ABSTRACT

OF VICE & VIRTUE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EASTERN ORTHODOX & MAHAYANA
MORAL PEDAGOGIES

by James R. Bigari

Through comparing the use of emotion, theology and philosophy in the moral pedagogies of Eastern Orthodoxy and Mahayana Buddhism, this thesis elucidates both the substantive and methodological issues involved in comparing disparate religious traditions. Through the application of a modified set of comparative principles derived from the Comparative Religious Ideas Project, the study shows that such a methodology can provide a partial explanation for the “same-yet-different” or Jonathan Z. Smith’s “déjà vu” phenomenon. It is argued that the knowledge gained from this form of comparison is not merely an epistemologically dubious construct of western scholarship which is artificially imposed upon the traditions. Rather, this comparative method reveals a process of “concept simplification” which occurs when a religious tradition shifts from the act of philosophizing and theologizing to the act of moral education. This shift results in the alignment of previously disparate concepts, thus contributing to the “same-yet-different” phenomenon.
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I. Comparison, Emotion & Religion

Introduction. If there is one phenomenon which has elicited the most debate in the field of religious studies it is the experience of what I will call here “same-yet-different.” Anyone who studies more than one religion will undoubtedly run into this phenomenon. Jonathan Z. Smith (1982) gives us a succinct description of this experience: “Indeed, he [the researcher] has been most frequently attracted to a particular datum by a sense of uniqueness. But often, at some point along the way, as if unbidden, as sort of déjà vu, the scholar remembers he has seen “it” or “something like it” before…This experience, this unintended consequence of research, must then be accorded significance and provided with an explanation.” It is this experience and the drive to identify and explain this phenomenon of same-yet-different that is the impetus behind the comparative method. Furthermore, it is the inevitability of this experience that has pulled the comparative method through the deluge of criticism it has received throughout the years. Regardless of what methodological objections one may raise, when the scholar sits down to work, those same-yet-different situations jump off the page and demand acknowledgement and explanation. Curiosities are the scholars’ muse, and the phenomenon of same-yet-different is assuredly a curiosity of the most tantalizing sort.

This thesis will address the objections raised against the comparative method. Through a modest comparative project that follows the guidelines set down by the Comparative Religious Ideas Project, it will be shown how a comparative project can be conducted which does not fall victim to the accusations of many postmodern scholars. Ultimately, I will make four claims that refute the common criticism of the comparative method. First, that between two historically and culturally distant texts there exist general categories that make comparison possible without doing violence to either tradition. Secondly, because of those categories, what is discovered in the end is not a complete fabrication of the comparative process with no corresponding reality within the traditions. Thirdly, that only through this comparative process can one glean information vital for understanding the same-yet-different phenomenon. The final and most substantial

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portion of my argument will be an explanation of the same-yet-different phenomenon which proposes that one cause of this phenomenon is a process I will call here concept-simplification. Through this process concepts that have a complex meaning in a given doctrine are streamlined and simplified in various ways so as to be useful in practice. In this sense, the differences found between religions are in part a product of the complexity of concepts as they are situated in the wider doctrine; a complex concept has a greater likelihood of being contrasted with another complex concept. On the other hand, the sameness found between religions is in part a product of the simplification of those same concepts as they are used in religious practice; a simple concept has a greater likelihood of having a cross-cultural parallel. In this sense, it is not that two concepts appear similar on the surface when in fact they are distinct. Rather, two concepts may really be different in the fullness of the doctrine, yet at the same time they really are the same as they are used in practice.

Critiques of the Comparative Method. The debate over the legitimacy of the comparative method has produced no shortage of commentary. Although the method is by no means currently popular, the pendulum swing of academic discourse is ever-so-slowly returning to the side of comparison. The early comparativists with their liberal and often uncritical use of convenient yet over general western categories and ambitious universalist claims spawned a back lash of criticism which all but brought the comparative method to its knees. These criticisms reached a crescendo with the rise of postmodernism. However, many postmodern thinkers pushed their rallying cry of

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2 See:
incomparability and cultural hegemony to the point of absurdity. The postmodern insistence on the impossibility of satisfactory comparative categories led to the somewhat disappointing and seemingly ridiculous idea that comparison itself is completely devoid of epistemological validity. This of course is troubling given the fact – as pointed about by many scholars since – that comparison is vital to the very process of learning and human cognition.

In an attempt to address the postmodern critique while salvaging the comparative method, some scholars – most notably J.Z. Smith – have taken a more moderate approach. By claiming that even though comparison cannot tell us “how things are,” it is nonetheless useful. Through comparison one can take what is learned in one tradition and use that lesson as a lens through which to view another. In this sense comparison functions more like a joke or a metaphor by playing on contrast and similarity in such a way that opens up new insights. Although this is certainly less stringent than some of the more extreme postmodern positions, its vagueness leaves one unsatisfied. What is the difference between “how things are” and what one sees “through the lens of another tradition?” Would not one want to see that tradition through this new comparative lens in order to see “how things are?” It seems a very odd position indeed if this is denied. If it is denied, then the question that has plagued the humanities for so long – the question of “so what?” – becomes a serious one. Why should I care about seeing a tradition through a new lens if the new sight is a mere fabrication of the scholar? The authors of *A Magic Still Dwells* attempt to answer this charge, but once again their reply is found wanting. In this text, Kimberley Patton says, “The contributors to this volume argue that scholars can risk positing a comparative framework, not to reach closure in service of a particular theory, nor to achieve moral judgment or gain intellectual control over the “other,” but to empower dialogue and the quest for understanding.”

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Patton’s “understanding” ultimately entails if not the validation or refutation of a thesis which makes a claim about “how things are.” It seems that much of the discussion concerning the legitimacy of the comparative method is fraught with ambiguous language that does little more than dance around what must ultimately be the case if the comparative method is to be of value, namely, that it tells us something real about that which we study.

Robert Segal (2001) gave a succinct account of the history of criticisms against the comparative method. He states that they can be boiled down to six accusations: 1) the comparative method finds only similarities among phenomena and ignores differences, 2) it confuses similarity with identity, 3) it generalizes too broadly, 4) it generalizes prematurely, 5) it takes phenomena out of context, 6) it relies on generalizations, which are ultimately distorting. In the following chapters I will demonstrate that the first five objections are a potential danger but are not intrinsic to comparison per se. With diligence they can be avoided. The sixth objection points out what is surely the case, namely, that generalization is ultimately distorting. Generalizations purposefully ignore certain distinguishing characteristics of the subjects of the category and focus on their similarities in order to more adequately organize material. This being the case, generalization holds the danger of misrepresenting disparate phenomenon as more similar than is actually the case. However, this is only a danger if one loses sight of the ways in which generalities distort their subjects and thus fails to compensate for the distortion. A lens may distort an image, but if one knows the nature of the distortion the true image may yet be rendered.

**Comparative Categories and the Comparative Religious Ideas Project.** Of utmost importance in comparison is the establishment of general categories that do justice to all the traditions under consideration. Many postmodernists have expressed doubt concerning the existence of such categories. In regards to this issue, Kimberly C. Patton (2000) relays an anecdote that proves as enlightening as it is entertaining.

At an AAR teaching workshop… I described a comparative course I hoped to introduce at Harvard Divinity School… on the variety of ways around the globe in which religious authority has been understood and transmitted, he [the leader of the panel] began to fume. “But that’s like my taking sixteen different birds and
hacking out their livers and laying them out in a row!” he said. “All you end up with is sixteen dead birds!”...I pitifully related this story to my colleague Larry Sullivan and asked what he would have said in answer to this cruel charge. He shook his head. “How,” he asked, “did he know that all of the organs were livers?”

The point of this charming (or possibly depressing) anecdote is that no matter what we do, general categories are an inescapable part of human meaning making. Patton herself goes on to say,

It is, I believe, disingenuous to pretend that organizing or “over-arching” categories do not exist in a wide range of forms of human knowing and thinking – in this case, the quasi-Platonic Idea of Liver, which although it was not perfectly represented by any one of the organs, nevertheless powerfully would dictate the criteria of which organs to select from among the corpses of the poor hypothetical birds. These are indeed “universal patterns...outside of concrete universal ‘texts’ ” – not divorced from them in their particularity, but nevertheless more than them.

It is exactly this point, not only that cross-cultural categories exist, but that they are a vital part to human meaning-making, which makes it possible for comparison to produce epistemologically sound commentary on the religions under consideration.

The above anecdote relates the prevalence of general categories and their importance for meaning-making. However, the question remains, what makes a “good” or “bad” comparative category? To answer this question I will refer to the thorough treatment of the topic in the Comparative Religious Ideas Project spearheaded by Robert Cummings Neville. According to Neville et al, the first characteristic of a “good” comparative category is that it is unbiased. Neville and his fellow author Wesley Wildman point out how in the past categories were taken from Christianity and imposed upon other religions in an attempt to organize and understand them. By describing the religious beliefs and practices of other cultures using the categories of a largely Christian West, scholars ended up constructing inaccurate accounts of the traditions beings studied. Neville and Wildman do not go into detail on what an unbiased category would look like. They content themselves with describing it as a category that is not taken from one

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6 Ibid., 160.
religion and imposed upon another. The closest they get to explicitly addressing this issue is in their discussion of the vague category of “the human condition” that they themselves employ. “The vague category must be no more biased towards one specification than another…Nearly every vague category has some particular historical roots – “the human condition” is heavily influenced by twentieth-century existentialism – but the category needs to be abstracted and purified so as to be as neutral as possible in registering what is compared by means of it.” It is disappointing that they do not go on to clarify what they mean by “abstracted” and “purified.” What seems clear is that Neville and Wildman seem comfortable with applying categories derived from enlightenment philosophy to the comparison of religions. I feel this is problematic in that it has the same potential to impose foreign conceptions upon the tradition being studied. This issue would support a substantial research project in its own right and cannot be adequately addressed here. However, because of my reluctance to follow Neville and Wildman on this point, I will take a more conservative approach and only employ categories that can be found in both traditions being studied, what I will call here “native categories.”

The second characteristic of a good comparison is that the author does not stop at the application of a vague category, but rather continues on to explore the specifications in detail. Neville and Wildman point to the comparative category of “theism” as a perfect example of the need to explore the subtleties of the specifications. While the vague category “theism” allows us to categorize and compare religious traditions, it is ultimately distorting given the fact that the each particular “theism” is often quite different. One must translate the specifications into the language of the vague category. That is, after the specifications are discussed for the sake of elucidating the subtleties of the manifestation, then it must be shown how the specific instance fits into the vague category. In this sense, comparison must move back and forth between vague categories and specificity in order to continually fine-tune our understanding of the category. Neville and Wildman effectively describe a system of categories that are ordered according to the level of specificity. For example, “the human condition” is a vague category in which “enlightenment” falls. In turn the term “enlightenment” is a category

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7 Neville, The Human Condition, 15.
in itself insofar as this term is interpreted differently throughout various religious teachings. In this sense, each specific category works to inform the more general category through a process of reciprocal reflection and alteration.

In the following comparative project I will employ a slightly modified version of the principles of comparison that are espoused by Neville et al. First, I will not employ the enlightenment categories that Neville et al. recommend. Rather, I will only use native categories that are readily apparent within the texts being compared. Secondly, I will pay particular attention to the relationship of the general categories to their various specifications to ensure an accurate assessment of the views of the traditions under consideration.

**The Texts & Their Pedagogical Structure.** In the 8th century, the Buddhist scholar Śāntideva composed *The Bodhicaryavatara*. This text instructs monastics on various methods for moral and ethical development, and became a centerpiece of Mahayana literature. Five centuries later, the Eastern Orthodox scholar Nil Sorsky composed the *Ustav*, a strikingly similar work which also gives monks directions for moral development. Reading these two texts, Smith’s déjà vu experience is all too apparent. The comparative project that follows will be based upon a pedagogical structure found within both texts. This structure is based on a common conception of human psychology and can be generalized in the following algebraic form:

1) One ponders concept A  
2) in order to arouse affect B  
3) which results in the desired state of C

In both texts the first element is always conceptual and the second element is always an affect or emotion. The third element can be either an affective or behavioral state. The advantage of this shared structure is two fold. The first advantage is methodological; this structure provides clear cut general categories for comparison. The second advantage is that this structure provides a means of investigating the much debated and currently popular issue of emotion in religion.

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**The Study of Religion and Emotion.** The role of emotion in religion has long been the object of academic inquiry. We can trace the field as far back as the 4th century when Augustine of Hippo incorporated into his theology an explication of the relationship between emotion and volition and its role in the life of the Christian person. This type of investigation has continued into the present day and has appeared in the works of prominent scholars such as Rudolf Otto, Emile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud and William James. Even though the field has a long and varied history, interest in emotive studies has seen a particularly dramatic increase in recent years. The current increase in appreciation of the role of emotion in human life has led to what has been dubbed as a “revolution” in the academic study of emotion. In his study of emotion and cognition, *Valuing Emotions*, Michael Stocker goes so far as to reject any philosophical positions that leave no room for emotion. Also, recently Robert M. Gordon has even coined the term “epistemic emotions”, claiming that emotions hold a similar function as belief in human cognition. Studies such as these challenge the popular overemphasis of the role of rationality in the human creature, a presupposition that has plagued much of western philosophy. The recent provocative findings regarding emotion’s role in human conceptualization and decision-making has provided an ever greater impetus for further studies in the role of emotion in religion.

While work in the area of emotion in religion has been increasing, minimal attention has been given to the role of emotion in Mahayana Buddhism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. In *Emotions and Religion: A Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography*, John Corrigan, Eric Crump, and John Kloos assembled an invaluable resource for researchers of religion and emotion. However, it is worth noting that of the 1258 articles cited in the text, only 15 of those articles directly address Buddhism. This is surprising given that one of Buddhism’s main concerns is the role of attraction and aversion in samsāra. Of the 15 articles dealing with Buddhism, most deal with the four sublime states of joy, equanimity, loving kindness, and compassion. This thesis will add

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to the currently existing body of knowledge on the subject of emotion in Buddhism. In particular, I will focus on how mundane affective states such as fear, urgency, hope, and enthusiasm are understood by practitioners and used in moral development.

Within Eastern Orthodoxy emotions and affect in general play a complex and integral role. However, there has been surprisingly little attention given to how these elements of experience are conceived of and handled within this tradition. In Emotions and Religion only eight articles deal directly with Eastern Orthodoxy. Although this annotated bibliography is not exhaustive, the surprisingly small number of citations is suggestive of a wider lack of scholarship on the subject. This could perhaps be due to the fact that Eastern Orthodox texts were influenced by stoic philosophy where the notion of dispassion is held as a great virtue and the only way to ascertain ontological truths. This being the case, it seems reasonable to conclude that emotion would not play a large role in the tradition. However, even though Eastern Orthodox writings adopted this notion of dispassion, it is clear that through the process of incorporating it into their soteriological scheme they modified its usage. When placed within the context of Orthodox doctrine, the concept of dispassion took on a more complex meaning, one in which emotion was not simply eschewed as a hindrance to rational lucidity, but rather one that recognized the important epistemological as well as moral functions of emotions. Whatever the ultimate reason for the lack of scholarship, it is clear that the subject is in need of further research. This paper will attempt to add to this field by investigating how affective experience is conceived of and dealt with in Nil’s moral pedagogy.

The texts I have chosen provide a uniquely clear description of the role of emotion within the traditions, thus giving a solid basis for comparison. The monastic pedagogies that I explore explicitly state the relationship between concepts, emotions, and behaviors. The forthrightness of the authors concerning the relationship between the aforementioned elements cuts down on the interpretive legwork of the researcher and provides compelling evidence for comparison. As described earlier, it is common for the religious teacher to say, “One should contemplate X, in order to arouse Y, and thus attain the state or behavior of Z.” Even in situations where the emotional element of Y is not explicitly stated, the form of the statement acts as a kind of algebraic equation where the idea X and the desired action Z are given, and from those the nature of the emotion Y can
then be deduced. Furthermore, the causal structure itself provides insight into how the authors conceive of the relationship between various elements of experience. It is because of this literary structure that this project has unique access to the role of emotions and can present a clear example of how emotion is conceived by the practitioners and its function within the pedagogy.

In regards to the issue of emotion in religion, this thesis will answer two questions cited by John Corrigan in the introduction of *Religion and Emotion* as being particularly important for the future study of religion and emotion. First, “How is it [emotion] en-valued or disparaged?” And secondly, “How is it [emotion] thought to intersect with intellectual life and action?”

**Defining Affective Experience.** Explicit in the pedagogical structure employed in both texts is a distinction between affective or emotional experience and cognitive experience. Both texts deal with groups of felt states that contemporary readers readily group into categories such as “emotions,” “moods,” or “motivations.” The contemporary discussion of the relationship between emotion and cognition and differences between various affective states is ongoing. It is not necessary for this thesis to delve into this debate as the question at hand is not our contemporary understanding of these states, but rather how Śāntideva and Nil Sorsky conceived of these states. For this reason I will use the terms “affect” and “affective states” in the most inclusive sense possible to mean any kind of felt state. Examples of these types of states include fear, desire, hope, excitement, sloth, aversion, etcetera. In contrast to affective states, I will use the term “cognitive” to indicate any conceptual thought. The texts present these two kinds of experience as intertwined. In this sense, Magda Arnold’s cognitive definition of emotion seems particularly fitting for the analysis. Arnold claimed that an emotion is “the felt tendency toward anything intuitively appraised as good (beneficial), or way from anything intuitively appraised as bad (harmful).” In this sense, emotions are considered cognitive because the feeling of the emotion is continually bound up with cognitive appraisals of the situation which in turn are based on and situated within the culture.

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The Questions. Reading *The Bodhicaryavatara* and the *Ustav* one finds excellent examples of the same-yet-different phenomenon. Both texts base their moral pedagogy on distinct doctrines, however the moral pedagogies espoused are uncannily similar. As such, these two texts are ideal subjects for a comparative project which aims at elucidating the causes of the same-yet-different phenomenon.

Three core questions will guide my investigation of this phenomenon. First, what is the foundational doctrine that is underlying the moral exhortation? This question is central as both Nil and Śāntideva build their pedagogies upon their respective doctrines. Furthermore, attention to the differences in doctrine is central to avoiding the historical tendency of comparative projects to only focus on similarities while ignoring differences. The second question addresses how various concepts are used to arouse or suppress affective experiences and what, if anything, those affects are thought to accomplish. This question will help elucidate how particular emotions are valued or disparaged in each tradition; which emotions are encouraged and in what context, and which emotions are looked upon as unwholesome? The final question asks for what purpose are these affects aroused? In other words, what is the desired mental state or behavioral outcome? Answering this question will tell us how cognition, emotion and behavior are thought to intersect.

Through this investigation three objectives will be met. First, light will be shed on the role of emotion in Mahayana Buddhism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Secondly, it will be shown that a responsible comparative methodology can yield results that do not fall victim to the postmodern critique of the comparative method. Finally, this thesis will provide a partial explanation for the same-yet-different phenomenon.
II. The Bodhicaryavatara

Introduction

The Goal of Bodhichitta. Before diving into Śāntideva’s pedagogy it is helpful to briefly note the wider immediate goal that is being pursued in The Bodhicaryavatara. While it is true that the ultimate goal is enlightenment, the more immediate goal is the development of bodhichitta. The concept of bodhichitta is divided into two parts, ultimate and relative bodhichitta. Ultimate bodhichitta refers to the direct realization of the essential emptiness of phenomena and corresponds to the concept of wisdom in Buddhist philosophy. Relative bodhichitta refers to the cultivation of compassion. Relative bodhichitta consists of aspiring and using practices to develop an ever greater experience of compassion. However, it is only with the attainment of ultimate bodhichitta that true compassion is aroused. Hence, the two forms of bodhichitta are intimately connected and each needs the other for full bodhichitta to develop. Once the young bodhisattva has developed the wish to free all beings from samsāra he or she can move on to engage bodhichitta and actually work towards the ultimate goal of universal enlightenment. This aspiration and engagement to help sentient beings escape samsāra knows no qualification. The bodhisattva must not abandon even a single being. To say that such a task is overwhelming is an understatement. Śāntideva himself speaks of the enormity of the task when one takes the bodhisattva vow, “Not knowing my own limitations, I spoke at that time as if I were a bit insane.”

Standing in the way of the development of bodhichitta are the Six Poisons of hatred, greed, ignorance, attachment, jealousy, and pride. Where there is ignorance there cannot be wisdom, and where there is greed or jealousy there cannot be compassion.

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16 Ibid., 199.
This being the case, the poisons stand as a matter of grave importance for the bodhisattva. It is through the development of virtues that the six poisons can be overcome and wisdom and compassion cultivated. Attributes such as patience, diligence, awareness and zeal are essential in order for the bodhisattva to navigate the obstructions of *samsāra*.

**The Questions.** In the following pages I will focus on one particular affective state (fear) and one particular doctrinal concept (hell) in order to answer three questions: 1) the questions cited by Corrigan, how are emotions valued or disparaged and how are they thought to intersect with intellectual life and action? 2) what are the categories that Śāntideva is using? 3) and finally, what is the difference between a concept’s function in doctrine and its function in practice.

**The Function of the Concept of Hell in Practice**

**The Need to Investigate Entire Lines of Reasoning.** In order to understand the role of the concept of hell in *The Bodhicaryavatara* it is necessary to investigate the whole line of argumentation in which it is situated. It is only in this fashion that one can come to understand Śāntideva’s wider intention of using the concept. In what follows I will investigate two examples of Śāntideva’s use of the concept of hell for developing the virtue of zeal.

**Example One.** The importance and nature of zeal is stated in the beginning stanzas of Chapter VII, “The Perfection of Zeal.”

1. Thus, one who has patience should cultivate zeal, because Awakening is established with zeal, and there is no merit without zeal, just as there is no movement without wind.

2. What is zeal? It is enthusiasm for virtue. What is said to be its antithesis? It is spiritual sloth, clinging to the reprehensible, apathy, and self-contempt.

3. Spiritual sloth arises from indolence, indulging in pleasures, sleep, and craving for lounging around due to one’s apathy toward the miseries of the cycle of existence.
Stanza two gives a definition of zeal. Zeal, Śāntideva says, is enthusiasm for virtue. In this case, enthusiasm is translated from the Sanskrit term vírya. This term holds greater connotations than the somewhat simplistic “enthusiasm”. In Sanskrit, vírya implies particularly masculine forms of courage, energy, pride and heroic dispositions. The importance of vírya is made very clear in the above stanzas, “Awakening is established with zeal,” the very heart of the Buddhist project depends in a large part on zeal. The importance of this virtue is easily understood when one considers the monumental task of the bodhisattva. The bodhisattva has vowed to liberate the multitudes of sentient beings from the bonds of samsāra. Laziness and apathy must be conquered and explicit methods for developing zeal are vital if the bodhisattva is to succeed. One cannot cling to reprehensible ways nor wallow in self-contempt while simultaneously experiencing enthusiasm for virtue.

In the above example, Śāntideva has simply instilled the concept of enthusiasm and the concept of virtue in the practitioner. With that accomplished, he moves on to manipulate a series of affective/cognitive relationships in an ascending fashion which is designed to bring the practitioner to the experience of zeal. The first example that will be used to demonstrate this process is taken from chapter seven “The Perfection of Zeal.” Here, Śāntideva begins this process by pointing out the imminence of death.

5. You do not see that those of your own kind are gradually being killed. You even fall asleep like buffalo among butchers.

6. When Yama watches you and your path is blocked on all sides, how can you enjoy eating, and how can you sleep and have sexual intercourse?

The use of imagery arouses in the practitioner the concept of the nearness of death. Śāntideva says that Yama, the Lord of Death, is watching and our path is blocked on all sides; we must go forward and face death. This being the case, how can we spend our time indulging in idle pleasures that in no way prepare us for this encounter? Sincerely pondering this point, we can see how it would arouse in the practitioner a sense
of urgency. Death could come at any time, so one must make progress along the path while one can to ensure a rebirth in a realm conducive to practice.

Now that urgency has been aroused we find Śāntideva’s first use of the concept of hell. The Padmakara Translation Group gives a particularly vivid translation of this portion of the text.

10. The memory of former sins will torture you;  
The screams and din of hell break on your ears.  
With very terror you will foul yourself;  
What will you do then, in such extremity of fear?

11. And if you are so scared while still alive,  
Like fishes writhing on the open ground,  
What need to speak of pain unbearable  
In hells created by past evil deeds?

12. The hells in which the boiling molten bronze  
Will burn your body, tender like baby’s flesh-  
All is now prepared, your former deeds have done it!  
How can you lie back, so free of care?

The above stanzas offer a horrific but relatively simple account of hell. Hell is described merely as intense suffering born out of your past deeds. Through contemplating these simple but vivid descriptions of suffering at the time of death as well as afterward in the hell realms, fear and repulsion against such horrors are aroused in the practitioner. Now that the practitioner apprehends both the nearness of death and the suffering that one might find oneself in due to sloth, one naturally asks: what can be done about this troubling situation? This question reflects a preliminary sort of motivation in the practitioner that will only come to full fruition as enthusiasm when he or she is shown a practical means to avoid such a horrific future. Śāntideva takes up that point in the following stanzas.

16. The absence of apathy, the array of abilities such as prudence, self-control, equality between oneself and others, and exchange of oneself for others
17. Should be practiced without the discouragement of thinking, “How could I possibly attain Awakening?” For the truth-speaking Tathagata proclaimed this truth:

18. “Even those who were gadflies, mosquitoes, bees, and worms attained supreme Awakening, Which is difficult to attain, through the power of their effort.”

Here, hope and direction are given through the exposition of behavioral virtues, and full enthusiasm can finally blossom. The beginning of this list of virtues shows us that one must first and foremost care. Without care, no further action would result as one would fall into apathy. Self-control must be practiced in order to avoid accruing bad karma. Without self-control one would succumb to base desires that further immerse the practitioner in ignorance. Equality between oneself and others must be practiced in order to avoid selfishness and develop relative bodhichitta. By seeing that all people, oneself included, are alike in their wish to avoid suffering, a sense of solidarity and compassion is aroused. Developing this equanimity is often the foundation for the next practice that Śāntideva advocates; this is the practice of exchanging oneself for others. This popular Buddhist practice is commonly known as tonglen, or “sending and taking.” In tonglen, the practitioner uses a series of visualizations in order to develop the ability to take away the suffering of other beings and give them peace. Like the bodhisattva’s project in general, this practice is daunting due to the sheer number of suffering beings. How can one being work to alleviate the negative karma of so many? The next stanzas encourage the bodhisattva in order to combat self-contempt and despair. Śāntideva quotes the Tathagata, an epithet commonly used for the historical Buddha, speaking of creatures with far less fortunate conditions than ours as having attained liberation, so we should not be discouraged. The situation is shown to be serious but not hopeless. Contemplating this point, hope and excitement at this prospect is aroused in the practitioner, without this element despair would prevail and depression and apathy would stifle any development of zeal.

Ideally, at this point the practitioner has developed the feeling of enthusiasm towards the idea of virtue. However, virtue itself manifests in three different forms:

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emotional, cognitive and behavioral. Throughout the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, Śāntideva cites specific manifestations of these forms of virtue. He speaks of things such as calm, respect, and devotion to others.\(^{19}\) Classifying the Six Paramitas of generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, contemplation, and wisdom according to the three-fold nature of virtue can help further clarify the distinction. Enthusiasm and patience represent the emotional elements that work in conjunction with the conceptual and behavioral elements. Wisdom represents the conceptual element, although it should be noted that wisdom itself also incorporates the direct, non-conceptual experience of what those concepts represent, i.e. the direct perception of emptiness versus the conceptual understanding of the philosophy of emptiness. And finally, generosity, morality, and contemplation constitute the behavioral elements. Although each of the Six Paramitas primarily manifests one form of virtue, each works in conjunction with the others to move the practitioner towards enlightenment. Here, for example, with the emotion of enthusiasm for the idea of virtue instilled, the practitioner is motivated to continue to develop other virtuous thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, as reflected in the Six Paramitas.

Śāntideva then moves on to add one more element to his exposition, the element of diligence.

62. One should diligently apply oneself to the action in which one engages. Intoxicated by that action, one should be of an insatiable mind, like one striving for the satisfaction of the result of a game

70. A practitioner should be like someone carrying a jar of oil while under the scrutiny of swordsmen, careful of stumbling out of fear of death.

74. Bringing to mind the teachings on conscientiousness, one should arouse oneself so that one is always prepared before encountering a task.

Here, Śāntideva attempts to arouse diligence in the practitioner in three different ways. First, he simply and directly states that one should be diligent, insatiable “like one

striving for satisfaction”. In the next stanza he again employs a conceptual metaphor to arouse and convey the sense of diligence, “like one carrying a jar of oil…under the scrutiny of a swordsmen.” Contemplating the fact that one drop of oil spilled may lead to a sudden and gruesome end encourages extreme diligence on the part of the practitioner. By imagining what this experience would feel like, the practitioner gets a sense of the level of diligence required of the bodhisattva. Finally, he admonishes the practitioner to constantly recall the teachings on mindfulness in order to arouse such diligence. It should be noted here that the last stanza reflects the conscious manipulation of the affective/cognitive dichotomy. He says, “Bringing to mind the teachings…one should arouse oneself.” So one ponders a concept (the teachings), specifically to arouse diligence (a non-conceptual, felt state).

To sum up this example, first the concept of the closeness of death is used to instill a sense of urgency. Next, the concept of hell as immense and prolonged suffering is elucidated to arouse fear and repulsion. Then the concept of virtuous action as an avenue that one may take to escape the torments of the hell realms is instilled which arouses a sense of direction and hope. We see here at the end of this process the very definition of zeal given earlier in the chapter, that is, enthusiasm for virtue. Through this process Śāntideva leads the practitioner to the essential affective/cognitive position of zeal. This process is portrayed in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Pedagogy</th>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Element</td>
<td>Imminence of Death</td>
<td>Urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Element</td>
<td>Hell Realms</td>
<td>Repulsion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Element</td>
<td>Virtuous Action as Solution</td>
<td>Excitement/Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Element</td>
<td>Fear of Death</td>
<td>Diligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeal (5th &amp; Final Goal)</td>
<td>Virtue</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to remember at the end of this process that virtue is being employed as a general concept towards which an emotion is felt. As Śāntideva’s teaching unfolds, the feeling of enthusiasm is aroused towards the idea of virtue as a means of salvation. With this feeling of enthusiasm for the idea of virtue, the practitioner
will then go on to work towards the development of virtue in its affective, conceptual, and behavioral forms. The above teaching should be repeatedly contemplated by the practitioner in order to motivate the development of all three experiential forms of virtue.

**Example Two.** This conscious manipulation of the affective/cognitive relationship to combat spiritual sloth is used throughout the *Bodhicaryavatara*. It can be seen again in Chapter IV, “Attending to the Spirit of Awakening”. In this example, Śāntideva begins with pointing out the rarity of a human birth.

20. Therefore, the Blessed One stated that human existence is extremely difficult to obtain, like a turtle’s head emerging into the ring of a yoke on a vast ocean.

This statement refers to the belief in reincarnation and the rarity of being born a human, a favorable birth for progression along the Buddhist path. It is easy to see how one who accepts and ponders this metaphysical position would be filled with a sense of urgency to make the most of this rare opportunity; one should make great strides towards enlightenment while one has the means.

21. One dwells in Avici hell for an eon as a consequence of a vice committed in a single moment. What then can be said of a favorable state of existence, since sin has been accumulated since beginningless time?

Here, as in the first example, Śāntideva uses a relatively simple account of hell as prolonged period of suffering due to one’s past actions. This concept of hell is used to reaffirm the position of stanza twenty concerning the rarity of a human birth. Śāntideva points out how difficult it is to acquire the proper karma to be born into a human realm with an unending string of sinful action in one’s past. Even one mistake can lead to an eon in Avici Hell. Hence, diligence and care are essential if one is to avoid the pitfalls of *samsāra* and make progress along the path. A few stanzas further on a description of Avici Hell is used.
25. The unendurable fire of hell will scorch my body for ages, and afterward the fire of remorse will torment my undisciplined mind for a long time.

As in the earlier example, this vivid imagery of hell coupled with the length of time one is subjected to such miseries for slight errors arouses in the practitioner a strong sense of fear and repulsion. This emotional element helps to fuel and sustain the bodhisattva’s endeavors. By vividly contemplating the potential for immense suffering if sinful actions are pursued, one develops a strong sense of aversion to those actions and an acute mindfulness of personal conduct.

Śāntideva then moves on to offer the practitioner hope in the face of such gruesome prospects.

47. Mental afflictions do not exist in sense objects, nor in the sense faculties, nor in the space between, nor anywhere else. Then where do they exist and agitate the whole world? This is an illusion only. Liberate your fearing heart and cultivate perseverance for the sake of wisdom.

This stanza functions in much the same way as stanzas sixteen through eighteen in the first example. Through elucidating a means of action against such suffering Śāntideva instills excitement and hope in the practitioner and turns what was merely a motivation away from suffering into enthusiasm for virtue. However, this time the means is not the behavioral form of virtue, but rather the cognitive form. Through the realization of the essentially empty nature of mental afflictions one also realizes the potential to overcome them. This realization of emptiness is also the wisdom aspect of bodhichitta and a vital element of enlightenment.

Looking again at the entire affective/cognitive interplay involved in this example we see that first the concept of the extreme rarity of a human birth is aroused in the reader. Such a conceptual realization leads to a sense of urgency. Next, Śāntideva arouses diligence through positing that even a single infraction can lead to an eon of intense suffering. Then, a vivid description of the suffering of Avici Hell is given to stir deep fear and repulsion in the practitioner. Finally, excitement and hope are aroused through the concept of emptiness, the realization of which offers a means of salvation.
from future suffering. All these taken together help to rouse enthusiasm for virtue. More succinctly:

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} Element</td>
<td>Rarity of Human Birth</td>
<td>Urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} Element</td>
<td>Infraction=Much Suffering</td>
<td>Diligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} Element</td>
<td>Avici Hell</td>
<td>Repulsion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} Element</td>
<td>Emptiness</td>
<td>Excitement/Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeal (5\textsuperscript{th} &amp; Final Goal)</td>
<td>Virtue</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparison of the Two Examples.** Although the order of emotions aroused in this example differs slightly from the first example, functionally they are identical. In both examples, urgency is the first emotion aroused and excitement for virtue is the last emotion felt. Urgency is aroused first in order to arouse interest and energy in the practitioner. If something like repulsion were to be aroused first there would be the danger of procrastination on the part of the practitioner. The practitioner might think, “I do not want to go to hell, but there will be time later to begin developing virtue.” By arousing the concept of the rarity of human birth, Śāntideva gives the audience a reason to take the teaching immediately to heart. The last element aroused is always excitement for virtue. Indeed, since zeal is the goal, this kind of excitement must be the last element if Śāntideva’s pedagogy is to be successful. Although the three intermediate elements all hold different positions from one example to another, it is important to notice that repulsion always comes before excitement/hope. There must be a sense of something one needs to be saved from before one can feel excitement towards that which saves. So in both cases the hell realms are cited in order to arouse a sense of repulsion and loathing, a sense of something that one wants to avoid. With this affective/cognitive set instilled, Śāntideva can then move on to cite virtuous action or virtuous cognitive states as elements towards which excitement and hope can be felt. The element of diligence is admittedly less constrained in its positionality. As long as some context has been established in which diligence can situate itself, its function remains in effect. In the first example, diligence comes after repulsion and excitement/hope have been
aroused; so one is diligent in one’s work towards virtue in order to avoid the hell realms. In the second example, diligence comes directly after urgency. However, the concept of Avici Hell is aroused in the same stanza as diligence, once again establishing context. So we see here that the affective/cognitive dynamics allow for variation within the argumentative structure while maintaining the overall function.

**Skillful Means.** We have seen how within the process of developing zeal, elements that are derived from the Six Poisons are actually harnessed and turned against each other. The two most prominent examples of this that we have seen have to do with aversion and pride. Aversion to the hell realms was repeatedly used to motivate practitioners towards virtue, and a prideful and boisterous attitude was also repeatedly evoked as a proper disposition to hold while facing mental afflictions. Use of the mental afflictions in this way falls under the working title of Skillful Means, which translates down from a Sanskrit term *upaya*, a term which translates as ‘means’ or ‘device.’ The related Pali term *upaya-kosalla* is also used and is translated as ‘skill in means.’ This term generally refers to any method or means that effectively brings sentient beings closer to awakening. Often it is specifically used to refer to the ability of a teacher to tailor a teaching to a specific audience; to know the audience’s strengths and weaknesses and teach accordingly.  

An example of this method can be found in Śāntideva’s use of repulsion. Repulsion is related to hatred, the first poison. In both chapters repulsion from the hell realms is a vital element to the development of zeal. Without this sense of repulsion the young bodhisattva would not have the same motivation towards *bodhicitta*. Strong repulsion equals great effort towards virtue as a means of developing wisdom and compassion. By harnessing the force of that habit in a beneficial way Śāntideva provides the practitioner with a powerful tool to aid in transformation.

The second example of Skillful Means can be found in the masculine, heroic, and prideful connotation of *vīrya* that we have seen throughout both examples. This method is found throughout the text and is a vital part of transformation as the once harmful habit is now transformed into something through which merit may be attained. An ideal

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20 Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, 57.
portrayal of this is found in verse 43 of chapter six. In this verse, Śāntideva displays this customary bravado and speaks openly about the method of Skillful Means.

43. I shall be tenacious in this matter; and fixed on revenge, I shall wage war, except against those mental afflictions that are related to the elimination of mental afflictions.

Śāntideva speaks of passion and rancor, emotions that are often thought of as detrimental to the Buddhist path. However, here these affects are turned on the defilements and used as a means of progression. These strong affective states are used to give the practitioner the energy needed to face other afflictive states. He goes onto say in the second portion of the stanza that he will not wage war against the “mental afflictions that are related to the elimination of mental afflictions.” So it is clear that the emotion being used is ultimately defiled but can still be used in a positive fashion. This method of Skillful Means is found throughout the text and is a vital part of transformation as the once harmful habit is now transformed into something through which merit may be attained. It is clear that Śāntideva approaches the affects from a pragmatic standpoint, any affective experiences which can be harnessed for the development of bodhichitta are saved, while others are eliminated.

The Structure & Its Categories. Above I outlined the structure and content of Śāntideva’s pedagogy in regards to the development of zeal. It was shown that Śāntideva gives specific recommendations on how monks should meditate on various doctrinal concepts in order to arouse affective states that are in opposition of an afflictive urge. Such an approach can be broken down into an algebraic formula that more clearly portrays the categories that are being used. The following excerpt is a particularly clear example of the literary structure that Śāntideva uses throughout both examples.

84. After bringing to mind the anguish of hell and the like, neither a weapon, poison, fire, a precipice, nor enemies are comparable to sensual desires.
85. Fearing sensual desires in this way, one should generate delight in solitude and in deserted woodlands devoid of strife and annoyances.

Here, Śāntideva advocates bringing to mind the intense suffering experienced in the hell realms. The goal of this is to arouse fear of the sensual desires that lead to such a rebirth. In turn, this fear motivates the practitioner to delight in solitude and religious practice. We can see here a formulaic structure to Santideva’s exhortation: One contemplates concept A (the anguish of hell), in order to arouse affective state B (fear of sensual desires), which in turn causes the state of C (delight in solitude).

The first and most vague category in this structure is the vague category of “doctrinal concept.” This category can contain anything from concepts of the structure of the cosmos such as the various realms of samsāra, to more philosophical concepts such as emptiness or inter-dependent origination. The specific manifestation of this category that I will consider is the Buddhist conception of hell, which will be discussed in detail in the following pages. The second category is that of emotion or affective states. It is clear that Śāntideva is employing a distinction between conceptual experience and affective experience. He says, “bringing to mind the anguish of hell,” this “bringing to mind” is obviously different than experiencing the anguish of hell. That difference lies in the cognitive/affective forms of experience; one is thought while the other is felt. As seen above, the specific manifestations of this category are urgency, repulsion, fear, excitement/hope, enthusiasm or zeal.

**The Concept of Hell in the Madhyamaka**

We have seen that the concept of hell as used in practice is a relatively simple, often described merely as long and intense suffering due to one’s past deeds. The function of this description is to arouse affective experiences that assist the practitioner in overcoming sloth. In contrast to how it is used in practice, in what follows I will investigate the concept of hell as it is discussed in doctrine. As clearly demonstrated in chapter nine “The Perfection of Understanding,” Śāntideva was a proponent of the Madhyamaka school. Because of this, it is from the Madhyamaka perspective that I will
approach the relevant terms. In addition, I will give a brief description of the various hells and elucidate some of the minor points attributed to them.

**Karma and Rebirth.** The doctrine of karma is central to Buddhist philosophy. The term karma refers to the sum of a person’s actions, with a special emphasis on volitional actions. Such actions are categorized as good, bad, or neutral. These volitional actions exist within a complex system of causation in which volitional actions are the source of future states of being. The causal playing out of one’s karma is an impersonal universal force that ensures one will experience the fruition of past deeds. The universal law of karma demands that the actions one undertakes results in corresponding effects. The experience of these effects is ensured due to the process of rebirth. Not only does rebirth act as a continued opportunity for past actions to come to fruition, but the process of rebirth itself is driven by one’s karma. This process is described in detail in the doctrine of the twelve limbs of dependent arising. Through this process ignorance leads to volitional action which in turn provides the impetus and dictates the nature of one’s rebirth. If the law of karma demands that an individual experience the effects of past volitional actions, and one has accrued many negative actions, than there must exist states of being in which one experiences intense suffering as a manifestation of negative karma.

**Types of Hells.** Just has the law of karma necessitates the existence of hellish states, so to does it dictate the nature and duration of such a state. Early Buddhist literature is replete with lengthy and vivid descriptions of specific types of hells for specific types of offences. Buddhist cosmology cites the existence of eight hells. The diagram below lists these hells and the offences which lead to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hells Caused by Physical Crimes</th>
<th>Causes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Samjīva (Hell of Repetition)</td>
<td>killing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Kāla-Sūtra (Black-Rope Hell)</td>
<td>stealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Samghāta (Crowded Hell)</td>
<td>sexual indulgence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Raurava (Screaming Hell)</td>
<td>taking intoxicants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Hells Caused by Vocal Crimes**

(5) Mahā-raurava (Great Screaming Hell)    lying

**Hells Caused by Mental Crimes**
Rebirth in the lowest hell, Avici, is a result of the five sins that “have no intermediate” between the deed and rebirth in Avici. Those five sins are matricide, patricide, killing a perfected saint, wounding the Tathagata with evil intent, and creating schism in the sangha.\(^\text{22}\)

**The Nature of Suffering in Hell and the Possibility of Relief.** Buddhist literature is replete with vivid descriptions of the suffering of beings in the hell realms.

Greedily burning are they, terrible, flaming, hard to endure, hair-raising, fearful, terrifying, and evil…In the hell Sanjiva creatures hang with their feet up and their heads down, the while they are trimmed with axes and knives…Released from Sanjiva they plunge into Kukkula…there they run about as they burn and endure bitter sufferings…Released from Kukkula they plunge into Kunapa…and there asses, swarthy brutes with sharp swords in their mouths, rend their skin and devour and feed on their flesh and blood…\(^\text{23}\)

The description of the carnage and suffering of the hell realms continues for pages, making it abundantly clear the degree to which one will suffer as negative karma comes to fruition. However, the suffering in hell is not without rare moments of relief. Those suffering in the hell realms are not completely out of touch with the rest of *samsāra.* Auspicious occurrences, if of proper magnitude, can provide a brief respite from the torment. The most popular example of this type of occurrence can be found in the account of Siddhartha Gotama’s birth. “When the child was born all beings, including even those in Avici, became prosperous and happy…To-day no fires blaze in the thousand hells, nor do the dismal regions between the worlds know aught of affliction.”\(^\text{24}\)

\(^\text{21}\) This diagram was taken from *The Buddhist Conception of Hell,* by Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga, p. 80.


And again when the Buddha conquered Mara under the bodhi tree it is said that “The hells became tranquil everywhere in the Buddha-field; burning coals were cooled, and the denizens became happy. Those beings in hell who had worked out their hellish penalty of woe were forthwith reborn among the devas.”

Thus, the hells can be penetrated by spiritually advanced beings to the great relief of the inhabitants. And although the auspicious circumstances alone cannot free individuals from hell, it is clear that those who have exhausted the karmic sources of their suffering are in some way assisted with their rebirth through the Buddha’s meritorious actions.

The Ontological Status of the Hells. In reaction to what he felt was the extreme realist position of the Abhidharma, the founder of the Madhyamaka, Nagarjuna, stressed the notion of the lack of intrinsic permanent nature of phenomena. Nagarjuna stressed the idea that what we experience as real and permanently existing phenomena are in fact transitory states brought about through a mutually inter-dependent relationship between the subjectivity of the constructed individual and the equally impermanent “objects” that are sensed. Consistent with its approach to other cosmological and philosophical issues, the Madhyamaka approaches the question of the ontological status of the hells through the concepts of emptiness and inter-dependent origination. Candrakirti, a sixth century proponent of Madhyamaka, explicitly states that the hell realms are empty of any inherent existence and are simply impermanent constructs which manifest out of the conditions of particular karmic strands. This point is reaffirmed in The Bodhicaryavatara:

6. Since all fears and incomparable sufferings arise from the mind alone. So it was taught by the teacher of Reality.

7. Who fashioned the weapons in hell so industriously? Who the movement of scalding iron? And who sired those sirens?

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8. Every single thing arises from the evil mind, sang the Sage. So there is nothing dangerous in the three worlds other than the mind.”

The particular attribute which results in one’s mind producing the experience of a hell realm is one’s tendency towards desire for ultimate fulfillment in objects which are impermanent. “Give up even your small desire. Nay, be wholly without desire, and therefore freed. Abandon desire and greed to which the common herd are addicted. The wise man follow the right path and pass beyond the danger of hell.” In this sense, the hells, like all other phenomena, are devoid of any permanent, inherent existence. The experience will eventually come to a close once the karmic fuel which is the cause for the hellish state runs out. However, the length of time it takes for one to escape the hell realms once one has become ensnared is often substantial, as the following excerpt demonstrates.

A certain bhikkhu said this to the Blessed One: ‘How long, venerable sir, is the extent of life in the Paduma hell?’ ‘The extent of life in the Paduma hell, bhikku, is indeed long…Suppose, bhikku, there were a Kosalan cartload of twenty measures of sesame seed, and from that a man might take a single seed at the end of every century. That Kosalan cartload of twenty measures of sesame seed, bhikku, would more quickly be exhausted and used up in that way than a single Abbuda hell.’

This excerpt continues for some length describing how a twenty Abbuda hells is one Nirabbuda hell, and so on for another six hells. This example gives us an appreciation for monumental portions of time that are under consideration in the Buddhist conception of hell.

We see in this brief account of the Madhyamaka conception of hell the intricate interrelation of doctrinal concepts which leads to a complex conception of hell. In doctrine, hell is understood in the light of karma, rebirth, emptiness, and inter-dependent

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28 Wallace & Wallace, The Bodhicaryavatara, 34.
The questions posed at the beginning of this chapter were 1) how are emotions valued or disparaged and how are they thought to intersect with intellectual life and action? 2) what are the categories that Śāntideva using? 3) and finally what is the difference between a concept’s function in doctrine and its function in practice.

**A Pragmatic Approach to Affects.** In regards to the first question, an emotion’s value is dependent upon its ability to motivate the practitioner towards virtue, and hence towards bodhichitta. Śāntideva does not just make a set laundry list of positive and negative emotions. Rather, he employs a process of pragmatic categorization that takes into consideration the entire context of the practitioner’s personal situation. If the affect shows no potential to assist the practitioner in accumulating merit, then other corrective emotions are aroused in order to root out the afflictive state. The system of emotional value is dynamic and constantly changing to suit particular situations.

As for the question of how the tradition conceives of the relationship between one’s emotions and one’s intellectual life and actions; in both of the examples concepts give rise to affects which in-turn motivate a certain kind of behavior or beneficial inner state. In addition, the concepts used give direction to the affective motivation. This is not hard to see. Imagine there is someone who is listening to Śāntideva’s exposition on zeal who does not believe in hell, or rebirth, or the essential emptiness of phenomena. Such a person would not have the proper emotional reactions and hence would not develop the zeal which is necessary to foster virtue in its three forms of emotion, cognition, and behavior. Thus, without the proper emotional element no action would take place. However, if one were to randomly have the emotions that Śāntideva arouses, in the order he arouses them, without the proper concepts to make sense of the emotional experience, then after the string of emotions had passed the person would simply shrug.
off the experience and no transformation would take place. Hence, without the proper correlating concepts no action would take place and virtue would not be developed. It is clear that the three elements of emotion, intellect, and action are conceived of being interrelated in such a way that if they do not work in harmony within the practitioners as they contemplate Śāntideva’s teachings, the project will ultimately fail.

The Categories. Two general categories were found in the structure of Śāntideva’s pedagogy, the category of doctrinal concept, and the category of affective experience. Both are promising comparative categories due to their universality. Affective and conceptual experiences are common to all human creatures and the distinction is widely recognized. However, as already discussed in chapter one, the comparison of the specific manifestations of these categories is fraught with methodological pitfalls, and the debates surrounding comparison of both doctrinal concepts and affective experience are ongoing. The various problems around such comparison will be addressed in full in the final chapter.

The Process of Concept Simplification. As demonstrated in the brief account of the Buddhist conception of hell, there exists an intricate interrelation of various doctrinal concepts which leads to a complex conception of hell. In contrast to the complexity of the concept of hell found in doctrinal exhortations, the concept of hell as used in Śāntideva’s religious practices is far more simple. While it is true that all the complexity found in the doctrinal exhortations on hell may be implied in the practitioners understanding of hell, in a phenomenological sense the concept of hell as it is described and experienced in practice is far more simple. This is because the concept of hell in practice has a very different purpose and function than it holds in the doctrine proper. In the doctrine, the role of the concept of hell is to fit into and support through logical connections its surrounding doctrinal concepts, thus facilitating complexity. However, in practice hell has been stripped down into a simpler form. In this context, the experience of the concept of hell is simply the concept of long and intense suffering due to one’s past actions. This process of simplification is simply the result of the limitations of human psychology. The point of the meditation that Śāntideva espouses is to arouse an emotion in the practitioner that leads to the negation of an afflictive state. If one wishes to arouse the most powerful emotion possible one must focus solely on those aspects of hell which
are most affectively potent. If one were to sustain a vivid conception of this suffering, one would surely be deeply moved. Because of this, the previously complex notion of hell, with all its doctrinal attachments and implications, has been stripped down to the simple notion of long and intense suffering for one’s past misdeeds.
III: Nil Sorsky’s *The Ustav*

*Introduction*

**The Goal of The Ustav.** Nil begins the *Ustav* with the following excerpt:

The knowledge within these writings encompasses the following: what activity is proper for a monk to have, who wishes in truth to be saved in these times – that it is proper to act both mentally and sensibly, according to the Divine Writings and according to the lives of the holy fathers, as much as possible.\(^{31}\)

Although the *Ustav* is concerned with the “activity” of monks, it is not merely a series of rules and approbations that one must follow in order to attain salvation. Rather, it is a series of instructions on how to undergo various inner practices so that one may hold virtuous states of body, speech, and mind. Of these three aspects of the individual, the *Ustav* is most concerned with the mind. “Bodily activity is a mere leaf, while the inner, that is, the mental, is the fruit…Every tree…which does not bear good fruit’, that is, the guarding of the intellect, ‘shall be cut down and cast into the fire’.\(^{32}\) If one is to be saved he must maintain a certain level of inner virtue. The *Ustav* gives explicit instructions on how to cultivate the proper inner dispositions.

**The Questions.** As in chapter two, I will focus here on answering three questions: 1) how are affects valued or disparaged and how are they thought to intersect with intellectual life and action? 2) what are the categories that Nil is using? 3) and finally, what is the difference between a concept’s function in doctrine and its function in practice? Once again, I will focus on examples of Nil’s use of the concept of hell to answer the above questions. If it is shown that the same categories that were found in Śāntideva’s work are found in the *Ustav*, then they can be used as legitimate comparative categories.

**The Logismoi & the Passions.** Before looking at Nil’s use of the concept of hell, it is worthwhile to discuss his wider understanding of human psychology and the particular problems it poses for the development of virtue. Nil’s central concern is the

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32 Ibid., 127.
misleading effects of the *logismoi* and the passions to which they lead. The best way to understand the terms *logismoi* and “passions” is to understand Nil’s conception of the psychological process in which they are situated. This process involves five steps. The first step is the *logismos* itself and is also referred to as the Assault. The Assault is the *logismos*, “a simple urge or image of something encountered newly manifested, conveyed into the heart and manifesting itself to the intellect.”

The source of the Assault is described by Gregory the Sinaite, “The assault is a recollection arising from the Enemy, saying, ‘Do this or that’…” This initial thought and impulse towards some ungodly purpose is not in itself sinful because it comes from outside of the monk; the devil will tempt, that is not the fault of the monk. The second step is called Coupling and “is to converse with what has appeared, in passion or dispassionately, that is, welcoming the urge coming from the Enemy – in other words, a meditation or conversation with it of our own free choice.”

In Coupling the monk becomes morally accountable. At this point the temptation, idea, or urge has not merely been caused to appear by Satan, but has been consciously held in consideration by the monk. This consideration comes from the monk and hence the monk is accountable. The third step on the road to passion is the stage of Consent, or the “voluptuous nod.” This nod is a conscious agreement with the urge that has been presented. The level of accountability of this stage is relative to the state of the ascetic. If one is far along on the path to holiness and, for lack of better words, “knows better,” such an individual is accountable for the sin of Consent. However, if a novice monk should find himself in a state of Consent, and if that monk quickly repents and prays to God for forgiveness, such an individual is quickly forgiven. The key to accountability at all stages is the amount of effort put forth by the monk. Nil’s citation of Gregory the Sinaite clearly addresses the issue of effort and accountability.

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33 The difficulty of the affect/cognitive distinction is already apparent. Nil describes it as an “urge or image,” thus it seems that the *logismos* is both affective and cognitive. However, it seems that what Nil is describing is in fact a two part process in which the two elements of the experience are temporally very near to each other. To be more specific, it seems that what would come first is an *idea* followed quickly by the feeling of desire. I base this interpretation on two facts. First, it would seem odd to say that one has an urge *before* one knows what the urge is towards. Most of the time we know what it is we want. Secondly, as will be shown shortly, Nil’s advice on how to deal with the *logismoi* implies a causal relationship in which a thought comes first and an affective experience follows.


35 Ibid., 133.
And what consent means here, said this saint, is: anyone who willingly accepts the urges of the Enemy, conversing and interacting with them, is defeated by them, and no longer wages war against the passions, but firmly agrees within himself to commit the sin; or if he has sought to effect the deed what he has already agreed to in his thought, but has been thwarted by the time or place or any other cause. And this is most grave and is classed as penitential.\[36\]

Consent is the vital element of culpability. It is through battling the passions that one makes the inner life holy. No sooner has the monk set down his weapons than the inner life becomes loathsome and blameworthy. The fourth stage is Captivation which is described as “Violent and involuntary abduction of the heart’ [which] occurs when the intellect is taken captive by urges, that is, forcibly abducted to wicked thoughts, being unwilling.”\[37\] Captivation occurs when one is suddenly overwhelmed by unholy thoughts and urges. Nil claims that this often occurs because of idle conversation and clamor. Generally speaking, it seems to be the result of a lack of mindfulness, a state in which one’s thoughts easily wander. This offence is judged differently depending upon when it happens, i.e. during prayer, during neutral time, etcetera. Finally, we come to Passion, which occurs when an urge has become engrained in the soul, a habit born from “much meditation and imagining.” Whereas the four earlier stages are preliminary flirtations with wicked urges, passions are more constant and deeply rooted. Again, this comes from Satan, it “happens when the Enemy frequently presents a passionate thing to a man and inflames him to love it.”\[38\] However, even though passions come from Satan, a monk is still accountable because urges can only become passions through the carelessness of the monk. This carelessness has consequences, Sorsky says, “in all cases this is liable either to a measured penance or to a future torment.”\[39\] If one’s sins are not corrected through penance they will lead to damnation. At the end of Nil’s discussion of the five stages he states that it is vital that one “zealously oppose it [Passion].” But how is one to do this? It is through exploring Nil’s answer to this question that we can come to understand both the role of the affects and concept of hell in Eastern Orthodox monasticism.

\[37\] Ibid., 134.
\[38\] Ibid., 136.
\[39\] Ibid., 136.
The Three Methods. Nil cites three different methods for combating the passions: prayer, contradiction, and scorn. The third method of scorn is reserved only for the most advanced monks. This method is exactly what the title implies, the seasoned monk simply scorns and shrugs off the *logismoi*. One notices them arise and can quickly see them for what they are, temptations that, if indulged, will lead to a separation from God. Seeing this clearly, the advanced monk can turn away from the Assault with little difficulty. This approach is not spoken of in any detail in the *Ustav*, and hence provides us with little insight into the interplay of emotion and cognition in the practices of the monks. Because of this, I will not be dealing with this method in any detail.

The second method of contradiction presents the most detailed account of both the role of affect as well as the concept of hell and will be the main focus of this paper. However, Nil’s discussion of the first method of prayer also sheds light on how he views affective experience and bears mentioning. Nil advises one to begin the struggle against the *logismoi* by bringing about stillness through constant prayer, “we first…endeavor to diminish the passions, that is, to preserve the heart from wicked urges, and thereby fulfill the commands, and with the guarding of the heart, we always have prayer. This is the first stage of monastic growth, and otherwise it is impossible to diminish the passions.”

Although we are not going to get into hesychasm proper, what is interesting about this point is its denial of any affective state. Nil says,

\[\text{struggle to render the intellect deaf and mute at the time of prayer...hold the heart in stillness away from every urge, even if it nonetheless appear good...upon dispassionate urges the passionate follow...it is proper to be silent in thought, even regarding urges considered right, and always gaze into the depths of our hearts, saying: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me'}\]

We see here that one function of constant prayer is to provide an object of focus that takes up the whole of one’s attention in such a manner that no thought or urge can enter. Even good thoughts and urges are discouraged as they open the door for other, less admirable thoughts and impulses. In this first stage we see the role of dispassion that was

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41 Ibid., 138.
mentioned in the first chapter. However, dispassion is not adopted simply because it is thought that all affect is negative, rather, dispassion is adopted because at this point the practitioner’s intellect, watchfulness, and will-power are so weak that the good affects will be disturbing enough to allow negative urges to enter. Dispassion is a pragmatic tool, not an overall philosophy.

Although dispassion is recommended for those just beginning to battle the *logismoi*, those who are more advanced can make use of the second method of combat. Nil’s extensive treatment of this method gives us invaluable insight into the inner life of a mid-level monk’s emotional and intellectual life. This second method of contradicting the passions employs a conscious use of concepts that arouse affects that contradict the afflictive passions. Or, as Nil put more simply, one “introduces good urges against the wicked.” Exactly how this is done will be demonstrated by an analysis of Nil’s description of various inner practices.

The Function of the Concept of Hell in Practice

The Fickle Mind. One chapter that stands out as a particularly clear example of both the method of combat and Nil’s use of the concept of hell is chapter seven “On Remembrance of Death and the Terrible Judgment: How to Learn about Them, So That We Possess These Urges in Our Hearts.” He begins this chapter by commenting on how difficult it is to constantly remember the coming judgment.

But flight of the mind and darkened oblivion do not give us leave to remain and meditate within these things. Often ruminating about them and conversing amongst each other about death, we are unable to implant and affirm these words in our hearts. However, on this account we shall not be pusillanimous nor abandon this activity, because God’s help, labor and time, we shall enter into it.42

Here, Nil is acknowledging the fickleness of the mind and the difficulty of keeping it focused on one idea for any extended period of time. Despite the difficulty of the task, he maintains that with proper effort and God’s grace one can succeed at keeping death at the forefront of one’s awareness. Nil then moves on to describe a series of practices a monk

can use to remember death and judgment. The final goal of this series of practices is to arouse remorse for one’s sins and to undertake the act of confession.

**First Element: Remembrance of the Deaths of Others.** The first meditation that Nil recommends is for one to recall the deaths of those we have lived with. In particular, he recommends that one ponder those who have undergone sudden and unexpected deaths.

And I also reckon it beneficial for us to recall to memory the various deaths, seen or heard of, which took place in our times. For many, not only laymen, but also monks, who lived in prosperity and loved the life of this age, having hopes of longevity and having not yet reached old age, were suddenly harvested by death. And among them some could not make any response in that hour of death, but were snatched straightaway as they were sitting or standing; and some expired while eating and drinking; others suddenly died en route and yet others lying in their beds, having intended to rest their bodies by this brief and temporary sleep, and thus fell into eternal sleep.  

Nil recommends that one consider a number of everyday activities people have been engaged in when they died. The goal of this is apparent, by focusing on the fact that others have been involved in the very same activities that one is presently involved in, and have died suddenly, one is struck by the nearness of death. By bringing death close, this meditation arouses in the practitioner a sense of urgency; it is not safe to procrastinate on the project of preparing for death. This urgency is especially acute as one can only work towards salvation while one is alive, after death it is too late. As Symeon the New Theologian observed, “after death there begins a state of inaction, when nobody can do anything, good or evil. Thus, one will remain as one was at the end of one’s earthly life.”

Now is the only time one has to ensure a good afterlife, and death can come soon, so one must act now.

**Second Element: Impermanence of Worldly Things.** After arousing a sense of urgency through the idea of the nearness of death, Nil recommends pondering the impermanence of worldly things.

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And bringing all of these to our memory, let us ponder: where are our friends and acquaintances, and what has any of them gained by it, if he was honored and famous and authoritative in this world, or possessed riches or abundant bodily nourishment? Have not all of these come to corruption, stench, and dust?

What food of life does not become a partaker of sadness? Or what glory survives immutable in this world? But all are weaker than a shadow, all more deceptive than a dream, and in one hour death lays hold of all of this…The wealth of this life will not precede us there, nor will the glory of this age accompany us, but when death comes, it will corrupt all this…This life, smoke, dust, ash, that appears for a moment and suddenly perishes.  

In the above passages Nil gives descriptions of the ephemeral nature of worldly things that a practitioner should contemplate. This transitory nature is painted in a negative light, described as a deceptive dream, nothing more than a shadow. All worldly things are eventually corrupted by death and turned into smoke, ash, and dust and any happiness based on them will fade. If death is near, it is useless to try and hide behind any worldly pursuits as all such things are subject to decay. The intent of this description is to arouse a sense of distaste and repulsion from worldly gains and concerns.


And what shall we then do, if before that time we have not been concerned, have not schooled ourselves in this, and are found unready? And in that bitter hour we shall understand how great a struggle a soul has, when it is separating from the body. Alas, how much it then suffers, and there is no one who takes pity on it. It raises the eyes to angels and prays to no avail. It extends the hands toward men and has no one helping it.

The above excerpt conveys the importance of taking advantage of one’s life to pursue spiritual advancement. The process of death is described as one of suffering and struggle. If one is not ready for the stresses of death, one will not know how to handle the dramatic transition. Furthermore, people who have not pursued the religious life are left bereft of the help of angels or the help of man, and they must face this struggle and confusion on their own. Pondering this point, one is filled with a great fear of facing death unprepared.

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45 Goldfrank, Nil Sorsky: The Authentic Writings, 194.
46 Ibid., 195.
Fourth Element: The Final Judgment & Hell. Now that one has thought over the experience of death itself, Nil next recommends pondering the Final Judgment and the experience of hell.

And thus let us take within our intellect the second coming of the Lord and our resurrection and the terrible judgment...To those on his left hand he shall say: “Depart from me, cursed ones, into the everlasting fire,” and these shall fall into everlasting torment.

And what, brothers, is more bitter and gruesome than that terrible and dread accounting and the spectacle of seeing all those who sinned and did not repent sent to eternal torment by the righteous judgment of God, and savagely trembling and crying out and weeping to no avail? How can we not wail and cry, when we take within our intellect those terrible and gruesome torments, which, Scripture calls ‘eternal fire’, ‘the outer darkness’, ‘the deep chasm’, ‘the gruesome sleepless worm’, ‘the gnashing of teeth’ and all other sufferings, awaiting those who have sinned greatly and evilly have angered the most gracious God with their wicked ways, among whom I, the wretched one, am foremost?

Therefore, let us fear and be horrified and take this within our intellect, even if the heart is unwilling. Let us compel it to contemplate this, and let us speak to our soul.  

We see here that both the experience of the Final Judgment and the experience of hell are terrible and terrifying. Nil describes the spectacle of seeing the unrepentant cast down into hell. The actual description of hell here is relatively simple. Nil describes hell as a place of eternal suffering one inhabits due to a lack of repentance. This punishment is said to be just and demanded “by the righteous judgment of God.” Nil explicitly states the intention of this vivid description of the final judgment and the sufferings of hell. The goal of such contemplations is to arouse fear and horror in the practitioner. This strong emotional reaction in turn motivates one to take up action to redeem one’s soul. The specific way of doing this is discussed in the fifth and final element.

Fifth Element: Goodness (Remorse and Confession). Up until this point Nil’s pedagogy has focused on using the concepts of death, pain, loss, the Final Judgment and hell to instill in the practitioner distaste for worldly things and fear of death and suffering.

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Although his teaching has dealt mainly with negative emotions, it is not simple fear mongering. Rather, Nil has shown the monk how to establish the proper motivations away from that which will lead to damnation. Now that one is properly motivated away from danger, he uses the final stanzas of the chapter to demonstrate what one should be drawn towards and how to develop that disposition. He begins this process speaking in generalities.

only the good deeds with God [can help one after death]. Thus understanding our brief life, let us be concerned about that hour of death, not giving ourselves to the tumult of this world and in its useless concerns. Hence soul, while you have time, draw away from shameful deeds, take up the good life, hurry, anticipate, and cry out with faith.\(^{48}\)

Being averse to facing death unprepared, worldly concerns, and hell, good deeds are now given as a way to avoid such negative experiences. The particular good that Nil emphasizes next is the experience of remorse for one’s sins and the act of confession and repentance. He describes this experience in the following stanza.

Lord, I have sinned vilely before you, but I know your clemency, Lover of Man: therefore I fall and pray to your goodness, that your mercy come upon me, Master, as my soul is troubled and pained over its departure out of my wretched body…Be merciful to me, Master, so that my soul not behold the dark gaze of wicked demons, but that your radiant angels take it….For I am contemplating your terrible tribunal, Most Gracious One, and, Indicted by my conscience, I quail and fear judgment day, and am in great sorrow for my wicked deeds.\(^{49}\)

Here, we see the summation and culmination of the series of meditations that Nil advocates. The practitioner is frightened by what waits in store due to past sins. Seeing this and knowing that virtue in thought and deed can assist in one’s salvation, one feels remorse and proceeds to confess and lament past misdeeds. The elements of Nil’s pedagogy in this chapter are portrayed in the table below.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 200-201.
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<tr>
<th>Elements of Pedagogy</th>
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<td>Imminence of Death</td>
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<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Element</td>
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<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Element</td>
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**The Value and Function of the Affects.** The above consideration of Nil’s pedagogy has helped to answer the two questions cited earlier. First, how are emotions (in this case the more general “affects”) valued or disparaged? We have seen that affective states are valued according to their ability to combat the *logismoi* and the development of passion. If one cannot engage the affects in this way they are to be avoided. The second question under consideration is how a tradition perceives the connection between thought, affect, and behavior. As implied by the second method of combat, thought is seen as eliciting affect, which in turn motivates behavior. Because of this connection, one can manipulate one’s felt states through focused concentration on various concepts.

**The Structure & Its Categories.** The above discussion helps identify the categories that Nil is employing. It was shown that Nil gives specific recommendations on how monks should contemplate various doctrinal concepts in order to arouse affective states that are in opposition of an afflictive urge. Again, such an approach can be broken down into an algebraic formula that more clearly portrays the categories that are being used. The following excerpt was cited earlier and will be used here as a particularly clear example of the literary structure that Nil uses.

> for I am contemplating your terrible tribunal, Most Gracious One, and, indicted by my conscience, I quail and fear judgment day, and am in great sorrow for my wicked deeds.\(^{50}\)

Here, Nil advocates bringing to mind the terrible nature of the Final Judgment in order to arouse fear. The goal of this is to be remorseful for past sins. And as seen in the example

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\(^{50}\) Goldfrank, *Nil Sorsky: The Authentic Writings*, 201.
above, this remorse leads to confession, forgiveness, and salvation. We can see here a formulaic structure to Nil’s exhortation: One contemplates concept A (the terrible Final Judgment and hell), in order to arouse affective state B (fear), which in turn causes the state of C (remorse for past sins and confession).

The first and most vague category in this structure is the vague category of “doctrinal concept.” The specific manifestation of this category that I will consider is the Eastern Orthodox conception of the Final Judgment and hell, which will be discussed in detail in the following pages. The second category is that of emotion or affective states. Like Śāntideva, Nil recognizes a distinction between conceptual experience and affective experience. He says, “I am contemplating your terrible tribunal...[I] quail and fear judgment day,” this “contemplating” is something very different from the experience of “quailing” and “fearing.” That difference lies in the cognitive/affective forms of experience; one is thought while the other is felt. As seen above, the specific manifestations of this category are urgency, repulsion, concern, fear, hope and remorse. The particular affective specification that I will later focus on in the last chapter is fear.

**The Doctrine of Hell in Eastern Orthodoxy**

**Nature of Judgment.** There are two different accounts in Eastern Orthodoxy of the nature of the Final Judgment. On one hand, judgment is seen as being actively meted out by God, as seen in this excerpt from St. Gregory Palamas:

Yet God is also a jealous God (Exod. 20:5), a just judge who takes terrible vengeance on those who dishonor Him, who disobey Him and who scorn His commandments, visiting them with eternal chastisement, unquenchable fire, unceasing pain, inconsolable affliction, a cloak of lugubrious darkness, an obscure and grievous region, piteous gnashing of teeth, venomous sleepless worms – things He prepared for that first evil apostate together with all those deluded by him who became his followers, rejecting their Creator in their actions, words and thoughts.\(^5\)

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It is clear from the above excerpt that God is viewed as actively judging and inflicting punishment upon sinners. However, another interpretation can be found within the tradition. This alternate view states that one should not understand the process of judgment as one will (God’s) imposing a sentence on another will (the individual). Rather, judgment is an internal process born out of the individual’s conscience. St. Ephrem the Syrian discusses this distinction in “Letter to Publius,”

That hidden judge who dwells in the discerning mind has spoken and there has become for them the judge of righteousness…Perhaps, it is this that separates them and sends each of them to the place suitable for him. And perhaps, it is this that silently accuses them and quietly pronounces judgment upon them. In this matter, I believe the inner mind has been made judge and law, for it is the embodiment of the figure of the law and itself is the figure of the Lord of the law.52

We see here a portrayal of the process of judgment not as one will imposed on another, but rather the natural playing-out of the law which is embodied in the individual’s soul. One’s past deeds testify to one’s relationship with God which dictates the nature of one’s post-Final Judgment experience.

**Nature of Suffering in Hell.** Just as there are two interpretations of the nature of the Final Judgment, so too are there multiple conceptions of the nature of suffering in hell. The first kind of torments that one suffers is punishment at the hands of demons. In the literature there are few descriptions of demons actually inflicting pain on souls in hell. Far more common are descriptions of demons inflicting pain and causing trouble for people on earth. Such accounts are common in the New Testament, most commonly they appear in conjunction with stories of exorcism. However, it seems implied that such harassment will continue after one dies and goes to hell. In his discussion of hell St. Anthony the Great describes how our sins “expose us to the demons who punish us.”53

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And St. Theophan the Recluse states that “The righteous will go into eternal life, but the satanized sinners into eternal torments, in communion with demons.”

The second form of suffering comes through deprivation of access to God’s goodness.

I know that many are terrified only of gehenna; but I think that the deprivation of that glory (of the Kingdom of God) is a torment more cruel than gehenna…This deprivation of good things will cause such torment, such sorrow and oppression, that even if no punishment awaited those who sin here, it in itself (this deprivation) could torment and disturb our souls.

In the above passage St. John Chrysostom points out that suffering is an intrinsic property of the experience of hell, and not just something that happens due to the cruelty of demons. One necessarily suffers in hell because one is cut off from the source of all that is good. In this sense, even if the demons were to cease their incessant harassments, one would still be in a state of great sorrow and suffering.

In contrast to St. John Chrysostom’s conception of hellish suffering, Issac the Syrian states that “it would be improper for a man to think that sinners in Gehenna are deprived of the love of God. Love…is given to all. But the power of love works in two ways: it torments sinners, even as happens here when a friend suffers from a friend; but it becomes a source of joy for those who have observed its duties.” Here, Issac describes the nature of the suffering not as being cut off from God’s goodness, rather, it is due to the corruption of one’s inner nature that one experiences God’s goodness as suffering.

This point is echoed in the writings of Nikitas Stithatos:

Since the day of judgment will be one of fire, what each of us has done…will be tested by fire. Thus, if what we have built up is of an incorruptible nature, it will not be destroyed by fire…but it will be made radiant, totally purified…but if the work with which we have burdened ourselves consists of corruptible matter, it will be consumed and burnt up and we will be left destitute in the midst of the fire.

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54 Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, 351.
55 Ibid., 348.
The final form of suffering is the suffering born of knowing that one has denied God’s love. Issac the Syrian writes that, “Those who are punished in Gehenna are scouraged by the scourage of love. Nay, what is so bitter and vehement as the torment of love? I mean that those who have become conscious that they have sinned against love suffer greater torment from this than from any fear of punishment.” This form of suffering is closely related to the inner form described above. One suffers not out of outer affliction, but rather from the very knowledge that one has denied that which is the ultimate eternal good. This knowledge is ever present and a source of continual torment for the damned soul.

While it is clear that hell is a place of suffering, the degree to which one suffers is based upon the degree of one’s offences.

But for those who are blinded in mind, that is, for those who have become estranged from God, according to the degree of their present nearsightedness, there will be darkness.

Each will be requited according to his actions — virtuous of in a sinful manner. The degree or quality of the requital will accord with the state induced in which by either the passions or the virtues, and the differing effects these have had.

God is a perfectly just, this being the case one’s punishments must fit the offences. This conception of personalized punishments fits well with the above descriptions of the inner and relational aspects of the nature of suffering in hell. If one is tormented by knowledge of one’s denial of God’s goodness, then the greater one’s denial, the greater the remorse. Furthermore, if suffering is a product of one’s un-repentant sins being exposed to God’s love, then the more sins one has the greater one suffers.

The Duration of Suffering in Hell. After the death of the physical body, the immortal soul goes on to a place of blissfulness or a place of suffering according to the past deeds of the individual. However, the final state of one’s soul is not realized until after the Final Judgment. “The Fathers of the Church…suppose that the torments of the

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58 Cunningham, & Theokritoff, *The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christians Theology*, 114.
sinners before the Last Judgment have a preparatory character.” St. Gregory of Sinai echoes this assertion,

Scripture describes as ‘a dark and gloomy land, a land of eternal darkness’ (Job 10:21-22. LXX), where sinners dwell before the judgment and whither they return after judgment is given. For can the phrases, ‘Let sinners be returned to hell’ (Ps. 9:17. LXX), and ‘death will rule over them’ (Ps. 49:14 LXX), refer to anything other than the final judgment visited upon sinners, and their eternal condemnation?  

The difference between the state of the soul before the Final Judgment and after is that a soul who is suffering in hell before the Final Judgment may be effected by the prayers of those still living. Before the Final Judgment not only can one’s suffering can be lessened but one can still be saved. However, such salvation before the Final Judgment does not come about through any effort of the individual. One cannot put forth personal effort to escape hell because one is incapable of change after death. Rather, it is only through the prayers of others and God’s grace that one can be saved from eternal damnation.

Although it is possible that some may be saved from the torments of hell before the Final Judgment, the Eastern Orthodox tradition rejects the doctrine of apokatastasis, or universal salvation. This particular eschatology was espoused by Origen in the third century, but his position was rejected by both the council of Constantinople in 543 CE and the fifth ecumenical council in 553 CE. Other theologians have put forward various conceptions of apokatastasis, Isaac the Syrian and Gregory of Nyssa are two of the most notable. However, it seems clear from Nil’s writings that he was not an advocate of the view. He states, “We are strangers here and sojourners’, but over there is eternal life and everlasting living after death, either in the peace or in the torment, which God will give unto each according to his deeds.” However, even though it the notion that everyone will necessarily be saved was largely rejected, the question of whether everyone might potentially be saved remains open. This point is demonstrated in the following excerpts from Timothy Ware, now Bishop Kallistos.

61 Pomazansky, Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, 3rd Edition, 335.
63 Cunningham, & Theokritoff, The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christians Theology, 115.
64 Goldfrank, Nil Sorsky: The Authentic Writings, 114.
What exactly is the condition of souls in the period between death and the Resurrection of the Body at the Last Day? Here Orthodox teaching is not entirely clear...The majority would be inclined to say that the faithful departed do not suffer at all. Another school holds that perhaps they suffer, but if so, their suffering is of a purificatory but not an expiratory character. Yet a third group would prefer to leave the whole question entirely open: let us avoid detailed formulation about the life after death.\(^65\)

There is no terrorism in the Orthodox doctrine of God...several of the Fathers have none the less believed that in the end all will be reconciled to God. It is heretical to say that all *must* be saved, for this is to deny free will; but it is a legitimate hope that all *may* be saved. Until the Last Day come, we must not despair of anyone’s salvation, but must long and pray for the reconciliation of all without exception.\(^66\)

The above consideration of the Eastern Orthodox conception of hell reveals a complex concept born out of both scriptural descriptions and theological deductions. The nature of the judgment that precedes one going to hell is described both as an overt act of judging and condemning on the part of a perfectly just God, as well as a purely naturally occurring inner process in which one’s past deeds necessitate eternal suffering. The nature of that suffering is also described in a number of different ways: demons inflict gruesome punishments, one is tormented by the knowledge of one’s past denial of God’s goodness, and one is tormented by the continued alienation of one’s soul from said goodness. Furthermore, hell is viewed as having a pre- and post-Final Judgment status. Pre-Final Judgment a soul can still be saved through the prayers of those still living and the grace of God, however, post-Final Judgment hell is inescapable.

**Conclusion**

**A Pragmatic Approach to the Affects.** This chapter has shown that Nil takes a pragmatic approach to the affects. If they can be used to combat the *logismoi* then they are valuable and should be consciously engaged. However, if one is not skilled enough to control the affects then they should be disparaged and dispassion should be developed.

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\(^66\) Ibid., 262.
In this sense the affects are viewed as controllable through self-awareness and the process of focusing on various doctrinal concepts. Through this process of affective manipulation more desirable affective and behavioral states are developed.

**The Categories.** As in the work of Śāntideva, two general categories were found in the structure of Nil’s pedagogy, the category of doctrinal concept, and the category of affective experience. Because the same general categories are openly acknowledged in both texts they will provide a basis for comparison in chapter four that does not impose distorting modern western categories on the subject matter.

**The Process of Concept Simplification.** This brief account of the Eastern Orthodox conception of hell revealed a complex concept which is born out of the foundational texts of the tradition as well as theological and philosophical musings on the part of later scholars. However, this complexity was only overtly found in the practice of theologizing. In contrast to this portrayal of hell, the concept of hell as used in Nil’s religious practices is far more simple. Doctrinally, there are various conceptions of the nature of the judgment that one undergoes as well as the nature of the suffering that one experiences once one is in hell. In addition, the experience of hell is split into pre- and post-Final Judgment, with different possibilities for the salvation of the soul in each. While it is true that all the complexity found in the doctrinal exhortations on hell may be implied in the practitioners understanding of hell, phenomenologically speaking, the concept of hell as it is experienced in practice is far more simple. This distinction between the portrayal of hell in theologizing versus practice is due to the fact that the concept of hell has a very different function depending on the context. In the doctrine, the role of the concept of hell is to fit into and support through logical connections its surrounding doctrinal concepts, thus facilitating complexity. However, in practice hell has been stripped down into a simpler form. In this context, the experience of the concept of hell is simply the concept of long and intense suffering due to one’s past sins. The point of the meditation that Nil espouses is to arouse an emotion in the practitioner that leads to the negation of an afflictive state. Because of this one must focus solely on those aspects of hell which are most affectively potent. Hence, the previously complex notion of hell, with all its doctrinal attachments and implications, has been stripped down to the simple notion of long and intense suffering.
IV. The Comparison

The General Categories & Their Specifications. In chapters two and three it was shown that the same general categories are being employed in both the Ustav and The Bodhicaryavatara. First, we have the general category of a doctrinal concept. The specification of that category that is the focus of this thesis is the concept of hell. Secondly, there is the general category of affective experience, the specifications of this category that have been uncovered in the examples discussed are urgency, repulsion, hope, diligence, enthusiasm, concern, and fear. Given that the vague categories of doctrinal concepts and emotional experience are employed by both writers, it is fitting to use them as the basis of comparison as they are not simply contrivances taken from the paradigm of western scholarship. In addition, the specification of fear is explicitly used as a function of the contemplation of the specification of hell in both texts, thus making the causal process itself a suitable subject for comparative work.

With the native categories established, I will now conduct the comparison proper. Through first elucidating the way a concept is used in the practice of theology and philosophy, and then how it is used in the practice of moral development, I will be able to elucidate what kinds of alterations take place. After this has been done in each respective tradition, I will compare the process between the two texts to see if some wider conclusion can be drawn about the relationship between a concept’s function in doctrine and its function in practice, and whether or not this can account, at least in to some degree, to the same-yet-different phenomenon.

A Comparison of the Concept of Hell as Found in the Two Doctrines.

The Causes and Process of Going to Hell. In the Mahayana view, one is reborn in a hell realm due to one’s past misdeeds. Such misdeeds are a manifestation of a deeper problem, namely, the three poisons of ignorance, attraction, and aversion. States of body, speech, and mind that are characterized by the three poisons produce negative karma. Because of the unfailing function of karmic law, one cannot escape the consequences of one’s past actions through death, but rather one is reborn according to the moral quality of one’s past life. It is in this next life that one’s karma can continue to unfold. In this
sense, one is reborn into the hell realms through a playing-out of an impersonal natural law.

Just as the three poisons and the law of karma leads to the experience of hell in Buddhism, it is one’s conscious alienation from God and the dictates of God’s perfect justice which necessitates the existence of hell in Eastern Orthodoxy. However, unlike the singular account of how one ends up in hell found in the Mahayana tradition, two separate accounts of how one goes to hell can be found in the writings of the church fathers. The first account paints a picture of the Final Judgment as just that, a judgment made by God, a personal, perceiving, omniscient and omnibenevolent being. This being is viewed as perfectly just, so the sentences passed upon immortal souls are in perfect accord with their past deeds. The second account portrays the Final Judgment not as an active performance on the part of God, but rather the active assertion of one’s own conscience. The immortal soul is viewed as being made in the image of God. Thus, the law of justice and righteousness that characterizes God is imprinted on the human soul, and the soul will ultimately be held to the dictates inherent to its being.

Although both accounts of the Final Judgment do not fully correlate to the Mahayana account of why one goes to hell, it is clear that the first account contrasts more heavily than the second account. In Buddhism, there is no supreme being who in anyway passes judgment on individuals and dictates the nature of their coming life. However, the second account of the Final Judgment does present some aspects of the process that might coincide with the Buddhist account. The second account’s emphasis on the playing out of the “law” verses an active assertion of God’s judgment recalls the Buddhist notion of the playing out of karma. However, this is where the similarity stops. The “law” that the Church Fathers discuss in this context is embedded in an immortal soul by a personal creator. In Buddhism there is no immortal soul, nor is there any discussion of an all powerful creator who crafts the nature of the human creature.

At best, one can say that there is one minor parallel between these two traditions in regards to how one ends up in hell. However, even the one parallel discussed above is relatively obscure due to the fact that this topic was not treated in any systematic manner by the Church Fathers. The issue is presented more as a musing – a curious exploration
of the issue – rather than a comprehensive account. The Mahayana and Eastern Orthodox conception of why one goes to hell are distinct, with little if any substantial parallels.

The Nature of Suffering in Hell. The Buddhist conception of suffering in hell is informed by the concepts of ignorance, attraction, and aversion. Ignorance of the emptiness of all phenomena leads one to grasp at ephemeral experiences in a search for fulfillment and happiness. But because these situations are constructed they are bound to decay, thus leading to frustration, anger, and a host of other immoral states and actions. This process of ignorance, grasping, and frustration is amplified in the hell realms. In these realms one’s ignorance manifests as horrific scenes of suffering and torture both from the environment itself and from demons who actively met out punishments. Buddhist cosmology describes a number of different hells that beings can be reborn into depending upon their karma. All though the nature of the suffering in the various hells differs, they are all characterized by the intense suffering which one undergoes. However, because karma acts through an impersonal law, this suffering will always be exactly in proportion to one’s degree of ignorance and immorality.

Just as there are two interpretations of the nature of the Final Judgment in Eastern Orthodoxy, so too are there multiple conceptions of the nature of suffering in hell. The first kind of torments that one suffers is the punishments at the hands of demons. These demons are God’s fallen angels that now actively pursue souls in a bitter attempt at revenge and warfare against God’s plan of salvation. The second form of suffering comes through deprivation of access to God’s goodness. God is the source of all goodness and to be alienated from that source leaves the soul in darkness. In this sense, God is not responsible for the suffering a soul undergoes because God does not actively inflict any punishment. Rather, it is through one’s alienation that one experiences acute distress. A third and potentially conflicting account of suffering claims that suffering does not come from being cut off from God’s goodness; instead, it is due to the corruption of one’s inner nature that one experiences God’s goodness as suffering. God’s love shines on all, even those in hell. The only difference is that God’s love is perceived as pain for those who have highly corrupt souls, “it torments sinners, even as happens here when a friend suffers from a friend; but it becomes a source of joy for those who
The final form of suffering is the suffering born of knowing that one has denied God’s love. After the Final Judgment the remorse and guilt one feels at denying the source of goodness is never ending; one is left to lament one’s impudence for eternity.

The difference between these two conceptions of hellish suffering is substantial. All but the first account of suffering in the Eastern Orthodox tradition frames the problem of suffering in hell in relational terms; one suffers in hell because of the nature of one’s relationship with God. Again, the Buddhist tradition’s lack of an all powerful creator deity makes such a relational account of suffering untenable. However, there are two apparent parallels between the two traditions.

The first apparent parallel lies in the fact that both traditions describe hell beings that inflict horrendous torture on those who have fallen into this terrible state. However, the similarity is only skin deep as the nature of these demons greatly differs in each tradition. In Eastern Orthodoxy, the demons are former angels – immortal beings – that have turned against God’s will and will forever be subject to eternal torment. These beings actively try to thwart God’s plan of salvation for humans, and torture those who are damned. The nature of hell beings in Buddhism is somewhat less clear. One can ask: are such demons separate entities with karmic chains of their own? Or are they merely manifestations of the individuals mind which cease to exist as hell beings once the individual has moved on? Rupert Gethin’s (1997) discussion of this issue may shed some light on the question of the ontological status of hell beings in Buddhism. Gethin observes that the categories of “mythic symbol” and “literally true” are modern contrivances, and to impose them on the issue of hell beings is to convolute our understanding of how these beings were understood in the early Nikāya and Abhidharma traditions. Gethin claims that these traditions did not hold a strict separation between the psychological and the cosmological. In the Suttanipāta and Samyutta Nikāya, the armies of Māra are described in both psychological and cosmological terms. And in the early Abhidharma traditions, the distinction between types of existence (psychological or cosmological) is merely a difference of scale. Gethin observes, “What is involved in

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67 Cunningham & Theokritoff, The Cambridge Companion to Orthodox Christians Theology, 114.
moving from the psychological order (hierarchy of consciousness) to the cosmological order (hierarchy of beings) is essentially a shift in time scales. The mind (of certain beings) might range through the possible levels of consciousness in a relatively short period of time – possibly in moments. A being, in contrast, exists at a particular level in the cosmos for rather longer. In this sense, the distinction between existence and experience is far more fluid than the modern western conception. Rather than it being an either/or situation, hell beings were understood as both psychological and cosmological. Although much could be said about this issue, this short discussion has elucidated the substantial difference between how demons are portrayed in Eastern Orthodox and Buddhist literature.

The second parallel lies in the fact that both traditions claim that the suffering one undergoes will always be in proportion to one’s offences. However, this similarity is also rather shallow. Buddhist’s claim that the proportionality of suffering to one’s offences is a result of the natural function of an impersonal force. In contrast, the Eastern Orthodox tradition claims that the suffering will be perfectly just because God is a perfectly just and perfectly powerful being. So once again, the similarities prove to be largely superficial.

**The Possibility of Intervention or Salvation.** In Buddhism hell is not wholly isolated from the rest of *samsāra*. Auspicious events which happen in other realms can penetrate into a hell realm and give respite to those who are suffering. High level bodhisattvas can even choose to enter into the hell realms to assist others in working towards liberation. Furthermore, one’s experience of hell is necessarily finite. Although it is exceptionally difficult to do, those who are in hell can escape the torments through exhausting their negative karma or through rare moments where a being in hell exhibits a positive state of body, speech, or mind. One can escape in this manner because the hell realms do not exist objectively, but rather they are the result of one’s particular karmic situation. Once one’s karma has been exhausted, or once one has managed to counteract one’s negative karma through the cultivation of merit, then one will escape the hell realms.

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68 Rupert Gethin, “Cosmology and Meditation: From the Agganna-Sutta to the Mahayana.” *History of Religions* 36, No. 3 (February 1997), 195.
The Eastern Orthodox tradition splits hell into its pre- and post-Final Judgment statues. Before the Final Judgment one’s suffering can be lessened and one can still attain salvation. However, such salvation cannot be accomplished through any effort of the individual. After death one falls into a state of inaction and no further work towards salvation can be undertaken. Because of this, any alteration in the soul’s condition must come about through the prayers of those still living and by God’s grace. This potential for salvation ends with the Final Judgment. After this event no further intervention is possible and a soul is trapped forever in hell, completely cut off from God and other souls who have been saved.

The Buddhist conception of hell holds certain similarity with the pre-Final Judgment conception of hell espoused in Eastern Orthodoxy. In both cases an individual can be affected by the meritorious acts of others, and one can yet escape the hell realm. But as in the earlier cases, this is about as far as the similarities extend. In the Buddhist conception of hell one’s post-death good deeds can help one escape from hell, whereas in Eastern Orthodoxy one must rely on God and the prayers of others. Moving on to the post-Final Judgment conception of hell one finds a radical separation in how the two traditions view the issue of intervention and salvation. In Buddhism, intervention is possible, and salvation (at least escape from the hell realm) is assured because one only has so much karma to fuel the experience of hell. In contrast, post-Final Judgment hell is completely alienated from heaven and its inhabitants, and there is no longer any hope for salvation.

**Concluding Remarks on the Concept of Hell as Found in the Doctrines.** The above comparison of the concept of hell was admittedly only the briefest of accounts. Such a comparison in its fullest form could support a far more substantial research project. However, the comparison presented here was sufficient to make the theoretical points of this thesis. This modest comparison made clear that the concept of hell in each respective tradition is understood within the context of the wider doctrinal systems, and the few similarities that were identified were shown to be largely insubstantial.
Comparison of the Concept of Hell as Found in Practice

The Bodhicaryavatara. Returning to the examples used in chapter two, we can see the aspects of hell employed in Śāntideva’s moral pedagogy.

10. The memory of former sins will torture you;
The screams and din of hell break on your ears.
With very terror you will foul yourself;
What will you do then, in such extremity of fear?

11. And if you are so scared while still alive,
Like fishes writhing on the open ground,
What need to speak of pain unbearable
In hells created by past evil deeds?

12. The hells in which the boiling molten bronze
Will burn your body, tender like baby’s flesh-
All is now prepared, your former deeds have done it!
How can you lie back, so free of care?

This description of hell incorporates only two elements. First, the intensity of the suffering in hell is emphasized. Śāntideva cites “the screams and din of hell,” “pain unbearable” and “The hells in which the boiling molten bronze will burn you body.” The second element is the cause of this suffering, one’s past misdeeds. Again, Śāntideva says “The memory of former sins will torture you,” “hells created by past evil deeds,” and “your former deeds have done it!”

A third element can be found in the second example of chapter two.

21. One dwells in Avici Hell for an eon as a consequence of a vice committed in a single moment. What then can be said of a favorable state of existence, since sin has been accumulated since beginningless time?

25. The unendurable fire of hell will scorch my body for ages, and afterward the fire of remorse will torment my undisciplined mind for a long time.

Here, Śāntideva focuses on the duration of the suffering addressed in the earlier example. He speaks of one being reborn in Avici Hell – the deepest of the eight main hells – as the
result of a single vice. And further on he claims that “unendurable fire of hell will scorch my body for ages.”

The above example is the standard form for Śāntideva’s use of the concept of hell. As seen above, hell as described for the sake of religious practice is relatively simple, incorporating only three elements: (1) intense pain (2) of a long duration (3) experienced due to one’s past misdeeds.

Ustav. Turning again to the example of Nil’s pedagogy used in chapter three, one can see how hell is described in practice.

And thus let us take within our intellect the second coming of the Lord and our resurrection and the terrible judgment…To those on his left hand he shall say: “Depart from me, cursed ones, into the everlasting fire” And these shall fall into everlasting torment.

And what, brothers, is more bitter and gruesome than that terrible and dreadful accounting and the spectacle of seeing all those who sinned and did not repent sent to eternal torment by the righteous judgment of God, and savagely trembling and crying out and weeping to no avail? How can we not wail and cry, when we take within our intellect those terrible and gruesome torments, which, Scripture calls ‘eternal fire’, ‘the outer darkness’, ‘the deep chasm’, ‘the gruesome sleepless worm’, ‘the gnashing of teeth’ and all other sufferings, awaiting those who have sinned greatly and evilly have angered the most gracious God with their wicked ways, among whom I, the wretched one, am foremost?69

Again, this excerpt is standard for Nil, and here, as in Śāntideva’s work, we can see three main elements that make up the concept of hell. The first concerns the duration of the experience of hell. “Depart from me, cursed ones, into the everlasting fire.” And these shall fall into everlasting torment.” The experience of hell is permanent, once one has passed through the Judgment there is no hope for salvation. The second element is the degree of pain experienced in hell. Nil describes them as the “terrible and gruesome torments,” “eternal fire,” “the outer darkness,” “deep chasm,” “gruesome sleepless worm,” and “the gnashing of teeth.” The third and final element is the cause of one being trapped in such a place. Nil cites the reason for this fall into eternal torment as unrepented sins and one’s “wicked ways.” So again we see a relatively simple description of hell as it is used for religious practice. One final point is worth addressing. Nil does

69 Goldfrank, Nil Sorsky: The Authentic Writings, 197-198.
imply a fourth element, that of a deity who passes judgment. However, this idea is only briefly touched upon and not developed in any detailed manner, whereas the other three elements are the focus of the exhortation.

**Reflections on the Comparisons**

**The Process of Concept-Simplification.** As demonstrated above, there exists a process of concept-simplification that occurs as doctrinal concepts are modified for use in religious practice. The concept of hell in its fullest conceptual manifestation in each tradition is only minimally comparable, and those elements of the concept that appear to coincide are shown on closer inspection to do so in only the most cursory of ways. However, the concept as it is used in practice in each tradition is nearly identical. The only acknowledged difference being the duration of one’s experience of hell, and the vague mention of some kind of deity that plays a role in the individual’s decent into hell.

This process of concept-simplification provides at least a partial explanation for the prevalence of the same-yet-different phenomenon, or the déjà vu experience described by Smith. Doctrines vary widely as conceptual systems are prone to go any number of ways based on the scriptural sources and the process of theology and philosophy which develops the ideas found in those sources into wider systems of doctrine. Because of this, systems of doctrine will be a rich source of variety and difference between religious traditions. However, only a limited form of a particular concept is employed in religious practice. As discussed earlier, this simplification is a function of the limitations of human psychology. If the goal of the exhortation is to arouse emotion, then it would be far more effective to have the practitioner focus on only a few of the most emotionally laden elements of the concept. The resulting conceptual simplicity results in a greater likelihood of finding a similar concept through the process of cross-cultural research. We can begin to see one way in which religions can be so different while simultaneously being so similar; two traditions can be doctrinally distinct, yet for pragmatic purposes strip down the various doctrinal concepts until they are nearly indistinguishable. It is not simply that some concepts seem similar until more closely scrutinized at which time their subtle differences manifest. Rather, in the act of religious
philosophizing the respective tradition’s concepts really are different, while at the very same time the concepts used in practice really are the same.

**The Universality of Concept-Simplification.** Although this brief comparison has been limited in both its substantive and theoretical investigations, it nonetheless points us in the direction of a potential universal process in religion. Given the simplicity of the process of concept-simplification and the dictates of human psychology, it seems highly likely that this process would be found throughout many religious traditions. The notion that comparison can elucidate universals is still a subject which is out of vogue in the current study of comparative religion. However, it seems that this disparaging of universals is largely a reactionary impulse in response to the over ambitious claims made by early comparativists. Many of these comparativists made, psychological, linguistic, and sociological claims about “where religion comes from.” I agree with many critics that comparison geared toward such an ambitious question is an interesting but ultimately misguided endeavor. I believe this for two main reasons. First, as noted earlier, the larger the question the more general the categories one must employ. Given the compromising nature of over-zealous generalizations already discussed, it seems any such theory would be fraught with complications. Secondly, and most importantly, to make any such claim as to the “source” of religion smacks of scientism. The humanities are bound by evidence, and logic. Thus, by definition they cannot lay hold of and pass judgment on claims of transcension as the transcendent is exactly that which is said to supersede evidence, and logic. If a religion claims to have its ultimate origin in that which is transcendent, there is little a scholar in the humanities can say for or against it. Given these concerns it is understandable that universalist claims are held as suspect. However, my claim that the process of concept-simplification may in fact be universal is one that does not deal with such a harrowing topic as the “source of religion.” Rather, my claim deals with the question of how the description of various concepts change according to what end the religious individual’s action is directed, e.g. philosophizing or moral development. This is a much more modest and specific proposal that stays well within the interpretive practices of the humanities.

**The Comparability of the Affective Specification.** An important element of the comparison is the literary structure itself. In both texts the authors employ a literary
structure that describes a causal psychological process in which thought A arouses emotion B and results in a more desirable state or action C. This structure reveals to us how each concept is thought to be functionally related to the other. This is important for understanding how fear is understood in both of the texts. The cross-cultural study of emotion is fraught with pitfalls. Issues of naturalism vs. constructivism, translation, and interpretation make emotive studies particularly difficult. Although the goal of exploring the specifications is to elucidate their distinctive characteristics, in this case I will argue that the concept of “fear” that is employed in both texts really is the same. I make this claim based on the fact that “fear” holds the same position in the literary structure in both cases; fear is the emotional result of contemplating a horrific future and in-turn motivates what each tradition views as beneficial states of body, speech, and mind. Although there is some debate concerning universal emotions, it has been shown that every language has some word which corresponds to the English “fear.” This linguistic evidence reaffirms the common sense presumption that in general the initial reaction to potentially intense suffering is fear, no matter what the culture. Given the prevalence of this emotion and the context of the passages, it seems highly likely that the emotional states that are labeled as “fear” in each passage are identical.

A Return to Corrigan’s Questions. In chapter one I cited two questions posed by John Corrigan in the introduction of Religion and Emotion as being particularly important for the future study of religion and emotion. The first was “How is it [emotions] en-valued or disparaged?” And secondly, “How is it [emotion] thought to intersect with intellectual life and action?”

The preceding pages demonstrated that both traditions en-value emotions based on their ability to be consciously employed for the sake of developing virtue. In this sense, both texts are particularly utilitarian in their approach to the affects. The Buddhist tradition portrays active spiritual development as an inner battle between various cognitions and emotions. One must learn how to wield these weapons in such a manner that bodhicitta is given the opportunity to flourish.

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Like Śāntideva, Nil judges the value of various emotions based on their ability to overcome afflictive states. He recognizes the precarious nature of emotions and only recommends this kind of emotional engagement for those who have developed the proper level of awareness. Emotions are once again seen as powerful, but potentially hazardous, tools with which to spiritually develop.

The second question of how emotions are thought to intersect with intellectual life and action is answered by the literary structure itself. Recalling the tripartite literary structure, it is clear that in both traditions emotions were viewed as reactions to cognitive experience that in-turn motivate both physical behavior as well as help transform one’s inner disposition. It is this understanding of the relationship between various categories of experience that is the foundation for Śāntideva’s and Nil’s pedagogy.

Conclusion

A Return to the Post-Modern Critiques. I have used the Comparative Religious Ideas Project’s principles of comparison to avoid the pitfalls of the comparison and uncover the process of concept-simplification. First, I only used native categories in the comparison. Secondly, I explored the complexity of the specification of the “doctrinal concept” category by discussing the complexity and difference of Eastern Orthodox and Buddhist conceptions of hell. I also explored the specification “fear” in the vague concept of “emotion” and found not difference but identity.

At this point it would be beneficial to return to the six critiques of the comparative method to ensure that my brief project has not given any of them validation. As a reminder, they are as follows: 1) the comparative method finds only similarities among phenomena and ignores differences, 2) it confuses similarity with identity, 3) it generalizes too broadly, 4) it generalizes prematurely, 5) it takes phenomena out of context, 6) it relies on generalizations, which are ultimately distorting. First, my comparison did not ignore difference. Difference was found in abundance between Buddhist and Eastern Orthodox concept of hell. Secondly, while it is true that confusing similarity with identity can be a pitfall, when one discusses issues of function one can legitimately speak of identity between two phenomena. I claimed that the function of the concept of hell was the same in both cases, that is, it was used to arouse fear which in
turn motivated positive states and actions. Given that the authors themselves explicitly stated that this was the function of the concept hell that they intended, I do not feel it was by any means an interpretive stretch. In addition, just as the function of the concept of hell in practice can be identical across traditions, the process of concept-simplification can also be identical. So while we must be careful when claiming two separate doctrinal elements are identical due to their necessary complexity, it is well within our bounds to claim that functions as understood by the practitioners are identical when the practitioners within the respective traditions openly acknowledge said function. The third and fourth objections claim that comparison generalizes too broadly and prematurely. I have avoided these traps by focusing on a very specific phenomenon. In addition, my claim concerning the universal character of concept-simplification was qualified by the claim that further research was needed to substantiate the theory. As I have already addressed the problems with the sixth objection in chapter one, the last objection of concern here is the fifth which states that comparison takes the subject matter out of context. Again, I gave full consideration to both the doctrinal and functional context of the terms under consideration. I described the way the concept of hell was couched in its surrounding doctrinal structure, as well as the openly acknowledged function of the concept of hell in practice.

The fault of early comparativists ambition does not extend to comparison as a whole. As demonstrated above, modest comparative projects which work with native categories can shed light on the processes through which the same-yet-different phenomenon manifests. This “shedding of light” is not simply a scholar’s fiction. Rather, it reflects an actual process that can be said to be what is actually happening within the traditions under consideration. Only reestablishing the notion that comparison can tell us something real about the traditions we study can the question of “so what?” be answered. In the case above, the answer to the question of how the phenomenon of same-yet-different manifests is partially explained through the process of concept-simplification. This in turn helps us to more fully understand both the processes that go on between doctrine and practice within a religion, as well as the reason for the prevalence of the same-yet-different phenomenon. On a more existential level, the answer to “so what?” is simply the appeasement and satisfaction of that human impulse.
towards understanding the curious, and further appreciation of the complex phenomenon that we have come to call religion.
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