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Some moral tasting notes on the Udyogaparvan of the *Mahābhārata*

James M. Hegarty

Abstract

This chapter explores the nature of moral deliberation in the Udyogaparvan of the *Mahābhārata*. It focuses on the moral content of the courtly debates contained in the Udyogaparvan, which are so central to the narrative progression of the *Mahābhārata*. The work of the noted psychologist Jonathan Haidt is used to explore the moral foci of the Udyogaparvan and the nature of moral debate in the text. The chapter shows that the debates of the Udyogaparvan centre on a series of recurrent moral concerns, which are enumerated and explored in Haidt's work. It is the argument of this chapter that the exploration of these recurrent moral concerns helps to explicate the moral saliency of the *Mahābhārata* in South Asia (across linguistic, cultural and religious boundaries) in new ways and further facilitates comparative analyses of religious texts.

Introduction

Nīlakaṇṭha, the great commentator on the *Mahābhārata*, repeated a widespread view held by the learned brahmins of his day that the *Mahābhārata*'s teachings on the *dharma* (or 'righteous acts') of kings

were perpetually authoritative and not just for the *kṣatriya* or warrior caste.[1] Nīlakaṇṭha, moreover, felt that the relevance of the *Mahābhārata* was not limited to its teachings on how to rule; it was, in his view, a text of universal, and universalising, religious significance. This was because it was based on Vedic knowledge, even where the original Vedic source was now lost to humankind.[2] While some may consider that rootedness in the Veda makes this claim a distinctively Hindu one, it is, in fact, from the perspective of the individual committed to the truth of the Veda, as Nīlakaṇṭha was, universal.[3] This chapter explores a somewhat different line of argument, but, like Nīlakaṇṭha, it stresses both the moral relevance and the universal underpinnings of the *Mahābhārata*. It focuses on the fifth book, the Udyogaparvan, in which the two branches of the royal family at the heart of the tale seek to avert—with rather different degrees of commitment—all-out war between them.

The existing scholarship on the Udyogaparvan, as is perfectly appropriate, emphasises the place of this *parvan* in the *Mahābhārata* as a whole and in the history of the development of Hindu religious and political thought more generally. In his introduction to his translation of the Udyogaparvan, van Buitenen does an excellent job of identifying the parallels between the great Sanskrit manual of statecraft, the *Arthaśāstra*, and the Udyogaparvan. For van Buitenen, the *Arthaśāstra*'s ideal-typical account of the conduct of diplomacy informs the form and content of the various diplomatic engagements of the Udyogaparvan. He is less clear, however, on the relationship between the several parts of the Udyogaparvan taken as a whole. For example, the night-time homily given by the sage advisor Vidura to the confused King Dhṛtarāṣṭra is, for van Buitenen, something of a trite rehash of materials better expressed elsewhere, while Sanatsujāta's philosophical teachings, which constitute a freestanding *upaniṣad*, are not much more than a foreshadowing of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Van Buitenen thus treats the Udyogaparvan in a way that is sensitive but disjointed. He offers instead, in his introduction, a long meditation on the theory of myth and the relevance of historical method as they pertain to the *Mahābhārata* taken as a whole (or not, which is rather the point of his discussion). Elsewhere, van Buitenen

1 He was writing in the second half of the seventeenth century in Benares, India, in his *Bhāratabhāvadīpa* or *Light on the Inner Significance of the (Mahā)Bhārata*, as cited and discussed by Minkowski (2010).

2 In the *smṛtyadhikaraṇa* of the Mīmāṃsāsūtra (1.3.1–2). See Minkowski (2005: 240–41), where he cites some of Nīlakaṇṭha's remarks. See also Müller (1860: 94); Pollock (1997).

3 Something McComas Taylor explores adroitly and to great effect in his work on 'regimes of truth' in relation to the *Pañcatantra* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. See Taylor (2007, 2008, 2016).

offers masterful elucidations of the ways in which the *Mahābhārata* evokes other ideas and practices only to subvert them or, at the very least, comment on them (the patterning of the Dyūtaparvan after the Vedic royal consecration ritual, the *rājasūya*, being a case in point) and yet here the parallels are elucidated but not definitively explored. The *Mahābhārata* and *Arthaśāstra* are, for van Buitenen, in learned agreement, but not *in conversation*, at least not in the Udyogaparvan. Angelika Malinar adopts a more subtle and sensitive approach to the debates of the Udyogaparvan, but she focuses on characterising the nature of their contribution to a larger debate about kingship, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the transition from lineage to state systems (ground covered in a more historical mode by Romila Thapar and many others before and since). My approach to the Udyogaparvan in this chapter is somewhat different and more than a little experimental (for which I beg the reader's indulgence and patience). It focuses on the moral content of the courtly debates contained in the Udyogaparvan, which are central to the narrative progression of the *Mahābhārata*. My exploration will pursue a more universalist line of inquiry, in which I consider the *moral foundations* of the back and forth of negotiations in the Udyogaparvan. This more universalist approach develops the work of the evolutionary psychologist and theorist of religion and politics Jonathan Haidt. Haidt argues for an approach to morality as *innate* to our species. He sums up his approach as follows:

> I defined innateness as 'organised in advance of experience,' like the first draft of a book that gets revised as individuals grow up within diverse cultures. This definition allowed me to propose that the moral foundations are innate. Particular rules and virtues vary across cultures, so you'll get fooled if you look for universality in the finished books. You won't find a single paragraph that exists in identical form in every human culture. But if you look for links between evolutionary theory and anthropological observations, you can take some educated guesses about what was in the universal first draft of human nature. (Haidt 2012: 178)

Haidt characterises five moral 'foundations' for humans, as shown in the columns in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1 Five moral 'foundations' for humans

	Care/harm	Fairness/ cheating	Loyalty/ betrayal	Authority/ subversion	Sanctity/ degradation
Adaptive challenge	Protect and care for children	Reap benefits of two-way partnerships	Form cohesive coalitions	Forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies	Avoid contaminants
Original triggers	Suffering, distress or neediness expressed by one's child	Cheating, cooperation, deception	Threat or challenge to group	Signs of dominance and submission	Waste products, diseased people
Current triggers	Baby seals, cute cartoon characters	Marital fidelity, broken vending machines	Sports teams, nations	Bosses, respected professionals	Taboo ideas (communism, racism)
Characteristic emotions	Compassion	Anger, gratitude, guilt	Group pride, rage at traitors	Respect, fear	Disgust
Relevant virtues	Caring, kindness	Fairness, justice, trustworthiness	Loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice	Obedience, deference	Temperance, chastity, piety, cleanliness

Source: From Haidt (2012: 146).

He explains them as follows:

> The *Care/harm* foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of caring for vulnerable children. It makes us sensitive to signs of suffering and need; it makes us despise cruelty and want to care for those who are suffering.
>
> The *Fairness/cheating* foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of reaping the rewards of cooperation without getting exploited. It makes us sensitive to indications that another person is likely to be a good (or bad) partner for collaboration and reciprocal altruism. It makes us want to shun or punish cheaters.
>
> The *Loyalty/betrayal* foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of forming and maintaining coalitions. It makes us sensitive to signs that another person is (or is not) a team player. It makes us trust and reward such people, and it makes us want to hurt, ostracise, or even kill those who betray us or our group.

> The *Authority/subversion* foundation evolved in response to the adaptive challenge of forging relationships that will benefit us within social hierarchies. It makes us sensitive to signs of rank or status, and to signs that other people are (or are not) behaving properly, given their position.
>
> The *Sanctity/degradation* foundation evolved initially in response to the adaptive challenge of the omnivore's dilemma, and then to the broader challenge of living in a world of pathogens and parasites. It includes the behavioral immune system, which can make us wary of a diverse array of symbolic objects and threats. It makes it possible for people to invest objects with irrational and extreme values—both positive and negative—which are important for binding groups together. (Haidt 2012: 178–79)

I will explore the significance of Haidt's theory, using his fivefold foundation of morality, to the debates of the Udyogaparvan.[4] On the basis of this, I will suggest that an approach that is theoretically informed by Haidt's evolutionary psychology can shed new light on the universal significance of the *Mahābhārata* as a nuanced response to the complex dynamics of family, politics, warfare and much else. I will, in this way, join Nīlakaṇṭha in making universal claims for the significance of the *Mahābhārata*, albeit on rather different foundations. I do this in a spirit of experiment and in the desire to model and stimulate new modes of engagement with ancient texts (most especially those that open new avenues for the comparison of materials from diverse contexts and stimulate new readings of both well-known and less well-explored materials). Inevitably, this chapter therefore sits somewhat adjacent to continuing debates about the *Mahābhārata* that are more literary or historical in their focus.

My title requires some explanation. In *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (2012), Haidt compares his moral 'foundations' to 'taste receptors' and makes recurrent use of the metaphor of a 'moral palate'. This is, of course, a metaphor well-known to Sanskrit intellectual tradition in the context of dramaturgy and formal

4 To this list of five, Haidt adds a provisional sixth foundation: liberty/oppression. Haidt (2012: 215) characterises this as: 'We added the Liberty/oppression foundation, which makes people notice and resent any sign of attempted domination. It triggers an urge to band together to resist or overthrow bullies and tyrants. This foundation supports the egalitarianism and antiauthoritarianism of the left, as well as the don't-tread-on-me and give-me-liberty anti-government anger of libertarians and some conservatives.' I do not make use of this additional foundation in the present analysis. It is described as provisional and seems, much more than others, to reflect contemporary, and particularly American, political polarities.

aesthetics, where the dominant mode of a work was explored in terms of its *rasa* or flavour. What follows, then, is a set of very exploratory 'moral tasting notes' for one of the most debate-intensive books of the *Mahābhārata*, the Udyogaparvan.

The debates of the Udyogaparvan

In this chapter, I follow the core courtly debates of the Udyogaparvan across its four main 'embassies', by which I refer to occasions in which an individual or group is sent from one court to another for the purpose of negotiation and/or remonstration. I will not explore the substories told to justify positions in the text, though I will touch on one of the more important of them, which is that of Indra and the slaying of Vṛtra and the consequent reign of the human Nahuṣa as king of the gods. I will also leave to one side the major separate and distinct dialogues of the text—namely, those between King Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his advisor, Vidura, and between King Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the sage Sanatsujāta, both of which occur during the blind king's long dark night of the soul (I have explored these dialogues elsewhere; see Hegarty 2019). My primary focus is on the patterns of exchange in the Udyogaparvan and the characterisation of their moral foundations or 'flavours'. I will point, however, to the ways in which aspects of the Indra/Vṛtra/Nahuṣa story, the theophany of Kṛṣṇa and the myopic focus on royal power in Duryodhana's speeches and embassies are morally and metaphysically relevant to the debates of the embassies of the Udyogaparvan.

By way of context, for those not overly familiar with the Udyogaparvan, it is structured around the back and forth between the two sets of cousins who are in conflict in the *Mahābhārata*, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. The five Pāṇḍava brothers, led by the eldest, Yudhiṣṭhira, have just completed 13 years in exile, which stipulated that the final year should be spent incognito. This period was spent in disguise in the court of King Virāṭa of the Matsyas, in Upaplavya, where we initially find the Pāṇḍavas considering their position. The other, far more numerous, set of cousins, the Kauravas, is to be found in Indraprastha, where they, too, led by King Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his boorish son Duryodhana, are debating their next steps. In both courts, different assessments of the recent past are heard and, in both courts, there is disagreement about what constitutes the right and the politic thing to do. The issues raised are not resolved, as one court sends embassies to the other. Against this backdrop of two very polarised groups of cousins, Kṛṣṇa, as both

god and chieftain, plays a critical role. The word *udyoga* literally means an 'effort' or a 'preparation' and the text is true to its moniker, in terms of both its diplomatically intensive content and its role in preparing the characters and readers of the text for the war that is to come.

The council of Upaplavya (*Mbh*, 5.1–6)

Dominant flavours: *Fairness* and *cheating*

Kṛṣṇa opens the proceedings. His initial statement regarding the situation of the Pāṇḍava brothers is anchored in the specifics of the wrongdoings of their cousins and opponents, the Kauravas. He wastes no time in enumerating the nature of the latter's misdeeds. He focuses on the following accusations: the Kauravas tricked Yudhiṣṭhira, the senior Pāṇḍava brother; they plundered the kingdom of the Pāṇḍavas; and finally, they sought to harm the Pāṇḍavas as children. The *mithyācāra*—the deceitful means, as the Sanskrit has it—of the Kauravas are thus made clear. Kṛṣṇa's emphasis on the moral rectitude of the Pāṇḍavas is equally clear. He suggests that Yudhiṣṭhira is always preoccupied with that which is right (*dharma*) and that which is useful (*artha*). The brothers, according to Kṛṣṇa, only wish to regain that which they won for themselves. Kṛṣṇa closes with a suggestion that an envoy be sent to the court of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra to establish the intentions of Duryodhana.

I will pause for an initial application of Haidt's typology of moral concerns. Kṛṣṇa's objections to the conduct of the Kauravas centre on the following:

- *Harm:* the Kauravas sought to harm the Pāṇḍavas as children.
- *Cheating:* the Kauravas cheated the Pāṇḍavas at dice.
- *Betrayal:* the Kauravas abused the parameters of the coalition of cousins.
- *Subversion:* the Kauravas took the kingdom and imposed the conditions of exile based on the improper use of power and rank (chiefly, though left unstated by Kṛṣṇa at this point, as a consequence of the weakness of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and his reliance on explanations of events in terms of the power of fate [*daiva*] and time [*kāla*]).

The rectitude of the Pāṇḍavas is, essentially, the inverse of this. They have, in Kṛṣṇa's view, never reacted to the abuse heaped on them. They are thus *caring*, *fair*, *loyal* and properly respectful of *authority* and its responsible and appropriate use.

Kṛṣṇa's point of view is most certainly not that of his senior brother, Balarāma. Balarāma makes clear that, in his view, Yudhiṣṭhira lost his head and the game of dice was entirely fair and above board. For Balarāma, Yudhiṣṭhira did not act as someone in his position should. Balarāma sees no issue in Śakuni's victory over Yudhiṣṭhira at dice, where the former acted as Duryodhana's nominated representative. Balarāma makes these points to urge the council to take up a conciliatory stance in their negotiations with Duryodhana and the Kauravas. Balarāma's counterposition can be read as follows in terms of Haidt's moral foundation theory: Yudhiṣṭhira is guilty of an act of *subversion*; as Pāṇḍava king, he lost his head to the dice, which is not appropriate behaviour given his position in the social hierarchy. Balarāma considers Śakuni to have acted *fairly* on this basis.

Kṛṣṇa's charioteer and Pāṇḍava ally Sātyaki counters this view very forcefully. He suggests that Yudhiṣṭhira was too trusting. He does not believe Yudhiṣṭhira should prostrate himself for the return of his patrimony, nor does he accept the claim that the Pāṇḍavas were discovered during their exile (an accusation that is circulating and which we will hear repeated below). His concerns centre therefore on fairness, cheating and the proper respect for authority. His final points emphasise the moral acceptability of the killing of one's enemies and the risks of begging from them.

The next speaker, Drupada, King of Pañcāla, reinforces this view by suggesting that Duryodhana acts consistently in bad faith and that King Dhṛtarāṣṭra is blinded by love for his son. Here, again, *fairness*, *cheating* and the proper exercise of *authority* are the key issues. This being said, the debate ends with Drupada dispatching his old house brahmin to argue their cause and sow dissent in the ranks of the Kaurava court (protected by his status as an envoy and by the spectre of brahminicide—in a culture in which the killing of a brahmin is the worst sin imaginable—something reinforced in the Udyogaparvan itself with its famous story of Indra's double brahminicide, which I explore below).

I count 25 distinct moral claims made across the various speeches of the council of Upaplavya (see Appendix 8.1 for my detailed enumeration and coding). For my moral tasting notes, I am not, at present, interested in who says what, but rather what, morally, is given the most 'airtime'—or perhaps, given my central metaphor and title, what is chewed over more thoroughly—by those present at a given debate or set of debates. We can represent the 'moral tasting notes' of the council of Upaplavya as Table 8.2.[5]

5 The embassy that immediately proceeds this council adds nothing to these totals, so I offer the tasting notes here rather than with my examination of the embassy below.

Table 8.2 Moral tasting notes of the council of Upaplavya

Moral 'flavour'	Level of usage
Care/harm	3
Fairness/cheating	20
Loyalty/betrayal	5
Authority/subversion	11
Sanctity/degradation	0

The passage we have been considering is thus strongly flavoured with concerns about *fairness* and *cheating* (it is indeed fiery with indignation); the *subversion* of *authority* follows next on our moral palate (sour as it is), with diminishing notes of *loyalty* and *betrayal* (ever salty) and issues of *care* and *harm* (earthy and umami, as these are, at least in my imagination). We find—unsurprisingly, given it is a partisan gathering—a simple exchange of mostly mutually reinforcing positions in this initial debate. Only Balarāma demurs. We also observe Haidt's typology holding up quite well as I put it through its initial paces. Nothing has challenged or exceeded his categories thus far. We will see the unfolding debates pivot several times, however, and interrupted by other forms of discourse or events that are significant and, I will argue, usefully explicated in relation to Haidt's 'foundations' of morality. It is worth noting that the present debate offered nothing in relation to the moral centre of *sanctity/degradation*, which is something that the next exchange in the text addresses fulsomely, though it is not one of the four embassies of the Udyogaparvan that are central to my analysis. It is to this exchange I will now turn.

Kṛṣṇa's options, Śalya and the story of Indra, Vṛtra and Nahuṣa (*Mbh*, 5.7–18)

Dominant flavours: *Sanctity* and *degradation*

Kṛṣṇa heads to his home in Dvārakā after the council of Upaplavya; the *kṣatriya* tradition in the *Mahābhārata* is that a request for support in arms will be met on a first-come, first-served basis. Consequently, Kṛṣṇa finds himself visited by Arjuna for the Pāṇḍavas and Duryodhana for the Kauravas. He is napping when they arrive; Duryodhana arrives first, but Arjuna is seen first. It is thus debatable who is truly 'first' at this critical juncture. This complexity leads the wily Kṛṣṇa to promise his aid to both parties either as a noncombatant advisor or through the loan of his armies. Arjuna is given

first choice. He selects Kṛṣṇa's aid as noncombatant advisor. Duryodhana is pleased to accept Kṛṣṇa's armies. Kṛṣṇa's brother, Balarāma, declares that he will not aid either party. Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to be his charioteer. This passage of only 37 verses is a momentous one. It gives us the critical pairing of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa on one chariot, which will provide the setting for the *Bhagavadgītā*. It also neatly dramatises the personal, increasingly devotional, loyalty of the Pāṇḍavas to Kṛṣṇa and the paramount goal of military power for Duryodhana, whose focus on a more mundane form of *kṣatriya* supremacy is, as we will see, unrelenting.

The passage includes another important and parallel event regarding the leadership of the Kaurava armies by King Śalya. Śalya, a Pāṇḍava supporter, is tricked into offering a boon to Duryodhana; Duryodhana uses this boon to compel Śalya to act as the leader of his forces. Śalya will also serve as the charioteer of Karṇa in his battle with Arjuna. On hearing this, Yudhiṣṭhira asks Śalya to undermine the confidence of Karṇa while acting as his charioteer; Yudhiṣṭhira acknowledges that this act is *akartavya* (a gerundive meaning 'it should not be done') but nevertheless makes the request. Here, we find a distorted reflection of the relationship between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. Śalya will agree, at Yudhiṣṭhira's behest, to act as charioteer and provocateur to Karṇa. Śalya will undermine his passenger; disunity will be the hallmark of their relationship, as harmony is that of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa.[6] Indeed, Karṇa's chariot, in a powerful metaphor of the limitations of his moral and metaphysical horizons, will sink into the mire of the battlefield just before his death.[7] Yudhiṣṭhira's request, alongside other misdeeds by the Pāṇḍavas during the war that is to come, will form the basis of further intratextual and extratextual controversies (beyond the scope of this chapter, but in proportion to the accusations of moral impropriety levelled against the Kauravas before the *Mahābhārata*'s main war).

It is at this point that Śalya tells the story of the victory of Indra over Vṛtra and Nahuṣa. Śalya explains that he intends to tell this tale to demonstrate that even the lord of the gods himself had his trials and tribulations. The tale is wonderfully rich, widely distributed in multiple tellings across South Asian literature and has been subject to numerous scholarly analyses, which I will not enumerate. It moves through the complex ramifications of a feud between the brahmin Tvaṣṭar Prajāpati and Indra. Indra kills the son

6 Kṛṣṇa will provide, through an extended act of philosophical persuasion and another well-timed theophany, higher knowledge in the *Bhagavadgītā* of the Bhīṣmaparvan, the book that follows the Udyogaparvan.

7 Notwithstanding other more complex symbolisms to be associated with this event.

of Tvaṣṭar, Triśiras, and incurs the sin of brahminicide. Tvaṣṭar, enraged, creates Vṛṭra to destroy Indra. With Viṣṇu's aid, Vṛṭra is killed by means of exploiting the 'small print' of his invulnerability (he cannot be killed by solid or liquid, by night or by day and so, inevitably, is slain by Viṣṇu-impregnated thunder-foam, which is, of course, neither solid nor liquid, at dusk, which is neither day nor night; this is the obvious ploy in retrospect!). Indra, now responsible for a double brahminicide, is overcome at the murderous ploy in which he has participated and retreats from the world in miniaturised form, choosing to hide in a lotus stalk. The gods anoint Nahuṣa, a human, to be their king in his absence. Nahuṣa proves to be more than a little despotic and lascivious.[8] He relentlessly pursues Indra's wife, Śacī, who resists his questionable charms. Meanwhile, Viṣṇu explains how Indra can expiate the sin of double brahminicide by means of ritual action (the very *aśvamedha* that Yudhiṣṭhira will perform after the terrible battle at Kurukṣetra). He does so and is cleansed of his sin. Śacī finds Indra, through the intercession of the goddess Upaśrutir ('Whisper' or perhaps 'Oracular Voice'). Indra suggests that Śacī make herself available to Nahuṣa on the condition that he appears on a wagon drawn by brahmin seers. While remonstrating with the seers, Nahuṣa's foot touches the head of Agastya. Because of this violation, he is cursed to spend 10,000 years in the form of a snake and is toppled from his position as king of the gods. Indra is thus returned to his high estate, cleansed of sin and reunited with Śacī.

This wonderfully rich story plays only a minor role in this chapter and I will detain us with only a few key observations drawing on the moral typology of Haidt (I will not seek to tabulate its content, as it is far less amenable to this treatment than a more straightforward moral debate). The story of Indra, Vṛtra and Nahuṣa is redolent with *sanctity* and *degradation* through the issue of both brahminicide (by Indra of Triśiras) and the physical humiliation of the brahmin Agastya (by Nahuṣa). It is filled with taboo, transgression and the ritual expiation of impurity. It is replete with beings invested with sacral power, in complex social hierarchies, who are themselves shot through with considerations of relative purity. With its graphic violence and emphasis on sexual possession and physical, but also symbolic, humiliation (most prominently, the foot on the brahmin's head, but also through beheadings and much else besides), it is a tale of moral disgust—a tale of sin and expiation. For Haidt, *sanctity* and *degradation* are those rules of moral behaviour that were, in our deep past, related to the avoidance of pathogens and parasites.

8 It is hard not to point to recent American political events here.

They are the moral impulses least amenable to the back and forth of debate. Instead, they engender the strongest and most visceral responses and are the locus of moral disgust. We find this moral centre being recurrently triggered in this tale. The story is also shot through with the agency of Viṣṇu. He is in the foam that kills Vṛtra and his advice provides the means by which Indra is rehabilitated from the sin of (double) brahminicide (a sin with no ritual expiation in *dharmaśāstra*). This allows Indra to advise his wife, Śacī, as to the means of defeating the despotic Nahuṣa, who stands, of course, as the proxy of Duryodhana in the main narrative of the Udyogaparvan, as Indra is Yudhiṣṭhira's. It is no accident that a story that places such emphasis on *sanctity* also emphasises its divine lynchpin, Viṣṇu. This is not insignificant to the action of the main plot of the *Mahābhārata*.

We are now in the position to observe how, in the content of the narration of the tale of Indra, Vṛtra and Nahuṣa, *sanctity* and *degradation* predominate. This is in marked contrast to the context of narration, in which we have seen, and will see, a strong emphasis on *fairness* and *cheating* with considerable emphasis also on the proper conduct of *authority* and the detailed examination of the recent past. This morally orthogonal discourse finds a complement and capstone in the theophany of Kṛṣṇa towards the end of the Udyogaparvan, which anchors both *sanctity* and human action in the revelation of its reality and substrate. Above and beyond the cut and thrust of moral and philosophical debate, the self-disclosure of God is the only meaningful power play. There is another contrastive moral discourse, but it lacks this heavyweight metaphysical anchorage. It is the 'might is right' philosophy of Duryodhana, which forms the core of his final mocking embassy to the Pāṇḍavas, when he sends the gambler's son Ulūka to beard his cousins mercilessly (in the fourth and final embassy that we will explore). For the present, it is sufficient to note that we will observe three types of moral discourse in the Udyogaparvan. One is anchored in the close reading of events to discern their morality (we have seen this already and might call it a discourse of *social justice*). Another is anchored in the sacred and the recognition of the underlying nature of reality, which, crucially, finds Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa at its apex as the divine being who encompasses and directs that reality (inclusive of fate and time). The third rejects the idea of the rules of engagement *in toto*, be they anchored in moralities, legalities or divine realities, and plumps instead for power in the here and now as the only determining factor. For this type of king, the pertinent question is not 'should I?' It is only ever the question, 'Can I?' We will see this play out across all the embassies of the Udyogaparvan, to which I will now turn.

The first embassy: King Drupada's brahmin in the Kaurava court (*Mbh*, 5.20–21)

Dominant flavours: *Fairness* and *cheating*

On arriving at the Karuava court, Drupada's unnamed brahmin leads with a reiteration of the moral concerns as they were laid out in the council at Upaplavya. It is a speech that even the pro-Pāṇḍava councillor of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Bhīṣma, calls *atitīkṣṇa* ('sharp'). Karṇa, interrupting his elder, moves the debate from one of varied moral issues, as reflected in the exchanges at Upaplavya, to a single moral and legal issue—that of *samaya* (or 'covenant'). For Karṇa, the dice game was fair, if asymmetric, and the consequent 'covenanted' period of exile was not duly honoured. There is but one moral issue here for Karṇa and it relates to *fairness* and *cheating*: the Kauravas have been fair; the Pāṇḍavas have not. Issues of *sanctity* and *degradation*, of godhead and brahmin supremacy count not at all.

Bhīṣma offers no further moral discourse. He does not attempt a rebuttal of the points made by Karna; instead, he recalls the court's attention to the prowess of the Pāṇḍavas in battle. The decision is subsequently taken to send the *sūta* ('charioteer') Saṃjaya to the court of King Yudhiṣṭhira. It is worth noting that even in this short sequence, the evident discord between Bhīṣma and Karṇa is exacerbated by the brahmin's blunt talk. In this way, our brahmin ambassador is true to the instructions given to him by his king, Drupada: he sows seeds of dissent even as he relays his message.

There is little need to tabulate the moral tasting notes of this embassy. We find, after a blunt speech by Drupada's brahmin, only one morally focused retort from a single, albeit important, interlocutor: Karṇa. Only Karṇa offers a rejoinder that is *morally engaged*. Indeed, he speaks directly to the dominant concern with *fairness* and *cheating* in the Pāṇḍavas' narrative of events. This absence of debate is itself significant. It reflects, from those sympathetic to the Pāṇḍavas, the absence of a convincing moral counterargument and, from those antipathetic to them, their reliance on arguments that are not morally focused. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the blind Kaurava king—as is usual in the *Mahābhārata*—turns to metaphysics and the power of fate to determine events, while his son Duryodhana relies on a doctrine of brute force.

The second embassy: Saṃjaya among the Pāṇḍavas (*Mbh*, 5.22–31)

Dominant flavours: *Sanctity* and *degradation*

Saṃjaya's embassy is longer and more complex than that of Drupada's brahmin. It also introduces some themes and threads that begin to push us beyond the moral preoccupations of the debates of the Udyogaparvan. It brings together the discourse of *sanctity*—reflected in the tale of Indra, Vṛtra and Nahuṣa—with an assertion of the metaphysical supremacy of Kṛṣṇa, which will be further developed in Kṛṣṇa's embassy to the Kaurava court. A signal demonstration of this can be found in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's initial instruction to his faithful servant as he sends him to Yudhiṣṭhira's assembly, when he states:

> *no ced gacchet saṃgaraṃ mandabuddhis | tābhyāṃ suto me viparītacetāḥ*
> *no cet kurūn saṃjaya nirdahetām | indrāviṣṇū daityasenāṃ yathaiva*
> *mato hi me śakrasamo dhanaṃjayaḥ | sanātano vṛṣṇivīraś ca viṣṇuḥ*
>
> [Though false, and weak-of-mind, pray that my son seeks not
> battle with those two men; pray they burn not the Kurus,
> As Indra and Viṣṇu consumed their enemies.
> For to my troubled mind, Arjuna is Indra's match,
> And that Vṛṣṇi hero is Viṣṇu everlasting.] (*Mbh*, 5.22.31)

The *dvandva* (or 'list'; compound, *indrāviṣṇū*, which combines Indra and Viṣṇu into a single word) emphasises the close relationship of these deities even as, in the verse's culmination, the relationship of these gods to Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa is asserted. The closeness of the relationship of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa is underscored in the previous verse with another *dvandva* in the celebrated line *kṛṣṇāv ekarathe sametau*, which can be translated as 'the two Kṛṣṇas are united on a single chariot'—an image that was brilliantly explored by Hiltebeitel (1984) almost four decades ago. It is worth noting the difference in the way in which King Dhṛtarāṣṭra expresses the relationships between Arjuna and Indra and between Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu. Arjuna's relationship to Indra is expressed in terms of equivalence, while that of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu is expressed in terms of identity. Additionally, the adjective *sanātana* ('eternal' or 'everlasting') does some theological heavy lifting here. It underscores the preeminent status of Viṣṇu by placing him beyond time—the very force that

Dhṛtarāṣṭra tends to fall back on when excusing his inability to check the excesses of his son Duryodhana. In this way, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is acknowledging the divine status of Kṛṣṇa, albeit without any great impact on his decision-making processes. He is true to the optative mood he uses in the above: he wishes one thing, but always seems to do another.

Saṃjaya's embassy properly begins on his arrival at the court-in-exile of King Yudhiṣṭhira. There is an immediate asymmetry in the extent of the inquiries about the health of the king and the court between Saṃjaya and Yudhiṣṭhira. Saṃjaya asks only of Yudhiṣṭhira's close kin; Yudhiṣṭhira asks after the whole Kaurava court and broader community. This prefigures a shift in focus in the unfolding moral debate to issues of *care* and *harm*, *loyalty* and *betrayal* and, finally, *sanctity* and *degradation*. Yudhiṣṭhira's series of caring inquiries gives way (from 23.20), however, to a none-too-subtle emphasis on the military prowess of his brothers (the sort of undermining sabre-rattling that is critical to ambassadorial activity both in the Udyogaparvan and in the normative instructions of the *Arthaśāstra*).

Saṃjaya relates the message of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, whose emphasis is on the moral issues surrounding the pursuit of war in the abstract. These emphasise the *harm* that will be done and the need for *care* of one's kin. He also suggests that to live on after the killing of kin is *na sadhu* ('not right'). This moves us from the *care/harm* moral centre to that of *loyalty/betrayal* and studiously avoids the difficult terrain of *fairness* and *cheating*. Saṃjaya, in articulating these positions, tends to offer *bons mots* rather than examples, as befits the shift from the moral analysis of the past to moral exhortation based on anticipated transgression in the future. Saṃjaya's embassy, like that of any good politician avoiding controversy, seeks to refocus the debate. Of the 25 moral points made in the council of Upaplavya, only three are abstract moral injunctions, whereas in the embassy of Saṃjaya, we find only 10 of the 26 moral claims are concrete (see Appendix 8.1).

Yudhiṣṭhira's response is to discourse initially on the evils of desire and on Dhṛtarāṣṭra's hypocrisy. He points to the failure of the king and his son Duryodhana to listen to the words of their advisor, Vidura, on at least four occasions. His response suggests that it is the desire of Duryodhana for personal power and wealth—and Dḥrtarāṣṭra's failure to heed sound advice—that is making war inevitable. The proper exercise of *authority* requires that the person in a position of power is in control of their desires and does not *cheat*. The willingness to engage in the latter is evidence of a failure to properly wield the former. Yudhiṣṭhira returns, in closing, to his

emphasis on the might of his brothers. The emphasis on desire gives Saṃjaya an opportunity to reframe the debate philosophically, which he is not slow to do.

Saṃjaya's response, in *adhyāya* 27, is thus interesting and constitutes a marked shift in the content of the moral debate so far. Saṃjaya does more than relay a message;[9] his is a far subtler approach. In the light of Yudhiṣṭhira's comments, he departs from the specifics of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's message and shifts to a discourse of *sanctity* and *degradation*. However, it is one quite different from the very concrete, brahmin-centred and socially hierarchical emphasis of the Indra/Vṛtra/Nahuṣa narrative. Saṃjaya emphasises the following: the sanctity of life; the need to not perpetrate evil deeds; the need to live without desire or material possessions; and the inevitability of karmic consequence. He uses metaphors of disease and illness to characterise the existential predicament and emphasises the Vedas and ritual purity to address this. It is a more than slightly ascetic discourse even if ritually orthodox.[10] It emphasises *sanctity* and *degradation* in the abstract. Only Karṇa (and Balarāma), it seems, has sought to engage with the Pāṇḍavas on their own moral territory. Saṃjaya's embassy is one that, while perhaps aimed at Yudhiṣṭhira's weakness for the contemplative life, takes us to a different place morally. This is made clear in its moral tasting notes of the debate taken as a whole (Table 8.3).

Table 8.3 Moral tasting notes of the second embassy

Moral 'flavour'	Level of usage
Care/harm	6
Fairness/cheating	4
Loyalty/betrayal	7
Authority/subversion	11
Sanctity/degradation	13

The moral flavour profile of this embassy is in marked contrast with the previous one. Here, *fairness* and *cheating* are little more than background notes, while *sanctity* and *degradation* come to the fore, albeit closely followed by *authority* and *subversion*. Behind these, but ahead of *fairness* and *cheating*,

9 Van Buitenen explores the reasons for this in formal Arthaśāstraic terms; see his introduction to his translation of the Udyogaparvan (1978: 134–38).

10 It appears that Saṃjaya is attempting to jump the strands of the 'dharmic double helix', from the this-worldly to the renunciative. This brilliant metaphor for *dharmic* concerns is that of Raj Balkaran (2020).

are notes of *care* and *harm*, as well as *loyalty* and *betrayal*. In Haidt's terms, the relationship of this sort of discourse to *sanctity* and *degradation* is clear; after a series of more concrete accusations from Yudhiṣṭhira, Saṃjaya invokes a variety of symbolic threats to what Haidt calls the 'behavioural immune system' and urges Yudhiṣṭhira to flee from the very real, very personal moral threat of his circumstances. This is not a debate of rights and wrongs *à la* Upaplavya, but it is a deeply engaged, agent-centred means of subsuming all moral debate into the overarching threat to one's sanctity as a Vedically guided, ritually active, transmigratory being. This is not to say other moral flavours are not present, but the emphasis is on moving away from the emphasis on fairness and cheating to a more abstract and 'ethical' mode.

If the first Pāṇḍava council and embassy see them develop a specific set of moral grievances based on experience, the embassy from Dhṛtarāṣṭra to their court does nothing to address these. Instead, the verbatim message of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and the further imploring and manoeuvring of Saṃjaya seek to move the debate from what has happened to the moral uncertainty of the future and of existence more generally, for the royal household, the world at large and, now, for Yudhiṣṭhira personally, as someone in immediate danger of moral pollution and its attendant metaphysical consequences. As the Indra/Vṛtra/Nahuṣa narrative showed, the deep past hinges on the sanctity of the social hierarchy with the brahmin at its apex; the present is a locus of moral uncertainty; the future must be brought into alignment with the deep and not the proximate past.

Saṃjaya's position, notwithstanding his status as Dhṛtarāṣṭra's ambassadorial mouthpiece, is rather different to that of his king's. He enjoins action to avoid the metaphysical, personal consequences of sin. This is the force of Saṃjaya's statement '*jarāmṛtyū naiva hi tvaṃ prajahyāḥ*' (*Mbh*, 5.27.26), which can be translated as 'for you shall never throw off old age and death' and which has a force not unlike Socrates's emphasis on the 'care of the soul' in Plato's *Apology* (as explored in Christiansen 2000). One must live in anticipation of an afterlife. This is a long way from the moral laziness of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's attitude that fate conquers all or Duryodhana's emphasis on royal power in the here and now. The future is now yoked to spiritual self-interest in a way that weakens the likelihood of the resolution of the moral debates about the recent past precisely because one should not be invested in the outcome of these trivial events. This is a brilliant manoeuvre on Saṃjaya's part, which plays into Kṛṣṇa's hand, as we shall see.

Yudhiṣṭhira seeks neatly to sidestep Saṃjaya's increasingly personalised and ascetic emphasis by shifting the debate to that of the adjusted legal obligations of exigent circumstances (in Sanskrit, *āpaddharma*; lit., 'the obligations of misfortune'; *Mbh*, 5.28.3). He stops short, however, of this form of justification (essentially the moving of the moral and legal goalposts) and instead defers the matter to the judgement of Kṛṣṇa in its entirety.

Kṛṣṇa's response seeks to meet Saṃjaya on his own ground. Rather than move the goalposts, he adjusts the rules of the game once more. The movement from morality to ethics by Saṃjaya is built on by Kṛṣṇa, but with a more forceful metaphysical turn, which encompasses participation in the social order and puts moral and social engagement firmly back on the table. His is a discourse not on the inevitable consequences and spiritual pollutions attendant on acting in the world, but a hymn of praise to acting in accordance with one's prescribed role (foreshadowing the *Bhagavadgītā*). Ironically, if debatably, this brings us closer to Dhṛtarāṣtra's *kṣatriya* fundamentalism. His elaborate description of the inevitability and necessity of karma extends over 20 verses and encompasses the gods and the various *varṇa*s of society. His conclusion is that Duryodhana is in the wrong because he is not duly conscious of the relational, reciprocal, profoundly patterned nature of morality and the society that emerges from it and its divine substrate. This is not a moral debate; it is an invocation of a moral framework as a metaphysical reality anchored in the self-disclosure of God. To consider yourself above the law, or to consider yourself the law, is to be, in the memorable Sanskrit term, a *manyuvaśānugāmin* ('a slave to wilful wrath'). Kṛṣṇa brings the sanctity of the social structure that has the brahmin at its apex into alignment with the sanctity of the transmigratory being. He places 'himself' at the apex of Saṃjaya's moral framework and, in so doing, harmonises the exigencies of fate (Dhṛtarāṣṭra's obsession) with 'care for the soul' (Yudhiṣṭhira's concern, and also that of Vidura, the son and incarnations of Dharma, respectively). Only Duryodhana's position is left beyond the pale, incapable of harmonisation with either devotion or asceticism even if, in practice, a fanatic adherence to warrior *dharma* would look a lot like orthopraxy (until it went off the rails, as it has at this point in the *Mahābhārata*, and as it did for Nahuṣa).

The third embassy and its preparatory discussions: Kṛṣṇa in word and deed (*Mbh*, 5.47–93 and 5.122–35)

Dominant flavours: *Authority* and *subversion*, *fairness* and *cheating*

The third embassy, in both its preparation and its undertaking by Kṛṣṇa, returns us to the more concrete enumeration of the wrongs experienced by the Pāṇḍavas at the hands of the Kauravas. Only 10 of the 59 moral points that are enumerated (see Appendix 8.1) are in the abstract in this long sequence of arguments, punctuated by several important subtales (beyond the scope of this chapter). I tabulate the moral concerns evinced in this portion of the Udyogaparvan in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4 Moral tasting notes of the third embassy

Moral 'flavour'	Level of usage
Care/harm	19
Fairness/cheating	31
Loyalty/betrayal	21
Authority/subversion	32
Sanctity/degradation	6

It is immediately clear that we are returning to a moral profile similar to that of the council of Upaplavya and its subsequent embassy, with the exception that here there are notes of *sanctity* and *degradation*. I recognised these by the way in which purity and pollution seem to haunt the edges of the debates about Draupadī's molestation in the *sabhā* of Hastinapurā at the time of the dice match because she was in her menses. This is a fact that is mentioned only once in the Udyogaparvan—precisely in the present cluster of texts, at *Mbh* 5.88.85. The reference is an oblique one: Draupadī is said to be *ekavastra* ('in one garment').

What runs through the, by now, almost rote enumeration of injustice, however, is the recurrent emphasis on the godhead of Kṛṣṇa. This is a return to and amplification of the morally and metaphysically orthogonal discourse that I have already identified and explored. Arjuna acknowledges Kṛṣṇa's identity as Viṣṇu in a long enumeration of Kṛṣṇa's great deeds (*Mbh*, 5.47 ff.). This is delivered in thunderous *triṣṭubh*s with, initially at least,

a central conditional refrain, *tadā yuddhaṃ dhārtarāṣṭro 'nvatapsyat* ('then that descendant of Dhṛtarāṣṭra will come to regret this war'). Directly after this speech, which is reported verbatim to the Kaurava court by Saṃjaya, Bhīṣma explicitly discloses the godhood of both Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, as Nara and Nārāyaṇa, who are born again and again when it is time to do battle (*tatra tatraiva jāyete yuddhakāle punaḥ punaḥ*). Saṃjaya likewise emphasises the unity, perfection and divine qualities of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa shortly thereafter, calling them *indraviṣṇusamau* ('the equal of Indra and Viṣṇu') at *Mbh* 5.58.11. However, much of this seems to emphasise the power of the Pāṇḍavas rather than to make a complex moral point.

The points made do stimulate, however, a theological retort from the warlike Duryodhana. He states that the gods do not concern themselves in human affairs. He then engages in self-praise that is close to a statement of his own godhead, as, for example, when he states—portentously or pretentiously, depending on your perspective: *devāsurāṇāṃ bhāvānām aham ekaḥ pravartitā* ('I alone set in motion the existence of gods and demons!'; *Mbh*, 5.60.14). This sort of statement has been interpreted as a refraction in the *Mahābhārata* of the historical rise of absolutism in post-Mauryan South Asia (see Malinar 2007: 36). In this context, however, it is hard not to read this assertion by Duryodhana as ironical or even bathetic in the light of what happens shortly thereafter—namely, the revelation of Kṛṣṇa's divine form in the Kaurava court. Before this, however, we have a series of passages, from 5.66 onwards, in which moral debate gives way to the frank assertion of Kṛṣṇa's divinity, culminating in the celebrated Sanskrit dictum *yataḥ kṛṣṇas tato jayaḥ* ('Where there is Kṛṣṇa, there is victory'). There follow, from Saṃjaya, words of deep devotion, which include etymological meditations on the names of God in a classically *bhakti* mode. Shortly after, Kṛṣṇa begins his embassy in the Kaurava court. Here, we find a back and forth between the more philosophical and abstract treatment of the nature of fate, time and human action with the more fine-grained debate on the specific wrongs done to the Pāṇḍavas. The debates go nowhere. Finally, at the close of Kṛṣṇa's embassy (at *Mbh*, 5.129.4–16), he reveals his *vidyutrūpa* (his 'brilliant form'). It is one that encompasses all being, and the assembled kings tremble before it. We have seen several both concrete and abstract arguments in the moral back and forth of the Udyogaparvan, but nothing like this. Where the moral *aporia* of the text gave rise to debates and to meta-moralities of various types (be they unrepentantly martial, ascetic or existentially engaged, but liberational), Kṛṣṇa's theophany connected definitively his views to his status as being itself. However, of itself, it can do little to resolve the moral minutiae of the Udyogaparvan and the debate about them persists within and beyond

the *Mahābhārata* (indeed, to these are added new accusations pertaining to the conduct of the war by both sides).[11] Moral arguments stick. Essays on theology and philosophy tend not to, it seems.

The fourth embassy: Ulūka beards the Pāṇḍavas (*Mbh*, 5.157–60)

Dominant flavours: *Authority* and *subversion*

Ulūka repeats verbatim the words of Duryodhana to the Pāṇḍavas in this final, rather brief embassy. Duryodhana returns to the events of the recent past, but substantially alters the moral tone. There is no meeting of the Pāṇḍavas on their own terms. There is no use of moral or legal counterarguments to rebut their complaints, as Karṇa sought to do with his emphasis on the covenant or *samaya*. Instead, Duryodhana interprets the entire sequence of events from the dice game and the molestation of Draupadī on as an example of might making right. Duryodhana could and did, and that is that. *Authority* is all. The victor determines the moral order. It is possible to interpret some of his message as morally focused (see Appendix 8.1). The two most abstract 'moral' principles Duryodhana offers are the need to subjugate enemies and the need to regain anything one has lost. The tasting notes of this passage are consequently not complex (Table 8.5).

Table 8.5 Moral tasting notes of the fourth embassy

Moral 'flavour'	Level of usage
Care/harm	0
Fairness/cheating	0
Loyalty/betrayal	0
Authority/subversion	5
Sanctity/degradation	0

Duryodhana was not privy to the story of Nahuṣa. He would have been unlikely to listen in any case. This final embassy, on the very eve of hostilities, is one that does not detain itself with the subtleties of what has gone before,

11 This is not the last, or most celebrated, occasion on which Kṛṣṇa will reveal his divine form. He does so in the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, even God incarnate cannot guarantee an attentive audience. Arjuna will ask for a reprise of the *Bhagavadgītā* 'because he forgot' in the fourteenth book of the *Mahābhārata*, the Aśvamedhikaparvan.

be this moral minutiae or metaphysics. It is insulting and intended to undermine the Pāṇḍavas. In this, it is superficially effective, but it has little to add to the foregoing analyses.

Some moral tasting notes for the Udyogaparvan in summary

Figure 8.1 summarises my initial findings in relation to the four embassies of the Udyogaparvan by moral 'foundation'.

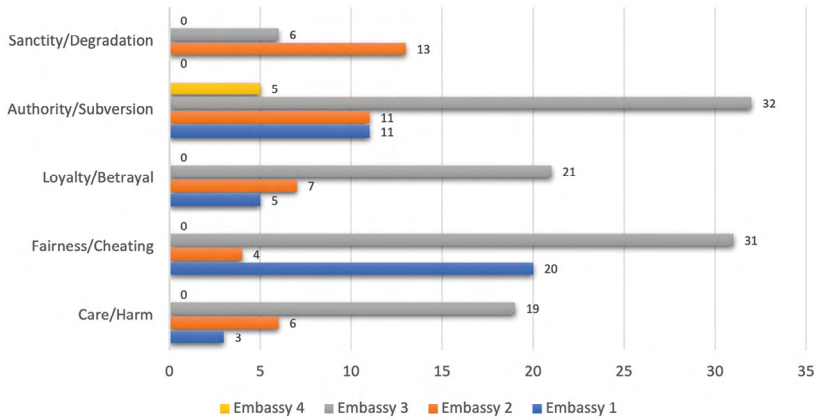

Figure 8.1 Moral tasting notes for the Udyogaparvan

Source: Author's summary.

Figure 8.2 summarises my initial findings by embassy.

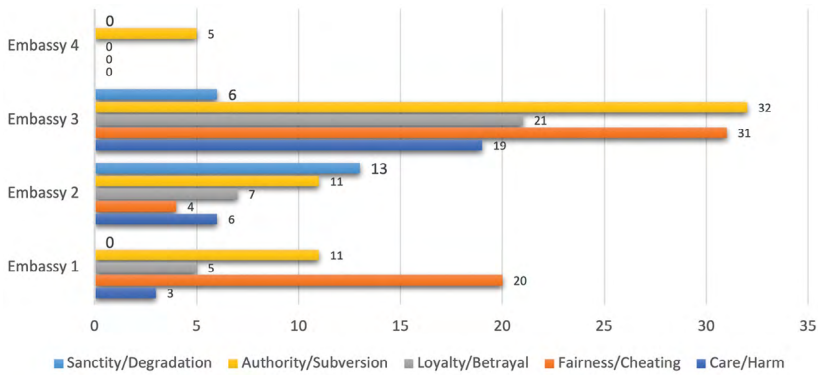

Figure 8.2 Moral tasting notes for the Udyogaparvan, by embassy

Source: Author's summary.

We can thus observe the flavour profile of the key debates of the Udyogaparvan and see clearly their similarities and differences, as discussed in detail above.

Conclusion

It is my hope that I have convinced you of at least the potential utility of Haidt's approach to morality as I have applied it to the *Mahābhārata*. I have no doubt this chapter is a first pass only. It is an attempt to provide, if not proof of concept, at least a suggestion of the need for further investigation. What, then, are the advantages of the approach adopted here? For the individual interpreting a text, it can lead to counterintuitive results. I coded as I went and found that I could not predict the outcome in terms of the moral profile of a given passage or set of passages. I am not insensible to the presence of confirmation bias in my coding, of course. This is not the first time I have read the Udyogapravan or the *Mahābhārata*. Without doubt, I have developed moral assumptions about the text and directly sought to apply Haidt's approach (thus, there is confirmation in two directions). For all that, I did not find the process to be a forced one. Indeed, I found it liberating to step away from the more established modes of classical Indological inquiry and use Haidt's typology, albeit as a heuristic only. I could then connect my results to more culturally specific ideas and arguments in the text, which I found to be illuminating, as I hope you did.

For comparison of the moral emphases and agendas of a variety of religious or political texts, there are also possibilities. I make one reference in passing to Plato's *Apology*, but it seems there is much to be said for an approach that sets out to compare moral 'tasting notes' drawn from materials from different times and places. The present approach also helps to explicate the moral saliency of the *Mahābhārata* in South Asia (across linguistic, cultural and religious boundaries). It has long been obvious that moral tales do not observe religious borders within and beyond South Asia. A cursory examination of the Buddhist *Jātaka*s and the Hindu *Pañcatantra* is sufficient to convince one of this. The moral discourse of the text, as reflected in my moral tasting notes, shows that the *Mahābhārata* is most satisfying to the moral palate. Additionally, if we accept for a moment Haidt's species-level claims, the *Mahābhārata* stimulates every one of our moral 'centres'. In this way, it is like a South Indian 'meal': nourishing to body and mind because it leaves nothing out. Yudhiṣṭhira's dice game, the Pāṇḍavas' exile and Draupadī's molestation, to name only a few examples, echo through the ages precisely

because of their rich range of moral flavours and their deep connection to the central concerns of our day-to-day existence and all those who have gone before us. The *Mahābhārata*'s attempts to explain these moral *aporia* in more and less rarefied terms—theologically and philosophically rich as they are (in the mouth of a Saṃjaya or a Kṛṣṇa) or existentially myopic (in the 'live free or die' or 'man a god to man' mode of Duryodhana)—are equally compelling and never more brilliantly set forth and juxtaposed than in the Udyogaparvan. These, however, sit at one remove from the direct moral experience of the text—not moral flavours so much as essays. However, such an order of examination of the text, which begins with an anthropology of moral concerns and moves to culturally specific ideologies, is a novel one in this age of hyperspecialisation. Nīlakaṇṭha was not so wrong, it seems to me, when he contended that the significance and moral reach of the *Mahābhārata* were universal.

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Appendix 8.1: Moral claims enumerated and coded according to Haidt's typology

The following are little more than the equivalent of 'fieldnotes', which I offer to the reader with a due sense of humility and contrition. This chapter employs Haidt's typology heuristically. I make no definitive claims that I have correctly identified the nature of a given moral observation, claim or injunction in the text. My hope is that I have not misrepresented the moral emphases of a given passage. This chapter is part of a larger project on 'public reason' in the *Mahābhārata*. It is thus exploratory and preparatory in the context of this larger project, for which I will find a more fine-grained and

detailed means of presenting information such as that given below. Indeed, the publication of preliminary inquiries is an important means of refining one's approach.

Claims given in italics are abstract, while those not in italics are concrete. Abstract moral claims tend to take the form of exhortations, while concrete moral claims are anchored in specific events.

Key

CH: *Care/harm*
FC: *Fairness/cheating*
LB: *Loyalty/betrayal*
AS: *Authority/subversion*
SD: *Sanctity/degradation*

The council of Upaplavya (*Mbh*, 5.1–6) and the first embassy: King Drupada's brahmin in the Kaurava court (*Mbh*, 5.20–21)

Defeated with tricks—FC
Kingdom taken—FC/AS/LB
Stood their truth—FC
Abominable vow—FC/AS/LB
Domain plundered ... in a manner deceitful—FC/AS/LB
Submitted to great, unendurable hardship—FC/AS
Did not vanquish ... by virtue of their own splendour—FC/AS
The king and his brothers desire to see them well—CH/FC
The sons of ... only the wish to regain what [they] won for themselves—FC
They tried to kill ... when children—CH
Sought to seize domain—FC/AS
Who all abide by their personal *dharma*—FC/AS
He lost his head—AS/LB
And was soundly defeated—FC
He did not know the dice; he trusted them—FC
Should he prostrate himself for coming into his patrimony—AS

Who claim that the Kaunteyas were discovered—FC
No adharma *in killing enemies*—FC/AS
Begging from foemen brings on adharma—AS/FC
Dhṛtarāṣṭra loves his son—CH/LB
[A]pplies to a man who from the first wanted to act wisely—FC
Men who are loyal will accept the first bid—FC
We owe the Kurus and Pāṇḍavas the same loyalty—AS
Refuse out of arrogance and folly—FC
You know fully how the Kaurava acts—FC

The embassy of Saṃjaya (*Mbh*, 5.22–31)

Victory is defeat—CH/LB
Blessed are those that act for the sake of their kin—CH/LB
To live with your kinfolk dead is not right—CH/LB
Dhṛtarāṣṭra is addled by desire—FC/AS
Dhṛtarāṣṭra is partial, but expects others to be impartial—FC/AS
Dhṛtarāṣṭra wails, but took the advice of his son—AS
Dhṛtarāṣṭra embarked on *adharma* knowing it well—AS/LB/FC
Duryodhana failed to listen to trustworthy Vidura—AS/LB
Duryodhana is prey to his wrath and a lecher, evil, betrayer—AS/LB
Dhṛtarāṣṭra saw full well—LB
Do not destroy life—CH/SD
Do not reign by war—CH/SD
Perpetrate no sin—CH/SD
Live without desire—SD
Live without objects—SD
Dharma *must go before acts*—AS/SD
Obtaining the Earth without dharma *is pointless*—AS/SD
Gifts to brahmins are the highest estate—AS/SD
Yudhiṣṭhira lives in desire; he should practise yoga—AS/SD
Possessions and the search for them lead to adharma—AS/LB/SD
Do not pleasure your heartburning after death—SD
Deeds pursue one—FC/SD

Yudhiṣṭhira is known to be pure—SD
Deeds follow you—FC/SD
Desire leads to evil [with disease metaphors]—SD
Killing of relatives is a sin—CH/LB
Yudhiṣṭhira should take the road of the gods—SD

The embassy of Kṛṣṇa (including preparatory councils; *Mbh*, 5.47–93, 5.122–35)

The Kauravas have been greedy—FC/LB/AS
Draupadi was molested—FC/LB/AS/SD
Arjuna points to trickery—FC
The sons of Pāṇḍu were cheated—FC
He who betrays is not called a guru—FC
They took the rightful gains of the Pandavas—FC
The Kauravas gloated—LB/AS
Duryodhana must be abandoned and lamentation must be replaced with action—LB/AS
It was assumed Dhṛtarāṣṭra would stand by his covenant—FC/LB/AS
He would not give even five villages—FC
Greed kills good sense—FC/LB
Shamelessness kills dharma—AS
Modesty is best—AS
It is ill to rob people of their wealth—FC/LB/AS
Killing kinsmen is wrong—CH/LB
Kṣatriya dharma *is a violent one*—CH/AS
Survivors engage in feuds—FC/LB
When they left you in your loincloth, the Kauravas did not care—CH/AS
The Kauravas cheated you—FC
They hurt you with words—CH
They boasted—AS
They are drunk with power –AS
They are engaged in a feud—FC/AS
They are cruel-spoken—CH

They are quick to deceive—FC/AS
Duryodhana will die before sharing his wealth—AS/LB
He turns down his friends—LB
He has given up *dharma*—AS/SD
He loves the lie—FC
Duryodhana stole what was theirs—FC
Using a cheater—Śakuni—at dice—FC
Draupadi was molested—FC/LB/AS/SD
Duryodhana mistreated you when children—CH
He looted your kingdom—CH
Duryodhana sought to estrange me [Kṛṣṇa] from you—FC/LB
There was trickery—FC
When conciliation and generosity have failed, only the rod remains—AS
Those who should be killed must be killed or there is a sin by omission—FC/LB/AS
Draupadi cites her molestation—CH/FC/AS/SD
The fact of their unfair banishment—CH/FC
The fact of their poverty—CH/FC
Her separation from her children—CH/AS
That she was given away by her father—CH/LB
That she was cheated by her father-in-law—FC/LB/AS
That she has not seen her sons—CH
There was the theft of their kingdom—FC/LB/AS
There was their unfair defeat at dice—FC/LB/AS
There was their exile—FC/LB/AS
There was the molestation of Draupadī *in her menses*—CH/FC/AS/SD
There was manifest cruelty—CH
The Kauravas were misguided—AS
They overstepped their bounds—AS
Their minds were carried away by greed—LB
The Pāṇḍavas *agreed* to the dice game—FC
The dice were crooked—FC
Draupadī was molested—CH/LB/AS/SD

The language used in the *sabhā* was abusive—CH/AS
They sought to murder the Pāṇḍavas in the lacquer house plot—CH/LB/AS
The Kauravas have used poison, fetters and attempted murder—CH/LB/AS

The fourth embassy: Ulūka beards the Pāṇḍavas (*Mbh*, 5.157–60)

The test of the *kṣatriya* is upon you—AS
Avenge your grudge—AS
He who fights must subjugate his enemies—AS
He who fights must restore their kinship—AS
Yudhiṣṭhira should be a man—AS

This text is taken from *Visions and Revisions in Sanskrit Narrative: Studies in the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas*, edited by Raj Balkaran and McComas Taylor, published 2023 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

doi.org/10.22459/VRSN.2023.08