. 178, where persons require first-person thinking, "autobiographical thought"; and cf. also S. SHOEMAKER in J. KIM, E. SOSA, ed., *A Companion to Metaphysics*, Uxtord/Cambridge, Mass. (Blackwell),1995, pp. 380-1). To all intents and purposes persons here are a particular class of human beings and higher beings – such as for theists God. (Not all humans even under this definition would be persons. Consider the case of a severely brain-damaged human being. Note in passing that in everyday English and life, however, we feel a certain unease to say the least about denying that a brain-damaged or perhaps a comatose individual is a *person*. We consider that personhood has implications for moral duties and rights which should not be denied to any *human)*. For the moment then we should note that the translation of *gang zag* by "person" follows standard practice among Tibetologists and gains its significance structurally as meaning the identity that sentient beings have given that there are no Selves in the technical sense that they are denied by Buddhists. Note however that there is nevertheless good philosophical precedence for this broader use of "person". In his influential discussion of the person in *Individuals* Ch.3, P.F. Strawson speaks of the concept of a person as "the concept of a type of entity such that *both* predicates ascribing states of consciousness *and* predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics, a physical situation etc. are equally applicable to a single individual of that single type" (P.F. STRAWSON, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*, London (Methuen), 1959, p. 102; italics original). Strawson's point is that the person is a sort of irreducible thing (it has, for Strawson, a logical primitiveness that is presupposed by both mental and physical predicates and cannot simply be reduced to either; cf. E.L. LOWE, *Kinds of Being: A Study of Individuation. Identity, and the Logic of Sortal Terms*, Aristotelian Society Series, Vol. X, Oxford/New York (Basil Blackwell), 1989, p. 116) about which both mental and physical ascriptions can be made, and it is the *very same thing* which is the subject of these mental and physical ascriptions (P.F. STRAWSON, *op. cit.*, p. 89; italics Strawson. See also D. WIGGINS, "The person as object of science, as subject

of experience, and as locus of value", in A. R. PEACOCKE, G. GILLETT, *Persons and Personality*, Oxford/New York (Blackwell), 1987, pp. 56-74). It seems to me that this characterisation of the person will apply to any being which is sentient and has a physical body. That will suit our purposes very well. Moreover the person is the *subject* of such mental and physical ascriptions. In particular, for Strawson states of consciousness must be ascribed to something, and that thing is the person – the very same person to which physical ascriptions are made. This incorporates excellently the subjectivity of mental events which I shall mention subsequently. Thus it seems to me there is no problem in speaking of the *dGe lugs* conventional self as the "person", a *subject* of mental and physical ascriptions. D.W. HAMLYN, *Metaphysics*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press), 1984, p. 199 in fact notes that this applicability of "person" to animals has been seen by some as a criticism of Strawson's usage, for it does not correspond with our normal usage in English. Hamlyn seems to prefer the term "self" to "person" here, and providing we are careful to distinguish the self in this sense from the isolated, independent monadic Self of a Cartesian or quasi-Cartesian sort there should be no problem with the term "self" (but cf. R. HARRÉ, "Persons and selves", in A. R. PEACOCKE, G. GILLETT, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100, who works with a rather more restricted notion of "self" and seems to be prepared to grant that chimpanzees can be rudimentary persons but not rudimentary selves). I shall make the relevant distinction, which corresponds to that between the *dGe lugs* "Self" and the "conventional self" by using upper case for the former and lower case for the latter (of course, Sanskrit and Tibetan do not have upper and lower cases). Thus I shall speak of "person" and "self" in ways which are to all intents and purposes interchangeable. I shall use "subject" mainly for the subject of mental ascriptions, although that too overlaps with "person" and "self". All this is to be distinguished from the Cartesian (or perhaps *Sāṃkhya*) Self. Incidentally, it is sometimes felt to be paradoxical (in Buddhist meditations on the selflessness of persons, for example) that the same word "I" sometimes appears to refer to the body and sometimes to the mind. Strawson would say that the word "I" refers to the person ("this person here"), and it is precisely the peculiar and irreducible nature of a person that mental and physical ascriptions can be used of the very same thing. So, "I am hungry", "I am happy", "I am six feet tall" all refer to this person here, and this very same person here can sometimes be the subject of mental ascriptions ("happy", and possibly "hungry"), and sometimes physical ascriptions (possibly "hungry", and "six feet tall"). That is just how it is with persons – they are unusual in that respect! The Buddhist's need to pin down *one* referent, or *one type* of referent, and drawing earth-shattering significance from failing to do so, is just the result of failing to understand the nature of persons, what sort of thing is sufficient to answer the question posed at time T: «What is the referent of "I"». Incidentally again, the fact that mental and physical ascriptions are made of the same thing, and require the concept of the logically primitive concept of the person in order to do so, suggests the impossibility of explaining the unity of the person on the basis of any Humean or indeed Buddhist "bundle theory" of psycho-physical attributes linked simply by causal or other relationships. With Strawson's persons as unique subjects of mental and physical ascriptions compare E.J. Lowe's

Therefore the person does indeed exist as a conventionality, it is the person who lives, breathes, needs to have his or her pains removed, and becomes enlightened. It is, if you like, what is referred to when I speak of "myself", but not my Self. Thus I am indeed a fiction, but once more I am a fiction not inasmuch as I simply do not exist but rather inasmuch as I experience myself to exist one way and actually exist another way. A well-known *dGe lugs* doxographic manual defines the person (at least as far as the world which we occupy is concerned), the *conventionality* which is referred to by the indexical use of "I" as finally and according to the most perfect understanding (that of *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*) "the mere-I which is conceptually imputed in dependence upon the five [psycho-physical] aggregates which form its own basis for imputation"[9]. I, myself, may be a "mere-I", a conceptual imputation upon the spatio-temporal continuant of "my" parts, but as such I exist. Thus one can make perfectly good distinctions between people.

Therefore it is clear that the existence of the person thus understood as a conventionality, even if there are no True Selves, enables all the normal everyday transactional distinctions to be made. This is why insight into the absence of any Self does not entail seeing that no one exists at all and therefore does not

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extremely helpful 1991 paper (E. J. LOWE, "Real selves: Persons as a substantial kind", in D. COCKBURN, ed. *Human Beings*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement: 29–Supplement to *Philosophy* 1991, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press), which would see the person as a "psychological substance": «a person is a substantial individual belonging to a natural kind which is the subject of distinctively psychological laws, and governed by persistence conditions which are likewise distinctively psychological in character» (p. 105). But while this is compatible with Descartes' Self, Lowe does not in fact think they are the same, since Lowe's person is not essentially immaterial. Rather, «persons are a wholly distinctive kind of being fully integrated into the natural world» (p. 107). It seems to me this is not so far from Strawson's position, and it is also compatible with animals and other sentient beings as (sub-classes of) persons, and it is thus suitable for our purposes.

[9] DKON MCHOG 'JIGS MED DBANG PO, "Grub pa'i mtha' 'i rnam par bzhag pa rin po che'i phreng pa", in *The Collected Works of DKON MCHOG 'JIGS MED DBAN PO*, Gedan Sungrab Minyam Gyunphel Series 26, Vol. VI, Delhi, (Ngawang Gelek Demo), p. 69: *rang gi gdags gzhi phungpo lnga. . . la brten nas btags pa'i nga tsam de gang zag gi mtshan gzhir 'dod.*

undermine the Buddhist path. Correspondingly, it seems obvious that if there is not only no Self but not even a person in the sense understood above then everyday distinctions of the relevant type cannot be made. It makes no sense to teach, for example, without even seeing the existence of a person or persons to be taught; it makes no sense to help without any awareness *on any level* of a person to be helped.

Now, there is a view that the Buddhist teaching of no True Self, if seen and understood directly in the fullest possible way, would logically entail freedom from all egoistic selfishness. Śāntideva himself seems to hold this view. Yet actually the fact, if it is a fact, of no True Self does not in itself have such an entailment. In spite of the common English equivalence of "selfless" and "unselfish", the absence of True Self is not the equivalent of, nor does it entail, unselfishness. It might be thought to be *immoral,* but there is no contradiction whatsoever in accepting as true a teaching of no Self *(anātman)* – even seeing it directly in the fullest possible way – and being selfish[10]. If I am selfish I give a precedence to the interests of

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[10] Cf. here DPA' BO GTSUG LAG PHRENG BA, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod 'jug rnam bshad Theg chen chos kyi rgya mtsho zab rgyas mtha'yas snying po*, apparently published in Delhi by the rGyal ba Karma pa's Rumtek monastery, 1975, p. 590: "Since there does not exist any self (Self) anywhere even conventionally, that very grasping after self and possessions is irrational, and it is necessary to abandon it (*bdag ni kun rdzob nyid tu 'ang gang na 'ang yod pa min pas bdag dang bdag gir 'dzin pa de nyid mi rigs te spang dgos so*). But it simply does not follow from the absence of any Self even conventionally that it is irrational to grasp after self and possessions, if by "self" here we mean a concern with myself, this person. It might be *immoral*, but not irrational. Many, perhaps most, contemporary philosophers and scientists would vigorously deny accepting a Cartesian or quasi-Cartesian Self, and prefer to accept what a Mādhyamika would be quite happy to call a "conventional self" as a socio-cultural or perhaps a biological construct. The fact that nevertheless they might often be quite selfish may be lamentable, but it is not a logical contradiction. To think that it is, or might be, rests on an equivocation which also occurs in Sanskrit between "self" as in a metaphysical Self and "self" as it occurs reflexively in words like "oneself", "myself" etc. This is simply a confusion. On the other hand if we take dPa' bo's comment to involve a denial even conventionally of any sense of oneself, a conventional person, then while this does indeed seem to be what Śāntideva has in mind, as we shall see it will lead to some extremely unwelcome implications.

this person, me, over the rights and interests of that person, say, Archibald. In itself this has absolutely nothing at all to do with holding to the existence of a Self. In order to give precedence to (a) this person over the interests and rights of (b) that person, all I have to do is be capable of making a distinction between (a) and (b). This distinction can be made in various ways, but in our common experience it rests on whatever normal everyday distinctions are indeed made between (a) and (b), between me and Archibald. Therefore if there is any difference at all between me and Archibald, if we are different persons, I can still be selfish. I can still put myself first.

Thus Śāntideva's "fiction" *(mṛṣā)* – notwithstanding its meaning elsewhere in Madhyamaka – here *must* involve complete non-existence. This is for reasons not of textual hermeneutics but rather philosophical coherence. Nevertheless in actual fact the simple non-existence of Archibald and Freda, you and me, is of course completely false. One does not have to be an out-and-out Cartesian to find it quite self-contradictory. Note that the issue here is not one of the status of you and me (the Self), but simply one of reference, the ability to refer for any purpose at all to you and me[11].

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[11] It is unusual in philosophy for a thinker to teach seriously and literally that he or she simply does not exist. Hume, in his famous treatment of personal identity, professed himself unable to find an *impression* of the selfsame self throughout his experiences yet independent of them, yet he would not have considered that he was literally contradicting himself when he said «The identity which I ascribe to myself is only a fictitious one» (in B. STROUD, *op. cit.*, p. 130; italics Stroud). Derek Parfit, in an approach which is often held to be somewhat similar to that of the Buddhist, has said controversially that «[w]e could therefore redescribe any person's life in impersonal terms. . . Persons need not be claimed to be the thinkers of any of these thoughts» (quoted by G. GILLETT, "Reasoning about persons', in A. R. PEACOCKE, G. GILLETT, *op. cit.*, p. 76), yet as Shoemaker points out in his review of Parfit's *Reasons and Persons*, Parfit seems to be unclear whether he is saying quite literally that there are no subjects at all for mental events (S. SHOEMAKER, "Critical notice: *Reasons and Persons* by Derek Parfit", in *Mind* n.s. 94 [1985], p. 446). It is one thing to deny personal identity over time, or even to suggest that first-person statements can be translated adequately into those involving solely third-person expressions, and another literally to deny subjects for mental events, and it is not clear whether this is what Parfit wants to do. If so, then there would be very serious problems for such an approach with reference to pain which, I shall urge, is

Unless we are to accuse him of disingenuousness however we have to assume that Śāntideva has what seem to him to be plausible reasons for what turns out to be an absurd conclusion. His reason is contained in the first *pada* of BCA 8:101. Composite things are wholes made up out of parts. As psycho-physical individuals we are actually each of us composite things. But in reality there is no such thing as a whole. In denying the opponent's argument, in actual fact Śāntideva has to deny the person in addition to the Self.

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intrinsically subject-involving. Thus if Parfit's position is literally that of no subject then in the case of pain he is quite wrong. But perhaps Parfit's view is closer to one described as "arguably Parfitian" by Galen Strawson (and which seems to owe something to a remark by Kant in a footnote at *Critique of Pure Reason* A363-4): «If we consider things at the purely experiential or purely mental level of description, it is not clear that we can identify anything that persists over long stretches of time as a single experiencer, whether in the case of cats or bats or human beings. It must, of course, be granted that "an experience is impossible without an experiencer». But maybe the best thing to say, when considering a succession of experiences that we naturally think of as the experiences of a single being at the purely experiential or purely mental level of description, is that each involves a different experiencer. This may be best, although we can certainly also say that they all involve a single experiencer insofar as we are considering them as the experiences of a single persisting physical thing, like a human being». (G. STRAWSON, *Mental Reality*, Cambridge, Mass./London (MIT Press), 1994, p. 133). Be that as it may I am by no means sure that the idea of a series of "I"s is coherent at all. If I were told that the very next second I would cease to exist, to be replaced by another I, but I shall notice no difference, I might protest (i) that not noticing any difference is scarcely very consoling, since I want to remain (the present I) and I will not, and the one who will not notice any difference will not be me; (ii) but who exactly is it who is not supposed to notice any difference?; and (iii) anyway it would certainly make one difference in that all memory claims would have to become false (the suggestion that all my memory claims are false would require some sort of evidence, to say the least), and it would be pointless for me to plan for *my* future (see R.M. CHISHOLM, *Person and Object: A Metaphysical Study*, London (George Alien and Unwin), 1976, pp. 104-5) – including becoming enlightened, helping all sentient beings etc.; and (iv) as Locke would point out, it would become unjust and mistaken to punish one I for the crimes committed by another I (this would be a very serious problem for the Buddhist approach to *karma* and its fruits). And so on and so on. Be that as it may, as Strawson makes very clear, the suggestion of a series of selves concerns what I have called the "status" of the self and not the existence of a referable subject. It is indeed quite incompatible with a literal no-subject view of experiences.

3. *Continuants and collectives*

A continuant *(saṃtāna)* is a sequential ordering of events, ordered in the series before and after. It is possible to imagine examples where the ordering is temporal, and also a spatial ordering. Thus for a Buddhist like Śāntideva the cause-effect series of mental events, where each event is both effect of a previous and cause for a further event within the series, and each causal event perishes before the occurrence of its resultant event, would be an example of a continuant showing a temporal ordering of before and after. Another example might be an *articulated* sentence or word-token. One uttered phoneme precedes the next, is the cause of the next and has itself ceased when its subsequent phoneme comes into existence. According to some of his Indian and Tibetan commentators, in speaking of a continuant here Śāntideva is precisely thinking of the mental continuant – where the before and after series is explicitly a temporal series – while reference to a collective *(samudāya)* is intended to indicate the physical body, where in contrast the ordering would seem to be a non-sequential structuring based, I would imagine, on something like purpose and optimal performance[12]. Thus Sa bzang mati paṇchen can speak of "a single

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[12] Although Bu ston, in *this* context rather simplistically, refers to the *samudāya (tshogs)* as simply the "uniting of many into one" *(mang po gcig tu 'dus pa ni / tshogs yin la;* BU STON, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i 'grel pa Byang chub kyi sems gsal bar byed pa zla ba 'i 'od zer*, included in L. CHANDRA ed., *The Collected Works of Bu-ston*, part 19 (Dza), Sata-Pitaka Series, 59 (1971), New Delhi (International Academy of Indian Culture), p. 469). Cf. here Bu ston with KALYĀṆADEVA, *Bodhisattvacaryāvatārasaṃskāra*, Cone mDo 27, f. 61a, who refers to the collective as the "collection, such as the aggregate composed of the hands etc." *(tshogs ni 'duspa ste / lag pa la sogs pa'i phung po lta bu 'o)*. But compare also Mi pham's pupil KUN BZANG DPA LDAN, *Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i tshig 'grel 'Jam dbyangs bla ma 'i zhal lung bdud rtsi 'i thig pa*, Delhi (Konchhog Lhadrepa), 1989, p. 470, who refers to the illustration of the collective with an army as conceptually superimposed upon a "collection of many men who have taken up arms" (*tshogs pa yang mtshon cha thogs pa 'i mi mang po 'dus pa la dmag ces btags*), an illustration which portrays the collective not just as an aggregate but as an *ordered functional, purposive* aggregate. Glossing the verse with reference to the continuant as the mind and the collective as the physical body is found already in Prajñākaramati's commentary: *paṅktivat saṃtānaḥ, senādivat*

continuant of the mind which consists of former and later temporal phases of itself"[13], a point echoed much more recently for example by gZhan phan chos kyi snang ba who precisely then couples this mental continuant in temporal series with "a collective of the body, consisting of feet, hands and so on"[14]. The dGe lugs lama Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa makes the situation even clearer when he speaks of the continuant or stream wherein there arises a sequentially ordered series, one following the other, of a plurality of former and later momentary cognition-events[15]. By way of contrast, in the case of a

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samudāyaḥ / The linking of the *ādi* with the *samudāya* appears to be merely for syntactical reasons, since the illustration of *ādi* with a garland (or rosary) and a forest would suggest here too a correlation with continuant and collective respectively.

[13] *Rang gi tshe snga phyi 'i sems kyi rgyud gcig pas.* SA BZANG MATI PAṆ CHEN, *Byang chub sems dpa 'i spyod pa la 'jug pa 'i rnam bshad gZhung don rab gsal snang ba,* New Delhi (Distributed by the Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji, H.P.), 1975, p. 277.

[14] GZHAN PHAN CHOS KYI SNANG BA, MKHAN PO, *Byang chub sems dpa 'i spyod pa la 'jus pa zhes by a ba 'i mchan 'grel*, Delhi (Konchhog Lhadrepa), 1989, p. 393: *rkang lag sogs kyang lus kyi tshogs pa gcig*). This echoes almost word for word the earlier phrasing of THOGS MED DPAL BZANG PO: *rang gi tshe snga phyi rgyud gcig la rkang lag sogs tshogs pa gcig pa* (p. 288). Interestingly, rgyal tshab rje, while speaking of one collective as consisting of a *single person's* feet and hands [etc.; see THUB BSTAN CHOS KYI GRAGS PA, (= MI NYAG KUN BZANG BSOD NAMS), *Spyod 'Jug gi 'grel bshad rGyal sras yon tan bum bzang.* Beijing: Kning go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990, p. 532], continues by referring to old age and youth, as well as former and later temporal stages (of the mind?) as one continuant. In other words for RGYAL TSHAB RJE the continuant appears to be any temporal series of the person *(gang zag)* ordered in the sequence before and after: *gang zag gcig gi rkang lag tshogs pa gcig cing / rgan gzhon dang tshe snga phyi rgyud gcig yin pas:* p. 183. DPA' BO GTSUG LAG PHRENG BA also implies that he takes the continuant as the mental continuant. His opponent speaks of a [conventional] Self – in fact the person – which is the "mere collective of the body and the continuum" *(lus kyi tshogs pa dang rgyun tsam bdag yin no snyam na:* p. 590). KUN BZANG DPAL LDAN also implies as much, taking the continuant as a before and after temporal series, and contrasting it with the collective of feet and hands [etc.], stressing the unification involved in the notion of "continuant" and "collective" even though the events which make them up are multiple: *de ltar tshe snga phyi sogs gcig min kyang de dag rgyun gcig yin pa dang / rhang lag de dag tha dad yin kyang tshogs pa gcig yin pas:* p. 470.

[15] THUB BSTAN CHOS KYI GRAGS PA, *op. cit.*, p. 532: *shes pa skad cig snga phyi da ma gcig rjes su gcig brgyud nas rim gyis 'byung ba la rgyun nam rgyud ces.*

collective there is no suggestion at all of sequential ordering in a before and after sequence, whether that sequence is understood in temporal or spatial sense. The foot does not by nature come *before* the hand, either in time or space.

Since the explicit linkage of Śāntideva's "continuant" with the mind involves a linkage with what is a *temporal* before and after series, it is interesting that as an example Śāntideva chooses a caste-row *(paṅkti)* – which is a *spatial* before and after sequence. The translation *of paṅkti* by "caste-row" here however is tentative, although I rather like it. The word can be used for any token-row, any row where its members are tokens of the same type and therefore fall under the same class. I am presuming that a group of things would not be classed together and therefore conceptually bound into one continuant if they had nothing in common at all. My suspicion – though I can scarcely prove it – is that Śāntideva intended to refer here to the homely example of a row of members of the same caste, as he refers also to the army *(senā)* as an example of a collective. Remembering that most monks would be familiar from childhood with the Brāhmanic social organisation of the village from which they came, perhaps the first suggestion of *paṅkti* would be the lineal organisation of caste and kinship members at a village feast[16]. Possibly some evidence for this interpretation can be found in the Tibetan translation. The Tibetan translates *paṅkti* by *phreng ba,* an expression which also translates the Sanskrit *mālā,* a garland or – commonly in the Buddhist context – a rosary, but also indeed a row or series (as in the case of a series of words). This gives rise to a problem however with the Tibetan translation of Prajñākaramati's *Pañjikā.* There, the additional examples implied by the expression "such as" *(ādi/la sogs)* employed in Śāntideva's verse are glossed by "such as a garland/rosary or forest and so on" *(mālāvanādayo/phreng ba dang nags la sogs pa)*[17]. The redupli-

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[16] See also here *Manusmṛti* 3:167 ff., where the concept of the "rows" refers particularly to the lineage of Vedic transmission and recitation. As Vedic lineage the *paṅkti* can also embrace of course a temporal as well as a spatial continuant.

[17] Compare here Kalyāṇadeva's glossing of *ādi* by "the flow of a river etc." (*chu 'i rgyun la sogs pa*). The use of a *mālā/phreng ba* is also found in

cation *of phreng ba* here with its use in the verse is of course quite absurd, and Bu ston, who appears to have used the Sanskrit text in writing his commentary, while he does not discuss the reduplication, wisely omits to make reference to this second use of *phreng ba*[18]. It is just possible that one reason for the translators using *phreng ba* in translating *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8:101 was that they felt *paṅkti* to be a cultural term which would not be understood by Tibetans, referring, that is, not just to a "row" but to a caste-row at a village feast. Thus the translators chose to translate with a reference to a garland or rosary which they felt would be more accessible to their Tibetan audience[19]. After all, if *paṅkti* in the root-text here suggested immediately to the translators simply a "row" or "sequence', there are other Tibetan expressions which could have been used as a translation, such as *rim pa,* thus avoiding the problems in the use of *phreng ba* in Prajñākaramati's commentary, where it translates *mālā* very precisely. I suspect that the culturally-determined country village use of *paṅkti* was predominant in the minds of the translators, and also in Śāntideva's search for a homely example to place alongside his reference to an "army'. If so, then Prajñākaramati's commentarial illustration of a *paṅkti* with a series of ants in file (also taken up by some of the later Indian and Tibetan commentators) can be seen as originally joke which might have appealed to the anti-Brāhmanical Buddhist monks, likening castes in file at a feast to ants playing follow-my-leader.

Vibhūticandra's commentary (f. 250a) which follows that of Prajñākaramati so closely as to count *in the main* as a summary of Prajñākaramati.

[18] In fact Bu ston chooses to split the application of the "such as', giving (with Kalyāṇadeva) the example of the flow of a river for the *ādi* taken with the example of a continuant, and referring to a forest which is an aggregation of a plurality of trees for the *ādi* applied to the collective.

[19] Among our commentators Kun bzang dpal ldan, (*op. cit.*, p. 470), appears clearly to have taken the reference in the verse to a *phreng ba* as a reference to a rosary, since he speaks of "conceptually superimposing one continuant which is a *phreng ba* upon a plurality of beads" *(phreng ba rdog du ma la phreng ba'i rgyud gcig ces btags pa bzhin).* The same interpretation can be found in his near contemporary Thub bstan chos kyi grags pa (*op. cit.*, p. 532). Perhaps it was current in the 19th and early 20th century *ris med* ("nonpartiality") circles in which they both moved.

4. Wholes simply do not exist

According to Śāntideva and his commentators there is simply no such thing as a continuant or a collective, let alone a psycho-physical aggregate of continuant and collective extended in time and space. This is not just the philosophically plausible (though it seems to me false) contention that aggregation does not make anything new over and above the composite elements. Rather, aggregation simply does not make anything at all, since otherwise there could be conventionally existent persons and – let me repeat – Śāntideva's argument would not follow. Why, according to Śāntideva and his commentators, is the whole – the continuant and collective – a fiction, simply nonexistent? The discussion by Prajñākaramati is for later scholars both foundational and comprehensive. According to Prajñākaramati:

(i) There does not exist any unitary ultimate reality called a *continuant.*

(ii) This is of the nature of a stream which is the ordered succession of moments occurring under the aspect of cause and effect.

(iii) It is not apprehended separately from that.

(iv) Thus, having recourse to one word for those moments a convention is employed by the mind for the purpose of everyday transactions with the word "continuant".

(v) It is a conceptual reality.

(vi) One should have done with craving for it. . . .

(vii) Thus also, there does not exist one reality which is a *collective* apart from the collected members themselves.

(viii) This is because it is not apprehended separately from those.

(ix) Since it cannot bear critical examination by way of conceiving it as identical or different from the subject, it will not be spoken of here.

(x) Therefore this also is a conventional existent, as formerly[20].

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[20] *saṃtāno nāma na kaścid ekaḥ paramārthasan saṃbhavati / kiṃ tarhi kāryakāraṇabhāvapravṛttakṣaṇaparaṃparāpravāharūpa evāyam, tato vya-*

Given that we have seen that for Śāntideva there can be no question of the psycho-physical composite existing but as a mere conventionality, one might be forgiven at this point for some confusion in reading Prajñākaramati's comments. Thus at (i) we are told that what is being negated is not the continuant as a conventionally existent construct, but rather an ultimate reality *(paramārthasat),* as something which can be found under an "ultimate analysis" (ix). Prajñākaramati actually states that the continuant is a "conceptual reality" *(prajñaptisat*; (v)), and the collective is a "conventional existent" (*saṃvṛtisat;* (x))[21]. Prajñā-

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tiriktasyānupalambhāt / tasmād eteṣām eva kṣaṇānām ekapadena pratipādanāya saṃketo kṛto buddhair vyavahārārthaṃ saṃtāna iti / iti prajñāptisann eva ayam / tena atrābhiniveśo na kāryaḥ /. . . / evaṃ samudāyo'pi na samudāyibhyo vastusan eko vidyate, tasya tebhyaḥ pṛthag anupalabdheḥ. tattvānyatvavikalpas tu asya avayavivicāreṇaiva gata iti neha pratāyate / tataś ca ayam api saṃvṛtisann eva pūrvavat / [= Tib Cone mDo 26 f. 166b] *rgyud ces pa 'ga' zhig don dam par srid pa ma yin te / 'o na kyang rgyu dang 'bras bu'i dngos po 'jug pa skad cig brgyud pa'i rgyun gyi rang bzhin nyid 'di yin te / de la tha dad pa de ma dmigs pa'i phyir ro // de'i skad cig ma 'di rnams tshig gcig gis blo'i tha snyad bya ba'i don du rgyud ces brdar byas pa yin te / de ltar na 'di ni brtags par yod pa nyid yin la / des na 'dir mngon par zhen pa spong par bya ste / de bzhin du tshogs pa can la sogs pa'i dngos po gcig pur gyur pa yod pa ni ma yin te / de rnams las de tha dad par ma dmigs pa'i phyir la / de nyid rang gzhan du brtags pa'i cha shas kyi rnam par dpyad pas mi gnas pa'i phyir 'dir brjod par mi bya ste / de'i phyir 'di yang sngar bzhin du kun rdzob du yod pa nyid do //*

[21] For another nice example of the way in which Śāntideva's commentators here slide between the denial of a Self as a truly existing and independent referent for the indexical "I" and the denial of a conventional self, or person, which will demarcate the difference between psycho-physical individuals see Sa bzang mati paṇ chen, *op. cit.*, 1975, p. 277: "They are fictions. This is because that which does not exist established truly as one, is not a primary existent *(rdzas=dravya).* Thus the solitary self which is the experiencer of pain does not truly exist. Therefore by whom, as experiencer for this pain which is to be experienced, will there be the owner – there will not be anyone as owner" (*brdzun* pa yin gyi gcig tu bden par grub pa med de rdzas du ma yin pa'i phyir ro // de ltar *sdug bsngal* myong ba *can* gyi bdag gcig pu *gang yin* pa *de* bden par *med pa des* na myong bya'i sdug bsngal *'di* myong ba po *su zhig* gis *dbang* du byed *par 'gyur* te su yang dbang bar mi 'gyur ro // Material in italics is from the verse). The answer to Sa bzang is, of course, that whether or not there is a "solitary self", the experiencer of pain – the owner – is the person Archibald, or Freda, and when Archibald experiences pain this is not the same as when Freda experiences pain. I know for a fact that when *I* experience pain,

karamati's terminology is that of Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma[22]. I have discussed the central Vaibhāṣika binary distinctions (which are equivalent in that they mark the same opposition) between *paramārthasat* and *saṃvṛtisat, dravyasat* and *prajñaptisat,* and *sasvabhāva* and *niḥsvabhāva* elsewhere[23]. In the Vaibhāṣika context we should note that these binary distinctions – which in origin arise

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it is not the same as when *you* experience pain. Having said that, it is indeed strange to speak of me as the *owner* of my pains. Many more examples of this slide from ultimate Self to conventional self and back again can be found among Śāntideva's commentators on these verses. A particularly interesting and I would imagine rather embarrassed example, given the *dGe lugs* care to distinguish between the conventional person which is not denied, and the Self which is, can be found in RGYAL TSHAB RJE's commentary *Byang chub sems dpa 'i spyod pa la 'jug pa 'i rnam bshad rGyal sras 'jug ngogs*, Sarnath (Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Printing Press), 1973, p. 183: «Therefore the self, which is the person *(gang zag)* of whom there is pain, does not exist. By that independent person *(gang zag rang dbang ba)*, who will there be the ownership of this pleasure and unhappiness» (*sdug bsngal can* gyi gang zag gi bdag *gang* yin pa *de med pa*'i phyir / gang zag rang dbang ba *des* bde sdug *'di su zhig dbang bar 'gyur*). Either there is a person who experiences pain or there is not! All this is particularly unfortunate, since as we have seen, and shall see again, Śāntideva's denial as one of the conventional person is *crucial* to his argument. One suggestion is that Śāntideva's commentators simply did not understand what he was saying. They were not actually thinking; they were not actually engaging in the meditation. Another suggestion is that they understood what Śāntideva was saying only too well, but also its unwelcome implications.

[22] But compare here the Hellenistic sceptic Sextus Empiricus: «if a whole exists it is either distinct from its parts or its parts of it *are* the whole. The whole does not appear to be distinct from its parts, since when the parts are removed nothing remains which would allow us to reckon the whole as something distinct from them. But if the parts themselves are the whole, the whole will be merely a name and an empty designation, and will not have an individual existence . . . Therefore there is no whole» (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* 3:98-9; trans. R. J. HANKINSON, *The Sceptics*, London/New York (Routledge), 1995, p. 249).

[23] Notably in P. WILLIAMS, "On the Abhidharma ontology", in *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 9 (1981), pp. 237 ff., although this distinction, the importance of which to Buddhist thought has, I believe, been much underrated, is central also to my historical discussions elsewhere, such as the 1994 "Argument for Cittamātra" paper, P. WILLIAMS, *A Tibetan Madhyamaka Defence of the Reflexive Nature of Awareness* (rang rig): *Mi pham's* Nor bu ke ta ka *commentary on Bodhicaryāvatāra 9:26 (Tib. 25) in context and controversy*, Taipei (Jin Luen Publishing). To be reissued 1997 with Curzon Press, London, 1996, p. 12-15, and P. WILLIAMS, "Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: a doctrinal overview', in P. WILLIAMS *et al.*, *Buddhist Thought in India: An Introduction*, forthcoming.

from the basic Buddhist claim that the apparently fundamental, primary reality of the Self can actually be reduced to a spatio-temporal series of psycho-physical elements – is closely related to issues of certainty and irreducibility, that is, the ability or otherwise to resist a process of literal, or analytic conceptual, reduction. To say that *x* exists in the fullest possible sense (i.e. it has *paramārthasat)* is to say that no matter how hard we try we cannot reduce *x* to some other elements which one way or another can be said to be its components and therefore, it is claimed, can be said to have *a more fundamental* (foundational, i.e. *dravyasat)* reality. We know that something has only conventional *(saṃvṛti)* or conceptual *(prajñapti)* reality when it can be divided into its component parts and then the original object is no longer experienced. In the light of this reduction the experience of the original object is lost. What this means, of course, although it is not put in quite this way, is that if such a reduction can take place then clearly there does not remain the original object still there alongside its parts. Thus, it is argued, apart from its parts the original object is nothing and therefore the original object is just a way of conceptualising, or seeing, its parts and cannot be granted the same sort of reality as the parts themselves. However, it is not maintained in *Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma* that to say that something has conventional or conceptual existence is a euphemism for saying that it does not exist at all. Things like rosaries, forests, armies, and any other continuants or collectives – even the person itself – while they are conventionalities inasmuch as they are made up of ontologically more fundamental elements, are definitely held to exist. They are not fictions *(mṛṣā)* in Śāntideva's sense of the term. And in this respect, as we have seen, *Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma* is surely correct.

There is another respect in which the Vaibhāṣika here is, if not necessarily correct, at least not necessarily wrong either. Rosaries genuinely are made up out of beads, forests out of trees, and pots out of atoms. It is truly the case that if you take apart the 108 or so beads of the rosary there does not remain an additional thing called the "rosary itself". While true, this is however quite trivially so. It is trivial to state that there is not an additional thing (an additional part,

or "super-part"?) called the "rosary itself" over and above the parts. Thus what Prajñākaramati states at (i), that "there does not exist any unitary ultimate reality called a continuant", at (iii) "it is not apprehended separately from that", and similar comments at (vii) and (viii), are all trivially true. Of course the whole "in itself" is nothing at all. A whole is a *whole,* by definition there is no whole *in itself.* The parts are precisely its parts. It is part of the meaning of "parts" that they are all the elements, factors or whatever which make-up *x* as its constituents (which is not to say that there are not other types of things – relations between parts, for example – which are necessary in addition to the parts themselves in order to make a whole). If there were an additional thing called the "*x* itself" then without that additional thing there would be no *x,* no rosary. Thus that additional thing would be a constituent of *x* and therefore not the whole but a further part. Thus it is trivially true – a result of the meaning of "part" and "whole" – that there is no thing called a "whole" in addition to the parts. There is no paradox here. Nevertheless a follower of *Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma* – let us call him "Vasubandhu" – is perfectly entitled to involve in distinguishing between wholes and parts a distinction of two types of "reality'. It is a matter of definition – perhaps not to be recommended as a potential source of confusion, however – if Vasubandhu wishes to call wholes *saṃvṛtisat*, *prajñaptisat* etc., and phenomena which are thought to be analytically irreducible *dravyasat*, *paramārthasat* and so on[24].

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[24] Things are rather different, however, for Madhyamaka. In Madhyamaka *all* phenomena without exception – all *dharmas*, all things – are said to have only *saṃvṛtisat / prajñaptisat.* While it is accepted that a provisional distinction can indeed be made between composites and the simples which make them up, still, inasmuch as composites for the Abhidharma lack their "own unique and distinct identity" (i.e. they are *niḥsvabhāva),* it is thought that all things inasmuch as they are one way or another for Madhyamaka the results of causal conditioning must therefore also lack their own unique and distinct identity and be *niḥsvabhāva.* Nothing has the full plenum of existence, all are simply conventionalities, conceptual existents. Clearly a switch has occurred here in the meaning of *svabhāva.* In the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma to have a *svabhāva* was not to be causally independent but rather to be a fundamental, an irreducible analytical simple, which can serve as a constituent of those composites which inasmuch as they do not have

The distinction is however more than just one of different types of reality. It contains a strong dimension of value. The word *paramārtha* in particular conveys in Sanskrit the sense of the supreme thing, purpose, goal and meaning. If a contrast is drawn between *paramārtha* and *saṃvṛti* there is an implicit but very definite value judgement being made. If something has *saṃvṛtisat* it may be useful but it is not to be *supremely valued.* Just as his discussion of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8:101 relies completely on the structures of Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma ontology, Prajñākaramati's derivation of the "ought" of value from the "is" of his ontological categories can be seen at (v) and (vi). Since the continuant is a conceptual reality, one should have done with craving for it. The principle underpinning this comment is the Buddhist horror of impermanence and our attempts to ignore or deny impermanence as the source of all suffering. It is plausible to argue that all (or perhaps most) composites, inasmuch as they have been put together by various forces of composition, will eventually fall apart. Thus composites by their very nature are obviously subject to impermanence. Inasmuch as craving for what is impermanent leads to suffering in the light of its very transitoriness, it is as well to

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that sort of existence in themselves are *niḥsvabhāva.* If something has a *svabhāva* it is free of a particular type of causation, causation through composition out of parts, not free of all causation altogether. Most Abhidharma fundamental existents (primary existents; *dravyasat)* are nevertheless the results of causal conditioning and are radically impermanent, succeeding one another as stages of a psycho-physical stream. Thus the well-known Madhyamaka equivalence of *niḥsvabhāvatā* with dependent origination would be unacceptable in Vaibhāṣika. And this is for good reasons. It is clearly incoherent to speak of all things as having merely *prajñaptisat*, all things as conceptual existents. The very meaning of *prajñaptisat* depends on its opposition to *dravyasat*, and in order to have things which are constructs it is necessary to have those factors out of which they are constructed. Thus a follower of Vaibhāṣika can plausibly argue that if the Mādhyamika says that everything without exception is *prajñaptisat*, i.e. a construction, this must mean that nothing whatsoever exists since it is not possible for *all* things to be constructions. There would then be nothing left for them to be constructed out of. While for Vaibhāṣika composite entities – rosaries, and persons – can be said to *exist as composites*, this cannot be the case for Madhyamaka. Śāntideva is thus actually right to maintain *on Madhyamaka grounds* that composites are fictions in the sense that they simply do not exist. He is right, consistent, but it is nevertheless absurd.

avoid craving for any composite. Therefore the rationale for distinguishing between wholes and parts, composites and simples, on the basis of types of existence, and the introduction of an axiological dimension through valuing one type of existence more than another – together with playing on the superficial paradox that the whole is *nothing in itself* and therefore is thought to be somehow not fully real – has its basis in the wider Buddhist spiritual context of decreasing attachment and therefore, it is argued and hoped, decreasing suffering. Within this context it is certainly not *wrong* of the Buddhist to speak of composites as "merely conventionalities", lacking the prestigious type of existence. This is a matter of how we choose to define and use our terms. It would be wrong, however, if the Buddhist was misled by this to go to the far extreme and deny that conventionalities have *any existence* at all. This, unfortunately, is what Śāntideva does. But if he does not do this then his argument is going to loose whatever initial plausibility it might possess.

5. The need for a subject

Śāntideva's position is an extreme version of the no-subject view. But any serious attempt at a no-subject view, even in a version considerably less extreme than that of Śāntideva, would appear to be quite implausible. As we have seen, in the *dGe lugs* version of Madhyamaka it is important to recognise the actual (conventional) existence of the person, the individual subject of experiences. In stressing this, *dGe lugs* scholars are absolutely right – but they are at variance with Śāntideva. It seems clear to me that pain has a *necessary* connection with a subject who is in pain, and that anything resembling a literal understanding of a no-subject position is quite incapable of making any sense of the concept of pain. Inasmuch as Śāntideva himself is therefore incapable of making any sense of the concept of pain, Śāntideva cannot make any sense of the removal of pain which is a *sine qua non* of the bodhisattva path. The case of the dying Mrs Gradgrind in Dickens' *Hard Times* is well-known among philosophers. Mrs Gradgrind declares that she thinks there is a pain in her room somewhere, but she is not sure whether she is the one who has got it or not (Bk. 2, Ch. 9). This is of course

absurd, as Dickens intended it to be. It is part of the very concept of a pain that it is the pain of a subject. While it is certainly possible to be unsure whether one is in pain or not, it makes no sense to speak of pains as if they are free-floating. It does not just *happen* to be the case, a contingent matter, that pain P is *my* pain, and that very pain P (the pain-token, the pain itself) could have been someone else's pain. I do not catch my pains, as I might catch a passing feather. If there is a pain, part of the having of the pain is its being had by a subject. *Pace* Śāntideva, it is necessarily false to think that a full account of a pain can be given without mentioning the subject of that pain. And that is just as well, since, as Galen Strawson points out, "if, per impossibile, there could be pain experience without an experiencer, there would be no point in stopping it, because no one would be suffering"[25]. On Śāntideva's extreme no-subject view there is no one undergoing pain, and thus there is no point is stopping pain.

All experiences are subjective, essentially for a subject, and in spite of Śāntideva's wish otherwise, subjects are different. In a world where subjects could not be distinguished (a "Śāntideva-world", the level of *prajñā,* the *buddhabhūmi?)* there could also be no experiences. We could no longer have grounds for speaking coherently of consciousness at all, not because we are there at the level of nondual *jñāna* which is beyond all linguistic superimposition but simply because we can make no sense of consciousness without experience, and no sense of experience without subjectivity, and no sense of subjectivity without subjects. The subjective quality of an experience is what makes it an experience, and is thus essential to consciousness. An experience which lacked subjectivity would not be conscious

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[25] G. STRAWSON, *Mental Reality*, p. 133.

6. On pain

Śāntideva has argued that without Selves there are no selves, with no selves there are no persons, and with no persons we cannot distinguish between "my pain" (my *duḥkha,* of which pain is a sub-class) and "your pain'. Nevertheless, the basic fact that we do (normally) as a matter of fact set out to remove our own pains is because Śāntideva's analysis of the person and pain is wrong, and if Śāntideva were right not only could we not remove pain but we would have no need to do so. Quite contrary to what Śāntideva says at *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8:102, that "Pains without an owner are all indeed without distinction. Because of its quality as pain indeed it is to be prevented', pains without an owner simply do not exist and therefore we cannot apply the argument that pain is to be prevented simply because of its subjectless quality as pain. I do not prevent (my own) pain because it has some abstract "quality of pain", but rather because it hurts, i.e. it is a first-person unpleasant experience. If neither I nor anyone else could make sense of pain hurting – and the hurting quality of pain is a sensation, *intrinsically* subjective – then not only would pain not exist but even if it did exist there would be nothing unpleasant about it and therefore no need to remove it. It is simply contradictory to argue with Śāntideva that there are no subjects and then refer to pain as being to be removed because of its quality as pain. We can only make sense of its negative quality as pain with reference to the unpleasant experiences of subjects. However if we cannot make sense of pain at all then the bodhisattva path becomes meaningless. Thus for Śāntideva to take his own argument and its implications seriously would be to destroy the bodhisattva path.

I want to argue that there is a *necessary* relationship between pains and the subject of pains. Although this seems quite obvious we can do more than simply repeat its obviousness. I have argued elsewhere for this necessary relationship using three arguments, but I shall treat only the first of those here:

(i) Far from there being no such things as persons, but only subjectless pains, I want to suggest that the truth is the exact reverse.

There are no such things as pains, but only subjects (persons, cats, limbs etc.) in pain. Once we understand our language properly we will no longer be misled by the noun "pain" into thinking that it refers to some thing which can float free of its subjective context. You can meet a person hurting, but you cannot meet a pain.

(ii) Pains (or the having of pains) are events, and events as changes cannot occur without a subject. Changes are happenings that occur to subjects.

(iii) The identification, individuation and reidentification of pains require mention implicitly or explicitly of the subject, the person who is in pain. There is no such thing as a pain in a subject-free bundle. Without the subject, pains cannot be identified and individuated, and pains without identity are pains which do not exist[26].

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[26] Note that I do *not* employ here the argument that pains are physiological occurrences in the brain involved in physical processes and with evolutionary and biological functions which can only be understood in terms of physical bodies. This happens to be true, and indeed so obviously true that it is indeed physiologically the case that it is difficult to know quite how to make biological sense of Śāntideva's free-floating pains cut adrift from the subjects in pain. But my concern here is not with biology but with conceptual coherence. I think one can make sense of replacing each of the biological factors in the biological account with another factor, say as it pertained to a robot. Supposing we replaced the physiological processes of the firing of various fibres and so on with some mechanical analogues, and supposing nevertheless we granted that the robot had consciousness (whatever that might be, at least as much consciousness as I might grant to a cat). And supposing the evolutionary process of the robot species was nothing like the evolution of humans or other animals, and yet nevertheless the robot convinced us in the normal way that we might be convinced by any being that it was indeed feeling something which we would normally be quite willing to call pain. Supposing the robot jumped up and down and writhed. None of this seems *impossible*, even if we were not convinced that the robot's feeling of pain had anything to do with its survival, or protection of its mechanic body or whatever. I want to leave it open that I could still be persuaded that the robot was indeed in pain, real pain. Thus being in pain is not as such something to do with the human, or the animal, biological structure and evolution. That is just a contingent fact about pain. Nevertheless there *is* a necessary connection between being in pain and the subject who is in pain, and this necessary connection is conceptual. That is what interests me here. Because there is a

(I) *There are no such things as pains, only subjects hurting*

We do not have to maintain that pains are *things* at all, in *any* sense. There is nothing in our experience which suggests that we should. Contrary to what Buddhists might urge, if we sit down and calmly observe what is going on we simply do *not* find (free-floating or independently identifiable) pains. We find that I, the meditator, have knees that are hurting. Thus, as Chisholm[27] points out, we can remove at a stroke questions concerning the peculiar status of pains as things. It seems likely that all statements which use "thing-language" of pains can be replaced with a form of adverbial – or perhaps verbal – language. Thereby, we can read a sentence like "I have a pain" as something like "I sense painfully", and "I have a pain in my knee" as "I sense painfully in my knee", or, in other words, "I hurt in my knee".

With these translations we are no longer left with strange *things* like pains at all. "I hurt in my knee" does not entail that it should be possible to operate on the knee and find a thing called a "pain". In "I hurt in my knee" there is nothing left which even *might* be free-floating[28]. It becomes incumbent on the one who would resist this rephrasing to show how something essential is lost in no longer referring to pains as things. Śāntideva's position absolutely requires

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necessary relationship between pain and the subject in pain, there could be no possible world in which Śāntideva's argument would work. This is not just a contingent fact about our world. But on pain, physiology and the self see also A. R. DAMASIO, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, London (Picador), 1995, Ch. 10 and pp. 263 ff. We could not locate a pain, and therefore there would be no pain, without a body-map. Pains *essentially* happen at a place, and that place is bodily and its identification and integration involves the unity provided by the self. In fact we might think of a pain as a particular sort of unpleasant irruption into the background feelings. As such, it necessarily occurs within the context of self (consciousness). For details of my second two arguments see the full version of this essay.

[27] R.M. CHISHOLM, *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study*, Ithaca/London (Cornell University Press), 1957, p. 123.

[28] There is of course a noun "hurt" which might be taken as an equivalent of "pain". But to think that because I hurt in my knee my knee should contain some occult thing called "a hurt" is patently absurd – about as absurd as thinking that because I hurt in my knee (= I have a pain in my knee), my knee should contain something called "a pain"!

that it makes sense to talk of pains floating free from the subjects who we normally speak of as possessing the pains, and indeed that such talk is truer to reality. It has to be meaningful to talk of pains while not requiring reference at all to the patently differing subjects of pains, differing persons undergoing pain. If the adverbial analysis or something like it is correct, then not only are there actually no pains to float free, but all pain expressions involve "hurting-modifications" of some subject. That subject could be e.g. a limb, but it seems to me that to give a full specification of the subject will eventually involve a reference to the *person* undergoing the hurting-modification. If this is right – or even if, as it surely must be, *any* subject at all is required for hurting-modifications – then inasmuch as persons/subjects differ Śāntideva's desired conclusion will not follow. Otherwise, if there are *no* subjects at all, then inasmuch as we have seen that pains can be translated into hurting-modifications of subjects it follows that there can be no pains. But the non-existence of pains in the sense of the complete non-existence of hurting would be the *reductio ad absurdum* of Śāntideva's thesis and entail its obvious falsehood.

7. Conclusion: how Śāntideva destroyed the bodhisattva path

Śāntideva has eliminated the subject in order to appeal for the removal of pains without discrimination of myself and others. His argument will fall immediately if this discrimination can still be made in terms of anything which will enable me to isolate myself from others, and this can be done with *any* identifying description. Let me repeat the point again, for it is central and its importance can easily be forgotten or missed. It is simply not true that Śāntideva's elimination of the subject, the person, or whatever, is occurring only on the level of the ultimate truth, the final way of things. Śāntideva intends his elimination of the person to issue in altruistic actions. But it is within the everyday transactional conventional realm that actions – and therefore the salvific actions of the bodhisattvas and Buddhas – take place. An elimination of the person as ultimate, leaving the acceptability of a conventional person, is completely irrelevant to his purposes and indeed quite possibly antithetical to

the conclusion Śāntideva wishes to establish. I can *quite consistently* accept that I do not have an isolated monadic True Self and yet, *qua* Williams, this person here, repeatedly and selfishly put the interests of myself (if not my Self) before the interests of all others.

Thus it is simply not the case that Śāntideva is denying the *ultimate* existence of the person and urging the removal of pain without discrimination. He has also to be denying the conventional transactional existence of the person. Thus *there can be no distinguishable and therefore differentiating subjects for pains either ultimately or conventionally.* Therefore Śāntideva is arguing that it is consistent to remove pain without discrimination because we cannot logically – if we want to be rational animals – discriminate between persons. There simply are no persons.

However, I have argued that it is absurd to refer to pains without the subjects who are in pain[29]. Thus on Śāntideva's premisses we are left with the impossibility of making sense of pain. If the first part of Śāntideva's argument is correct then the conclusion of altruism which he wishes to draw becomes impossible, and the removal of pain as an integral part of the bodhisattva path itself looses any meaning. Indeed reflection suggests that if the implications of Śāntideva's argument at *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8:101-3 are consistently thought through – particularly in terms of their complete elimination of the person as subject – their effect on the bodhisattva path might be even more catastrophic than the mere meaninglessness of pain. Let me give just one example to illustrate what I mean:

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[29] That without self (indeed Self) and other there can be no sensations like pain appears to be accepted by dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba in his commentary to *BCA* 8:102: «Therefore, because no "self" is apprehended really (or "as real"), there is not apprehended also an "other" in mutual correlation. That being the case, having calmed by nature verbal differentiations and characteristics, all *dharmas* being without distinction, there is not apprehended self and other which are the basis for distinction, and indeed pleasure and pain which are the distinguished qualities» *(des na yang dag par na bdag mi dmigs pas ltos zla gzhan yang mi dmigs cing spros mtshan ngo bo nyid gyis zhi bar chos thams cad bye brag med pas khyad gzhi bdag gzhan dang khyad chos bde sdug nyid kyang dmigs su med la).*

Our problem is that on Śāntideva's premisses, pain has to be seen as *intrinsically* bad. There is nothing about pain which makes it something to be eliminated apart from the fact that it is pain, for the only thing about a free-floating pain is its nature as pain. However, the intrinsically bad nature of pain seems to be wrong. Take the case of morphine poisoning. It is a simple fact that in the case of someone with morphine poisoning the antidote is to *give* them pain, thus "soaking-up", as it were, the excess morphine. In the case of pain *x*, it is only the context – which includes necessary reference to the person in pain – which will tell whether *x* is or is not the antidote to morphine poisoning. Thus if pain is to be eliminated regardless of persons in pain, the bodhisattva would be unable to administer pain in the appropriate context, or would seek to remove the therapeutic pain, and thus would be unable to help the person with morphine poisoning[30]. Note also, of course, that intentional action is embedded in persons as well. When we speak of the actions of a Buddha or a bodhisattva we mean the actions of a person (as subject) as the locus of the actions. Without persons to act as their loci, there can be no actions of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. It makes no sense for

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[30] There are other contexts where it might be argued that a bodhisattva would be at a disadvantage in not being able to administer pain. One thinks of cases like killing Hitler, or the commander and guards of a concentration camp in a context where all the inmates could successfully escape, or the use of pain as punishment. Note that the bodhisattva would also actively intervene to *remove* the pain inflicted with laudable intentions by others in these contexts. But it is at least arguable that there are cases and contexts where pain is appropriate for beneficial ends. This would seem to fit rather well with the notion of skill-in-means *(upāyakauśalya)*, which is of course central to the Mahāyāna path. Unfortunately, on Śāntideva's premisses it would seem that the bodhisattva precisely cannot take into consideration the individual cases in this way, at least where the individual cases require reference (as they usually do) to the persons involved. But the example of morphine poisoning is particularly unanswerable since even a fully-enlightened Buddha could not help a person with morphine poisoning without actually *giving* pain. It is the actual pain which is the cure. And I doubt it could be argued that the situation would not arise for a Buddha could prevent morphine poisoning occurring since, apart from the question of free-will, it is difficult to see how one can prevent morphine poisoning without any reference to persons. On morphine poisoning see D. C. DENNETT, *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology*, Montgomery, VT (Bradford), 1978, p. 196.

Śāntideva to speak of acting for the benefit of others, removing pains because of their quality as pain, if he denies the person as locus for the action.

The point is important. As we have seen, Śāntideva's exhortation to act is on the same level as his denial of personal differences which would make us act to remove our own pains and not those of others. Thus it seems clear that Śāntideva is exhorting selfless action at the same time, at the same level, *and on the very same grounds* (that we have no distinctive self) as he is in fact (although not in intention) denying its basis. We find that on Śāntideva's premisses there could be no such thing as an immoral action, or a virtuous action, or the actions of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. From an initially plausible starting point we find that in fact if his argument is correct, and our behaviour should be expected to follow disinterested reasoning in order to be truly moral, Śāntideva – the great poet of the bodhisattva path – has actually destroyed the very path he writes of so movingly.