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Wild Emptiness: A Zen Approach to Environmental Ethics

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Wild Emptiness: A Zen Approach to Environmental Ethics

Before enlightenment, chop wood carry water. After enlightenment, chop wood carry water.

-Roelof Boumans

Environmental Ethics

Zen Environmental Ethics Don't Exist

The following chapter will explicate the arguments of several western environmental ethicists and will serve to give insight into both traditional and more liberal approaches to contemporary environmental ethics. These arguments have been chosen as a means to address the different mechanisms employed to motivate ethical engagements with the environment. Furthermore, they are provided to shed light on how contemporary ethics define ethical environmental behavior and to address what sort of entities are regarded as the proper subjects of these ethical actions. Zen Buddhist doctrine does not explicitly address environmental ethics, as this is a branch of philosophy that has only very recently emerged from Western culture. Therefore, it will be most relevant to understand how contemporary Western ethicists approach the matter as a means of establishing a cohesive framework to address the central question at hand. What is the Zen approach to Environmental Ethics? How would a Zen Buddhist engage with the earth? Why?

Environmental Ethics

The first three philosophers that will be addressed, Paul Taylor, Gary Varner, and Holmes Rolston III appeal to the assignment of intrinsic value as a means of asserting the moral standing of biotic factors. While each of the three give slightly different justifications for why the assignment of intrinsic value to living beings is appropriate and assign different amounts of intrinsic value to different organisms, they nonetheless all ground their ethical framework in the most traditional mechanism of appealing to the assignment of intrinsic value. Environmental ethicist Thomas Hill challenges the validity of grounding an environmental ethic in the assignment of intrinsic value and rather identifies destructive environmental tendencies to be reflective of one's lack of "human excellence". He does not necessarily encourage ethical behavior as a means of achieving moral superiority, as a traditional appeal to virtue ethics would, but rather identifies one's destructive tendencies to be reflective of one's lack of excellence of which he claims is a reflection of one's incapacity to be a good moral agent. Finally, Arne Naess's radical ontological approach to environmental ethics will be explicated. Naess encourages identification with an enlarged self, such that one is encouraged to abandon identification with their narrow ego and to take on a conception of self that is not separate from, but rather part of, one's environment. He claims that the dissolution of the conception that the individual is separate from their environment will internally motivate "beautiful" environmental actions.

The rise of Environmental Ethics occurred in academic philosophy in the 1970s. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club and forester Aldo Leopold are credited to have trailblazed the uncharted territory of extending ethics to both biotic and abiotic factors (Stanford Encyclopedia). The environmental ethical movement posed a challenge to the traditional assumption of human superiority and argued for the assignment of intrinsic value to non-human environmental factors. Traditional western ethical perspectives were primarily anthropocentric such that intrinsic value was assigned solely to human beings or human beings were assigned a significantly greater amount of intrinsic value. This assignment of intrinsic value served to justify the protection and promotion of human welfare at the expense of non-human beings. For example, Aristotle claimed that "nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man" (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2) which highlights the deeply rooted anthropocentric foundation of western ethics, as the renowned ancient philosopher is shown to have regarded nature as merely of instrumental value of which is to be used as a tool to facilitate the welfare of humans. On the contrary,

environmental ethicists have challenged this foundation with the assertion that non-human ecological factors are intrinsically valuable. This is to claim that they have value in themselves independently of their prospects for furthering some other end such as the facilitation of human health or providing pleasure of aesthetic experience. The assignment of intrinsic value is commonly regarded to generate a prima facie direct moral duty on the part of moral agents to provide protection to that which is intrinsically valuable (Stanford Encyclopedia). Traditional environmental ethics appeal to the assignment of intrinsic value to biotic factors as a means of asserting their moral standing.

Aldo Leopold: The Land Ethic

Environmental Ethicist, Aldo Leopold does not give an explicit framework for an environmental ethic but rather, fervently calls for an ethical movement that extends ethical recognition to the "land". His article "Land Ethic" initially recalls a tale of Odysseus, a heroic mythological Greek king who when returned from war, is thought to have hung a dozen slave girls who he suspected of misbehavior during his absence. It is noted that there was an ethical structure of that day that protected wives, but ethics had not yet been extended to human chattels. Thus, there was no ethical dispute regarding the girls' execution as they were considered merely property and the disposal of property was then and is now still a matter of expediency. Leopold provides this jarring piece as a means of provoking the understanding that ethics are a time and culture dependent set of human rules which deem that which is right and wrong. He shows that over three thousand years from Odysseus's time, ethics have grown immensely to be extended to many "fields of conduct with a proportionate shrinkage in those judged by expediency only" (Leopold, 124) .

Leopold claims that ethics rest on the premise that "the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts" (Leopold, 125). Leopold traces the origins of ethics to be rooted in the tendency of interdependent entities to evolve modes of co-operation. Primal human instincts toward survival and reproduction prompt the individual to compete in community. Contrarily, ethics prompt the individual to co-operate within the community. Leopold parallels ecological symbioses, the cooperation of organisms within an ecosystem, and the systems of politics and economics of which he describes as advanced symbiosis in which the primary human instincts of survival and reproduction are mitigated by co-operative mechanisms with ethical content. Ethics is recognized to have first dealt with the relation between individuals and later evolved to mitigate the engagements of the individual and society.

Leopold recognizes that like the slave girls, land and its non-human inhabitants are still regarded as property. He claims that with regard to the previously described evolution of ethics, it is merely the "third step in a sequence" (Leopold, 124) to extend ethics to deal with the individual within the ecosystem. Leopold states that one's relationship with the land is still rooted in economics but claims that it is both an "evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity" (Leopold, 124) to extend ethics to the field of ecology and thus enlarge the boundaries of the moral community. Leopold calls for the ethical recognition of soils, waters, plants and animals of which he refers to collectively as "the land" (Leopold, 126), and iconically claims "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." (Leopold, 128) Leopold calls for the need for an intense consciousness of land, as a means of promoting that which is "natural, wild, and free" (Leopold, 129).

Paul Taylor: Species Egalitarianism

American philosopher Paul Taylor argues for a "life-centered system of environmental ethics" (Taylor, 102) as opposed to a traditional "human-centered ethics" (Taylor,102). He describes the responsibilities of traditional human-centered environmental ethics as being grounded on the contingency that the treatment of ecosystems has the capacity to further the realization of human well-being, a recognition that ecosystems are traditionally regarded as merely instrumentally valuable. Contrarily, in his bio-centric system, Taylor argues that individual organisms are considered entities with inherent worth, and a respect for this inherent worth is that which drives our moral relations with life on earth. Due to the

assignment of inherent worth, or intrinsic value, he claims that humans are morally bound to protect and promote the wellbeing of individual organisms. Taylor's assertion that all organisms have inherent worth is grounded in the fundamental notions that every organism, population, and community of life, (1) "has a good of its own" (Taylor, 103) and (2) the realization of this good is intrinsically valuable. Taylor defines the notion of "a good" for a non-human organism as consisting in the full development of its "biological powers" (Taylor, 103). He claims that cognitive interest thus sentience is not a necessary condition of having a "good". He provides the example of a tree which is wholly unaware of favorable or unfavorable conditions, all the while growing toward the sun, and absorbing ground water as a means of deliberately surviving. He claims that in addition to sentient life, insentient life forms do have a "good" in the sense that the full realization of their "biological powers", can be facilitated or hindered. Taylor appeals to the principle of intrinsic value which states that the realization of the good of members of "Earth's community of life" (Taylor, 104) is "intrinsically valuable" (Taylor, 104). This is to assert that all individual life forms have a "good" that that is prima facie worthy of being preserved and promoted as an end in itself. Thus, he claims that duties owed to organisms are grounded in the responsibility of performing actions that facilitate the realization of "good" which is considered to have inherent value.

Taylor claims that one's attitude taken toward living beings depends on an underlying a belief system, which constitutes a particular outlook on nature and the role of humans within the biosphere. He develops a philosophical world view of which he calls "the biocentric outlook on nature" (Taylor, 105), a belief framework with four main components. The first component being the understanding that humans are members of Earth's community of life. He calls for the acknowledgement of human origins as rooted in the same evolutionary process that gave rise to all other species. Additionally, in relation to Earth's natural ecosystems, he calls for the recognition that humans are but one species among many that share a similar dependency on the earth and its resources. The second component of Taylor's outlook is the recognition of ecosystems as complex webs of interconnected elements which involves understanding that biological functioning of each element is dependent on the functioning of other elements. Taylor describes the foundation of ecosystems as being grounded in intricate interconnected dynamics with relatively stable structures including food chains, predator-prey relationships, and plant succession. These structures which are self-regulating, energy-recycling mechanisms preserve the ecological equilibrium necessary for the maintenance of life. Taylor claims that knowledge of these causal connections is essential for informing decisions regarding actions involving engagement with nature. The third component of Taylor's outlook is the recognition of each individual organism as a teleological center of life, this is to recognize that each individual carries out its biological function according to the laws of its species-specific nature which involves developing an awareness of the uniqueness of each organism. Taylor claims that through the recognition that every organism carries out its biological function by its own unique means, one is able to recognize the organism's individuality and is able to empathize with their perspective, as a system of goal-oriented activities directed toward self-preservation. He claims that as moral agents, humans can genuinely consider the perspectives of teleological centers, and ground their value judgements with respect to whether or not an action promotes another being's own good.

The final component of Taylor's biocentric outlook involves the rejection of human superiority, which he claims to be the result of taking the perspective of the first three components. Taylor argues that unique human characteristics, usually appealed to as justification of human superiority, such as rationality, aesthetic creativity, autonomy, self-determination, and moral freedom, are considered essential to the preservation and enrichment of human civilization but are only beneficial to human welfare. Thus, to assert human superiority based on the capacity to have these characteristics is to claim objective superiority from a subjective standpoint. Moral superiority, which is often appealed to as a superior characteristic, is refuted as it is noted that only beings with the capacities of a moral agent can be judged to be either moral or immoral, thus since animals and plants do not have such capacities, they cannot be considered morally inferior. Taylor claims that foundational western thinkers, namely the Greeks, Cartesians, and Judeo Christians, are all recognized to assert human superiority without sufficient

justification and thus he claims that our deeply rooted belief of human superiority is "irrational and arbitrary" (Taylor,112).

Taylor claims that when his biocentric outlook integrates with the conceptual framework of which one perceives the world, one develops a recognition of a deep sense of kinship with non-human forms of life. Since the conception of human superiority recognizes humans as the sole dominating species, he claims that rejection of human superiority "entails it's positive counterpart: the doctrine of species impartiality" (Taylor,112). He suggests that as humans recognize that the realization of their good is not inherently superior but equal to the inherent value produced by the realization of the good of all individual organisms, one subsequently recognizes the equal inherent worth of all organisms. While Taylor refrains from asserting that all organisms have moral rights, he calls for the assignment of legal rights which would publicly recognize the equal inherent worth of all organisms. Taylor's biocentric egalitarian approach suggests that since the inherent value associated with the realization of good of all individual living beings is equal, humans should place limits on population and technology with the deliberate intention of sharing the Earth's bounty with other species.

Are All Species Equal

David Schmitz's article "Are all Species Equal?" raises criticisms regarding Paul Taylor's biocentric outlook, and his conclusion that the rejection of the notion of human superiority entails the doctrine of species impartiality. In regard to the second component in Taylor's biocentric outlook, and his conclusion, Schmitz notes that though all living things are teleological centers of life, which he recognizes as an equally shared valuable status, beyond that, there is nothing that asserts species equality. Schmitz asserts that there are dimensions of value independent of one's drive to survive and reproduce, that should be considered. He compares a tree which has the ability to grow and reproduce, with a cheetah which has these abilities in addition to its ability to run. Schmitz suggests that a species' abilities could be summed to determine their overall value. He does not attack Taylor's claim regarding human superiority, and thus does not suggest that the number of a species' abilities correlates with its inherent superiority, but rather wishes to illustrate that the values of different species are not the same. He asserts that the "goods of trees and chimpanzees are not comparable" and claims that the value of species are not the same, but vastly different. Furthermore, he claims that we needn't ignore that there are grounds for moral standing, like being sentient, that humans do not share with all living things.

Additionally, Taylor's rejection of human superiority which is grounded on the notion that humans have no objectively superior characteristics could be challenged on account of rationality having the capacity to reduce suffering. It is a widespread ethical agreement that the deliberate reduction of suffering is good, thus, since humans are the only species with an intellect capable of recognizing and deliberately reducing suffering, it could be argued that humans are inherently more valuable. Taylor rejects the notion that humans are morally superior as he states that an individual incapable of engaging with morality cannot be characterized as either immoral or moral. While the individual may not be able to be characterized as either moral or immoral, it is apparent that they do not have the capacity to engage in moral action, thus it could be argued that humans are morally superior by the simple fact that they are capable of engaging in moral action.

Gary Varner: Biocentric Individualism

Like Paul Taylor, American philosopher, Gary Varner developed an environmental approach that involves the assignment of intrinsic value to all individual living beings as a means of justifying the consideration of all of life, sentient and non-sentient. As a means of establishing the moral standing of non-sentient life, he criticizes the traditional "mental state theory of individual welfare" (Varner, 92) which identifies the interests of an individual as that which the individual "actually desires" (Varner,92). This traditional theory does not recognize non-sentient beings as being capable of having interests, as they are incapable of having conscious desires. Varner defines an interest as a need or desire that when

fulfilled creates intrinsic value and he defines an entity with moral standing as that which has interests. Thus, since the traditional mental state theory does not recognize non-sentient beings as having interests it also does not recognize their moral standing or as having the capacity to produce inherent value through the satisfaction of their interests. He develops an alternative "psycho-biological" (Varner, 93) theory of individual welfare which recognizes both preference interests and biological interests. Preference interests are traditionally recognized and involve conscious desires while biological interests serve biologically based needs and do not involve conscious desires. Through the assertion that non-sentient organisms have biologically based interests, even though they are incapable of consciously desiring anything at all, they can be considered to have both moral standing and the capacity to create intrinsic value. Thus, Varner's approach argues that all conscious and non-conscious organisms have interests, the satisfaction of which creates intrinsic value. This can be paralleled with Taylor's assertion that inherent value is produced by the realization of the good of all organisms.

In contrast with Paul Taylor, Varner establishes the notion of "hierarchically structured interests" (Varner,96). He creates a rough framework of a value hierarchy that establishes the satisfaction of "ground projects" as creating more inherent value than the satisfaction of "non-categorical desires" which create more inherent value than the fulfillment of "biological interests" (Varner 96). "Ground projects" are defined to involve a host of long-term desires, and are considered to give meaning to one's life, a career could be an example. "Non-categorical desires" are described as day-to-day desires and can be paralleled to the aforementioned notion of preference interests. An example could be the desire to eat an apple. He justifies this hierarchical framework with an assumption regarding hierarchically structured interests of which he states that "when the satisfaction of one [interest] requires the satisfaction of the other [interest], but not vice versa." (Varner,96), then the two interests are hierarchically structured. Additionally, he makes the assumption that the satisfaction of interests from similar levels in similar hierarchies creates similar amounts of value, and the amount of value produced from their satisfaction is relative to their position in the hierarchy of structured interest. He thus claims that since satisfying a ground project requires the satisfaction of innumerable non-categorical desires but not vice versa, the satisfaction of the ground project produces more value than the satisfaction of non-categorical desires. The same claim is made regarding the relationship between non-categorical desires and biological desires respectively.

Varner argues that in light of his assumption regarding hierarchically structured interests, it is appropriate to assert what he calls "the priority of desires principle" which states that "the death of an entity that has desires is a worse thing than the death of an entity that does not."(Varner, 97) He points out that non-sentient beings only have the capacity to have biological interests, while sentient beings have this capacity in addition to the capacity to have non-categorical interests ie. desires. Thus, in accordance with this principle, he concludes that the lives of non-sentient beings are generally less valuable than the lives of sentient beings as sentient beings satisfy both preference and biological interests while non-sentient organisms only satisfy biological interests and thus do not have the capacity to produce as much value through their satisfaction of interests.

Varner recognizes that his biocentric individualist approach is in a sense anthropocentric, as he regards humans to be to sole species capable of forming and satisfying ground projects, which he considers the satisfaction of to produce the most good. Thus, in accordance with the priority of desires principle he deems human life as having superior importance, followed by sentient organisms which are capable of non-categorical desires, and then non-sentient organisms which are capable of satisfying only biological desires. Through the recognition of both preference and biological interests, Varner argues that all individual organisms have interests and thus have moral standing and the capacity to produce intrinsic value through the satisfaction of their interests. While non-sentient beings have the capacity to produce intrinsic good, their capacity is inferior to that of sentient beings, which is inferior to human's capacity to produce intrinsic good. Varner does not argue for the moral obligation to protect non-sentient beings but

justifies the consideration of non-sentient life in making decisions as rooted in their capacity to generate intrinsic good, as it stands relative to sentient beings and humans.

Varner's Assumptions

Varner's approach is rooted in the assumption that "two interests are hierarchically structured when the satisfaction of one requires the satisfaction of the other, but not vice-versa" (Varner,96) as he uses this assumption to establish a hierarchy of interests. He proceeds to make a further assumption which establishes the amount of value produced by the satisfaction of interests as relative to the position of that interest within his interest hierarchy. From these two assumptions he develops the principle which establishes the importance of a life based on how much value the satisfaction of their interests creates. Thus, his whole argument is rooted in his initial assumption which establishes a hierarchy of interests. Before establishing this assumption, he admits the unpopularity of moral hierarchies, but as a biocentric individualist "feels forced to draw one" (Varner, 96) as a means of avoiding "becoming guilty" (Varner, 96) whenever sacrificing or injuring life. He claims that this is a plausible assumption "when coupled with empirical observations about certain broad categories of interest" (Varner,96). While this may be the case, Varner's essay "Biocentric Individualism" does not provide any empirical evidence to validate the plausibility of this assumption and thus his whole argument teeters on the flimsy assumption that it is appropriate to establish a hierarchy of interests as a means of dodging the guilt associated with sacrificing life.

Holmes Rolston III: Duties to the Natural World

The previously mentioned ethicists have developed approaches grounded in the assignment of intrinsic value to individuals. American theologian and environmental philosopher Holmes Rolston III recognizes "member components of the biotic community" (Rolston,70) as having intrinsic value, which alludes to the assignment of intrinsic value at the individual and species level. He alludes to the assignment of intrinsic good as he defines individual organisms and "kinds" (Rolston,67) of organisms ie species, as "evaluative systems that conserve goods of their kind"(Rolston, 67) and claims it would be "callous and insensitive"(Rolston,67) to eradicate or damage these goods for the sake of frivolous human pleasure. He is most notable for asserting that an ethic is "urgent at the level of species "(Rolston, 68), and he claims that species are more intrinsically valuable than individuals. He justifies his assignment of intrinsic value to individuals and species by appealing to mutual dependency, in which he suggests that since the survival of both humans and other species are dependent on the resources produced by the same ecosystems, those species are worthy of intrinsic value.

Rolston recognizes a need for an environmental ethical movement which passes "hedonistic, humanistic logic" (Rolston, 66). He claims that "hedonistic calculus" which sums the "pains, pleasures, interests, and welfare of individual animals" (Rolston, 66) and provides the foundation of traditional western ethics, is but one of the many considerations necessary to develop an appropriate environmental ethic. With respect to the assignment of intrinsic value to non-sentient beings, who cannot obviously suffer, he claims that classical humanistic ethics find ecosystems to be unfamiliar territory as the minimization of suffering cannot not serve as the sole foundation of an ethics of respect.

Rolston calls for a "vital ethic" (Rolston, 67), a comprehensive ethics of respect for life which prioritizes the welfare of ecosystems of which he recognizes as "objectively satisfactory communities" (Rolston, 70) in that they provide sufficient means for species to survive and flourish, and thus he considers them to be "satisfactory communities to which to attach duties"(Rolston,70). While Rolston does not assign intrinsic value to ecosystems themselves, he argues that biotic "member components",(Rolston,70) ie. individuals and species, which he considers having intrinsic value, are dependent on the ecosystems for survival. Therefore, he argues that one has a duty to protect ecosystems, as ecosystem welfare is identified to substantially contribute to the welfare of the intrinsically good member components. Rolston describes the natural functioning of ecosystems as perpetually heading

toward species diversification and argues for the moral obligation to protect the natural functioning of ecosystems. He argues that the "secret to [ecosystem] fertility" (Rolston, 70) is biodiversity, and therefore since ecosystems are dependent on biodiversity for fertility, and member components are dependent on ecosystem fertility, biodiversity is to fervently be conserved as a means of respecting the intrinsic value of member components. The moral obligation to protect ecosystems is not rooted in respect for its inherent intrinsic value but rather, is rooted in respect for the intrinsic value of the member components of whose welfare is dependent on the fertility of ecosystems.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Welfare

Rolston's argument for an urgent ethic at the level of species rides on the empirical notion that the preservation of all species is necessary for the stability and wellbeing of ecosystems. Although ecologists used to agree that the complexity of an ecosystem stabilizes it, this claim has been empirically criticized especially in regard to species that occupy a small area with a small population as these species show to have little impact on the stability of an ecosystem.(Sober,139) Ironically, endangered species whose protection is fervently asserted by conservationists, fit these parameters exactly, they have small populations and occupy small areas. Thus, endangered species are recognized to have very little impact on the stability of an ecosystem. Rolston's appeal to the upkeep of biodiversity as a necessary means to maintain ecosystem welfare, overlooks the empirical notion that some species, namely those whose populations resemble endangered species, may not be necessary to maintain the wellbeing of ecosystems.

Intrinsic Value

The positions addressed thus far have appealed to the traditional environmental ethical approach of the assignment of intrinsic value to biotic factors as a means of establishing moral standing and developing a foundation for an environmental ethic. Paul Taylor's biocentric egalitarianism claims that the "realization of good" of all organisms has the same inherent worth or produces the same intrinsic value, and thus he grants each individual equal intrinsic value as a means for arguing for moral standing. Gary Varner also recognizes that all individual organisms have the capacity to generate intrinsic value through satisfaction of their "interests", but unlike Taylor establishes a hierarchy of moral standing grounded in the amount of intrinsic value they are capable of producing through the satisfaction of their interests. Holmes Rolston III, like Taylor and Varner, assigns intrinsic value to individuals but considers species to have more intrinsic value. Rolston argues that "member components, both individuals and species, which he considers to have intrinsic value, are dependent on ecosystem welfare, and ecosystem welfare is dependent on biodiversity. Thus, he argues for the moral obligation to preserve biodiversity as a means to maintain ecosystem welfare, of which the welfare of member components is dependent on. Unlike Taylor and Varner who claim that an organism's intrinsic value is "produced" or "generated" though the "realization of good" and the "satisfaction of interests" respectively, Rolston does not explicitly state why he assigns both individuals and species intrinsic value. He alludes to the notion that humans and other species are mutually dependent on the same natural ecosystem processes as a means of justifying why he assigns intrinsic value to species and organisms, but is known to have a quasi-religious perspective, in which he considers natural processes and thus the life that emerges from such processes as sacred and thus inherently valuable (Stanford Encyclopedia, 5).

This traditional appeal to the assignment of intrinsic value as a means of establishing the foundation of an environmental ethic has received great criticism. Thomas E Hill recognizes that all organisms have "interests" or in Taylor's case "a good" but claims that just because these interests can be satisfied or doomed, does not imply that they are morally relevant, or that their consideration is morally justified. Both Taylor and Varner consider fulfillment of an organism's desires and needs to generate intrinsic value, such that their wellbeing is granted moral standing as a moral agent is obligated to facilitate the generation of intrinsic value. Hill recognizes that justifying an organisms moral standing on a mere capacity to have "interests" or a "good" is loose and arbitrary. If Hill's criticism holds and it is

inappropriate to assign intrinsic value on account of an organism's capacity to have interests, then all environmental ethics that appeal to this argument are essentially null.

Additionally, Rolston bases his assignment of intrinsic value on the assumption that that which has emerged from sacred natural processes, namely life, retains the objective property of intrinsic value, which serves to justify his argument for the moral obligation to acknowledge their interests. It should be noted that it is seemingly arbitrary assignment of intrinsic value on the basis that something has emerged from a natural process, as that which is natural, or emergent of a natural process is an arbitrary characteristic. For example, a beaver dam would be considered intrinsically valuable, as it would be considered emergent from a natural process performed by beavers, but since humans are naturally emergent, that which emerges from human processing should also be regarded as emerging from a natural process and therefore considered intrinsically valuable. Thus, Hill argues that the assignment of intrinsic value to that which is naturally emergent has very weak grounding as that which is "natural" is an arbitrary characteristic. Thus, Thomas E Hill rejects that the assignment of intrinsic value based on emergence from a natural process has the capacity to serve as sufficient grounding for an environmental ethic and takes an alternate approach.

Thomas Hill: Human Excellence

Thomas E Hill does not establish an environmental ethical framework but instead seeks to understand why we feel "moral discomfort" (Hill, 294) with the actions of strip miners of Appalachia, or loggers of an ancient irreplaceable redwood grove, those who seem to value nature solely for its utility. He claims that while indifference to non-sentient organisms does not necessarily reflect the absence of virtues, it often signals the absence of certain traits which are the natural basis for the development of certain virtues. He first suggests that destroyers of the environment lack "evolutionary awareness" (Hill, 294) and thus lack a proper appreciation for of their position in the universe. He clarifies that this lack of awareness is not a mere lack of particular information regarding the evolutionary process, but it as an inability to perceive the self as one part of nature. Hill claims that it typically holds that when one is able to perceive of themselves as part of the natural order, one comes to value the whole independently of its effects on the self. While Hill recognizes that one who does perceive of the self as merely part of the whole of nature can still take on the attitude that nothing is important but humans and sentient animals, his argument appeals to the common idea that awareness of nature typically has a humbling effect. Hill claims that learning humility requires learning to feel that something matters besides what will affect oneself and one's circle of associates and claims that learning to value things for their own sake involves the capacity to overcome self-importance. In addition to overcoming self-importance, Hill also addresses another aspect of humility which he calls self-acceptance, he describes this as "facing squarely" (Hill, 298) who and what one is. Hill claims that when one does not hide from oneself what one really is, and is able to halt behaviors rooted in the desire to disown or deny features of the self, the individual has achieved a virtue of human excellence. Hill suggests that experiencing nature casually promotes self-acceptance as one finds comfort in living, growing, declining, and dying by the same natural laws that govern all living beings. Additionally, he suggests that those willing to accept themselves as part of the natural world lack the common drive to replace natural environments with artificial ones.

Hill claims that while regarding non-sentient nature as merely instrumentally valuable is not necessarily wrong in a moral sense, it is likely to reflect either ignorance, self-importance, or a lack of self-acceptance, which must be overcome to achieve humility. He suggests that this lack of proper humility is reflective of an inadequacy of one's "human excellence" (Hill,298) and likely reflects a lack in the individual's capacity to be a good moral agent. Hill proceeds to suggests that one's tendency to destroy natural factors is reflective of one's lack of lack of "aesthetic sense", as he claims that a morally capable individual would not vandalize their own home. Hill's conclusion suggests that the "moral discomfort" associated with the actions of those who regard non-sentient environmental factors as merely

instrumentally valuable, is due to the intuitive recognition that their actions are reflective of their lack of ideals of human excellence.

Humility

While Hill does not necessarily encourage engagement in behavior aimed at protecting biotic and abiotic factors, he claims that in only recognizing the instrumental value of these factors, one reflects their own lack of human excellence, which in turn reflects their incapacity to be a good moral agent. He states that environmentally destructive habits are reflective of a lack of "humility", which he assumes to be an essential virtue of human excellence. While this virtue may be commonly regarded as desirable, it is arbitrary to assert that this virtue is necessary for the achievement of "human excellence". Hill does not offer a framework to describe the achievement of "human excellence" but merely states that it is a good measure of one's capacity to be a competent moral agent. If the achievement of human excellence is merely a designated state to describe one's capacity to be a good moral agent, why could it not be the case that one who is kind and generous, but not necessarily humble, be considered to have achieved "human excellence" as they would likely be capable moral agent? While he states that environmentally destructive tendencies reflect a lack of humility, he fails to address why the virtue of humility is necessary for the achievement of "human excellence" which he states reflects one's moral capacities.

Arne Naess: Deep Ecology

In addition to Hill, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess took an alternative route to the traditional assignment of intrinsic value as a means to justify an environmental ethic. He developed "Deep Ecology", an environmental ethical framework, of which he contrasted with "the shallow ecology movement" (Naess,3). The shallow ecology movement, the traditional environmental movement of the time, is described as the fight against pollution and resource depletion, with a central objective to promote the health and affluence of people in developed countries. The deep ecology movement instead encourages the intuitive recognition of the value axiom of the "equal right to live and blossom" (Naess,4) with regard to all of life, sentient and non-sentient, with a central objective to "save the planet from further devastation" (Naess,4). While the shallow ecology movement seeks to fight against pollution and resource depletion as a means of increasing human welfare, Naess encourages the individual to abandon their myopic perception of self and take on an expanded perception of self as a means of recognizing the intuitive value axiom that all of life has an equal right to "live an blossom", the realization of this value axiom he believes will create an internal motivation to engage in ethical environmental action.

Naess's approach is notable for its rejection of the "human-in-environment image"(Naess,3) in favor of the "relational total-field image."(Naess,3) The traditional human-in-environment image, which is the conception that the individual is inherently separate from their environment, serves as the root of essentially all other environmental ethics, as the individual is recognized as the moral agent of which has the duty to respect and protect the environment. Rather, the "relational total-field image" recognizes organisms as "knots in the bio spherical net"(Naess,3), and identifies an "intrinsic relation"(Naess,3) between the self and one's environment, such that this relation belongs to the basic constitution of both, so without that relation neither the self nor the environment are the same.

He seeks to illustrate how this notion of an intrinsic relation between the self and the environment dissolves the human-in-environment concept. He exposes the arbitrariness of the prevailing notion of the "self" in Western culture through illustrating how one's identification with the body can never provide an all-encompassing notion of the self. He shows that one does not identify merely as a physical entity, such that he explicitly shows that when used in a sentence the words "my body" cannot replace the word "I" and consistently elicit the same meaning (Naess,15). Rather he claims that "after a couple thousand years" (Naess,15) of thinking, philosophy nor psychology nor social-psychology has reached a stable conception of the self. He evokes the dissolution of this common conception as a means to reestablish the notion of self. He calls for the development of an "all sided maturity" (Naess,15) in

which one "identifies" (Naess,15) with "all living beings, beautiful, or ugly, big or small, sentient or not". (Naess,13) This process of identification, in which one expands their concept of self to include all of life, is described as development of the "ecological self" (Naess,14). Naess suggests that identification with one's environment is not merely a philosophically rooted intellectual achievement but an intuitive process. He provides the example of an Eskimo, legally apprehended for demonstrating against hydroelectric infrastructure, who claimed that the part of the river in question was "part of himself" (Naess,19). He reformulates this remark as a claim that states "my relation to this place is part of myself" (Naess, 20) and "if this place is destroyed something in me is destroyed"(Naess, 20) thus, "my relation to this place is such that if the place is changed, I am changed"(Naess,20). Naess emphasizes that this reformulation is meant to illustrate an internal rather than an external relation between the self and the environment, such that there are not two real separable entities to be related. He alludes to the development of a perspective of "crude monism" (Naess,27) which involves the dissolution of subject, object, and medium as a means of understanding oneself as merely a part of one's environment in contrast to a separate entity.

Naess seeks to establish the practical importance of the conception of an ecological self as he quotes Erich Fromm as remarking "love of others and love for ourselves are not alternatives" (Naess,16), and proceeds to assert that through identification with the ecological self, one is able to perceive their own interests as served by the promotion of the interests of the environment, namely through ecological conservation. Naess distinguishes between loving others because we "ought"(Naess,25) to, which involves satisfying other's interests out of duty, and loving others due to an expansion of the notion of the self, in which one's identifies the satisfaction of the interests of others with the satisfaction of their own interests. Naess claims that the satisfaction of a being's interest "furnishes a bridge from self-love to self-realization" (Naess,17), which is to say that self-love involves the drive to satisfy one's interests which leads to self-realization. He describes self-realization as "realizing inherent potentialities" (Naess,18), of which he claims survival is a necessary but insufficient condition and can be paralleled with one's capacity to "blossom". Naess quotes Ghandi who recognized the basic common right to live and blossom as rooted in the notion that self-realization is dependent on the "belief in the essential oneness of all of life" (Naess,23). Through the process of identification with all of life, which is to "see our self in others" (Naess,14) Naess claims that one realizes that their capacity to self-realize is dependent on the capacity of other life to self-realize. Naess claims that through identification with the ecological self, the "requisite care flows naturally" (Naess, 26) so that the protection of "free Nature" (Naess,26) is conceived of as the protection of the self. Naess encourages individuals to follow "positive inclinations" which allows one to "act beautifully" (Naess,26) rather than aligning one's actions with moral laws out of respect for duty of which he claims human kind has a very limited ability to do.

Naess takes an ontological approach, such that he argues for the dissolution of the commonly conceived of metaphysical barrier that separates the individual from their environment and does not establishment an environmental ethical framework and but rather claims that through identification of an expanded notion of the self, one's behavior will naturally and beautifully follow the norms of strict environmental ethics. While Naess seeks to encourage appropriate treatment of the earth, his approach is not morally grounded, such that it does not appeal to the achievement of moral excellence or adherence to moral law but seeks to promote self-realization. He claims self-realization involves the experience of the infinitely rich joyful aspect of reality, an aspect of reality unattainable through the tripartition of subject object and medium, but rather is a feature of the "indivisible" (Naess,23).

The Ecological Self

Naess argues that one should expand their conception of self to include all living beings as he believes that identification with an "ecological self" has the capacity to facilitate "beautiful" or environmentally ethical behavior. While he shows that one's intuitive conception of self is not a mere identification with a body, he does not offer a positive account for a notion of self, but rather recognizes it

as mysterious concept, such that academia has not achieved as stable standard conception of the notion. He recognizes the body as uncomplete conception of the self and encourages identification with an enlarged "ecological self". While he offers several anecdotes like the one about the Eskimo, to justify why identification with an ecological self is more appropriate than identification with an ego. He does not provide a hard argument as to why identification with this ecological self is reflective of an "all sided maturity". His argument appeals to the achievement of "self-realization" of which he claims one must dissolve their subject and object perception tendencies to achieve. Therefore, he encourages one to identify with environment as a means of facilitating this dissolution, but if one does is not interested in achieving self-realization, he gives no alternative as to why one should abandon their narrow-ego conception of self and identify with the ecological self.

This piece will now take a radical turn from contemporary Western philosophy and delve into the vast intricacies of ancient Buddhism in order to establish a foundation with which a Zen environmental ethic will be aligned.

Emptiness

Buddha

The rise of Zen Buddhism is thought to have occurred in China during the turn of the 6th century. The Buddhist monk, Bodhidharma, is credited as the father of the tradition and is considered to have lead the revolution of traditional Buddhism as it was transmitted from India and took root in China as Zen.

Traditional Indian Buddhism can be traced back to the Buddha, and while there are a plurality of recognized Buddhas over space and time, Siddhartha Gautama, is considered the original Buddha and founder of the Buddhist religion. Gautama was born the son of a ruler around 480 BCE in present-day Nepal. He was raised in lavish royalty and showered with pleasure, thoroughly sheltered from exposure to the suffering of the world. At age 29, while off royal bounds, Gautama encountered an old man, a sick man, and a corpse and was finally brought face to face with the raw facts of aging, sickness and death. Following the realization that life was imbued with impermanence and suffering, he could no longer find contentment in the confines of royalty, knowing he was merely sheltered from the suffering of the world. Gautama thus left the palace and sought to devote himself to overcoming suffering as a wandering ascetic. Hungry for spiritual guidance, he turned to the practice of yogic meditation, but the rarefied modes of consciousness he managed through yogic techniques proved unfulfilling. So, he sought a deeper ascetic practice, that of self-mortification. He subjected himself to miserable sensual circumstances, as an attempt at dissolving all his attachments to sensual pleasures. But even after excelling as an ascetic, his mind was still in turmoil, so he decided to abandon the ascetic practice all together. Tradition holds that after deciding to give up asceticism, Gautama sat one evening under the Bodhi-tree, entered a state of deep meditation, and at dawn he had a great insight into the nature of the universe. At this point, he is considered to have achieved "awakening". He believed he had solved the problem of suffering, and orthodox Buddhism stems from this original insight.

The Four Nobel Truths are thought to provide a concise framework for the Buddhas realization, the four assertions are as follows, suffering is inherent in life, suffering is caused by craving, craving and hence suffering can be destroyed, and the holy Eightfold path is the course tending to this. Like a course of treatment for the disease of life, identified as suffering, the Eight fold path encourages the cultivation of the following virtues, 1) right understanding 2) right thought 3) right speech, 4) right action 5) right livelihood 6) right effort 7) right mindfulness and 8) right concentration. The Eight Fold Path is not a set of instructions on achieving escape from reality or attainment of blissful tranquilization but rather serves as means to facilitate extinguishing the fire of craving which is considered the seed of suffering. Within the Buddhist tradition, craving is inseparable from ignorance, and to free oneself from craving one must first cultivate a proper understanding of the universe. This emphasis on developing "right understanding" as a means of overcoming suffering is apparent as the cultivation of this virtue is the first of the Eightfold

path. The Buddhist tradition considers the nature of the universe to be ultimately empty and regards enlightenment to be the direct experience of universal emptiness. These teachings, which regard the understanding of emptiness as the the foundation of overcoming suffering, are essentially accepted by all Buddhist traditions and constitute what is considered orthodox Buddhism.

Many schools developed as branches off orthodox Buddhism, some schools tried to preserve the core of Gautama's message in pristine form and resisted attempts to add new teachings, while other Buddhist schools were less conservative. The most influential of the more liberal schools was the Mahayana school. This branch of the Buddhist tradition began to take shape in 150 BCE and was centrally concerned with the "Bodhisattva Path", the practice that was considered to lead to Buddhahood. Within this tradition it was asserted that Buddhahood was a goal attainable by all sentient beings such that all ought to aspire to achieve awakening. The Mahayana school accorded altruistic action to be a central role on the Bodhisattva path, and the tradition was also marked by developments in the teaching of emptiness. Unlike other schools, which considered phenomenal "wholes" to be empty while regarding basic elements of the phenomenal realm to have ultimate existence, the Mahayana school retained a more radical interpretation of emptiness and held all phenomena to be ultimately empty. This piece will primarily focus on Mahayana Buddhism as it pertains most relevantly to Zen.

The Mahayana

The Mahayana school traces its origins to Nagarjuna who lived in South India during the first century CE. Nagarjuna is considered the most important, influential, and widely studied Mahayana Buddhist philosopher, (Garfield, 219) and is the author of the primary Mahayana text, the Mulamadhyamakakarika. This text is said to be terse and often cryptic with suppressed explicit arguments, but the uniformity of the philosophical methodology provides a considerable platform for critical interpretation. The central topic of this text is emptiness, the Buddhist technical term for the lack of independent existence, inherent existence, or essence.

Nagarjuna analyzes phenomena that appear to have inherent existence and argues that while these phenomena are seemingly existent, they lack "svabhava", which translates to "own being". This lack of self-nature or intrinsic essence serves as a central concept within the Buddhist tradition as everything within the phenomenal realm is considered to have no ultimate underpinning. He provides multiple arguments as to why he regards all phenomena as lacking intrinsic nature or an independent essence necessary to justify the ultimacy of its own-being. The primary argument for phenomena's lack of inherent essence is grounded in the principle of dependent origination. Dependent origination regards the rise of all phenomena to be dependent on other phenomena, such that vast relationality has given rise to the intricate interweaving that is the phenomenal realm. Following the assertion that the rise of phenomena is dependent on other phenomena, Nagarjuna proceeds to argue that all phenomena lacks unique substance, such that all phenomena is merely an assembly of properties borrowed from the phenomena of which its existence is dependent on. Nagarjuna appeals to the principle of dependent origination, which considers all phenomena to be solely constituted by and dependent on other phenomena, to justify his rejection of the traditional interpretation of reality which regards phenomena as independently existent. Nagarjuna recognizes a distinction between ultimate reality and conventional reality, and while he argues that phenomenal reality's lack of intrinsic nature justifies the rejection of its ultimate existence, he does not consider phenomena as completely non-existent, but rather as conventionally real.

Nagarjuna grounds this dual assertion, that phenomenal reality lacks inherent existence and is conventionally real in his text on "the doctrine of two truths". This doctrine explicitly draws the distinction between ultimate truths and conventional truths. Conventional truths function to describe daily experiences within phenomenal reality, but these truths, which describe phenomena that lack intrinsic essence have no ultimate underpinning. Ultimate truths are regarded to describe ultimate reality which would be considered to have inherent essence and the capacity for independent existence. Nagarjuna does

not recognize an existent ultimate reality, but merely uses the concept of ultimate reality to contrast with conventional reality. The ultimate truth about conventional reality is that it is empty, and likewise the ultimate truth about ultimate reality is that it is empty. This notion of emptiness is not used to ascribe an ultimate nature to either the conventional or ultimate realm but rather is used as a means of positively addressing the lack of inherent nature of both realms.

Phenomenal Emptiness

Nagarjuna employs a part-whole a part whole argument to argue for a lack of inherent essence and independent existence with regard to tangible objects. Concrete objects within phenomenal reality are considered to be partite, or constituted by several parts, and thus their existence is considered to be dependent on the existence of their parts. For example[1], the existence of a table is dependent on the existence of its materials as it could not exist without the existence of wood, metal, and finish. Additionally, the existence of the table is also dependent on the specific assembly of its unique parts, ie. that multiple legs are mounted to a flat surface and set upright. Furthermore, the existence of the table is dependent on the convention that establishes that a flat surface mounted on multiple legs is referred to as a "table". Without the parts, there would be nothing to assemble into a functional piece of furniture, without proper assembly there would merely be a pile of table parts next to a can of finish and without the convention to establish that a piece of furniture that functions to hold objects is referred to as a "table", the table could not exist. Nagarjuna uses this part-whole argument to establish that the concept of the table can be reduced down to its parts to show that the 'table' is merely a conjunction of properties. It's structural properties are borrowed from its parts, functional properties are borrowed from its proper assembly, and nominal properties arbitrarily produced by mental conventions, therefore all of the "table's" properties can be understood as derived from other phenomena. Thus, since the table has no unique substance of its own that it has not borrowed from other phenomena, it is argued that while the word 'table' does refer to something, it does not refer to a singular entity that is a table. Rather, the word 'table' refers to a multiplicity of parts assembled into a particular structure that provides a specific function.

Mark Siderits explicitly argues on Nagarjuna's behalf to explain why something's dependent nature necessarily establishes its lack of intrinsic essence. He states that there are two possible conceptions of how partite phenomena could be conceived of as ultimately real, 1) the parts and the whole are identified as identical and real and 2) the parts and the whole are identified as separate and real.

He rejects the first conception, which regards the parts and the whole as real, with an appeal to the "indiscernibility of identicals". This principle states that "if x and y are numerically identical, then x and y share all the same properties"(Siderits,108) To say that x and y are numerically identical is to declare that x, and y, are different names for the same thing, and if this is so, then in accordance with the principle, x and y must share all the same properties. Therefore, with regard to the principle of "indiscernibility of identicals", the table and all the parts in relation cannot be identical, such that the table has the property of being one thing while the parts in relation obviously do not. Thus, one can move to the second conception.

Siderits also rejects the second conception which regards both the parts and whole to be separate. He first claims that there is no evidence for the emergence of a new thing from the assembly of multiple parts, such that all experiences with respect to a table can be explained in terms of facts about its parts in relation. When one sees a table, they see the table's parts in relation, when one sets a coffee mug on a

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[1] Garfield, Jay. "Dependent Arising and the Emptiness of Emptiness: Why Did Nagarjuna Start with Causation?" *Philosophy of East and West*, 1994. (220)

table they use the parts in relation. He therefore suggests that there is no evidence for the existence of a whole that cannot be explained in terms of facts about the parts in relation. Additionally, he invites one to ponder the question, if the whole exists, its location clearly overlaps with the parts, but where is its specific location? He poses that whole could potentially be located in a single part, but the whole of the table can obviously not exist within one leg. He then poses that the whole could potentially be located equally in all the parts, but this also cannot be the case. The conceptual whole of a table is associated with its function, its capacity to hold things, and it is obvious that this function, an essential quality of the concept of a table, is not present in all parts equally, rather this is merely a quality of all the parts in relation. Therefore, since the location of a whole can neither be identified as in one its one parts, or in all its parts equally, he suggests that there are no real wholes.

Thus, since all tangible phenomena can be understood as dependent on other phenomena for their existence and are rejected to have the capacity to be inherently real, either as identical or separate from their parts, all partite entities are considered mere useful fictions. All referents used to refer to tangible phenomena are considered words that refer to a conjunction of properties borrowed from a multiplicity of phenomena and are not considered to describe some singular entity with an inherent substance independent of the phenomena of which its existence is dependent on.

This part-whole argument is extended to assert that all partite phenomena are ultimately empty, and notably is employed to assert the ultimate emptiness of human beings. Sentient beings are considered partite such that they are composed of five skandhas, which like the parts of the table are considered to constitute the being. These five aspects include the body, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness and are considered to be in constant interplay and thus frequently perceived of as a discrete entity. The individual perceived to be independently existent is considered merely a perpetually fluctuating conjunction of skandhas. The emptiness of individuals has heavy implications on Zen ethics and will be taken up more thoroughly later.

Not only are concrete objects in phenomenal reality considered to be empty of ultimate truth, Nagarjuna also rejects the ultimate existence of processes. He shows how motion can be understood as a process and then as lacking ultimate existence. He evokes an argument rooted in the notion that the present is a dimensionless instant. He shows how the concept of motion requires maintaining a certain position at one time and maintaining another at a later time. Thus, motion cannot occur within a single instant but can only occur between two distinct moments as motion describes displacement over a period of time. Thus, motion is considered partite as it involves the conjunction of a multiplicity of instants in which some concrete phenomena is displaced. This is to say that while the mind perceives motion as continuous displacement over a period of time, ultimately motion is the assembly of conditions, such that it is composed of many instants of displacement. If the concept of motion is merely partite, it cannot be recognized as an independent entity with an inherent essence, as its existence is dependent on the conjunction of displacement over several instances. Therefore, Nagarjuna shows how motion can be recognized as conventionally true, as it is perceived by the mind within phenomenal reality, but as ultimately empty, as it is partite and therefore dependent on the assembly of phenomena. In addition to motion, this argument is used to show that all change is empty, as change requires the assembly of phenomena over several instants, thus change cannot occur independent of other phenomena, and cannot be considered to have an essence of its own. Thus, since all processes involve a series of changing events which require phenomenal assembly, Nagarjuna uses this argument to convey the emptiness of all processes within the phenomenal realm.

The assertion of phenomenal emptiness alludes to the notion that all conceptual referents used to describe phenomenal reality such as objects, people, and processes are merely "convenient designators" (Ho,1235). The process of individuation, which is the tendency to differentiate phenomena into discrete entities, is regarded as having only practical relevance as these conventions function to expedite day to day engagements within the phenomenal realm. These individuated concepts and their respective

referents are regarded as conventional truths but are understood to have no inherent essence or to provide ultimate truth.

Causality

One fundamental argument relating to the Buddhist principle of dependent origination concerns causality which simultaneously rejects phenomena's capacity for causal power and establishes that the existence of all phenomena is grounded in its relationality with other phenomena. Dependent origination is commonly formulated as "when this exists, that comes to be, with the arising of this, that arises" (27, Jiang). The principle identifies the rise of phenomena to stem from, and thus be dependent on, the existence of other phenomena. Since "the arising of this" is dependent on the arising of "that", "that" which arises is not considered to have its own intrinsic nature, but to borrow all of its properties from the phenomena of which it is dependent on.

In his exegesis of the orthodox Buddhist principle of dependent origination, Nagarjuna makes a distinction between two possible views of causality. The first, which represents the traditional understanding of causality, recognizes phenomena as capable of bringing about effects in virtue of their inherent causal power. He then recognizes dependent origination's alternative account of causality which asserts that phenomena lack causal power and causal relations are regarded merely as explanatory useful regularities. Since recognizing phenomena as having causal power would allude to phenomena's possession of an inherent property, and Nagarjuna rejects the capacity for phenomena to possess such qualities, he defends the latter view of causality. His explication of the principle involves the recognition of a causal process that identifies the rise of effects, of which lack independent existence, to be dependent on conditions, rather than causes, which are also considered to lack independent existence. This account of causality which does not recognize the existence of metaphysical causal links can be said to regard causality as empty.

In providing explanation for his interpretation of dependent origination, Nagarjuna draws a distinction between causes and conditions. He considers an entity or event with causal power to be understood as having the power to bring about effects, this power is considered to be part of the entity's essence or nature. A cause is understood to have a metaphysical connection to the effect it produces, while on the other hand, conditions are defined as phenomena that can be appealed to in explaining the rise of other phenomena. Contrary to the notion of a cause, which implies an occult connection between explanandum and explanans, conditions do not assign a metaphysical link, but only address the correlation between phenomena and the rise of other phenomena. In alignment with the rejection of intrinsic phenomenal essence, he rejects that phenomena have causal power, and thus does not recognize the existence of causes. Rather he appeals to conditions as a means of explaining correlations within the phenomenal realm.

Nagarjuna argues that various types of conditions are conventionally existent and argues that while these conditions are normally deemed causes, they lack occult connections to their effects, and thus should be considered conditions. Jay Garfield in his article "The Emptiness of Emptiness" uses the example of explaining "why the lights are on" (Garfeild, 223) as a means of illustrating the lack of appeal to causal power in day-to-day explanation of phenomena. His example provides an illustration of each of the four types of conditions recognized by Nagarjuna. In regard to the question "Why are the lights on?", if one were to explain that "Someone turned on the light." this would be recognized as an appeal to the "efficient condition" and can be paralleled to the intuitive explanation of the rise of phenomena. The response that "The wires are in working order and the lightbulbs are effective." would be considered an appeal to the "supporting conditions" and serve to address an environmental condition that made the explandum possible. The explanation, "The light is the emission of photons in response to the bombardment of an atom by an electron" would be considered an appeal to the "immediate conditions" which is likened to an appeal to empirical evidence or scientific underpinning as a means of explanation. And finally, the explanation "So we can see." is considered the "dominant condition" and explains why

one deliberately sought the rise of the phenomena in question. Each of these conditions seeks to explain why the lights are on, but none make reference to any metaphysical link between the phenomena appealed to as the cause and the light turning on. Garfield's example shows that explanations for the rise of phenomena, usually regarded as "causes", do not identify the causal power of phenomena to bring about effects. Even the immediate condition, which appeals to the laws of physics, does not shed light on a metaphysical link between the emission of photons and the bombardment of an atom by an electron, but rather identifies that when an atom is bombarded by an electron it consistently emits photons. Therefore, explanations for the rise of phenomena merely involve the identification of a correlation between some initial phenomena and the rise of other phenomena. Garfield's example shows that explanations for the rise of phenomena are not rooted in "joints in nature" (Garfield, 223) or a metaphysical connection between two discrete phenomena, but merely identify correlation. Garfield's example conveys the different types of conditions Nagarjuna recognizes to be appealed to as explanation for the rise of phenomena. Thus, Nagarjuna argues that these explanations, usually regarded as causes, are actually conditions as they only serve to identify phenomenal correlation.

Additionally, Nagarjuna evokes the three times argument to show that the existence of what is conventionally understood as cause and effect are dependent on a process of phenomenal assembly and are thus empty. He argues that a specific phenomenon cannot be considered to be a cause at a point before the rise of an effect, as there is no effect for which the cause could have produced. Additionally, the phenomena cannot be considered to be the cause after the effect has occurred, as the effect is already present so the phenomena cannot be a cause when it is not actively "causing" anything. Furthermore, Nagarjuna claims that the cause cannot give rise to an effect at during a dimensionless instant but rather the cause must initiate a process of production to bring about an effect. This process describes a period of time in which both the cause and the effect are neither existent nor nonexistent but are in the midst of emerging. He recognizes that both the cause and effect are dependent on a process of emergence, such that the emergence of the effect is dependent on the process initiated by the cause and the emergence of a cause is dependent on the process of the emergence of the effect. Thus, both the existence of the cause and the effect are dependent on a series of phenomena that can be likened to the assembly of conditions and therefore both are considered partite. Since both are dependent on a process of emergence in which phenomena are assembled, neither are considered to have intrinsic essence, and both are considered empty.

The arguments above serve to justify Nagarjuna's rejection that phenomena have causal power, but in addition to rejecting a causal power view, Nagarjuna also provides an interpretation of dependent origination and offers a positive account of the emptiness of causality. Dependent origination's traditional formulation, "When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises" (27, Tao Jiang) alludes to the notion that within the phenomenal realm one is typically confronted with "a vast network of interdependent and continuous processes" (223,Garfield) rather than discrete phenomenal entities causing the rise of other discrete entities. Within the phenomenal realm, which can be understood as a web of interdependence, Nagarjuna recognizes the absence of a causal link between causes and their respective effects. The absence of this causal link is considered to be rooted in the very absence of an independently existent discrete phenomena to be capable of possessing causal power.

Nagarjuna's interpretation of dependent origination can be paralleled to David Hume's account of causation, which recognizes that correlating conditions that have been consistently observed will be seen as constituting a cause-effect relationship. However, he asserts that the observation of causal connection is impossible and that the notion of necessary connection between cause and effect is merely a "feeling of anticipation projected out onto the world" (Siderits,179). As shown through Garfield's example regarding the question "Why are the lights on?", causal explanations depend more on our explanatory interests rather than appealing to the identification of a discrete phenomenon with causal power responsible for bringing about a specific effect. For example, one's desire for light does not exert some occult force on the lights, nor is there metaphysical connection to be found between the production of light and any of the

four phenomenal conditions appealed to as explanation. He recognizes that these conditions are active in the production of light, but not in the sense that any of the conditions contain the potential to produce light or have causal power.

While Nagarjuna rejects the ultimate existence of causation, he recognizes the relevance of explanations based on phenomenal regularities and considers it relevant to distinguish between patterns of regularities and coincidental regularities. The scientific method, which produces all empirical evidence, does not have the capacity to shed light on a metaphysical causal link, rather, the method has the capacity to identify patterns of consistent phenomenal correlations through a controlled and repeatable formula. Thus, empirical evidence is a viable means of identifying regular patterns of correlating conditions which Nagarjuna considers to be conventionally true. Furthermore, knowledge of these patterns of correlating conditions provide a useful means for predicting the nature of phenomena and informing day-to-day decisions made within conventional reality. For this functional purpose, regular patterns of correlating conditions should be distinguished from coincidental correlations, but these regular correlations cannot be explained by appeal to a causal link or causal power inherent in phenomena. While Nagarjuna does not offer an alternative explanation for why phenomena correlate in regular patterns, he merely finds it inviable to fabricate an occult connection that cannot be perceived. Therefore, while Nagarjuna regards the identification of patterns of correlating conditions relevant in regard to the functionality it provides within conventional reality, he rejects the existence of a causal link between the phenomena and does not regard patterns of regular correlations as ultimately true.

Nagarjuna addresses the traditional views of causality and phenomena of which he identifies as the causal power view of causation and an essentialist view of phenomena and claims the two views are incoherent. He claims that the causal power view, which asserts that phenomena has the inherent capacity to cause the emergence of some other phenomena, clashes with the essentialist view of phenomena, which asserts that phenomena has an intrinsic essence. He claims that if phenomena has causal power, all phenomena is dependent on the causal power of the phenomena that caused its emergence. Nagarjuna claims that since the causal power view necessarily implies the dependence of the emerging phenomena on the causal power of the initial phenomena, phenomena cannot be considered to exist independently. Since intrinsic nature is considered to be a property completely independent from other phenomena and the causal power view implies the existential dependence of phenomena on other phenomena, Nagarjuna argues that because of the causal power view's implication of phenomenal dependence, under this view phenomena cannot be said to have any properties independent of the properties of which its existence is dependent on. Thus, Nagarjuna claims that the causal power view is incoherent with essentialist view because the causal power view nullifies the potential for phenomena to have independent existence and thus a unique intrinsic essence.

Nagarjuna's aforementioned arguments establish an alternative view of both causality and phenomena. He is shown to support the condition view of causality, ie dependent origination, and a conventional view of phenomena. Dependent origination regards the emergence of phenomena to correlate with the emergence of other phenomena, which is to assert that the assembly of certain phenomenal conditions can consistently be seen to lead to the emergence of other phenomena but does not assign phenomena causal power. He claims that to take on this view of causality, which rejects the assignment of causal power of phenomena and establishes its existential dependence on other phenomena, is to regard the existence of phenomena as merely conventionally real and as lacking intrinsic essence. Thus, Nagarjuna claims that while the traditional view of causality and phenomena are incoherent, these alternative views are coherent and thus superior in their conventional truth value.

Nagarjuna suggests that to take on the causal power view of causation, is to "succumb to the temptation" (Garfeild,226) to ground the explanatory practice of phenomena in causal powers, which is to assign phenomena an intrinsic nature and assert its ultimate reality. Instead Nagarjuna considers ultimate

reality to be empty and conventions to be the foundation of the phenomenal realm, thus nullifying any attempt of a philosophical search for the ontological foundations of conventions in ultimate reality.

Emptiness

Dependent origination, which recognizes all phenomena as dependent on and arising from other phenomena, serves to establish a causal nature for what Nagarjuna's doctrine of two truths recognizes as conventional truths. According to the doctrine, conventional truths function to describe and predict the nature of phenomenal reality, but the nature of this reality is not considered to be independently existent or to have intrinsic essence. On the other hand, ultimate reality is supposed to have an inherent essence with the capacity to exist independently of other phenomena. If ultimate reality were to be recognized as existent, ultimate truths would function to describe ultimate reality. The doctrine of Dependent Origination does not provide a positive analysis for ultimate reality other than characterizing it as empty. Nagarjuna does not recognize this emptiness as a self-existent void that serves to describe the nature of an existent ultimate reality that underlies the conventional realm. Rather, he describes emptiness as a mere aspect of conventional reality to describe its lack of self-nature. He provides the notion of emptiness as a quasi-positive characterization of ultimate reality as a means of conveying the notion that there is no ultimate reality that underlies the phenomenal realm. The doctrine recognizes phenomenal reality as ultimately empty, and offers a singular ultimate truth, that there is no ultimate truth.

Nagarjuna rejects the reification of emptiness, which would be to establish a dualism between conventional reality as illusory and emptiness as the ultimate reality underpinning it. To understand emptiness in this way is to see it as radically different than a mere aspect of conventional phenomenal reality, this would be to ascribe emptiness independent existence and to contrast it with conventional reality. Nagarjuna rejects this reified view of emptiness and nullifies this dualistic interpretation of conventional reality and emptiness as he describes that which is dependently arisen as emptiness. Thus, he establishes that emptiness and phenomena are not distinct, rather, the notion of emptiness serves to describe phenomena's lack of ultimate reality. The concept of ultimate reality is employed solely as a means of contrasting phenomena's conventional perceivable existence with an ultimate metaphysical existence, but Nagarjuna recognizes no such existent ultimate reality to provide metaphysical underpinning. Therefore, phenomena are considered to be empty which is to have no metaphysical grounding in ultimate reality as ultimate reality itself is empty such that it is not recognized as ultimately existent. It is not the case that emptiness is the ultimate reality that lies beneath phenomenal reality but rather, to describe something as dependently arisen is to assert its emptiness, and vice versa, to assert something's emptiness is to describe it as dependently co-arisen.

Nagarjuna recognizes phenomenal emptiness, which is to recognize all conceptual frameworks as merely "convenient designators" that serve only as a practical means to describe conventional reality. That is to establish that the identity of all entities within phenomenal reality depend upon the mental construction of individuation and the ensuing establishment of verbal conventions. This is to recognize that apart from conventions of individuation, in which one differentiates one phenomenon from another, phenomena is really nothing more than an "arbitrary slice of indefinite spatiotemporal and causal manifold" (Garfield, 229). For example, the concept of a tree, is regarded as practically relevant, such that it serves as a convenient referent to communicate the notion of a photosynthesizing organization of cells with a single trunk. While this concept of a tree is useful, such that one does not have to constantly employ the aforementioned long-winded description, it does not serve to identify an ultimately existent entity, rather it is a mere convention used to describe a piece of the interconnected web of relations that is the phenomenal realm. Thus, Nagarjuna recognizes that the assignment of phenomenal identities to discrete entities merely involves the differentiation of phenomena and the assignment of a referent because of the phenomena's significance within human culture. To recognize that something's identity is merely a verbal fact about it, is to recognize it as dependent on a conceptual framework that is neither an

independently existent entity nor as unreal, but it is to understand it as conventionally real and ultimately empty.

Ultimate Truth

Nagarjuna rejects the existence of an ultimate reality of which one could truthfully describe, and therefore rejects that conceptual frameworks have the capacity to offer ultimate truth. Thus, he recognizes the only claim that corresponds with the nature of ultimate reality is that there is no claim capable of explicitly conveying the nature of ultimate reality. This is to assert that the only ultimate truth is that there is no ultimate truth.

Nagarjuna's rejection of ultimate reality and his subsequent rejection of conceptual framework's capacity to offer ultimate truth asserts the emptiness of his own doctrine and seems to wholly nullify the Buddhist scripture as a platform for offering a truth with the capacity to facilitate the achievement of awakening. Since he does not recognize an ultimate reality of which ultimate truths could be employed to describe, it would be incoherent to regard Buddhist scripture or his own doctrine, as capable of offering ultimate truth. It seems unlikely that these meager conceptual frameworks, with only the capacity provide conventional truths have the capacity to offer insight capable of facilitating awakening. But, as mentioned earlier in the piece, awakening is likened to liberation from suffering, the root of which is identified as craving. Buddhist scripture recognizes this craving or attachment to stem from the reification of phenomena, in which one perceives phenomena as ultimately real and inevitability attaches to or avoids these reified entities. The Buddhist practice aims to demolish this process of reification through postulation of the principle of dependent origination which asserts phenomenal emptiness as a means of destroying craving and overcoming suffering. Since Nagarjuna's doctrine and orthodox Buddhist teachings are merely phenomenal concepts, they are recognized as ultimately empty, and recognizing their emptiness is imperative in avoiding attachment to these doctrines. Thus, Nagarjuna himself would recognize his own doctrine and orthodox Buddhist scripture as merely useful fictions. While principles offered in the doctrines only function as expedient pedagogical methods with the capacity to offer conventional truths, they are the only doctrines to offer the notion of emptiness and to recognize their own empty nature. So, if their arguments for phenomenal emptiness are good, these doctrines are unparalleled, though still a humble attempt to describe an ultimately nonexistent reality.

While it is recognized that Buddhist teachings and Nagarjuna's doctrine have not the capacity to offer ultimate truth, for a budding student in search of a means of liberation from suffering it may be useful to pretend that these doctrines are ultimately true. Through the fervent assertion of phenomenal emptiness, dependent origination has the capacity to facilitate the dissolution of almost all phenomenal attachments, a process considered necessary to achieve awakening and overcoming suffering. But, the full realization of dependent origination, which is likened to awakening, involves recognizing the dependent nature and thus emptiness of all phenomena which includes that of the conceptual framework of dependent origination itself.

Zen

Zen History

The Buddhist doctrine was transmitted along trade routes from India to China in the first century CE. Pilgrims, translators, and missionaries delivered Buddhist teachings to China whose culture was dominated by the diametrically opposed philosophies of Confucianism and Taoism.

The socio-political ideology of Confucianism, provided an account of the ideal life and a means of achieving the state of the "superior man". Among the cultivation of other virtues including 'jen' or benevolence, the Confucian notion of an ideal life was said to be marked by adherence to "li" which translates to propriety. It was through abidance to li, that one was thought to achieve the moral excellence required to become a "superior man". Respect for li involved recognizing one's place within social and

filial hierarchies and attending to the responsibilities appropriate to one's stature within those hierarchies. The ideology emphasized the necessity to adhere to customs, social conventions, and etiquette, as a means of embodying the "superior man". Confucianism considered the universe to be constituted by strict hierarchy, and fulfilling one's role within this hierarchy was deemed a necessary means of living an ideal life.

Taoism's central concern also involved providing an account of the ideal life but unlike the Confucian socio-political framework, Taoism provided an internal and individualistic approach to achieving harmony with the universe. For the Taoist, the ideal life is not based on respect for a hierarchical universe, but a life lived in accordance with the "way of things". This "way of things" is thought to be driven by the Tao, which is portrayed as a mysterious creative force which flows through and gives rise to all things. While the Taoists give a somewhat positive account of the Tao's nature, it is such that the first lines of the Tao de Ching read 'The Tao that can be told of/ Is not the Absolute Tao" (Yutang,583). Thus, the Taoist text paradoxically, describes the Tao's nature and established that any attempt to explicitly describe this enigmatic force, immediately encounters the problem that the Tao is held to be ineffable. Thus, since it is impossible to explicitly give an adequate description of the Tao, it is also impossible to explain what it means to live in harmony with it. While it is recognized that the Tao cannot be determinately captured in words, Taoist texts employ metaphors, paradoxes, and figurative language as an attempt to convey the ineffable nature of the Tao. To live in accordance with the Tao is merely to go with the flow with the mysterious force that drives the universe. Notable is the Taoist notion of "wu-wei" which translates to non-action and is considered to describe action driven by the Tao. Wu-wei is characterized by non-deliberate action, grounded in spontaneity, and in accordance with the natural flux that underlies all phenomenal processes. Taoism has been associated with the ideal of a simple lifestyle in a natural setting as a means of escaping the trappings of civilized culture, which are considered hinderances to achieving in harmony with the universe.

When Buddhism first arrived in China, it was faced with the Confucian dominated Han dynasty whose reign lasted from 206 BCE to 220 BC. The hierarchical foundations of Confucianism clashed with the Buddhist principle of emptiness, which recognized hierarchy as empty. Additionally, traditional Indian Buddhism encouraged the monastic practice which systematically detached the individual from the very social hierarchies that founded the Confucian socio-political ideology. The fall of the Han Dynasty in third century CE and the ensuing Period of Disunity (221 CE to 589 CE) led many influential thinkers to abandon Confucianism and turn to Taoism as a foundation for social philosophy. The Taoist lack of interest in socio-political organization and emphasis on a simple, selfless life lived in harmony with nature had much more in common with Buddhism, which aimed to facilitate the realization of universal emptiness and dissolve attachment to phenomena. Thus, the intellectual shift in China from Confucianism to Taoism provided fertile ground for the roots of Buddhism to take hold.

Tradition traces the beginning of the Zen revolution to Bodhidharma, an Indian monk who arrived in China in the late fifth century CE. Legend portrays him as an eccentric figure, iconoclastic, unperturbed by authority and moreover fiercely dedicated to the practice of a remarkably austere form of sitting meditation. He is said to have spent nine years meditating before a wall in monastery so long that according to legend, his legs fell off. The most iconic story of the monk[2] tells of his meeting with Emperor Wu of Liang (502-550 CE). Upon encounter with Bodhidharma, the emperor asked how much merit he had accrued from his patronage of Buddhism. Bodhidharma is thought to have responded unapologetically, "No merit". Taken aback, the Emperor asked "What is the highest meaning of the holy

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[2] James, Simon P. *Zen Buddhism and Environmental Ethics*. Ashgate, 2004.

truths?" "Vast emptiness, no holiness" came the reply. "Who are you to say this?" the Emperor demanded. "I do not know" responded Bodhidharma, and left. Bodhidharma's eccentricities and disregard for authority paralleled with insubordinate tendencies of Taoist sages and his meditation tendencies resemble that of Indian yogis, his iconic character thus provides insight as to how Buddhism took on Taoist principles as it integrated with Chinese culture.

The Rise of Zen

Widespread inquiry of Buddhism in China lead to the interpretation of Buddhist doctrines using a broad set of metaphysical and ontological themes derived from Taoism. The Ch'an movement, better known as Zen has been described as a "reformation or revolution in Buddhism" (Chan,425) The Sanskrit "dhyana" pronounced in Chinese "ch'an" and Japanese "Zen" translates directly as "meditation". The traditional notion of meditation from its Indian origins involves intense concentration of the mind in order to transcend the phenomenal realm. It is an attempt at avoiding the external world and ignoring outside influence, as a means of achieving an intellectual understanding of emptiness in order to achieve a state of enlightenment. (Chan, 429) In China the notion of meditation took on a Taoist twist and was instead recognized as a means of "conserving vital energy, breathing, reducing desire … [and] preserving nature." (Chan, 425) Unlike Indian meditation which involves ignoring the external world as a means of transcending the phenomenal realm, in China, meditation evolved to become a practice in realizing the emptiness of phenomena in every moment while engaged with the phenomenal realm. Traditional mediation in India was a practice in which one either assumed lotus position or walked silently as a means of cutting off engagement with the phenomenal realm. In China, meditation evolved into a practice of deep awareness of one's immediate phenomenal circumstances, a state unobstructed by attachment that one was thought to have the capacity to achieve during all day-to-day activities, like washing dishes and feeding cows. Unlike traditional Indian Buddhist tendencies which emphasized adherence to a monastic lifestyle, the Chinese sought to attain enlightenment through engagement with the phenomenal realm through the recognition of its emptiness in every moment. Thus, the reformation of Buddhism in China involved emphasis on a concept of meditation unlike traditional Indian meditation involving silent mental concentration but rather as the enlightenment of the mind as it engages with the phenomenal realm.

Two Strands of Emptiness

Zen Buddhism is thought to have interpreted emptiness as an interweaving of the Mahayana notion of emptiness with the Taoist notion of wu. The Mahayana notion of emptiness is used to describe phenomena's lack of ultimate reality as justified by dependent origination, and is appealed to in the fundamental Zen assertion that phenomenal distinctions and their respective dualistic designations are ultimately empty. Within Taoism, the notion of "wu", is considered an existent nothingness that underlies and drives the phenomenal realm. Within the Zen tradition this concept of "wu" is also referred to as emptiness and is appealed to in describing the perpetually fluctuating source of experience, of which the Zen student is advised to return. Within Zen, these two strands of emptiness, namely the conception of phenomena as lacking ultimate reality and the conception of a dynamic emptiness, are not explicitly differentiated, but instead are found woven together into various patterns throughout the Zen tradition. For the sake of philosophical examination, they will initially be taken separately and eventually interwoven to provide a holistic scope of the fundamental principles of the Zen tradition.

The Mahayana notion of emptiness and the Taoist notion of wu provide two different conceptions of emptiness of which are interweaved to produce the Zen tradition. The concept of emptiness as it emerged from the Mahayana school, serves to describe the ultimate nature of phenomenal reality, such that phenomena is considered ultimately empty. This is not a reified concept of emptiness, such that it serves to describe an existent metaphysical emptiness that underlies phenomena, but rather the notion merely describes the lack of an ultimately existent reality that underlies phenomena. The Taoist concept of wu serves to describe a metaphysically existent emptiness that underlies and drives all processes within the phenomenal realm. This concept of wu is both used as a referent for Tao and frequently appealed to in

describing the nature of the Tao of which is associated with perpetual transience, infinite creativity, and utter spontaneity. While these two concepts both describe a sort of emptiness, they are obviously at odds as the Mahayana notion of emptiness describes a lack of ultimate reality while the Taoist notion describes an existent ultimate reality that underlies phenomena. Therefore, during the rise of Zen, as these two conceptions of emptiness organically intermingled, each conception made a unique contribution to the tradition. On one hand, Zen absorbed the Mahayana concept of emptiness, such that the tradition regards all phenomena as lacking ultimate reality and justifies this with appeal to the doctrine of dependent origination. And on the other hand, Zen absorbed a notion of emptiness from Taoism that serves to describe the dynamic source of phenomena. The Zen tradition essentially disregarded the ontological implications of "wu" while retaining the notion's capacity to propel phenomenal processes and drive spontaneous human action. Thus while the two conceptions are fundamentally at odds with regard to their ontological standing, they were integrated into Zen without clashing.

Mahayana Emptiness and Nonduality

Buddha is said to be one "free of all forms" (Ho,1236), this is to assert that one who has awakened will refrain from imposing determinate forms on things as they will have fully recognized dependent origination and therefore understand all phenomena as ultimately empty. The Zen tradition appeals to the Mahayana notion that the reification of phenomena serves as the roots of the dualistic thinking patterns that lead to attachment. To regard an entity as definitively existent is to ascribe to it a determinate form and assign it a fixed self-same identity. It is thought that it is this tendency to definitively differentiate between phenomena that leads one to cling to reified concepts, and this clinging is considered the root of suffering. Through the realization of Mahayana emptiness, an awakened individual will have overcome the habitual tendency to assign a fixed identity to phenomena, this is not to say they will cease to use referents as a means of referring to phenomena, but rather that they will not falsely imbue conceptual fictions with ultimate reality.

The Zen tradition appeals to dependent origination as a means of justifying the lack of ultimate existence of all concepts, such that all concepts are mind-dependent and therefore cannot be considered independent or ultimately real. The tradition characteristically employs an additional mechanism which rejects the ultimate reality of concepts through exposure of their dualistic nature. A mutual dependence between concept x and non-x is recognized, such that a concept is such in virtue of not being all the concepts of which it is not. All concepts can be understood as dependent on all the concepts of which they not, as a concepts existence is dependent on being contrasted with other. For example, a thing can only be regarded as having the quality of lightness in virtue of lacking darkness, furthermore an apple can only be regarded as such in virtue of not being an orange and furthermore, in virtue of not being a skateboard or any other concept. Therefore, different concepts are not diametrically opposed or inherently separate but rather all concepts are mutually dependent one another for existence. Zen appeals to this argument which rejects dualistic concepts as dichotomies and rather asserts their intimate connection by appealing to their mutual dependence as a means to underscore the emptiness of dualities, an important theme within the tradition.

The Zen tradition's fervent rejection of dualism as rooted in Mahayana emptiness, identifies the mutual dependence and therefore lack of inherent separation between all dualistic phenomenal pairs, which includes that of all Buddhist metaphysical concepts such as samsara and nirvana, and ordinary mind and buddha mind. The rejection of the opposition of these metaphysical concepts seems to run the risk of nullifying the Buddhist practice. The rejection of dualisms asserts that there is no samsara opposed to nirvana or buddha mind inherently separate from original mind, thus the Buddhist practice seems to become absolutely disincentivized as the central goals of achieving buddha mind and nirvana essentially evaporate. The rejection of these dualistic metaphysical concepts does not serve to nullify the Buddhist practice but rather serves to completely eradicate the tendency of reification of which is regarded to be the greatest hindrance to awakening. If one has reified the notion of the buddha mind or the concept of

nirvana, they will recognize these states as ultimately superior ideal states of being, they will inevitably attach to these concepts and strive to rid themselves of the ordinary mind which traps them in samsara. Thus, the reification of these concepts, like the reification of phenomenal concepts leads only to their becoming objects of attachment and aversion. This craving to attach to and avoid reified phenomena is regarded by the Buddha as the seeds of suffering and the greatest obstacle for awakening. Therefore, the Zen Buddhists deliberately regard these metaphysical concepts not as diametrically opposed, but rather as mutually dependent and deeply interconnected as a means of asserting their ultimate emptiness. Through the assertion of their ultimate emptiness, the tradition seeks to avoid students' reification of the concepts as this poses the threat of attachment thus obstructs one's capacity for awakening.

Zen's emphasis on the emptiness of all dualities is extended further to reject a definitive distinction between subject and object. Since the notion of subject and object are mere dualisms, such that their existences are dependent on one another, they are regarded to be ultimately empty. In recognizing the mutual dependence between the individual and their environment, or that which is outside of their body, the Zen tradition rejects that the individual in inherently distinct from anything at all. Rather, both the individual and all aspects of their phenomenal environment are dependent on one another for their existence, thus they are not inherently separate but intimately connected.

This assertion, that there is no distinction between the self and that which is outside of the self can be appealed to in the metaphor of Indra's Net.[3] This beautiful metaphor serves to elicit the intimate connection between all phenomenal entities such that it provides a visual representation of cosmic interdependence. An interlacing net is described as extending infinitely in all directions with a glittering jewel placed in each vertex of overlapping cords. The surface of each jewel presumably reflects all the other infinite jewels each of which reflects all of the others. Through each reflection, the infinity is multiplied and remultiplied endlessly, an infinite repetition of endless reflections is reflected by each jewel. The infinite reflections on the surface of each jewel is thought to symbolize the interdependent origination of the entire phenomenal realm and the infinitely repeated interrelationships among its constituents. Thus, the Zen tradition underscores the notion that there is no ultimate distinction between any phenomenal entities rather the whole of the phenomenal realm is intimately intertwined.

With regard to conceptual emptiness, the Zen tradition emphasizes the imprecision of language and stresses that is not a vehicle by which the ultimate nature of the universe can be transmitted. Language is the means in which phenomenal distinctions are conceptualized and communicated. Thus, the function of nominal words, which is to designate referents to respective referential, presupposes the fundamental conceptual contrast between "x" and "non-x". Thus language is merely a nominal reflection of exactly the sort of habitual differentiation that Zen Buddhists claim lead to reification and thus attachment and suffering.

Zen does not advocate that one should abandon language altogether as a means of transcending the world of dualities and aim to exist blissfully in a distinctionless state of trance. Rather it encourages the individual to operate within the world of duality while recognizing that the distinctions are only conventionally real and relative rather than absolute. The distinctionless form of insight, as ascribed to the Buddha, is not so practical within one's daily engagements with the phenomenal realm but is essential as it reinforces the awareness that all distinctions and designations in their pragmatic usefulness are ultimately empty. Without this sort of distinctionless form of insight one runs the risk of reifying phenomena through the habitual thinking patterns that differentiate and designate phenomena, which are

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[3] Krummel, John. "Emptiness and Experience: Pure and Impure." *A Journal of Comparitive Philosophy*, vol. 5, 2004, pp. 57–76.

regarded to turn them to objects of attachment. Language is deeply imbedded in the Zen tradition and masters are regarded as characteristically skillful in their capacity to creatively "shock" one out of habitual dualistic thinking as means of evoking an experience of awakening. The practical application of language will be taken up more thoroughly later in the piece.

Taoist Emptiness and Flow

As noted above, the second strand out of which the Zen conception of emptiness is woven has roots in Taoism and is connected to the notion "wu". The concept of "wu" or non-being in Taoism serves as a referent for the Tao, or the ultimate creative principle that is considered the source of all phenomena. Within Taoism, "wu" is regarded as a metaphysically existent nothingness that serves as the ontological basis for all of that which exists. Furthermore, the notion "wu" is employed to describe the nature of the Tao, of which is associated with a non-deliberate perpetually dynamic and ineffable essence.

Notable is the notion of wu-wei. In Taoism, the principle of wu-wei serves as the primary personal implication of "wu". Wu-wei or non-action is considered action driven solely by "wu" the natural flux of the universe. Action rooted in wu-wei is likened to submission to the constant flow of the universe, such that one has released all attachment and therefore can freely go about their life merely flowing with the rhythmic waves of fluctuation that are considered the phenomenal realm. Wu-wei is associated with non-striving and spontaneous action, as these are also characteristics regarded to describe the nature of the Tao. The notion does not describe non-action like that of a sedentary couch potato but rather non-deliberate action and can be paralleled with the paradoxical Taoist saying, "everything is done in doing nothing". Not only is action rooted in wu-wei recognized as the optimal driver of action it is also regarded provide access to infinite creativity such that it is action propelled by the same enigmatic force that has autogenerated the universe.

The notion of a metaphysically existent ontological source, as regarded to describe the traditional notion of wu in Taoism, seems to contradict the Mahayana notion of emptiness. Mahayana Buddhists refuse all reification, including that of emptiness, as dependent origination fervently asserts that emptiness is also empty, such that there is no self-existent emptiness that gives rise to and underlies the phenomenal realm. The the cosmological application of "wu", an existent metaphysical emptiness, would be to assert, quite contrarily to the Mahayana concept, that there is a self-existent source that has an ultimate nature and the capacity to give rise to the phenomenal realm. Thus, the cosmological dimension of "wu" as an existent ontological source simply was not integrated into the Zen tradition as it clashed with the Mahayana interpretation of emptiness which serves as the ontological foundation of the tradition.

Instead, Zen integrates the notion of "wu" such that the tradition recognizes a dynamic flow that drives all processes within the phenomenal realm. While this flow was regarded within Taoism as self-existent dynamic emptiness, the Zen tradition abandoned this quality of self-existence and instead conceives of this perpetual flux as inherently empty. Thus, Zen regards all processes within the universe to be driven by a perpetually dynamic, infinitely creative, and non-deliberate flow, such that all of that which exists is an embodiment of this dynamic emptiness.

Zen most fervently integrated the personal implications of their interpretation of the Taoist concept of "wu" into its tradition. The Zen tradition encourages the individual to reconnect with their "original face" (66,Kasulis) or the emptiness that drives both the universe and one's own existence. Zen considers action propelled by the flow of the universe to be the ideal "way" of life (66, Kasulis). The notion of wu-wei is not employed to encourage lackadaisical laziness, but rather a mode of action grounded in non-striving, a means of preserving vital energy by merely catching a ride on the perpetual flux of the universe. Since this universal flow is considered completely spontaneous it is the case that action propelled by this force also must also be spontaneous. It is considered a non-deliberate or "nonself-conscious responsiveness" (Kasulis, 66) to the phenomenal realm, as it involves no recognition of an objectifiable self, that takes the action. Without a reified subject, there is no incentive to deliberately

weigh pro's and con's, as this is a mechanism employed to protect a reified self or other reified phenomena, thus if one recognizes not such reified entities, this sort of deliberation in decision making will cease to exist. Action rooted in the is the universal flow of emptiness is thought to thrust an individual into harmonization with the patterns of flow that are the conditions of their unique phenomenal situation. This is not to describe a deterministic or fatalistic approach to action but is considered to be a state of nonresistance to being affected by conditions as well as a willingness to utilize one's conditions to bring about effects.

The Zen tradition considers spontaneous action rooted in the flow of emptiness to provide access to infinite creativity. The Zen interpretation of wu, an empty dynamic flow that drives all processes in the universe, is considered the spontaneous designer of all cosmological patterns, the driver of carbon-based evolution, and the empty creator of the mystery of love. Thus, when one disregards their own deliberate actions as a means of preserving their reified ego, and instead submits to the natural flow of the universe, one is considered to take on the capacity for infinite spontaneous creativity.

Zen Freedom

The interweaving of Nagarjuna's principle of emptiness and Taoism's principle of wu provides an intimate connection between the understanding of phenomenal emptiness and the mode of action required embody this knowing. Zen awakening is considered the embodiment of emptiness, it is said to be akin to "awakening to one's placement upon a bottomless sea of layers of shifting grounds"(Krummel,67) and "following along with the movement of all things […] and being free"(Wang,78).

Zen tradition utilizes the Mahayana interpretation of dependent origination, which asserts the relationality, and thus emptiness of the phenomenal realm to establish an ontological framework. This ontological framework recognizes no existent metaphysical reality to underlie phenomenal reality, this lack of ultimate reality is described as phenomena's inherent emptiness. This principle is extended to assert that all differentiation within the phenomenal realm is merely conventionally relevant for it's practical application in one's day to day life. It encourages the practitioner to become aware of their discriminative tendencies in which one non-deliberately differentiates and reifies entities within the phenomenal realm. Zen seeks to bring awareness to one's passive tendency to falsely reify the phenomenal realm, this is to shed light on the habitual discriminative thinking patterns that imbue empty phenomena with ultimate realness as a means of facilitating the dissolution of this passive process of reification. To cut off these thinking patters is to achieve non-discriminatory wisdom which is considered a release from the tendency to grasp or chase after false absolutes (67, Krummel). It is thought that when one wholly understands the understands the emptiness of the phenomenal realm and aligns all actions with this understanding, their experience is "somewhat like being suspended over an infinite void, groundless with nothing to hold on to" (67, Krummel) This lack of security or solid ground is taken as freedom, a liberation from the bondage of attachment that inevitably follows from the reification of the phenomena. Thus, it is the Mahayana principle of emptiness that provides a cognitive approach to the elimination of discriminative thinking patters and thus facilitates the achievement of freedom from the reification of phenomena.

While Zen awakening involves the rational understanding of emptiness as a means of realizing the ontological relationality of all things in the universe, Zen awakening is regarded as the embodiment of emptiness. After one cognitively grasps the emptiness of the universe, which can be likened to understanding of the whole of the phenomenal realm as interrelated perpetual flux, it is thought that they will achieve harmony with the flow of all phenomenal conditions. This unceasing flow is regarded as the nature of the universe and thus also as human-nature. To realize one's nature is said to be "like the great sea which gathers all the flowing streams, and harmonizes the small waters with the large waters as a whole"(73, Krummel). Thus, realizing "one's own nature" is not like the Western logic based approach, or the Indian Brahaminical concept of Self, but instead is achieved through a practical-behavioral reconnection with the natural flux of the universe. Realizing one's self nature is simultaneously

deconstructing the notion of a "self nature", as one is thought to disregard the notion self and submit to the unceasing flow that is the nature of the universe. Action that is brought about from this submission is considered non-deliberate and infinitely creative, as this flow is the same spontaneity that propels all phenomenal flux. In addition to the intellectual understanding of phenomenal emptiness, Zen emphasizes the necessity to surrender to perpetual flow of the cosmos as a means of embodying emptiness and thus attaining awakening.

Though the previous explication of the relationship between the cognitive understanding of emptiness and the practical embodiment of that knowing may suggest a chronological nature, such that the cognitive attainment of non-discriminative wisdom leads to reconnection with the natural flow this is not necessarily required by the Zen practice. Rather, it is thought that in moving with the perpetual flux of all phenomenal conditions, one neither grasps at achieving the understanding of emptiness, nor grasps at reified phenomena. There is neither attachment nor rejection of phenomena and all activities are seen as opportunities or necessary conditions for the realization of enlightenment, all circumstances are understood as empty waves with which one non-deliberately finds harmony. So, it is not the case that the cognitive understanding of emptiness necessarily precedes reconnection with the cosmic flow. Instead, the Zen tradition intimately interweaves both strands of the conception, such that enlightenment is merely considered achieving harmony with the unceasing universal flow without attachment to anything, including the desire to grasp phenomenal emptiness.

Like an ordinary person, the enlightened person is still left to chop wood and carry water, such that they remain engaged with the same ordinary tasks necessary to sustain life. The only difference is that an enlightened person has the attitude of non-attachment toward preserving their self-identity and is released of the will to cling to or avoid reified phenomena. They have achieved the non-discriminative wisdom necessary to "let the mind be free" (77, Wang) and have revived their connection with the flow of emptiness. The enlightened person is considered completely spontaneous, infinitely creative, and liberated from the bondage of attachment to all concepts.

Freedom from Words

A monk asked,[4] "I will not ask about the finger that points to the moon. Just what is the moon?" The master said what is the finger that you don't ask about? The monk then asked "I will not ask about the moon. Just what is the finger?" The master said, "The moon" the monk asked "I asked about the finger. Why did you answer 'the moon?'" The master said, "Because you asked about the finger."

Zen is considered a "a special transmission outside of doctrinal teachings" (Ho, 1231) and is known to eschew the written word, as it is merely the representation of the designations used to describe the discrimination of phenomena, of which is advised to be abandoned. Yet, Zen masters have long been praised for their quick improvisational use of language as a means of cutting off the interlocutor's habitual dualistic thinking patterns to evoke an experience of awakening. While Zen regards all language as ultimately empty, and emphasizes its limitations, it is not the case that language is wholly disregarded, as this would represent the dualistic pattern that leads to reification of silence. It is said that Zen also forsakes the duality of language and the ineffable, such that "speaking is silence, silence is speaking; speaking ad silence are nondual" (Ho,1232) thus Zen awakening does not go beyond language, but rather has language deeply imbedded in it.

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[4] Ho, Chien-hsing. "Interdependence and Nonduality: On the Linguistic Strategy of the Platform Sutra." *Philosophy of East and West*, vol. 66, 2016, pp. 1231–1250.

As illustrated in the engagement above between the master and the monk, the master gives no logical or explicit answer to the monk's question which seems to be an inquiry regarding the ultimate nature of the moon. The master instead gives an answer that apparently transgresses common sense as a means of dislodging the monk's discriminative thinking pattern. Masters are frequently recorded to employ paradoxical phrases, figurative expressions, negations, questions, and repetitions as means of evoking the realization of emptiness within the student. While the experience of awakening can in no way be transmitted through explicit linguistic explanation, this does not constitute a reason for disregarding the value of language as a powerful vehicle for evoking one's internal realization of emptiness. While the master quickly and provocatively engages with words, he is simultaneously free from words, unfettered by common sense, he illustrates his awakened state by ostensibly conveying the paradox of emptiness.

Zen's fervent rejection of the reification of phenomena violently clashes with the notion of ascribing to doctrine. The tradition recognizes all phenomenal wholes to have no ultimate underpinning, which is to reject that all people, places, things, and ideas have an ultimate truth to offer. Thus, the assertion of a Zen "practice", as a formulated conceptual framework, rooted in the notion of emptiness as interpreted in the Mahayana and imbued with Taoist principles seems to counter the very foundation of Zen's conception of emptiness, which should deem the practice itself as lacking ultimate truth. Thus, in accordance of the spirit of universal emptiness, the Zen tradition recognizes that one is able to wholly understand emptiness only when they have overcome it's dogmatic and doctrinal character. It is thought that one must existentially approbate emptiness into one's own experience, such that it is in appropriate accordance with the individual's unique conditions. The Zen practitioner is to tailor the "source" offered by the tradition to appropriately imbue their student's existence with the wisdom of phenomenal emptiness, and the master is tasked with transmitting awakening, not through indoctrination, but through transmission of "how to commune with the source on one's own" (Krummel,68).

Zen Ethics

Zen Ethics

The central objective of Zen Buddhism is the same as that of orthodox Buddhism, to overcome suffering through liberation from attachment to phenomena. It is the reification of phenomena that Buddhists believe lead one to attachment, and thus they seek to demolish the reifying thinking patterns that are thought to inevitably lead to suffering. The principle of dependent origination asserts the emptiness of all phenomena, and its purpose is to undercut and dissolve the reifying thinking patterns that are identified as the root of suffering. With respect to the foundational principle of dependent origination, a Zen ethic cannot be rooted in appeal to an objective moral law that establishes that which is inherently right or wrong. Appeal to conventional moral law would both assert the ultimate reality of a moral law and an ultimate nature of phenomena as either right or wrong. Since both assertions clash with the principle of dependent origination, Zen ethics does not appeal to moral law. Nor does the Zen tradition appeal to the cultivation of virtues in the traditional sense, as a means of achieving a state of superior morality, as this would require the existence of an ultimately real individual capable of acquiring an ideal moral standing. Rather, Zen ethics appeal primarily to the cultivation of compassion, not as a means of achieving virtuosity, but instead as a means of facilitating one's understanding of phenomenal emptiness. The practical application of the embodiment of emptiness, and embodying that knowing which is likened to unwavering compassion is thought to spontaneously flow from the awakened individual. the achievement of awakening.

Suffering

The Zen tradition is a practice employed as a means to facilitate one in overcoming suffering, therefore it is assumed that all individuals practicing Zen are interested in reducing their own suffering.

This notion of suffering is not imbued with an ultimate essence or considered ultimately real, rather the Zen tradition assumes that suffering is a mere aspect of conventional reality that will be universally avoided by all beings. The conception of suffering within the Zen tradition is far vaster and more subtle than the traditional western notion of the word. In the order of most concrete to most subtle, the most influential of the Buddhist taxonomies of suffering are regarded to be, "explicit suffering", "suffering of change" and "conditioned suffering" (243, Harris)

Explicit suffering which includes both physical and psychological pain describes what western culture traditionally regards to constitute the notion of suffering. This conception of suffering includes unpleasant sensations like the pain associated with getting kicked by a cow, or being subjected to listen to bad harmonies, and also includes mental suffering like that which is associated with anxiety, grief, and anger. While Buddhist sources are divided as to whether awakened beings experience psychological pain, (243, Harris) awakened beings are regarded to experience physical pain.

The latter two notions of suffering, "suffering of change" and "conditioned suffering" are considered to be rooted in craving and ignorance, and since an awakened person is regarded to have overcome craving through the cultivation of perfect wisdom ie. have recognized phenomenal emptiness, they will not experience the suffering associated with these two conceptions.

The "suffering of change" is rooted in craving pleasant phenomenal sensations and is associated with the ensuing suffering that arises when a pleasant sensation ends. Craving is likened to grasping for the continuance of impermanent phenomena. When a mind "infected with craving" (245,Harris), experiences pleasurable sensations, it's tendency to imbue transient phenomena with permanence leads to suffering. The root of the problem is not the pleasure itself, but instead it is such that within the ordinary mind, pleasure is coupled with craving which seeks permanence in impermeant sensations, and when the sensation rears it's transitory nature and vanishes, what was once pleasure transforms to the pain associated with mourning it's loss. Furthermore, even if one does not falsely imbue phenomena with permanence but rather recognizes its impermanence, it is still the case that an unawakened mind would crave its continuance. Thus, suffering of change is also associated with the anxiety that arises when one obtains an object that provides pleasure but recognizes its impermanence and seeks to defend its continuance. So, it is shown, that on one hand if pleasurable sensations are imbued with permanence, when they inevitably end, the craving mind will experience suffering in the form of morning their loss. On the other hand, even if the craving mind recognizes the inherent impermanence of the phenomena, indulgence of the phenomena will be imbued with subtle suffering due to the anxiety associated with craving it's perpetuity while simultaneously recognizing its impermanence. Thus, in both cases, whether the phenomenon is falsely imbued with permanence or its inherent impermanence is recognized, the craving mind is shown to never be fulfilled. The craving mind's pursuit of sense pleasures is compared to "a famished dog gnawing at a meatless bone smeared with blood"(249,Harris) which suggests the insatiable nature of craving such that pleasurable sensations merely lead to suffering and greater longing.

The Buddha spoke of three poisons "greed, hatred, and delusion" (79, Buddhist Ethics) which are considered to stem from the craving mind which seeks to secure pleasurable sensations for the benefit of a reified self. Delusion is associated with the lack of understanding of the emptiness of the self and the conception of a reified self. Hatred is considered to arise from delusion, as one recognizes themselves as separate from others, an inevitably privileges oneself and the groups they identify with at the expense of others. Greed is considered to arises from the delusion that one is inherently separate, and therefore seeks to secure possessions that will bring pleasurable sensation to a reified self. The three poisons are considered to be self-perpetuating as they tend to motivate certain sorts of actions which in turn tend to reinforce the reification of the self and thus lead to greater greed, hatred, and delusion. For example, when one's greed leads them to steal, this action strengthens the belief that there is a real self that can be made better by increasing what it possesses at the expense of others. The result of this sort of action, which reinforces the reified concept of the self, is considered to be a kind of feedback loop that leads to further

greed, hatred, and delusion. These three self-perpetuating poisons are considered substantial hinderances to overcoming the illusion of the self and are thought to lead to the type of suffering associated with the "suffering of change" which stems from a futile attempt at securing sensual pleasures for a falsely reified self.

Conditioned suffering is the most subtle of the conceptions of sufferings and is associated with anxiety directed toward nothing in particular, it is recognized to stem from the refusal to accept the dependent nature of one's existence. The ordinary mind which can be regarded as "an impoverished cognitive and perceptual system" (250, Harris) functioning under the influence of ignorance and craving, seeks to identify as an enduring self. As previously mentioned, the Mahayana notion of emptiness asserts the emptiness of all phenomena such that the concept of the self is also considered empty. Thus, action aimed to preserve the self, is considered merely futile as there is no enduring self to be preserved. It is a lack of wisdom that is considered to lie at the root of attempts at self-preservation. Furthermore, since all circumstances are unstable due to their dependent nature as asserted by dependent origination, all circumstances are liable to be replaced by circumstances which provide less pleasure or cause suffering. An individual ignorant of phenomenal emptiness and concerned with self-preservation will experience perpetual anxiety associated with the everchanging and dependent nature of both themselves and of the phenomenal realm. Conditioned suffering is suffering associated with an intense feeling of helplessness due to a lack of stability within one's phenomenal circumstances and a lack of control over their own existence. It is one's lack of recognition of the emptiness of the self and of the phenomenal realm that is considered the root of the the perpetual discomfort associated with the notion of "conditioned suffering".

Compassion

The Zen tradition which seeks to dissolve all dualisms, deemphasized the necessity of participation in monastic life as a necessary means of overcoming suffering. Privileging monastic life over life lived integrated within society involves adherence to one lifestyle and dismissal of another, and thus involves an attachment to this conceptual dualism. Instead, the tradition emphasizes the practical embodiment of emptiness within society and identifies compassionate action as "the highest practice"(351,Chappell) and "the best way to attain"(351,Chapell) awakening. The notion of compassion and compassionate action will be taken up more thoroughly later, but for now compassion will be described as empathizing with the suffering of others and the subsequent action aimed at reducing that suffering. Since compassion is regarded as nondiscriminatory empathy for the suffering of others, the practice does not involve adherence to anything, merely it is regarded to reflect an individuals understanding of their own emptiness, such that their action stems from intuitive drive to reduce suffering..

Within Zen, the employment of the notion of skillful means is notable, as the tradition recognizes that individuals are at different points in their path to awakening and thus there can be no singular teaching that can appropriately facilitate one to overcome suffering. Zen therefore is considered to have a "three layered answer"(Buddhist Ethics,79) to explain the motivation driving engagement in compassionate action.

Karma

The first is grounded in the doctrine of karma and rebirth, which asserts that acts of benevolence bring about "good karmic fruit" and actions motivated by ego driven desire bring about "bad karmic fruit". With regard to the Buddhist notion of reincarnation, this is to say that compassionate action leads to good rebirth and uncompassionate action leads to bad rebirths. This first layer is geared toward individuals not so deep into their practice, as it is apparent that individuals that appeal to this layer, are merely concerned with securing pleasure and happiness for their reified concept of self. While this justification for moral action seems to contradict the emptiness of phenomena as asserted by dependent origination, it serves as a rudimentary motivation that aids one escaping the vicious cycle of the three

poisons. As previously mentioned, greed hatred and delusion are considered to motivate action that seeks to benefit a reified concept of the self and in turn reinforce further greed hatred and delusion, trapping the individual in patters driven by these three poisons. Thus, even if one merely engages in moral action as a means of bringing about "good karmic fruit" they are developing habits that are considered to serve as serve as antidotes to greed, hatred and delusion. Habitual compassion, regardless of its motivation is considered to have the capacity to break the vicious cycle of the three poisons, as the consideration of the suffering of others is thought to aid in the dissolution of one's reified notion of self.

Emptiness

Unlike the first layer which involves an appeal to an external reward system as a means of motivating compassionate action the second layer occurs when one disregards the "moral fruits" of their actions and instead involves internal motivation that arises when one has grasped the understanding that compassionate action has the capacity to facilitate one's understanding of phenomenal emptiness. As mentioned, compassionate action is thought to lead to the pacification of the three poisons as habitual consideration of other's suffering facilitates the understanding of the emptiness of self, and therefore aids in the dissolution of delusion which is thought to lie at the root of both hatred and greed. Pacification of the three poisons is considered pertinent, as they are considered to be the result of craving and pose a substantial hindrance to the realization emptiness and thus to awakening. Thus, the dissolution of the conception of a reified self, which is identified as the root of these hindrances, is fervently attempted by an individual seeking to overcome suffering.

The Buddhists give several arguments to justify the notion of the self as empty, but it will suffice to point to the part-whole argument that appeals to the partite nature of the person as a means of justifying its lack of independent existence. As previously described, Buddhists consider the individual to merely consist in the occurrence of a series of impersonal impermanent conditions, referred to as the skhandas. The skhandas consist of the body, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness of which are in a constant interplay. Since the skhandas are in in constant interplay, they are regularly perceived of as a cohesive entity, but the Buddhists regard this reified conception of the individual to be rooted in the same ignorance of phenomenal emptiness that underlies the reification of all phenomena. Rather, within the Zen tradition, the individual is conceived of as a "floating collection of various psychophysical reactions and responses" (Chinese Ethics, 41) which has no intrinsic essence or fixed nature.

While the Zen practice advocates for the recognition of one's own ultimate emptiness the tradition does not encourage the individual to disregard their own conventional realness, but rather to consider how their actions will cause or diminish suffering within the phenomenal realm. Somewhat paradoxically, one is encouraged to continue to identify with the past and future stages of the causal series of skhandas but should not reify themselves through this identification. It is considered important for one to consider how their actions will affect their future self. For instance, the Zen practice still advocates for one to brush and floss their teeth even though they recognize the individual as inherently empty. While brushing and flossing seem to be like the futile self-preserving tendencies as mentioned above that are rooted in the false reification of an existent self, brushing and flossing are encouraged a means of reducing future suffering associated with tooth decay. Furthermore, one is encouraged to acknowledge their past mistakes that caused suffering and avoid repeating them. Recognizing one's conventional realness together with recognizing the patterns of correlating conditions within in the phenomenal realm one has the capacity to effectively reduce their own suffering and the suffering of others. It is said that the enlightened being avoids the pain of tooth decay through brushing and flossing but does not "lean on the crutch of a self"(Buddhist Ethcs, 81). This is to say that while an enlightened being does engage in actions that seem to be self-preserving, these actions are not grounded in defending a reified self, but rather arise due to the individual's drive to reduce future suffering.

It is said that when one truly recognizes phenomenal emptiness, they are able to recognize that their intuitive drive to reduce their own suffering is really a drive to reduce all suffering. The recognition

of phenomenal emptiness involves recognizing that all distinctions that establish discrete phenomena lack ultimate underpinning, which is to establish that no individual is ultimately separate from other individuals. Thus, if one properly understands their own emptiness, they will recognize there that there is no ultimate separation between one's own pain and the pain of others, and therefore there is no reason to privilege one's own welfare over that of others. It is thought that once one overcomes the illusion of the self they will recognize that their intuitive drive to prevent their own suffering is actually a desire to prevent all suffering.

As mentioned briefly, compassion involves empathizing with the suffering of others and the subsequent action aimed at reducing that suffering. Within the Zen framework, this notion of empathy, is not meant to describe the process of enlarging one's notion self to include others, and therefore conceiving of their suffering as their own, as this would involve the reification of an enlarged suffering self. Rather this notion of empathy, is rooted in the recognition of the dependent nature of all phenomena, such that one realizes that no suffering is inherently separate. Thus, it is not that one feels compelled to address suffering once they have absorbed others' suffering as their own suffering, but instead, when one realizes that there are ultimately no discrete entities, the individual experiencing the suffering becomes irrelevant, and intuitively addressing one's own suffering becomes synonymous with addressing the suffering of others. Thus, empathy for others suffering is grounded in the recognition of the dependent nature of phenomena, and ensuing action is likened to a commitment to the "concrete relief of the suffering of others" (Chappell, 360). While the Zen tradition recognizes the importance of cognitively grasping the notion of phenomenal emptiness, the tradition emphasizes the practical embodiment of this knowing as pertinent for true awakening and likens compassionate action with explicit manifestation of emptiness.

The Zen tradition emphasizes practicality and thus, rather than feeling responsible for reducing the suffering of all beings everywhere, one is encouraged to be compassionate toward any and all beings of whom one encounters. In this age of globalization, when products and services are often collaborative efforts involving multiple sources from around the world, deliberately showing compassion for every one of whom one encounters may not be so cut and dry. While the Buddhists do not comment on this complexity, the tradition does encourage a commitment to nondiscrimination and non-favoritism which would suggest that it is important to consider not only the Americans nor only the humans nor only sentient beings affected by one's actions or consumption choices, but rather all who may be affected. As an extension of non-discriminatory compassion, the tradition emphasizes the importance of balancing one's commitment to helping others with their commitment to reduce their own suffering, affirming one's responsibility to maintain one's own life in order to be useful in reducing the suffering of others.

An example of action motivated by this second layer could playout as such, one may refrain from stealing because they know that by not engaging with the poison of greed they will gain further insight into the emptiness of the self, the embodiment of which is considered awakening. They recognize that stealing is merely the manifestation of a desire to secure impermanent phenomenon as a means of attaining pleasurable sensations, which is a desire that presupposes a reified entity of whom will benefit from those pleasurable sensations. Therefore, one who seeks to embody emptiness will refrain from stealing as they recognize that action rooted in greed is reflective of and reinforces the concept of a reified self. Instead an individual seeking to embody emptiness will behave in alignment with their understanding of the emptiness of the self. This involves recognizing that one's suffering is not separate from the suffering of others and thus involves being considerate in their actions to diminish suffering as a whole. Therefore, when one recognizes that their belief in a reified self is a substantial hindrance to their awakening, they will deliberately engage in compassionate action as they recognize its capacity to diminish the craving that reinforces the concept of a reified self. This layer of motivation involves one's deliberate engagement with compassionate action as a means of ridding of their ego-driven desires in order to fully recognize and embody their own emptiness. The cultivation of compassion is considered a "necessary prerequisite"(Chappell, 359) for attaining awakening, such that it involves habitual action in

alignment with the wisdom of phenomenal emptiness, which is thought to eventually lead to the embodiment of emptiness which is likened to awakening.

Freedom

Unlike the first two layers, the third layer does not serve to motivate deliberate compassionate action, but rather is the recognition that spontaneous compassion is a result of awakening. As explicated, the second layer of motivation does not assert that awakening is a reward for those who have cultivated compassion but rather that uncompassionate action stems from motives like hatred and greed that reinforce the conception of a reified self and in turn interfere with the liberating insight of non-self. Thus, one seeking liberation deliberately engages in compassionate action as a means of undercutting those motives, as they recognize the hindrance they pose to the realization of non-self. This third layer involves recognizing that when one has established proper conception of the self, such that they have achieved the "right understanding" of the emptiness of the self, compassionate action will automatically ensue. All human suffering, other than explicit suffering, is thought to stem from the concern to preserve an enduring self and the subsequent craving to secure objects that provide pleasurable sensations to that self. The recognition of the emptiness of the self is thought to release one from their attachments to a self, to the pleasure providing objects they wish to secure, and free one from suffering.

While compassion involves the practical commitment to the concrete relief of suffering, it does not function like the utilitarian approach at reducing suffering. The utilitarians attempt to quantify the happiness produced by potential actions and deliberately aim to produce the most good. Quite contrarily, the Zen tradition appeals to a notion of "freedom" which can be paralleled to the Taoist notion of wu-wei as a means of regulating how one who is awakened should compassionately respond to suffering they encounter. The notion of Zen freedom "jiyu" is a phrase that designates "out of self on its own" (Zen Freedom,20) and carries with it a sense of spontaneity. It is thought that when one has achieved "nondiscriminatory knowledge" (Zen Freedom, 21) or the knowledge of phenomenal emptiness, one recognizes no ultimately discrete phenomena and does not dwell on anything thus there is no obstruction hindering the mind's freedom. The mind of one who has realized phenomenal emptiness is thought to remain absolutely still in the midst of action, and the individual is thought to be motivated not by deliberation but rather is thrust into action by a "surge from the creative source in the bottomless ground" (Zen Freedom, 20). This is not to appeal to a reified higher power or an ultimately existent force, but to suggest that the embodiment of emptiness allows one to synchronize with the "spontaneous creative act of living nature"(Zen Freedom, 20). The Zen tradition appeals to spontaneity rather than deliberation as the ideal force to drive compassion, as true spontaneity is assumed to be inherently altruistic and considered to facilitate harmonization with the dynamic flow of emptiness that is considered the universe.

Wild Emptiness

A Zen Perspective on Environmental Ethics

When Buddhism took root in China, and integrated with the nation's Taoist intellectual climate, the tradition retained the orthodox central objective of overcoming suffering. While conserving this principal aspiration, the rise of Zen is associated with deviation from the orthodox practice of monasticism and toward the practical embodiment of emptiness while integrated in society, which can be likened to the practice of unwavering compassion. As mentioned, it is not such that awakening is a reward for unconditional compassion, but rather that the cultivation of compassion is thought to dissolve the motives that hinder one from grasping phenomenal emptiness. Furthermore, following the achievement of awakening, nondiscrimination compassion is thought to necessarily ensue.

While environmentally ethical practices may be motivated with a karmic reward system as part of the tradition's employment of skillful means, ultimately proper treatment of the earth will be internally

motivated by it's capacity to facilitate awakening such that as one realizes that unethical practices are motivated by the desire to preserve and benefit a falsely reified self, a conception of the self that is considered a substantial obstruction to the achievement of awakening. Furthermore, once one has overcome their reified concept of self and realized phenomenal emptiness, spontaneous unwavering compassion is thought to necessarily follow. As the tradition realizes that every individual is at a different stage in their path to awakening, an approach to environmental ethics cannot be motivated by a singular appeal to either a reward system or to the capacity of compassionate action to facilitate one's understanding of emptiness, rather, adherence to an environmental ethic must be motivated by a tailored concept appropriate for the unique depth one has achieved in their practice.

Regardless of the motivation appealed to in encouraging adherence to a Zen environmental ethic, the framework of the ethic will be in alignment with the fundamental principle of dependent origination which will be shown to clash with the traditional frameworks of the previously explicated traditional western environmental ethics. Appeals to both intrinsic value and "human excellence" as ethical frameworks are rather obviously inconsistent with principle of dependent origination and they will be nullified as options of which the Zen tradition could appeal to in the establishment of an ethic. In some ways, Arne Naess's identification with the "ecological self" as a means of achieving "self realization" does coincide with notion of dependent origination and addressing this ethical framework as it related to a Zen environmental ethic will be taken up later.

Taylor, Varner, and Rolston III's approaches were shown to be grounded in the assignment of intrinsic value, which identifies the value of biotic factors as having value irrespective of their instrumental value to humans. The assignment of intrinsic value served to assert the moral standing of biotic factors. The assignment of moral standing appeals to moral law which establishes that the well-being of an entity with moral standing should be taken into account by others. The wellbeing of an entity who has been assigned moral standing is thought to deserve consideration because moral law says this is appropriate. Dependent origination, which asserts the emptiness of all phenomenal concepts, would consider the concept of moral law to be empty and thus not the have the capacity to offer ultimate truth. Furthermore, the assignment of intrinsic value is dependent on a real entity of which has the capacity to bring about value through satisfaction of their desires. Thus, since the assignment of intrinsic value involves granting real entities moral standing which is an ethical mechanism that appeals to moral law, and dependent origination deems the concepts of both moral law and individuals inherently empty, a Zen environmental ethic would not employ the traditional western mechanism of the assignment of intrinsic value as it would be considered justifying ethical behavior with an empty concepts.

While Thomas E Hill does not establish an environmental ethic, he appeals to improper treatment of biotic and abiotic factors as reflective of one's lack of virtues associated with human excellence. He does not necessarily encourage adherence to an environmental ethic as a means of achieving human excellence, but identifies the "moral discomfort" associated with individuals who engage in the destruction of ecosystems to stem from the capacity of those improper actions to illustrate one's lack of certain traits which he considers to be the natural basis for the development of certain values of excellence. For example, he identifies that destructive tendencies stem from one's lack of "evolutionary awareness"(Hill, 294) which he likens to one's inability to perceive of the self as merely a part of nature. Without this sort of perception in which one recognizes their self as small fragment of the larger whole of nature, Hill argues that one is incapable of embodying "humility" of which he claims to be an essential virtue with respect to the achievement of "human excellence" (Hill,298). Furthermore, he claims that one's lack of humility, and thus "human excellence" likely reflects a lack in the individual's capacity to be a good moral agent. Unlike traditional virtue ethics, Hill does not necessarily advocate for proper treatment of the earth as a means of achieving "moral superiority", rather he suggests that the improper treatment of biotic and abiotic factors is reflective of one's lacking moral capacities. While Hill's argument does not serve to motivate adherence to any ethical framework, in claiming that one's improper treatment of the earth is reflective of their lack of ideal virtues, his argument presupposes that there is a

reified individual of which has the capacity to achieve "human excellence". This notion is incoherent with the fundamental assertion of dependent origination, which does not recognize the ultimate of existence of individuals of whom should cultivate their "excellence" as a means of flaunting their capacity to be good moral agents. Thus the Zen tradition would neither establish an environmental ethic that appeals to the cultivation of virtues as a means of achieving moral superiority, like traditional virtue ethics, nor would they ascribe to Hill's argument which deems improper environmental treatment as reflective of one's lack of "human excellence" and thus their lack of moral capacity.

Dependent origination which asserts the emptiness of phenomena, deems that both the concept of ethics and the concept of an ethical being are ultimately empty, thus ethical action is not considered "good" in any ultimate way, rather it is considered precious for its capacity to aid one in overcoming suffering. As previously mentioned, Zen ethics appeal primarily to the cultivation of compassion, as the practice of this virtue is considered to aid in dissolving the three poisons that are considered to trap the individual in their reified perception of self. The notion of compassion, which is associated with empathy for the suffering of others and the ensuing practical action aimed at reducing suffering, is considered to have the capacity to dissolve the thinking patterns that are identified as the roots of craving by undercutting the concept of a reified self. Furthermore, compassionate action is likened to the embodiment of emptiness and is considered to spontaneously follow awakening. Therefore, a Zen environmental ethic, must be fundamentally rooted in the practice of compassion with respect to the environment.

With regard to the Buddhist tradition's employment of skillful means, which aims to effectively propel students forward on their path to awakening through employment of means considered appropriate for the depth of their practice, there cannot be a singular explicit framework that can be employed to motivate compassionate environmental actions. Thus, while a Zen environmental ethic will fundamentally appeal to compassion as a means of determining what ethical action is, the motivation to engage in ethical environmental action will vary depending on one's unique level of progression on the path to awakening.

Karma

For an individual stuck within the tumultuous cycle of the three poisons, trapped in the conception of a reified self, a Zen environmental ethic would likely employ the motivation of a karmic reward system to encourage compassionate environmental behavior. The notion, rooted in the doctrine of karma and rebirth, that ethical, or compassion, actions produce "good karmic fruits" while uncompassionate action produces "bad karmic fruits" would be employed. One would be incentivized to consider how their actions contribute to environmental suffering and make decisions aimed at minimizing suffering as a means of bringing about "good karmic fruits". For example, an individual may refrain from littering as they realize that the proper disposal of waste has the capacity minimize the suffering of wild animals. Engaging in action aimed at minimizing future suffering of other organisms would be thought to bring about "good karmic fruits" or some pleasurable reward in the future.

It is very apparent that appealing to a karmic reward system merely serves to incentivize ethical behavior with the belief that it will bring about future pleasure, thus this mechanism obviously employs a motivation that involves attempting to secure pleasurable sensations for a reified self. While this mechanism seems to contradict the principle of empty self, as previously mentioned, this sort of mechanism is important in it's capacity to facilitate one's release from the vicious cycle of the three poisons. Delusion which is likened to the improper conception of a reified self is thought to lead to hatred and greed as one conceives of themselves as inherently separate and privileges their own wellbeing at the expense of others. Engaging in actions rooted in hatred and greed are thought to reinforce delusion and habitual compassionate action is thought to serve as an antidote to these motives and initiate a break in the vicious cycle of the poisons. Engagement in compassionate action, even when those actions are motivated by the incentivization of a karmic reward system, is thought to facilitate one's release from the cycle that reinforces the reification of the self and thus perpetuates suffering. Appeal to a karmic reward system

would serve as the most rudimentary motivation to encourage compassionate environmental behavior, but would be an important mechanism in facilitating a habitual compassionate practice, which is thought to aid in the dissolution in the reification of the self, and thus free one from the cycle of the three poisons.

The notion of compassionate action is not necessarily cut and dry such that one is not always able to know how their environmental engagements will contribute to suffering of sentient beings. The suffering produced by one's indirect engagements with the environment such as one's consumption patterns are especially hard to gauge. For example, when one buys meat in a grocery store, other than considering the somewhat arbitrary labeling, which deems the meat, "free range" "grass fed" or "organic" one is unable to gauge how much suffering is being supported by their consumption choices. While those aesthetic little stickers may have some correlation with the amount of suffering faced by the cows, unless one has an intimate connection with the farmers that produce their meat, one cannot know anything about the cow's wellbeing. Furthermore, it is also almost impossible to know whether one has the capacity to reduce suffering through their consumption patterns. Such that even if an individual stopped consistently buying grocery-store meat, whether or not their individual consumption patterns effectively reduced the suffering of cows would be impossible to know. This example serves to illustrate how one's indirect engagements with the environment have the capacity to affect the suffering of sentient beings and to illustrate that the quantity of suffering produced or reduced can essentially be impossible to gauge.

Furthermore, with regard to the same example of grocery-store beef, it is almost impossible to know how the waste of the animal was disposed of, whether it was allowed to runoff into a lake and contribute to suffering of the organisms within that ecosystem or if it was spread on garden beds to facilitate the soil's nutrient cycle. While this run off does not necessarily directly affect the wellbeing of the cow this lack of proper waste management has the capacity to produce significant suffering of other beings within the same or proximal ecosystems. Therefore, not only should one consider how their actions directly affect the wellbeing of sentient creatures, it is also pertinent to consider how their actions will affect the wellbeing of abiotic factors. Sentient beings with the capacity to suffer are dependent on the intricate connection of biotic and abiotic factors of which constitute ecosystem for their sustenance, therefore being compassionate involves considering how one's choices will affect not only sentient beings but also the ecosystems.

While some environmentally compassionate action is easily identifiable such as, such as "leave no trace", or sustainable agriculture practices, and some non-compassionate actions are easily identifiable, such as fracking or large-scale agriculture, other day-to-day choices especially in regard to consumption patterns are far more arbitrary. If a Zen environmental ethic motivates compassionate environmental action, the issue of how one is to appropriately determine compassionate action is will arise. This issue will be dealt with at greater detail later, but for now it will be noted that deliberate compassionate action involves considering how one's actions will affect both their own suffering and the suffering of others while retaining the ultimate objective at minimizing suffering. While it may be hard to quantify who and what will suffer from one's actions, it is important to be nondiscriminatory in one's practice of compassion, but rather to address the suffering of whoever and whatever one is immediately confronted with, in whatever capacity is practical in that moment.

Whether the individual properly quantifies the precise amount of suffering that will be produced by their decision is irrelevant, rather the example is given as a means of highlighting one's internal motivation to adhere to an environmental ethic as a means of reducing suffering and facilitating their achievement of awakening. The individual seeking awakening understands that while they may intellectually grasp phenomenal emptiness, and thus cognitively know that their suffering is not inherently separate from the suffering of others, true awakening requires the embodiment of emptiness. Thus, this individual behaves in such a way that seeks to reduce the suffering of others with as much fervency as one seeks to reduce their own suffering, as this behavior is in alignment with their understanding of phenomenal emptiness. While it is imperative for an individual on the path to awakening

to have compassion for humans and animals who obviously have the capacity to suffer, it is equally important to consider how one's actions will affect the wellbeing of nonsentient biotic factors and abiotic factors, as they contribute substantially to the suffering of sentient beings. Therefore, considering the grandiose effect of ecosystem welfare on the wellbeing of sentient creatures, it would be pertinent for an individual seeking to embody emptiness to consider how their actions effect both nonsentient and abiotic factors.

Seeking Emptiness

An individual further on their path to awakening who has disregarded the moral fruits of their actions will instead deliberately engage in compassionate environmental action as a means of facilitating their understanding of emptiness. They will be internally motivated to ethically engage with the environment as a means of dissolving the motives, such as hatred and especially greed, that lead to uncompassionate environmental actions. These motives will be recognized as hinderances to the realization of emptiness as they are rooted in the delusion of a reified self. In seeking to fully embody emptiness, one will practice compassionate action as a means of aligning their actions with the teachings of dependent origination which asserts the emptiness of the individual and of the environment.

Traditional western approaches to environmental ethics emphasize the importance of protecting and conserving the environment, a notion that presupposes the distinction between the individual and the environment. With respect to the assignment of intrinsic value, one is encouraged to protect sentient and nonsentient life forms as a means of retaining the "good" produced by "satisfaction of their interests". In the case of attaining "human excellence" one's tendency to protect both the biotic and abiotic factors of the environment is considered to be reflective of their capacity to be a "good moral agent". Thus, traditionally a distinction is drawn between the individual and their environment such that the individual is encouraged to actively protect and conserve both the biotic and abiotic factors of the environment of which is outside of oneself. Quite contrarily, one seeking to embody emptiness would be cognitively aware that there is no ultimate distinction between the individual and their environment as the existence of both is dependent on each other and both are considered ultimately empty.

It is not only the Zen tradition that rejects this dichotomy between the individual and the environment, but Arne Naess's Deep Ecology movement also rejects the "human-in-environment image" and is in favor of the "relational total-field image.". He identifies an "intrinsic relation"(3) between the self and one's environment, such that this relation belongs to the basic constitution of both, so without that relation neither the self nor the environment are the same. Following the identification of this intrinsic relation which deems humans to be in part constituted by their environment, and vice versa, he encourages one to enlarge their notion of self beyond the mere physical and psychological process traditionally identified as the self to include one's environment. Identification with an "ecological self", serves to nullify the presupposition that that humans are inherently separate from their environment, and therefore considering the welfare of one's environment can be likened to considering the welfare of oneself. Therefore, Arne Naess can be understood to take an ontologically based approach to environmental ethics similar to that of Zen, as he roots proper action in the understanding that there is no ultimate distinction between human and environment.

While Naess's movement which seeks to eliminate the distinction between the human and their environment through identification with an "ecological self", seems very similar to Zen's rejection of the individual and environment dichotomy, Naess's argument encourages identification with an enlarged reified self, which contrasts starkly to the Zen assertion of no self. Naess suggests that once one has achieved identification with their "environmental self" they will recognize the suffering of their environment as their own suffering. Therefore, identification with the ecological self serves to dissolve the distinction of man and environment and facilitate the absorption of the environments suffering to be

included in one's own suffering. This absorption mechanism serves to motivate ethical environmental action as reducing the suffering of the environment can be recognized as a means of reducing own suffering. This enlargement of self and absorption of others' suffering is very different from the Zen notion of compassion which involves the recognizing the dependent nature of phenomena and the emptiness of oneself. The realization of one's own emptiness involves realizing that their suffering is not inherently separate from any other suffering but does not encourage one to absorb others suffering as their own. Absorption of other's suffering involves a belief in a reified self of which has the capacity to enlarge and thus absorb suffering, which is quite contrary to Zen belief of an ultimately non-existent self. Therefore, Deep Ecology appeals to an ontological framework that dissolves the distinction between human and environment as a means of motivating environmentally ethical behavior through the encouragement of the enlargement of the self which clashes with Zen's fervent rejection of the conception of a reified self.

An individual seeking to embody emptiness would have a partial grasp on dependent origination and would be cognizant of their emptiness and the emptiness of other phenomena but would not have ha full grasp of phenomenal emptiness due to subtly reified conceptions that obstruct their capacity to fully embody their cognitive understanding of emptiness. Compassionate action or actions geared at the reduction of suffering irrespective of the subjected individual, are considered to have the capacity to facilitate the dissolution of those reified conceptions. It is thought that non compassionate action fundamentally stems from the belief in a reified self and habitual engagement in compassionate action serves to replace uncompassionate action and thus undercut the reified conception of the self that lies at the root of all uncompassionate action. Compassionate action is thought to function as an antidote to the reified conception of the self that prevents one from fully embodying their cognitive understanding of emptiness, and therefore one seeking awakening would deliberately engage compassionately with all aspects of the phenomenal realm including that of the environment.

For example, an individual that buys several acres of forested land and is in need of firewood would consider how the organisms that live in that forest would be affected by removal of trees before taking action. One would consider how much suffering would be created if they were to clear cut the forest versus if they were to selectively remove invasive species versus if they were to allow the forest to remain untouched. After considering one's own need for firewood and the dependence of organisms on the forest for habitat, one would decide to maintain their forest by selectively cutting invasive trees as a means of meeting their own firewood needs and attempting to facilitating a healthy ecosystem by giving native trees a chance to thrive. While selectively removing trees will inevitably destroy the habitat of birds, rodents, bugs, and mosses and decrease the amount of carbon sequestration performed by the forest, the chosen option reflects the individual's consideration for how their actions will contribute to not only their own suffering but also the suffering of the beings who are dependent on the forest for habitat. They will attempt to gauge how much suffering is produced by each option and choose the option that produces the least amount of overall suffering, essentially irrespective of the proportionality, such that the subjects is irrelevant, and the objective is to reduce overall suffering. One would be motivated to consider how their actions contribute to suffering, not because they recognize the suffering of others as their own suffering, but rather through their recognition of vast interconnectivity of phenomena as asserted by dependent origination, they recognize that inherently all suffering is connected, such that their intuitive drive to reduce suffering will be extended to address all suffering. One who seeks to dissolve all reified conceptions as a means of fully embodying emptiness would recognize that actively engaging in behavior aimed at reducing the amount of suffering in the world, would facilitate the dissolution of those subtle reified beliefs and facilitate one's awakening.

Spontaneity

Furthermore, an individual who has achieved awakening will have a nondeliberate internal motivation to engage in compassionate action toward the environment, such that compassion will

necessarily follow from their state of embodied emptiness. The previously addressed motivations, namely the employment of a karmic reward system and deliberate compassionate action as a means of embodying emptiness, both beg the question as to how one should properly determine what the appropriate compassionate action is. Especially with regard to ecosystems, which are highly complex and perpetually evolving to maintain balance, it is essentially impossible to determine how a singular action will holistically effect an entire ecosystem, and furthermore how that effect will contribute to suffering. It is thought that once one has achieved awakening, they will no longer engage in dualistic thinking patterns as a means of differentiating compassionate action from non compassionate action, but rather an awakened individual will take "action in stillness", or action rooted in the embodiment of emptiness, which can be likened to spontaneous compassion.

The Buddhist causal process of dependent origination not only provides a substantial argument for the emptiness of all phenomena, it also asserts the vast interconnectivity of the phenomenal realm. Thus, awakening not only involves recognizing the emptiness of oneself and the rest of phenomena but it also involves recognizing the dependent nature of phenomena such that a change in one phenomenon will inevitably lead to the change of other phenomena and this sequential change will go on for infinity. It is this perpetual fluctuation of interacting phenomena that is considered to be perceived as the phenomenal realm. In recognizing the dependent nature of all of phenomena, one recognizes that a single action has the capacity to affect the wellbeing of substantial phenomena, therefore it is not such that an awakened individual moves carelessly and frivolously through the phenomenal realm, but rather through their understanding of dependent origination understands the magnitude of their actions. Unlike the intuitive Western practice of recognizing the significance of a decision and proceeding to intensely deliberate as a means to devise a strategy to optimize the good produced, within the Zen tradition, when one realizes the dependent nature of the phenomenal realm, and thus realizes the immense gravity of their actions, all deliberation is thought to stop. The spontaneous action that ensues is not rooted in ego driven desires, as spontaneity in western culture commonly connotates action stemming from is lust or thrill seeking behavior, but rather this is considered action free of attachment. Having realized emptiness one is thought to overcome the reifying thinking patterns that lead to attachment and thus will not be distracted by the motivation to either secure or avoid reified phenomena. Rather, one will be deeply aware of their present phenomenal conditions and without the obstruction of ego driven desires will be capable of rooting their action in the flow of the "creative source in the bottomless ground" which can be likened to the dynamic emptiness that is thought to drive the phenomenal realm.

Therefore, unlike western Environmental Ethics which either appeal to the preservation of individuals, species, or ecosystems, as a proper unit to fervently protect, a Zen approach will not encourage this sort of dualistic deliberation in determining the optimal course of compassion. An awakened individual will not establish a proper unit to protect, as it is realized that this essentially involves establishing an attachment to the preservation of a particular unit. When one has realized that the phenomenal realm is in perpetual flux, they will also realize that it would be inappropriate to consistently appeal to the preservation of a single unit as a means of acting compassionately. Spontaneous compassion is not rooted in a predetermined idea about what is appropriate, but rather is rooted in one's genuine response to their unique circumstances in that moment. Furthermore, the establishment of a proper unit of protection would pose as an obstruction to one's capacity to purely respond to their immediate circumstances and their actions would be tainted by their preconceived idea of proper environmentally ethical behavior. This is not to say that an awakened individual would disregard empirical evidence, but rather they would recognize the conventional truth that substantial deforestation of the jungle will absolutely lead to the immense destruction of habitat and thus would produce far more suffering than the death of an individual cow. These conventional truths, which provide insight into how the protection of different units correlate with the production of suffering, would be recognized, but not granted ultimate domain over one's course of action. Rather, these conventional truths would be recognized, but ultimately

one would respond in whatever way was genuine and spontaneous in that moment whether or not it was in alignment with empirical evidence.

Wild Emptiness

It has been established that following awakening, spontaneous compassion will ensue, such that one will unwaveringly act in a way that seeks to reduce suffering regardless of the subject. This drive to nondiscriminatorily reduce suffering is not grounded in rational deliberation but rather is thought to stem from one's own intuitive response to the suffering they encounter. An awakened individual will have released all attachment to subjects, and therefore will not privilege the welfare of any being over that of another. Thus, it is very possible that one could feel intuitively compelled to protect human infrastructure and industry as a means of reducing suffering. This drive to protect infrastructure and industry needn't stem from beliefs about human superiority or an inherent tendency to privilege one's own species, but rather one could be inclined to protect industrialized society as means of reducing large scale suffering. I will argue that spontaneous compassion would not lead one to protect large scale human industry, rather one who has achieved awakening will see through the necessity of industrialized society and furthermore will be inclined take on a lifestyle that provides ample engagement with the pure dynamic flow of emptiness that here will be referred to as "the wild".

Here, the notion of "wild" will be implemented to avoid alluding to the connotations often associated with the word natural. The conception of nature often alludes to a wholesome pristine Eden state that is starkly contrasted with civilization and human culture. The notion "wild" will be borrowed from Jason M Wirth who uses it to describe "the processes that surround us all" of which can be likened to "self creating nature"(Wirth,49) and the enigmatic force that drives self-organizing ecosystems. That which is wild can be understood as being driven by the flow of emptiness that is recognized with in the Zen tradition to drive all processes. While civilized life socializes the individual to perceive human life as distinct from wild life, through a deep understanding of dependent origination, an awakened individual will recognize that human life and wild life are dependent on the exact same wild processes, and thus there is no ultimate distinction.

Large scale agriculture makes cheap grocery store food possible and significantly reduces the percentage of the population that are subject to toiling in fields as a means of producing their own food. The automotive industry makes fast transportation highly accessible and reduces the amount of time individuals are subject to walking or biking long distances exposed to the elements. Civilization provides luxuries like these that serve as cushy barriers that create a stark distinction between human life and wild life. Civilized life teaches man than human life involves eating grocery store food with forks and knives, taking tests in big lecture halls, and carrying a communication device in one's back pocket. It teaches man that human life is disparate from the life of a cow grazing in the pasture, savagely munching grass from the ground and defecating without self-consciousness. While the luxuries of civilization serve to cleanly package the cow in plastic and styerfoam such that one rarely remembers how it grazed the pasture, I argue that that the awakened individual will see through these illusory barriers that lead to the conception that human life as dependent on societally driven processes rather than the wild processes that sustain all other life.

While an awakened individual has released all attachment to phenomena, they must recognize their conventional existence, such that food, water, and warmth are understood as absolute necessities for survival. While civilized life may lead to the delusion that beef spontaneously arises in plastic wrapped packages and water originates from the faucet, the awakened individual will have too deep of an insight into on the vast interconnectivity of phenomena to be lured into these delusional societal conceptions. They will recognize that humans are not only dependent on the cow for beef, they are also dependent on the wild processes that facilitate the growth of grass which feeds the cow. They will recognize that humans are dependent on rainfall for their own hydration, for the hydration of the cow, and for the hydration of the grass. Like the cow in the pasture, dependent wild processes on to provide grass and

water, humans are dependent on exactly the same wild processes to produce the resources necessary for the maintenance of life. Due to an awakened individuals' understanding of dependent origination, which asserts the dependence of phenomena, they will understand that the resources necessary to sustain human life originate from the same wild process that produce the resources necessary to sustain all life. Therefore the distinction between human life and wild life will dissolve as all of life will be understood as dependent on and driven by the same wild processes.

The understanding that basic human needs are fundamentally fulfilled by and dependent on wild processes will lead an awakened individual to perceive industrialized society as a nonimperative mechanism to enhance welfare or reduce suffering. Taking into consideration the immense destruction necessary to build massive infrastructure and the vast amount of resources necessary for the productivity of industry along with understanding industrialized society as essentially irrelevant to the reduction of suffering, it is very unlikely that an awakened individual would be inclined to preserve this mechanism.

Furthermore an awakened individual would likely be inclined to engage in a lifestyle that provides abundant engagement with wild processes as they are reflective of the same emptiness embodied by the individual. Wirth described the "disease of overcivilized life" (Wirth,51) as "denigrating human life to the default fact that it lives simply because it has not died"(Wirth,51). While civilized life provides cushions that decrease the amount of wear and tear on the body and contribute to the extension of human life, these cushions are also thought to compromise the quality of human life. The soft barriers implemented in society, employed to shelter humans from the gritty work of living directly off wild processes, may protect one from the dirty rawness of those processes, but also serves to conceal the spontaneous creativity that underlies the production of all resources. It is likely that an awakened individual would take on a lifestyle that provides ample engagement with wild processes as a means of surrounding oneself with phenomena that have been auto created by spontaneous wild processes and therefore "preach the profound and incomprehensible" (Wirth, 53) embodiment of emptiness. This is not to suggest that the awakened individual would attach to a "homesteading lifestyle" or that one could not be content in an urban setting but rather it is to suggest that an awakened individual would gravitate towards a simple lifestyle where their needs could be met through direct communion with the wild process that give rise to all of life.

An awakened individual will not engage in environmentally ethical behavior as a means to bring about anything in particular, but rather will spontaneously engage in action geared at reducing suffering. While this spontaneity could be perceived as potentially threatening to an environmental ethic such that an awakened individual would not necessarily privilege environmental causes over industrial growth, I argue that an awakened person would not perceive industrialized society as pertinent to reducing the suffering of humans or any other being. On the contrary, an awakened person would realize that industrialized society requires the destruction of habitat and funnels resources into the blackhole of the rat race, all in order to produce tangible items of attachment and luxuries that serve to shelter humans from the grit of wild processes. It would be realized that human welfare is not dependent on industrialization, and furthermore that industrialization leads to the widespread suffering of essentially all other species. An awakened individual will likely find the padding that societal life shoves between human life and wild life as distasteful as it hinders the individual from coming into direct contact with the raw embodied emptiness of the wild. Thus, for an awakened individual, an environmental ethic does not mean the fervent striving to conserve wild processes, as this would suggest a futile attachment to the empty dynamic flow of the universe. Rather, one who embodies emptiness would take on a lifestyle that by it's very nature would spontaneously reduce environmental suffering and allow one to to provide for themselves through direct communion with the infinitely creative source of the universe that spontaneously facilitates the generation of all basic necessities. An awakened individual would be intuitively drawn to intimately harmonize and engage compassionately with the source of all phenomena, an ultimately nonexistent wild emptiness.

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