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Buddhism

Philosophically, the first prerequisite for a system of ethics, according to the Buddha, is the notion of free will, secondly the distinction between good and bad, and thirdly the notion of causation in relation to moral action. The third concept, as indicating the good and bad consequences of actions which can be morally assessed, is also related to a specifically Buddhist notion, survival after death.

Of these, the most crucial concept necessary for the evaluation of human action is the notion of kamma, based on the notion of moral causation. The Pali term kamma is used to refer to volitional acts which are expressed by thought, speech and bodily action. The oft quoted statement 'I call the motive to be the deed' provides a focus for the evaluation of human action from a moral point of view. Volitional acts which come within the purview of moral evaluation can be good, bad or neutral, and could also be of a mixed nature.

When we evaluate an action, we can look at its genesis. If the action has had as its roots greed, hatred and delusion, it is an unwholesome or bad action, and if it was generated by the opposite roots of liberality, compassionate love and wisdom, it is a good action. But we have also to see its consequences to others as well as to oneself, as they also play a part in moral evaluation.

From De Siva P – Buddhist Ethics in 'Great Ethical Traditions' from Part 2 of Singer P (ed) – *A Companion to Ethics* (Blackwell, 2001) p60-61

1. (a) Clarify the argument and/or interpretation in the passage. **(24)**

- (b) Do you agree with the idea(s) expressed? Justify your point of view and discuss its implications for understanding religion and human experience. **(16)**

(Total 40 marks)

TOTAL FOR PAPER 1C: 40 MARKS

Start your answer on page 3.



