

A Passionate Buddhist Life  
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In George Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, the title character offers advice to his desperate friend, Gwendolen, who suffers from debilitating moral guilt and a growing recognition of the depth of her own selfishness. Deronda encourages her to use her suffering to connect with others and to broaden her interests beyond the vicissitudes of her own life. He tells her, "It is the curse of your life – forgive me – of so many lives, that all passion is spent in that narrow round, for want of ideas and sympathies to make a larger home for it."<sup>1</sup>

This paper addresses the ways that we can "make a larger home" for our passions and how this project contributes to moral and spiritual development. To this end, I choose to think with two Tibetan Buddhist thinkers, both of whom take up the question of how passionate emotions can fit into spiritual and moral life: the famous, playful yogin Shabkar Tsodruk Rangdrol (1781-1851) and the wandering, charismatic master Patrul Rinpoche (1808-1887). Shabkar's *The Autobiography of Shabkar* provides excellent examples of using one's own passionate emotions to connect to others and gain insight into the world. Patrul Rinpoche's *The Words of My Perfect Teacher (kun bzang la ma'i zhal lung)* focuses on passionate empathy with the emotions of others.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on these texts, I present a (distinctly Buddhist) conception of a passionate life and argue that passionate emotional experience is a central part of moral and spiritual development more broadly construed.

Both Shabkar and Patrul Rinpoche describe moral and spiritual life in surprisingly passionate terms. It is surprising because it is often assumed that Buddhism promotes the ideals of dispassion and detachment. But Patrul Rinpoche's and Shabkar's understandings of emotional life runs counter to this stereotype: passionate emotional experience is not in itself a cause for

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<sup>1</sup> Eliot, George. (1876) *Daniel Deronda*. New York : Harper Brothers, Publishers. Vol 2. p.78

<sup>2</sup> *The Words of My Perfect Teacher (kun bzang la ma'i zhal lung)* is a recording of Jigme Gyalwai Nyugu's (Patrul's "perfect teacher") commentary on a classic revealed text entitled *The Heart-Essence of Vast Expanse (klong chen snying thig)*.

concern, and in fact is praiseworthy when it is directed in the right ways toward the right objects.

The assumption that Buddhism values dispassion as the central virtue is apparent in Joel Marks' (1995) defense of dispassion as an ethical ideal. All feelings, he argues, have affect, belief and desire components but he reserves the words "emotion" and "passion" for those feelings that have strong desire components. Dispassion, therefore, is the absence of passion (and its strong desires) rather than the absence of all affect whatsoever. Thus he can avoid the troublesome conclusion that the dispassionate life is one that is completely absent of all desire. Marks worries that such an ideal would be absurd, since without any desire whatsoever, human beings would have no basis for feeling or action. For this reason he thinks that the typical Buddhist admonitions against desire, from which he draws heavily, must be interpreted as being directed against *strong* desire. This is reflected in his Buddhist-inspired argument for the dispassionate ideal: "Suffering is bad. The singular cause of suffering is strong desire. Therefore, strong desire (i.e. passion or emotion) is bad."<sup>3</sup>

In the above argument, Marks presumably has in mind the Second Noble truth which states that there is a cause or origin of suffering. That cause is the attitude of clinging, grasping or fixation, often translated simply as "desire" or "craving."<sup>4</sup> As Marks himself notes, English translations of Buddhist texts rarely specify that *strong* desire (as opposed to simply desire) is the cause of suffering:

But is strong desire intended in the Buddhist usage? I think the answer must be Yes, for in this way Buddhist ethics is saved from absurdity. A total condemnation of desire would leave no basis for feeling and action, but these are necessary for life. Furthermore, it does seem plausible that suffering would result from, or be a form of, intensity of feeling and not just any degree of feeling.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Marks (1995) "Dispassion as an Ethical Ideal" in *Emotions in Asian Thought*. Albany: SUNY Press. p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> For example, "If this sticky, uncouth craving overcomes you in the world, your sorrows grow like wild grass after rain. If, in the world, you overcome this uncouth craving, hard to escape, sorrows roll off you, like water beads off a lotus." (*Dhammapada* 335-336); See also *Samyutta Nikaya* 27.8

<sup>5</sup> Marks (1995) p. 143

Marks, therefore, makes two claims: (1) Buddhist ethics condemns (or should condemn) strong or intense feelings and that (2) such condemnation is ethically appropriate.

I disagree with both claims. Given the diversity and dynamism of Buddhist philosophies and practices, it cannot be assumed that the condemnation of strong feelings is a basic or universal Buddhist position. As I will show, Patrul Rinpoche in no way suggests that all intense feelings should be avoided; on the contrary, he encourages cultivating them in some contexts. Furthermore, not only is dispassion (at least as Marks defines it) not a universal Buddhist ideal, it should not be an ethical ideal in general. By giving up all passionate emotional experience we lose important moral insights that can transform our understanding of ourselves, others, relationships, and the world.

I begin with a brief discussion of the passionate life as it is often conceived of in Western philosophy and literature, particularly in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and, more recently, Robert Solomon (§1). I juxtapose this life to what I claim is an example of a passionate Buddhist life, which includes understanding one's own passionate experiences (§2) and the empathizing passionately with at least some of the emotions of others (§3). Although empathy is central to many conceptions of moral life, such as Adam Smith's, I argue that Patrul Rinpoche's approach is unique with regard to the extent, intensity and passion of our empathic experience (§4). Nevertheless, the passionate life that Patrul Rinpoche and Shabkar describe is consistent with other core features of Buddhist teachings that they accept, such as the virtue of equanimity, the eradication of craving and aversion, and the general program to be liberated from suffering (§5). I conclude by arguing that passionate emotional experiences contribute to moral and spiritual development in three main ways: by contributing to psychological health and integrity, by providing motivation for altruistic action and by offering deep insight into ourselves, others and our relationships (§6).

§1 *What is a Passionate Life?*

My candle burns at both ends.  
It will not last the night.  
But, ah, my foes and, Oh, my friends,  
it gives a lovely light.  
- Edna St. Vincent Millay

Robert Solomon describes the passionate life as “a life defined by emotions, by impassioned engagement and belief, by one or more quests, grand projects, embracing affections...vaulting ambitions and essentially insatiable goals”<sup>6</sup> It is often associated with artistic sensibility and places a high value on beauty, originality and creative expression. One who lives such a life is not afraid to strive to achieve her grand goals, even if her attempts are ultimately futile, and does not shy away from feeling the misery of failure or the ecstatic joy of success. For the passionate person, these are signs of her power; they show that she is really living the fullest life she can.<sup>7</sup>

The passionate life is often defined in opposition to the dispassionate or tranquil life. Idealized by the Stoics (and it is often claimed by Buddhists), the dispassionate life values tranquility and peace of mind. The passionate life, on the other hand, values energy, enthusiasm and, as Solomon has noted, even frenzy.<sup>8</sup> Both the passionate life and the life of tranquility are responses to the vicissitudes of human life and elusiveness of long-lasting and reliable pleasure. Both reject the idea that chasing short-lived pleasurable feelings is the final end of life, which differentiates both lives from a hedonistic life. A defender of a life of dispassion solves the problem of the inherent suffering of human life by valuing peace of mind as the final end, which is attained by minimizing and eventually eradicating violent emotional ups and downs. By contrast, the passionate person plunges freely and gladly into the vicissitudes of everyday life. The passionate person, as Nietzsche

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<sup>6</sup> Solomon (2007) *True to Our Feelings*. New York : Oxford University Press. p. 86

<sup>7</sup> This kind of life is more commonly explored in novels, poems and autobiographies than in philosophical texts (with the notable exceptions of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard). Aristotle, for instance, does not include this life in his list of possible conceptions of the good human life (E.N. I.5). He includes the life of pleasure, the life of the moneymaker, the life of politics, the life of virtue and the life of contemplation.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon (1999) *The Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin versus the Passionate Life*. New York: Oxford. p.18.

has famously put it, says “Yes!” to life, with all its suffering, thus revaluing suffering itself.

The passionate life is also usually understood as distinct from the ordinary moral life (the life of being a good person). This may be in part because one of the most famous advocates of a passionate life in Western philosophy, Nietzsche, used this idea as part of his overall critique of morality. Solomon, who notes that the passionate life need not be immoral or even amoral, nevertheless locates an important difference between the two kinds of lives: the passionate life does not share the skepticism of violent emotions that is so pervasive in conceptions of the good life.<sup>9</sup> Even the moral sentiment theorists, such as David Hume and Adam Smith, who were perhaps the greatest (Western) proponents of emotions in moral life, tend to defend the so-called calm, gentle emotions, particularly sympathy. But the passionate life is not one that only appreciates the relatively calm or manageable emotions, but rather it honors strong and even violent emotions. In his discussion of Nietzsche’s “will to power,” which Solomon understands as a “general vision of the passionate life,” he claims that Nietzsche’s passionate life is

directed to self-mastery and self-expression. It embraces such particular passions as pride...It embodies anger and its aggressive kin...It includes joy, but mainly that energetic joy that comes with victory and strength, not the quiet and quietist “bliss” praised by Christians and Buddhists.<sup>10</sup>

As the above quotation suggests, a certain fascination with the self and self-expression – which is not mere “self-interest” – looms large in the passionate life, for both Nietzsche and Solomon. The joy experienced in the passionate life, which Solomon contrasts to the bliss of the Christian and Buddhist traditions, comes with person’s own triumphs and successes, especially with regard to her self-mastery and creative expression; the misery or depression a passionate person feels concerns her failures in these realms. The passionate person is driven to find creative expression for her own experiences that are original and, in some sense, beautiful. Unlike Nietzsche

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<sup>9</sup> See Solomon (2003) *Living with Nietzsche*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3, Solomon (1999) Chapter 1

<sup>10</sup> Solomon (2003) p. 88

who offers this life as an empowering and life-enhancing alternative to the “moral” life, Solomon prefers to expand the concept of virtue to incorporate at least some passionate experiences.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, although it contains an (at times) empowering intensity and depth of feeling, the passionate life is not a life of invulnerability. The passionate person, by definition, is vulnerable to unbearable misery as well as overwhelming joy. Unlike the ideal of dispassion, which often emphasizes attaining a fearless state in which nothing can harm us (think Epictetus), the passionate person can be deeply hurt. But the passionate person can (usually) recover because she also recognizes the possibility of great joy and has the fullness of spirit to forgive and, perhaps more importantly, forget.<sup>12</sup>

§2 *Dealing with Difficult Passions: The Story of Shabkar*

“Take the present suffering as a painful letting in of light”

- George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (79)

It has been widely assumed, by both critics and defenders of Buddhist thought, that a good Buddhist life is a quiet, dispassionate one.<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche famously criticized Buddhism (and other ascetic traditions) for what he assumed to be its dispassion, deprivation, and “desire for nothingness.”<sup>14</sup> Solomon claims that Buddhist thinkers (along with a host of other philosophers including Socrates, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, and Confucius) “have all been more or less staunch in their insistence that strong, violent emotion – the sort that is said to “sweep us away” – is at best untoward and often disastrous, even fatal.”<sup>15</sup> As we have seen, in his defense of the virtue of dispassion, Joel Marks assumes that Buddhism advocates a dispassionate life, which, on his view, is not affectless but lacks

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<sup>11</sup> Solomon (1999) Chapter 1. Solomon notes that not all passions can be virtues and that distinctions must be made between, for instance, passionate love and obsession.

<sup>12</sup> See Nietzsche's “Second Essay” in *Genealogy of Moral*

<sup>13</sup> See Marks (1995), Solomon (2003), Nietzsche GM I.6. For discussions of the more passionate side of Buddhist literature, see Maria Heim (2003) “The Aesthetics of Excess,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 71, No. 3, p. 531-554.

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche GM I.6

<sup>15</sup> Solomon (1999) p.18.

of strong, intense emotions.<sup>16</sup>

What Nietzsche, Solomon and Marks have in common is the assumption that dispassion is the central Buddhist virtue. This assumption is supported by some key features of Buddhist thought and practice: the focus on renunciation, the valorization of the hermit-saint meditating alone in a cave, the emphasis on equanimity and the general project to be liberated from suffering. I will argue, however, that a passionate Buddhist life is not a contradiction in terms. In fact, we can see examples of such lives in the spiritual autobiographies of some Tibetan Buddhist masters as well as in the writings of Patrul Rinpoche.

One such example is the life of the Tibetan yogin Shabkar (1781-1851). In many ways, Shabkar fits the stereotype of the Buddhist ascetic. According to his autobiography, which is largely a collection of songs that he composed, Shabkar spent most of his life wandering and meditating in caves and, as his fame and popularity grew, he retreated to increasingly secluded locations. To the dismay of his mother, he refused to marry and have children, claiming that marriage would tighten a “noose of samsara” around his neck. Shabkar left home as a young man to study meditation with a famous master, a plan that was only approved by his mother by telling her, falsely, that he would return in one year (he did not return until after her death). When his mother wrote letters begging him to come home, he urged her not to be upset and coolly pointed out that “there might be many children who benefit their parents in this life with food, clothes, and wealth. Yet how many parents have children staying in the mountains, practicing the holy Dharma for the benefit of their parents’ future lives?”<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, Shabkar’s life is not a model of emotional disengagement. On the contrary, he often expresses intense emotion. When his mother died, he deeply regretted not making a greater effort to see her. (Shabkar was on his way home when he heard that she died). We learn that the

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<sup>16</sup> Marks (1995) p.141

<sup>17</sup> Shabkar (Ricard, Mattieu, trans.). *The Autobiography of Shabkar*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.142

reason he did not visit his mother sooner was not because of emotional detachment but rather due to a mistaken perception (one that may be typical of children with regard to parents). He writes, "I still thought of my mother as being young, and thought that, even if I did not see her for a few years, she wouldn't die."<sup>18</sup> After his mother's death he describes himself as "disconsolate" and "overwhelmed" by the memory of his mother, which stung "like a knife in [his] heart." His sadness, he tells us, was "fathomless."<sup>19</sup>

There is nothing in his autobiography to suggest that Shabkar's outpouring of emotion was considered wrong, inappropriate or destructive. In fact, in the song he sings about his mother's death, he suggests that his grief gave him insight into impermanence:

Again, overwhelmed by the memory of my mother, I sang this song about her, weeping, in utter dismay:

Mother who first gave me life,  
Mother who fed me and clothed me  
Mother who allowed me to enter into the Dharma  
Mother who now teaches me impermanence:

Having died, you have turned into a handful of bones  
Your bones I have turned into tsa-tsas [ashes mixed with clay].  
These tsa-tsas I have hidden in a scree.  
Now even I can no longer see them.

In times to come, when I am wandering in distant places  
I shall never see you again, Mother.  
Not only will I never see you again, Mother,  
I won't even see the tsa-tsas of your bones.

Considering this, sorrow surges up from deep within me.  
Now I do not need to do "meditations on impermanence"  
My old mother, leaving me, gave me these teachings.<sup>20</sup>

This vignette shows the complexity of evaluating passionate emotional experiences and defining passionate living. On the one hand, Shabkar's ascetic and often solitary life hardly qualifies as an example of Solomon's (and Nietzsche's) conception of a passionate life. Yet, the depth and

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<sup>18</sup> Shabkar (1994, 201)

<sup>19</sup> Shabkar (1994, 201)

<sup>20</sup> Shabkar (1994, 203)



intensity of his emotional experience is not captured by the typical understanding of a quiet, dispassionate life. Furthermore, Shabkar does not treat his grief as a necessary evil, or even as an understandable human reaction, but rather as a way of understanding deeper truths, in this case the truth of impermanence. Although he feels his grief intensely and is, in a sense, overwhelmed by it, he still is able to use it as an opportunity for moral and spiritual growth. Shabkar's story challenges the idea that Buddhism forbids passionate emotional expression, even about oneself and one's own life; Shabkar has keen emotional responses to the events in his own life. But these passionate experiences of grief, anger, humiliation, envy, exhilaration, etc. are neither repressed nor glorified but rather taken as an opportunity to connect with others and learn about the nature of the world and human experience.

### *§3 Understanding Passionate Responses to Others: Patrul Rinpoche's Meditation*

Although the difficult passionate experiences of grief, anger, despair, etc. are experienced as an opportunity for insight and growth, they are not purposefully indulged or cultivated. Passionate feelings of love, compassion and sympathetic joy, on the other hand, are intentionally cultivated through relationships and empathic imaginative contemplations. These emotions, which are generally thought to be natural human emotions, are gradually developed to become more intense, more reliable, more frequent and more passionate.

Patrul Rinpoche's discussion of the Four Immeasurables (love (Tib: *byampa*), compassion (*snying rje*) sympathetic joy (*dga' ba*), and equanimity (*btang snyom*)) is notable for its advocacy of intense and passionate emotional experiences. He describes cultivating an “intense” love, an “unbearable” feeling of compassion, and a sympathetic joy that “knows no bounds.” Patrul Rinpoche often characterizes the experiences of the compassion, love and sympathetic joy as *ma bzod pa*, which literally means “intolerable” or “un-endurable.”

Patrul Rinpoche uses passionate language to describe the four immeasurable qualities and

intentionally invokes passionate emotions in his meditations on these qualities. In describing sympathetic joy, he writes,

The image given for boundless sympathetic joy is that of a mother camel finding her lost baby. Of all animals, camels are considered the most affectionate mothers. If a mother camel loses her baby her sorrow is correspondingly intense. But when she finds it again her joy knows no bounds. That is the kind of sympathetic joy you should try to develop.<sup>21</sup>

To feel boundless joy for others' success and happiness does not simply mean feeling happy about the happiness of everyone. The "boundless" here also refers to an inward boundlessness: for any particular person, we are to feel joy that *knows no bounds* (i.e. is boundless). His emphasis on inner boundlessness, which refers to the strength and depth of feeling, is what gives Patrul Rinpoche's discussion of the Four Immeasurables its passionate flavor. In his description of compassion, Patrul Rinpoche evokes an image designed to activate this "inner" boundlessness:

The image given for meditating on compassion is that of a mother with no arms, whose child is being swept away by a river. How unbearable the anguish of such a mother would be. Her love for her child is so intense, but as she cannot use her arms she cannot catch hold of him...Her heart breaking, she runs along after him, weeping.<sup>22</sup>

The meditation practices that Patrul Rinpoche recommends to cultivate the Four Immeasurables are designed to activate these intense emotional experiences. The depth and strength of feeling that Patrul Rinpoche's contemplations require are especially apparent in the following meditation on compassion:

Imagine a prisoner condemned to death by the ruler and being led to the place of execution, or a sheep being caught and tied up by the butcher. When you think of a condemned prisoner, instead of thinking of that suffering person as someone else, imagine that it is you. Ask yourself what you would do in that situation. What now? There is nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. No refuge and no one to protect you. You have no means of escape. You cannot fly away. You have no strength, no army to defend you. Now, at this very moment, all the perceptions of this life are about to cease. You will even have to leave behind your own dear body that you have sustained with so much care, and set out for the next life. What anguish! Train your mind by taking the suffering of that condemned prisoner upon yourself.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994). *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* (Padmakara Group, trans.) San Francisco: Harper Collins. p. 215

<sup>22</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994). p. 212-13,

<sup>23</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994), p.201-202

In another meditation for developing compassion, Patrul Rinpoche asks us to imagine the pain and the panic of a sheep about to be slaughtered. He even suggests covering one's mouth with one's hand in order to get a fuller, more visceral experience of that pain and panic.<sup>24</sup> For Patrul Rinpoche, compassion and sympathy are not, contra Hume, calm emotions. They are passionate ones.

Patrul Rinpoche's meditations on love and sympathetic joy, although not as gut wrenching as the meditations on compassion, are also characterized by intense feeling. When cultivating sympathetic joy, we are encouraged to "sincerely rejoice" in the successes of others, taking genuine delight in their "achievements and favorable circumstances." We "meditate from the depth of [our] heart" on how "truly glad we are that there are such excellent people, so successful and fortunate."<sup>25</sup> When meditating on boundless love, you should continue until "you want others to be happy just as intensely as you want to be happy yourself."<sup>26</sup>

As his choice of images and cultivation practices indicate, Patrul Rinpoche is asking us to go to the limits of our emotional capacity – and then go further. We develop "emotional muscle" to go deeper and deeper with practice. In fact, his meditations, particularly on compassion, may push us to (or beyond) our emotional limits. They leave little room for typical defense mechanisms against emotional experience, such as distancing oneself, conceiving the situation in an abstract or general way, or limiting oneself to feeling a "watered-down" or lukewarm version of the emotion. On Patrul Rinpoche's view, the emotional experiences of the Four Immeasurables are anything but dispassionate. He is surely not recommending shying away from intense and difficult emotional experience but rather is inviting us to engage more fully, more whole-heartedly, and to keep doing it as an ethical-spiritual practice.

Patrul Rinpoche's meditations encourage living a life that honors passion in many of the

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<sup>24</sup> In Tibet it was common to kill animals through suffocation.

<sup>25</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994), p.214

<sup>26</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994), p. 199

ways Solomon and even Nietzsche have advocated. It is an emotionally engaged life that not only values passionate emotions when they arise but is in fact committed to *cultivating* them in certain contexts. Contrary to the stereotype of Buddhist practice as an exercise in emotional detachment, Patrul Rinpoche uses these meditations, at least in part, to break habits of emotional distancing and indifference. In some ways, he even includes the grand projects and vaulting ambitions that are central to Solomon's account. He is, after all, advocating the cultivation of intense and genuine love, compassion and sympathetic joy to all sentient beings without exception, which is just about as vaulting an ambition as one could have.

The central difference between these two conceptions of passionate living is that, for Patrul Rinpoche, a passionate life *is* a moral life (although not the conventional life of "mores").<sup>27</sup> As we can see, there are strict moral boundaries to his valuation of passion; passionate compassion is praised, but not passionate anger or passionate envy. (In fact, Patrul Rinpoche urges: "Uproot that evil mentality that finds it unbearable that someone else should have such perfect plenty."<sup>28</sup>) As Shabkar's story illustrates, this does not imply that the so-called afflictive emotions such as envy and anger are repressed or denied. Rather, they are excellent opportunities for moral and spiritual growth.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, in general afflictive emotions are not to be indulged by seeking their validation or consciously re-triggering them. In other words, when afflictive emotions arise we must skillfully redirect the power inherent in them for better ends, but we do not intentionally cause them to arise or intentionally maintain them. For Patrul Rinpoche, the passionate experiences that we intentionally cultivate are more or less limited to love, compassion, sympathetic joy and their related emotions, such as gratitude, devotion and reverence. The motivation for distinguishing

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<sup>27</sup> In fact, Patrul Rinpoche is never shy to question social conventions that he thinks are not in accord with the Buddha's teaching, such as meat-eating, demon exorcism, the relationship of monks to benefactors (which he sees as "pandering") and the cruel, but common, treatment of pack animals and watchdogs.

<sup>28</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994) p.213. Given his pervasive criticism of resentment, Nietzsche would most likely agree with Patrul Rinpoche's condemnation of passionate envy. However, Patrul Rinpoche's insistence on limiting passionate experiences to the "good" emotions is at odds with Nietzsche's – and Solomon's (2007) – general approach.

<sup>29</sup> See Geshe Lobzang Tenzin's (1999) dissertation *Emotions in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*, Emory University, Chapter 4; see also Mingyur Rinpoche's *Joyful Wisdom* (2009).

between afflictive and positive emotions rests, in part, on the fact that afflictive emotions are characterized by attachment, which is undergirded by mistaken beliefs or assumptions about the world. Positive emotions, on the other hand, are characterized by non-attachment and are supported by moral insights. (This point will be discussed in more detail in §6).

Because of the other-regarding nature of love, compassion and sympathetic joy, their passionate expressions tend to be about or for others. Passionate responses to one's own triumphs and defeats can, like all experiences, be "taken on the path," but they are not cultivated. In fact, passionate reactions to our own successes and failures can often prohibit us from feeling passionately for others. Attention to this fact again distinguishes Patrul Rinpoche's conception of a passionate life from Nietzsche's, which holds self-mastery and personal power as the foundations of a passionate life.

#### *§4 Passion and Empathy*

Empathy, for Patrul Rinpoche, is one of the main vehicles for passionate emotional response. It is by considering others' happiness and suffering that we become "swept away," as Solomon puts it, by our emotions. Although Patrul Rinpoche does not use a word in Tibetan that could be translated as "empathy," he employs imaginative empathic processes – such as the ones described above as well as the common Tibetan Buddhist practice of "exchanging self and other" – that underlie cultivating love, compassion and sympathetic joy.<sup>30</sup> Following the conventions of Western scholarship on emotions, I distinguish empathy (the psychological phenomenon of taking on the feelings and perspectives of others) from compassion and sympathy, which employ empathy and add the extra value judgment that another's suffering is bad and her happiness is good. Empathy, as a value-neutral skill, may be used for good or evil purposes

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<sup>30</sup> The meditative process of exchanging self and other is a typical practice for developing the altruistic mind of enlightenment (bodhicitta). See Patrul Rinpoche (1994), p. 222-234 and Tsongkhapa's *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*.

(consider, for example, sadism). Patrul Rinpoche, however, is interested in how, by taking on the feelings and perspectives of others, we can develop positive emotions for them. I suspect that it is for that reason that the positive emotions, rather than a kind of value neutral empathy, are more explicitly discussed and theorized in his work. Nevertheless, empathizing with others is at the heart of the project of cultivating love and compassion for them. In fact, in Patrul Rinpoche's work it often seems like the main barrier to developing compassion and love is the failure of empathy, which he sees as motivated by the mistaken belief that "you" or "they" are, morally speaking, fundamentally different from (and inferior to) "me" or "us."

In contemporary Western ethics, empathy is also widely considered to be one of the main mechanisms by which we expand our sphere of moral concern beyond the egocentric.<sup>31</sup> Empathizing with, or "feeling with," another's emotional experience can take many different forms, such as affective responses to facial expressions and other cues and highly cognitive imaginative projection.<sup>32</sup> In Western philosophical ethics, Adam Smith was one of the greatest proponents of well-developed empathy in moral life. Although he uses the word "sympathy" ("empathy" has a more recent coinage), it is clear that, at least at times, he means empathy, and usually highly cognitive, imaginative empathy, much like the kind invoked in Patrul Rinpoche's contemplations.<sup>33</sup> He writes:

By the imagination we place ourselves in [another's] situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter, as it were, into his body and become in some measure the same person with him; and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See John Deigh, (1995) "Empathy and Universalizability," *Ethics* 105:4, p. 743-763; Nancy Sherman, (1998). "Empathy and Imagination," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XXII, p. 83-119; Sherman (2004). "Empathy and the Family," *Acta Philosophica*, 13:1 p. 23-44.

<sup>32</sup> Nancy Snow (2000) locates three defining characteristics of empathy: that the empathizer feels the same or similar emotion as the person with whom she is empathizing, that she feel that emotion because the other feels it (i.e. not coincidentally) and the she understands that the other does in fact feel that emotion ("Empathy," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 37:1 p.65-78.) See also Elliott Sober and David Wilson (1998). *Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

<sup>33</sup> The English word "empathy" was coined by E. Titchner (1909) in *Experimental Psychology of the Thought Process*. New York: Macmillan.

<sup>34</sup> Smith (1948) *A Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. p. 74

Smith asserts that we all can and do participate in imaginative projection, although to varying extents. It is what allows us to care deeply about the happiness and suffering of others, even when their welfare does not directly affect our own. His identification of empathy as a primary principle of our nature (“the greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it”) seems to be borne out by recent findings in psychology and neuroscience.<sup>35</sup>

Although they both take empathy to be the primary ethical skill, Smith's account of empathic response lacks the emphasis on passion that so pervades Patrul Rinpoche's discussions. On Smith's view our empathy will only ever be a shadow of the original emotions. He writes,

Mankind, though naturally sympathetic, never conceives for what has befallen another that degree of passion which naturally animates the person principally concerned. That imaginary change of situation upon which their sympathy is founded is but momentary...the thought that they themselves are not really the sufferers, continually intrudes itself upon them and, though it does not hinder them from conceiving a passion somewhat analogous to what is felt by the sufferer, hinders them from conceiving anything that approaches to the same degree of violence.<sup>36</sup>

Patrul Rinpoche would no doubt agree with Smith that our ability to empathize is normally fairly weak. This in fact explains why Patrul Rinpoche takes such pains to push us to empathize by, for instance, insisting that we think about the suffering person or animal as ourselves or our old mothers. The difference is that for Patrul Rinpoche we strengthen our ability to empathize through practice over time. These practices hone our empathic skills and cultivate the

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<sup>35</sup> Smith (1948) p. 74. For a philosophically oriented summary and analysis of many psychological studies on this topic, see Nancy Sherman (1998, 2004), Daniel Goleman (1994). *Emotional Intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books. Chapter 7; Jeremy Rifken (2009). *The Empathic Civilization*. New York: Penguin Books. Chapter 3. Also, the discovery of mirror neurons, which fire both when we perform an action and when we see others doing it, seem to support Smith's claim. For more on mirror neurons, see A. Motluk, “Read My Mind,” *New Scientist*, January 27, 2001. p. 22-8; Helen Thomson, “Empathetic Mirror Neurons Found in Humans at Last,” *New Scientist*, April 16, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> Smith (1948) p. 74.

corresponding emotions of love, compassion and sympathetic joy. The assumption that empathy can be honed and love, compassion and sympathetic joy can be cultivated helps explain why empathy is a much more passionate experience on Patrul Rinpoche's view than on Smith's.

Another reason why Smith may have been reluctant to advocate the intense empathic meditations that Patrul Rinpoche recommends is that for Smith empathic response is directly linked with moral judgments. To approve or disapprove of another's emotional state is to acknowledge that they are in agreement or disagreement with one's own, were one in that person's situation. He writes, "If, upon bringing the case home to our own breast, we find that the sentiments which it gives occasion to coincide and tally with our own, we necessarily approve of them as proportioned and suitable to their objects."<sup>37</sup> Since to empathize with someone just is to approve of her action or response, it is important for Smith's ethical system that our empathy not extend farther than our moral judgments.<sup>38</sup> The fact that we do at times empathize with someone whose actions we do not approve of is a challenge for Smith's account (and one for which he does not seem to have a satisfying answer). Nevertheless, given his project of identifying the capacity to empathize with implicit moral judgments, Smith's account cannot accommodate passionate emotional experience through empathy unless that response is appropriate and proportional to its object.

Despite the similarities of their examples – for example, Patrul's prisoner awaiting execution and Smith's "brother on the rack" – Patrul Rinpoche does not tend to use empathic projection to understand or provoke moral judgments.<sup>39</sup> The point of the practices above is not (primarily) to issue judgments against meat eating or capital punishment, either in general or in

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<sup>37</sup> Smith (1948) p. 79

<sup>38</sup> Smith writes, "to approve of the passions of another, therefore, as suitable to their objects, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them" (1948, p. 58). For a more detailed discussion of Smith's link between sympathy and judgment, see Nancy Sherman (1998), "Empathy and Imagination," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XXII, p.90-91.

<sup>39</sup> See Smith (1948), p. 73. This is not to imply that Patrul Rinpoche does not issue moral judgments, only that these are not obviously connected to the empathy practices he offers.



particular situations. Unlike Smith, Patrul Rinpoche is not concerned with the reasonableness of the response with which we are empathizing. In the execution contemplation, for example, he does not give many details about the prisoner – he may be the most hardened and vicious criminal – which leaves little ground for making a judgment about the justice of such a punishment.<sup>40</sup>

Instead, Patrul Rinpoche advocates imaginative empathy to cultivate emotional dispositions that yield moral insights. The aim of these empathic projections is to elicit targeted emotional responses, particularly love, compassion and sympathetic joy. According to Patrul Rinpoche, passionate experiences of these emotions are central to moral and spiritual development and empathy triggers, sustains and intensifies these emotional experiences. Through empathizing with the suffering of the animal about to be slaughtered, we naturally feel compassion for the animal; through empathizing with the happiness of a loved one, sympathetic joy naturally arises. These feelings carry with them important moral insights, such as the fundamental equality of members of the moral community and the dynamic and changing nature of our world and even ourselves (see § 6).

Given their different purposes, it is not surprising that Patrul Rinpoche and Smith disagree about the degree to which they think passionate empathy is possible or desirable. Since Smith is primarily concerned with using our natural tendency to empathize as a basis for making moral judgments, it makes sense that our empathy for others – and our expectations to be empathized with – be kept in check. Moral judgments are made with regard to whether a particular response is appropriate or reasonable and it may not be appropriate or reasonable to expect that people can feel intense and pervasive empathy, let alone the feelings of boundless love and compassion that the empathy is meant to provoke. Because Patrul Rinpoche is

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<sup>40</sup> For a comparison between Adam Smith and the four boundless qualities in Theravada Buddhism, particularly in the work of Buddhaghosa, see Maria Heim's "Toward a "Wider and Juster Initiative": Recent Comparative Work in Buddhist Ethics" in *Religion Compass*, Volume 1, Issue 1, pages 107–119, January 2007.

primarily interested in gradual moral and spiritual development through passionate experiences of love, compassion and joy, he is not interested in limiting our empathy for others. In fact, as I argued, he actively attempts to push our emotional limits.

In this way, the passionate life that Patrul Rinpoche and Shabkar are suggesting offers a unique perspective on the relationship between passion and morality that is not fully explored by those, such as Solomon and Nietzsche, who advocate a passionate life based on self-mastery and self-expression, nor by moral sentiment theorist such as Smith who focus on empathizing with the emotions of others. The passionate life I have described here shares Solomon's and Nietzsche's appreciation of passionate emotions but it is more explicitly "moral," since insists on a high degree of other-regarding motivations and commitments. It shares Smith's commitment to morality and altruism but rejects his insistence that empathy is an implicit moral judgment and, as such, is less intense or passionate than the original feeling.

#### *§5 Passion and other Buddhist Ideals*

This advocacy of the passionate life may seem to be in direct conflict with core Buddhist ideals, namely that other Immeasurable quality, equanimity, and the project of becoming liberated from suffering. Equanimity (or impartiality) is often considered to be a virtue of detachment and dispassion, almost by definition. Indeed, Patrul Rinpoche characterizes equanimity as "giving up hatred for enemies and infatuation with friends," which seems to be a recommendation for the dispassionate life.<sup>41</sup> But he differentiates boundless equanimity from what he calls "mindless equanimity" (*gti mug btang snyom*), which is to "just to think of everybody, friends and enemies, as the same, without any particular feeling of compassion, hatred or whatever."<sup>42</sup> Mindless equanimity, he argues, brings neither benefit nor harm; it must be infused with feelings of love and compassion.

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<sup>41</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994) p. 196

<sup>42</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994) p. 198

Boundless equanimity works in conjunction with love, compassion and sympathy because it specifically targets the cravings and aversions that can otherwise limit or obscure these positive emotions. According to Patrul Rinpoche, when we practice the meditations on the four boundless qualities, we should begin with equanimity. Otherwise, he notes, “whatever love, compassion, and sympathetic joy we generate will tend to be one-sided and not completely pure.”<sup>43</sup> This is not to say that experiences of love, compassion and sympathetic joy do not also help dissolve problematic distinctions between self and other, but rather that equanimity, because of its focus on uprooting craving and aversion can specifically address problematic notions of the self and thus provide the basis for deeper expressions of love, compassion and sympathetic joy.

Since the passionate life, as presented by Patrul Rinpoche, is distinct from the life of intense craving and aversion, it is compatible with (and indeed relies upon) equanimity. Love, compassion and sympathetic joy are, for Patrul Rinpoche, deep emotional commitments that are not characterized by craving and aversion. This is because craving and aversion are essentially reactions to grab at and cling to what we like (craving) and push away or avoid what we do not (aversion). Love, compassion and sympathetic joy are cultivated dispositions that focus on the others and our relationships with them. Unlike craving and aversion, they are neither reactive nor centered on the self. In this way, equanimity makes possible expansive passionate experience of love, compassion and joy. By uprooting craving and aversion we have more emotional space to strengthen the other immeasurable feelings.

We may still worry that Patrul Rinpoche's advocacy of intense and “unbearable” compassion conflicts with the broader Buddhist project of liberation from suffering. If compassion is at least in part a project in taking on the suffering of others, then how can the compassionate person, especially the intensely compassionate person, be anything but

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<sup>43</sup> Patrul Rinpoche (1994, p. 195).

miserable? And isn't misery exactly what we should be aiming to liberate ourselves from?

As far as I know, Patrul Rinpoche did not directly take up these questions. But there are at least two ways of answering it. One way is to differentiate compassion from suffering or misery, which is the approach taken by the 5<sup>th</sup> century Indian scholar-saint Buddhaghosa in his discussion of the four boundless qualities in *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*. Here he distinguishes each boundless quality from its “near enemy,” a feeling that seems similar but is in fact opposed to the boundless quality. The near enemy of compassion is grief or sorrow. Buddhaghosa claims that compassion “succeeds when it makes cruelty subside and it fails when it produces sorrow.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, the contemporary Tibetan Dzogchen teacher Tsoknyi Rinpoche suggests that compassion is best characterized as tenderness, rather than as grief or misery.<sup>45</sup> Cultivating compassion should result in a deeper and more extensive tenderness. If it makes us miserable or depressed, then it is not compassion that we are cultivating but rather some kind of grief or sorrow.

It would be difficult, however, for Patrul Rinpoche to avail himself of this solution. He does not distinguish between such closely related emotional states such as tenderness, sadness and grief. In fact, he seems to be directly asking us to take on the pain with which we are empathizing. Recall the practices that involve “experiencing the pain and the panic” of a sheep about to be slaughtered or a prisoner about to be executed. And just in case this pain is not visceral enough, we are encouraged to at least partially recreate it by covering our mouths to temporarily stop breathing. It seems that Patrul Rinpoche is literally asking us to suffer as part of developing compassion.

But how can Patrul Rinpoche's insistence that we experience the “pain and the panic” of

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<sup>44</sup> Buddhaghosa. (1956) *The Path of Purification*. (translated from the Pali by Bhikku Ñāṇamoli.) Colombo, Ceylon : R. Semage. For a contemporary defense of Buddhaghosa's approach see Chris Frakes' (2007) “Do the Compassionate Flourish?” in *Journal for Buddhist Ethics*. Vol. 14.

<sup>45</sup> See Tsoknyi Rinpoche (2004). *Carefree Dignity: Discourses on Training in Nature of Mind*. North Atlantic Books.

those we are empathizing with be compatible with the larger Buddhist project of liberation from suffering? The first Noble Truth tells us that there is suffering; we suffer and others suffer. With regard to the suffering of others, we seem to have three options. We could try to avoid it, which was the approach of the Buddha's father who tried to protect his son from the sight of the suffering and death of others. This famously did not work. Just as surely as we cannot avoid other people, we cannot avoid their suffering.

Alternatively, we could try to become indifferent to the suffering of others. This does not involve avoiding the suffering of others but rather witnessing their suffering while remaining indifferent to it. But this sounds like the behavior of someone with psychological abnormalities (for instance a sociopath or someone with severe autism) rather than any kind of moral ideal. To situate the point within the context of basic Buddhist philosophy, the strategy of becoming indifferent to the suffering of others is an active denial of the first Noble Truth that there is suffering. By being indifferent to others' suffering it seems that we are not in any substantial way recognizing that there is suffering. We are treating suffering as something that does not matter, which violates the spirit of the first Noble Truth.

The remaining option is to genuinely feel the suffering of others and use these experiences for moral and spiritual development. The contemporary Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, writes that cultivating compassion “can break your heart.” “But,” he continues, “a broken heart is an open heart. Every heartbreak is an opportunity for love and compassion to flow through you.”<sup>46</sup> In other words, we can use the suffering that may arise along with compassion in order to cultivate compassion. This involves (1) the recognition that a broken heart is evidence of our ability to fully appreciate another's suffering and (2) the practice of using that suffering to connect with and understand others. If our compassion is tinged (or overwhelmed) by feelings of grief, sorrow or guilt, then we can use these feelings – as we would

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<sup>46</sup> Mingyur Rinpoche (2008) *The Joy of Living*. Three Rivers Press. p. 182

in other occasions – as opportunities for insight.

It should also be noted that the point of Patrul Rinpoche's practices is to push our emotional limits by challenging our comfort with indifference to others; the point is not to traumatize us. For instance, for some of us actually witnessing a mother with no arms try in vain to rescue her drowning baby would be a traumatic experience from which it may take years to recover. Since this kind of trauma can clearly stunt emotional growth, it would be antithetical to Patrul Rinpoche's aims. Just as doing overly strenuous physical exercise can be a set back for getting in shape, overly strenuous emotional exercise can prevent emotional growth and maturity. The meditative practices for cultivating the Immeasurables offer a more controlled environment for emotional growth and experimentation. In this safe setting, we can hone in on the space between indifference and trauma, which will be different for different people at different times, in order to continue to strengthen our emotional capacities. We want to break our hearts – not obliterate them.

In this way the suffering or pain that we may feel when cultivating the Immeasurables, especially compassion, can be conceived of as part of moral and spiritual development. By gradually breaking our hearts in a safe setting we learn to feel more deeply, which has significant consequences for our moral and spiritual growth. The fruit of this project of deepening and intensifying emotional experiences – riding the boundary between indifference and trauma – is the subject of the remainder of this paper.

#### *§6 Why does Passion Matter?*

Nietzsche once claimed that “the most short-sighted and pernicious way of thinking wants to make the great sources of energy, those wild torrents of the soul that often stream forth so dangerously and overwhelmingly, *dry up* altogether, instead of taking their power into service and economizing

it.”<sup>47</sup> The insistence that passionate emotions are sources of energy and power – and that their repression leads to a kind of impotence – is one of Nietzsche's, and Solomon's, strongest recommendations for the passionate life. By not erecting barriers to passionate emotional experiences, we gain (or maintain) access to one of our greatest sources of power and energy. The passionate life is a psychologically healthy life.

On Solomon's view, the passionate life promotes is a certain kind of unity of emotional experience, which he calls emotional integrity. This unity is complex; it is neither mere consistency nor coherence. As he points out, we can have consistency in our emotional lives by simply fixating on one emotion and the corresponding set of beliefs. Yet this kind of fixation is the antithesis of emotional integrity. Emotional integrity requires a range of emotional experiences to integrate. The dispassionate person cannot integrate experiences she does not have, recognize or appreciate. She cannot understand the depth and complexity of emotional-ethical life if her only goal is peace of mind. Emotional integrity includes a “mixed, even conflicted, repertoire of feelings, emotions, and reflections, including dissatisfaction, self-criticism, lack of contentment, and real ethical dilemmas, that is, impossible choices and engagements.”<sup>48</sup> A life without such emotional complexity is, according to Solomon, “a limited life indeed.”<sup>49</sup>

Emotional integrity is one of the main benefits of using our passionate emotions as a support for moral and spiritual development. It gives us a method for fully experiencing our emotions without repressing them, controlling them or overly identifying with them. To use emotions as a way to connect to others, we must have a wide variety of compelling emotions. But we must not only be capable of depth and variety of feeling; we also need awareness of our emotional states and the capacity to reflect on them as shared human experiences. In this way,

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<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power* (section 381).

<sup>48</sup> Solomon (2007) p. 267

<sup>49</sup> Solomon (2007) p.267

taking our passionate emotions as a support for moral and spiritual development requires, to use Solomon's terminology, both "first order feeling" and "second order reflection." It does not demand that our emotional experiences be accurate, coherent or consistent but rather that, through awareness and reflection, that we can use our emotions in service of the larger commitment to connect with others, understand human experience and the world around us.

But taking our emotions on the path is only one aspect of the passionate life that I have described here. The other aspect is cultivating passionate experiences of love, compassion and joy through empathy. The benefit of this practice is not only psychological health and integrity, but moral and spiritual excellence. In particular, cultivating passionate experiences of the four immeasurable qualities, contributes to moral and spiritual excellence in two ways: it provides excellent motivation for altruistic action and can transform our perception of the world, which allows us to understand important moral truths.

Passionate experiences of love, compassion and sympathetic joy are excellent motivation for altruistic actions, which is why they are commonly discussed in the context of cultivating *bodhicitta* (the altruistic attitude of having concern for the well being of all sentient beings and the resolve to orient one's life in order to help them). Emotions provide compelling motivation for action, and intense, passionate emotions are especially motivating. Because they are cultivated over time into emotional dispositions, these emotions can also provide *reliable* motivation. And since these passionate experiences are cultivated only in the context some emotions, namely love, compassion and sympathetic joy, and not others, such as jealousy, hatred and resentment, the actions that they motivate will not be destructive, hurtful or immoral.

Moreover, passionate emotional experience can also carry insight. This can happen in two main ways. In the case of the so-called afflictive emotions (*nyon mongs*), we can gain insight by skillfully using these emotions, as Shabkar was able to do with his grief. The Immeasurables, on the other hand, carry insight in a more direct way: by increasing our ability to surrender to



these feelings we simultaneously become more wise.

In fact, in Patrul Rinpoche's discussion of boundless love and compassion, he claims that these feelings are the best ways to dispel confused ways of thinking and feeling; they are the greatest purifiers of our obscurations, both cognitive (*shes grib*) and emotional (*nyon mongs*). In addition to impermanence, one of the main insights that passionate experiences of love, compassion, and sympathetic joy can reveal is the fundamental equality of members of the moral community.<sup>50</sup>

By fundamental equality, I simply mean the idea, which appears widely in Western and Eastern ethical systems, that there is some basic sense in which all members of the moral community are equally deserving of care and respect. For Kantians, this is often expressed as a commitment to respect the humanity of rational beings; utilitarians focus on the equal consideration of interests of all those capable of having interests. For Patrul Rinpoche (and other Tibetan thinkers) this basic equality is expressed as a recognition of the fundamental similarity of experiences (the desire to be happy, avoid suffering, etc.) and the underlying potential for moral and spiritual development.

Passionate experiences of love, compassion and joy facilitate in the recognition of this basic equality of members of the moral community. Love, described by Patrul Rinpoche as an active, engaged commitment to the happiness of another, affirms another's basic worth; similarly compassion, which seeks to relieve another of her suffering, and sympathetic joy, which celebrates the success of another, rest on a basic recognition of the inherent value of another's basic well-being. As we extend these feelings to increasingly many members of the moral community (thereby making these feelings “boundless” or “immeasurable”) we come to deeply

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<sup>50</sup> In addition to yogic self-cultivation, Patrul Rinpoche (and other Vajrayana masters) also emphasized the power of devotion to Buddhas, bodhisattvas and deities to provide direct insight into the nature of reality. In particular, the preliminary (*ngondro*) practices such as guru yoga seemed designed to facilitate realization through devotion rather than active self-cultivation. Patrul Rinpoche does not seem to see these methods as in conflict and includes them both in *WPT* (see Chapter 6 on guru yoga). Due to space limitations, I cannot compare but only point to these two methods of gaining wisdom (yogic self-cultivation and devotion to deities) here.

appreciate the universality of this inherent value. As these experiences become more heart-felt and passionate, the recognition of the basic equality of members of the moral community becomes increasingly integrated into our ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. We do not simply know that there is a way that all members of the moral community are equal; rather, this recognition informs our deepest feelings, attitudes and patterns of thinking and orients our moral and spiritual life. In other words, the wisdom that passionate experiences can bring does not only increase knowledge or information about the world, but it transforms the agent.

In summary, in this paper I have argued for the following conclusions. First, contrary to popular stereotypes, there is room for some passionate emotional experiences in Buddhist ethics, as exemplified in the work of Shabkar and Patrul Rinpoche. Because of its emphasis on moral development, this conception of a passionate life differs from Solomon's Nietzsche-inspired account. Because of its deep appreciation of a variety of passionate emotional experience, it differs from Adam Smith's moral sentiment theory. In this way, the conception of a passionate life suggest by Shabkar and Patrul Rinpoche gives new insight in the relationship between passionate emotions and moral and spiritual development. Second, these passionate emotions are not in conflict with cultivating equanimity, nor are they in conflict with the project of liberation from suffering. Finally, passionate experiences of love, compassion and sympathetic joy contribute to moral and spiritual life in three ways: they promote emotional integrity, they motivate concern and care for others, and they give us tremendous insight into the moral equality of others by breaking confused habits of thinking and feeling.