

A Buddha and his Cousin

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Preamble

Like most religions, the Buddhist tradition is rich in stories that are designed to illustrate key principles and values. Stories of the Buddha himself offer a verbal portrait of an ideal human being that followers of the tradition can aspire to emulate; his story offers a picture of a person with a perfectly healthy mind. Stories of other people (and of gods, ghosts and ghouls) portray a wide range of beings from the nearly perfect to the dreadfully imperfect, all presented as models of what one could eventually become oneself through gradual transformations from one's present mentality. In what follows, I shall first tell a brief story about myself and will then recount the stories of two men who were cousins with similar but importantly different mentalities. And I shall conclude with a few observations about what I see as the significance of the difference between these two cousins.

First, a word about the story teller. A few decades ago, my life was dominated by my need to make a decision about whether I would do the military service that I had been told my entire life was a duty and a privilege. While in the midst of making that decision, I happened to read Platos account of the trial and death of Socrates. During that same month, I happened to attend a series of talks on Buddhism, all given by Asian Buddhists who also happened to be scientists working in the United States. Both Socrates and the Buddha had the same advice: find out who you really are, and then have the moral courage to be yourself.

After giving the matter more thought than I have ever given to anything since, I impulsively decided not to do military service and not to stay in the country that required it of me. Ever since that time, I have kept near me a worn copy of Plato's account of the death of Socrates and a shelfful of Buddhist texts.

Curiosity about the Buddhist texts led to my going back to university to take up the study of Sanskrit, Pali and Tibetan. It also led me into a variety of Buddhist

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temples and centers to train in various kinds of Buddhist meditation. I now teach Buddhist studies at McGill University, and my wife and I guide people, mostly young adults, in Buddhist meditation at our home.

Also woven into the Socratic Buddhist tapestry has been a thread of intermittent interest in psychology. During recent years, circumstances have permitted the fulfilment of a lifelong dream of working with an analyst. (The dream was for a Freudian, but it came true as a Jungian, which is close enough for dreams.) Socrates, the Buddha and Jung now seem to me like a tripod on which my mind is, for the time being, delicately balanced. A great deal of what this mind does is to think about the tripod on which it is balanced. What follows is some of that thinking.

Gotama and Devadatta

My most recent affiliation with a Buddhist group has been with the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order (FWBO), an order founded in the late 1960s by Sangharakshita, a British man who had been a Buddhist monk for almost two decades. In the book of chants and recitations used by the FWBO, there is a verse that reads:

We reverence the Buddha, and aspire to follow him.
The Buddha was born as we are born.
What the Buddha overcame, we too can overcome.
What the Buddha attained, we too can attain.

Aspiring to follow the Buddha, of course, requires having some understanding of what he overcame and what he attained. Such understanding is imparted in a number of ways, one of the most common being to tell the story of his life and to reflect on the events that served as major turning points. It is not my aim to retell that whole story here but rather to touch on a few episodes within it that have a particular relevance to myself and, I think, to many people living now in Western culture. By looking at these episodes I hope at least to give some idea of what one aspires to overcome and to attain through Buddhist practice.

Perhaps the best known feature of the traditional account of the life of the Buddha is that he was born into luxury and privilege. According to ancient canonical sources, the young man called Gotama had three palaces and a beautiful wife and a large retinue of servants and attendants. Despite all this affluence, he was uneasy and restless. A poignant story is told of how, as a boy, Gotama saw his father and a team of farmers plowing the earth. On seeing how hard the oxen struggled under the drag of the plows, and how difficult it was for the men to guide the beasts, and especially on seeing all the insects and grubs and eggs that had been disturbed by

the plows, the boy was filled with a profound sadness. Realizing that it is impossible to maintain life without disturbing the lives of others, sometimes even depriving others of their lives, the boy was overcome with grief of the type that Jungian analyst James Hollis calls existential guilt, which arises when “we understand that the principle that underlies life is death” (Hollis 1996: 30).

Part of what it means to say that the Buddha was born as we were born is that he, like many of us, was disturbed by the recognition that his life entailed the destruction of others, and that this is so no matter what one chooses to eat. Some degree of pain and suffering, in other words, is unavoidable so long as one is alive. It is impossible to achieve a painless trajectory through life. At best, one can aspire to achieve a path through life that reduces the amount of unnecessary suffering that one’s existence inflicts on others.

It could be said that the principal task of a Buddhist is to figure out somehow which kinds of pain are avoidable and which are inevitable and to learn how to avoid as much as possible inflicting and being afflicted by those that can be avoided. Inflicting no pain at all on others can result only in making one’s own life impossible; inflicting too much makes the burden of guilt unbearable. Thinking that one must do what is impossible, namely, to avoid all pain, only increases one’s own pain. Above all else, what one must do is to be realistic in one’s aspirations.

The point that pain is unavoidable in any worthwhile enterprise in life is illustrated in traditional accounts of Gotama’s decision to leave home. When Gotama reached the age of twenty-nine, say the texts, his first and only son was born. In celebration of the event, a large party was arranged at which all the best food and drink was served. Entertainment for the evening was provided by the most accomplished singers and dancers, most of them women, who stayed until very late in the evening. The festivities went on for so many hours that most of the guests fell asleep, as did the entertainers. On seeing all these women lying around in various states of disarray, some of them drooling and others snoring and yet others sleeping with their eyes wide open so that they appeared like dead fish, the new father was horrified by their appearance. Upon seeing that all these women, who had been so alluring only a few hours earlier, were now arranged in such repelling postures, with their once-attractive cosmetics now smeared unappealingly over their faces and clothing, the young man realized that beauty is not absolute but depends entirely on circumstances and perceptions.

On coming to this sad recognition, Gotama lost all interest in the pleasures and opulence of the only kind of life he had known, for this life no longer brought him satisfaction. And so, not knowing what he might find as an alternative, he left. His leave-taking proved to be a source of grief to his father and to his wife and to all those who loved him. Fully acknowledging the pain caused by his decision, Buddhists traditionally say that so long as people have emotional dependencies on

others, they are bound to suffer. It is only by breaking free of those dependencies that one can become liberated from suffering, and yet the very act of breaking free causes pain of its own. Among the many unrealistic expectations that can cause unnecessary pain is that of expecting freedom from hardship without undergoing some more hardship.

The point that a realistic balance must be found is further emphasized in another episode in the traditional story of Gotama's life. According to this story, he tried to win freedom from his distress by avoiding destroying anything at all. So as to harm nothing, he avoided all but the smallest amounts of food. He ate so little that he became too weak to think clearly or do anything but sit still. It was only when Gotama, then aged 35, abandoned the extreme self-denial of a rigorously ascetic life that he finally became a Buddha, that is, someone who had awakened to the true nature of things and adjusted his expectations accordingly.

Shortly after coming fully to his senses, the Buddha Gotama returned to his home town and visited his family for the first time since he had fled home at the age of twenty-nine. It was during this visit that he became reacquainted with his cousin, Devadatta, who was convinced of the soundness of what the Buddha was teaching and made the decision to become a monk in the newly founded Buddhist order. For nearly forty-five years the Buddha Gotama and his cousin Devadatta lived the life of wandering mendicants, preaching to people wherever they went and living a life that inspired others by exemplifying the joy that comes of virtue.

According to all accounts, Devadatta was popular and effective as a teacher. He was, in nearly all respects, a model monk. And yet, towards the end of his life, things went dramatically wrong between him and the Buddha, and their falling out had repercussions for nearly everyone in the Buddhist community. The rest of this story will be devoted to reflecting on how this falling out occurred, and what it means for anyone who takes up serious contemplative practice.

From the very beginning of his career as a Buddhist monk, Devadatta distinguished himself through his attainment of psychic powers. This accomplishment in itself was not seen by the Buddha as a sign of spiritual attainment, for the Buddha made it clear that a person could attain psychic powers, and the ability to perform miracles, without being virtuous. What should matter to a Buddhist is just the purification of the mind through the elimination of harmful and unrealistic desire and animosity. The ability to read the thoughts of others or perform miraculous physical healing is something that one can acquire without becoming free of desire and anger. And freedom from desire and anger is something that one can attain without developing psychic powers. Therefore, said the Buddha in such canonical texts as the Kevaddha Sutta (part of the Pali canon, which is the scripture of the Theravada school of Buddhism), such powers are irrelevant to the real goal of Buddhist practice; since, however, such powers have the capacity to confuse people, the Buddha

says that he despises them (Walshe 1987: 176).

Later scholastics, such as the fifth-century Theravadin commentator Buddhaghosa, list psychic powers as one of the principal obstacles to insight. “Like a child lying on its back and like tender corn it is difficult to manage. It is broken by the slightest thing. . . . Therefore, one who desires insight should cut off the impediment of psychic powers. . . .” (Buddhaghosa 1975:113). It is possible that this wariness of psychic powers stems from the fact that Devadatta was well known for having them, but even better known for not having the attainments that are the real goal of Buddhist meditative practice. It is worth noting that the wariness of achievements like those of Devadatta extends well beyond psychic powers and covers a wide range of attractive qualities that are popularly known as charisma. In most Buddhist traditions, personal charisma, whether it is one’s own or someone else’s, is something to beware. The ways in which Devadatta displayed his charisma, along with his lack of good character, makes up one of the best known cautionary tales in Buddhist lore.

Eight years before the Buddha died at the age of eighty, Devadatta’s lack of good character began to manifest itself in ways that could no longer be ignored. According to the canonical sources, the Buddha had become a well-known teacher by this time. During the thirty-seven years that had elapsed since he began his teaching career, the Buddha had attracted a number of prominent monks as well as wealthy and famous patrons. As his fame increased, so did the material quality of the gifts that were given to the Buddhist community. Monks who had once dressed in robes made of discarded rags were now being given robes made of new cloth. Monks who had once begged their meals by going from house to house were being invited to dine with kings and merchants. Monks who had once lived outdoors in makeshift huts were now living in monastic compounds in permanent buildings. The Buddha, who had been called the great ascetic, was no longer living a life of obvious asceticism. It was this shift in lifestyle that became the explicit substance of Devadatta’s grievance against the Buddha, although the texts hint that the explicit issue was masking a more personal agenda. About this more will be said later.

One of the Buddha’s most powerful patrons was King Bimbisara, who had been on the throne for fifty-two years and had known Gotama well before the latter came to be known as the Buddha. Bimbisara had a son named Ajatasattu. Devadatta reportedly talked Ajatasattu into seizing power from his father. The prince would seize control of the state at the same time that Devadatta seized control of the monastic order, and the new king would become the patron of the new spiritual leader. The stories of the two rebellions are told with obvious parallelism. In each case, the person to be deposed learned of the plot to overthrow him and refused to take measures against the conspirators who were planning the coup.

The outcomes of the two conspiracies, however, were different. The coup d'état succeeded. Bimbisara was imprisoned, and his son took power. Because he understood the Buddha's teachings about impermanence, however, Bimbisara was not alarmed at being thrown in prison. He even thrived there. He took his confinement as an opportunity to meditate and live a life of simplicity, and every day he grew more contented with his new life. Finally Ajatasattu gave orders to torture Bimbisara, with the result that Bimbisara died, and the usurping son was left with the dread stain of parricide on his hands.

To make matters worse, Ajatasattu found out only after his father had died that his mother had planned to have an abortion while pregnant with Ajatasattu, and Bimbisara had prevented the abortion and then shown the greatest of love for the baby prince, once saving the child from infant death by taking heroic measures. And so the usurper had not only killed his father but had taken the life of the man who had more than once saved his life. As if this were not enough of a burden of guilt, Ajatasattu also learned that his father, even in dying, had forgiven his son.

Devadatta's attempt to take leadership of the Buddhist community was less successful. He tried three times to murder the Buddha, but each time the plot failed, although on one occasion the Buddha was seriously injured. Even after Devadatta had tried to kill the Buddha, the Buddha forgave him. And then Devadatta went to the Buddha and made five requests, all having to do with the way that Buddhist monks should live. The five requests were that all monks should be required 1) to live in the forest rather than in cities, 2) to eat only begged alms rather than food provided at feasts to which monks were invited guests, 3) to wear only sewn rags rather than robes made of new cloth donated by the laity, 4) to sleep only under trees rather than in buildings with a roof, and 5) to follow a strict vegetarian diet, avoiding all flesh and fish, even when this was given to a monk on his begging rounds. The Buddha responded to these requests for stricter discipline by saying that any monk who wished to follow those austerities was welcome to do so, but adhering to such a life was to be purely voluntary for Buddhist monks and nuns.

When the Buddha refused to make Devadatta's proposed rules for more stringent asceticism mandatory, Devadatta mounted a campaign throughout the Buddhist community. Proclaiming that the Buddha had grown soft and was no longer interested in renouncing the luxuries of a settled life, Devadatta managed to win five hundred monks and nuns over to his side, all of them dedicated to the ideal of living a truly homeless life free of any of the domestic comforts. The defections, however, proved to be short-lived.

Before long all the monks and nuns returned to the Buddha. Upon realizing that his attempts to seize power had utterly failed, Devadatta fell ill to a disease that so weakened him that he could no longer walk. His condition deteriorated steadily for several months.

Finally, when he realized that he was about to die, he sent word to the Buddha with a request that he be allowed to see him one last time. The Buddha responded by saying that the two men had no further need to see each other in this life. Devadatta, thinking that the Buddha would surely see him, arranged to have some men carry him on a stretcher to where the Buddha was then staying. On the way to see the Buddha one last time, Devadatta became thirsty and asked the stretcher-bearers to set him down near a stream so that he could bathe and have a drink. When he stepped off his portable bed onto the earth, the earth opened up and swallowed him.

Traditional comments on Devadatta's story

In discussing the story of Devadatta and the Buddha, there are several points to which the Buddhist tradition has added comments. Let me discuss these briefly before explaining what they mean to me personally. One point that traditional commentators have made is that even when one becomes liberated from the root causes of suffering, suffering does not stop. What is said to stop at the moment of liberation, which Buddhists call Nirvana, is the formation of new karma. Karma, according to Buddhist scholasticism, is any action that is performed with the intention of some kind of personal gain. An act of kindness, for example, that is done with the hopes of gaining some benefit as a reward for the kindness done, is a karma. In this case, it is a good karma, one that will ripen into happiness for the person who does it. Even as a good karma, however, it is a karma, and one of the features of a karma is that one has expectations. Whenever there are expectations, there is the risk of disappointment, and disappointment is a kind of pain. The only way to be liberated from this kind of pain is to have no further expectations. Even when this kind of liberation from expectations has been achieved, however, the effects of all the karma that one had accumulated before being liberated must still be experienced. If one had malevolent thoughts in the past, then the negativity of those malicious motivations must be experienced in the form of some kind of pain. And so the commentators tell us that the Buddha's difficulties with Devadatta, and the injuries he received at Devadatta's instigation, were the final results of maliciousness and anger that Gotama had felt before becoming a Buddha.

A second point, which I alluded to above, was that Devadatta's ostensible reasons for wishing to take control of the Buddhist monastic community were a result of his failure to have control over his own mind. One who fails to control his own mind compensates for this lack of control by trying to seize control of external factors.

One canonical text called the Devadatta Sutta, found in the fourth volume of The Book of Gradual Sayings, specifies all the ways in which Devadatta had failed

to gain control over his own mind. This text reports that shortly after Devadatta had left the Buddhist community, the Buddha said of his cousin that he was overcome by desires for material gain, by a dread of material loss, by a desire for fame, by a fear of obscurity, by a desire for honor, and by a fear of blame. He was overcome, says this text, by evil intentions from within and corrupted by bad companionship from without (Hare 1935: 109). He and Ajatasattu, both overwhelmed by their own lust for power, naturally fell into league with one another, each reinforcing the other's ill-conceived desires. One's mentality influences one's taste in friends, and the company one keeps affects one's mentality.

A third point that the tradition makes is that Ajatasattu, because of the gravity of his crime against his father, was never able to benefit from the Buddha's teachings. Even when he later became a patron of the Buddha and was given inspirational discourses by the Buddha, the king's mind was so vitiated by the heavy burden of parricide that he was still confused, even when he heard the most lucid teacher in the land. In other words, the traditional Buddhist moral of the story is that a mentality can become so diseased and corrupted that even the greatest healer of the human psyche cannot make it healthy and whole again.

Bringing the tradition down to my level

Let me now try to explain what the story of the Buddha and Devadatta has meant in my own practice of Buddhism. As I said above, my interest in Buddhism began when I was a twenty-one year old man trying to make a decision about whether to answer my country's call to military service, and while thinking about that issue, I happened to read Plato's account of the trial of Socrates. What I recall most vividly was that when Socrates was found guilty of corrupting the youth of Athens and was sentenced to death by hemlock, his friends tried to talk him into fleeing to another country. Socrates refused. My interpretation of his refusal to flee was that he felt that he had benefited by the laws of his country his entire life and could not disregard those same laws when they worked to his personal inconvenience. (He also said that for a philosopher, death is no inconvenience, but in my youth I tended not to trust people who say such things while still alive.)

Applying Socrates's line of reasoning to my own situation, I decided that I had no choice; the only honorable thing for me to do was to stay in the country and obey its laws, or face the prescribed penalty for breaking the law. This conclusion seemed inescapable to me, and my newfound love of Socrates made me feel determined either to do my military service or refuse to do my duty and go to prison as a criminal. Having made this very firm decision, I then surprised myself by making a sudden and spontaneous decision to take the next bus across the border into

a country I knew next to nothing about. There is more than one way to escape a conclusion.

Every escape has a price. The price I paid for escaping the wisdom of Socrates was a heavy burden of feeling that I had failed to be honorable. I had cheated my country. I had taken everything of benefit that my society could offer me and absconded with it to a place where I was a foreigner. I could not honestly claim to have deep convictions, though I tried very hard to cultivate them and to portray myself as a pacifist and a conscientious objector. In my newly adopted country, many people received me almost as a kind of hero, a man who had bravely stood up for his convictions. In my heart, however, I knew that I was just a kid who had no ambition to die a seemingly pointless death in some battle in a foreign land. In my own mind, I was a coward.

To make matters worse, an older cousin, whom I had admired and emulated all my life, had done the honorable thing and gone to war, where he was severely wounded. He has spent the rest of his life in a wracked body, subject daily to pain and inconvenience while I have enjoyed almost perfect health. In this situation I could find nothing fair, nothing that sustained my childhood faith that the universe is fundamentally a moral structure in which virtue is somehow rewarded.

The only consolation I had was that I was unable to return to my country, which seemed at least a form of poetic justice. Even that poetic justice was eventually taken away, however, when a federal court judge sent me a letter saying that he had decided that the warrant for my arrest was so old that my case should be dismissed. I was neither found guilty nor exonerated nor granted an amnesty. My case was simply dismissed as a housekeeping measure, an attempt to keep a court docket from being bloated with too many trivial pending cases.

Legally, it was as if nothing had ever happened. Psychologically, it was as if I had been damned to knowing forever that I had gotten away with evading justice. Years later, when I was sitting in an airport and whiling away the time by reading a Buddhist text, I read that among all the Buddhist hells, the most dreadful is the one in which people receive good fortune that they knew in their hearts they did not deserve. Right away, I recognized that I had been living in that hell for most of my adult life. (Since then, I have moved out of that particular hell, but I still retain visiting rights. My current hell is the lesser one of remembering things I have read but forgetting where I read them.)

Devadatta Within

Several of the many Buddhist traditions are based on the doctrine that everyone has a Buddha within, and this inner Buddha is one's true nature. Although for

many years I practiced a form of Buddhism built on that very doctrine, I never believed it. I still do not. What I find it much easier to believe is that everyone has a Devadatta within, who is lying in wait ready to ambush and destroy the Buddha if he should ever happen along the road. The Devadatta of Buddhist legend was, or claimed to be, a moral perfectionist. He was someone who could not tolerate anything that might be construed as laxity or as a lack of the most rigorous forms of self-discipline. As we saw earlier, the Buddhist tradition has long recognized that this sort of perfectionism in the matter of external form is in fact a mask for a fundamental lack of control.

In the language of modern psychotherapy, the need for stringent rules that everyone must be made to follow is an instance of projection. It is projecting one's own actual but disowned sense of weakness and moral failure onto others. This leads to the conviction that everyone needs a dose of iron discipline, imposed if necessary by a benevolent dictator. In my own case, this projection led me in my younger years to be a stern father, an uncompromising husband and an overly demanding pedagogue.

It also led me to practice the most severe forms of Buddhism, such as Zen. For many years, the only practice that I recognized as authentic Buddhism was sitting motionless until the pain made tears come to my eyes and then signaling to the monitor to come beat me on the back with a stick the size of a cricket bat. When I now look back on that kind of practice, I am inclined to think that I am not the only Buddhist whose inner Devadatta has gained the upper hand over his inner Buddha.

Perfectionism

The story of Devadatta shows that perfectionism is the enemy of perfection. But when one is caught up in the snares of perfectionism, it is very difficult to appreciate that this is the moral of the story of Devadatta. Failing to grasp the nature of Devadatta's failings, one is inclined to take up a spiritual practice that measures insight and wisdom by one's ability to follow strict forms of externally imposed, and arbitrary, discipline without flinching or complaining.

It is one thing to know that moral perfectionism retards (or even destroys) rather than promotes spiritual growth and maturity; it is another thing to find one's way out of Devadatta's community and back into the Buddha's. As with everything that is truly worth doing, there is no set prescription for how to do it.

That notwithstanding, there are, I think, some important clues in the traditional Buddhist analysis of Devadatta's character. He was, says that analysis, overwhelmed with worldly ambitions. He was conquered by his own desire for recognition, approval, material gain, and comfort. He was afraid of anonymity, disap-

proval, material loss, and pain. So far, this is a very stock and formulaic list of the foibles of any worldly person. Hundreds of Buddhist texts speak of the ill that comes of these four desires and the corresponding four fears, which collectively are called the eight worldly traits. What is interesting about Devadatta's case, however, is that he seems not to have recognized his own worldly nature. He denied it. He projected it onto others. He insisted that everyone live by the strict discipline that he needed. This is perhaps one of the most common (and most tragic) themes in the entire history of human religions.

What I personally find fascinating about Devadatta's blindness to his own worldliness is that the traditional Buddhist cure for his brand of perfectionism is itself a kind of perfectionism. The preferred alternative in Buddhist tradition to being a Devadatta is to become a Buddha. But how is a Buddha described? A Buddha is described as a person who has gotten entirely beyond the reach of the root causes of avoidable unhappiness; he is someone who has completely exterminated his desires and aversions that are rooted in a failure to see and accept things as they really are. This is the perfection that Devadatta's perfectionism tries to kill.

Integrity

Let us go back and consider once again two lines from the liturgy of a Buddhist order:

What the Buddha overcame, we too can overcome.
What the Buddha attained we too can attain.

A question that no one with the intellectual integrity of a Socrates or a Buddha would allow us to evade is this: Is it realistic to expect to get entirely beyond the reach of such fundamental drives as the desire for the pleasant and the fear of the unpleasant? I can hear Devadatta prompting us to answer Yes! But is that answer fully in keeping with our own experiences of what it is like to be the owner and operator of a human body run by a human mind?

Unfortunately, I think the majority of Buddhists have listened to Devadatta on this one. Most Buddhists, it seems to me, insist that the Buddha was completely liberated, without even a trace of worldly desire or fear of pain. But the Buddha himself said to listen to oneself, to study one's own reality with an uncompromising determination to discover what one's constitution really is. It is only when one has truly studied oneself and sees what is there, rather than what a spiritual guide or some other authority says ought to be there, that one has taken the Buddha seriously.

My own experience, and my familiarity with the reported experiences of others, has told me again and again that it is unwise to listen to Devadatta on this question of the feasibility of perfect liberation. It is here, I think, that modern depth psychology can come to the rescue of such contemplative traditions as Buddhism that are prone to being undermined by an unhealthily enthusiastic drive for goals that are best seen as unattainable.

It has become my preference to see the goals of Buddhism not as actual possibilities but as similar to mathematical asymptotes, theoretical limits that can be approached but can never be attained. My inclination is now to view Buddhist concepts such as nirvana or enlightenment as navigational stars by which one gets one's bearing and sails in approximately the right direction. Just as no wise sailor ever hopes to reach the stars by which he navigates the world, I would suggest that the wise Buddhist is the one who navigates life by the ideal of liberation without succumbing to the hope of actually reaching that ideal. Ideals have the potential to be liberative. When they are taken too literally, however, there is a real danger of becoming further ensnared in delusion rather than liberated from it.

Postamble

Stories have endings. We know how the stories of Socrates, Devadatta and the Buddha ended. What is not yet known is how the teller of this particular tale will end up, except dead. The current prognosis for the years that remain before that inevitable ending seems to be positive. For the time being, my inner Devadatta seems to have been swallowed up by the earth.

Or has he? There is always the very real possibility that he was not swallowed at all but rather was launched into orbit, where he lives constantly in the earth's penumbra, coming out now and then to offer an overly harsh mythological retelling of his own history. The inner Buddha has become an asymptote, to be approached but never reached. This means Devadatta cannot lay his hands on him. That leaves only my inner Socrates to account for. He seems to be waiting patiently to be accused of corrupting the youth by calling into question the literal reality of the Buddhas.

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