

Abstract

This work presents the question whether our nature is changeable and deserves changing in the ethical sense, on the contrast of Kant's moral philosophy with Buddhist thinking.

Kant's approach associates morality with pressure on desires (mainly speaking of inclinations – habitual sensuous desires) because it understands sensuality – where it places them – as given. Splitting a human being into reason (standing aside from causality) and sensuality is the cause why Kant's efforts to incorporate moral progress (towards “joyful fulfilling of one's duty”) into his system fail, unless it is to undergo a radical reconstruction.

However, the experience of craving shows its non-mechanical basis, the basis in understanding its object as of a value for us. The Buddhist account of non-self (similarly to Heidegger's thought that we at first understand ourselves wrongly as an entity that only occurs) problematises this understanding. The self-demarcation, which establishes craving means understanding oneself as an object, with which something can happen and which can have some attributes. But our experience of freedom shows, that our power to act is not a possibility of that sort. If we are able to recognize self-demarcation (selfishness) as a fallacy, it means that our nature is changeable. And because such seeing frees us from the burden of life (*dukkha*), it is the answer to the basic ethical question: “how to live”.