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Cultural Traditions and Contemporary Challenges in Southeast Asia: Hindu and Buddhist

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Introduction

George F. McLean and *Robert Magliola*

In the years since the end of the Cold War the expansion not only of a unified economy and market, but especially of communications and information, has created a truly global context for human interaction.

The advantages of this are evident for it makes possible in principle to draw on the best realizations of all sections of humankind toward a future synthesis more rich and humane than had been possible hitherto.

Yet all is not promise, for the early experience suggests that not all cultures enter this "common market" of values and virtues on an equal footing. For one, the economic strength and technological capabilities of the North Atlantic entail a communicative predominance that engenders a practical hegemony, e.g., in news and entertainment dissemination. Secondly, this power is matched by a political capability and the will to use it in the world's financial and political structures.

But perhaps most decisive is the fact that culturally this power has been prepared for, and indeed created by a cultural simplification initiated by the development in Greece of the capacity for abstraction and simplification. Intensified by the modern radicalisation of reason and its characteristic empiricism in dealing on the surface, this has resulted in a Western utilitarian society that overrides the self-understanding, dignity and human goals of other peoples.

In particular, if ecologically the world is threatened with a loss of biodiversity and reduction to too small a number of fallible species, this is the more true in terms of cultures. From a vast variety of resources of the human spirit we are in danger of a forceable reduction of all peoples to a single thin value-free culture of legal forms with neither transcendent vision nor inner self-identity and commitment.

The real battle of our times is then between all and any alternate culture and that of the West. The most flagrant, because physically the most proximate and spiritually the most intense, is the frontier between Islam and the West, but beyond this lie the vast peoples of South, East and Southeast Asia.

In this situation while the world is distracted by the tactics of military confrontation in the Middle East, it is still possible to take the strategic and perhaps more creative steps further to the East or South. Concretely, it is possible to take up, not the easy, but the more difficult task of asking whether a culture built on community and oriented toward mystical transcendence can not only articulate and justify itself in the face of the present individualist and secular cultural assaults from the West but contribute healing vision for the global society.

That is the challenge of this founding work of the Southeast Asian regional set of teams of the project on "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change" of The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. The conference itself laid firm grounds for this work through a series of studies which are organized here into four parts.

Part I, "The Nature of Southeast Asian Cultures and Tradition," begins to make room for the special philosophical contributions of Asian cultures with Chapter I, Vincent Shen's "Metaphor and Narrative in Taoism and Buddhism." If these philosophies are more mystical in character it can be asked how their exalted vision can be accessed and be formative for concrete life. Professor

Shen shows how this question itself reflects a Western more rationalist hermeneutic that distinguishes Paul Ricoeur' work, for example, from his own work. Shen begins rather from the lived experience reflected in the narrative content of the tradition and analyses how the use of metaphor and contrast allows this tradition to bespeak the exalted and the mystical.

Chapter II, by Tran Van Doan, "What Can be Called Tradition?" builds on these conclusions to show how tradition is not a given, but a human construct of choices that support life. It is important, however, to note that these choices are not only utilitarian and for practical interests, but rather are guided by a deeper sense of what is just and right, based on an absolute which transcends calculation. Here the key contribution of Southeast Asian cultures to world culture emerges, and along with Chapter I founds a corresponding hermeneutic.

Chapter III by Warayuth Sriwarakuel, "Globalization and Common Values: King Bhumibol's Model," bridges from the regional to the global by drawing expertly on K.O. Apel, J. Habermas and H. Kung and relating them to Buddhist themes that emerge in the model of the King of Thailand. King Bhumibol emphasizes self-reliance, communal harmony, and proper reception of benign outside contacts. The Thai monk Buddhadasa's notion of "Dharma language" as the common substrate of global religious languages is helpful towards this wholesome form of globalization.

Part II, "Buddhism and Hinduism," follows up on this opening, by looking more in detail into the thought and practice of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Chapter IV by Sebastian Vadassery, "The Dance of Life: Leisure, Culture and Religious Experience," turns attention to the Hindu roots of Buddhism by following a psychological path to the contemplative center where human life opens to the divine. Correlating on the one hand the insights of the great pedagogue Paulo Freire and other contemporaries, and on the other hand the traditional wisdom of the Indian Upanishads and the Chinese Masters, Vadassery shows that *one can help human culture only by being with it, not of it*.

That such a quest is not only an interior concern is well-demonstrated in Chapter V, by Joseph Fernando, "Cultural Heritage of India and the Imperative of Radical Change." Fernando applies this vision to issues of justice for India's outcast communities, arguing that modern India needs a new Buddha-figure to overturn the caste system which in reality continues to oppress the Dalits, and --he maintains --still pervades the mind-set of most Indians.

Chapter VI by Veerachart Nimanong, "The Buddhist Middle Way and Its Application to Contemporary Thai Socio-Economic Conditions," begins the process by comparing the "middle way" of Aristotle as articulated in terms of the individual in this world to that of the Buddha with its transcendent implications as constituting a true standard for life. However, Buddhism's "middle way," unlike Aristotle's, does not mean a moderate path between extremes of good and evil; but rather, adherence to the Buddhist "five Precepts" and "ten Wholesome Actions."

Chapter VII by Somparn Promta, "Buddhist Ethics and the Modern World," deepens this search by going explicitly beyond the utilitarianism of Bentham to lay the metaphysical foundation of an individual and social ethics. Somparn Promta discusses how Buddhist ethics applies diversely to the monkhood and the laity; and how the Buddha's description of a *patirupadesa*, or a "proper land," posits social ethics as the first condition of moral practice.

Chapter VIII by Phra Suthivorayan, "New Thought in Buddhism," provides a careful selection of texts which illustrate the developments in Buddhist "new thought," by which is meant modern but faithful applications of the Buddha's traditional Teaching. Phra Suthivorayan examines 'Right View" (the first factor of the Eight-fold Path) in terms such as *Yonisomanasikara* on *Ariyasacca*,

or the 'problem-solving method'; and *Yonisomanasikara* on *Kusalabhavana*, or 'reflective attention on developing psychic moral factors'.

Chapter IX by Mettanando Bhikkhu, "Applied Buddhist Philosophy in Academic Research," applies Buddhist principles to founding and elaborating academic research. Towards this end, Mettanando Bhikkhu carefully explains --among others --the Buddhist 'Principle of Uncertainty', and Buddha's 'Two Directions of Investigation', 'Hindrances to Knowledge', and 'Classification of Errors'.

Chapter X, by Me Me Khine, "Attitudes of Burmese Buddhist Nuns towards Social Work," illustrates modern Buddhist research by reporting on very consequential empirical data concerning Burmese Buddhist nuns: the research reveals how they weigh the significances of their commitment to the monastic mode of daily life. Me Me Khine carefully scrutinizes and interprets this research, which shows that a majority of the nun-respondents consider social work not part of their vocation, and a large minority (44%) consider such work appropriate.

Part III, "National Challenges and Cultural Tradition," seeks to test out whether the classical traditions of Islam, Hinduism and especially Buddhism continue to have a contribution to make to the Southeast region in our days. The responses are impressive.

Chapter XI, by Thaiwat Nilkhet, "A Cultural Heritage: Belief in Phii Poota in the Context of Thai Isarn Catholics," explores the institution of respect for ancestors and how it is put to the test in meeting evangelisation by a Christianity which traditionally had not greatly elaborated the place it had for ancestors in its notion of the Communion of Saints. The essential question for Nilkhet's paper is whether the enrichment between Christianity coming from the West and the Isarn people of Thailand can be truly *mutual*. If past efforts have been to bring Christianity to the Isarn, is it possible for them to respond with their own proper gifts from their cultural endowment?

Chapter XII, by Kirti Bunchua, "Dynamic Heritage of the Thais Through Five Paradigms," opens a panorama of five stages or paradigms in Thai culture from the point of view of the author, a Thai scholar who has been central to the effort to give philosophical voice to the rich cultural traditions of the Thai people. Bunchua describes Thailand's Sukhothai, Ayuthya, Dhonburi, and Bangkok historical periods in terms of the five paradigms, which respectively emphasize (1) the will of the On-High, (2) the Laws, (3) the after-life, (4) scientific reasoning, and (5) critical mind and detachment.

Chapter XIII, by Nguyen Trong Chuan, "The Cultural Heritage of Vietnam and Modern Changes," extends this effort into the present economic and social strivings of the people of Vietnam. The author discriminates the positive and negative aspects of Vietnamese tradition, and the good and bad influences coming from globalization and the 'market economy'. He remains confident the endogenous Vietnamese culture, transforming what is good coming from the outside, will continue to be the source of Vietnam's development as "nation and country."

Chapter XIV, by Rolando M. Gripaldo, "Cultural Traditions, the Person, and Contemporary Change: The Filipino Experience," makes an analogous contribution from the Philippine people. Using as his resource the value-system of Rizal's *La Liga Filipina*, which in the 19th century pioneered Filipino independence from Spain, Gripaldo discusses the People-Power phenomenon of the present-day Philippines. He emphasizes the importance of re-discovering and developing an endogenous Filipino philosophy, both academic and popular.

Part IV, "The Global Challenges to Southeast Asian Cultures," explores the issue of whether the Southeast Asian cultures can merely add to and complement the culture of the West, or whether

they have a distinctive and indispensable role to play in building the future. In another volume in this series, *Cultural Impact on International Relations,* Xintian Yu makes such an argument, proposing that in order for the present economic and political institutions formed in the West at the end of World War II to promote peace and cooperation between peoples their individualist and first world bias needs to be enriched by a deeper attention to community and attention to the concerns of the developing world. This, she argues, is a contribution which China has the cultural resources and developmental experience to make, along with the economic power to assure that these important contributions will not be ignored.

Here Professor Soraj Hongladarom leads off this argument in Chapter XV, "Cultures and Global Justice," with a sharp critique of the abstract and formal Kantian character of the 'Western' notion of justice and rights. He faults the Kantian model for eclipsing local cultural difference, and for a 'thinness' which both ignores the technological divide and assumes Occidental value is universal value.

In Chapter XVI, "Marcel's Mystery of the Family and Problems of Modernization," Manuel B. Dy shows that four traditional Asian values are under assault due to Westernization: (1) family solidarity, (2) reverence for the Sacred, (3) respect for the authority of elders, and (4) personal care and affection for the aged. The insights of Gabriel Marcel into the family as "mystery" and "presence" resonate to the traditions of the Asian family, and can be used to teach the West a new appreciation of family structure.

Chapter XVII by Imtiyaz Yusuf, "Islamic Culture Facing Contemporary Change," is a comprehensive overview of the essential characteristics of Moslem culture and its values, as well as its cultural diversity in the different regions of the world. This is followed by an analysis of its contemporary challenges in terms even of recent events in Afghanistan and in South East Asia.

In Chapter XVIII, "Cultural Identity or Change: On the Approach of Development Ethics," Charn Mayot critiques the technological and economic determinism which motivates the imposition of the 'market-economy' on Third World Countries. He finds usefulness in the mode of 'discourse ethics" (Habermas, Apel, Oser, et al.), but agrees most with the 'reflective middle-path' proposed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Southeast Asia can have its own 'development theory' which can help not only the East but the West too.

It is perhaps in the last two chapters that the theme of mutual giving between East and West is put to its greatest test, for it is not just that Southeast Asia has gifts thus far inadequately appreciated in other parts of the world, but that, like so many other regions, it teeters at this point on the brink of disaster and struggles to regain its equilibrium. In Chapter XIX, "Globalization and the Process of Khmer Culture," Chhay Yiheang takes up this challenge with a review of the needs and gifts brought to 'humanizing the future' by the experience and heritage of Cambodia. The author shows how Cambodia's tragic experience under Pol Pot should sensitize the world to the atrociousness of violence, even the fictional violence often depicted in the movies and on television. Cambodia's centuries-long religious experience teaches that 'more' is not always better, that 'civil rights' should not mean disobedience to parents, and that 'modernity' should not mean belittling what are often simpler local needs.

Finally, these concerns are addressed by J. Haryatmoko of Indonesia in Chapter XX, "Reorganizing Collective Memory and Creating Public Space: Toward Cultural and Religious Transformation in Indonesia." Haryatmoko directs special attention not only to relations with forces from afar, but between neighbors of different faiths and cultures. He deploys the modes of deconstruction and game-playing to urge healing upon the Indonesian people. Indonesia at its best is learning that differences are not a threat: rather, they are an occasion for intense communication

and for celebration of cultural richness. Literary discussion and story-telling can be vehicles for value-education, and can play a vital role in spreading a ‘culture of democracy’. Haryatmoko’s questions, like that of Rodney King’s “Can’t we get along?” are deep in the hearts of all peoples. This positive response from the peoples of Southeast Asia can bring rich contributions to the development of a new world order.

Part I
The Nature of Southeast Asian Cultures and Tradition

Chapter I
Metaphor and Narrative in Taoism and Buddhism

Vincent Shen

Mysticism: The Unfathomable and the Expressible

In this paper, I will try to analyze philosophically metaphors and narratives used for expressing religious experience, taking Taoism and Buddhism as my examples. Since the term "religious experience" represents a variety of experiences and therefore is imbued with many and diverse connotations, I will limit myself in this paper mainly to mystic experience in which there is manifestation of Ultimate Reality. The denotation of "Ultimate Reality" will vary according to different religious traditions and philosophical schools, for example, a Personal God in monotheistic traditions, the Tao in Taoist tradition, Emptiness in Buddhist tradition, Heaven or the Great Ultimate in Confucian tradition, etc.

Generally speaking, Western philosophy is built upon concepts and argumentations. For example, according to Kant, philosophy is a "knowledge gained by concepts,"[1] and, for G. Deleuze, philosophy consists in "creating concepts."[2] On the other hand, mystic or religious experience in its most profound dimension is a direct experience with the manifestation of Ultimate Reality, different to express in language; at its best, it can be told only with metaphors and stories. Asian philosophical and religious discourses, including those that are Chinese, though not exclusive to concepts and argumentations, quite often are expressed in metaphors and stories. The manifestation of Ultimate Reality in its multiple forms is the common ground of religious experience and philosophy. Religious discourse conveys this manifestation to evoke the original experience with Ultimate Reality, whereas philosophical discourse tries to put this experience within the range of human reason, sometimes in using concepts and argumentations, sometimes in appealing to metaphors and stories.

Mystic experience is interesting for philosophical inquiry to the extent that it is an experience in which there is manifestation of Ultimate Reality. In mystic experience, the abundance of Ultimate Reality comes to manifest itself by its own generosity to a spiritual being in total passivity. Yet, even in this experience of manifestation, there is still space for our constructive activity in the sense that representation and discourse can still intervene so as to convey its meaning; otherwise religious studies and religious narratology will not be possible. The compatibility of mystic experience with human reason is a typical case for showing that our experience of manifestation is liable to cognitive construction and, conversely, construction in our cognitive activities is related to the experience of manifestation. I would even say that in cognitive activities we construct in order to manifest, whereas in mysticism we experience a manifestation tending towards, but not restricted to, linguistic construction. Philosophy is related to the manifestation of Ultimate Reality in that, through the function of human reason, it takes the

[1] "Philosophical knowledge is the knowledge gained by concepts." I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A713B741, translated by N. K. Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 577.

[2] "La philosophie, plus rigoureusement, est la discipline qui consiste à créer des concepts." G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce-que la philosophie?* (Paris: les Editions de Minuit, 1991), p. 8.

initiative to articulate the reasonableness of this manifestation and put it into linguistic and conceptual construction.

In Asian thought, especially in Chinese philosophy, there is a larger and integral vision of the function of reason in the sense of an intimate interplay between the speculative, the practical and the imaginative functions of reason. First, the speculative function of reason, in reference to totality when grasping the Ultimate Reality in an enlightening insight, tends to form a kind of Original Image-Ideas. This is something between a pure Idea and an iconic/sonoric image, keeping the totality of the manifestation or its intuitive reception. Second, artistic creativity, with the imaginative function of reason and poetic transformation, renders this Idea-Image into a sort of concrete iconic/sonoric image and thereby materializes it. Third, the practical function of reason brings the Idea-Image into the judgment of events and the intervention of one's own action into the course of events and thereby takes responsibility. All together in the Asian and Chinese context, these three functions of reason collaboratively serve the self-understanding of these people in the formation of their personal as well as collective histories.

On the other hand, as I see it, the main stream of Western philosophy, at least from Parmenides and Plato on, consists in pushing the Idea-Image into pure ideas, and then, with intellectual definitions, conceptualizing these and relating one concept with other concepts in a logical way.[3] That is why, with Kant and G. Deleuze, philosophy is a conceptual enterprise. In a quite different manner, Chinese philosophy tries to retain the holistic function of human mind/heart, thereby keeping the creative tension of the Idea-Image. Then, when rendering it into philosophical discourse through language, it still keeps this creative tension in contact with images, sounds and plots. That is why the use of metaphors and narratives is a common practice in Chinese philosophy and religious thought, where discourse conveys ideas through parables, metaphors and stories understandable with or without logical argumentation. In Chinese culture, to tell a philosophical or religious idea is much more to tell a story or a metaphor than to propose a logical argumentation or to build an architectonic of concepts. But, even if so, the critical function of concepts could be helpful in detaching our mind from the reification of metaphors, which is something to be learnt by the Chinese way of thinking.

Philosophy should be conceptual and argumentative in part, but not completely. This is not to say that philosophy should tell only stories and evoke symbols of local cultural tradition. We could say that there are always some concepts and arguments in the narratives, yet concepts and arguments could also be delivered through narratives. Any radically and exclusively dualistic differentiation is already contrary to the Chinese wisdom of the Middle path.

The Representation of Manifested Ultimate Reality

Concepts are detached deliberately from images, things and events, and are defined and related one to another logically in descriptive and argumentative sentences and discourses. This detachment helps the human mind not to limit itself to the particularity of images, things and events, by paying attention to the abstract universalizability of concepts and the rigor of their logical relation. On the other hand, metaphors retain an intimate relation with images and events, being mostly related to one another by poetic sentences and narratives. But both concepts and metaphors belong to the order of representation, though differently.

[3] Such Pre-Socratic thinkers as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus. . .maintain an intimate relation to the original Ideas-Images, in relating, for example, *Arché* and *Physis* to water, the unlimited, air, fire, etc.

Representation is a mechanism of presenting our experience not in itself but in mental images, impressions, concepts, discourses, etc. In our ordinary cognitive experience, such representations as image and concept play an important role, serving as useful and necessary tools for our knowledge. Some philosophers would argue that we have non-representational knowledge, such as Henri Bergson's "intuition" of *élan vital* and *durée*, Heidegger's truth as manifestation, Gabriel Marcel's presence and participation, etc. All of these could be seen as very privileged moments in our life, and they happen in an unusual way. In ordinary life and scientific activities, we are in need of representations, both conceptual and metaphorical. But even these experiences of intuition, manifestation and presence should be intelligible and therefore expressible through language. That is, even if they are non-representational in nature, still they could be seen as compatible with representations in their expression. In other words, the knowledge that we have in our ordinary life and scientific activities are in the main representational and discursive in nature and in expression. Even if we could have some form of non-representational knowledge, such as intuition, manifestation and presence, these at least are expressible in a way compatible with representations. Any dualistic separation of them will eventually not only separate religious experience from our everyday life, but also render impossible all studies of religious experience.

Etymologically, the words 'mysticism' or 'mystery' come from a Greek verb, which means to close one's eyes or mouth. It is therefore related to the experience of silence in darkness. Since one's eyes and mouth are closed, and one's soul is immersed totally in the darkness and silence, there will be no representational and linguistic intervention. Yet, when we ponder the relation between the innermost dynamism of the human mind and Ultimate Reality, we should say that mystical experience, though beyond all representation, is still compatible with metaphorical and conceptual expressions. That is why there could be narratives of mystical experiences and narratological studies. To narrate is always to put into language by arranging plots in a certain linguistic configuration.

For example, St. Augustine narrated in his *Confessions* the mystical experience that occurred to his mother St. Monica and him. While leaning out a window and looking into the garden, all of a sudden their souls flew above all things including heavens, until arriving in the depth of their soul. In his words, "while we were thus talking of His Wisdom and panting for it, with all the effort of our heart we did for one instant attain to touch it," and then, "almost with a sigh, returned to the sound of our tongue, in which a word has both beginning and ending."[4]

If to any man the tumult of the flesh grew silent, silent the images of earth and sea and air; and if the heavens grew silent, and the very soul grew silent to herself and by not thinking of self mounted beyond self; if all dreams and imagined visions grew silent and every tongue and every sign and whatsoever is transient. . .they all grew silent, and in their silence He alone spoke to us, not by them but by Himself.[5]

This mystical experience is told in the context of a story. What St. Augustine described in his story is that, in his shared mystical experience with his mother, their souls transcended all bodies, earth, sea, air, heavens, dreams and images in a metaphorical way, and for one instant of spiritual concentration, they attained the wisdom of God, beyond all representations and languages. But, right after they returned to the sound of human language, they could state that, after everything

[4] St. Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by R.S.Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin Classics, 1961), p. 197.
[5] *Ibid*.

became silent, "He alone spoke to us." In this description of St. Augustine, mystical experience is not exclusive of expression by language.

Although mystical experience transcends all representations, there are religious meditations which begin by mental images, such as when Buddhists meditate on images of Buddha and bodhisattvas, Christians visualize the Virgin Mary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, etc. Their final intentions are common: to surpass all representations so as to attain the Ultimate or Divine Reality. These are symbolic representations, defined as representations pointing through present, sensible and thinkable signs, etc., towards a transcendent, invisible and unthinkable reality. They could be seen as a useful tool to arrive at mystical experience. Yet, to surpass representations does not mean to exclude representations. Even icons and music could serve to mediate ordinary experience and mystical experience. Our experience with religious music reveals a contrasting element in our experience of representations. Music surpasses concepts and language and makes us feel that we are approaching the Reality itself; yet, it still belongs to audible representation, which means that it is not incompatible with representation. In the same manner, icons, though belonging to pictorial representation, could nevertheless become the focus of silent meditation so as to evoke a feeling of mystery.[6]

From all this, we can say that symbolic representations could serve as a dynamic mediation between ordinary and mystical experience. The call for destroying images and denying representations responds only to the need to surpass representations in relief and in profile, but does not justify the position that mystical experience excludes any representations. The human soul could even attain the mysterious through the dynamic mediation of symbolic representations. The surpassing of representation and the attaining of Reality could be achieved by symbolic representation.

Interpretation of the Manifestation

The contrast between the unfathomablility and the representability of Ultimate Reality leads to the use of metaphor and narrative in philosophy and religion, as the expression of the Idea-Image, manifested in the intuitive grasping of the experience of manifestation. This could be considered as being already an interpretation, which consists in seeing or saying X as Y, mostly animated in a story plot. We can say that metaphor and the story in which it appears possess an "As-structure," permitted by the contrast between the unfathomablility and the representability of Reality. In philosophy, this use of metaphor and narrative is to convey, through interpretation, the Idea-Image in trying to keep intact the totality of and to make easily understandable the experience of manifestation, while in recognizing the inadequacy of interpretation to manifestation. Yet, in religion, the metaphor concretizes itself quite often in some religious figures and the stories become events of the revelation of religious truth from or to these religious figures, sometime presumed as real as possible so as to enhance the religious devotion.

In Taoism and Buddhism, there is a tendency to affirm the Tao or Emptiness as the Ultimate Reality, manifestable in certain privileged moments of life, yet in-expressible by any human discourse. For Buddhism, Emptiness is the Ultimate Reality, and the experience of emptiness is the essence of enlightenment and liberation, unspeakable, unfathomable, unthinkable. Since it is unspeakable, there is nothing to say, no dialogue; there seems to be no personal God with whom

[6] Just as Nicephoras (758-829 AD) would claim that icons were "expressive of the silence of God, exhibiting in themselves the ineffability of a mystery that transcends being. Without ceasing and without speech, they praise the goodness of God in that venerable and thrice-illumined melody of theology."

to dialogue. For Buddhism, presuming a personal god is a sign of inferiority in comparison with the experience of emptiness, or more radically, the emptying of emptiness.

Chinese Buddhism manifests three main meanings of "emptiness": First, the ontological level of emptiness means that all things come and go by dependent causation and therefore without any substance of their own. Second, the spiritual level of emptiness means that the spiritual achievement of a sage consists in total freedom, not to attach oneself to any achievement, nether being nor non-being, neither dualism nor non-dualism, neither attachment nor non-attachment. Finally, the linguistic level of emptiness means that all the words we use are but artificially constructed, without any correspondence to reality. Chinese Mahayana Buddhism would emphasize mostly the spiritual emptiness. For example, although these three meanings could be found in Seng Chao's *On the Emptiness of the Unreal*, he would interpret it, in appropriating Taoist language, as the spiritual achievement of a sage. Seng Chao says, "Unless one possess the wisdom and special penetrating power of a sage, how can he harmonize his spirit with the realm of either being or non-being? The sage moves within a thousand transformations but does not change, and travels on ten thousand paths of delusions but always goes through."[7]

Now, in order not to attach oneself to any horizon of spiritual achievement, a negative dialectic is necessary to depart always from any fixed position, such as shown in Chi-Tsang's *Treatise on the Double Truth*.[8] The first level, according to Chi-Tsang, is the worldly view of being, on the one hand, and the true view of non-being, on the other. Then, through a negative dialectic, one moves on to the second level, where both being and non-being belong to the worldly view, whereas non-duality (or centrality) belongs to the true view. Then, again through a negative dialectic, comes the third level in which both duality and centrality are worldly views, whereas neither-duality-nor-centrality is the highest truth. In his *Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, Fung Yu-lan errs in his interpretation of the Theory of Double Truth. Fung sees the point of this theory to be the denial of all one-sided truths.[9] However, the real point of the theory is to overcome any dualism rather than merely one-sidedness of the worldly view and the true view. The negative dialectics consists in first denying the dualism between *yu* (being) and *wu* (non-being), then that between two one-sided-views, and finally that between the one-sided-view and the middle (central) view. The true middle path is thus interpreted as neither one-sided nor middle, but realized in the process of negative dialectics as emptiness, which is freedom from all kinds of dualism constituted by sophistic discourse or playful discourse.

But, even if Buddhism looks on the enlightenment as an experience of emptiness, yet, since the beginning of Buddhism there has been a tendency to deify Buddha, and, since the beginning of Mahayana Buddhism, there has been a tendency to see spiritual freedom as based upon a Pure Mind, which led to the concept of Buddha nature in every sentient being in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. The reification of metaphor could be radicalized even to the point of seeing Buddha's relics as the presence of Buddha's body or even Buddha himself. All these, though used as metaphors when seen from the philosophical point of view, become so real in religious experience so as to be able to touch common believers' hearts. Historically speaking, we can trace the tendency of deification of Buddha back to the origin of the Second Council, in which was divided the Mahasamghikah (Section of the Great Mass) and Sthavirah (Section of the Elders). For the

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[7] Seng Chao, Chinese text of "On the Emptiness of the Unreal," see Taisho shinshu Daizokyo, A Vol. 45, pp. 152-153.

[8] Chi-Tsang, Chinese text of "Treatise on the Double Truth,"see Taisho shinshu daizokyo, Vol. 45, pp. 90-91.

[9] Fung Yu-lan, *Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), pp. 245-246.

Sthavirah, the human body of Buddha, just like everybody, needs clothing, eating, sleeping and medical care when ill, whereas Buddha's Dharmakaya (Spiritual Body) is perfect. But the Mahasamghikah asserted that Buddha is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient and living endlessly and eternally. That Buddha himself is in the Tusita Heaven, and never teaches in this world. He who teaches is merely a Nirmannakaya, a form of Buddha's appearance body.[10] Philosophically speaking, we can say that to deify Buddha is to respond to a need in the Buddhist believers to dialogue. There is indeed a need of dialogue with transcendent divinity in psychology of religion. When a Buddhist believer enters into a Buddhist temple to adore a Buddha statue, philosophically it should be seen as an act of enlightening one's own Buddha nature by approaching the light of Buddha, not as an act of worshipping a divine Buddha. But in fact, deep in the heart of every Buddhist believer, there is still a need for dialogue with a transcendent divine Buddha.

Let's come back to the problem of dialogue a bit later. Indeed, the need of image, seen as an interpretation of the manifestation, and therefore functioning as a metaphor, is inevitably strong in religious experience. For example, the visualization of Buddha was considered as the most important method in Hui Yuan's (523-592AD) *Commentary on The Visualization of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*, one of the founding texts of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. One hundred year later than Hui Yuan, Shan-tao's commentary, elevating oral recitation to a primary form of practice, became most influential in the orthodox Pure Land Buddhism.[11] Philosophically speaking, the methods of evoking Buddha, either by image (visualization) or by sound (oral recitation), should be based always upon the wisdom of emptiness and serve therefore merely as metaphors. Nevertheless, both sound and image have the tendency to concretize themselves in real forms. For example, concerning visualization, we find, in Hui Yuan's *Commentary on the Visualization on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*, a method of progressive imagery visualization: departing from the beginning visualization of the setting sun in this Saha world, the ground, trees, lakes in the Sukhavati realm, Buddha Amitabha and his attendants. . .etc. In the end, the most important three visualizations are those of the True-body, of the response body and of unrefined pure faith within visualization of Response body. To be more accessible for common people, Hui-yuan seems to emphasize the visualization of Response body as the main teaching of the sutra: "To visualize the Buddha as the body of the Tathagata who shares characteristics with a worldly body is called the Response body visualization."[12]

Concerning relics(sarira), although Buddha's Relics have the function of reminding us of the body of Buddha, and therefore possess the As-Structure of a metaphor, there is actually a tendency to identify Buddha's relics with Buddha's body. Philosophically speaking, even the body of Buddha himself should be seen only as the Enlightened of Ultimate Reality, therefore as a metaphor for the Ultimate Reality, though it is very often identified with the Ultimate Reality Itself. We read, for example, a narrative in the Lotus Sutra has such a kind of identification:

Shakyamuni Buddha with the fingers of his right hand then opened the door of the tower of seven treasures. A loud sound issues from it, like the sound of a lock and crossbar being removed from

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[10] The reason of this great schism is their difference in interpreting the status of Buddhahood. See Yin Shun, *A History of Indian Buddhist Thought* (in Chinese), (Taipei: Cheng-wen Press, 1988), pp. 61-63.

[11] I take Hui Yuan's commentary as philosophically more interesting than that by Shan-tao, although the later is more influential in the later development of orthodox Pure Land Buddhism.

[12] Kenneth K. Tanaka, *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine: Ching-ying Hui-yuan's Commentary on the Visualization Sutr*a (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p.120.

a great city gate, and at once all the members of the assembly caught sight of Many Treasures Thus Come One seated on a lion seat inside the treasure tower, his body whole and unimpaired, sitting as though engaged in meditation.. . .At that time Many Treasures Buddha offered half of his seat in the treasure to Shakyamuni Buddha,. . .Shakyamuni Buddha at once entered the tower and took half of the seat, seating himself in crook-legged position.[13]

As we know, the Many Treasures Thus-Come-One is the Buddha of the past, already in nirvana and buried in the tower; therefore that which could be found in the tower is but his relics. Yet, we read here his sound and gesture of invitation and offering half of his seat,. . .all these seems to suggest, philosophically speaking, the permanence of the Thus-Come-One. Yet, in the eyes of the common believers, this means that through Buddha's relics you can see the Thus-Come-One in himself.

In Taoism, the Tao is considered as the Ultimate Reality: not only ways followed by things and persons, but the Way Itself, the Ultimate Reality or Being Itself. Here the concept of "Being" does not mean negatively, as in the case of Hegel's Science of Logic, mere beingness, the most impoverished ontological determination without any other positive determinations. It represents rather the Act of Existence, though, unlike the *Ipsum Esse* of St. Thomas, or the self-manifesting Being of M. Heidegger, it is mediated by nothingness as marvelous realm of possibilities. It is not even a concept, because treating it as concept is equal to saying that it is merely a conceptual being or *ens rationis*; this reduces it to an ontic status where it loses its ontological meaning. That's why Lao Tzu says, "The Tao that can be told of is not the Constant Tao; the name that can be named is not the Constant Name."(Ch.1) In this way, Lao Tzu discards right from the beginning any possibility of reducing the Way to a mere object of science or discourse. In Lao Tzu's metaphysics, there is a going beyond towards the meontological, or, in other words, his ontology is complemented by a me-ontology, because he sees being and non-being as the two essential moments of the manifestation of the Tao. Non-Being is not mere nothingness, it is unfathomably marvelous realm of possibilities, transcendent to our grasping either by senses or by intellect, and to the moment of being. The manifestation of Being Itself is for Lao Tzu a dialectical process between being and non-being, thereby avoiding the hypostasis of the Tao as substance. For Lao Tzu, the dynamism and act of existence is more essential than substance, which is but a mode of being; Lao Tzu's metaphysics is never an ousiology. Nor is a theology, because for him "the Tao seems to have existed before the Lord" (ch. 4). God is but the Lord of the realm of being, whereas the Tao transcends being and therefore transcends God. God and the realm of being, in Lao Tzu's metaphysics, are derived from the manifestation of the Tao. It becomes clear now that Lao Tzu's metaphysics does not belong to what Heidegger calls the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics. Lao Tzu says,

There seems to be a state of undifferentiated whole, existing before Heaven and earth. Inaudible and invisible, it is self-subsistent and boundless, and could act as mother of Heaven and Earth. It's name is unknown, therefore I term it as the Tao. If I am enforced to name it, then I'll call it "the Great." Great means to depart from all boundaries. To depart from all boundaries means to be far off. To be far off means to return.[14]

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[13] Burton Watson, *The Lotus Sutra, translated* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 175-176.

[14] *Bamboo Slips*, Lao Tzu, Text A, in *Kuodian Bamboo Slips*, edited by Chin-men City Museum (Beijing, Wenwu Press, 1998), p. 112, my translation.

Undifferentiated whole, inaudible, invisible, independent, immutable, pervasive, ceaseless, great, acting everywhere, far-reaching and cyclical or spiral are then the characteristics given by Lao Tzu to describe Tao. Now we must keep in mind that these characterizations are but names given reluctantly, as Lao Tzu says, "If I am enforced to name it." Still Lao Tzu proclaims that he does not know its name. So the best name is the "il y a," the "there is, . . ." which points silently but eloquently to the Way, the Tao.

In Philosophical Taoism, the Tao as Reality Itself is differentiated from Constructed Reality, thereby leaving a space of passivity for humans to receive the generosity from the Tao. Yet in the Religious Taoism, the Tao is identified with Lord Lao who reveals the Tao to various historical and legendary figures. We can find stories that tell how the Lord of Lao comes to reveal himself, in his generosity, to different saints and sages in different time and different space.

For example, in Taoist Hagiographies, such as the *Biography of the Lake Dragon (Yu Long Chuan)* and *The Sacred Chronicles of the Undifferentiated Origin* (*Hun Yuan Sheng Chi*), *A Summary of the Chronicles of Great Highest Lord Lao* (*Tai-shang Lao-chun Nian-pu Yao-lue*, and *A Brief History of the Highest Undifferentiated Origin Lao Tzu* (*Taishang Hunyuan Laotzu Shihlueh*,[15] Lord Lao the God either reveals the Tao to philosophers and emperors or incarnates himself as Taoist founders, sages or authentic persons. Among these, the most important revealing events are: explaining the rites to Confucius; the writing of the Tao Te Ching; the appearance as the Master on the River, resulting in the Ho Shang Kung's *Commentary on the Tao Te Ching*; then the revealing of the *Taiping Ching* to Gan Chi, etc.,[16] Notice that in all these, revelation of the Tao into scriptures or texts is the most important event.[17]

We can say therefore, in religious experience the emphasis on concrete images might make the Chinese much attached to concrete images and signs, either through natural phenomenon, oracle slips or spirit writings. For example, the biography of Wenchang, the divine Lord of Zitong or the Master of Enlightening Transformation of the Ninth Heaven, included in the *Dao Zhang*, can be read as a revelation through such different means as natural phenomena, dreams, oracle slips, and finally spirit writing according to the narratives in the *Wenchang Huashu*. As T.F. Kleeman points out, "The Book of Transformation is a revealed biography of the god, chronicling his origins, his repeated incarnations in human form, the divine offices he held, and his failings and success along the way."[18]

I should point out here that, despite their founder's distinction between the Tao told and the Constant Tao, both philosophical Taoism and religious Taoism highly emphasize the Scriptures or

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[15] See, Cheng-tung Tao-tsang, Volume 30, (Taipei: Hsin Wen Fung Publishing House, 1994), pp.1-160, 161-167,171-206, 207-263.

[16] A recent study of the *Biography of the Like Dragon* (Yu Long Chuan and The Sacred Chronicles of the Undifferentiated Origin (Hun Yuan Sheng Chi) by Livia Kohn divides these instances of revelation into three types: philosophical (to the philosopher Confucius, or the philosophically engaged Emperor Wen), millenarian (to Ganji and Zhang Daoling, the two founders of Taoist Movements) and salvational (to Ge Xuan, Kou Qianzi, religious reformers to transform the entire world into an empire of the Dao). Livia Kohn, *God of the Dao, Lord Lao in History and Myth* (Ann Arbor: The Regents of the University of Michigan, 1998), pp. 291-309.

[17] Other earlier texts of Lao Tzu Ming (Lao Tzu's Inscription) and Lao Tzu Pian Huan Ching (The Classics of Lao Tzu's Transformation), was studied by Anna K. Seidel in her *La divinisation de Lao Tseu dans le Taoisme de Han* (Paris: Ecole Français d"Extréme-Orient, 1969).

[18] T.F. Kleeman, *A God's Own Tale: The Book of Transformations of Wenchang, the Divine Lord of Zitong* (Albany: State University of New York, 1994), xii.

texts. Religious Taoism is a religion relying very much on Scriptures and writings. We can even say that it is a religion of text and in Taoist religious rituals; it sacrifices texts instead of animals. Reflection upon text itself is also a specific characteristic of Philosophical Taoism. For this reason I will not make a radical distinction, as Fung Yu-lan did, between Taoist philosophy (*taochia*) and Taoist religion (*tao chiao*). This distinction is a bit too simplistic, without taking into consideration the essential connection between religious Taoism and Philosophical Taoism. The Scriptures of the Taoist religion include all the Taoist philosophical works, which shows that there is a textual continuity between Taoist religion and the Taoist philosophy wherefrom it emerges. Furthermore, Taoist religious masters call themselves *tao chia*. Fung supports his claim of a separation between Taoist religion and Taoist philosophy by saying that Taoist philosophy teaches that we should follow nature, but Taoist religion teaches that we should go against nature and try to prolong our lives as much as possible.[19] But these two ideas can be reconciled when we see that the search for immortality comes from the philosophical Taoist concept of conserving the wholeness of life. The search for immortality is thus the prolongation of our life as a unity with nature, and seeking immortality is in fact a continuation of the Taoist ideal of pursuing the wholeness of life and the natural.

A Taoist Theory of Metaphor

We can find a theory of metaphor in Chuang Tzu, a master thinker of classical Taoism in its second phase of development.[20] According to Chuang Tzu, the discourses he pronounced could be summed up as of three kinds: metaphorical discourse, hermeneutical discourse and de-constructional discourse.[21] Among these three kinds of discourse, the metaphorical discourse is the most fundamental because there must be first an enlargement of experience by emancipating it from the constraints of sensible data and logical reasoning in order that there could be a revelation of truth by hermeneutic discourse and deconstructional discourse.

The metaphorical discourse of Chuang Tzu consists in communicating certain experience of/with reality through concrete images, fables and stories. A metaphor means "this" when talking of "that." The reason why it could mean "this" by talking of "that" is that there is an analogical relation between "this" and "that." Contemporary discussions about metaphor emphasize only similarity between metaphor and the metaphorized. The "similarity" in metaphor is constituted of an analogical relation between what is said and what is intended to say, to the extent that there is a contrasting tension between similarity and difference. By contrast I would suggest a relation which implies not only similarity but also dissimilarity, not only difference but also complementarity, not only continuity but also discontinuity. Metaphorical discourse, in using this kind of tension, renders interpretation to the experience of manifestation and transforms the process of human thinking by a contrasting relation between experience and reality. Chuang Tzu says:

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[19] Fung Yu-lan, *Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1948), p. 3.

[20] For me, Classical Taoism consists of three phases of development: first is the founding phase of Taoism by Lao Tzu; second is its development by Chuang Tzu; third is its further development by the Huan Lao Taoism in adapting itself to the needs of the social political situation of the Chin-Han period.

[21] In the Chapter 27 of the Chuang Tzu, entitled "Metaphorical Discourses," we read, "Ninety percent of my discourse are metaphorical, among these seventy percent are interpretive. De-constructional discourse comes out every day to bring harmony with the measure of Nature."

The ninety percent of my discourses are metaphorical. This means that I rely on something external to discuss my messages. A father does not act as go-between for his own son, and if a father wishes to praise his own son, it is best to deny being the father. I will not take the blame for such methods -- the prejudices of others compel them. They agree with whatever is the same as themselves and oppose whatever is different. The former is right, the latter wrong, they say.

What Chuang Tzu says here as "relying on something external to discuss my message" means the same as "to mean 'this' when talking of 'that'." Chuang Tzu knows well that all enunciatively and argumentative discourses could lead to a situation in which people defend whatever is the same as themselves and oppose whatever is different from theirs. That is why he proposes to use the metaphorical, which permits us to see the world in the framework of "x as y." For example, in the first chapter entitled "A Free and Happy Excursion," Chuang Tzu tries to communicate to us an experience of achieving freedom in playing with the infinite by telling a story about the movement and transformation of k'un fish and p'eng bird. In the end of this narrative, he says that, "Only when one is charioted upon the eternal fitness of Heaven and Earth, driving before him the changing elements as his team to roam through the realm of the Infinite, upon what then, would such a one have need to depend?" "Then it is said, "The perfect man ignores self; the divine man ignores achievement; the true Sage ignores reputation."

This narratives communicates to us that life is born free, though conditioned in the beginning; then, by transforming from smallness to largeness, from lowness to highness, and by changing fundamentally its direction and accumulating favorable conditions, one could transcend all conditions and attain unconditional freedom in mystic communion with the Tao, the Ultimate Reality. This process of attaining communion with the Tao is too profound to be expressed straightforwardly as it is and is therefore only 'spoken out' through metaphorical discourse.

But this way of analysis of ours is already an analysis of the metaphorical discourses into some philosophical concepts. In fact, the core concept implicit in this beginning narrative of Chuang Tzu which we make explicit by our reading, is "freedom" which, in turn, includes such other related concepts as "conditioned freedom," "process of transformation," "unconditioned freedom" and "communion with the Tao." In short, the meaning of this story, which uses metaphors in narrating, could be made explicit through concepts.

Another Taoist experience with Reality is expressed by the narrative concerning Butcher Ting who, in cutting up an ox, acts in such a marvelous way that he slithered the knife with the musical rhythm of dancing, as good as an artistic performance. "All was in perfect rhythm, as though he were performing the dance of the Mulberry Grove or keeping time to the Ching-sou music."[22] This story tells how, with a life-praxis capable of grasping the complexity of life, one could eventually follow the natural rhythm and earn the way of freedom:

And now -- now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural laws, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are.

There are spaces between the joints, and the blade of the knife has really no thickness. If you insert what has no thickness into such spaces, then there's plenty of room --more than enough for the blade to play about it.[23]

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[22] *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, p. 50.
[23] *Ibid*., p. 51.

This story shows us --and in saying this, we appeal to concepts -- that, on the one hand, our life is situated in the context of an ontology of relation, in which all are complicatedly related one to another. By reason of this one should act according to the natural laws and follows things as they are. But on the other hand, there exist still possibilities of freedom -- "the spaces between the joints," in which one has "plenty of room -- more than enough for the blade to play about it." The ultimate experience of being in relation does not mean total determinism and does not deprive human being of their freedom. By contrast, the possibility of human freedom is not freedom in isolation and does not lead to chaos. There is freedom in relation, and there is relation in freedom. In other words, the relation we have is a relation imbued with freedom, and the freedom we have is a kind of relational freedom. Chuang Tzu's story of Butcher Ting tells us exactly the contrasting situation of relation and freedom, in which contrast means the dialectical interplay and mutual immersing between difference and complementarity, continuity and discontinuity.

By all these, I would say that the metaphors in Chuang Tzu's narratives are not against conceptual analysis. On the contrary, its philosophical meaning could be made explicit in referring to concepts. Nevertheless, the theory of metaphor implied in Chuang Tzu's narratives has its own specificity, to be made explicit in comparison with Western theory of metaphor. Briefly speaking, traditional Western metaphor theory could be said to consist of the following points: 1. The use of metaphor is limited to the level of terms. 2. The metaphor possesses certain similarity to its original term. 3. This similarity permits us to substitute the original term by its metaphor. 4. Since the use of metaphor consists only in substitution, it has only emotive meaning, and no cognitive meaning.

In contrast, Chuang Tzu's employment of metaphors shows, first, that metaphor is not limited to the level of terms such as "fish," "bird" "ox" "knife," etc, but rather is constituted on the level of discourses, that is, by stories constituted of the totality of sentences describing the movements of fish, bird, butcher and his knife. . .etc.

Secondly, in Chuang Tzu's metaphorical discourse, although there is always some similitude between metaphors and the metaphorized, the relation between them is not thereby identified with the *Eikon* (Aristotle) or Icon (C.S. Pierce). Fundamentally speaking, the theories of metaphor from Aristotle till its recent development in Pierce, Saussure, Jakobson. . .etc are all based upon the similarity between metaphor and the metaphorized. On the contrary, the function of metaphorization in Chuang Tzu makes use of the tension between similarity and dissimilarity to provoke the dialectical movement of our imagination.

Thirdly, Chuang Tzu's metaphorization does not consist in the substitution of the metaphorized by the metaphor. On the contrary, it tends to create a surplus of meaning by the dialectics of contrast between similarity and dissimilarity. The metaphors of Chuang Tzu do not use the substitution process between two similar terms to provoke our association. It is a work of creation rather than that of substitution. The logic of creation is a logic of contrast. They create instead a meaningful horizon capable of stirring up the ambition of our spiritual life, through the dialectics of contrast.

Fourthly, Chuang Tzu's metaphor has certain cognitive meaning. It provides us with certain knowledge of our spiritual life. This means that metaphorical discourse possesses not only emotional meaning, but also cognitive meaning. It is based upon this cognitive meaning that a narratology of mystic experience is made possible, although here the cognitive meaning is different from conceptual and logical constructs. The meaning of metaphors cannot be measured by the principles of verification, tautology or falsification. Chuang Tzu's metaphorical discourse possesses what P. Ricoeur calls a "surplus of meaning." It is not an expression of emotion, though it could achieve transformation of emotion by experiencing Ultimate Reality. As it reveals, Chuang

Tzu's metaphorical discourse conceives of truth as manifestation, not as correspondence. We cannot judge it as emotional and without cognitive meaning simply because it does not follow the concept of truth as correspondence.

We should say that metaphors in religious stories enjoy the status of a symbol. Symbolism is a way of using direct, original and literal signs to reveal a dimension of meaning which is indirect, derivative and figurative, the latter of which could be perceived only by means of the former. In other words, symbolism is a meaning pattern structured by visible, concrete signs pointing to invisible, abstract dimensions. The symbolized possesses a surplus of meaning over the symbol. The manifestation of Ultimate Reality is always more than that which is expressed in a symbol. Also symbolism is rooted in the deep dynamism of human nature. In psychoanalysis, symbols point to libidinal impulses and their mutual conflict in our sub-consciousness; in religious experience, symbols point to the manifestation of the Ultimate Reality.

Story: Emplotment and Dialogue

We have been analyzing the metaphorical side of religious narratives, now we have to come to its narrative side. Narrative consists of events organized by plots, which suggests that narrative is already a sort of construction. We have been analyzing the process from manifestation of Ultimate Reality to interpretation by metaphors, now it is time to see the process from interpretation to construction by the organization of plots.

Taking narratives as a construction, I would argue for a primacy of manifestation and interpretation over the structural aspects, such as the conceptual network and the resources of symbolization. Here I have a different understanding of the problem than P. Ricoeur, for whom these are the first anchorage of the intelligibility of narratives. In *Temps et Récit*, Ricoeur says, "The intelligibility engendered by emplotment finds a first anchorage in our competence to utilize in a significant manner the conceptual network. . . ."[24] By "conceptual network" he means terms we use to identify who, why, how, what, with whom or against whom, etc. For Ricoeur, the second anchorage is what he calls the "symbolic resources." He says, "If, in fact, human action can be narrated, it is because it is always already articulated by signs, rules and norms. It is always symbolically mediated."[25] Although I do not deny the role of these two anchorages in rendering narrative intelligible, I would integrate them into human experience of movement of events in time and limit them to the structural intelligibility of narrative construction, which presupposes always interpretation and manifestation

I would say that in narrating a religious story, the narrator, based upon an experience of manifestation and then interpreting it through metaphors, now comes to its construction with symbolic resources and a conceptual network. Yet, the listeners or readers might go the other way round. Through reading or listening to a story told, led by the conceptual network and symbolic resources, they may enter into a process of re-construction so as to reinterpret it and thereby have access to the manifested Ultimate Reality. They thereby own a world of meaningfulness of their own, which is the ultimate hope of every human being. We can say that narrative of this kind brings us hope.

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[24] P.Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit*, Tome 1, Paris: Editions du Seuil, p.88-89, English translation by K.McLaughlin and D.Pellauer, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 54-55.

[25] *Temps et Récit*, Tome 1, p. 91; Time and Narrative, p. 57.

As I see it, M. Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* has evidenced the process from manifestation to interpretation, whereas P. Ricoeur's *Temps et Récit* has developed the process from interpretation to construction. Basically, what the human being is longing for is the manifestation of the Ultimate Reality, yet the manifestation itself can only be grasped through interpretation by seeing or saying X as Y. With narrative construction, we can tell the story of our life or specific stories of privileged moments in our life, although it should always be retained that no manifestation from the generosity of Ultimate Reality Itself could in any way be exhausted by our interpretation and narratives. It is in this circular come and go between manifestation-interpretation-construction that religious narratives could be understood. In mediating between manifestation and construction, the process of interpretation permits us to put ourselves in time as organizable, in which we can have projects, prospective or retrospective. In this process, we can use signs and symbols to interpret events and actions and the relation between them. Then, based upon all these, we could identify, through the conceptual scheme consisting of who, why, how, what, with whom or against whom. We should not understand the primacy the other way round. It is here that I differ from P. Ricoeur, who sets up a priority of the conceptual scheme, and then proceeds to talk about symbolization before coming finally to the dimension of temporality.

I would even venture to say that, if there are events, actions and their construction through plots, it is because there is relation, interaction or dialogue with the other. Some contemporary scholars argue that there is no dialogue in mystic experience. In both Christian and non-Christian religions, there is a common belief in the unfathomable nature of mystic experience, that it is beyond all language and speech, *neti neti*, darkness, silence,. . .etc. This gives us a misleading impression of excluding dialogue. In fact many religious narratives are in the form of dialogue, including narratives for example, about the experience of enlightenment in Buddhism and the legacy of the Tao in Taoism.

In Mahayana Buddhism, where philosophically there is no need to refer to Buddha for dialogue, still we can discern a form of dialogue in which a great part of the Buddhist sacred texts appear. For example, in the Lotus Sutra, by far the most popular and influential of Mahayana scriptures in East Asia, we find the narratives of the impoverished son, as a story about the change of status via enlightenment. It would be very interesting to compare this Buddhist text with the narrative of the Prodigal son told by Jesus in the Gospels. Both see, either the enlightenment in the wisdom of Buddha, or the final happiness in God, as a kind of recognition of one's true identity and as a return to and enjoyment of the prosperity and richness of one's parent's home via the detour of misery and me-cognition. This Buddhist text is presented in form of a dialogue with the Buddha, in which the story of impoverished son was told by Monks to Buddha. In fact it is a story told within another story, which run as follows.

At that time, the men of life long wisdom,. . .gazing up in reverence at the face of the Honored One, said to the Buddha, We stand at the head of the monks and are all of us old and decrepit. We believe that we had already attained nirvana and that we were incapable of doing more, and so we never sought to attain supreme perfect enlightenment. . .now in the presence of the Buddha we have heard this voice-hearer receive a prophecy that he will attain supreme perfect enlightenment, and our minds are greatly delighted. . . .

World-Honored One, we would be pleased now to employ a parable to make clear our meaning. Suppose there was a man, still young in years, who abandoned his father, ran away, and lived for a long time in another land, for perhaps ten, twenty or even fifty years. As he grew older,

he found himself increasingly poor and in want.. . .The impoverished son drifted from one kind of employment to another until he came by chance to his father‘s house.[26]

The following story tells of the recognition of the impoverished son by his father the progressive arrangement by the father for the acceptance of the son and finally the public announcement of the identity of the son in saying:

. . . Now everything that belongs to me, all my wealth and possessions, shall belong entirely to this son of mine." Hearing these words, the son was filled with great joy and thought to himself, "I originally had no mind to covet or seek such things. Yet now these stores of treasures have come of their own accord.[27]

Then comes the explanation of the meaning of the story to Buddha:

World-Honored One, this old man with his great riches is none other than the Thus Come One, and we are all alike the Buddha's sons. The Thus Come One constantly tells that we are his sons. But because of the three sufferings, World-Honored One, in the midst of birth and death we undergo burning anxieties, delusions, and ignorance, delighting in and clinging to lesser doctrines. Today the World-Honored One causes us to ponder upon carefully, to cast aside such doctrines, the fifth of frivolous debate.[28]

As we see now, this explanation is proposed, in fact, not for Buddha himself, who could understand even with a smile, but for the heuristic use of the parable for common readers. Yet, even a smile is a sign, an expression of understanding or even of enlightenment. Here in this story, all understanding and enlightenment are put into a dialogical situation in which events are emploted to form a story about enlightenment. It is clear that the story itself is told to common readers in order to put them into the right track and the right doctrine, in abandoning other lesser or even erroneous doctrines. Nevertheless, the Story is a constructed reality for the use of human purpose, not for the Thus Come One. The context of dialogue and emplotment is for the purpose of readers other than the storyteller. The meaning of this story is to tell us of enlightenment as return to one's parents' home. In the story, the son is defined in relation to his other, his father; the impoverished is defined in relation to his other, the rich; the situation of misery is defined in respect to prosperity and joy. In the whole story, the joy of the son comes from the generosity of the father, which symbolizes enlightenment as coming out from the generosity of the Thus Come One, or Buddha.

Taoism holds that the Tao transcends all forms of discourse. Lao Tzu said, "Tao Itself could be told of, but the Tao told is not Tao Itself." Chuang Tzu said also, "Tao, existing beyond the limit of things, could not be supported by words and silence." Since Tao surpasses all forms of discourse, there seems to be no space for a dialogue with the Tao. But, from the fact that, though the human being could be in union with the Tao, the human being is not the Tao, therefore their mystic union must be a form of interactive union. In the case of Chuang Tzu, who preferred to talk about "Wondering with the Creator" -- "Above he wonders with the Creator, below he makes

[26] *The Lotus Sutra*, translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 80-81.
[27] *Ibid*., pp. 85-86.
[28] *Ibid*., p. 86.

friends with those surpassing life and death, beginning and end." Could we say that, in all these ways of wondering and making friends, there is no room for dialogue?

In fact, Chuang Tzu's hermeneutical discourse quite often takes the form of dialogue to express a kind of fusion of horizons. According to Gadamer, in the process of understanding, realized through dialogues, there happens a real fusion of horizons.[29] This is clearly exemplified by Chuang Tzu's hermeneutic discourses in the form of dialogues.[30] These dialogues between venerable or older persons in historical records are all reconstructed by Chuang Tzu's metaphorical discourses and original interpretations, and thereby attain a fusion of horizons in order to conserve in a creative way the truth revealed in them. What the Chapter "Under Heaven" says -- " He (Chuang Tzu) takes hermeneutical discourse as revealing truth" -- does not mean to repeat without any modification the words of venerable old men or traditional texts in order to gain credibility, but, on the contrary, to reveal the truth implied therein through dialogue, fusion of horizons and creative interpretations.

In the Chapter "Great Master," where Chuang Tzu talks about the Tao the Ultimate Reality and its effect on the practitioner, the Woman Crookback, old in years and whose complexion is still that of a child. This Lady told the procedure through which one attains the Tao,[31] and then traced the heritage of the Tao through its different stages to its origin:

Nan-po Tzu-k'uei asked, "Where did you happen to hear this?"

I heard it from the son of Aided-by-Ink, and Aid-by-Ink heard it from the grandson of repeated-Recitation, and the grandson of repeated –Recitation heard it from Seeing-brightly, and Seeing-brightly heard from 'Hearing-whispering', and 'Hearing-whispering' heard it from Needing-praxis, and Needing–praxis heard it from Breathing-songs, and 'Breathing-songs' heard it from Dark-Obscurity, and Dark-Obscurity heard it from Participation-in-the-'Unfathomable', and Participation-in-the-'Unfathomable' heard it from 'doubtful beginning'.[32]

Here Chuang Tzu uses the form of dialogue and metaphors to talk about the legacy of Tao, in saying that, first one learned from written tradition, represented by "the son of Aid-by-Ink." The Scriptures or Written texts seem to be then placed in the beginning position, and therefore the basic form of learning the Tao. Then, Scriptures or the written tradition they have constituted seem to come from oral tradition, represented by "the grand son of Repeated-Recitation." Then, oral

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[29] "Understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves." H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second, revised edition, English translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), p. 306.

[30] For example, in the first chapter we have the dialogues between Emperor Yao with Shu You, Chieh Wu with Lien Shu; in the second chapter we have the dialogues between Nankuo Tzuchi with Yanch'ehg Tzuyu, Emperor Yao with Shun, Yeh Ch'eh with Wang Yi, Chu Ch'iao with Chang Wutzu; in the third chapter we have the dialogue between prince Huei and his cook; in the fourth chapter we have dialogue between Yen Huei and Confucius. . .etc. There are too many of them to enumerate them all.

[31] ". . . It's easier to explain the Way of a sage to someone who has the talent of a sage, you know. So I begin explaining and kept at him for three days, and after that he was able to put the world outside him. . .after that he was able to put things outside him. . .after that he was able to put life outside him. . .he was able to achieve the brightness of dawn. . .he could see his own loneliness. . .he could do away with past and present,. . .he was able to enter where there is no life and death.. . .Its name is Peace in Strife. After the strife, it attains completion." *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, pp. 82-83.

[32] *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, p.83 [I have made some corrections in the translation.]

tradition seems to come from observation by keen eyes, represented by "Seeing-brightly," which in its turn comes from listening by receiving-ears, represented by "Hearing-whispering," which learned from praxis, and praxis from singing, which comes from unknown sources tracing back to the doubtful origin.

Yet, as is visible, this legacy of Tao is communicated to us through a form of dialogue. We can therefore say that even in the religious narrative about a mystic experience of enlightenment or with the Tao there should still be some sort of dialogue; the narratives themselves quite often take the form of dialogue. Indeed, the mystic experience of love, as a kind of communion in dialogue, is quite common in both Christianity and non-Christian mystic traditions.[33]

Conclusion

My analysis in this paper shows that metaphor, though different from concepts, yet is not incompatible with them. But the use of metaphors in religious narratives has the specificity that in permitting us to see or to say X as Y, an interpretation is made of that which might be undifferentiated and even unfathomable, yet is manifested to us in religious experience. Human experience is such that there is always a transition from manifestation to interpretation, although knowing that the interpretation never could cover the richness of the manifestation. With interpretation, human experiences tend to be configured as stories, in which there are human constructions of the intelligible part of experience through the emplotments of events and actions. The story-teller might follow the order from manifestation to interpretation to construction, whereas the listeners or readers might go from the constructed story, through interpretation, to have access to the manifestation or the religious experience in question, and thereby fulfill his/her hope in life. In some sense, we can say that narratives are meaningful because they bring with them hope, not only the hope for a better life, but also the hope of encountering the Ultimate Reality.

If there are stories to be told, it is because there is the other and our encounter with the other. Stories are always stories about one with the other, and are told always to another. In the case of religious narratives, the relation with an Ultimate other constitutes the gist or the essence of the religious story, or, in other word, the narrativity of religious narratives. The need of dialogue, either in form or in life, refers ultimately to the other, to an Ultimate other.

Openness to the Ultimate other, which keeps with it the unfathomability of the Ultimate Reality, is the assurance for religious experience against easily falling into an idolization of images or reification of metaphors, all in keeping the contrast, the essential tension, between the expressibility and the unfathomability of its manifestation. As to the function of human reason, the critical and self-critical function of conceptual reasoning, not to be limited within itself, could also

[33] Concerning this relation of dialogue, what Al-Junayd ibn Mohammad (?-910AD) said is most interesting for my philosophy of contrast: "The union of that which has been separated and the separation of that which was in union with Him, are both ideas of Separation implicit in perfect union with God." "I spoke when I was absent from my normal state and then an overpowering vision and a refulgent brilliance took possession of me. . .creating anew in the same way as he created me at first when I had no existence." "He causes to be intimately associated with the individual the manifestation of that wherein He clothes his elect. He has clothed them with the manifestation of that wherewith He has them in his thrall." See *The Resa'il of Al-Junayd,* in Ali H. Abdel-Kader, *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd* (London: Trustees of the E.J.W.Gibb Memorial), pp. 123, 153, 166.

keep the human mind on guard in an intellectual way against the idolization of images or reification of metaphors.

Finally, concerning the relation between Asian and Western religious experiences, what I have proposed in this paper, especially through discussing the relation between metaphor and concept, is a relation of contrast, which means the dialectical interplay of difference and complementarity, continuity and discontinuity, best exemplified by the structure and dynamism of Yin and Yang in the Tai-chi diagram. All while rendering clear the specificity of Asian religious experiences, it is more important to let Western and Asian religious experiences encounter each other. We should think in the manner of the Middle path, which, in respecting the differences, still cherishes the complementarity. Against the dualistic thinking in Western modernity, non-dualistic or even the non-non-dualistic thinking is the thinking of the Middle path, a thinking by way of contrast.

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Chapter II

What Can Be Called Tradition?

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Preliminary Remark

Much has been discussed about traditional values.[1] Thus one may raise the question whether discussion can add anything new to what is already known, and whether our proposed solution can be of use to the deadly antagonism between modernism (liberalism) and traditionalism (conservatism). With this consideration in mind, I will examine the dual, seemingly conflicting, essences of tradition: the useless *déjà passé* and the still useful *vivante* -- to repeat the jargon once used in the "Querelle des anciens et des modernes."[2] My analysis of this dual essence will follow the same pattern used by Benedetto Croce in his classic *Cio che e vivo e cio che e morto nella filosofia di Hegel*.[3] In our view, the "dead" and the "living" can be easily judged by their dynamic force, their generated utility and their aesthetic dimension. Thus, one may say with some certainty that only that tradition which can stand the test of time and confront the unexpected upheaval may be worth calling 'tradition'. Furthermore, only that tradition which is still beneficial and satisfying and more importantly, stimulates and generates new values, could be cherished and worthy of being preserved.

Guided by the principles of utility (preservation), progress (creative force) and aesthetics, my inquiry into the essence of tradition begins with simple questions like: Would we mind passing on (trad-ere, trans-ire)[4] to our own children what we may consider as useless, bad and dangerous? If

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[1] Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); Richard J. Bernstein, ed. *Habermas and Modernity* (Boston, 1988); Tran Van Doan, "The Dialectic of Tradition and Modernity," *Philosophical Review*, 17 (1994), pp. 129-162; Gianni Vattimo, *La fine della modernita* (Garzanti, 1985). The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (CRVP) (with its founder, Professor George F. McLean) has organized a number of conferences on the problematic of tradition and published in its series: George F. McLean, Wang Miaoyang and Yu Xuanmeng, *Chinese Cultural Traditions and Modernization* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1997); Miloslav Bednar and Michal Vejrazka, *Traditions and Present Problems of Czech Political Culture*(Washington, D.C.: CRVP, 1994); Liu Fangtong, Huang Songjie and George F. McLean, *Philosophy and Modernization in China* (Washington, D.C.: CRVP, 1997); Wang Miaoyang, Yu Xuanmeng and George F. McLean, *Beyond Modernization: Chinese Roots for Global Awareness* (Washington, D.C.: CRVP, 1997), etc.

[2] Cf. Hans Robert Jauss, "Ursprung und Bedeutung der Fortschrittsidee in der 'Querelle des anciens et des modernes'." In Helmut Kuhn and Friedrich Wiedmann, eds., *Die Philosophie und die Frage nach dem Fortschritt* (Muenchen, 1964), pp. 51 ff.

[3] Benedetto Croce, *Cio che e vivo e cio che e morto nella filosofia di Hegel*. English translation*: What is Living and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel* (London: In this work, Croce maintains that the philosophy of history of Hegel is already dead. See also Karl Loewith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (Holt, 1961), p. 133; See also Frederich Copleston, *History of Philosophy* (London: Newman Press), vol. 8.

[4] Tradition from the Latin *traditio* of which the verb *tradere* (*traditus*) originally means to "give over," to "give up," to "surrender," and to "deliver." Here, I wish to point out another character of tradition, namely its dialectical essence: what is delivered to us is no longer the same, but dialectically "negated" and

so, then what is passed on must be seen as valuable. From a reverse angle, one may ask similar questions: what would our next generations like to accept? There is no doubt that, like most of us, they would prefer only what they regard, believe and know as good, useful and beautiful. However, such an answer could hardly explain the fact, that human beings may hold to some traditions which do not follow these principles, or that not everyone shares the same beliefs, ideals or views. In order to understand such an enigma, my work is concerned not with the questions of "what is good?," "what is beauty?," or "what is of value?," but with the dialectic of the ideals and the means in the process of human search to satisfy their needs, interests and aspiration. By placing the question of value and tradition in the dialectical process of the ideals and the means, the individual and the social (universal), and in the context of the human search for a satisfaction of needs and interests, we may be able to grasp the paradoxical essence of tradition and its ambiguous force: it can be good, but it can be dangerous too. The main issue is no longer the question of "could traditional values be really valuable?," because it involves the irresolvable conflict between individual interests, tastes and ideals and universal interests, tastes and ideals. Conscious of such a problem, the questions of "which tradition could generate values" and "which tradition may bring more harm than benefit?" are the main subjects of our investigation. The answers to these two questions can be of help in dispersing the myth of the ideology of "eternal values" (conservatism) and that of an omnipotent modernism[5] (liberalism), and in clearing the prejudices about tradition as a "reactionary force," "useless relic," or worse, a "danger" and "obstacle" to human progress.[6]

My paper thus consists of two main parts: the first part concentrates on the question of "which tradition could generate values?"; the second part attempts to answer the question of "could traditional values be really valuable in the long run and in dealing with new problems?" The first question touches the metaphysical foundation of tradition, while the second question confronts its claim of a universal and lasting value. In this part, I will investigate the genetic process of tradition in terms of the genesis of values. Here, one finds a certain relation between the human search for survival, for a satisfaction of human needs and the idea of values. Only those which may secure human existence, and only those which may satisfy human needs, could be regarded as valuable. Similarly, only the ideas (culture, religions, morals) and the means (technique, skills, science) which can be helpful in preserving these values could be called tradition. Here, one clearly finds an internal relation of tradition to values. In the second part dealing with the question of the necessity of tradition, I will try to locate the essential (or basic) values and the inessential (or

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"sublimated" at the same time. Hence, the Latin *transire* means not only to go over or to cross, but to take a new form or to go into a new world. For a further more encompassing treatment of the meaning of tradition, see George F. McLean, *Tradition, Harmony and Transcendence* (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994). George McLean describes tradition thus: "The development of values and virtues and their integration as a culture of any depth and richness takes time and, hence, depends upon the experience and creativity of many generations. The culture which is handed on, or *tradita*, comes to be called a cultural tradition; as such it reflects the cumulative achievement of a people in discovering, mirroring and transmitting the deepest meaning of life. This is tradition in its synchronic sense as a body of wisdom." Pp. 9-10.

[5] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 302 ff.; Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

[6] See the critique of the protagonists of the May Fourth Movement in China at the beginning of twentieth century: Hu Shih and Chan Duxuo (*On the Object of the New Youth*) in *New Youth*, V, 4 (October 15, 1918), p. 433. For further information, see Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 289 ff.

accidental, or auxiliary) values to argue for the lasting and the temporal values. Here comes into play the factor of human freedom, or the human choice of tradition. In the conclusion, I argue for a kind of (rational) universal tradition free of any dominating character, which serves as the foundation to the process of globalization. Only in this sense, may globalization succeed in furthering (but not dominating) common (universal) human values.

What Can Be Called Tradition?

Here we shall attempt to investigate the internal relation between values and tradition. We begin with a question, seemingly strange, "what can be called tradition?" This question differs greatly from our accustomed manner of asking "what is tradition?"[7] By posing the question of "what can be called tradition?" I wish to raise an important issue of human freedom of choice, a choice in terms of the rational calculation of the purposes and means used the process of forming a tradition. Tradition is by no means a natural fact, a phenomenon, or an external value imposed on us. Rather, tradition reflects a choice in accordance with rational principle: we only choose, deliberately or involuntarily, consciously or unconsciously, what we regard as a part of our life, what lasts for generations, what could be passed on to the next generations, what may benefit. In a word, we take what is cherished. That means, tradition is called tradition only if it forms a part, a necessary part of our life; only if it preserves our life; and only if it could further or prolong our life. Hence, the main issue here of what could be called, or regarded, or categorised as tradition, must be seen from three aspects of human life: tradition as a part of life, tradition as a means for life-preservation, and tradition as a force stirring the development of life. The following section will deal precisely with these three aspects. In a word, tradition cannot be understood out of the context of values, and consequently, the genesis of tradition takes the same pattern of the genetic process of values.

A Part of Life. Let us begin with any fact, any custom (habit) long kept and respected by our society (the Chinese and Vietnamese society with which I am quite familiar), say, the custom of respecting the elders, especially the aged.[8] Such a custom, preserved for thousands of years and still kept (but no longer dogmatically) by Chinese and Vietnamese (and perhaps Koreans and Japanese as well), is regarded as a norm (though not a law) which these people ought to respect.[9] (The following analysis of the custom of respecting the elders would shed some light on

[7] The questions of "what is tradition?," "what is value?" just as the question of "what is it?" may reflect our curiosity, or our desire for better information, our quest for understanding, etc. They require an investigation of the meaning, the values. . .of tradition and values. However, they do not touch the main question of our freedom of choice, and of how we opt for such a tradition, or such a system of values. A great deal of debates on traditionalism and modernity have been centred on the question of "what is tradition?" Such a "tradition" of questioning tradition could not clarity the "inexplicable" reason of why some people may prefer, or even decide for some tradition which we regard as "irrational," "bad taste," "savage," "primitive," etc.

[8] Here one needs to keep in mind that the elder is the older (following the order in a family or a society), while the aged is the old man (woman). In our discussion, we do not make a clear distinction between the elder and the aged. In fact, the custom of respecting the elder includes the respect for the aged, since the aged is understood as the eldest.

[9] I do not know whether such a custom could be considered as a norm in other Asian countries like Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and others. However, as we will explain, the respect for the aged, long observed in the West and, of course, in Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, etc., is greatly different from the custom of respecting the elders in the Confucian countries.

the essence and characteristics of tradition, which may affect our choice, i.e. our attitude favourable or unfavourable toward a tradition.)

First, we observe that such a custom is not a law, especially a criminal law, or even a civil law, and there exists no clear indication of any legal suit, or criminal punishment in the case of this custom being violated. One may say therefore that such a custom can be at best regarded as a moral law.

Second, its rigour and its force far surpass civil and criminal laws. A law breaker may, in many cases, still be respected by the community,[10] but a violator of the custom of respecting elders would be despised, condemned and even rejected by the Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean and Japanese society. Thus, the punishment takes the form of a total rejection from the society or "self-punishment" expressed by the belief in the "sting of conscience" or "morbid conscience."

Third, its value is "universal" and "necessary" in character. It surpasses the border of any single field, the pragmatic or the metaphysical, the practical or the religious. It extends to the encompassing life-world of the Far-Eastern people. They take it as fact, as a sign of good will (good conscience, *luong tri*), as a symbol of nobility[11] and, in the mind of ordinary people, as a principle of utility.[12] In a word, it is an imperative in the sense of categorical imperative (but not identical to the categorical imperative of Kant), even if the custom of respecting the aged has no firm ground. It is not based on a scientific epistemology as in the Kantian deontology.[13]

Fourth, respect for the aged reflects the "religious" sense of the Far-Eastern people, while the respect for the elders symbolises the act of following social order. The aged here does not mean simply senior men (or women) in the sense of a man (woman) in old age. The aged represents the ancestors from whom we are descendants.[14] He reflects our root, and our future. That means the aged "binds" (*religere, re-eligere*) us in the same root or tradition. The aged furnishes the next generation with a feeling of home;[15] he symbolises what we usually call "home."[16] Thus, one can easily discover the "religious" dimension and the solemnity of the rites performed in any cult of

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[10] The so-called folk literature well received by Chinese and Vietnamese such as Sui-hu Chuan, which honoured those "who execute justice in the name of T'ien" even if they are *de facto* law-breakers. Similar examples are seen in Western literature, such as Robin Hood, as well.

[11] *Book of Odes*, ode no. 279; *The Analects*, 1:2; 1:6, etc.

[12] Toan Anh, Phong Tuc Viet Nam (Vietnamese Customs) (HCM City, 1998), pp. 190-2.

[13] One may be attempted to take the Kantian categorical imperative to interpret the Confucian moral laws in the way of some Neo-Confucians in Taiwan. By taking Kant's insistence on the identity of the means and the ends for example (Never take others as the means, but as ends), one may argue that the respect for the aged implicates a categorical imperative, because the act of respecting itself is both the means and the ends. Such an argument bypasses an important element of any categorical imperative: the act of respect does not include the responsibility of taking care of the aged.

[14] See my paper: Tran Van Doan, "Hieu Dao trong Dao Tho Kinh To Tien" (*Filial Piety in the Cult of Ancestors*), The Vietnamese Institute of Philosophy and Religion, (Washington, D.C., 2001).

[15] It is important to note that the Asians in general (including the Jews, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean) pay particular attention to "family-history." Each family keeps a family-register (gia phau, Chia-pu) recording their genealogy.

[16] The belief that the most important precept is "to recognise one's own ancestor, and to return to one's own root" (nhan toa quy tong) is still dominant in the Far Eastern society. The famous story of the Lee (Lyù) Family who, after almost 800 years of residing in Korea, had not forgotten their roots in the North of Vietnam is not an exception. The desire of "dying in one's own land" (nuoc nguoc ve coi) reflects this belief.

ancestors in the Far-Eastern countries:[17] the cult of ancestors is a form of solidarity, and an expression of the spirit which is living among these people.[18]

Fifth, respect for the elders (the aged) is a philosophy of life, as seen in Confucianism. Such a philosophy follows a pragmatic course and, at the same time, metaphysical principles. The idea of "respecting the aged in order to be redeemed with longevity"[19] is motivated certainly not only by the pure desire for longevity, but is a logical corollary of the Confucian principle of altruism: "Do to others as you would like others to do to you," or "Don't do to others what you do not wish others to do to us."[20]

Sixth, respect for the elders may be understood as respect for human wisdom. The general belief among Asian people that wisdom increases with age gives birth to the custom of regarding seniors as the most welcomed "wise judges" in the case of dispute or conflict.[21]

Seventh, the custom of respecting the aged is partly born in the spirit of utilitarianism. In an agrarian society, the aged still have a great role in taking care of the children, in guarding the house and in keeping the members of the family in harmony.[22]

Eighth, the respect for the elders may reflect a long hidden ideology, the so-called patriarch or matriarch society, which we unconsciously take for granted.[23] Thus, the authority (and wisdom)

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[17] Toan Anh, *Tin Nguong VietNam* (*Vietnamese Religious Belief*), vol. 1 (Sai Gon: Ho Chi Minh City Publ. Co., 1996), p. 23 ff.

[18] Unlike Western countries which give more weight to the birthday, the Vietnamese (and Chinese) take the "death day" to be the day to remember. In Vietnam, one commemorates the death of his or her parents each year. It is an important day of family gathering, more important than birthdays. See Quyen Di, "Sinh Tu Trong Van Hoa Viet" (*Life and Death in Vietnamese Culture*), Paper, Symposium on the Question of Death in Vietnamese Culture (Orange, 8. 1999); See Toan Anh, *Tin Nguong Viet Nam*, op. cit., p. 69.

[19] In popular belief: to respect the elders just in order to be rewarded with longevity (*kinh lao dac thoï*, or *jing lao de shou*).

[20] *The Analects*, 12:2; Chu Hsi, Lun-yu Chi-chu. The same "golden law" is found in Christian tradition: Mc 12, 28-34; Mt 7, 12; 1Ga 420; 1 Ga 4,12; 1 Ga 15.

[21] In rural areas where laws and law suits are still unknown, almost all disputes, especial those about social problems and family troubles, are solved by a group of senior men or women. See Toan Anh, *Phong Tuc Viet Nam* (*Vietnamese Customs*), *op. cit.*, p. 300 ff.; See also Phan Keá Binh, *Viet Nam Phong Tuc* (*Vietnamese Customs*) (Ha Noi: Van Hoa Thong Tin, 2001), p. 24, ff.; In the history of Vietnam, the seniors were even called to assist the King in the affairs of the state. Hoi Nghi Dien Hong, or the old form of parliament, consisted of the old men (and women) who were convened by the King of the Tran dynasty to advise the King in forming the resistance front against the invasion of the Yuan dynasty. In China, the custom of calling to the aged as "judge" is widely observed in rural areas. See Fei Hsiao-tung, *Rural Development in China: Prospect and Retrospect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[22] Various statistics and surveys of the young generations in Taiwan confirm this utilitarian principle. In 1991, three sets of statistics (done by a group of psychologists and sociologists of National Taiwan University, by the Academia Sinica, and by Soochow University) almost unanimously confirmed the fact that over 92%, 89% and 91% of the young people are willing to support the policy of "three generations under the same roof" (promoted by the government), on the ground of economic and social needs. See *United Daily News*, 27, Sept., 1991, col. 14.

[23] Sigmund Freud's interpretation of the deadly conflict between father and son as well as incest between the son and his mother (in the myth of Oedipus) as a permanent rebelling of the son against the absolute authority of the father in order to become the new patriarch, seems to be less than appropriate to Far Eastern culture. In fact, there were some princes who killed their father. However, the killing was certainly not motivated simply by their desire to become the real father with full authority, but because they wanted the

of the elders is considered as a divine gift. The Confucian golden rules, as well the quite famous *Xiao-ching*,[24] widely regarded as a book of laws, directly or indirectly confirm and fortify this ideology.

Ninth, and not the least, the psychological expectation and desire for security in the future play an undeniable role warranting the law-like status of the custom of respecting the elders. People rationally expect to be well treated by their children in their turn in the future (when they are growing old). Such an expectation is justified by the metaphysical principle of justice "to repay what we owe to our parents," and fortified by the belief in the dogma of "causal relation" which is stressed by almost all religions, especially by Buddhism.

Tradition as a Means for Self-Preservation

Our investigation into the reasons for respect of elders sheds some light on our understanding of tradition.

First, the Far-Eastern people chose, kept, and passed on this tradition not randomly, blindly or at the whim of rulers. On the contrary, they consciously guarded the custom and zealously defended it against any criticism. This suggests that their preservation of the custom was rationally calculated, as we have shown in the previous section.

Second, such a tradition does not benefit a certain individual or class (especially the ruling class), but every one. Its benefits are not limited in a spiritual award, or a simple moral achievement, but extended to all fields of human life, including daily life. In short, the benefits reaped from the custom of respecting the elders are almost "universal." The state could spare a huge sum of money; the aged has no need for pension or sanatorium, and less worry about their utility; young people could save the cost of baby-sitters, security guard, etc. The advantage of the custom of taking care of the aged in the Far East over the practice of "respecting the freedom of self-independence of the aged" of the West is no longer in doubt, especially in terms of economy, psychological security, and education. The small or non-existent amount of funding for aged-care in the Far East until recent times,[25] the low rate of suicide among the aged in China, Vietnam, Korea, etc., the healthy minds of those who are conscious of their utility and their responsibility to foster the next generation, all reveal a custom worthy of praise.26

Third, the tradition of respecting elders, especially the aged, is not an ordinary custom, as, for example, that of gift-giving (cash wrapped in a red envelope). It takes the form of religious dogma, and the cult of ancestors is as sacred as the cult of gods and goddesses. As such, it occupies an important place in our mind that could not be easily eradicated. The brain washing by the Cultural Revolution to eradicate this tradition was unsuccessful, just as its radical negation by Westernised

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absolute power of the King. Freud seems to neglect the difference between political power and paternal (maternal) authority.

[24] Xiao Ching (*The Book of Filial Piety*) or *Hsiao ching*, trans. by Mary Lelia Makra (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), and "Hsiao King," trans. by James Legge, in *The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879), pp. 464-488.

[25] Actually, with the exception of Japan, only a limited budget is prescribed to the system of elder care. With the deterioration of the custom of respecting the elders, Japan must spend a fifth of its gross total income to deal with pensioning, housing, and health care of the elders. One has to note also that the suicide rate among the elders in Japan is the highest in Asia. However, in comparison with European states, such a rate is still very modest.

intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century had little impact on the Chinese and Vietnamese people.[26]

Tradition and the Development of Life

However, the custom of respecting the elders is not the only miracle. One could hardly imagine any revolt against it if it were so good. Even if conservatives had tried to conceal its negative aspects, they could not absolve it from real troubles inherent in it. As matter of act, the negative aspects of the custom of respecting the elders are doubtless as abundant as its positive ones. The elders themselves have to acknowledge that the moral prescription of respect for them provides an opportunity of abuse of power, and a dogmatic blind obedience. Let us not dwell on these negative aspects that our predecessors had already detailed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.[27] It is sufficient to note that the hindrance to new approaches in dealing with new problems, the lack of courage among young people to take bold action in difficult times, the passive attitude towards the world, etc. -- all could be viewed as the bad fruits of our reverence for elders. Furthermore, once respect for the elders has been identified with a blind obedience to them -- as the elders often view it -- and once their knowledge can no longer cope with the new problems, then they become not only useless, but still dangerous for progress. Thus, one may argue that tradition is not a panacea, but, on the contrary, a cause of obsolescence.

Furthermore, such a critique is widely welcomed by financially independent people. They have no need of the aged in their family, since they own their own house, rely on their own job, and have a different plan of life. Their children are taken care of in the new institutions like kindergarden, schools, etc. Their urban life seems in strong contrast to the rural life. They are burdened with many more problems and new interests than a single individual or a family could solve or offer. And of course, they have more need for privacy and personal time. Besides, attracted by a new (mostly Western) way of life, new ideals, and new interests, young people feel themselves quite different, and even incompatible with the aged. Thus, the role of the aged and their utility diminish, or simply, are negated. Nowadays, the aged becomes not only useless but a burden. Once stripped of their labour, once their knowledge is no longer wisdom, and once their capacity to compete in the modern world is lost, then they become a burden to their own children. The use of the slogan "old cliché" in the sense of a reactionary force or obsolete knowledge, as an epithet toward the older generation, a common practice of the May Fourth Movement and Tu Luc Van

[26] Note that, heavily influenced by the process of Western individualisation, the practice of respecting the elders as well as the custom of "Three generations under the same roof" (*tam dai dong duong*) is being undermined. In the 1980s, the Taiwan government promoted the program of "*san dai tung tang*," but has regretfully misled it by concentrating on the problem of housing only. Since 1980s, Taiwan has experienced a rising rate of suicide among elders, and a wide dissatisfaction among them, although the government introduced a new, very costly policy of elders-care, beginning with a monthly subsidy, the so-called "respect-money for the aged."

[27] The very limited and temporal success of the May Fourth Movement in China, and of Tu Luc Van Doan (Self-independence Literal Movement Group) clearly testifies to the strength of the custom of respecting the elders. See Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement*, *op*. *cit*.; See also Emmanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 511.

Doan, has never faded away. Now it takes a new meaning: the (non-productive) longevity is no longer a blessing but a curse, the aged are no longer a sign of happiness but a burden.[28]

In fact, the liberal's critique reveals only the tip of the iceberg. Even without critique, traditional customs would crumble. They were no match for the new imported values (such as science and democracy) and new tastes. In a word, tradition may no longer be the treasure of values but a sign of wrong values.[29] Of course, the liberal critique (since the May Fourth Movement in China, and Tu Luc Van Doan in Vietnam) of tradition has not been quite convincing because they could not clearly indicate the real causes of the downfall of tradition. If tradition is diagnosed as a kind of "authority," "conservatism," "feudal system," "loyalty," "obedience," or "respect for the elders," then the liberal critique has missed the point, because the old customs like "loyalty to superiors," "respect for elders," "obedience to parents," etc. have not yet lost their value. The real causes making the Far-Eastern countries backward are rooted in the lack of rational thinking: liberals and conservatives alike had looked only to their own interests. They searched for some novelty which might fit their tastes and satisfy their curiosity. Since they regarded tradition or modernity not as a kind of value but as the means to warrant, or to get access to their interests; they did not take time to search for the long lasting elements, the real foundation of tradition. The price they paid for their myopia was quite high. The dark scenario of a rapid deterioration of morals and the breakdown of social solidarity in our modern society are no longer a prediction, but a reality. Adding to the moral and psychological loss is the high cost of searching for alternatives. The construction of expensive but less effective institutions to take care of the aged,[30] to house the homeless, to feed abandoned children, etc., reflects the damage caused by the loss of our tradition. The belief in a national system of health care, welfare, child daycare, etc., which can replace the old traditions remains, sadly, an illusion. By every effort, the state cannot replace the family, and laws cannot substitute for morals. Similarly, the artificial social contract can never claim to be real solidarity, just as respect achieved through education can never be a respect achieved through love.[31]

The Chinese Tradition as Rational Calculus

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[28] Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance* (Chicago, 1934), p. 44. Quoted by Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement, op. cit.*, p. 339. Hu Shih regarded tradition as the force against reason, freedom, glorification of life and human values.

[29] Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement*, op. cit., p. 302 and notes 53-55. See also Emmanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China, op. cit*., p. 498; John King Fairbank, *China, A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 268.

[30] 30 In 1996, the Ministry of Interior Affairs promoted a program giving individuals the right to establish a "home for the aged." In one year, there were over 1000 applicants. In 1999, the government had to concede the sad fact that 87 percent of private institutions were inadequate, that a horrible dissatisfaction among the aged could not be concealed, that private institutions (save the ones run by religious congregations) took advantage to make money, etc.

[31] The aged, even being taken care of and respected by others, still feel lonely and miserable. The incredibly high rate of suicide among the aged in Western countries, and in contrast, the very low rate of suicide of the aged in the Far East may verify our point. Vienna, Austria claims the highest rate of suicide among the aged in the world, although Austria is regarded as one of the countries with the best system of welfare. In Asia, Japan claims a high rate of suicide among the aged, perhaps because it is the most Westernised country in Asia. Japan is also the most advanced country in terms of welfare. Note that, though the rate of suicide among the elders in Tokyo is low in comparison to the West, it is already alarming to the Confucian states.

From the above analysis of the custom of respecting the elders, including indicating its benefits and its deficiencies, one has now some idea on how a tradition is constructed. Clearly such a custom can become a tradition, not simply because it belongs to the past, or because it reflects the mood of the people, or because it brings some benefit to a particular class, a certain society, or a certain individual and in a limited period. It becomes a tradition just because it generated and is still generating manifold values in preserving the actual state of the society, in keeping the stability, in running the household, in satisfying basic human sense of solidarity and love, in securing our own future, etc. Furthermore, its effect is still found in a wide range of encompassing spiritual, psychological, economic and pedagogical aspects. However, once its utility, its "value" and its power are reduced, or simply vanish, then such a tradition faces one of two possible fates: either it falls into oblivion, or it has to transform itself in order to survive.[32] In the last case, a tradition often becomes richer and more valuable, but also less pure.[33] The survival of a tradition depends on human choice, and human choice is a rational act calculating benefits and losses. Thus, one may say that tradition is not a categorical imperative,[34] but a rational calculation between benefits and loss. The acceptance (preservation) of tradition or its negation is therefore not a blind act. What the liberal movement raised up against the "old" customs like that of respecting the elders reflects their choice of new values, and their calculation of the loss they might face if they continue to preserve the old tradition. They knew too well that by sticking to tradition, they might have to forfeit their chance (or their right) to enjoy more freedom, or to enjoy their own life. And, as seen in the case of liberal intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century, they regarded tradition as a burden or, more strongly, an obstacle to economic development, intellectual reform and national renovation.[35] The question of whether they were able to free themselves from tradition is doubtless not our concern. As a matter of fact, they did not! Their problem lies elsewhere in their ignorance of the paradox of tradition: by freeing oneself from tradition, one has to rely on (other) tradition.

The Choice of Tradition: Dialectic of Ideals and Means

The above analysis of tradition suggests that any tradition may be ambiguous: it could be a blessing, but also a curse. Hence the attitude in favour or against a tradition is neither completely correct nor totally wrong. Actually, the objection to a tradition may suggest an acceptance of another tradition. The objection to Confucian tradition by the Chinese intellectuals in the May Fourth Movement forced them to search for a "new idea," which was none other than the Western tradition (from the Enlightenment). And even the rejection of a tradition does not mean that all of its characters are dismissed. The critique of the "old cliché," or the rejection of "Confucian" virtues such as loyalty and absolute obedience to the custom of respecting elders, do not totally negate other benefits from such customs. As such, the main point of our discussion is no longer tradition per se, but the question of our choice of a certain tradition, as well as the reason for our search for the fusion of traditions.

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[32] See my "The Dialectic of Tradition and Modernity" in *Philosophical Review*, 17 (1994), pp. 129-162.

[33] 33 Hegel, *Vorlesungen ueber die Geschichtephilosophie*; See also Karl Loewith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, op. cit., p. 133.

[34] We understand categorical imperative in the sense of an absolute command that we have to obey even at a heavy cost.

[35] Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement*, op. cit., p. 58ff. In the period of 1917-1925, tradition was condemned as "feudal," "reactionary," etc. while reform was hailed as "patriotic," "heroic," etc.

Tradition as Support for Life

The choice of tradition suggests that there exists a great deal of traditions (the old ones and the new ones) from which we are free to choose. Similarly, the selection (preservation or negation) of some characteristics of a tradition clearly indicates that any choice is rationally guided by interests. Here, one has to note that in suggesting we are free to choose from many traditions, we are not advocating the idea of a plurality of traditions of equal value. To argue that all traditions are equally valuable is to render moral discernment meaningless. The "post-modern" insistence on a pluralism and relativism of value naively classifies tradition in the same category of casual and personal taste, or hobby. In fact, the choice of tradition is far different from the choice of food, clothes, pets or games. It is not a matter of personal taste. The choice of tradition is a choice of a way of living, a choice of one's own existence. Thus, those who have a common way of living, common interests, common tastes, etc. may naturally incline to a certain tradition which may give them or provide them what they wish. In a word, human beings accept the same tradition only if they have many things in common. Thus, one can say that tradition is called tradition, or taken to be tradition only if this custom of living, this way of living, this mode of thinking, etc., preserve and develop human existence, or make our life meaningful.

Starting from such a principle, one may be able to avoid the radical view of either a total negation or an unreserved affirmation of tradition. Such a principle suggests that both the conservative view and the liberal view of tradition are insufficient. They do not grasp the nature and the essence of tradition. The conservative view tends to originate in and be cemented by the notion that human existence is basically invariable. Consequently, tradition reflects our invariable way of living. Evidently, if tradition is eternal, then the demand for a choice of tradition would be impossible. The less conservative or the moderate may tend to the idea that basic human activities do not change. Thus the traditions which reflect these basic activities also do not change. If one follows this kind of view, then one has no choice of the so-called traditions of "residual" essence (Giambattista Vico's and Vilfredo Pareto's view).[36] What we can choose is the "variant," or the "non substantial."

As we have mentioned, the arch-conservative view is no longer tenable in light of the scientific discovery of human evolution and historical progress. But the moderate conservative view may still attract us, since it contains some truth which no one could deny. As we have shown in our analysis of the custom of respecting the elders, its residual essence is seen not in its practical function, but in the deepest human yearning for longevity, the common human hope for eternity and in human compassion. These aspirations force us to search for a way to express, to satisfy, and to fulfil what the residues demand. Tradition, as such, reflects the way (method, means) of expressing, satisfying and fulfilling that proved to be successful in the long run. Yet, not all traditions are generated from residues, and not all traditions were taken by all of us, and not all of them were effective. Indeed, a great number of traditions seem to belong to the non-residual, or non substantial group. They are constructed from the way that human beings had adopted to satisfy their temporal needs and tastes, i.e. the needs and tastes found in a certain geographical area and possessed by a particular group of human beings. Since these traditions are born merely in a way of living of particular and limited characters, and since they are designed to satisfy non-substantial

[36] See Giambattista Vico, *La Scienzia nuova*, 313; Vilfredo Pareto, *Trattato di soziologia generale*, 23: Section 1,324. Such a view is echoed by structuralists like Claude Levi-Strauss.

needs and taste, they may easily fade away, once they can no longer satisfy us. They will be replaced by new needs and tastes.[37]

Therefore, the point to be sought is which tradition is of residual essence and which is not. To many social scientists like Pareto and Weber, residues have to bear in themselves permanent, invariant, fundamental, i.e. "archetypical" characters.[38] Residues consist of two kinds, the absolutely necessary and universal, and the relatively universal and necessary. Human needs for survival, for love, for longevity, etc., belong to the absolutely universal residues, while the needs for enjoyment, for better housing, eating, beauty, etc., belong to the relatively universal residues. The absolute residues are found in all people and in all times, while the relative residues belong to a particular group of people in a limited geographical space and historical age. With regard to the traditions constructed from absolute residues, one hardly has any choice. In the case of relatively universal residues, one is free to choose which tradition may be best (suitable, useful, social, etc.). The tradition of hat wearing by women in the Church or in ceremonies may be cherished in Great Britain, but less so in the States. Hat wearing in church or in a ceremonial place would appear strange in Chinese or Vietnamese society, however. Similarly, the custom of wearing suit and tie is relatively universal today. It can be seen in any society. But it has no obligatory force in Asia, especially in the Far East. Thus, one can hardly regard suit and tie as a custom of universal and obligatory force. However, to wear the best clothes in important ceremonies is a custom well respected by everybody in any society. In the Far East, such a custom is often regarded as a moral and social obligation. That means a choice of tradition is possible only with regard to the relatively universal residues. Such a choice is rational in the sense that it could not be made without careful consideration of the purposes, the means, the external (social) and internal (psychological) conditions of our acts, and of course, of our belief.

Liberalism vs Conservatism

In this context, both the demand for a total revolution negating all traditions and the call for an unconditional preservation of all may be false for a number of reasons:

First, such a demand is born in our inability to distinguish the residual tradition from the temporal one, the universal tradition from the particular one, the absolutely necessary tradition from the contingent one. On the one hand, to negate the absolute residues means to negate one's own life-world. However, on the other hand, zealously to guard all traditions, regardless of their practical values would suffocate life-world.

Second, they often lapse into the confusion between the ends and the means, the real and the ideal. A liberal view for example may be "liberal" in adopting the new means, but is not necessary "liberal" with regard to the ends. All scientists consider discovery, invention and progress as their aims, but they may adopt different methods (means), some very liberal, others very conservative.

[37] The custom of betel nut chewing for example is fading away in Vietnam, but is still popular in Taiwan. One of the many reasons explaining the dismissal of this custom among Vietnamese is due to their change of aesthetic view (the view considering white teeth more beautiful than black or coloured teeth, once popular among Vietnamese women in the North), and the growth of their health awareness. In contrast, the betel nut industry contributes to the prosperity of Taiwanese farmers, and to the living of a great number of people. Though discouraged by medical authorities, it is tacitly encouraged by the local government. Rampant advertising (mixed with sex appeal) of betel nut is therefore tolerated.

[38] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1956), vol. 1. Engl. trans., *op. cit.* p. 345.

A liberal may be "liberal" in opting for a new end, but he may continue the old way of doing research. In reverse, a conservative may stick to his old aims, but be open to new means (for example the high technology of computer science). He may consider the old methods as universally valid, but change his mind to a new view of science. In this context, it is difficult to pass a clear and final verdict on what is liberal and what is conservative. Karl Popper, a noted philosopher well known for his liberalism, is more conservative than his followers may imagine. His radical critique of inductive method, and his unconditional insistence on the deductive approach as the most scientific method for example is in fact a repetition of the method long adopted by Aristotle, and hailed by Descartes.[39] Furthermore, there is no demarcation between the liberal view and the conservative view with regard to the questions of the real and the ideal. As a matter of fact, the most conservative and the most liberal are often the idealists par excellence. They are very sensitive, however, to the real problems.

Third, there is neither an absolute liberalism nor an absolute conservatism on values and tradition. If value can be known, judged, and accepted by its practical usefulness, and if its usefulness is known by its effects (in solving problems, in discovering new problems), then value cannot be taken off from its context, i.e. our life-world. The human life-world is far different from the mathematical world due to its complexity and living character.[40] Thus, any conception of the life-world in terms of a one-dimensional world, any reduction of the life-world into a single aspect, and any understanding of the life-world in terms of ideology, etc., are malicious distortions of our life-world.[41]

Hegel

Hegel was well aware of the mistakes of the liberal and the conservative view alike. He understood tradition not as the relic of the past, but as a bridge toward the new values. In the logical context of world history which is guided by reason and which is constantly striving to the absolute spirit, Hegel conceived of tradition as a testament, or as the "child of a time," or as "the spirit of an age." As the product and the spirit of an age, tradition bears its main characteristics. But at the same time, motivated by the absolute spirit and forced by reason, tradition must involve itself in a dialectical process of *Aufhebung*. Tradition has to obey the rational law by "negating" its no longer rational aspects, and by "sublimating" them in order to become the spirit of the present age.[42] Philosophy, regarded by Hegel as the form of reason, is the force to reconcile the antinomy of diverse traditions, and to elevate (sublimate) them into a more rational tradition. Loewith brilliantly sums up Hegel's view: "Reason which is conscious of itself and reason as existing reality are united with each other; 'in the depths' of the substantial spirit of the age they are one and the same."[43] Hegel himself stated that tradition is not lost; it is retained in a more encompassing form:

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[39] Karl Popper, *Logik der Forschung* (Wien: Julius Springer, 1935) (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1976, 6 ed.); English translation by Leonhard Walentik as *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1975, 8 ed.), chap. 1.

[40] Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, transl. David Carr (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 27. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Transl. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), p. 9.

[41] Herbert Marcuse, *The One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 157-158.

[42] Hegel, *Vorlesungen ueber die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*; ed. Lasson (Leipzing, 1929), vol. III, p. 229; also vol. XV, p. 689.

[43] Karl Loewith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, op. cit., p. 46.

"The world spirit has now arrived at this point. The final philosophy is the result of all that has gone before; nothing is lost, all principles are retained. This concrete idea is the result of the struggles of the spirit through almost 2500 years (Thales was born 640 B.C.), of its most serious effort to become objective in respect to itself, to know itself: *Tantae molis erat se ipsam cognoscere mentem*."[44]

Hegel's view of tradition may be seen as a plausible corrective to the one-sided views of the conservative and liberal alike. In accordance with the logic of reason, "nothing is lost," "all principles are retained," and the historically subsequent surpasses the prior in terms of richness, depth and necessity. In our view, Hegel is too optimistic, and even dogmatic. Too optimistic because he unconditionally believes in the omnipotence of reason; too dogmatic, because he regards reason as the absolute God. If reason is absolute, if the absolute spirit represents the absolute value of all ages, and if it dictates history, then Hegel's claim that "nothing is lost," and "all principles are retained" may be an unnecessary tautology. The right wing of Hegelianism had found in Hegel a new Moses, and they exploited his views to the extreme to defend the (political and cultural) status quo. However, by sticking to the belief in the omnipresence and absoluteness of the spirit, Hegel's claim of a "becoming" world in terms of an increasingly perfected world contradicted the conservative view. How can the same become another by remaining the same? Hegel had to choose sides, either the camp of conservatism, according to which the dialectic is a mere slogan, and tradition contains universal and necessary essence which cannot be negated, or in the camp of liberalism which opposes any form of the status-quo.[45]

The point here is: which kind of tradition and which kind of reason does Hegel ascribe to humankind? His answer is unmistakably clear: there is only one and the same reason perceived by the Greco-Christian tradition and by modern science. It is precisely against this point that many criticisms arise. Hegel's thesis of reason's uniqueness leads directly to the view of a unique value based on reason. Of course, such a view is part of the tradition of Western rational thinking since Socrates. To Socrates, reason and truth were the only virtues for which one might sacrifice one's own life. For the Enlightenment, reason was the key to opening the door of mystery. Thus, as a true heir of the Western tradition, Hegel elevated reason to the absolute rank and bestowed on it a divine status. To follow Hegel's logic, one has to accept that (1) an absolute tradition based on absolute reason is a matter of fact, i.e. an undeniable truth, (2) that other traditions (values) are of inferior quality because they are the pre-moments of the absolute,[46] and consequently, (3) that reason demands that one has to abandon one's own traditions.

There is no doubt that Hegel might have contradicted himself when he entertained the idea of a continuous enrichment tradition, even if the enriching process is dialectical. How can the changeable remain unchanged? Indeed, Hegel rebuffed the critique of his adversaries by sophistically claiming that the changeable is phenomenal, that the negation is strategic (in the second moment) and that the self-preservation (in the third moment of synthesis in his dialectic) does not means a repetition of the same. The irresolvable point is that if tradition enriches itself by preserving the old values and by accumulating the new values at the same time, then any attempt

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[44] Karl Loewith, *op. cit*., p. 41; *Aeneid*, 1, 33.

[45] Karl Loewith, *op. cit*., Chap. "The Overthrown of Hegelian Philosophy by the Young Hegelians," pp. 65 ff.

[46] In his study of religions and aesthetics, Hegel had indeed regarded other religions as the pre-stages (and of inferior value) to Christianity, and other forms of aesthetics as preceding moments of romanticism. Cf. *Phaenomenologie des Geistes*, part on Religion.

to abdicate one's own tradition is foolish. The fact is a great number of traditions have quietly disappeared, so quietly, in fact, that no one may have taken notice of it.

Tradition and Choice

Of course, Hegel's deliberate attempt to stay the middle course mediating the extreme position of the liberal and the conservative has been futile. His ambition to preserve all values in the synthesis does not produce real conciliation. In fact, no reconciliation had been established, and the battle of modernist and conservative force still rages.[47] Conscious of such a fact, we follow a different pattern. We understand tradition neither as a relic of the past, nor as an expressive form of reason, but as "the chosen" in the context of a human life-world. Tradition does not follow a fixed pattern, and does not traverse history like a strait projectile. It may take a "discursive," "non-linear," "interrupted" course.[48] To us, tradition is regarded and called tradition only when a certain custom has been chosen and is still chosen by us. The "chosen" does not follow a certain system as reason requires. It is not determined by a certain form of reason, much less by the unique reason of unified science. It is chosen or selected due to a certain reason, to some reasons, or to many reasons which can be known only in the context of a certain life-world. The Far Eastern option for the custom of respecting the elders must have its own reasons as described in the first section of this work.

From this consideration, we argue that "what is passed on" is synonymous to "what had been chosen" by our predecessors, and "what is chosen" by us. We choose only what is best for us, or what is more suitable for us, or in the worst case, only what may do less damage to us. That means, tradition cannot be thought of in the absence of value of judgements and human choice. Hence, to follow a tradition is a matter of choice, and not a blind obedience to fate, even if this fate is constructed on rational principles. Following this consideration, we put forth the following thesis: The choice of our tradition is made by a rational and encompassing reflection on (1) whether this tradition could be of value to satisfy, defend or develop our basic interests; (2) whether this tradition could be of help in solving our problems; (3) whether this tradition may be compatible to our belief, our taste, our habit, etc.; (4) whether this tradition may become an obstacle to our progress, happiness, communication, etc.; (5) whether this tradition could be easily compatible, adaptable, or open toward the new way, new knowledge, new world, new taste; and (6) whether this tradition may cause less harm, milder damage in the case of being constrained, etc. In general, a tradition is kept and followed if it is still generating the above-mentioned values, or a part of them. Less frequently, one may keep a tradition but not necessarily follow it if its values are diminished or negated. In the rare case of dangerous tradition, one may simply drop it and replace it with a "new tradition" imported from other cultures. In other words, the choice of tradition, the will to keep or to abandon it, the attempt to develop or transform it. . .all are met on the basis of a meticulous calculation (or a computation, in Hobbes' jargon) of its positive aspects, or of the difference between its positive and negative aspects. A less meticulous, or irrational calculation, or a false computation. . .of the role and value of tradition, just as any biased prejudice nourished

[47] Juergen Habermas, "Modernity versus Postmodernity" in *New German Critique*, 22 (1981), p. 17; republished in Thomas McCarthy ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985).

[48] Michel Foucault, *Archeologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), Introduction. pp. 9 ff. See also Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Pantheon, 1971 reprinted), Engl. Translation: *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), Chap. 10: "The Human Sciences," pp. 344-387.

by hatred, racism and ideology against it would be judged “premature,” “immature,” “naive,” “ignorant,” or worse, “malicious,” “venomous,” etc.

Concluding Remarks

The analysis of the custom of respecting the elders yields a balanced view about the problematic of tradition. If tradition has been falsely taken to be the symbol of the past, or the ideology of power, or the means to defend the status quo, etc. then criticism of tradition may be justified. However, if tradition is understood in the context of human choice, and such a choice can be judged not by any external criterion, but by the criteria implicit in our life-world (i.e. a world in which we are actually living), then tradition means rather a continuous maintenance (and practice) of the means (concepts, customs, morals, arts . . .). The value of these means is seen in their utility for solving our problems, for keeping social stability, or individual security, for preserving an harmonious state, or for furthering progress. In other words, the value of tradition must be known through its generating force of solving problems, of preserving basic human needs (interests), of securing our life, etc. Once its values are diminished, once its values are dismissed, then tradition simply vanishes. Even if one tries to preserve it, it could hardly survive the onslaught of the laws of human history. Thus, our question of “what can be called tradition?” does not reflect the “living elements” and the “dead elements” of tradition only, but also points to the real fact that tradition cannot be detached from the factor of human choice and human history.

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Chapter III

King Bhumibhol's Model, Globalization and Common Values

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It is widely known that Thailand and some other countries in Asia have experienced difficulties since 1997. The economic crisis, or as some people call it: "The Tom Yum Koong Disease" caused a lot of people and businesses to go bankrupt. A Thai banker once said, "There are no more business tycoons in Thailand today. We just have yesterday tycoons." Many people blamed one another. Some said that the government was the main cause of the problems. Others blamed the business people who had borrowed too much in running their businesses. Others blamed corrupt politicians, corrupt government employees and corrupt business executives. Others blamed George Soros and hedge fund managers. Others blamed all the Thais who consumed more than what they could produce. Others blamed themselves and committed suicide. Others blamed WTO and free-trade policies. Still, others blamed the educational system of the country. Certainly, many people blamed capitalism, globalization and Western values. With regard to globalization, we may divide Thai people who are concerned about it into three main groups:

1. Those who totally adopt it.
2. Those who totally reject it, and
3. Those who partly adopt and reject it.

In this paper I will try to demonstrate that His Majesty the King's Model falls into the third category.

King Bhumibhol's Model and Whitehead's Art of Living

According to Whitehead, the art of life may be divided into three stages as follows (Birch, 1998:289):

1. To be alive.
2. To be alive in a satisfactory way.
3. To acquire an increase in satisfaction.

In other words, we may analyze Whitehead's art of living into three steps: To survive first, then to survive in a satisfactory way, and lastly to increase satisfaction. This may be shown in the following schema.

To increase
satisfaction

To survive in
a satisfactory way

To survive

Some people may think that Maslow's hierarchy of needs corresponds to Whitehead's art of living,[1] but I would disagree. It seems to me that what is lacking in Maslow's model is spirituality.[2] Even though Maslow's model includes physical, psychological, social and intellectual needs, it has no room for the needs of religion and spirituality. For Maslow's humanistic psychology, love or social needs imply only *eros* and *philia*, but not *agape.* And a man of self-actualization implies merely a worldly successful able person, not a saint or an arahant. In short, Malsow's model implies only science while Whitehead's model includes both science and religion. Thus for whitehead "to be alive in a satisfactory way" requires both science and religion. Whitehead sees the limits of science. Science alone cannot deal with all human experience and all dimensions of life. He once wrote:

Science can find no aim on nature: Science can find no creativity in nature; it finds more rules of succession. These negations are true of natural science. They are inherent in its methodology. The reason for this blindness in physical science lies in the fact that such science deals with half the evidence provided by human experience. It divides the seamless coat, or to change the metaphor into a happier form, it examines the coat, which is superficial, and neglects the body that is fundamental.[3]

However, to recognize the limits of science is not the same as to neglect it. Whitehead never rejects or resists science. Instead, he welcomes science the same way as he does religion. A main task of philosophy is to enable science to make friends with religion. As he said, "Philosophy. . . attains its chief importance by fusing the two, namely, religion and science, into one rational scheme of thought" (Whitehead, 1978:15).

His Majesty King Bhumibhol has established and developed his "New Theory" since 1988.[4] The new theory has been designed for Thai people especially Thai farmers who are the majority of the country. However, the ideas in the theory can be applied by all people. His Majesty the King's model of the new theory could be divided into three main stages as below:

1. To become self-reliant and self-sufficient.
2. To strengthen their communities in all dimensions through getting together in groups or cooperatives.
3. To get ready for contacting the external world, which is outside their communities, for the better quality of life.

From these three stages, we may interpret as: First to survive, secondly to survive in a satisfactory way, and thirdly to increase satisfaction. Like Whitehead's model, His Majesty's model includes wisdom, appropriate technology and spirituality. All steps are based on wisdom,

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[1] Maslow established that needs are in a rough hierarchy from lower-order needs to higher-order ones. These needs include physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualization needs. See Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954).

[2] 2 Another problem with Maslow's model is the wrong order of needs. I do not think that love comes after the first two needs as Maslow describes. Love always comes first. We are from love and always need it. It is obvious that even embryos and babies need love. According to the Christian model, love is both *alpha* and *omega*.

[3] Quoted by *Charles Birch*, "Processing Towards Life" in *Process Studies*, Vol. 27/3-4, p.289, 1998.

[4] See more details in the King's annual speeches given to Thai people especially from 1988-1998.

practical knowledge and Dhamma. The model is established for local contexts. The emphasis on the local may lead to the misunderstanding that this model is anti-globalization. In fact, His Majesty's model, if I am not mistaken, is neither anti-globalization nor pro-globalization. On the one hand, it is not anti-globalization in the sense that it has no room for globalization and that it restricts itself to locality only. The King's model is not any form of absolute conservatism. On the other hand, it is not pro-globalization in the sense that it always adopts, supports and defends all forms of globalization without critical reflection. His model is as holistic as Whitehead's. And like Whitehead's model, it strives for the higher quality of life.

Globalization and Postmodernity

In 1848 Marx wrote in his book *Communist Manifesto,* "A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism." In 1983 Portoghesi cited *Le Monde* "A spectre is roaming through Europe: the Postmodern" (See Docherty, 1993:1). At this moment we cannot deny that the words "Globalization" and "Postmodernity" are heard in almost every part of the world. Thailand is no exception. It is no exaggeration to say that we hear the word "Globalization" everywhere in Thailand through mass media while the word "Postmodernity" is discussed only among a few groups of people in this country. What are globalization and postmodernity? It seems to me that it is quite difficult to define each word with a single meaning, especially the word "postmodernity." Cahoone is right when he wrote:

Certainly the term 'postmodern,' like any slogan widely used, has been attached to so many different kinds of intellectual, social, and artistic phenomena that it can be subjected to easy ridicule as hopelessly ambiguous or empty. This shows only that it is a mistake to seek a single, essential meaning applicable to all the term's instances (Cahoone, 1996:1).

The term 'globalization' seems to be less problematic in its definitions. One clear definition of globalization is given by Apel. He wrote:

Globalization in our day has become a key word for a process that is primarily concerning an international expansion of economy, or more precisely, a systemic intertwining of financial capitalism and communication technology that seems to exceed any control by the nation state and hence by social policy so far (Apel, 2000:137).

Concerning with globalization, Kung draws the picture of the new millennium as follows:

1. The use of atomic power can be for "peaceful or military ends."
2. The development of communication technologies gives "excessive information that individuals no longer cope with because they are completely disoriented."
3. The development of a world stock exchange and a world money market is "beyond the control of any authority."
4. The development of gene technology "threatens to lead to monstrous manipulations of human beings and their heredity."
5. The development of medical technology "raises questions about the implantation and treatment of embryos in accord with human dignity, and also about dying and actively helping people to die in accord with human dignity."
6. The gap between the rich North and the poor South is so much enlarged that ". . .the impoverishment and indebtedness of the Third and Fourth Worlds. . .in the 1980s rose from 400 to 1,300 billion dollars" (Kung, 1992:409-10).

From the picture given by Kung, globalization, if we do not know how to deal with it properly, seems to:

1. Be extremely dangerous.
2. Be beyond the control of any authority.
3. Affect, more or less, directly and indirectly all individuals and the whole world.

To deal with globalization appropriately, what we urgently need is a preventive ethics. Kung wrote:

Previously, ethics has usually come too late, in so far as it is reflection on the morality of human behavior. Too often people have asked what we may do only after we have been able to do it. But for the future the decisive thing is that we should know what we may do before we can do it and do indeed do it. Ethics, although it is always conditioned by a particular period and society, should therefore not just be reflection on crises; those who constantly look in the mirror at the way along which they have come will miss the way forward. By means of prognoses of crises which take worst cases into account (as H.Jonas argues), ethics should be a prophylactic for crises. Leading ethicists now agree that we need a preventive ethics (Kung: 409).

It seems to me that globalization is based on modernity. Globalization is a process whose progress and development is based on at least three major modern revolutions: the scientific and technological revolution of the 17th century, the socio-political revolution of the 18th century, and the industrial revolution of the 19th century.

Now let us turn to postmodernity. If postmodernity, as some people may say, is identical with or the same as globalization, then postmodernity is not something detached from modernity. In this sense, postmodernity is nothing but ultra-modernity or excessive modernity. In other words, modernity is still an unfinished project as Habermas put it:

The project of modernity, formulated in the eighteenth century by the Enlightenment *philosophies*, consists of a relentless development of the objectivating sciences, the universalistic bases of morality and law, and autonomous art in accordance with their internal logic but at the same time a release of the cognitive potentials thus accumulated from their esoteric high forms and their utilization in praxis; that is, in the rational organization of living conditions and social relations. Proponents of the Enlightenment like Condorcet still held the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would further not only the control of the forces of nature but also the understanding of self and world, moral progress, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness (Habermas, 1992: 162-3).

If proponents of the Enlightenment or modernity holds that globalization and postmodernity are identical, then their argument may be shown as below:

Globalization is developed from modernity.
Postmodernity is globalization.
Therefore, postmodernity is developed from modernity.

If postmodernity is globalization, then it will follow that postmodernity is developed from modernity. Certainly, not all people would accept that postmodernity is developed from modernity. For these people, postmodernity is anti-modernity. Therefore, they simply deny that postmodernity

and globalization are identical. They may assert that we should not try to understand postmodernity in terms of globalization. For them, premodernity and modernity are recommended if we want to inquire into the nature of postmodernity. Habermas classifies people dealing with the problem of postmodernity into three groups: the antimodernism of the Young Conservatives, the premodernism of the Old Conservatives, and the postmodernism of the New Conservatives. He wrote:

The Young Conservatives appropriate the fundamental experience of aesthetic modernity, namely the revelation of a decentered subjectivity emancipated from the constraints of cognition and purposefulness and from the imperatives of labour and utility and use it to escape from the modern world. They base an implacable antimodernism on a modernist attitude. . .In France this line extends from George Bataille through Foucault to Derrida. Over all of them, of course, hovers the spirit of Nietzsche, resurrected in the 1970s.

The Old Conservatives do not allow themselves to be contaminated by cultural modernity. They observe the disintegration of substantive reason, the differentiation of science, morality, and art, and the modern understanding of the world and its merely procedural rationality with suspicion and advocate (and here Max Weber discerned a regression to material rationality) a return to positions prior to modernity. New-Aristotelianism in particular has enjoyed a certain success. . .Along this line, which emanates from Leo Strauss, one finds interesting works by Hans Jonas and Robert Spacmann, for example.

The New Conservatives take the most affirmative position on the accomplishments of modernity. They welcome the development of modern science as long as it oversteps its own sphere only to further technical progress, capitalistic growth, and rational administration (Habermas: 168).

As mentioned before, to understand postmodernity seems to be more difficult than to understand globalization because there are more different opinions and more controversies on the nature of postmodernity. However, among different models of describing the nature of postmodernity, I would agree with Kung's model. Kung makes it clear that postmodernity is neither contra-modernity nor ultra-modernity. Postmodernity, according to Kung, takes "modernity up into what transcends and replaces it." He argues:

Postmodernity. . .cannot be content with a radical pluralism or relativism which in fact are characteristics of the disintegration of late modernity. Randomness, colourfulness, the mixing-up of all and everything, the anarchy of trends of thought and styles, the methodological 'anything goes,' the moral 'all is permissible': this and similar phenomena cannot be the signature of the postmodern period. . .

However, postmodernity cannot aim at a uniform interpretation of the world in which we live. Nor can wholeness in the sense of totality and integrity and some premodern church integralism, or a 'essentialism or 'Neoaristotelianism' in philosophy', be hallmarks of the postmodern period either. . .Postmodernity in the sense developed above strives for a new basic consensus of integrative, humane convictions in a new world constellation towards which democratic pluralistic society is inexorably directed if it is to survive" (Kung: 413-4).

In order to clearly see the relationship between postmodernity and modernity according to Kung's model, we can put it into the following diagram.

From the above diagram, modernity (1) is "to be affirmed in its humane content"; modernity (2) is "to be denied in its inhuman limits"; and modernity (1) is "to be transcended in a new, differentiated, pluralistic and holistic synthesis" (1)+(3). Similarly, if we turn to the relationship between King Bhumibhol's model and globalization, we will see the same result as follows:

Globalization (1) is to be affirmed in its constructive humane values such as freedom, pluralism, respect, and so forth; globalization (2) is to be denied in its destructive inhuman characteristics such as materialism, hedonism, consumerism, and so on; and globalization (1) is to be transcended in a new holistic synthesis (1)+(3). Similarly, we can use this schema to demonstrate the relationship between the King's model and folk wisdom or low technology (premodernity) as follows:

From the above schema, we may say that folk wisdom or low technology (1) is to be confirmed in its helpful values, that folk wisdom (2) is to be rejected in its obsolete inappropriate values, and that folk wisdom (1) is to be transcended in a new holistic synthesis (1)+(3). In this sense we may conclude that the King's model is neither contra-globalization nor ultra-globalization, and that it is neither anti-locality nor ultra-locality.

Common Values and Multiculturalism

In our day the term "multiculturalism" is also often heard. In fact, the term is used in various contexts. It follows that the meanings of "multiculturalism" are many. People may use the term for their different purposes. Some people contrast the term to "monoculturalism" or "biculturalism." Others use it in connection with "culture" and "subculture." Some talk about it in terms of "cultural relativism" and "cultural pluralism." Others relate it to "intercultural" and "cross-cultural education." Yet for others it is used with "the politics of recognition." In education "multiculturalism" is used to refer to their educational reform movement that intends to equalize educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their different racial and ethnic groups (Siegel, 1999:387-8). Hoopes and Pusch wrote:

Multicultural education is a structured process designed to foster understanding, acceptance, and constructive relations among people of many different cultures. Ideally, it encourages people to see different cultures as a source of learning and to respect diversity in the local, national and international environment. It stresses cultural ethnic and racial, in addition to, linguistic differences. It is often broadened to include socio-economic differences (urban, rural, age/youth, worker/middle class), professional differences (doctor/nurse), sex and religious differences. Multicultural education refers first to building an awareness of one's own cultural heritage, and understanding that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another; secondly, to acquiring those skills in analysis and communication that help one function effectively in multicultural environments (Hoopes and Push, 1981:4).

Though there appear to be many meanings and uses of multiculturalism, there are at least two things in common. First, all uses of multiculturalism imply diversity. This fact often misleads some people because it makes them think that there is no place for unity in multiculturalism. Secondly, all uses of multiculturalism imply particularity or individuality. This fact also leads some people to a belief that there is no room for universality or commonality if we adopt the ideal of

multiculturalism. In summary, for some people, multiculturalism cannot and do not go together with unity and universality, so it may harm the society and the world at large.

How can multiculturalism get along well with unity and universality? Before answering this question, we need to reply first why we should value multiculturalism. Siegel's answer is clear when he says:

If we ask why we should embrace multiculturalism - why we should think that students with diverse cultural backgrounds should have equal educational opportunities; why students should (at a minimum) not be penalized for their cultural identities and commitments; and, more generally, why cultural differences ought to be acknowledged, valued and respected rather than denied, trivialized, ignored or decried, or the members of minority cultures oppressed by the hegemonic dominant culture — the answer given by advocates of multiculturalism is straightforward; it is *morally* required that we treat students with justice and respect, in ways which do not demean, marginalize, or silence them; and education which provides such opportunities.. . .is the only sort of education which meets this requirement. . .the justification of multiculturalism, in education and in general, is at bottom moral. . .(Siegel, 1999: 389).

Can we value cultural diversity and simultaneously embrace unity and universality? The answer can be positive if we define "universality" as "something applicable to all." There are two senses of "universality": ontological and phenomenal. Ontologically speaking, Nature is One. This One is "something given and surely applicable to all." Cultures are diverse, but Nature is One. All cultures are in Nature. In this sense, it follows that *diversity is in unity*. Phenomenally speaking, particular cultures have their own ideals and values. In other words, all ideals and values are born in particular cultures. Some ideals and values, despite their birth in particular cultures, are applicable to all cultures while others are not. All ideals and values that are applicable to all cultures can be considered as universal. All cultures that contain these ideals and values have unity in that they share "something applicable to all." In this sense, we may say that *unity is in diversity*. Hence Siegel is right when he says:

While as a matter of fact cultures do not converge on a universally held set of ideals, it is nevertheless the case that some ideals are universal in the strong sense that they are applicable to all cultures, even to those cultures which do not recognize them as such. To say they are universal is not to say they are from God or from Nowhere, but only that they transcend individual cultures in that they are legitimately applicable, and have force, not only beyond the bounds of the particular cultures in which they are acknowledged, but beyond all such cultural boundaries (Siegel: 4.7-8).

If some ideals and values are universal in that they are applicable to all cultures, we can harmonize multiculturalism with unity and universality. To adopt universal ideals and values in this sense is not to lose a cultural identity. For example, Thailand can still keep its own identity as such even though it uses modern science which was born in the West. Similarly, America will never lose its identity although it uses the Buddhist way of meditation which was born in the East and applicable to all cultures. Turning to the King's model, we will find that it has no problem with common values in the sense mentioned above.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Hans Kung

What surprises me is that the two great scholars, namely, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Professor Kung, seem to share a similar attitude towards "global ethics" in the sense that they do not deny common values even though they have different backgrounds and are from different parts of the world. In general, both Buddhadasa and Kung search for minimal values which are common to all religions, cultures and civilizations. We should not misinterpret them as trying to establish a new universal religion. Kung wrote, ". . .precisely as a theologian, my intention here is not to develop a terrifying apocalyptic scenario demonstrating our arrogance about our capabilities and then go on where possible to bring in the Christian religion or even the Christian churches as saviours from all ills"(Kung: 410). Professor Kung just focuses on a "necessary minimum of common values, standards and basic attitudes." To reach this goal, Kung seems to bracket his own faith as Apel put it:

For the Catholic theologian Kung this position seems to mean that he himself must be prepared to bracket the dogmatic presuppositions of his religious belief and that he can suppose that all religious and philosophical positions can and must do the same with all of their presuppositions" (Apel: 144).

Buddhadasa, on the other hand, has three missions in his life (Buddhadasa, 1985:3):

1. To see people study and reach the heart of their own religions.
2. To see people study and understand other religions.
3. To see people get together and join hands in weging war against materialism, consumerism, and sensual defilements.

Buddhadasa tries to transcend all the differences among religions and reach "global ethics" through Dhamma language. Human languages make people see only diversity or multiplicity, but Dhamma language makes them see commonality in different religions and cultures. Buddhadasa himself sees that all religions share the same end, means and result. The end of all religions is to be saved from suffering, the means of all is to destroy selfishness and the result is rescue from suffering (Buddhadasa: 41-42).

Conclusion

Each culture possesses its own heritage. Cultural heritage is socially transmitted from one generation to another. Ideals and values are among this transmitted heritage. They are born in particular cultures. However, when they are applicable to other cultures, we can consider them universal as proposed by Siegel. Multiculturalism should be one of the universal ideals in the age of globalization because it promotes equal opportunities for all people - regardless of their diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Simultaneously, the models as proposed by Whitehead, the King and Kung are also appropriate in this day because they can provide room for common values and globalization which is inevitable (no matter we like it or not).

Thailand is a country with its own cultural identities. Among our cultural heritage are the royal institution, religious pluralism and the family institution. Throughout its history, Thailand has never lacked scholars and wise persons. Among those wise people is King Bhumibhol the present king of Thailand. He is a great king who has always worked hard and cared for his people. The

problem is merely whether or not Thai people learn how to listen to him, reflect on what he has taught and put those teachings into practice in their everyday lives.

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Chapter IV

The Dance of Life: Leisure, Culture and Religious Experience

Sebastian Vadassery

Introduction

My fancies are fireflies,
Sparks of living light
Twinkling in the dark (Tagore, 1933)

Skipping over time, my mind is aglow with fancies of childhood twinkling in the dark folds of my memory like fireflies. The home where I grew up was near a temple dedicated to the goddess Kali. The temple festivals were dotted with religious dances by the devotees in altered states of consciousness. In contact with the goddess through the rhythmic movement of their bodies they were transformed into the goddess herself responding to the queries of the devotees. "Dance is of the greatest significance," writes Heiler (1961) "throughout the history of Religion: next to sacrifice, it is the most important cultic act. Indeed among primitives it is more important than sacrifice."[1] It is even a panacea to provide protection against illness and death and defense against demons and the like. Gerardeen van der Leeuw (1938) says that ecstatic dance transformed the dancer into a godlike being, where the devotee, overcoming the heaviness of the body through rhythmic movement, entered into mystical flight.

All religions offer liberation from the delimiting human conditions as the goal of life, which traditionally is known as enlightenment, *samadhi*, *moksha* or heaven. Religious experiences through rituals and ceremonies are personal experiences of Divinity that transform one and place one on the road to fullness of life. Like the temple dancers, man needs leisure to dance through life in order to experience its joy. Leisure, unoccupied time, is vital to reflect on realities beyond the shore of this life (Piper, 1948). The writer's contention in this article is that today one is too preoccupied with building castles in this world, leaving no space to appraise the deeper realities of life. Modern culture should provide opportunities for leisure to experience what is beyond man, if not, he will be totally self-absorbed. Thus the article considers the necessity of leisure in building culture and arriving at the self-exploding inner religious experiences that transport man to the other shore of life where he will be "fully human and fully divine."

The Questions

It all started with a fatal tragedy on the birthday of my friend. At a traffic junction, while waiting on a scooter for the traffic light to turn to green, a bus jammed us from behind. My companion was killed instantaneously; I was hospitalized. The ensuing crisis shattered my security as the leader of a Christian 'community life' into pieces of glass. Ever since I have been piecing together the shattered ideals of life. The questions confronting me were: what is life? Is it to follow

[1] *Kenosis* is the Greek term used by Christians for the process of self-emptying, while *Sunnyatha* is the Sanskrit having similar meaning and used by Buddhists.

a path dictated by a society or religion; or have we to make our own path in life? What is the real role of religion in life? Hinduism and Buddhism and the Abrahamic religions speak of rebirth. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again from above" (John. 3: 3). Is this rebirth the goal of life? If so is it to be achieved in another world or in this?

My answer was that our mothers gave us birth, society nurtured us, but it is the individual who has to bring about his or her own rebirth in life; rebirthing is of vital importance in life seen as a journey or pilgrimage. Speaking of journey, Sheldon Kopp (1976) writes: "In every age, men have set out on pilgrimages, on spiritual journeys, on personal quest. Driven by pain drawn by longing, lifted by hope, singly and in groups they come in search of relief, enlightenment, peace, power, joy or they know not what."

Rebirthing begins by becoming a seeker. We have many metaphors and stories of seekers in history. Jesus and Paul journeyed to the Judean desert, Siddartha Gautama to the forest of the Himalayan foothills and Mohammed to the cave of mount Hira of Mecca. Francis Bernardone (St Francis of Assisi) left his rich merchant father, even a political career to go into the cave of Assisi in search of meaning and became a mendicant. In our own times William James, Aldous Huxley, Mother Theresa, Buddhadasa Bikku, Krishnamurthi, Ramana Maharashi and others took the same path, leaving the secure life to enter into the darkness of uncertainty, not knowing where it will lead. Every person has to make his or her personal journey of rebirthing. It is not an easy task; there are natural enemies to be confronted, to which most may succumb. Most important of all is the fear of leaving a secure world for an uncertain one. If one overcomes fear and acquires clarity of mind this very achievement becomes the enemy by tempting one to cling to it and abandon the search all together, and so it goes. A complete emancipation is essential: total self-emptying, *Kenosis* or *Sunnyatha*1 is the first step towards the new journey. St. Paul, speaking of the need for self-emptying, writes to the Philippians Christians,

Let what was seen in Christ Jesus be seen in you. Though being divine in nature he did not claim in fact equality with God, but emptied himself taking on the nature of a servant made in human likeness and in his appearance found as a man. He humbled himself by being obedient to death, death on the cross.[2] (Phil. 2:5-8)

The journey is lonely; friends and family members do not understand. They think you are deluded to leave the secure life of power and position; they even persecute you for wandering from the beaten path they have laid out for you. Ironically, however, as the seeker gives up the securities he or she gains new freedom, becoming aware that at each point one must risk anew. Aided by the newfound freedom, one is presented with new experiences for which the individual is unprepared. One confronts new aspects of oneself, which, though wonderful, are also terrible. Willing to learn and yet confused when taught, the seeker moves on. (see Sheldon Kopp, 1976) Krishnamurthi speaking of his search writes: "I have long been in revolt from all things, from the authority of others, from the instruction of others, from the knowledge of others; I would not accept anything as Truth until I found the Truth myself." (Bancroft, 1976)

Leisure

The foundation for all cultures and religions is leisure. This is the freedom from time-consuming daily occupations to go into solitude in order to wonder and to search for the deep meanings of the realities of life, to know their depth and meanings. The early man had sufficient

[2] The Biblical quotations in this article are taken from "Christian Community Bible."

leisure to wonder at the surrounding universe and to build a culture, which developed into a religion. Whether Egyptian or Mesopotamian, Greek or Roman, Indian or Chinese, all cultures have their roots in leisure. (Piper, 1963)

Leisure and Western Thought

Aristotle, in his Metaphysics, emphasized the importance of leisure to know the 'meta' physics, or what is beyond physical realities. 'Skola' is the Greek term for leisure and from which derived the Latin Scola and the English, School, where we pass the wisdom of life gained from reflection to the coming generation. The medieval 'artes liberales' or liberal arts has its roots in the same tradition.

The Bible emphasizes the value of leisure by asking to keep the Sabbath holy. "For in six day Yahweh made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is in them, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why Yahweh has blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Ex. 20: 11). Relaxing, He viewed the universe He had created and saw that it was good and beautiful. He enjoined the Jewish people to keep the 'Shabbat'[3] holy in order to wonder and enjoy the beauty of life.

The New Testament community, the Christian Church, following the same tradition kept 'Dominica' or Sunday as the day of the Lord for worship and rest. It enjoined on all believers to cease from servile work and to celebrate with joy the liberation from the bondage of sin by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Through the Eucharistic or thanksgiving celebration, Christians were enabled to go beyond the ordinary humdrum experiences of living and enter directly into the depth of the source of life itself. Thus the entire creation took on a new meaning; it became a message or a love letter from the Creator.

It is said a boy one day ran into the studio of Michelangelo and seeing there a large marble slab asked, "Sir, what is this stone for?" Looking at the curious little face, Michelangelo replied, "You come back, son, after about three months and you will know what it is for." The boy ran away as fast as he came, but did not forget to come back after a period of three months. He was in dismay, seeing the beautiful sculpture of the famous David in the place of the marble slab. A beautiful David hides in all of us: we have to sculpt it and give it birth. It is only in the studio of leisure that we can fashion this David. (Deepika, 1985)[4] Parmenides (515-445 BCE) the Greek sage invites us saying:

Come now, and I will tell thee - and do thou hearken and carry my word away. The only way of inquiry be thought of, the one way that it is and cannot not-be, is the path of persuasion, for it attends upon Truth. The other that it is-not and needs must not-be that I tell thee is a path altogether unthinkable. For thou could not know that which is not (that is impossible) nor utter it, for the same thing can be thought as can be (construction as above, literally the same thing exists for thinking and for being) (Kolak 1990).

Today the call of Parmenides is unheeded as the noise of computers, mobile phones, cars and airplanes deafen our ears. For modern living these new discoveries are very valuable, yet the disproportionate emphasis on science and technology - neglecting philosophy and religion - has been causing concern to the thinking people of the world. The saying "the most civilized state isn't

[3] The *shabbat* comes from the *shavat* meaning to rest or to cease.

[4] A local daily in the state of Kerala, India.

further from barbarism than the most polished steel is from rust" is a truism. Jalaludin Rumi (1207-1273) writes,

> Little by little wean yourself
> This is the gist of what I have to say
> From embryo, whose nourishment comes from the blood
> Move to an infant drinking, to a child on solid food,
> to a searcher after wisdom, to a hunter of more invisible game. (Barks, 1997)

To become wise like King Solomon, we need to take time to reflect, to have leisure and enter into solitude. In pursuit of science, reflection will humanize us and lead us to a far greater degree of material wealth by eradicating poverty and diseases. This in turn will give us a greater degree of leisure to delve further into the depth of reality. This in turn will nourish the flowering of philosophy and religion along with technology, then we can build a "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1) as envisioned by the apocalypse. Then the human community will have attained maturity, as Confucius (551-479 BCE) had it;

at fifteen, I set my heart on learning. At thirty, I had already a good grasp of the rites and morals. At forty, I could form my own judgements of things. At fifty, I began to know the objective laws of nature. At sixty, I could know a man from his words and make a clear distinction between right and wrong. at seventy, I could follow my inclination without any of my words or deeds ever running counter to the rules (Kolak, 1990).

Leisure and Indian Thought

The Sanskrit term for Philosophy/Wisdom is *Darshana*, the result of encountering the Real. The Indian climate is warm by day and cool by night. Most early dwellers of the Indus valley spent their evening out in the open enjoying the cool breeze and the star-studded night sky with their minds soaring high. Leisure gave the Indian mind a natural penchant for reflectiveness. Some even retired to the forest looking for more profound tranquillity, serenity and freedom from the busy world. These forest dwellers were called *hrushi* or guru and some became famous by their wisdom. Narada Maharishi tells of this: "At last I went into a deep forest in search of solitude. Seated under a tree, in a quiet lonely place, I remembered what the sages had taught me, that God dwells within the heart" (*Bhagavatam*).[5] The villagers sent their children to these Gurus to learn to read,[6] write, calculate, and particularly gain wisdom. The language in which they were taught came to be known as Sanskrit, the language of the cultured; students were *vidhyarti*, seekers of wisdom. These first schools came to be known as *Gurukulam*,[7] or more often as*Asharama*. They were places of leisure, where freed from the preoccupations of life students devoted themselves in acquiring wisdom. The word "*shrama*" in Sanskrit means effort made to procure daily needs and "a," the negative article, gives the meaning freedom from time consuming duties and activities. The *hrushi*/ sages enabled the seekers to wonder at the mysterious universe and themselves as part of this universe, thus initiating them as seekers, often called *Brahmachari*. Another important quality of the seeker

[5] *Srimad Bhagavatam*: *The wisdom of God* is a Scripture of Hinduism, aside from the Vedas.

[6] The students are given different names like chela meaning disciple or sadhaka denoting as achievers of wisdom.

[7] The household of the teacher.

is *Jijnasa*, curiosity to gain wisdom. The Rg Veda "Hymn of the Origins" is a good example of the wondering and questing of early teachers and students and the answer they came to.

> In the beginning there was neither existence nor non-existence,
> neither the world nor the sky beyond;
> What was covered over? Where? Who gave it protection?
> Was there water, deep and unfathomable?
> There was neither death nor immortality
> nor any sign of night or day
> THAT ONE breathed, without breath, by its own impulse
> Other than that there was nothing at all. (*Rg.Veda* no.10: 129)

In this atmosphere of leisure the sages found that man is rooted in Nature, the Brahman, which is the ground of all existence. There is no finiteness for all is Brahman. Man's life purpose is to express the Infinite in his daily living. The whole reality is a unity. But when one identifies him with the multitude of impressions he is fragmented and dispersed, seeing everything as they and I. This is illusion, *Maya*, the unreality of life. From this illusion arises individual self, strife, competition and suffering.

Leisure gives man the time and opportunity to see the deeper realities of life, opportunities to free oneself from the limiting aspects of life that bring fragmentation and suffering. To understand the deepest human longing for spiritual fulfillment, India's great sages and philosophers devoted themselves to exploring and studying the range and depth of human experience. The wisdom generated by this quest cannot be condensed into simple formulas. Yet the insights of the sages of the Upanishads can be summarized as: "the fundamental energizing power of the cosmos and spiritual energy in human beings are one and the same. At the deepest level of our existence, human beings share in the very same energy that created the universe." Because of our participation in the Ultimate power (*Brahman*), it is possible to transform our superficial, limited existence into one that is free and boundless. Thus, the aim of life is transformation, a new transcendental perception of oneself and reality. These visions of participation in the Ultimate reality and the spiritual transformation of human existence have guided Indian philosophy, religion and culture through the centuries (Koller 1982). This particular transcendental vision of the universe and man led the sages to assert that perceptual reality is an illusion. The real perception is to see the indweller (*Brahman*) in all existences. But this perception of the world as illusion did not deter them from being engaged in the world as is witnessed by the great culture and religion they built. Writes Huxley (1987):

The world is an illusion, but it is an illusion, which we must take seriously, because it is real as far as it goes, and in those aspects of the reality, which we are capable of apprehending. Our business is to wake up. We have to find ways in which to detect the whole of reality in the one illusory parts which our self-centered consciousness permit us to see. We must not live thoughtlessly, taking our illusion for the complete reality, but at the same time we must not live too thoughtfully in the sense of trying to escape from the dream state. We must continually be on watch for ways in which we may enlarge our consciousness, we must not attempt to live outside the world, which is given us, but we must somehow learn how to transform it and transfigure it. Too much "wisdom" is as bad as too little wisdom, and there must be no magic tricks. We must learn to come to reality without the enchanter's wand and his book of words. One must find a way

of being in the world while not being of it. A way of living in time without being completely swallowed up in time. (Bancroft, 1976)

The Indian tradition of searching for the Eternal has continued through the centuries. History tells us that there were many sages, gurus and great institutions of learning in India. Thakshila, where the grammarian Panini taught in the 4th century BC, was one of the famous institutions of the time. Nalanda, Vikramasila, Dharmanikola, Banares, Navadisilpa and, in our own times, Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan and Visvha Bharati and many others stand as shining examples of the Indian search for Ultimate wisdom. (Radakrishnan, 1978)

Culture

Individuals are born into a culture and nurtured by it. Culture offers a particular worldview and a collection of reactive behavior responses, with many do's and don't's approved and cultivated by the culture. Charles Conrad (1989) says that "culture is a system of shared meanings that are expressed through symbolic forms, such as rituals, stories and myths that hold a people together."

Culture is the training ground where an individual's reactive forces or primitive drives are ground and shaped. The reactive power is inborn or genetic in origin and is schooled to ensure the safety and survival of the group and the development of the individual. Priority is given to the preservation of the group, for which even at times individuals are sacrificed. Cultural groups force individuals to follow set patterns, using "iron collars and torture" to train the individual's inborn tendencies or reactive forces. If the individual does not follow the beaten path he will be coerced, ejected from the group or even destroyed.

In prehistoric times certain behaviors and practices were found good for the preservation of the group. Often these behaviors were arbitrary, depending on the immediate situation; thereafter these behaviors became time-honored customs and even were sacralized and passed on to the next generation. Wanting to emphasize its importance, each group traced back its origin to a particular god whose chosen people they were and from whom the laws emanated. These cultural patterns and behaviors in the course of time gave man a new faculty -- that of memory -- not just to remember the past, but to act in the future. Culture thus formed men to be able to shape their own future and contributed to the growth of the group. It guaranteed the individuals right to develop and mature; these rights provided the individual with a framework within which he or she could develop. These rights of individuals and groups have been enshrined in various forms of constitutions. The patterns and practices may be different in groups spread geographically, but they shared the same goal of training the individual. These transmitted through rituals, myths and stories of heroes and heroines that facilitated the understanding of one another through behaviors common to the group. Thus one group may show respect by bowing or nodding the head, while another stressed the value of eye contact; still another avoids eye contact and so on. The truthfulness of the stories was not important, but they bound together the members of the same clan (Deleuze 1993).

Cultural patterns were created and developed by generations over the centuries. Often the architects of these were priests and shamans who had leisure to reflect on the fine aspects of life and were communicated to people through elaborate ceremonies and myths. What is important here is that cultures are the product of leisure.

The Worship of Power

The traditional meaning of the word science or "*scientia*" is knowledge or wisdom. For modern man, science has come to stand for the physical sciences that brought him untold wealth, comforts and power. Science created industrialized nations, our mega-cities and super powers. Whereas prior to the arrival of the physical sciences, cities were centers of art and culture, now they have become centers of industrial production and pollution. Science has brought stupendous progress to mankind, yet it has robbed man of his meaning, freedom and dignity. The two world conflagrations, and racial, religious and social conflicts are indications of this impoverishment. Realizing this, many in the industrialized world are moving to the spiritually-oriented cultures of the East to better engage their spiritual dimensions.

In *Elements of Encounter*, William Schutz (1982) writes that in human beings there are three strong primitive forces: power, sex and religion, which Gilles Deleuze (1993) calls reactive forces. History suggests that most wars were driven by these forces. Man seems to be under the grip of such drives. The events of September 11 and its aftermath, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian political-religious conflicts, and the ethnic struggles in Sri Lanka are examples of these. These drives are also making inroads into our personal lives and communities. The question becomes whether we are adversaries or partners in building a more humanized world! Power seems to be the dominant force. The struggle to predominate is played in almost every field of human life. What is the power for? Modern man has no leisure to relax and reflect on these realities; even if he has, it is to dissipate himself in pleasurable activities. Money, power, and sex seem to be the guiding principles today, but are they? We claim to be wedded to truth, but are we? Or are we fettered by our beliefs, myths and socio-ethical traditions, and enslaved to the need for power? Ramana Maharishi (1985), the Indian sage who sought after truth, says that "in order to be truly human we have to throw out all the age-old *samskaras* (innate unruly tendencies) which arise inside us. When all of them have been given up, then the Divine will shine in us." Liberation from these reactive forces in us is essential to become truly human. Jesus said "Truth shall make you free." All of us desire to be free, but freedom can only come through discipline of all reactive forces under the guidance of Truth.

There is a Greek myth about an innkeeper, called Procrustes, all of whose rooms had the same size beds. If guests were too short, he stretched them to fit the bed; if guests were too tall, he chopped off the feet or squeezed them to fit in. Like Procrustes, modern man measures life with the one measure of power, whereas a real self-actualized person, an *arhant* or saint, is one who has harmonized all the life forces within. The process of harmonizing is rebirthing. It is a hazardous occupation. One needs leisure time to reflect on his human nature and to harmonize it. Like power, *eros* is another force that swallows the *logos* and *agape* dimensions in life. Society has to provide the human person with the necessary leisure to contemplate the truth of life. The basic philosophy of man today is the Berkleyan principle: "to be is to perceive" (*esse est percipi*). S/he needs time to wade through all these impressions, to shape them, and so to reading one's unique identity. This will enable one to marvel at the wondrous creature he is and at his rightful place in this Universe. The Psalmist writes, "be still and know that I am God." (Psalm lxv. 11)

This brings to mind a little book written by Trina Paulus (1972), *Hope for the Flowers*. It tells of a group of caterpillars trying to climb a small mud heap, each trying to beat the others in reaching the top. One little worm became curious to know what is at the top. It asked those who were coming down, "what is up there?" "Go up and see for yourself," was their answer. The curious one climbed and climbed, often tumbling down and yet refusing to give up the climb. It persisted until it reached the top. Then it looked up and saw the naked sky. Disappointed and frustrated, it was starting down

when it saw a beautiful butterfly in rainbow colors flying over its head beckoning it to join in the flight to freedom. There is hope; life indeed is beautiful. Ours is a culture where the individual is pushed to climb higher and higher by using his fellowman as a stepping- stone. He is giddy with power, yet hungering for still more power, wealth and pleasure. But is he climbing to reach the top of nowhere! Perhaps he needs to make this climb to see its total futility. But we all have the choice to become a beautiful butterfly. For this one needs to move away from the achievement-oriented work a day life, to be alone. One needs silence to make the choice to be human, to be free, to be a person, a dancer in life.

Critical Consciousness

Paulo Freire (1993), the great educator points out that culture can enslave and prevent us from becoming who we truly are. Man is in the universe and with the universe. Alone among creatures he is aware of being part of the world, yet can also distance himself from it. Man alone is conscious of his own finitude and death. Man is not only a conscious, but also a free being, with the ability to create and shape his own future.

Man is genetically programmed to learn and to be open to new experiences. He is able also to reflect critically on his own experiences and either integrate them into his own person or reject them. This is being free. Cultures are necessary and good, but they can also become oppressive when imposed from above or when the cultural responses become ossified in the midst of a dynamic and changing reality. To perceive what is relevant and meaningful one has to develop a critical consciousness.

Freire continues that to exist humanly is to name the world, to engage in it and transform it. Dialogue is essential here for it is the encounter between men mediated by the world in order to name the world. Thus the role of men and women is not only to be in the world but to engage it through acts of creation and re-creation. Humans make culture and thereby add to the natural world which we did not make. We are certain that people's relation to Reality, expressed as a Subject to an object, results in knowledge expressed through language.

The essence of consciousness is not to be in the world, but to be with the world. To be in the world is to apprehend facts and to attribute to them a superior power. This is a naive consciousness characterized by fatalism, which leads one to fold one's arms, resigned to the impossibility of resisting the power of facts. But to be with the world is to develop a critical consciousness where reality is seen in its totality, not just empirically. To achieve this consciousness man must be in constant dialogue with the world. Yet for effective dialogue one must periodically withdraw into the silence of one's heart to consider. Speaking of being engaged in the world, Freire observes that profound silence is a sine qua non to see reality in its totality.

I obviously do not refer to the silence of the profound in which men only apparently leave the world, withdrawing from it in order to consider it in its totality and thus renewing with it. But this type of retreat is only authentic when the mediator is 'bathed' in reality, not when retreat signifies contempt for the world and flight from it, in a type of historical schizophrenia. (Freire, 1963)

Neither nature nor culture, man is yet part of nature and culture. Being critically aware of reality or critical consciousness takes one to the core of reality in its nakedness, peeled of all externals. William James (1950); the philosopher psychologist, observed that consciousness is a personal stream of thoughts, consisting of continuous thoughts, whose force, focus, content and direction these precede it. Man is aware of his thoughts, can reflect on them and welcome, reject or choose them on the basis of values (truths) dear to him. This is critical consciousness. To be

authentic to oneself as the image of God, the *Atman*, he has to choose critically what he wants to be or where he wants to go. *Atman*- realization is to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.

Religious Experience

Experience

Individuals faced with midlife crisis begin to ask questions like: What is life? What is the value of this power and wealth for life? What is the ultimate meaning of my existence? My existence was given to me as a gift, but what is its purpose? Individual answers may vary but for the writer, "life is a mystery that unfolds itself through living." The meaning of life becomes clearer as life unfolds through events and situations of everyday occurrences. Most of us go through life without questioning enough, which can lead to a superficial and unreflective existence. To live fully as Freire says, "problem posing" is essential. Reflective questioning is important for experiencing life which entails living an event fully. One has to step back and watch how life is unfolding, but this also be ready to engage events rather than living passively.

Experience is learning through direct contact with people, things and events or living these realities in their totality. It is the ability to assimilate perceptions and thoughts through questioning, evaluating, interpreting and conceptualizing. The interpretation takes place under both inside (genetic) and outside (environmental) influences, by what one is through past experiences that are part and parcel of one, and by the cultural and linguistic conditioning that surround life in the concrete. (Gelpi, 1999)

This implies that interpretations of experiences are open to fallibility, because they always involve guesses, hypotheses, and theorizing. This ought to be so due to the finitude and fragility of man. Yet in the human condition past experiences are essential to plan life ahead. Authoritarian attempts to coerce a particular interpretation rules out new experiences, which is suicidal to human growth which is enriched by, and grows through, experiences.

Each human individual is a unified whole through an integration of experiences with his self. The human person is an integral organism; it is the inner unifying principle within that integrates all the experiences. It is said, "God write laws not in the pages of books but in your hearts and in your spirit. They are in your breath, your blood, your bone, in your flesh, your bowels, your eyes, your ears and in every little part of your body" (*Gospel of Peace*, 1970). The spirit of God within that is the source of all life. There is an Indian parable of a musk deer whose glands come active at mating season. The deer is so taken with the entrancing scent, it begins to run through the forest seeking the source of the scent. The frenzied deer may lose all sense of direction and become entangled in underbrush or even plunge off a cliff. Frantically seeking musk without, the deer will never discover the source of the odor – within itself.

There are two ways of interpreting experiences: reason and faith. Reason operates autonomously according to the principles of the empirical scientific method and the historical critical method. Faith offers interpretation in depth. Faith, says Smith (1979), is one's orientation or total response to oneself, others, the universe and God -- a transcendental worldview. It reflects the human capacity to see, feel, and act in transcendental terms as an essential human quality. It is a transpersonal, God-centered interpretation. From this perspective the inner interpretation of experiences takes place, while external or cultural interpretations come from socio-cultural situations through the centuries. Smith (1963) notes that these cumulative traditions are human constructs offered as a means of making the dynamic flow of human history intelligible, referring

to all observable contents – temples, rituals, scriptures, myths, moral codes, social institutions. These are accumulated over time and passed on to succeeding generations, each contributing something of their own, and resulting in each generation's distinctive character.

Faith is living human existence at its deepest level, in which we share the same energy or power that created the universe. Because of this it is possible to transfer our superficial limited existences into boundless existences. This transformation of existences can result only if there is leisure to reflect on life's deeper experiences. (J. Koller, 1988)

The creative energy or the Spirit is not limited either by form or formlessness. The Spirit can be in any form or even formlessness; it appears in the form that the devotees imagine it. Thus those who are very devotional often choose to worship God with forms, a God they can visualize and represent with images. Others believing in a formless Spirit, conceive God more abstractly as pure light, love or cosmic consciousness. Quoting Ramakrishna, the Indian sage, Nihilanada (1948) writes, "You may believe in a God without form but never for a moment think that this alone is true and all else is false. Remember, too, that God with form is as just and true as without form. Whatever way you want him to be, hold fast to your own conviction."[8]

Whatever be your perception of the Ultimate Reality, it is beyond all, transcendent and yet immanent. Divine reality is not fully explainable by our reason. He is the Being beyond all, yet He is part of all. He is the ground of all being; as Paul would say, "It is in Him we move and have our being," and referring to God's indwelling the Gospels say, "the Kingdom of God is within you." Reason, which works through analysis and argument, is not capable of apprehending the depth and profundity of Reality in its deepest sense. The Godhead, Nirguna Brahman,[9] is beyond all comprehension, division or differences. It is pure existence. Yet this pure existence is part and parcel of all existences; it is the being and ground of all being, the Lord who exist in the heart of all existences. Leisure with reflection, prayer and meditation assisted by Divine grace (Madvacharya, c.1220 & St. Bonaventure, 1221-1274) will take us to the heart of the Universe. There in the center of our existence in complete surrender in love to the Divine Reality, the seeker can hope for the transformation of life.

Religion and Experience

Experiences, religious experiences in particular, are unique and personal. Their origin and foundation are the private feelings that arise in the very recesses of one's being. William James (1888) in his *Varieties of Religious Experiences* says that personal religious experiences have their root and center in the mystical states of consciousness. He calls this the 'mystical germ', the core of religious experience. Rituals, creeds and dogmas are the results of past religious experiences of individuals, which were stratified. These may evoke religious experiences but are not the experiences of man here and now.

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[8] It is interesting to note that established religions codified different pathways of approaching the Divine according to the psychological make up of individuals. There is a striking similarity between pathways given by Christianity and Hinduism -purgative way (*yoga marga*), illuminative way (*jnana marga*), and unitive way (*bakti marga*).

[9] Indian Philosophy has a two dimensional perspective of God. Nirguna Bhraman literally means Bhraman without qualification, referring to the Uncreated Immensity beyond, which no one can name, and Saguna Bhraman meaning the Bhraman, who can be qualified, pointing to the Immensity that is manifest as the world.

Religious belief confronts every person at some stage of the individual's life, demanding a choice either for or against. If one makes a choice for belief, it makes a significant difference in his life. William James holds that an individual can make the choice on the basis of two modes of judgement concerning belief: an existential judgement, which looks at the historical phenomena of belief; and the spiritual judgment, which looks at the personal value, significance and meaning of belief. James believed it was the choice founded on spiritual judgment that brings a luminosity and moral power for transformation.

Religious experiences, being very personal, differ from person to person. This is because they emerge from the very deep recesses of one's feelings, from the dark unexplored depth of the human individual. This experience can be judged only from the privacy of the individual's inner being, the mystical germ. It is a primordial, solitary experience of direct communion with the Divine, which is spontaneous and often predictably unorthodox in occurrence.

The many religions of today evolved from such personal and original experiences of individuals, which in time became stratified and codified with rites, formulas and behaviors, killing genuine inspiration. They continue to exist as institutions with hierarchical structures, but without any inspirations.

In his analysis of individual religious experiences, William James identified four characteristics of mystical/religious experiences. Ineffability makes these experiences and the concomitant feelings inexpressible in human terms which they transcend. The second characteristic is its noetic quality where the mind is illumined with new knowledge having an enduring sense of authority. Transiency gives the mystical experiences a fleeting quality, leaving a longing for renewed experience. The last characteristic is passivity where the individual does not feel any personal control, but feels grasped and held by the other who is encountered in the experience. Active meditation may initiate mystical experiences, but it is in the experience itself that the individual experiences pure passivity.

The mystical experience can take place in diverse ways: a sudden sense of presence, the significance of a maxim, a word, a ritual, a play of light, a musical pattern, or a sunset. It can also be triggered in meditation, in prayerful reading of the Scripture, in service to fellow human beings (*ora et labora*) or in the selfless act of another, and so on. William James in his "mystical ladder" sees the following stages in religious experience:

- Full scale cosmic or mystical consciousness
- Feeling of ecstatic union with the deepest truth
- Obliteration of sensory experience, leaving nothing but abstracted self
- Feeling surrounded by incomprehensible truth
- Sudden sense of having been here before (déjà vu)
- Sense that some word or sensory impression has a deeper significance. (Wulff, 1978)

A Seagull's Experience

Jonathan Livingston Seagull, by Richard Bach, tells us graphically what we have been discussing so far. Let me highlight some points from this story.

Singularly religious experience brings the highest form of wisdom. Both East and West emphasize the importance and necessity of leisure for having religious experiences. Thus we see in all religions individuals moving into forests, deserts, into monasteries, wats and temples in search of deep religious experiences. This may help but is not a condition *sine qua non* for such

experiences. We have also examples of people living ordinary lives attaining such experiences. The story of Jonathan Seagull underscores that religious experience results from the transformation of consciousness that takes place stage by stage until it reaches the point where the individual is the perfect expression of the Eternal. This can be reached by striving to be perfect through motivation and practice.

Jonathan is an ordinary but reflective gull. He became bored with the life of a gull, daily waiting for the fishing boats to arrive in order to fight for a fish or picking a piece of stale bread here and there. He thought of perfecting his flying. For most gulls, it is not flying that matters, but eating. For Jonathan it was not eating that mattered but flight which he loved. He had made his decision to perfect his flying ability in spite of a lack of enthusiasm from the gull community, including his parents. He often practiced the whole day and was able to fly with great velocity, style and pleasure. One day, what he was expecting happened. The gulls flocked for a council and Jonathan heard the elder's voice saying:

Jonathan Livingston Seagull, stand to center. . .for Shame in the sight of your fellow seagulls, for this irresponsibility, for violating the dignity and tradition of the gull family.. . .Irresponsibility will not pay. Life is the unknown and the unknowable except that we are put into this world to eat, to stay alive as long as possibly we can.

No one speaks back to the elders, but Jonathan found himself saying,

Irresponsibility? My brothers," he cried, "who is more responsible than a gull that finds and follows a meaning, a higher purpose for life? For a thousand years we have scrabbled after fish heads, but now we have a reason to live -- to learn, to discover, to be free! Give me one chance; let me show you what I have found. . . .

He had broken the gull tradition: a serious offence. Jonathan was an outcast now; no one dared even to come near him. Accepting the situation and with renewed vigor, he began to fly to reach its zenith. His desire to look for fish heads and stale bread diminished considerably. Flying became his passion. Each achievement brought with it a higher consciousness, a new mode of feeling and existence. His feathers glowed with brilliance and his wings were smooth and perfect like sheets of polished silver making flying smoother and smoother. He was delighted and began to press power into his wings to reach the next stage of perfection in flying.

According to the saying that "when the student is ready the teacher appears," the gull Sullivan, who had attained a higher stage of consciousness, appeared in Jonathan's life and began to instruct him on new aspects of flying. Sullivan told him, "Jonathan, one in a million gets the chance to perfect flying, there is such a thing as perfection and our purpose in life is to find perfection and show it forth." Jonathan began to climb the path of perfection day by day and soon found himself in the company of the Elder gull Chiang, who had reached a higher stage of consciousness. Chiang took up the tutorship of Jonathan and brought him to higher planes of consciousness. One day Jonathan inquired, "This world is not heaven at all. Is it?. . .Is there a place as heaven?" Chiang replied, "No Jonathan, there is no such a place. Heaven is not a place and it is not a time. Heaven is being perfect." He continued, "You will begin to touch heaven, Jonathan, in the moment you touch perfect speed. Perfection, my son is being there."

So Jonathan perfected his flying further and entered into higher and higher stages of consciousness. It happened one day while Jonathan was standing on the shore, eyes closed and

concentrating -- all in a flash he knew what Chiang was telling him. He became aware: why, that is true, I am a perfect, unlimited gull. He felt a great joy within and heard Chiang's approval. As Jonathan and friends experienced this revelation, they noticed that Chiang was changing. His feathers were becoming brighter and brighter until no gull could look at him. He constantly encouraged Jonathan and his friends to " Keep working on Love," and one day Chiang vanished into the perfect invisible principle of life. Jonathan continued to work on love and experienced the urge to go back to his earthly community of gulls to help those who wanted to see beyond the breadcrumbs and fish. With a thought he was there, helping those who were ready to learn, and they addressed him, the son of the great gull. While working with the gulls, Jonathan realized that the hardest thing in life is to convince a bird that he is free. . .that a seagull is unlimited freedom, the image of the great gull. There are no limits for life. (Bach, 1970) We are tuned to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect, so is the silent longing in every heart for the Eternal. Rabindranath Tagore (1968) expresses this longing in *Gitanjali:*

As light keeps its gloom, the petition for night
Even this in the depth of my unconsciousness
Rings the cry, I want Thee, only Thee

The Dance of Life

The story of Jonathan Seagull focuses on ways of perfection in life. Eastern religions, in particular, are more ways of life than religions, while Western religions are more religions than ways of life, says Alan Watts (1973). This is to dichotomize religions. Religions are critiques of culture, which set our consciousness in a particular mould from our mothers' womb. Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as the Abrahamite religions, are paths to liberate us from these moulds and make us truly free human individuals, to make us temples of Brahman. The quality of a liberated individual, explains Chinese poet Chen-tao Ke, is:

He walks always by himself goes about always by himself
Every perfect one saunters along one and the same passage Nirvana
His tone is classical, his spirit is transparent his airs are naturally elevated.
His features are gaunt, his bones are firm, he pays no attention to others. (Suzuki, 1935)

Culture is a game, an illusion (from Latin ludere meaning "to play"). Culture is to domesticate the individual to the needs of the society and to socialize the individual in the ways of the society. It makes him forget his true nature. As we read in Scripture, man is created in imago Dei, the image of God, the root and foundation of his being. Cultures create the ego-self and nourish differentiation. Buddhism tells us there is no such psychological self (anatta) while Hinduism reminds us that true self is Brahman not the ego-self, which consists of millions of passing moments. To be true to oneself, we must not take these social conventions too seriously. They are needed at certain stages of one's life. As we grow we need to outgrow them. We have to see through these conventions and their role in our life.

Culture informs man that he should have possessions. In the desire to possess and acquire things, one can spend an entire life gathering things and building a fort to protect one from one's own fears. Even with spiritual things -- merits, prayers, holy images – we can become spiritual materialists. These become man's securities and tickets to heaven. They make him forget what he

is. Positions and titles are in society for the service of society, but they often enslave as one begins to identify one's true self with them. Man is valued for the credentials he produces, not for the individual he is. One is disturbed when someone does not respect or acknowledge him for the papers he produces. Social religious conventions get to the very fiber of man's being and enslave him, instead of enabling him realize the authentic self.

The monk Matsu as a youth was fanatical about sitting cross-legged in meditation for hours on end. Hua-jang, the great master, asked him what on earth he was doing sitting cross-legged for so long day after day. Matsu said:

"To achieve Buddhahood."

Thereupon Huai-jang sat next to him, picked up a tile and began to polish it assiduously.

"What are you doing master?" asked Matsu.

"Oh, I am making a mirror out of my tile," said the master.

"Master you can polish it till doomsday," said Matsu, "You'll never make a mirror out of a tile!"

"Aha," smiled Huai-jang, "Maybe you are beginning to understand that you can sit till doomsday, it won't make you a Buddha."

Religions are to make man realize the true meaning of life, not entangle him with their traditions.

Social structures create needs in the individual, make him crave for them, creating the individual neurotic in the process. Religion is to liberate man from his social neuroticisms, from nonsensical problems and unexamined assumptions that depersonalize. But often religion itself adds to the neuroticism: society creates a double bind: one must be part of the society and yet free himself from its claws to attain liberation and salvation. Nirvana, Mukti or Heaven is the process of freeing man from the samsaras, from our ego-selves. In the Christian context the carnal man must die and rise to the beauty of the resurrected life. Jesus said, "Unless the wheat falls down and die, it shall not bring forth fruit." St. Francis says, "It is dying that we shall rise to eternal life" ("The Peace Prayer"). Each religious tradition offers man liberation from a set of metaphysical, cosmological, psychological and moral doctrines and institutions under which man is enslaved. These have hypnotized man from the very moment of his conception; they may be good at the early stage of life. But the mature person must outgrow and respond spontaneously to the Divinity within. In St. John the Apostle's words, man must obtain freedom from "the craving of the flesh, the greed of eyes and people boasting of their superiority" (1 John 2.16), from all the illusions of life. This does not mean throwing away all laws and traditions, but seeing through them. As Jesus advised his disciples, be "in the world but not of the world." Sheldon Kopp (1976) has a book titled, If You Meet The Buddha on the Road, Kill Him! whose basic idea is that Buddha, Christ or Krishna is in us, not outside us. We are not to worship them, but to grow into the stature of Christ or Buddha or Krishna whose images we are. The Bible reminds us that the Kingdom of God is within.

In fact there is no other choice for man but to grow and mature. "Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Man has to choose this, knowing well that there is no other choice but the choice itself. Eastern philosophy and religion emphasize thinking without thought, acting without action, loving without attachment. To distinguish the thought and the thinker is duality; to choose is to take sides in the game, it is illusion (ludere). Liberation is not to take sides in the game of life; nor take life itself too seriously. There is no id, ego and superego. Duality is the game of

the mind, a mental construct, a glitch. The fruit of liberation is to be one with all, to be all in all. Enjoy being alive here and now, dance the dance of life. There is no Jew or Gentile; no Hindu or Muslim, no Christian or Buddhist; these are labels. The promised new heaven and new earth begins here on this earth when we see in everyone and in everything the face of our heavenly Father. Chandogya Upanishad states:

> In the centre of the castle of Brahma, our body
> There is a small shrine, in the form of a lotus flower and
> Within it can be seen a small space
> We should find who dwells there and want to know him
> For the whole universe is in him and
> He dwells within our hearts (Mascare, 1965).

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Chapter V

Cultural Heritage of India and the Imperative of Radical Change

Joseph I. Fernando

The Cultural Heritage of India

Indian culture is the oldest culture still alive and vibrant.[1] The other ancient cultures of Egypt, Sumeria, Rome, Greece and so on have become museum pieces. Gordon Childe, an eminent British archaeologist, notes that at the time of the highly developed Indus Valley civilization, the people in England were in the Stone Age. The natural conditions of India were conducive to the contemplative attitude, as the Indian had plenty of leisure. He expressed the riches of his soul in music and dance, poetry and myths, ceremonies and rituals:

1. *Literature*. The richness of the cultural heritage of India is manifest in its institutions, literature, philosophy, religion, art, architecture and way of life. The two dominant cultural groups have been the Dravidian in the South and the Aryan in the North. Tamil is the oldest language of the Dravidians and has a copious literature. The earliest Tamil literature is known as the *Sangam* literature, as old as the Vedas. There are innumerable other literary works such as *Kambaramayanam*, *Silappadiharam*, *Manimegalai*, *Jeevaha Chinthamani*, and those of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite saints known as *Nayanmars* and *Alvars* respectively. The *Tirukkural* with its universal appeal is acclaimed as a classic piece of world literature. Tamil has drawn the attention of the best scholars of linguistics from all over the world. As ancient as Sanskrit, Tamil is nonetheless a living and modern language unlike Sanskrit. Sanskrit, the language of the Aryan culture, is an Indo-European and sister language of Latin, Greek and Persian. Sanskrit literature is a voluminous treasure by itself.

2. *Philosophy and Religion*. The spectrum of Indian philosophy is breath-taking. The philosophies of the Vedas, Upanishads, Epics, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vedanta, the numerous philosophical commentaries, the orthodox and heterodox systems are evidence of the Indian mind's quest for truth. India is a cradle of great religions such as Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism.

Among Indians great sages, saints, philosophers and scholars are Valmiki,[2] Vyasa,[3] Buddha,[4] Mahavira, Panini,[5] Kalidasa,[6] Nagarjuna,[7] Ashvaghosa, Vasubandhu, Dinnaga, Dharmakirti,

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[1] A glimpse of the rich cultural heritage of India is found in *The Wonder That Was India* by A.L. Basham.
[2] The author of *Ramayana*.
[3] The author of *Mahabharata*.
[4] Buddha and Mahavira were contemporaries who challenged orthodox Brahamanism.
[5] The Sanskrit grammarian.
[6] A great Sanskrit poet and author.
[7] Nagarjuna, Ashvaghosa, Vasubandlhu, Dinnaga, Dharmakirti were Buddhist philosophers and theologians.

Aryabhatta,[8] Charak,[9] Kamban,[10] Valluvan,[11] Ilango Adigal,[12] Appar,[13] Sundarar, Thirugnanasambandar, Manikavasagar, Gurunanak,[14] Kabir,[15] Meerabai,[16] Tukaram, Jnaneshvar, Ramdas, Vallabha and Chaitanya.

Buddhism spread from India to Sri Lanka, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Japan and Korea. Hinduism spread to Sri Lanka, Bali, Malaysia and Singapore. In ancient India all these countries were known as Greater India. Although the Cholas of Tamilnad had the most powerful navy in ancient India, India never had the ambition of conquering other countries. Its only conquest was cultural: much of Indian culture spread all over Asia.

3. *Art and Architecture*: India's contribution to art and architecture has been magnificent. The rockcut caves of Ajanta and Ellora, the huge temples of both Dravidian and Nagara styles all over the country, the countless sculptures of exquisite beauty, the Buddhist stupas, chaityas, viharas and the Jain monuments speak volumes about the architectural finesse of India. The Brahadeesvarar temple at Tanjore is a unique creation of the Chola architect who conceived like a giant and finished like a jeweller. The classical dance of Bharatanatyam is perhaps the finest and most graceful dance form in the world. Both Carnatic and Hindustani music of India reveal the soul of the Indian.

Rules had been framed for both life and art. There are canonical works like the Dharmashastras which contain moral codes, Natyashastra for dance and music, Shilpashastra for sculpture and architecture, Arthashastra for governing the nation and Kamasutra for making love.

4. *Science*. India's contribution to science is part of her cultural heritage. As S. Radhkrishnan observes,

Ancient Indians laid the foundations of mathematical and mechanical knowledge. They measured the land, divided the year, mapped out the heavens, traced the course of the sun and the planets through the Zodiacal belt, analyzed the constitution of matter, and studied the nature of birds and beasts, plants and seeds.[17]

This is confirmed by Monier Williams in his *Indian Wisdom*:

Whatever conclusions we may arrive at as to the original source of the first astronomical ideas current in the world, it is probable that to the Hindus is due the invention of algebra and its application to astronomy and geometry. From them also the Arabs received not only their first conceptions of algebraic analysis, but also their valuable numerical symbols and decimal notation

[8] An ancient Indian mathematician.

[9] The founder of the Ayurveda system of medicine.

[10] Classical Tamil poet and author of *Kambaramayanam*.

[11] Author of *Thirukkural*, the greatest work in Tamil, universal in appeal.

[12] A great Tamil poet and author of the epic *Silappathiharam*.

[13] Appar, Sundarar, Thirugnanasambandar, Manickavasagar were the greatest Shaivite Tamil saints and poets.

[14] The founder of Sikhism.

[15] A great poet and saint who attempted a synthesis of Islam and Hinduism.

[16] Meerabai, Tukaram, Jnaneshvar, Ramdas, Vallabha and Chaitanya were Vaishnavite Saints of the bhakti or devotional movement.

[17] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 29.

now current everywhere in Europe, which rendered untold service to the progress of arithmetical science.[18]

Besides developing the two sciences of logic and grammar the Indians were knowledgeable in medicine and surgery. Wilson writes:

In medicine, as in astronomy and metaphysics, the Hindus once kept pace with the most enlightened nations of the world; and they attained as thorough a proficiency in medicine and surgery as any people whose acquisitions are recorded, and as indeed was practicable, before anatomy was made known to us by the discoveries of modern inquirers.[19]

5. *The Impact of the British rule on Indian Culture*. Napoleon called Britain a nation of shop-keepers and, true to their tradition, the British came to India as traders. Eventually they became her rulers and ravaged India to strengthen their economy back home. But the sensible elements among them worked for the welfare of the Indian society. Thanks to the combined efforts of the enlightened British and Indians like Ram Mohan caste, social evils like *sati* (the self-immolation of a widow in the funeral pyre of her deceased husband), child marriage, temple prostitution and so on were eradicated through legislation. The Renaissance Movements such as Brahmo Samaj, Areya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, the Theosophical society and the Ramakrishna Mission were the outcome of India's encounter with the British.

As India was a British colony for too long, Britain's culture was unquestionably thought to be superior to that of the oppressed. Nevertheless, the Europeans were inevitably led to appreciate the greatness of Indian culture. Mortimer Wheeler, William, Jones, Fergusson, Max Muller, Winternitz and James Princep were some of those who unveiled the riches of Indian culture to the world.

The Greek, the Scythian, the Persian, the Moghul, the French, the Portuguese and the English ruled over the people of India for hundreds of years, but these foreigners could not subdue the culture of India. On the contrary, they were drawn to discover the vitality, the tremendous assimilative capacity, the beauty and magic of Indian culture. The cultural heritage of India which has withstood the ravages of time is a testimony to the achievements of the human spirit. This great cultural heritage needs to be cherished, protected and preserved for posterity.

India Today

One can experience today the rich cultural heritage of India as manifest in the lives of India's people. The majority live in villages where Indian culture is preserved more authentically. Their religiosity, belief in *dharma*, *karma* and superstitions, traditional mentality, day-to-day activities and so on reflect the culture of India. India is a land of eternal paradoxes. The grandeur and glory of India exist alongside her misery and ugliness. The economic devastation of India is a British legacy. The British exploited India for more than three centuries and the India they left behind was famished, woebegone and crippled.

The new, independent nation of India had to start from scratch. Scarcity was everywhere. Even today, there is scarcity of everything in India except population. Because of this perpetual problem of scarcity, there is a tendency among the Indians to grab whatever they can. This is the

[18] *Ibid*., p. 29.
[19] *Ibid*., p. 30.

chief reason for corruption. One tries to overcome scarcity by hook or crook and in the face of growing scarcity, Indians tend to overlook the morality of means enshrined in their *Dharmashastras*.

Although India is rich in resources, poverty is a stark phenomenon: India is a rich country occupied by poor people. Unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, lack of basic amenities, child labour and so on are the most serious problems in India today, which were unknown to the ancient Indians. The traditional values of respect for life, protection of women, honesty, simplicity, and spirituality are on the wane due to economic crisis. Crimes such as robbery, murder, sexual harassment, dowry deaths, female infanticide, embezzlement and bribery are on the rise. Criminalization of politics is a disheartening phenomenon in India. Added to that, communal violence based on differences of caste, religion and language flare up frequently in the land of Buddha and Gandhi, the apostles of *ahimsa*. There is a great threat to the values embodied in Indian culture.

Despite the scores of problems that choke India's growth, India has made commendable progress in certain sectors of the nation's life such as agricultural production, science and technology, particularly space science and software technology and quality education. Indian professionals and academics abroad maintain high professional standards and are a force to reckon with.

Nevertheless, social interaction in India has been a failure. The envisioned peace and prosperity of India and her place in the emergent world order call for recognition of radical change in the social life of India.

The Imperative of Radical Change

With the dawn of Aryan culture in India, Indian society has always been a divided society. The four-fold class division mentioned in the *Purusha Sukta* of the Rig Veda unfortunately hardened into a caste system over the centuries. The worst sufferers have been the so-called *Shudras*, the menial labourers. The cruelest thing is their treatment as untouchables. Birth determines one's caste in the Hindu society: one's superiority or inferiority is defined by birth, not by character or what one makes of oneself. The untouchables have been treated worse than the animals. Rejection has been their lot; interdining and intermarriage have been ruled out among the castes. It is no exaggeration to say that Indian society has been a sick society despite India's great contribution to philosophy and religion.

Marx is right in saying, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." Indian philosophers have interpreted ultimate reality, but they hardly bothered about upholding the values of fellowship and the dignity and worth of the human person. They waxed eloquent on *Atman* and the unity of *Atman* and *Brahman*, but failed to recognize the sanctified presence of *Atman* in the so-called untouchable. One is born an untouchable because of his *karma* which cannot be changed. A society that believes in fatalism can never cherish the ideals of fraternity, equality and liberty. Such a society is in dire need of liberation.

There is a strong tendency among the Dalits[20] in India today to reject outright the ancient philosophies of India. According to them, the philosophies, of the *Law of Manu* and the *Dharma Shastras* legitimise caste discrimination and oppression. Radical social change demands a drastic break with all that justifies oppression and persecution. One can understand the logic of the Dalits as they emerge from the anguished depths of the consciousness of those who have been

[20] The Dalits are the untouchables who have been the worst victims of caste oppression in India.

systematically wronged and psychologically exterminated for hundreds of years. But to jettison the whole of Indian philosophy as worthless is an extreme reaction. The best elements of Indian culture deserve to be preserved and promoted. What is required is a new hermeneutics in terms of social equality and well-being.

Gandhi declared, "Untouchability is a sin against man and God." But he is accused of not being radical enough to battle against caste discrimination. B.R. Ambedkar, the leader of the Dalits and the architect of India's Constitution, vowed, "I was born as a Hindu, but I will not die as a Hindu." He died as a Buddhist. Together with thousands of his followers, he embraced Buddhism as a revolt against the Hindu society which had been treating them in the most inhumane way over the centuries.

Although untouchability is forbidden by law, in India today it is in practice in many remote areas of the country. The politicians favour the existence of caste for the sake of vote banks. The so-called upper castes may not be enthusiastic about the idea of caste equalization, as they stand to gain from the existing caste discrimination. They seem to dislike the British who threw open schools for pupils of all castes, whereas traditionally the so-called lower castes were denied education. The priestly class may still cherish a nostalgic return to the pre-British India where it enjoyed privileges and honours and hence the vested interests would gain from caste discrimination. For a Hindu Indian it is almost impossible to look at another Indian without the tinted glasses of caste. Caste system is a curse on India. Some caste groups have neo-fascist overtones as they exalt their caste to the high heavens to the exclusion of others.

There are some Indian intellectuals who justify the continuation of the caste system on the grounds that caste bestows identity on the Indian. "Eliminate caste and the Indian's identity ceases to be." This is not rational for caste is a mental phenomenon, not physical, whereas race is a physical phenomenon. Even without caste, an Indian can enjoy perfect identity as an Indian, as a member of a linguistic, religious, regional group and so on.

Caste is an absolutely irrational phenomenon as it has no rational basis whatsoever for its justification. Hence, the categorical imperative to overthrow caste discrimination in which a given man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being. There is no rational basis at all to treat a person as untouchable because of one's birth and family circumstances. It is possible to consider some human beings as superior or inferior in terms of intelligence, character, accomplishments and so on.[21] But no human being can be considered untouchable because of doing the so-called 'dirty' jobs,[22] which in any case have to be done by someone or other. Indeed, however, there is no such thing as a dirty job because human labour has its own dignity: to understand the nature of human labour is to discover its uniqueness and nobility.

Without labour humankind not only cannot survive, but it cannot even become human. Labour distinguishes the human from other forms of life. Human labour is purposive: thereby human beings of their own accord enter into interaction with nature in order to appropriate nature's productions in a form adopted to their own wants. Human labour is imaginative, conscious and not intellectual: at the end of the labour process we get the results which were already present in our imagination before starting the labour. Human labour liberates the subject; it is not a curse. Overcoming obstacles is in itself a liberating activity and leads to self-realization and real freedom. Human labour is social; it is self-realization through production for others and with others. It is

[21] Strictly speaking, there is no justification to classify human beings as superior and inferior. Intrinsically, all have equal worth and dignity as human beings.

[22] In India traditionally, the scavengers, sweepers, barbers, washermen, cobblers and so on have been treated as doing "unclean" jobs.

impossible for isolated individuals to survive on their own; productive interaction with nature necessitates cooperation, division of labour and exchange. Hence, the meaning of labour lies in the self-realization of the human species.

Without overthrowing caste, there is no salvation for India. Modern India cannot achieve progress, economic development, justice and peace so long as Indians are divided among themselves as superior and inferior by birth and subjected to discrimination, rejection and persecution. Unfortunately, many do not perceive caste as an evil; but in fact are its staunch supporters. The Muslims in India do not bother about the caste system because it is not their problem, but that of the Hindus. The Christians in India have failed to work for the creation of a humane society with the accent on fellowship, instead indulging in excessive sermonizing while socially remaining very much a part of the Hindu society. Who will come forward to liberate India?

India needs a today's Buddha, as the Buddha was the first to protest against caste and priestly domination in India in 6th century B.C. After him, none have had his audacity, wisdom, originality and compassion. India waits for the arrival of another Buddha, the philosopher and humanitarian who will usher in radical change in Indian society. The new Buddha will lead the people of India from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality,[23] from the tyranny of caste to the joy of fellowship, from the night of oppression to the daybreak of liberty, from the isolation of untouchability to the celebration of human dignity and worth.

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[23] "Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality." *Brhadharanyaka Upanishad*, i.3.27.

Chapter VI

The Buddhist Middle Way and Its Application to Contemporary Thai Socio-Economic Conditions

Veerachart Nimanong

Introduction

At present, the term 'Middle Way' is invariably applied to all kinds of action in Thai society. We wonder about the meaning of the term, and whether this doctrine belongs only to Buddhism or to other schools of thought as well. If so then how do they explain the middle way? This paper is devoted primarily to a discussion of this question.

At the outset, I would like to say that Buddhism cannot claim a copyright for the word, because the concept of the middle way is found in many schools of thought (Muzaffar, 2000, p. 106). In Buddhism, at least two schools are concerned with the concept, namely, Nagarjuna's Madhyamika which regards the doctrine of Dependent Co-Origination as the Middle Way, and Theravada, which recognizes the Eightfold Noble Path as the Middle Way. This paper focuses on the Theravada's Middle Way, as it appears in the Tipitakas and commentaries.

The Middle Way is considered the most unique characteristic of Buddhist culture and values, because it emphasizes the median of both theory and practice, or, in philosophical terms, of both epistemology or metaphysics and Ethics. Therefore, the Buddhist concept of Middle Way itself can be categorized as two kinds: the epistemological middle way and the ethical middle way. In its epistemological mode it is technically called the Middle Dhamma (Teaching) (*majjhena-dhammadesana*),[1] signifying the Doctrine of Conditionality (*Paticcasamuppada*).[2] This is further divided into two kinds, namely Dependent Origination as the cycle of life or the wheel of birth and death (*samsara*), and the Dependent Cessation as the breaking of the cycle of life (*Nibbana*). The doctrine of *paticcasamuppada* is said to be between Eternalism (*Sasatavada*) and Annihilationism (*Ucchedavada*).[3]

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[1] The phrase *majjhena-dhammadesana* comes from the Pali sentence '*majjhena dhammam deseti'* which occurs frequently throughout the *Nidanavagga* of the *Samyuttanikaya*. (S.II.17-77).

[2] Sometimes the term *idappaccayata* is used as a synonym of *paticcasamuppada* and appears long with it. In such cases, the term *paticcasamuppada* is almost always preceded by the term *idappaccayata*, (S.II.26). Sometimes it is used to denote a characteristic of *paticcasamuppada*, as, for example, in the statement, 'Causation is said to have objectivity, necessity, invariability and conditionality, (D.II. 36-37; M.I. 167; S.I.136).

[3] Different sources of Buddhist texts presented the Middle Way in different forms as the way standing: (1) in between *atthikavada* (the school which holds that all things really exist, which is called extreme realism and *natthikavada* (the school which holds that all things do not exist, which is called nihilism an; (2) in between *atthita* (being) and *natthita* (non-being) (S.II.16-17, 76; III. 134); (3) in between *attakaravada* or *saynkaravada* (the school which holds the view that happiness and suffering are entirely self-determined (kammic autogenesism) and*parakaravada* (the school which holds that happiness and suffering are entirely caused by external factors (kammic heterogenesism) (S.II.19); (4) in between *Karakavedakadi-ekattavada* (the belief that the doer and the experiencer of the fruit of actions are one and the same (the monistic view of subject-object unity) and *karakavedakadi-nanattavada* (the belief

In its ethical aspect, the Middle Way is technically called the Middle Path (*majjhima-patipada*), signifying the Doctrine of the Eightfold Noble Path. This is the last of the Four Noble Truths and is said to be between the two extremes of sensual indulgence (*kamasukhallikanuyoga*) or materialism, and self-mortification (*attakilamathanuyoga*)[4] or Asceticism. The path (*magga*) without a goal is empty, and the goal without a path is blind. So, apart from upholding *Nibbana* as the goal of religious life, Buddhism also provides the practical path that leads directly to that goal.

The Relationship between the Middle Dhamma and the Middle Path

The Inter-Relationship of the Middle Way: In essence, the Middle *Dhamma* (*Paticcasamuppada*) explains two processes, namely the causal law of existence and that of non-existence as stated above.[5] The Middle Path is recommended by the Buddha in order to reach the Middle*Dhamma*. Therefore, to understand the Middle *Dhamma* and the Middle Path, we must understand the inter-relationships between two Middle *Dhammas* and one Middle Path.

The Middle *Dhamma* and the Middle Path are explained in light of the Four Noble Truths: We must concern ourselves with, and search for the cause of, problems or sufferings (*samudayasacca*) in our life because we are burdened with problems or sufferings (*dukkhasacca*), whose relief demands a search for its causes and conditions. When the causes of sufferings are understood, the solution of the problems consists in the destruction of those causes. Thus the process of the Middle *Dhamma* by its nature is regarded as the natural process. In short, the reason for dividing this doctrine into two processes is that the Middle *Dhamma* describes only natural phenomena or processes, functioning according to natural causes and conditions. It is not designed for practical application. Likewise the process of cessation of suffering, which is included within the Middle *Dhamma*, is simply a discussion of impersonal phenomena or processes and how they produce the cessation of suffering. It does not address the details of practical application in any way. It can be said that in Buddhism the Middle *Dhamma* is the goal, and the Middle Path is the means leading to the goal.

The Purpose of the Middle Way: The Buddha maintains that this is the only way that leads to purity of understanding; and if one walks along this way, one will put an end to suffering. One who follows it with mind absorbed, will find release from attachment of the five aggregates (*khandhas*: form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness). The Buddha says: the

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that the doer and the experiencer of the fruit of actions are separate things (the dualistic view of subject-object distinction) (S.II.75).

[4] Vin.I.10; S.V.420. In the ethical aspect, two extremes are Consumerism and Superstition.

[5] The details of the traditional explanation in the original text include two principles of the doctrine: Firstly, "the general principle with no mention of its condition-number" which is divided into two kinds: (i) Dependent Origination: "When this is, that comes to be (*imasmim sati idamhoti*); from the arising of this, that arises (*imassupada idam uppajjati*);" (ii) Dependent Cessation: "When this is not, that does not come to be (*imasmim asati idam na hoti*); from the ceasing of this, that also ceases (*imassa niroda idam nirujjati*)." Secondly, "the particular principle with mention of condition-number," which is of two kinds: (i) Dependent Origination, divided into four kinds: (a) starting from ignorance down to karma-formation, consciousness, mind-and-matter, six sense-bases, contact, feeling, desire, attachment, becoming, birth, decay-death, etc., (b) starting from anyone in the middle such as *vedana* down to the last formula; these two are regarded as 'normal order' (*anuloma*), (c) starting from the last link, i.e., decay-death, etc., up to ignorance, (d) starting from anyone in the middle and go up to the first, these two are known as 'reverse order' (*patiloma*); (ii) Dependent Cessation, divided into four kinds: (a) starting from the cessation of ignorance down to decay-death,etc., (hence the same for b.c. and d. by adding the word 'cessation').

purpose of practising this Middle Way is to develop a full understanding of greed, hatred, delusion, enmity, hypocrisy, malice, envy, avarice, deceit, craftiness, obstinacy, pride, arrogance, intoxication and indolence, and achieving their annihilation, overcoming, vanishing, extinction, abandoning, destruction, renunciation and detachment therefrom (A. IV. 349).

That the Middle *Dhamma* and the Middle Path are not a compromise between the two extremes or an admixture of them is indicated by its definition in the same sermon as the passage, "without entering into either extreme."[6] This shows that it is called the Middle *Dhamma* or the Middle Way because it transcends the mutual opposition between the two extremes. As the Buddha said:

This worldly *Kaccayana* generally proceeds on a duality of existence and *non-existence*. But he who with right insight sees the uprising of the world as it really is does not hold with the non-existence of the world. But he who with right insight sees the passing away of the world as it really is does not hold with the existence of the world. Everything exists – this is one extreme. Nothing exists – this is another extreme. Not approaching either extreme the Tathagata teaches you a doctrine by the middle. (S. II. 17)

Therefore, the Middle Way in Buddhism transcends the two extremes and transcends itself; to use the Madhyamika Buddhist terminology, it is an emptiness of all things, and it is the Middle Way (Murti, 1974, p. 50).

The Goal of the Middle Way as *Nibbana*: It is understood that the practice of the Middle Way will result in attaining religious fruition, which is known as three advantages (*attha*), i.e. the advantage in this life or worldly happiness of householders, the happiness in the next life or heavenly happiness after death, and the ultimate happiness as peace of mind or *Nibbana* (*Khuddhaka-Nikaya*, *Culanidesa*, 26).

The word *Nibbana* (skt: *Nirvana*) literally means extinction of fire or flame, that is, extinction of *samsara* (*bhavanirodhanibbanam*), (S.II.117). Once the flame of a lamp is extinguished, as is said metaphorically, its succession comes to an end. Similarly the process of rebirth is rendered inoperative. According to Buddhism, the effective medium of rebirth is consciousness, and the attainment of *Nibbana* involves the stopping of consciousness, which further leads to the stopping of rebirth.

According to Buddhism, *Nibbana* is attained as a result of uprooting ignorance and craving. The germs of new life become completely extinct. When the round of rebirth and redeath disappears, there arises automatically and immediately the absence of the round of existence; we need not travel from one place called 'the round of birth and death' (*samsaravatta*) to another place named 'the absence of the round of birth and death' (*vivatta*), unless we speak in terms of perspective or comparison. When ignorance, desire and attachment disappear, *Nibbana* simultaneously appears in the same place and at the same time. The cessation of the three root-causes themselves is thus regarded as *Nibbana*, since, in normal life, the worldly mind is threatened by the three defilements which conceal its wisdom and bring to itself the remaining unwholesome states. When the so-called impurity is eradicated, simultaneously there comes wisdom. Hence, the world is seen as its reality. If the mind is expansive, free, clean, clear and peaceful, it is said, it can see and think of the unseen and unthought phenomena wrapped up in

[6] *Ubho ante anupagamma*.

those three defilements.*Nibbana* is, therefore, said to be transcendent to empirical thought and beyond the limits of space and time; it can be perceived by the pure mind and attained in this very life. The Buddha said: "Monks, *Nibbana* is seen in this life; it is a thing not involving time, inviting one to come and see, leading onwards, to be realized for themselves by the wise" (A.I.156).

The Middle Dhamma and the Middle Way as Moderate Pluralism and Dialogue

The Middle *Dhamma* and Moderate Religious Pluralism: The Middle Way in Buddhism does not accept any two extremes of the following four statements of the materialistic view: (1) The view that all things exist is one extreme materialistic view; (2) The view that all things do not exist is the second materialistic view; (3) The view that all things are one is the third materialistic view; and (4) The view that all things are a plurality is the fourth materialistic view. Buddhism proclaims a balanced teaching that avoids these extremes. Thus:

With ignorance rooted in greed, hate and delusion, as condition there are volitional impulses; with volitional impulses as condition, consciousness. . .with the complete abandoning of ignorance, volitional impulses cease; with the cessation of volitional impulses, consciousness ceases (S.II.77).

Now in the field of religious studies and philosophy, one theory which is known as Pluralism tries to propose the idea of 'pluralism as the Middle Way', which is the middle (or third) way between Exclusivism and Inclusivism. Here, the pluralists intent on finding things common to try to say that all religions and philosophies are good, but good differently. Some would say that this is a sort of extreme pluralism. Emphasizing the differences among all theories and saying that this is the middle way leading to peace are not widely accepted. This is not the Middle Way in the real sense of Buddhism and that of 'process philosophy in the Buddhist perspective'. Because the Middle Way in Buddhism cannot be reckoned as the third way between the two ways, and it does not emphasize any extreme assertions. According to the Buddhist context, the Middle Way is taken rather as a dialectic of thought; it can be a way, can not be a way, can be both a way and not a way and can neither be a way nor not a way. It is said to be a combination of all conditions put together. It is called the way, and at the same time it transcends the way. In other words, if the Middle Way is putting together a way, it signifies something changing all the time; it cannot be controlled, and it is not essential to be counted as the way. Therefore, to be called pluralism according to Buddhism, something must be without the bases of all identities. It should not be attached to any concept at all. It should be free from ego-centric thought.

The Middle Way in Buddhism should be taken as Moderate Religious Pluralism (the belief that Buddhism exists, however, without attachment to its existence, i.e. emptiness of entity or egolessness) with the belief that all religions and philosophies are inter-dependently good. In other words, they cannot be entirely dependent nor completely independent of each other. All of them can not be good independently or differently as the extreme (hard) Pluralists would say. Saying that all religions and philosophies are differently good is not the same as saying that all religions and philosophies are inter-dependently good. The word "inter-dependent" signifies a sense of "mutual understanding and working together," which indicates the sense of non-attachment. Therefore, moderate pluralism can alleviate the four suspicions associated with pluralistic religion, namely:

(1) People fear that an affirmation of religious pluralism will lead to vicious relativism and eventually to a self-defeating skepticism;

(2) a person may view religions other than his or her own as rivals or enemies, and simply reject them or try to convert their adherents to his or her own faith;

(3) a person may attempt to find parallels between his or her own religion and other religious traditions and to evaluate the religious significance of the beliefs of others without prejudging or rejecting them; and

(4) a person may, with even greater openness, recognize a common Reality underlying the different religious traditions and claim that they are different manifestations of this common Reality. (Abe, 1995, pp. 20-21)

In order to avoid all those suspicions, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, the timeless Thai master of moderate religious pluralism and contemporary dialogue, in his celebrated book entitled No Religion, remarks and suggests thus:

The ordinary, ignorant worldling is under the impression that there is this religion and that religions are all different to the extent of being hostilely opposed.. . .If one has penetrated to the essential nature (Dhamma) of religion, he will regard all religions as being the same.. . .However, if he should go on to a deeper and deeper understanding of Dhamma until finally he knows the Absolute Truth (Highest Dhamma), he would discover that there is no such thing called religion" (1979, pp. 3-4).

The above-mentioned passage of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu introduced two steps in resolving the problem of religious pluralism through the Middle Dhamma in Buddhism. In the first step he introduces extreme (soft) religious pluralism, which holds that all religions are the same or similarly good. And in the second step, he introduces the idea of moderate pluralism, which holds that all religions are so inter-related and good that they transcend the concept of religion.

An example of non-egocentrist treatment according to the Buddhist principle of impermanence, uncontrollableness and non-self, as examplified by Warayuth Sriwarakuel, deserves mention here:

Being a Christian does not put me in trouble with my personal and Thai identity because I adopt the Buddhist way of thinking. With the principle of non-attachment I have no attachment to identity at all because I am conscious that we are new persons every moment.. . .So if someone happens to ask me, "Who are you?" in terms of religion, I would say, " I am a Catholic in baptism and tradition, Protestant in spirit, and Buddhist in the way of thinking" ("Religious Pluralism as a Middle Way," p. 21).

The Middle Path and Religious Dialogue. The Middle Path consisting of eight principles of practice called the Noble Eightfold Path (D.III.312)[7] is taken as the foundation of Buddhist culture

[7] The Middle Path leading to the end of suffering is classified as follows:

1). *Sammaditthi* or Right View: The world is filled with sorrow generated by uncontrolled desire on the path of mankind; the extinction of this desire is the path to peace for all. In short, it is the right knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, especially the first truth of suffering, the Three Common Characteristics, the Doctrine of Dependent Origination, and the root-cause of wholesome and unwholesome states, (A.I.189).

and values, and it as a sustainable path for all activities. According to Piyasilo Bhikkhu, the Middle Path is categorized as three modern expressions of ecoculture, autoculture and metaculture. They are explained as follows: (1) Ecoculture is Moral Conduct (*silasikkha*), consisting of Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood; (2) Autoculture is Concentration (*cittasikkha*), consisting of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration; and (3) Metaculture is Wisdom (*pannasikkha*), consisting of Right Understanding and Thought, (1988, p. 12). The World Buddhist University, which is a university for peace and happiness and organized by the World Fellowship of Buddhists of Thailand,[8] also demonstrates the balanced development of man through the Middle Path, having for its objective, "to work for securing peace and harmony amongst men and happiness for all beings and to collaborate with other organizations working for the same ends."

If moderate pluralism is recognized as the Middle Path, then dialogue can play its role as a tool for the Middle Path to reach its goal. Thus, the Eightfold Noble Path can be expressed as four kinds of dialogue: (1) Dialogue of Life is paired with the Path of Wisdom (*panna*), consisting of Right Understanding and Thought; (2) Dialogue of Action is the Path of Morality (*sila*), consisting of Right Speech, Action and Livelihood; (3) Dialogue of Doctrine; and (4) Dialogue of Religious Experience which can be included in the Path of Concentration (*samadhi*), consisting of Right Effort, Mindfulness and Concentration.

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2). *Sammasankappa* or Right Thought: Right thought is manifested as the abandoning of wrong thinking. It indicates the wholesome thought, i.e., thought of renunciation, thought free from hatred and thought of non-violence, (A.III. 446).

3). *Sammavaca* or Right Speech: Right speech means the four right speeches: Abstention from telling lies, from slander, from insult, and from talking frivolously, (A.V.257). To speak truth; to utter speech that makes for harmony; to speak gentle, loving, courteous, dear and agreeable words; and to speak at the right time, in accordance with facts, what is useful, moderate and full of sense, (M.I.287).

4). *Sammakammanta* or Right Action: This path is be to followed by avoiding the destruction of life and by being concerned with the welfare of all lives; by avoiding stealing, not violating the right to private property of others; and by avoiding sexual misconduct,not transgressing sex morals, (A.V.266).

5). *Samma-ajiva* or Right Livelihood: Right Livelihood refers to abstinence from unrighteous livelihood and earning one's own living by righteous means. For monks, the practice of the 'Four Noble Traditions' (*ariyavansa*), (D.III.244). and the Four *Parisuddhisilas*, (Vism.,I.18), are compulsory. For Laymen, the Lay Person's Practice, such as 'the Virtues Conducive to the Present' (*ditthadhammikattha*), (A.IV.281) should be strictly followed.

6). *Sammavayama* or Right Effort: Right Effort refers to four efforts: (i) Prevention: To avoid the sources of unwholesome thoughts and emotions, (ii) Abandon: It is a curative process when prevention has failed, (iii) Development: It implies the cultivation of virtuous qualities and (iv) Preservation: It signifies the effort to keep from danger whatever virtuous qualities are developed in the three above mentioned conditions, (A.II.74).

7). *Sammasati* or Right Mindfulness: Right Mindfulness denotes the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, namely, the contemplation of the body, of feeling of mind and of mind-objects, (D.II. 290-315). The practice of Mindfulness aims at knowing things as their reality. The process of cultivating Mindfulness is known as that of 'Insight Development' (*vipassana-bhavana*), which is a matter of later discussion.

8). *Sammasamadhi* or Right Concentration: Right Concentration refers to the state of mind in the eight successive stages of meditations called *jhanas* and *arupajhanas* as have been mentioned while discussing consciousness. The practice of concentration aims at calming the mind and it is known as *samatha-bhavana* (transquillity development) (M.I.40).

[8] The World Fellowship of Buddhists. *News Letter*. Vol 3, No. 11, Nov. 2543/2001. One of its five objectives to work for securing peace and harmony amongst men and happiness for all beings and to collaborate with other organizations working for the same ends.

Dialogue based on the Middle Path rooted in non-attachment will finally lead to peace. If the goal of religious dialogue is the peace for human beings, then Buddhism has something to contribute. Because Buddhism is the religion of peace (*santi*), that is *Nibbana*, which is derived from the Middle Way (Morality, Concentration and Wisdom). The basic principle of Buddhist life is the Four Sublime States of Mind, namely Loving-Kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity (Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension), which are regarded as the foundation of five precepts and five virtues. As Masao Abe beautifully remarked:

In Christianity, love and justice are always linked together. Love without justice is not true love; justice without love is not true justice. Likewise, in Buddhism compassion and wisdom always go together. Compassion without wisdom is not true compassion; wisdom without compassion is not true wisdom. The unity of wisdom and compassion is realized by awakening to the Buddhist truth, that is the truth of *anatman* (non-self) and the law of *pratitya-samutpada* (dependent co-origination) (1995, p. 179).

The Buddhist Middle Way and Aristotle's Golden Mean

In spite of their different social and cultural contexts, there are many formal parallels between the ideal of human perfection conceived by the Buddha and that envisaged by Aristotle. Both regard human nature as a complex of intellectual and emotional factors and consider man's ultimate good to lie in the full development of his potential in these two domains. This is a gradual process. The state of perfection finally reached is *Nibbana* for Buddhism, and *eudaemonia* for Aristotle, characterized by happiness. The respective goals differ inasmuch as "for Aristotle the*eudaemonia* has no transcendent implications; it is a perfection to be manifested in this world alone and especially in the social context of the polis" (Keown, n.d., p. 195).

Regarding the concept of the Middle Way, they have both differences and similarities. In the present day Thailand, sometimes Buddhists confuse the Buddhist Middle Way with Aristotle's "golden mean." The way Thai people act conforms to the golden mean of Aristotle, but not that of Buddhism. For example, Mr. A has a small enterprise, a dry goods shop where almost everything, including water-based mosquito killer, poison, drugs, liquors, is for sale. When we ask, does Mr. A follow the middle way of his living? The answer is yes, he does, because according to Aristotle's idea of the golden mean (Aristotle's ethics), Mr. A has his own business. Mr. A's business is said to moderate between being a robber and a lazy man with no business at all. According to the Buddhist ethics, however, Mr. A's business is not accepted as the moderate way, because Buddhists are prohibited from selling poisons, drugs and alcoholic liquor. Mr. A's business may be lawful, but not meritorious according to Buddhist ethics, which has three levels, namely the level of five precepts, the level of ten wholesome actions (*kusalakammapada*) and the level of the Eightfold Noble Path. Mr. A's action corresponds to the first level of the Buddhist precept. Now let us consider the following details:

The Aristotle's Principle of Moderation is not the Buddhist Middle Way. The main body of Aristotelian ethical theory is to be found in three treatises: the *Nicomachean Ethics*; the *Eudemian Ethics* and the *Magna Moralia*. The *Nicomachean Ethics* constitutes Aristotle's mature reflections on ethics. The middle way of Aristotle, known as the golden mean, which is used to determine virtue, can be compared and contrasted to some extent, to the Buddhist Middle Way. Three terms can be used in his moral philosophy, namely, mean, moderation and middle

way. Aristotle strongly urges moderation in all things, because the immoderate actions are immoral. According to him, extremes are always evil, whether it be the extreme of defect or that of excess. Between two extremes, a virtue will be found. According to Aristotle, the mean most often lies nearer excess than deficiency. Courage, a virtuous state, lies between the deficiency of cowardice and the excess of foolhardiness, but closer to the latter. One can begin with excess and then draw back to the moderate mean. Experience also shows that, on the whole, it is preferable to swing towards underdoing rather than towards overdoing (Fuller, 1995, p. 209).

Aristotle's middle way is different from that of Buddhism in the sense that Aristotle's lacks a definite criterion or general standard to determine what the exact middle is (see *Phramedhidhammaporn* [*Prayoon Mererk*], 1994, p. 239). Aristotle's middle way depends on each person's criterion and interest. One thing may be taken as the middle way by one person but not by another, because each one has his own criterion of the middle way. Aristotle's middle way is judged according to an individual's reason and interest. "The mean, however, is not absolute but relative, differing as it must with respect to the individual and to the object, time, place, and circumstances of the action" (Fuller, 1995, p. 209). This can be compared to the seven principles of a Good Man in Buddhism.

Aristotle arranges a long list of moral qualities or virtues in triads of virtuous means between vicious extremes. For example, (1) courage is said to be between cowardice and foolhardiness; (2) temperance between intemperance and insensibility; (3) liberality between meanness and prodigality; (4) magnificence between niggardliness and vulgarity; (5) magnanimity between humility and vanity; (6) ambition between lack of ambition and overaggressiveness; (7) gentleness between indifference and irascibility; (8) friendliness between churlishness and obsequiousness; and (9) truthfulness between modesty and boastfulness (Ibid. p. 210).

The Buddhist Middle Way does not weigh virtues in the way Aristotle does. According to the nature of virtues (*Dhamma*) Buddhism would say that Buddhists should follow the particular Dhamma for special purpose, in conformity with the general Dhamma (*Dhammanudhammapatipatti*). The meaning of *Dhammanudhammapatipatti* is 'the practice in accord of all levels and aspects of the Dhamma or the practice in perfect conformity to the Dhamma or to the Principle (A.II. 245). The word virtue or Dhamma in Buddhism is neutral by its nature, which can only be divided into two aspects, namely the wholesome Dhamma (*kusala*) and unwholesome Dhamma (*akusala*). Thus, non-greed, non-hate and non-delusion are seen as wholesome, and greed, hate and delusion as unwholesome (D. III. 275). In contrast to Aristotle's virtue, the non-greed, for example, in Buddhism cannot be classified as three levels of strong greed, moderate greed and weak greed. Non-greed itself is to be counted as the middle way between the sensual pleasure and the self-mortification, because both the sensual pleasure and self-mortification are rooted in greed, which is non-virtue. Therefore the Buddhist neutral *Dhamma* and Aristotle's moderate virtue are not similar.

Buddhism is in agreement with Aristotle's idea that actions like theft, adultery and murder, and emotions like shamelessness, envy and spite are in themselves already either excesses or defects, and therefore cannot exist in moderation. The virtue of justice is important in that it links moral with legal considerations and also introduces into ethics the question of the attention with which an act is committed. Justice deals with rewards and punishments, and with the fair treatment of one individual by another. Man is a political animal, and as a citizen he must exercise virtue. Aristotle regarded the family as the basic unit of the state, and the state as a creation of nature, since in isolation man is not self-sufficient. He distinguished three kinds of acceptable government:

monarchy, aristocracy, and polity. He preferred the third, somewhat akin to constitutional democracy, criticized communism, and stressed the importance of the family and of a prosperous middle class.

While Aristotle's middle way lacks a definite criterion or general standard to determine what the exact middle is, the Buddhist Middle Way, or the Eight Noble Path, is quite clear in its principles, goal and purpose. As the Buddha said:

There are these three things belonging to this life, that is, the lustful, the depraved, and the deluded man, because of his lust, his depravity, his delusion, directs thought to his own harm, directs thought to the harm of others, to the harm both of himself and of others, but when lust, depravity, and delusion are abandoned directs thoughts neither to his own harm nor to that of others, nor of both, thus these results belong to this life, they are undecaying, not subject to time, inviting to come and see, leading onward (to *Nibbana*), to be realized each for himself by the wise (S. IV. 339; S. Tr. IV. 243).

The Middle Dhamma as Dependent Origination in Society

In the Buddha's time there were monarchical and republican forms of government, but the Buddha did not promote any system as the best one. He directed his attention to principles of rule as the important factor. Thus, he emphasized not the form of government but how it, in fact, runs. We find that whenever the Buddha visited some a state, he became a good friend of the ruler and advised him on the appropriate virtues to assure the stability of each system of government. No new political system was given by the Buddha. He believed in improving the systems of government already available. He wanted the rulers to be virtuous. Society in his time was dominated by the Brahmanical tradition. The social structure was divided into four castes (*vannas*). As Ven. Dr. Chanya Khongchinda puts it: "The Buddha did not have any idea to make radical change in the social structure. He emphasized the importance of giving virtue to each individual rather than changing his social hierarchical position by any means" (1993, p. 12). The *Dhamma* he gave is the Middle *Dhamma* and the Middle Path to be the social basis and cultural heritage.

The Buddha explains the principle of conditionality not only on an individual basis, as it occurs within the mind, but also in a social context, as it occurs in human relationships. The Dependent Origination cycle describes how social ills arise along the same lines as personal suffering, but from craving onwards it diverges into a description of external events:

In this way, Ananda, conditioned by feeling is craving, conditioned by craving is seeking, conditioned by seeking is gain, conditioned by gain is valuation, conditioned by valuation is fondness, conditioned by fondness is possessiveness, conditioned by possessiveness is ownership, conditioned by ownership is avarice, conditioned by avarice is guarding, conditioned by guarding and resulting from guarding are the taking up of the stick, the knife, contention, dispute, arguments, abuse, slander, and lying. Evil and unskillful actions of many kinds thus appear in profusion. (D. II. 58)

This sequence illustrates a process connecting individual mind experience with external event, showing how the origin of social problems and suffering lies within human defilements. The sequence is very basic, showing only an outline of the unfolding of events. More detailed explanations, emphasizing more specific situations, appear in other Suttas, such as the *aggañña* (D.

III. 80-98), the *Cakkavatti* (D. III. 58-79) and the *Vasettha* Suttas (Sn. 594-656). These Suttas are the working models of the principle of "dependent origination" on the social level.

The Buddhist Utopia. To understand better the social economy of Buddhism, we need to mention the ideal society in Buddhism. The question is often asked: Is there any ideal society in Buddhism? The word 'utopia' is not actually mentioned directly by the Buddha, but almost all Buddhist thinkers agree that the Buddhist utopia, or ideal society, is to be found here and now. The Buddhist monks' community is regarded as the ideal society in Buddhism, because in the monks' community the doctrine of contentment or satisfaction with what is one's own (*santutthi*) is strongly emphasized in order to protect the society against the threat of consumerism. According to Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, this kind of society is known as Dhammic Socialism.

The Ideal Person as c. We need to mention the idea of Nibbana as the standard of the middle way and the concept of Arahant as the model person, or one who follows the middle way properly. The Buddha said that as long as Buddhists follow the middle way – otherwise known as the Eightfold Noble Path the world will never be without Arahants. The Arahants are to be found in the present society here and now. In the study of Nirvana, it is best is to study the state of the attainer of Nirvana and not that of Nirvana itself. The state of the attainer may be discerned from the characteristics of the attainers themselves.[9] We may discuss this briefly in accordance with three principles: (1) the intellectual state (*panna*), (2) the mental state (*samadhi*) and (3) the state of behaviour (*sila*).

First of all, the intellectual state of the Arahant differs from that of the worldly person. The Arahant certainly sees things as their reality in accordance with the law of impermanence, suffering and not-self. (He comprehends advantage, disadvantage, and departure from the sensual pleasure, worldly happiness and the five aggregates as their reality.) And he is able to abolish sensual pleasure, worldly adherence and attachment of five aggregates, because he has seen a liberal and sublime life.

Secondly, the mental state means the freedom from the influence of *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*. The Arahant has already been trained well in controlling his perception. The nature of Arahant's consciousness is called 'having nothing' (*akincana*), 'peacefulness' (*santa*), 'sorrowlessness' (*asoka*), 'safety' (*khema*), 'contentment' (*santuttha*) and so on. A characteristic that should be emphasized is happiness, because Nirvana is the highest bliss. The Arahant does not adhere to any kind of happiness; his feeling is without evil inclination. But a worldly man has latent tendencies of "lust" for sensual pleasure when he gets pleasant feeling; tendencies of "irritation," when he gets unpleasant feeling; and tendencies of "ignorance," when he gets neutral feeling. The Arahant has no mental illness, though he has to suffer because of his physical illness. The Arahant's happiness is perfect happiness in itself. But worldly happiness is like the happiness arising from temporary relief from disease. A worldly man is like a person with leprosy who must scratch himself. His happiness is obtained by scratching the spot that itches. In short, the Arahant has a more highly developed mental state than the worldly man.

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[9] The word '*Arahant'* can in terms of hermeneutics be interpreted in both the positive and negative meanings. For instances, the '*Arahant'* means one who has attained the *summum bonum,* (Vin. 1. 8), *Khinasava,* one whose mind is free from mental obsessions, (S.I.235) and *asekha,* one who does not require any further training,(A.I.62), etc. The *Arahant* is independent of faith (*assaddha*). The word '*assaddha'* (faithless) here means a person who has already known the thing by himself without relying on others. It differs from the preliminary common meaning of the word, which means 'not-knowing or not-seeing,' (D.III. 252, 282).

Thirdly, the state of the Arahant's behavior can be considered in terms of his duty and not his precepts (*silas*). Since, noble persons, say, from Sotapanna upward are entirely perfect in their precepts, they will not behave in a wrong way, because their minds are emancipated through insight. The Arahant has destroyed his action (*karma*) in the sense that his doing is only action (*kiriya*) because of no ignorance, (Dh., v. 96). The Arahant does not bother about his own interest, for his characteristics are is called *anuppattasadattha* (one who has attained his own benefit), (It., 38), *katakaraniya* (having performed one's obligations), (S. I. 71), *sabbamitta* (the friend of all man), (Theg 648) *sabbabhutanukampika* (the helper of all creatures), A. I. 211

To conclude: the states of wisdom, mind and living of the Arahants, as mentioned above, are included in the following three principles, wisdom or knowledge, deliverance and compassion. The personal work of the Arahants is held to be knowledge and deliverance, but the service to others is esteemed in the light of compassion. It is said that deliverance is the state of effect, i.e. the accomplished work, but wisdom and compassion are esteemed as the teaching of how to work: wisdom helps one to attain Nirvana, and compassion makes others' work possible. Therefore, the Arahantship or Nirvana, which is achieved in this very life itself, is solely the purpose of the Buddha.

The Middle Way Between Consumerism and Occultism. Karunadasa has observed that the Buddha's acts in the past, the Buddha's life itself, delineate the perennial conflict between *sassatavada* and *ucchedavada* and its transcendence by the Middle Path, (MW. P. 73). He further comments: "The Buddha's lay life as a prince exemplifies one extreme; his life as an ascetic practicing severe austerities exemplifies the other. And his attainment of enlightenment by giving up both extremes shows the efficacy of the Middle Path for deliverance from all suffering" (*Ibid*.). We can observe that the Buddha was more sympathetic towards eternalism or self-mortification and more critical of annihilationism or materialism. The implication seems to be that although the former group does not lead to the realization of truth, nevertheless it does not lead to the destruction of moral responsibility, (see also S. V. 420).

The reason why materialism is more blameworthy than asceticism is because according to materialism, man, as a pure product of the earth, is awaiting annihilation at death. His aim in this life can never be the denial of sensual pleasures even in his spiritual pursuit. Because materialism rejects rebirth, it tends to encourage man to lead a life unburdened by a sense of moral responsibility or by moral inhibition. Hence, the two ethical extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification represent the practical aspects of the two metaphysical extremes of annihilationism and eternalism. At the same time, the avoidance of the two ethical extremes also serves as the avoidance of the two metaphysical extremes.[10]

Consumerism. At present, materialism as opposed by the Buddha is actually consumerism, which is always accompanied by capitalism. The Buddha's purpose in establishing the monks' community based on the four basic needs of food, clothing, shelters, and medicine, was to propose the communal model for society and to show the disadvantage of consumerism. Consumerism is fueled by advertising. The dominant message found in all the corporate ads is to buy. Consumerism is a social and economic creed that encourages us to aspire to even more than our share, regardless of the consequences. The United States alone, with only 6 percent of the world's population, consumes 30 percent of the world's resources. 20 percent of the world's population consumes over 70 percent of its material resources, and owns over 80 percent of its wealth. Although this global elite includes people in almost every country, it is mainly concentrated in the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Japan (*Ibid*.).

[10] Karunadasa, MW, August Vol. 74. P. 72.

Occultism. Another purpose of the Buddha's preaching the Middle Way was to combat superstition or occultism, which, as a kind of unprovable faith, is belief in magic powers, spells and supernatural powers. This means placing hope in some external mysterious power to get help. By its nature, the effectiveness of occultism cannot be proved. It is believed that such occultism is derived from the Hindu Veda. Buddhism tries to help people avoid occultism, because it cannot lead to a cessation of suffering, though it might bring us to worldly knowledge (*lokiya-abinna*). We might further say that the Buddha was more sympathetic towards occultism or superstition and more critical of consumerism. The implication seems to be that although the former group do not lead to a realization of truth, neither does it lead to the destruction of moral responsibility,

In Thailand, Buddhism is historically divided into two schools, namely Mahanikya, the ancient and liberal school, and Dhammayuttika, the new and conservative school. Culturally, Buddhism is divided into two types, namely popular Buddhism and genuine Buddhism. Popular Buddhism is a kind of Buddhism mixed with consumerism and occultism, but genuine Buddhism is the pure Theravada Buddhism.

Thai people are mostly influenced by a mixture of consumerism and superstition. For example, the former Assistant Minister of Education, Mr. Chauvarin, tried to dig into a cave in the Kancanabhuri province in search of gold believed to be buried there by Japanese soldiers during the Second World War. His intention was to repay Thai's national debt to the IMF. Moreover, at present in Thai society we can find many examples of occult behaviors reported on the front page of every newspapers.

The Middle Way and Its Application to Contemporary Thai Economy

During 1994-1997, the Thai people experienced an economic slump when the economic bubble burst. Apparently, it caused much pain to millions of people, especially to those who had no financial safety net. It is said that the bubble economy was the economy of the believers in occultism and consumerism. Rooted in greed, desire and attachment, it was unsustainable. According to Dr Prawase, (http://www.mcot.or.th/king/king), the country committed three major mistakes in the past decades. First, it traded its natural resources and environment for money. Second, it promoted industries based on imported technology and supplied them with cheap labor available due to the depletion of natural resources. Third, it borrowed money to speculate in a bubble economy.

The Buddhist Economics as a Sustainable Path

To be a Buddhist is to follow the Middle Way, which is to accept the middle economy. Depending on the middle economy, the nation will not grow fast, but the growth will be sustainable. Generally, modern academics view economics as the study of the supply and demand of materials in terms of wealth, prices, power and the forces that determine income and employment. But Buddhist economics goes back to the basics: it is the study of 'skills in managing the household'.[11] Even though the material world appears to be difficult and dangerous, we cannot

[11] The scriptures contain a number of terms that refer to Buddhist economics, viz: *gihisukha* (the householder's welfare, A.I.80), *gihidhamma* (the householder's code, A.3.41), *upasakadhamma* (the lay disciple's code, A.3.206), and *gihikicca* (the householder's duties, Pv.4.1). The Pali terms *gihivinaya* (the householder's discipline) and *gihipatipatti* are modern terms that reflect the emphasis on household training

change it into an ideal place. What we can change is the mind. We have to change ourselves into a spiritual community. Its basis is Right Livelihood as leading to a peaceful life. As Ven. Piyasilo expressed it:

> Buddhist economics is not a spiritual theory or a fashionable neologism, but a vital breeze that refreshes the stuffy confines of a world that grinds on greed, hate and delusion. It is the middle way that avoids the extremes of opportunistic capitalism and modish socialism, on the one hand, and of selfish materialism and anarchistic individualism of the other (1988, p. 39).

In a materialistic world where 'more, bigger and faster' overshadow the human spirit and turn people into statistics, Buddhist economics acts as its counterweight, antidote and ideal. It is a meta-economics (principles that guide the contents of economics) for those who wish to opt out of race for profit and be more human, even to attain spiritual heights. In Buddhist training one comes to see 'more and more of less and less.' 'Contentment is the greatest wealth' (Dh no. 204), or in the words of E.F. Schumacher, 'Small is beautiful' (Long, 1973, p. 43).

Schumacher dedicates a whole chapter to 'Buddhist Economics," in which he says that 'the Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least threefold: to give man a chance to utilise and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his egocentredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence' (1973, ch. 4).

What is the nature of Right Livelihood in Buddhism? The hallmark of Right Livelihood is that it is self-affirming, human-centered and ecologically sound -- or at least it does not negate oneself, others or the environment. As such, one might say that Right Livelihood is self-caring through other-caring. The traditional formulation of Right Livelihood exhorts one to avoid the five kinds of wrong trade, i.e. trading in arms, in living beings (which includes slavery), in flesh (including hunting and butchery), in drinks and intoxicants, and in poison and pollutants (A. III. 208). In the Mahacattarisaka Sutta, the Buddha extends the list of wrong livelihood to include slaughtering, fishing, soldiering (especially by mercenaries), deceit, treachery, soothsaying, trickery, usury (especially loan-sharking), cajolery and so on (M. III. 75).

It must be stressed here that in listing these occupations as wrong livelihoods, the Buddha is not condemning the fisherman, the butcher, the soldier or the druggist. These are just names; for no one is really a fisherman, for example, every hour of the day. Insofar as one fishes, one is a fisherman; insofar as one hunts, one is a hunter. It is the fishing, the hunting, the killing -- the deed not the doer -- that is regarded as evil. Indeed such people need Buddhism more than those whose lives are already Dhamma-based.

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in Buddhism. The ideal householder is called a 'jewel of lay disciples', 'red lotus of disciples' or 'white lotus of disciples' (A.3.206).

The philosophy of Buddhist economics has been laid down by the Buddha over 2500 years ago in such discourses as: *Sigalovada Sutta* (Social Discipline; Budgeting,D.III.188); *Annanatha Sutta* (Worldly Happiness, A.II.68); *Dighajanu Sutta* (Conserving Wealth; Insurance, A.IV.282);*Adiya* Sutta (How to Enjoy One's Wealth, A.III.44); *Kula* Sutta (Home Management, A.II.249); *Ina* Sutta (Danger of debts, A.III.352); *Papanika* Sutta (Shrewdness of a Merchant, A.I.116); *Samavati Vatthu* (Recycling of Robes, dhA.I.219); and *Cullaka Setthi Jataka* (Small is Beautiful, J. no 4).

The Buddhist theory of economics is centered on the Right Livelihood (*Samma-ajiva*), examples of which are properly shown in the *Samyutta Nikaya* (S. VI. 331) *Anguttara Nikaya* (A.V. 1), in the Sutta known as *Kamabhogi*, which lists ten modes of life of those who enjoy sense pleasures. The last type of *kamabhogi* is highly appreciated by the Buddha and is narrated in the form of a story as follows:

In the Buddha's time, the headman named Rasiy, came to visit the Buddha, and asked what kind of ascetic is blamed. The Buddha said that among three kinds of ascetics, he appreciated the third one. One kind of ascetic, living a rough life, goes forth from his home and becomes homeless as a Wanderer. He thinks: perhaps I shall reach some profitable state; perhaps I shall realize some superhuman experience, some truly noble excellence of knowledge and insight. So he punishes himself, even to self-torture. Finally, he both reaches some profitable state and realizes some superhuman experience of knowledge and insight.

Then the Buddha told him about an ideal person who practices the Middle Way economy, the tenth and last among the ten types of sense-pleasure is most who appreciated by him.

A certain enjoyer of sensual pleasures seeks wealth by lawful means, without violence. So seeking it, he gets ease and pleasure for himself, shares it with others, and does meritorious deeds. But he makes use of his wealth without greed and longing, he is guiltless of offence, he is heedful of danger and alive to his own salvation (S. IV. 329-338).

The Buddha further explained the reason of his appreciation of the tenth type: the tenth enjoyer of sense-pleasures seeks wealth lawfully and without violence. In so seeking he gets ease and pleasure for himself, shares it with others and does meritorious deeds, uses not his wealth with greed and longing, and is guiltless of offence, heedful of danger and alive to his own salvation. Such a person is praiseworthy in four respects: in seeking it lawfully without violence, in both getting ease and pleasure for himself and sharing it with others, and doing meritorious deeds,. . .in being alive to his own salvation (S. Tr. IV. 235-243).

The Examples of Buddhist Middle Way Economics in the Present Thai Economy

King Phumipol Rama IX's Self-Sufficiency Economy or Self-Reliance Economy. In Thailand at present, His Majesty, King Phumipol and his royal family should be regarded as model persons who strictly follow the Buddhist principle of Middle Way. The king has many projects based on the Buddhist theory of middle economy, especially the doctrine of Right Livelihood (*Samma-ajiva*). One of his theories is widely accepted and known as Self-Reliance Economy, called 'New Theory'. His Majesty's New Theory, which sets forth how farmers may achieve self-sufficiency, is not only a treatise on farm management technique. More importantly, it is a succinct analysis of the cause, and the way to end, the current economic crisis. If followed in letter and spirit, the royal proposal could lead to a more sustainable Thailand, (for his Majesty' New Theory on Managing Agricultural Land, see http://www.mcot.or.th/king/default.htm.) Based on his extensive travels throughout the country, and from experiments at royal-initiated demonstration farms (notably at the Mongkolchaipattana Temple in Saraburi province), he formulated his New Theory, which consists of a three-step agricultural method designed to serve as a guide for farmers to attain self-sufficiency (see Appendix).

His majesty's method of instruction for people in different walks of life is based on the Buddhist Middle Way or the Eightfold Noble Path, and can be summarized in the following nine points:

(1) Do not tell the people how to act.
(2) Stress self-reliance and self sufficiency.
(3) Stress participation by the people.
(4) Use democratic principles: if the responsible officials cite technical difficulties, His Majesty listens impartially.
(5) If the officials who are in agreement feel that results might not be worth the money invested, His Majesty suggests changes to the project.
(6) Act in a locally-appropriate way: projects should be environmentally, geographically, and culturally sensitive for every region of the country.
(7) Revitalise the community by building a structure based on essential production principles which lead to long term self-sufficiency. This kind of development helps rural people deal with the outside world; which His Majesty calls "an explosion from within" and this must be done step by step.
(8) Provide the means to obtain and create information for rural people. His Majesty stresses that people should know more about making a living through appropriate use of agricultural technology and have "examples of success" which they can adopt effectively to be self-sufficient.
(9) Introduce a bureaucratic reform which promotes a "single management or unity administration" strategy, which is one of the most significant characteristics of the Royal Development Study Centres (http://www.mcot.or.th/king/king).

His Majesty's instructive method consists of nine steps, signifying his status as King Rama IX. These can be understood along the lines of the Buddhist principles of the middle path. Though the King's nine points cannot be simply categorized into the eightfold path one by one, each set can be integrally combined into the other. The main idea applied by His Majesty is the Path of Right Understanding, which is the forerunner of all seven paths.

Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs). It is said that the Buddhist Middle Way can be explained covering all the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand (http://aeup.brel.com/sme/sme16.html), which is the main policy of the present Thai government. Liberty is promoted by SME whose characteristics are: (1) Independent: The business must be self-sufficient in producing diversified products. Providing a raw material to a large factory creates much dependency on product distribution. (2) Flexibility: The business should consist of a small work force employee which will be more flexible enough to change product lines and production processes depending on market demand. (3) Low investment: The business should require a minimal initial investment. (4) Uses of local material: Merchandise should be produced using local material, or it should be furnished by a local or nearby resident. Use of imported material should be minimal, and it must be an important part, that greatly enhances the value of the product. The profit margin should be quite high. (5) Local know-how: Production may require the use of imported machinery, but the technology should be inexpensive. The machinery should not be the main factor in production, but skill and know-how. In this way, the company can free itself from dependence on foreign source for new product development. (6) Uniqueness: The product must be unique and should not be produced in a mass volume. (7) Part of the community: The business should play an active part in the community where it is located. It should use local staff as a way

to give back to the local society. (8) Global standard: The product should be in high quality and accepted globally for its design and material. (9) Export products: After people have achieved self-sufficiency, then they can share the products with outside communities. The business should generate an income in foreign currency. Not only will this help the country economy, it will automatically control the quality of the exported products based on global standard. (10) Understand the nature of running the business: The owner or management of the business must understand and know the factors for success and failure for the business.

Self-Sufficiency and SMEs Theories Governed By Buddhism. Dr Prawase Wasi, a highly-respected social critic, has noted that the reign of King Rama IX has coincided with a period of enormous transition in Thailand's economy and society (http://www.mcot.or.th/king/king). The concept of self-reliance goes beyond managing a household or community economy by producing enough to live on while preserving the integrity of the environment, the universal life-support system for sustainable living. It is not only a matter of physical health, but also of mental balance. The key to self-sufficiency lies in the eradication of greed, in knowing what is enough. This does not mean becoming stagnant or shutting ourselves off from the rest of the world.

Self-reliance means '*por yuu, por kin'*, or producing enough to feed ourselves. When our stomach is full and our mind attuned to the idea of moderation, we will have the basic requirements for secure living. If we expand outward from this solid base, we will not easily lose our way easily (*Ibid*.).

His Majesty's New Theory concept of integrated farm management is in essence a system of managing resources so that villagers have everything they need for domestic consumption right in their back yard. It helps insure farmers against external risks, such as a drop in farm prices. When the goods they produce exceed their household demand, they can sell them to the market, thus proceeding from self-reliance to '*kin dee, yuu dee*,' or 'eat well and live well'. This is the connection between Self Sufficiency Theory and Small and Medium Enterprises (http://www.mcot.or.th/king/king).

The Influence of *Mahajanaka* on the Thai Socio-Economy. *Mahajanaka*, the latest literary work by His Majesty the King, is hailed as the crystalisation of his visions for the country. Adapted from the story of one of the Lord Buddha's previous lives, it focuses on the virtues of perseverance and moderation as guidelines for sustainable development through the rich use of Dhamma riddles, (http://www.mcot.or.th/king/king).

Conclusion

Thai Buddhists are nurtured by the Buddha's Doctrines of Middle Dhamma, i.e. Dependent Origination as samsara and Dependent Cessation as Nibbana; and especially by the Middle Path, i.e. Eightfold Noble Path. At present, rural Thais are stricter practitioners of Buddhism than urban Thais. The values of Buddhist culture of rural Thais can be traced back to the Buddha's teachings about the five precepts and their five counterpart virtues. One tradition, which is found among rural Thais, is that of voluntary help, or sharing labor, called in Thai 'Long-Khaeg' or 'Long-Raeng'; this embodies the teachings of charity, concentration and wisdom. Voluntary labor does not need money in return to help accomplish the activities in the ancient Thai tradition, especially in rural areas. The present King of Thailand is trying to set up many projects to solve the Thai economic crisis, especially in the countryside by trying to revive agriculture. The King is a devout Buddhist who strictly practices the Ten Royal Virtues (Dasavidhadhamma, D.II.312). With his background of the Dhamma almost all of his assistance projects are grounded on the Buddha's

Dhamma, as can be seen from his theory of Self-Sufficiency Economy based on his new theory of agriculture. His theories correspond to the ten virtues of those enjoying sensual pleasure, especially the last one.

Buddhism is the religion of the Middle Way. There is flexibility in practice in terms of conventional and ultimate truth or Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's theory of Human Language and *Dhamma* Language. According to Piyasilo Thera (1988, 19-20), the religious aspect of Buddhism is its tradition (myths, legends, culture) that give form and dimension, color and sound to the Dhamma, allowing it to have a beneficial impact on those in the world. In the course of time, the message of truth will emerge through the medium of tradition. Buddhism needs to be remythologized. The myths, legends and stories have to be carefully studied and reexamined in relation to the *Dhamma*.

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Chapter VII

Buddhist Ethics and the Modern World

Somparn Promta

The modern world is complex. Dealing with moral problems today is not easy. Religious ethics is viewed as being created largely within a context quite different from our present world. The complexity of contemporary moral problems, as found in prostitution, abortion, mercy killing, genetics research, science-based human reproduction, human cloning, and so on, results mainly from the complicated relationships between people and society and among individuals. Science and technology are considered to play the key role, facilitating human desires in various intricate forms. The religious precepts which best served in ancient communities increasingly appear ineffectual. This paper argues that Buddhist ethics must evolve to become relevant to the moral dilemmas of the modern world. Discerning that way to reinvent Buddhist ethics is a difficult. It can never be claimed that there is only one way of interpreting Buddhist ethics suitable for responding to the present world's moral problems. While the way I choose depends mainly on my personal understanding of Buddhist teaching, I try to present a Buddhist ethics. Hence, certain doctrines commonly accepted in Buddhist community are the sources of writing, while personal opinions figure rather in the language for communicating the ancient ideas in a modern way.

What Is Buddhist Ethics?

As philosophers, we know that proper questioning leads to clear answers. So, let us begin this paper with some questions. First, what is Buddhist ethics? Second, is it different from other ethical ideas in the world, and if so, how? Third, what is the objective of Buddhist ethics? Fourth, as any ethical idea is usually based on some metaphysical principles, are there metaphysical principles on which Buddhist ethics is based and, if so, how are such principles used to support Buddhist ethics? We will consider these questions as follows.

First of all, Buddhist ethics should be understood to belong to the ethical category of religious ethics. Normally, the study of ethics is of two major types: religious and non-religious. Religious ethics is grounded in religious belief such as Christian ethics of Thomas Aquinas, Islam ethics, Hindu ethics of Shankara and Buddhist ethics of Nagarjuna. Non-religious ethics is not grounded in religious doctrines, e.g., Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, or John Stuart Mill.

A fundamental difference between religious and non-religious ethics is the context in which they operate. In brief, religious ethics can never be studied separately from the main ideas of the religion from which it derives. For example, Christianity teaches that the world is created by God, and that after creating the world God created human beings through the first pair of people known as Adam and Eve. According to Christian belief, God created the world and human beings with some plan and purpose. Ethics in Christian tradition can never be understood separately from this belief.

Buddhism as a religion has its own history. Grounded in the Indian tradition, Buddhism not surprisingly shares some of the worldview of that tradition. For example, Buddhism teaches that

human beings are determined by their moral actions.[1] The concept of *kamma* was shared by religions of ancient India at the time of the Buddha. Rebirth differs from Christianity but is widely accepted in ancient India, e.g., in Hinduism and Jainism. Nevertheless, as a unique religion Buddhism has its own ideas not found in other Indian religions. Studying Buddhist ethics can never be done separately from this uniquely Buddhist world view grounded in its unique history.

The student of Western ethics notes that ethical theories often appear to have little relevance to real life. Western ethics can be studied as if it were merely a thought game. Kant says a lot about moral reasoning as does Mill. In studying the ethical theories of these great philosophers, we learn methods for national decision-making in difficult ethical situations. Kant presents duty as the criterion for judging what should be done, while Mill presents idea of utility. Even though their methods differ, both Kant and Mill bare their ideas in reason or the brain rather than on mind.

In addition, Buddhist ethics like other religions' ethics is best viewed as an ethical doctrine requiring the whole life. To be Buddhist, one needs to devote one's life entirely. Two concepts that might be useful for clarifying this statement are being and role playing. Both of these concepts are found in daily life. We are called a father, a mother, a teacher, a policeman, and so on. These titles denote the different realities. Being a father or a mother requires the permanent reality. That is, we can never be a father at one time and not at another; being a father is something given for all time, and we can never escape from it. On the contrary, being a teacher or a policeman does not require our whole life. They can be considered as temporary realities in comparison with the permanent one. So, we can say that we are a father or a mother; but concerning the position of teacher or policeman, we play that role. The position of father is being, while the position of teacher is a role played. The difference between being and playing is that the former is something we can never escape from, while the latter we can. Western ethics as taught in the university classroom requires merely role playing, while Buddhist ethics requires being. This necessity of being in Buddhist ethics is a central point Buddhism teaches us to seriously examine our life, and the ethics required for this purpose can never be one based on mere role playing. Buddhism teaches much about suffering as it sees life to be nothing but suffering.[2] Accordingly, human beings share the great task of overcoming suffering from the moment of birth. Such a task requires a radical revolution; not merely playing a role but a serious struggle.

Buddhist Ethics and Other Ethical Theories

In the academic study of Buddhism, there have been the attempts by scholars to examine Buddhist ethics in various ways of which one is a comparative study of Buddhist ethics with other ethical theories. We will begin this with non-religious ethical theories. There are two important questions. First, what should be counted as the ideal of life? Second, what is the definition of good and evil? The first question stems from the notion that life has some objective. Living without any

[1] *Karma* in Sanskrit and *kamma* in Pali. These terms are used to refer to an action that contains at least two properties. Firstly, it is intentional as the Buddha says intention is *kamma*. Secondly, it contains moral properties. That is, it can be considered good or evil. Playing a game such as football is not counted as *kamma* as it does not contain a moral dimension, while killing or stealing can be counted.

[2] It should be understood first here that the concept of suffering taught in Buddhism does not denote any negative implication. It is taught as fact; there is no value judgment behind this concept. *Dukkha*, which is normally translated into English as "suffering," should be considered a neutral concept. It denotes the reality of life and the world. The Western reader well acquainted with the work of the pessimist philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer may be misled to include Buddhism as a pessimistic philosophy.

objective is not to live as a human being but as an animal. Philosophers concerned with this category of question confront two important issues: 1) What should be considered the objective of human life? 2) What reason can be the justification for the proposed objective? The second question is proposed on the grounds that daily life contains moral terms such as good, bad, right, wrong. One of the duties of the philosopher is to give a clear definition of such words. These two questions proposed by ethical philosophers appear related. Normally, the objective of life is considered to be also the good life. Hence, the definition of goodness necessarily plays an important role in guiding our life.

Regarding what should be counted as the ideal of life, two differing views have been proposed by ethical philosophers. The first is the theory of hedonism. The second is a group of theories that oppose hedonism, which will be called non-hedonistic theories. Hedonism states that sensual pleasure should be accepted as the ultimate objective in human life. This theory is based on a simple reason. Jeremy Bentham, a British moral philosopher who proposes a hedonistic theory, states that human beings are created by nature to love pleasure and hate pain. This is a fact of life that can never be denied. To guide our living along the proper way, Bentham argues, the most important requirement is knowing our real nature. The guideline must be something that human beings can actually do. For example, if we are taught that we should struggle against our desire, this implies that desire is a thing we can overcome. Yet if desire is something we can never defeat, it is useless to teach people to struggle against it. Likewise, when we call an action good, this implies that such an action can be done. For Bentham, to teach people to do something without studying whether it can be done or not is useless. In brief, the ideal of life according to Bentham must be in accord with our nature. As pleasure is our preferred experience, should it not be counted as the ideal of life? There are varying forms of hedonism. Among these, utilitarianism, presented by John Stuart Mill, seems the most outstanding. According to this ethical theory, that which promotes the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people is the greatest good.

The essence of the arguments behind hedonism can be illustrated by the example of making shoes. In making shoes, we should make them fit our feet: the form, size, material, and so on must be designed to make the shoes comfortable for wearing; it is a mistake to make our feet fit the shoes.

Non-hedonist philosophers do not accept that argument. They argue that our nature and what should be counted as the ideal of life can never be the same thing. There seem to be some hidden assumptions here. Human beings in the view of non-hedonist philosophers are created by God (for the theist thinker) or by nature (for the atheist thinker) to possess two parts of essence. One may be called the good part and one the bad part. Naturally, in our life the bad part dominates over the good one. Examples of the bad part are desire, ignorance, hatred, and so on. The best way to grasp the bad part in our life and how it works is to consider what we call instincts. We share a number of instincts with animals, which may be called simply animal instincts; pleasure is one among them. Though all of us like pleasure and hate pain, this does not mean that pleasure must be accepted as the ideal of life, for animals also are created to like pleasure and hate pain. The ideal of life must transcend animal instincts.

The essence of arguments given by non-hedonist philosophers is centered on a belief that human beings possess something that goes beyond animal instincts. There are so many things we love by nature, such as sex and laziness, that what we like must be separated from what we should do as the good. The value of life can be disclosed not through following our animal instincts, but on the contrary, when we struggle against animal instincts. Animal instincts are compared to

darkness, while the good part in our life is compared to a light. Following what we like is nothing but running into the darkness.

Among the best known candidates for the ideal of life proposed by non-hedonist philosophers are wisdom (proposed by Socrates and Plato), and peacefulness of mind or liberation of the soul (presented by Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Taoism, and Confucianism). According to non-hedonistic theories, human beings are born to search for these good things; otherwise we are little different from animals. Socrates statement that the unexamined life is not worth living underlines that human life is fulfilling when it is devoted to the search for the good.

As previously mentioned, the objective of life is also the definition of the good. Bentham considers sensual pleasure to be the ultimate aim of life; pleasure is the definition of good. Man is naturally forced to make decisions in his life, to choose between two or more possibilities. If we accept Bentham's theory, we should choose that which produces the highest sensual pleasure. On the contrary, if we accept a non-hedonistic theory, say Plato's theory of wisdom as the good, then wisdom becomes the criterion for choice. What leads us closer to wisdom should be considered as the good. These differing viewpoints lead to differing ways of life. In general, most people follow the hedonistic principle to some extent, whether they are aware of this or not. Wealth, for example, is accepted as the ultimate aim of life. More rare are the people who reject accumulating wealth and walk on the way that leads to something beyond money and worldly pleasure.

Should Buddhist ethics be categorized as hedonistic or non-hedonistic? Certainly, sensual pleasure is strongly denied in Buddhist literature. The Buddha himself once was a prince staying in luxurious palaces surrounded by highly sensual pleasure, but finally realized that such things are not to be counted as the objective of life. He left behind all sensual pleasure and lived a homeless life in order to find something which transcends worldly pleasure. He found peacefulness of mind, later in Buddhism called *nibbana*, to be the ultimate objective of life. Hence, Buddhist ethics should be categorized as a non-hedonism.

However, as Buddhist ethics contains many steps of self-cultivation, it is argued by some Buddhist scholars that sensual pleasure can be accepted in Buddhist ethics if it is considered within some lower step of the self-cultivation process. There is a Buddha saying in the Pali canon stating that there are at least three kinds of happiness accepted in Buddhist teaching. The first is *kamasukha* which normally is rendered as sensual pleasure. The second is *jhanasukha*, usually translated as meditation happiness. The third is *nibbanasukha*, literally liberation happiness. The first kind of happiness seems to be the same as that meant by Bentham, and it is accepted by the Buddha that sensual pleasure is not an evil for the householder, so long as it is not gained by immoral efforts. However, Buddhist ethics differs from the ethics of Bentham in that it believes that sensual pleasure is not the only kind of happiness; there are other kinds of happiness of which some have higher qualities not found in sensual happiness. Happiness derived from meditation is placed above sensual happiness as it contains at least two superior qualities: it exploits less material and is much more permanent than sensual happiness. The householder sometimes is called *kamabhogipuggala* in the Buddhist texts, meaning one who consumes sensual pleasure. Persons of this kind are advised by the Buddha not to stop at seeking sensual pleasure only. Meditation can be practiced by the householder to attain a happiness of the mind that is more subtle than sensual pleasure. For Buddhist monks, sensual pleasure is prohibited, while happiness from meditation is introduced. As Buddhism believes that real happiness is the cessation of suffering, sensual pleasure and meditation happiness ultimately are considered not to be the highest happiness as each contains a certain amount of suffering. Sensual pleasure sometimes is compared to the wind that blows past just for a moment. When the days of joy have passed away, the negative

aspect of sensual happiness will be disclosed, and we will realize the suffering hidden in what we think so joyful. That which is considered to be the ultimate aim of life in hedonist ethics, namely, sensual pleasure, is viewed by Buddhists as something to be consumed more wisely. Human beings are created by nature to love sensual pleasure; this fact is never denied by Buddhism. But the pursuit of sensual pleasure should not be our whole life. In Hinduism, sensual pleasure is treated as one of the aims of human life.[3] As religions grounded in Indian tradition, Buddhism and Hinduism seem to share rather positive attitude to sensual pleasure. Sometimes it is argued that Buddhist ethics rejects sensual pleasure because the Buddha says in the *Dhammacakkappavattana* Sutta that the doctrine of sensual pleasure, (*kamasukhallikanuyoga*in Pali) is one of two extreme doctrines with which Buddhist ethics does not agree. To respond to this argument, it may be well to separate the way of life of the householder from that of the monk. The ethics taught in the *Dhammacakkappavattana* Sutta is meant for the latter; it is presented directly for the monks, not for laymen. However, some implication for the householder may be possible. That is, even though the householder is expected to be involved with sensual pleasure, he should be advised not to think that his entire life must be sacrificed for it.

Ultimately, it is clear that Buddhist ethics teaches that the liberation of the self, *nibbana*,[4] is the final goal of life. To reach that final goal, we have many things to do on the way. Life is compared to a journey. Interestingly, on this journey we will see many things which may be compared to sensual pleasure. To stop and look at scenic beauty is not a moral mistake as long as we are aware that there is the ultimate goal to be reached at the end of the road. Buddhist ethics is a process ethics in the sense that life is viewed as a process in which moral experiments are inevitably needed. Mahatma Gandhi deals with process ethics in his great book *My Experiments with Truths*. Perhaps sensual pleasure should be viewed wisely as a negative condition that indirectly supports the process of self-cultivation. Both happiness and pain provide life with useful material for enlightenment. Sensual pleasure should not be seen as an evil, but as a valuable opportunity for spiritual growth.

The Objective of Buddhist Ethics

As we have considered previously, Buddhist ethics should be viewed as an ethical system designed for some specific religious purpose. This may be the general characteristic of religious ethics, to present the ethical principles as a means leading to the highest goal accepted in that religion. Ultimately, *nibbana* is the highest objective of life in the Buddhist perspective. Some academic studies of Buddhist ethics state that *nibbana* should be used as the whole criterion to judge what is good and what is not according to the Buddhist moral system. That is, whether an action is considered good or not depends on whether it leads us closer to *nibbana* or not. This theory is criticized for assuming a single ethical system for all Buddhists, whether layman or monk. However, if we accept that there can be more than one system in Buddhist ethics, the criterion

[3] In Hindu teaching there are four aims of life. One of these is *kama*, meaning sensual pleasure. A well-known account of this aim is *The Kama Sutra*, in which sexual pleasure and other sensual delight are presented as the facts of life.

[4] As Buddhism does not accept that a thing called self or soul really exists, the liberation of the self means the absolute cessation of suffering. Buddhism believes that the root of human suffering is grounded in the idea of self; we look at ourselves and think, "This is me," and create the world of me and mine on such an idea. The liberation of the self is the self-cultivation process which aims in the end at the destruction of the concept of self. As nothing really exists as the real me, nothingness or voidness is the liberation of the self.

of *nibbana* proposed above may be unsuitable. In Buddhist literature, such as the *Visuddhimagga* and the commentary of the *Mangala* Sutta, the *Mangalatthadipani*, at least two kinds of ethics are mentioned: the ethics for laymen and that for monks. This theory of more than one ethical system is more flexible and in accord with the actual moral practices of Buddhist communities, both those mentioned in the texts and these that inertly exist.

For the layman, the Buddha teaches that being a good person is the aim of moral practice. The concept of the good person is mentioned through a Pali term, *kalyanaputhujana*. An outstanding Thai Buddhist thinker, the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, explains that being a good person is defined by at least two properties. First, one should understand the essence of the Buddhist worldview. Second, one should follow some moral rule recognized as proper for the lay Buddhist. Understanding the essence of the Buddhist worldview means knowing how Buddhism views this world. The good person from the Buddhist perspective, while still involved in worldly affairs, is able to separate the objective of life from what is not. For example, sensual pleasure is not the objective, but self-realization is.

At this level of ethics, some kind of passion, *kilesa* in Pali, is permitted. There are two kinds of passion mentioned in Buddhism. One could be called the positive passion and the other the negative one. Passion in the Buddhist perspective is defined in relation to the idea of me and mine. Buddhism believes that because we feel, "It's me who is now living in the world," this me as the object of our feeling pushes us to do such and such things in daily life. From a moral perspective, these things are good or bad. The bad side of actions will not be considered because it is clear that the passion working behind these kind of actions can never be morally justified. Only the positive aspect of passion will be examined. Suppose a young politician feels strongly that his country and people are oppressed by a tyrannical government. He tries to arouse people to fight against the immoral governance, and his actions finally lead to great change in the country. This man is an example of a person who does the good thing from the positive aspect of passion. Certainly, he must feel, "It is me who has helped my people and my country." The love of country is closely related to the idea of me. In daily life, a great number of people who do good things out of this positive aspect of passion. A mother who willingly dies for her child must be counted a very good person. She takes such an action rooted in the thought that this is my child. Worldly love as found in family, a couple of lovers, and so on is all a manifestation of passion. Lay Buddhists are taught to be responsible for their family, their community, their neighbors, and so on. This ethics is based on the acceptance of some aspect of passion. In brief, in lay ethics being a good person is not contrary to passion in the sense that people do not have to negate passion to be good.

At the level of the ethics for the monk (for which the term "homeless" is used),[5] all passion is treated as the enemy of the holy life. The main difference between the ethics for the householder and that for the monk or "homeless" is that in the former positive passion is accepted while it is not in the latter. To accept or not accept something in Buddhist ethics relates to the ultimate objective of its ethical system. What leads the Buddha, as a young prince, to the way of the homeless ascetic is the passion to overcome the miserable facts of life: birth, old age, sickness, and death. After a time of experiments with various kinds of religious practice, *Nibbana* is found by the Buddha to be the state that overcomes those miserable realities of life. Buddhism is nothing if it is not involved with *nibbana*. As this world is viewed full of suffering his followers was advised by him to try to overcome suffering by a serious practice of the *dhamma*. The most powerful enemy

[5] A homeless person, *anagarika* in Pali, is the name given to the member of a monks' community in Buddhism. There are two kinds of Buddhist monks: male (*bhikkhu*) and female (*bhikkhuni*). All are called *anagarika* as they leave behind all their family life.

of the self-purification process is passion, regardless of the kind. However, as passion is notably varied, the follower of Buddhism seeking the final goal is achieved to deal with the lower passion first and subsequently with other passion which are more subtle and difficult to destroy.

As stated above, there are two main categories of passion. The first is the most vulgar passion which instigates the harmful actions human beings do to each other. The second is the positive passion. This level of passion, even though it can be viewed as useful in terms of worldly goodness must be considered as one among many conditions that if much engaged will prevent a person from totally enlightenments.

The very essence of the monks (homeless) ethics is self-purification, a state that can be compared to body washing. The objective of body washing is the cleanness of the body; that of practicing the *dhamma* in homeless ethics is the cleanness of the mind. As both kinds of passion produce rebirth to which *Nibbana* is opposed, for those who want to go quickly to *nibbana*, even worldly goodness must be avoided. (To say nothing of immoral actions.)

Even though Buddhist ethics can be viewed to include two kinds of ethics, the worldly ethics (*lokiyadhamma*) and the transcendental one (*lokuttaradhamma*), these two systems are not completely separated from each other. Rather, the ethics for lay people should be seen as a lower step leading to the higher one.

However, there is a notably differing view concerning the relationship between worldly ethics and transcendental ethics as to whether practicing transcendental ethics requires abandoning worldly life. Traditionally, the Buddhists in Theravada Buddhist countries such as Thailand think that transcendental ethics cannot be practiced by a person still concerned with worldly life. It is believed that the *arahant*, the absolutely awakened person, must leave worldly life and take a homeless one; otherwise he must die within seven days. This understanding seems to make the two systems of Buddhist ethics unrelated to each other, as it assumes two worlds which cannot be lived in simultaneously. Moreover, this may give rise to other seriously questions such as: If one is forced to leave his daily life when his moral training has been developed to the highest point, how can Buddhist ethics claim to benefit people when it has divided a man from his life?

Zen Buddhism seems to hold that there is no contradiction between the holy life and the world. A man of highest perfection can never be subject to contradiction with the world, people, nature, himself, or anything else. In a famous sutra of Mahayana Buddhism, the *Vimalakirti* Sutra, it is stated that the highest truth can never be contradictory. The dualistic view[6] is considered by Mahayana Buddhism to be a contradictory concept. To divide Buddhist ethics into two categories as done in Theravada Buddhism raises the question as to whether it is based on the dualistic view or not. If the answer is yes, it can never be the highest truth. However, there are some Theravada Buddhist thinkers, e.g., Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, who believe that there can never be a contradiction in Buddhist ethics. To clarify this position, Bhikkhu defines Buddhist ethics as the ethics of thought, not of the form of life. Traditionally, Theravada Buddhist texts, especially the commentaries, stress the importance of the form of life. The monk, even though newly ordained and having lesser spiritual qualities, must be respected by lay people who are more qualified in the *dhamma*. This follows the concept that ethics in Buddhism is defined by the form of living. The monk is placed at the higher moral position because he is practicing the ethics of the

[6] Dualistic view holds that there are two sides of things in the world, and that they are created to be opposed to each other. For example, there are the good and the bad; the man and the woman; perfection and imperfection; the lower and the higher; and so on. Taoism is well known as a philosophy that does not accept any kind of dualistic view. Mahayana Buddhism is sometimes considered to share that philosophical position with Taoism.

"homeless," which is considered to be the higher form. On the contrary, in the Sutra of Hui-neng it is recorded that Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of Chinese Zen Buddhism, was awarded the position of the leader of Zen when he was just a temple boy. The form of life is not important? The Zen Buddhist perspective. What does matter are that moral qualities of the mind. Hui-neng deserves the position of patriarch because his master, the fifth patriarch, understands Buddhist ethics as the ethics of the mind, not the form of living. Buddhadasa too defines Buddhist ethics as the ethics of inner qualities, not the outer form of life.

It is possible that the contradiction found in Theravada Buddhist ethics has resulted from the confusion between the *vinaya* and the *dhamma*. Phra Dhammapitaka, another outstanding Thai Buddhist thinker, explains that morality in Buddhism has two major forms. In Buddhist texts the first form is called *vinaya*, and the second form the *dhamma*. At the time that the Buddha began to pass away, he said that the *vinaya* and the *dhamma* would be the master of the Buddhists after his departure. The *vinaya* are the rules designed to be the minimum requirements for the member of Buddhist society. The five precepts, *pancasila* in Pali, or the 227 rules practiced by the monk are examples of the *vinaya*. The essence of the *vinaya* is outer control, while the *dhamma* is designed to give the practitioner for inner restraint. The *vinaya* thus belong to the category of the ethics of outer life, while the *dhamma* plays the role as the ethics of inner life.

The *vinaya* and the *dhamma* play complimentary roles in Buddhist ethics. The former plays a major role in dealing with the negative passion which may cause harm to oneself and to others. The latter plays a basic role in dealing with the positive passion which may cause subtle suffering. In brief, there are two dimensions in human life to be purified. The first is the outer life which can be purified by the *vinaya*. The second is the inner life which can be purified by the *dhamma*. Ultimately, the *dhamma* will lead to the cessation of suffering. But the *dhamma* is also the higher steps of the staircase: one cannot jump up to the higher steps without passing the lower ones. This is why these two parts of Buddhist ethics should be viewed as equally important.

Buddhist Ethics and Metaphysical Realities

As stated above, the *dhamma* plays an important role in Buddhist ethics. In the Western world of ethics, it may be possible to have as ethical theory not based on any metaphysical theory. But in Buddhism, the *dhamma* is at the core of everything from which ethical concepts are derived. To make the above statement less abstract, the meaning of *dhamma* should be clarified. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu of Thailand proposes a theory of *dhamma* considered to be a great contribution to understanding Buddhism. He states that the *dhamma* taught by the Buddha has four meanings. First, it means everything in the universe. Second, it means natural laws that regulate all natural things in the universe. Third, it means moral duties to wisely follow the laws of nature. And fourth, it means moral fruits which one gains through wisely following the laws of nature. We will not consider Buddhadasa's theory in detail, but will focus on his interpretation of the *dhamma* as natural things and natural laws. It should be noted that the interpretation of Buddhist teaching as natural phenomena seems to be a dominant paradigm in Thailand. We can find this line of understanding Buddhist teaching in a famous work by Phra Dhammapitaka entitled *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values for Life*. According to Buddhadasa and Phra Dhammapitaka, the universe is a natural reality in the sense that its existence can be understood without referring to supernatural beings such as God. The universe contains two components: natural things and natural laws. These two components exist as realities and the question as to who creates these things is considered by the Buddhist to be useless and absurd. This Buddhist view of

the universe seems to be in accordance with a cosmological theory known as the steady state theory, which states that the universe has already existed without beginning and that any question regarding the starting point of the universe is meaningless.[7]

The question concerning the beginning of the universe seems even less important when considered in the context of Buddhist ethics. It does not matter when the universe was originated (if there is such a beginning point); the universe remains the place where suffering still confronts people. The most important thing for the Buddhist is the nature of the universe itself. Buddhism gives several accounts of the nature of the universe through fundamental teachings such as the doctrine of three characteristics of things (*tilakkhana*), the doctrine of dependent origination (*paticcasamuppada*), etc.

It should be remarked here that ethics in Buddhism is sometimes considered a naturalistic ethics in the sense that the grounds used to justify the moral claims in Buddhism are all from facts in nature.[8] The doctrine of the three characteristics of things and the doctrine of dependent origination should be considered as metaphysical grounds that support the ethic of Buddhism, besides being metaphysical doctrines themselves. The fact that Buddhist ethics is grounded in Buddhist metaphysics[9] is very significant. It can be said that ethical statements in Buddhist teaching can be translated into metaphysical statements. Or we can say that in Buddhism for any word denoting ethical qualities, such qualities can be found in the natural world. Some Western ethical philosophers argue that the meaning of words denoting moral properties, such as good, cannot be derived from the natural world. It is merely a conventional concept, denoting nothing in the real world. On the contrary, in Buddhist ethics the meaning of a word denoting moral qualities is believed to derive directly from facts in the empirical world. Thus, words like good, bad, right, wrong, etc. have meanings which are not merely conventions created by human beings but are

[7] This assertion should be understood to be of the Theravada school. It is accepted among most Theravada Buddhist scholars, especially in Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. However, some Theravada Buddhist scholars do not think that Theravada Buddhism rejects the assumption of the starting point of the universe. For the Mahayana school, a beginning of the universe seems more possible than in the Theravada school.

[8] The term, naturalistic ethics, is used here in the wider sense. Two views can be called naturalistic. The first assumes nothing natural except that which can be directly observed by sense experience. The second accepts some unobservable realities, but does not think that these things are supernatural phenomena. Buddhism is counted naturalistic in the last sense; facts in nature can be observable or unobservable. Whether observable or not, a fact remains natural in the sense that it must be either a natural law which regulates natural things or a natural thing which follows the law of nature.

[9] It is sometimes said that the Buddha rejects metaphysical concepts, as he does not say anything when asked to discuss the questions called in Buddhist texts *avyakata*. The *avyakata* is interpreted by some Buddhist scholars as the metaphysical concept. Following this line of interpretation, it is said that no metaphysical concepts are allowed in Buddhist teaching. The term 'metaphysics' is used here in a broader sense than accepted by philosophers. When we philosophers hear the story of the Buddha's silence, we feel that even though the questions rejected by the Buddha can be included in metaphysics, there are other kinds of metaphysical concepts considered acceptable in Buddhist teaching, such as the concept of human nature which is much explored in Buddhism. So it may be safer to say that there are some metaphysical concepts rejected by the Buddha; but not all. It should be noted that the metaphysical concepts that the Buddha rejects are completely useless in terms of self-cultivation. Some Buddhist scholars argue that these questions are rejected by the Buddha because they can be debated forever without conclusion. However, it might be said that all metaphysical concepts, including those explored widely in Buddhism such as the concept of man, can never be stated conclusively. The question whether man really has or has not a soul remains completely unsolved. So understanding why the Buddha rejects these questions is probably best seen in their apparent uselessness as stated by the Buddha himself in the Pali canon.

based on realities in the natural world. For example, when Buddhism says that killing is a wrong action, this does not mean that killing is considered to be wrong just on conventional grounds. Killing refers to a certain moral fact that really exists in the world.

Some Western philosophers say that people call killing evil because it causes harm to the community and so is undesirable, but that the word evil still does not denote anything but a convention. The meaning of evil as a convention does not differ from the meaning of mathematical concepts. Mathematical terms like one, two, three, etc. do not denote anything in the world. They are merely signs created for the purpose of mathematical computation. Likewise, words that seem to denote moral qualities such as good, bad, evil, etc. exactly do not denote anything in the real world. They are just signs created for the purpose of ethical communication. The important implication that follows is that as social conventions can be changed when it is found that the former cannot serve society anymore, so also the meaning of good, bad, right, wrong, etc. can be changed. That is, that which used to be accepted as the good can be changed to the bad evil. Buddhist ethics does not accept this thought. For Buddhists, words like good, bad, evil, etc., really do denote the facts of the world, and these facts are eternal as the unchanging realities.

It seems that between two differing views on the relationship between ethical concepts and metaphysical realities, the theory which states that there is a relationship is more difficult to defend. The question of reality is a subject that some Western philosophical schools have at times tried to exclude from philosophy. Regardless, the question remains. The most difficult task confronting Buddhists in trying to point out that there is a hidden relationship between ethical terms and metaphysical realities is how to convince the non-Buddhist philosopher that this belief is not an illusion. Modern scientists, such as Fritjof Capra, have made a great contribution to public understanding of science and Eastern religions by pointing out that the secret teachings in these religions can be illustrated through the medium of Western science and the mysterious phenomena found in modern science can also be explained through the religious concepts of these Eastern religions. This way may give some light on the difficult matter we are considering even though sometimes Eastern religions in the work of these scientists could be considered by them superstitions rather than knowledge.

The Buddhist doctrines of three characteristics of things and dependent origination describe a very interesting picture of the world. In this picture, we note two important points. First, nothing seen can be said to have an essence. Second, the world of things is manifest as a unified field. These two points seem to be contradictory. The unified field mentioned in the doctrine of dependent origination implies essence, but the concept of non-substantiality mentioned in the teaching of *anatta* suggests something else. However, this is not a real contradiction for the doctrine of three characteristics is concerned with individual things, while the doctrine of dependent origination describes events, or the chain of things. The concept of field suggests the possibility of permanent essence. In modern physics, the universe is described through the concept of field. That is, the field is considered to be more fundamental than things. The field is permanent, while things which appear in the field are temporary. The Buddha mentions two kinds of beings. The first is the conditioned beings, *sankhatadhamma* in Pali; and the second is the unconditioned ones,*asankhatadhamma* in Pali. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu notes that the doctrine of dependent origination suggests that the field of things is unconditioned being while things that play various roles within the field are temporary. We will not go beyond this observation as this is not an exploration of Buddhist metaphysics in depth. It can be concluded that the doctrines of three characteristics and dependent origination are viewed by Buddhists as providing the moral grounds used in Buddhist ethics in two ways. First, as the world has nothing worth grasping, the highest

goal of life is to liberate oneself from all the illusions of the world. This may be called individual ethics, whose main objective is the cessation of suffering. The individual ethics in Buddhism is based on the doctrine of three characteristics of things and others which present a similar view, such as the doctrine of four noble truths. Second, as the world is the web of beings in which nothing can be separated from the whole, we the members of society, or the world and the universe on a larger scale, have the moral responsibilities to cooperate in promoting the welfare of all. This may be called social ethics. The social ethics in Buddhism is based on the doctrine of dependent origination. Differing from an individual ethics, social ethics aims at the cessation of the so-called social suffering instead of only individual suffering.

Two Kinds of Buddhist Ethics and Their Relationship

As mentioned above, there are two kinds of Buddhist ethics: the ethics for the individual, and the ethics for society. Both stem from a fact of nature, namely, that there are two statuses in each person. On the one hand, each person is an individual whose life has unique quality not found in another. On the other hand, each person is a member of society with certain responsibilities required for the welfare of the whole society. Ethics is designed to reflect this fact. Some ethical theories deal with human beings as individuals, such as the hedonistic theory proposed by Bentham. This kind of ethics is normally used to give advice as to which way should be followed when one is confronted with a conflict in life. It should be noted that the conflict we are considering is an individual one, happening in one person's life. How to best resolve such conflicts is the task of individual ethics. Similarly, as a member of society, man is sometimes confronted with the so-called social conflict. This kind of conflict is concerned with the relationship between man and his society or the relationship among the members of society. This kind of conflict requires as ethics designed specifically for the problem. Some ethical theories fit this category, for example, the well-known utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill. The principle, the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, is proposed as a rule for deciding between two or more conflicting choices in society.

Likewise, Buddhist ethics provides a twofold ethics to deal with the different problems in human life. Basically, Buddhism originated as personal advice to overcome individual suffering. The Buddha himself first felt only his personal suffering and tried to seek the way leading to its cessation. Later, he found that such suffering was shared by other human being, so be shared his personal experience in struggling against the inner enemy. The Buddhist ethics for the individual is grounded in a belief that human beings share a number of life facts. Suffering is one of these eternal facts, and each of us should struggle against it by ourselves. Buddha's personal experience in struggling against his personal problems is the basis of the Buddhist ethics for the individual.

When Buddhism became a social institution, the Buddhist community found that a social ethics was also needed. Suffering in human life has two main aspects. One results from the confrontation with the enemy inside, and one results from the confrontation with the enemy outside. The enemy inside is one's own nature: birth, old age, sickness, and death. The enemy outside is the immoral structure of society. In brief, individual suffering is one that a person gives to himself through ignorance. Social suffering is a product of the depraved structure of society. The French writer and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre, says that hell is the other. In saying that one must be free from their judgment to create his own happiness, Sartre might be seen as proposing a kind of individual ethics. Ultimately, he seems to believe that a person's real problem is himself.

Suffering can never enter our life if we do not open the door and let other people walk in to judge our life.

Karl Marx, like Sartre, speaks of suffering created by human beings. For him, hell is other; but he does not think that this should be viewed in terms of individual struggle. It can be said that Marx and Sartre see the same thing, but interpret it differently. For Marx, human misery results chiefly from the immoral structure of capitalist society. The ethics presented by him could be called a social ethics.

Buddhist ethics given at the time of the Buddha has been modified by modern Buddhist scholars to cover new more complicated ethical problems, chiefly from the modern confusion of values. Individual ethics seems to be less affected by this modern confusion; it deals with human nature which remains the same. Thus the individual of suffering of a thousand years ago is essentially the same as individual suffering today. But social conditions of the modern world cannot be compared with the past. The modern world requires more detailed responses for more complex ethical problems, such as fairness, rights, liberty, and equality. Moreover, science and technology have caused many controversial moral issues as the inevitable results of scientific research. Human cloning can be taken as the latest moral issue stemming from challenging research undertaken by the scientist. Religion as a social constitution has been expected to provide a rational solution for these critical phenomena. Buddhist ethics designed for the purpose mentioned above must carry social dimensions.

In conclusion, ethical problems with which we are confronted in the modern world can be divided into two categories. The first is the old problem concerning human suffering. The second is the newly created one stemming mainly from the highly complicated structure of our society. In a famous sutta of Theravada Buddhism, the *Mangala* Sutta, the Buddha points out that the proper land, *patirupadesa* in Pali, is a necessary condition of self-cultivation. This implies that social ethics is required as the first condition of moral practice. One can never have peace of mind if the surrounding social conditions are all immoral. *Nibbana* can never be expected in a time of war. In the land where the poor are the oppressed majority can we discuss what should be seen as the ideal of life? Social ethics thus precedes individual ethics.

Moral Problems in the Modern World

Essentially, moral problems in the modern world could be considered to stem mainly from human desires. Buddhism analyzes three kinds of human desire. The first one is sensual desire, called in *Pali kamatanha*. The second is desire for being, called in Pali *bhavatanha*. And the third is desire for non-being, called in Pali *vibhavatanha*. Formerly, science and technology were considered to provide sensual pleasure. But these days they are seen to go beyond that. As Buddhism has criticized, sensual pleasure is impermanent, and we human beings know this fact; we know that we are like an empty glass of water and we think that our life would never have been meaningful if there were no water to fill the glass. But water remains water, it comes and goes. ‘To be something’ by oneself is more permanent when compared with ‘having something’. At this point, desire for being is more powerful than desire for sensual pleasure. In existentialist ethics we find that even though sensual pleasure is not highly endorsed, as it is in hedonist thought, existentiality is accepted to be the moral goal. The French existentialist thinker, Albert Camus, said, “I rebel, therefore I am,” a statement which follows the well known form used by Descartes, meaning that to be something is to act against tradition. Tradition in the existentialist view is anything people do without questioning. We work, making money to gain sensual pleasure without

questioning why we do that thing rather than other. If this be counted tradition, we can never be something as far as we are involved in tradition.

Much of scientific research undertaken by the scientists today does not aim at providing sensual pleasure, but at promoting human existence. Death is a common phenomenon and is considered by the anthropologist as one of the starting points of human civilization. Mummification found in Egyptian civilization could be cited as an example. Buddhism says a lot about death for it is one of the most important things in Buddhism called suffering: no death, no Buddhism, some Buddhists believe. Death in itself is a natural phenomenon, and as such can be viewed to be a problem or not, depending on our way of thinking. Normally, the Buddhist is advised not to view death as a problem. In some Buddhist traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, death is considered to have some positive value for life. But this same thing viewed through the eyes of the scientists is a problem to be overthrown. In the scientists' eyes death is our enemy! Immortality is one of the imagined things human beings have tried to find for centuries. In the past, it was believed that magic could be the instrument to achieve immortal life. In the present, science and technology are considered to replace magic, promising the same immortality.

The depth of will to immortality in human beings, as well as in other living things, is manifest in biology as instinct. A modern Darwinian, Richard Dawkins believes that all actions in human life are forced and directed by genetic instincts deeply rooted in the gene. The individual's life cannot be immortal, but that of the gene is immortal. The gene is wiser than us and undertakes its mission secretly behind our brain as the reason why we love, marry, and have a family. In a Darwinian view of life, the final purpose of these manifestations is to preserve the immortality of the gene. So, as individuals we can be viewed to have a long history going back for a million years: our history is nothing but the immortal chain of the gene.

Buddhist ethics is the ethics of reality-awareness. The whole world is reduced by Buddhism into one's own life. That is, the world is nothing but pure data interpreted by human thought. Things have no value in themselves, but the human mind gives them value. The world is not a problem in itself; man is his problem. So awareness of reality is viewed as the core of Buddhist ethics. There is a famous saying in Zen Buddhism that, "Before studying Zen I see the river as the river, the mountain as the mountain; during practicing Zen I see the river not the river, the mountain not the mountain; finally after finishing Zen practice I see the river as the river and the mountain as the mountain again." Reality in Buddhist ethics is clear and simple. Just let the river flow, this is reality. The moral problems in the modern world are nothing but the result of not letting the river flow!

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Chapter VIII

New Thought in Buddhism

Phra Suthivorayan

The present decade (1990-2000) is a turning point in the history of the world. Perestroika and reconstruction in the USSR, the unification of Germany and the evolution of the European Common Community, etc., are symbols of a turning point in the history of mankind. The end of the Cold War leads to a new vision to transform the world from a battlefield to an era of a lasting peaceful "New World Order."

Alvi Toffler and Fritjof Capra have pointed out these phenomena of the changing world in their books, *Future Shock* and *Turning Point* respectively. Albert Einstein also believed that human progress will be safe from technological catastrophe by turning human thought to new discovery.

Turning to Buddhist philosophy, can we search any sources in original Pali texts to show the new or systematic thought found by the Buddha? This paper will attempt to answer that question in searching for the new thought in Buddhism.

Old Thought in the Buddha's Time

In the time of the Buddha or even before (6th century B.C.), there were two schools of thought, namely *Sassataditthi* -- eternalism and *Ucchedaditthi* -- annihilationism. The former includes *Issaranimmãhetu* -- Theistic determinism and *Pubbekatahetu* -- Past-action determinism. The latter includes *Akiriyaditthi* (inefficiency of action), *Ahetukaditthi* (non-causality) and *Natthikaditthi* (nihilism). In this context, a man who believes in eternalism generally practices the Tapa and Yoga to make his life longer or achieve a better life in the future by the graciousness of God. The annihilationism generates the practice of sensual indulgence or materialism, suggesting the words of Omar Khayyam, "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die."

These two thoughts are applied by the people even now in the form of Consumerism and Extremism. The former emphasizes happiness and a luxurious life and the latter on idealistic and violent actions.

New Thought of the Buddha, the Middle Way

The Buddha as the Bodhisattva had practiced the two old thoughts, namely, sensual indulgence and self-mortification, but could not attain the Enlightenment. So, he turned his mind to the new thought that is The Middle Way; then he succeeded in attaining the extinction of suffering. He proclaimed this truth in the first sermon that is the *Dhammacakkappavattanasutta* as below:

avoiding both these extremes, the Tathagata has realized the Middle Path; it gives vision, it gives knowledge and it leads to calm, to insight, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. And what is that Middle

Path? It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path; namely right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.[1]

In *Samyuttanikaya Mahavagga*, it is stated that the Noble Eightfold Path is the Supreme Life (*Brahmacariya*). One who treads on the Noble Eightfold Path is called *Brahmacari*. The end of lust, the end of hate, the end of illusion is called the end of Supreme Life. The benefit of Supreme Life is Noblehood.[2]

The Dawn of the Noble Eightfold Path

What is the forerunner or the dawn, the foundation of the Noble Eightfold Path? The Buddha pointed to the seven dhammas as the dawn or forerunner, the harbinger of the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path in *Samyuttanikaya Mahavagga*:

Just as, monks, the dawn is the forerunner the harbinger of the arising of the sun, so friendship with the lovely is the forerunner, the harbinger of the arising of the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path. . .even so possession of virtue. . .possession of self-actualization. . .possession of right view. . .possession of earnestness. . .possession of systematic thought is the forerunner, the harbinger of the arising of the Noble Eightfold Path.[3]

The Middle Way: Human Integrity

The aim of the Noble Eightfold Path is self-development or to be well-educated. In this process, the physical growth (*bhavitakayo*), social growth (*bhavitasilo*), mental growth (*bhavitacitto*), and intellectual growth (*bhavitapanno*) are developed in full scale as human integrity. This can be found in *Anagata Sutta*,[4] *Pancakanipata*, *Anguttaranikaya*.

The Aim of the Middle Way

The aim or benefit of the Eightfold Path is first that it leads to welfare (*hitaya*) which can be divided as:

1. *Attattha* – the individual welfare
2. *Parattha* – social welfare
3. *Ubhayattha* – both individual and social welfare.

The next step is happiness (*Sukkhaya*). Happiness can be classified as *Kayikasukkha* (physical happiness) and *Cetasikasukkha* (mental happiness) or it can be classified into three kinds, namely *Ditthadhammikasukkha* (happiness in this world), *Samparayikasukkha* (happiness in the future or next world) and *Paramatthasukkha* (the supreme happiness, the perfect peace or Nibbana).

In any case, it can be said that all doctrines in Buddhism have one theme, namely, freedom (*Vimuttirasa*) which is the perfect essence of Supreme Life. The Buddha said: "That, Brahmin,

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[1] *Mahavagga*. Vol.6 pp.17-18; *Book of Discipline* part 4 p. 15; *Kindred Sayings* V. 356-357 (PTS).
[2] SV. 23; *Kindred Sayings* V. 23 (PTS).
[3] KS. V. 27-23.
[4] GS III. 84-86.

which is unshakable freedom of mind. This is the goal of the Brahma – faring, this the pith, this the culmination."[5] (See the chart next Page).

Paratoghosa and Yonisomanasikara: The Condition of Arising of Right Understanding

There are two conditions[6] for the origin of *Sammaditthi* or right view, which is the first factor of the Noble Eightfold Path:

Paratoghosa – voice from the other which is external factor of the right view. It may be right information or a good friend (*Kalyanamitta*).

Yonisomanasikara – literally this means a critical reflection or thinking in terms of specific conditions such as causal relations or problem–solving, reasoned attention, systematic attention or analytical thinking. According to the Buddha, right view arises in one who sees things with systematic attention or reflective thought. This it leads to the extinction of suffering. To see things without reflective attention, leads to the wrong view and then to suffering.

We find at least ten methods of *Yonisomanasikara* in the canonical text:

1. *Paticcasamuppada*, known as the relative or ring method. The *Nidanavagga* of *Samyuttanikaya* explains the relative method of thought as follows:

Tatra bhikkhave sutva ariyasavako
Paticcasamuppadam sadhukam yonisomanasikaroti
"Iti imasamim sati, idam hoti. Imassuppada idam uppajjati.
Imasamim asati idam na hoti, Imassa nirodha idam nirujjhatiti"

Herein, brethren, the well taught Ariya disciple states thoroughly and systematically the causal law: "this being, that comes to be. From arising of this, that arises. This not being; that does not come to be. From the cessation of this, that ceases."[7]

2. *Khandavibhanga* or the analysis method can be seen from such statements as

Yatha hi angasambhara hoti saddo ratho iti,
Evam khandhesu santesu hoti sattoti sammati.

Just as, when the parts are rightly set, the word 'chariot' Arises in our mind, so also it is our usage to say; 'A being' when the aggregates are there.[8]

Seyyathapi avuso katthanca paticca vallinca paticca tinnanca paticca mattikanca pattica Akaso parivarito agarantveva sankhayam gaccchati, i.e. evaneva kho avuso atthinca paticca naharunca paticca mamsanca paticca cammanca paticc akaso parivarito rupantveva sankhayam gacchati. . .

[5] MI. 204-205; *Middle Length Sayings* I. 252-253.
[6] MI. 294 (PTS-1987); MLS. I. 353. Parato ca ghoso yoniso ca manasikaro ime kho avuso dve.
[7] KS. II. 66-PTS.
[8] KS. I. 170.

vedana. . .sanna. . .sankhara. . .vinnanam. . .evam hi kira imesam pancannam upadanakkhandhanam sangho sannipato samanvayo hoti.[9]

Your reverences, just as a space that is enclosed by stakes and creepers and grass and clay is known as a dwelling, so a space that is enclosed by bones and sinews and flesh and skin is known as a material shape . . feeling. . .perception,. . .mental formations,. . .consciousness.. . .Thus there is, so it is said, the including, the collecting together, the coming together of these five groups of grasping.[10]

Phenapidupanam rupam vedana pubbubupama
Maricikupama sanna sankhara kadalupama.
Mayupamanca vinnanam desitadiccabandhuna
Yatha yatha nijjhayati yoniso uparikkhati
Rittakam tucchakam hoti yo nam passati yonisoti.[11]

"Like to a ball of foam this body is:
Like to a bubble blown the feeling are:
Like to a mirage unsubstantial
Perception; pithless as a plantain trunk
The Activities, a planton, consciousness.
Thus declared the Kinsman of the Sun
However, one both contemplates (this mass)
And thoroughly investigates its form,
To him, so seeming, empty, void it is.[12]

3. *Yonisomanasikara* on *Tilakkhana*, or systematic thought on three streams of all things. It generates the insight of mind and leads to dispassion and purification of mind. Sometimes it combines with the first and the second method. In *Samyutta, Khandhavagga,* the Buddha had advised that,

Rupam bhikkhave yoniso manasikarotha; rupaniccatanca yathabhutam samannupassatha, rupam bhikkhave bhikkhu yoniso manasikaronto rupaniccatanca yathabutam samannupassanto rupassmin bibbindati. Nandikhaya ragakkhayo, ragakkhaya, nandikkhayo, nandi-ragakkhaya cittam vimuttam 'Suvimuttanti vuccati'. (evaneva vedanam. . .sannam. . .sankharam. . .vinnanam.)[13]

Do you apply your mind thoroughly, brethren, to body and regard it in its true nature as impermanent. He who so applies his mind thoroughly to body, and so regards it, feels disgust at the body. By the destruction of the lure of it comes destruction of lust. By the destruction of the

[9] MI. 191-191 *Mahahatthipadopamasutta*.
[10] MLS. I. 236 (PTS – 1987).
[11] S. III. 141-142.
[12] KS. S. III. 121 (PTS-1975).
[13] S. III. 52.

lust comes the destruction of the lure and by destruction of the lure the mind is set free, and it is called "well freed and so for the other four factors (feeling, perception, activities, consciousness).[14]

Sutavatavuso kotthita bhikkhuna pancupadanakkhandha aniccato dukkhato anattato yoniso manasikatabba.[15]

The five grasping groups, friend Kotthita, are the conditions which should be attended systematically by well-taught brothers as being impermanent, suffering. . .and soulless.[16]

4. *Yonisomanasikara* on *Ariyasacca*, or problem-solving method of systematic thought, is part of the new thought in Buddhism.

so imam dukkhanti yonisomanasikaroti, ayam dukkhasamudayoti yoniso manasikaroti ayam dukkhanirodhoti yoniso manasikaroti ayam dukkhanirodhagaminipatipadati yoniso manasikaroti. Tassa evam yoniso manasikaroto tini samyojanani pahiyanti sakkayanitthi vicikiccha silabbataparamaso.[17]

This is suffering" wisely attends.. . .This is the origin of suffering.. . .This is the extinction of suffering.. . .This is the path leading to the extinction of suffering. Because he wisely attends thus, the three feters decline: the wrong view as to one's own body, doubt and adherence to (wrong) rites and ceremonies.[18]

5. *Yonisomanasikara* on *Atthaparikkha*, or systematic thought on the relation between theory and practice (*Dhamma* and *Attha*), is one of the right thoughts in Buddhism. This is the way to stability in Buddhism in the real sense and the way of intellectual progress. The Buddha had pointed out in the *Anguttaranikaya*, *Pancakanipata*:

Pancime bhikkhave dhamma saddhammassa thitiya asammosaya anantaradhanaya samvattanti. Katame panca? Idha bhikkhave bhikku sakkaccam dhammam sunati; sakkaccam dhammam pariyapunanti; sakkaccam dhammam dharenti; sakkaccam dhatanam dhammanam attham uparikkhamti; sakkaccam atthamannaya dhammannaya dhammanudhammam patipajjanti.[19]

Monks, these five things lead to stability, unconfounding, nondisappearance of Saddhamma. What five? Carefully the monks hear Dhamma; carefully they master it; carefully they bear it in mind; carefully the test the good of things borne in mind; knowing the good and Dhamma, carefully they go their way in Dhamma by Dhamma.[20]

Yonisomanasikara is also stated as one of four dhammas for the growth in wisdom as:
"Cattarome bhikkhave dhamma pannaviddhiya samvattanti. Katame cattaro?

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[14] KS. III. 45 (PTS-1975).
[15] S III. 168.
[16] KS. III. 143-144.
[17] MI. 9-10.
[18] MLS. I. 12-13 (PTS-1987).
[19] *Anguttaranikaya*, III. 174.
[20] *Gradual Sayings* III. 132 (PTS-1988).

Sappurisasamsevo sadhammasavanam
Yoniso manasikaro dhammanudhammapatipatti.[21]

Monks, these four states conduce to growth in wisdom. What four? Association with a good man, hearing *saddhamma*, reflective attention, practice of Dhamma along with right path.[22]

6. *Yonisomanasikara* on all things in three dimensions (*assada – adinava – nisarana*) is one of right thought in Buddhism. The Buddhists cannot be pessimistic or optimistic, but they should be realistic. The explanation of *Kama* (sensual pleasure), for instance, in *Mahadukkhakhandhasutta* has given the clear concept on three dimensions of thought:

O monks, what is the satisfaction of sensual pleasure?. . .Whatever pleasure, whatever happiness arises in consequence of these five strands of sense-pleasures. This is the satisfaction of sensual pleasures.

What is the escape from pleasures of the senses?

Whatever, monks, is the control of desire for and attachment to pleasures of the senses, the getting rid of the desire and attachment, this is the escape from sensual pleasures.[23]

The mind of a monk attending wisely in sensual pleasure becomes not attached or inclined thereunto. But whose mind escaping sensual pleasure, becomes calm and firm is freed from the cankers that surge-from-lust-caused, painful, and burning -- nor does he feel that feeling. This is the escape from sensual pleasures.[24]

7. *Yonisomanasikara* on *paccayapatisevana*, or systematic thought on true value, and artificial value, for using four requisites. The Master had advised his disciples in *Sabbasavasutta* as follows:

Idha bhikkave bhikkhu patisankha yonoso civaram patisenati. . .patisankha yoniso pindapatam patisevati. . .patisankha yoniso senasanam patisevati. . .patisankha yoniso gilanapaccaya-bhesajjaparikkharam patisevati.[25]

In this Teaching, monks, a reflective monk, uses a robe simply for warding of the cold, for warding off the heat, for warding of the touch of gadfly, mosquito, wind and sun, creeping things, simply for the sake of covering his nakedness.

Wisely reflective, he uses almfood not for sport, not for indulgence, not for personal charm, not for beautification, but just enough for the support and sustenance of the body, for keeping it unharmed, for furthering the Brahma-faring, thinking: Thus do I crush out former feeling and do not set going new feeling; and there will be for me faultlessness and living in comfort.

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[21] A. II. 246.
[22] GS. II. 250-251 (PTS-1982).
[23] MLS. I. 112-115. See also Pali text: MI. 83-91.
[24] GS. III. (PTS-1988).
[25] MI. 10.

Wisely reflective, he uses lodging only for warding off the cold, for warding off the heat, for warding off the touch of gadfly, mosquito, wind, son and creeping things, only for dispelling the dangers of the seasons, for the purpose of enjoying seclusion.

Wisely reflective, he uses the requisite of medicines for the sick for warding off injurious feelings that have arisen, for the maximum of well-being."[26]

8. *Yonisomanasikara* on *Kusalabhavana*, or reflective attention on developing psychic moral factors. This is part of the new thought in Buddhism. Personal awakening to do good things is necessary in Dhamma-faring. So the Buddha had advised his followers to avoid *kusitavatthu*, the basis of laziness, and follow the base of energy (*alambhavatthu*). The Buddha had expressed in *Sabbasavasutta* as below:

Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu patisankhayoniso. . . .
Uppannuppanne papake akusale dhamme
nadhivaseti
pajahati vinodeti byantikaroti anabhavam gamati..
bhikkhu patisankha yoniso satisambojjhangam. . . .
Dhammavicaya sambojjhangam.. . .Viriyasambojjhangam. . . .
Pitisambojjhangam. . .passaddhi sambojjhangam. . . .
Samadhisambojjhangam. . . .
Upekkhasambojjhangam bhaveti vivekanissitam viraganissitam nirodhanissitam
vossaggaparinamia.

In this teaching monks, a monk, wisely reflective, does not give in. . .to evil unskilled mental objects that have constantly arisen; he gets rid of them, eliminates them, makes an end to them, sends them to their ceasing. . . A monk, wisely reflective, develops mindfulness,. . .investigation of Dhamma,. . .energy,. . .rapture,. . .serenity,. . .concentration,. . .and even-mindedness as a factor of enlightenment which is dependent on aloofness,. . .lack of attraction,. . .ceasing and ending in renunciation.[27]

In *Sangitisutta* of *Dighanikaya*, Sariputta had given a list of two virtues which are realized or ascertained by the Buddha himself. They are:

1. *Asantutthita kusalesu dhammesu* -- discontent in moral states or good achievement
2. *Appativanita padhanasmim* -- perserverance on exertion or unfaltering effort.[28]

The Buddha supported and focsed his mind on the aim of enlightenment by undertaking with energy that,

Kamam taco ca naharu ca atthi ca avasissatu, sarure upasussatu mamsalohitam yantam purisathamena purisabalena purisaviriyena purisaparakkamena pattabbam, na tam apapunitva viriyassa santhanam bhavissati

[26] MUS. I 13-14.
[27] MLS. I. 15 (PTS-19870).
[28] D.OOO. 214; DB. III. 206.

skin, sinew and bone may remain as it will; my flesh and blood may dry in my body; but not without attaining complete enlightenment shall I give up the energy.[29]

9. *Yonisomanasikara* on here and now in the present movement is another method of 'New Thought' or 'Right Thought' in this context. The unique way of practice is *Satipatthana* or the foundation of mindfulness, as the Buddha proclaimed in *Mahasatipatthanasutta* that, "This, monks, is the one and only way for the purification of all beings, for overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for destruction of suffering and grief, for attaining the right, for realizing of Nibbana, that is to say, the four foundations of mindfulness."[30]

In Bhaddekarattasutta, the Buddha had stated that:

The Past should not be followed after, the future not desired. The past has been gotten rid of and the future has not come. But whatever has vision here and now of a present thing, knowing that it is immovable and unshakable, let him cultivate it.

Swelter at the task this very day. Who knows whether he will die tomorrow? There is no bargaining with the great hosts of Death. Thus abiding ardently, unwearied day or night.

He indeed is called Auspicious, described as a sage at Peace.[31]

According to *Anagatasutta*,[32] the Buddha had warned the monks to prepare now for the attainment of Nibbana by thinking wisely about various dangers in the future, such as old age, bad health, food shortages, disunity among people, Sangh in conflict, etc. Then they should warn themselves to practice for attaining the stream of Nibbana in the present time. That is an example of good planning.

10. *Yonisomanasikara* in *Vibhajjavadi*. It is one of technique in "Right Thought" of Buddhism which can be used in the way of practice and answer the questions of the people during wandering for preaching Dharma to the people. Systematic thought on this method depends upon the fact, factor, moment, relation between cause and effect or condition. The Buddha had used four kinds of answer to the question, namely one way, classification, two ways and silence. (See A.II. 44-45 *Gradual Sayings* II. 53-54) So he was called *vibhajjavadi*.[33]

It should be concluded by the word of the Buddha in *Majjhima Nikaya* that, "there is wise attention and unwise attention. Monks, from unwise attention cankers arise that had not arisen, and also cankers that have arisen increase. But, monks, from wise attention cankers that had not arisen, do not arise, and also cankers that have arisen decline.[34] Without cankers our minds attain the absolute freedom of which the world is in need of today."

Reflective Thought in Buddhism

1. Interdependent Theory or *Paticcasamuppada*.
2. Analysis Theory or *Vibhanga*.

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[29] KH. *Mahanidesa* p. 467.
[30] D. II sutta no. 22; MI. sutta no. 10; MLS. I. 70.
[31] M. III. sutta no. 131; MLS. III. 233.
[32] A. III.99-105; GS. III. 81-87.
[33] M. II. 197; NLS. II. 386. Vibhajjavado kho ahamettha manava-I, Brahma youth, discriminate.
[34] MI.6-7.

3. The Problem – solving Theory or *Caturariyasacca*.
4. Three Streams Theory or *Tilakkhana*.
5. Three Dimensions Theory
6. The Value Theory.
7. The Wholesome Development.
8. The Assembly Post Theory.
9. The Full Moon Theory.
10. The Dialectical Theory – Vibhajjavadi.

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Chapter IX

Applied Buddhist Philosophy in Academic Research

Mettanando Bhikkhu

Introduction

For decades there have been ongoing concerns within the academic community in Thailand concerning a pervasive lack of students interest in scientific and academic research. Most students feel that the growth of an academic tradition has nothing to do with their lives and their culture; obtaining a university degree is the sole motivation for higher education. Unfortunately, as long as this problem lasts, Thailand will remain far behind in all areas of development that require research.

The cause of the problem may be far deeper than the level of syllabuses taught in universities. It is the attitude of the people towards academia as a whole, one that alienates those who quest for knowledge, founded in an antipathy toward rational thinking inherited from our ancient past.

This is a cross-cultural impression among the Thais. Every textbook on science from elementary school forward confirms that the dawn of the systematic quest for knowledge really began in Ancient Greece with Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and grew in European countries -- but never in the East. Asia has remained on the receiving end of modern civilization. Most of the world's famous thinkers were Europeans and Americans, so it is taken for granted that the transfer of knowledge and technology is a one-way street, from West to East. Absent the conviction that knowledge belongs also to one's own culture, how can there be motivation for developing more knowledge by Thais?

There are a few outstanding thinkers who are bold enough to put forward their new ideas to the public, but their projects are hardly well-received in the society. A culture accepting that new advances in knowledge only take place in foreign countries has a difficult time welcoming any new discovery taking place in its own homeland.

Other reasons Thais prefer to import new technology is that they have more faith in Western ideas. It is simpler and less troublesome to buy it. The result is an unusual phenomenon: as science and technology become more advanced, fewer discoveries are made by native citizens.

Building up a culture of scientific investigation in a new nation is much easier than in a country pregnant with a long history of sophisticated cultural values such as is found in Southeast Asia. Cultural values can encourage or retard academic growth. We know from history that in the West, science also had a difficult time proving itself amidst the religious dogmatism of the Middle Ages and establishing a firm foundation in its homeland. But in Thailand, people never see any interaction between their culture and science. As long as the gap remains wide, there can be hardly any sustainable development in science and technology.

It is therefore an urgent challenge for the modern academic community to plant the seeds of right understanding within their cultural settings. One venue which alienates the quest for knowledge has already been explored, i.e., ignoring the cultural heritage of the native people and focusing instead on teaching the new scientific and academic disciplines, copying all the syllabuses from the Western world, and teaching them in schools. Another possible route is via a dialogue between the two civilizations, that of the modern scientific West and the traditional wisdom of the

Asian culture. The latter process requires a deeper philosophical analysis of both modern science and tradition, before the cultural software of one culture can be fully functional in the other cultural machine. Though more difficult and ambitious, this process has the potential to benefit both the Western academic community and that of the people in the developing world.

Another supportive reason for the process of dialogue is that the current methodology used in research and science has never been an independent discipline. Scientific methodology was the direct result of a conflict between the religious authority in Europe and the inquisitive thinkers. The position adopted by the new science is therefore deprived of all ethical religious values, which is entirely founded in the belief in the Creator God. Hence, pure science developed out of a free, radical movement, highly suspicious of the existence of God. But this interaction might not take place in Eastern culture, where people see the balance between knowledge and morality as essential to the natural world. A dialogue between the academic community and the wisdom of the East may produce another creative outcome for both sides. Science may see a different branch of development wherein the growth of knowledge is more balanced by the spiritual wisdom of the East.

From history, we learn that knowledge is a double-edged sword: there is always a negative effect that spins out of every scientific advancement. Science has no connection with any moral value, i.e., research and technology trend to grow in one direction to satisfy human curiosity and desire, rather than to build a peaceful world. Spirituality and morality are forgotten dimensions in scientific methodology. Justice, for instance, has no meaning in natural science; it is a value judgement and has no statistical significance. Obtaining empirical data, which can be measured and compared, is the only goal for scientists, who can then accept or reject hypotheses. In modern scientific society, the quality of life for people is judged by the amount of money that one has in the bank, rather than by virtue or happiness of the mind.

Currently, the modern world is bearing witness to the rapid polarization within the human race --between the haves and the have-nots, and between the developed and under-developed countries. This process of polarization is parallel with the rapid decay of the world environment and the increase of greenhouse gases which result in global warming, a new threat to the whole of mankind. It appears that the progress of knowledge in the material world has already equipped man with a powerful weapon for self-destruction. Is there some kind of imbalance in the body of advanced science and technology? Or is it the lack of a holistic perception among scientists that has brought the new environmental catastrophe to our planet?

A dialogue between modern scientific society and an ancient spiritual tradition is much needed to promote the progress and avoid the ultimate destruction of our world. Certain religions in Asia share a balanced and holistic view of matter and spirituality. Perhaps this is a better option to the current science-only education in many developing countries. The process of dynamic interaction must take place at the deepest philosophical levels of the two paths. Modern science may help religious people to be more open and see their common humanist standpoints, even as academics learn more about the wisdom of the past and integrate this knowledge into the development of a holistic view of reality.

One of the best candidates for dialogue with the modern academic tradition is Buddhism. It has influenced billions of lives in Asia and is rich in its critical analysis of nature, on the one hand, yet embraces a strong humanitarian value, on the other. For Buddhists, a religion is not a system of faith and worship, but concerns the Truth and its quest. Over two thousand years, the religion has spread peacefully from India to every corner of Asia coexisting with numerous native cultures since the beginning. Several elements in Buddhism are shared with science, namely, the denial of

the Supreme Creator, God, and the doctrine of independent thinking -- a founding doctrine strongly upheld in Buddhist canons. Buddhist philosophy can be a good tool for scientists and educators to develop cultural software that can sustain modern science's quest for knowledge and intellectual development.

Unique Characteristics of Buddhism

Founded in India, *circa* 5th century BC, Buddhism is recognized as a unique religion and one of the largest religions in the world. In Sanskrit the word "buddha" means the "awakened one"; it is not a name, but a title given to Siddhartha Gautama who realized that the Noble Truth brings an end to the defilement of the mind and puts an end to the infinite rounds of rebirth. The word is also translated into English as "the enlightened one," which does not quite fit its original meaning. Being enlightened is a state of irreversible awakening, i.e., the Truth that the Buddha found awakened him from the unreal to the real.

According to the Buddha, the Truth that the Buddha found, called the Dharma, is eternal and timeless, unlike the whole changing cosmic existence. Still, the Dharma can be temporarily lost and then discovered again by an Enlightened Person. The Buddha's message leads listeners to attain the Dharma; therefore his teachings receive the same name, the Dharma. The community of ordained disciples, men and women, is known as the Sangha. The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha together form the highest bodies of respect for all Buddhists, known as the Triple Gems.

During the forty-five years of his mission, the Buddha's teaching spread only through peaceful means. But he challenged the contemporary popular belief among the Indians about the validity of the theory of Divine Creation, and other spiritual positions promoting doctrines of nihilism and predestination. Buddhism is one of the few religions that have no commandments or tenets for anyone to follow. The Buddha did not prescribe any ideal model for society or the world. His teaching is based on pragmatism and dependent causality. Its appeals to thinking listeners who believe in the rights of human beings in choosing their own path of living. The Buddha told his followers that he was just a teacher who shows the way; it is up to the people to decide their own destinies.

Buddhism, therefore, is not a school of religion in the understanding of a Western mind, which sees God as central to creation and virtue. In the West, it is almost impossible to talk about a religion that teaches about love, virtue, forgiveness and spirituality without God. However, the Buddha taught a profound message of love and forgiveness, no less than that found in Christianity. Compassion and wisdom are the most outstanding characteristics of the teaching of the Buddha. Indeed, there exists a balance between the development of emotion and intelligence, power and morality, individual rights and responsibilities, as well as the cultivation of Buddhist meditation and virtue. Because of the deep philosophical and psychological teaching of the founder along with the denial of the existence of God, quite a few scholars in the West preferred to identify Buddhism as a school of Oriental philosophy rather than a religion.

In the shortest definition of Buddhism, the Buddha said that his religion has to do with Dissatisfaction (*dukkha*)[1] in life and the way to be delivered from Dissatisfaction. Death and aging

[1] Etymologically, "*dukkha*" derives from "*dus*" (prefix: bad, poor) + *kha* (from Sanskrit root *stha* to stand or to connect)." Its literal meaning should be uneasy, uncomfortable, difficult, dissatisfaction; however, it has been commonly translated into English as "suffering," which is taken for granted by most schools of Buddhism. The original meaning of the word was more mechanical, probably borrowed from craftsmen of India; the secondary meaning, however, has become popularized in an abstract sense. A more accurate

are part of life. The Buddha told us that diseases are rooted in health. Liberation from death, aging and diseases are the goals of the Buddha's teachings.

One way to view the Buddha is as a physician and his teaching as the medicine. Buddhism deals with the healing of life and the final goal of the healing is called Nirvana -- the state of existence or non-existence (depending on the branch of Buddhism).

Buddhism is not merely a school of Eastern philosophy, however. It includes such religious characteristics as myths, rituals, and worship. Buddhist canons are full of these spiritual decorations of antiquity. Like Jesus and Muhammad, the Buddha never wrote the canonical literature associated with him; the community of his followers did this. Myths and miracles could not be separated from any of the historical founding fathers of religions. However, the large amount of the recorded teaching of the Buddha is extremely valuable for academic research and the development of new theories.

Enlightenment and Knowledge

The Buddha said that there are two schools of religious thinking in the world: one is founded in the theory of the Prime Cause, i.e., how things began; and the other is focused on the theory of the Last Day, e.g., what will happen to the world on its last day. Neither of these concerns deserve people's attention: certainly they are beyond the limits of human understanding and therefore impossible to prove. However, the Dharma that the Buddha found is subjective and available for everyone to experience. Once liberation is attained, then one's mind is free to probe into the mystery of the universe. The Buddha's teaching to attain the Dharma can be taught, learned, and trained. Thus, religion according to the Buddha is subject not to belief, but to education. An untrained mind is like the mind of a sleeping person -- vulnerable to danger and trapped in endless dreams; it is not yet able to solve any mystery. Awakening, on the other hand, is an active process that alerts persons to their full capacity and function. Once alert, they are free to acquire whatever knowledge they want.

The teaching of the Buddha is not the entire body of knowledge of Buddhism; however, it is the essential part that shows one path to transcend the phenomenal world.

To illustrate these points, consider a story the Buddha taught his monks when he picked up a few leaves that had fallen in the woods.[2] He asked:

Monks, what is more numerous, those leaves in the forest or these in my hand?" All of his disciples confirmed that the leaves in the forest outnumbered those in the Lord's hand.

"Likewise," the Buddha concluded, "the knowledge that exists in reality is like those in the forest, but what I have taught you can be compared to that in my hand." What the Buddha taught was identified as Buddhism, but what still remains outside his teachings is the body of knowledge in Nature.[3]

The Buddha emphasized that his teaching was important since it leads practitioners to the end of their suffering and is the gateway to the rest of the body of knowledge. The Buddha also compared his teachings to a living tree.[4] The innermost core of the tree is the practice for liberation from all dissatisfaction of life, for mental concentration, and for morality; the rest was the bark,

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English translation should be "dissatisfaction." (See Monier-Williams, S., *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1899, p. 483; Charles Hallisey's "Lecture on Theravada Buddhism," Harvard University, 1992.)

[2] The wood of Siµsapa trees, *Dalbergia Sissoo*, tall large trees, near the City of Kosambî.

[3] *Siµsapavanasutta*, (*The Discourse in the Siµsapa Wood*), Pali Text Society Version: SN V, 438.

[4] *Cûlasâropamasutta*, *Book of Middle Length Sayings*, Pali Text Society Version, MN I, 198-205.

branches and leaves of the tree. The body of his teaching has to do with individual enlightenment rather than establishing a new law and order for society. It is mainly to free one's mind from attachment to the ephemeral world.

Among the most frequent sayings to his surrounding disciples war, "Be a lamp unto yourself. Make yourself your own refuge, take no other thing as your refuge."[5] The Buddhist doctrine of investigative analysis and liberal thinking could be of great use to modern thinking. For the development of critical thought in Asian and Buddhist countries, Buddhism can serve as a powerful tool for academics.

The followings are aspects of basic Buddhist doctrines which can be directly applied for academic researches.

Doctrine of Independent Investigation

Among major doctrines in Buddhism is the famous *Kâlâmasutta*, or *Kesaputtasutta*[6] -- a firm foundation for critical thinking. Although the aphorism is not very long, it contains all the basic principles for philosophical analysis. The Sutra tells the story of the Buddha while he was visiting a village called Kesaputta. Villagers there raised a question about the diverse teachings from many visitors. They asked him how to choose a suitable school of teaching. The Buddha replied that their skepticism was appropriate and stated:

1. One should not believe in hearsay.
2. One should not believe because of tradition.
3. One should not believe because of rumor.
4. One should not believe by the authority of a text.
5. One should not believe because of its logic.
6. One should not believe because it is the policy or instruction.
7. One should not believe by assumption.
8. One should not believe because it fits in with one's premise.
9. One should not believe because it is highly probable.
10. One should not believe because this ascetic is our teacher.

The Buddha concluded: "You should realize by yourself what teaching is wholesome, and what is unwholesome, what is defective, what is blameworthy."

It is a fact that hearsay, tradition, rumor, text, (called the Ten Grounds of False Beliefs) are the most common references. Following them makes people prone to grave mistakes. The Buddha expounded that the history of the world proves that war and atrocities committed from the dawn of human civilization were caused by beliefs and assumptions based on the Ten Grounds of False Beliefs. People waged war against other people because the text gave them inspiration and guidance; false leaderships led people to war; people killed each other in the name of God or their religious text. According to this aphorism, religious teachings, in particular, should be scrutinized more than any schools of philosophy. Following this instruction in *Kâlâmasutta*, one should not

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[5] *attadîpa*µ *viharatha, attasaraöŒ ana-asaraöŒ*. The word "*dîpa*" is ambiguous, it can either come from Sanskirt, *dv´pa,* an island, or *d´pa* a lamp. The saying is repeated many times in important aphorisms in the *Book of the Long Sayings of the Buddha*, such as the*Mahâparinibbânasutta*, a narrative account of the Last Days of the Buddha, the *Aggañña sutta,* the Buddhist Genesis.

[6] *Book of Gradual Sayings of the Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya Suttapitaka*, Pali Text Society, AN I, 189.

adopt any belief based on any of the Ten Grounds, but start all over again and have a sincere investigation into the reality of the world through one's own understanding.

The message of *Kâlâmasutta* concerns self-investigation. The Buddha directly told his listeners to ask themselves: Do I believe this doctrine because I have heard this from someone? Do I believe this because it is my tradition? Do I believe this because it is in this book? Do I believe this because the monk who told me is my teacher, or because the Buddha told me so? And so on. If so, the belief may be wrong! Then it is reasonable to start all over again from the basics. If you do not know, it is wise and honest to accept the fact that you do not know. But accepting any theory or concept before it is proved is both dangerous and unwise. As Joseph Campbell once said: "He who knows he knows doesn't really know. He who knows he doesn't know is beginning to know."

According to this doctrine, religion is not a system of belief and worship, but concerns the Truth and how to attain it. The Buddha's teaching in *Kâlâmasutta* advocates realism, the rights to free investigation and an individualistic approach to philosophy and religion. It can be seen as basic to critical thinking, as the foundation of the investigation of reality, as well as the foundation for spiritual practice and the essence of the foundation on which Buddhism is based.

Doctrine of Causality

"The present existence is not determined by the previous life; nothing was created by the Supreme Creator, and nothing arises independently," said the Buddha,[7] thereby refuting the three common grounds of religious determinism. Believing in the doctrine based on any of these three grounds deprives a person of the opportunity to improve his/her life, since they accept authority as resting outside of his/her control. Life is too short and meaningful; one should not waste time in idleness. The Buddha sees causality as the foundation of all phenomena in the universe. One always has a chance to improve one's life, provided that he/she pursues the right conduct to create the right course.

The doctrine of causality is explained in the first sermon[8] of the Buddha, which later became the symbol of his life-long mission. He claimed his enlightenment through his discovery of the Four Noble Truths, namely: the Noble Truth of Dissatisfaction (*dukkha*), the Noble Truth of the Rise of Dissatisfaction (*samudaya*),[9] the Noble Truth of the Cessation of the Dissatisfaction (*nirodha*),[10] and lastly, the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Dissatisfaction (*magga*).[11]

It is clear that the logic of causality underlining the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths can be applied not merely in the quest for spiritual liberation, but also for the pursuit of academic

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[7] *Book of Gradual Sayings of the Buddha, Anguttara Nikaya Suttapitaka*, Pali Text Society edition, AN I, 173.

[8] "Dhammacakkapavattanasutta," or the "Wheel-turning Sermon," *Book of Monastic Discipline (Vinaya*), Pali Text Society, Vin I, 9.

[9] *Samudaya* is not a proper name, but is commonly used among Buddhist in the Theravada tradition almost like a specific name. The word is a shortened form of *dukkha-samudaya*, a compound for the Rise of Dissatisfaction.

[10] *Nirodha* is also not a proper name, but is commonly used among Buddhist in the Theravada tradition almost like a specific name. The word is a shortened form of *dukkha-nirodha*, a compound for the Cessation of Dissatisfaction.

[11] *Magga* is not a proper name, but is commonly used among Buddhist in the Theravada tradition almost like a specific name. The word is a shorten form of *dukkha-nirodha-gaminî-pa ipadâ*, a long compound for the Path Leading towards the Cessation of Dissatisfaction.

knowledge. It is similar to the principles of diagnostic investigation used by modern physicians. First, identify the illness (*dukkha*); then search for its cause (*samudaya*); next establish the goal of treatment (*nirodha*); lastly, prescribe the cure (*magga*). Probably because of this similarity in the systematic approach to human suffering, the Buddha was seen as a doctor and healer who prescribed his teachings as medicine for the people.

In another broader perspective, the doctrine of systematic investigation based on the model of the Four Noble Truths is already applied in scientific research. The protocol of differential diagnosis of modern doctors is consistent with and affirms the principles of the Four Noble Truths.

The Buddha told his disciples of the two directions of investigation,[12] first, by running along the chain of causality --from the causes to their effects (*anuloma*),[13] and from the effects to their causes (*patiloma*).[14] Also, there can be more than one cause leading to an observed phenomenon, and a phenomenon once it arises can serve either as a cause or as an effect in relationship to another phenomenon. Through this careful investigation, the person realizes things as they are, and reality as it is, not as it should be or as we would like to see it.

The only difference between the Buddha's application of the Four Noble Truths and academic research is that the Buddha used it for meditative purposes; while for scientific researchers, the goal is scientific discoveries. For the former, the goal is spiritual, subjective, and internal; for the latter, academic, objective, and external.

In both directions of making discovery, internal or external, the discoverer has to be free in all respects from prejudice and bias, which are the main hindrances to achievement. Regarding this, the Buddha explained the causes of common mistakes and bias, which can be useful for both kinds of investigation.

The Foundation of Academic Achievement: Buddha's Protocol

It is clear that the process for acquiring knowledge in Buddhism is mostly internal, which is in stark contrast with the work of most scientists and academic scholars whose attention is focused on producing an objective result. Buddhists would argue that it is still the mind of the scientist or researcher that is the master of every piece of their academic achievement. Hypotheses, theories, equations and research planning --all of these could not come into existence without the effort of the mind. Using sophisticated equipment to gather data for a lifetime could not take place without the primary step in research, conceptualization, which could take place in a flash of a second. Therefore, there is much similarity between the effort of a Buddhist monk conceptualizing a new idea on the meaning of life and a scientist testing out a new hypothesis in his laboratory.

"Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think."[15] This famous saying of the Buddha is the opening verse of the Book of *Dhammapada*; it affirms the Buddhist position on the significance of the mind as origin and the mother of all creativity. But this does not mean that Buddhism denies the significance of the material world. Rather, Buddhism encourages balance as the path to happiness, namely, the balance between the mind and body, the material and the

[12] In Buddha's teaching of the doctrine of Dependent Origination, *paticasamuppâda* or *idappaccayatŒ*, for example.

[13] Literally, *anuloma* means "following the direction of the hair"; *anu* (prefix: following, according to, after), *loma* (noun: hair).

[14] Literally, *pa iloma* means "against the direction of the hair"; *pa i* (prefix: against), *loma* (noun: hair).

[15] This is an English translation of the famous opening verse of the *Dhammapada:* "manopubbaµ gamadhammâ manose hâ, manomayâ."

spiritual, the intellectual and the emotional. This aphorism is the Buddha's introduction to his basic teachings on morality and meditation --the foundations for spiritual discovery and enlightenment. Scientists may see Buddhism as a culture of mental discipline which advocates an escape from the real world in order to live with suffering. Buddhists, on the other hand, see all discoveries and progress made by scientists as beginning in the mind before the experiments were designed to prove it and the result, published for the world. The mind of the scientist has to be trained and specialized in that particular field of knowledge in order to make discoveries.

Scientific methodology begins with "curiosity" about an observed phenomenon with an unknown mechanism. In Buddhism, the steps to wisdom begin with the "love to know" (almost in the same vein with "*philo*" in Greek.) There are several terms in Buddhism, some positive, some negative, that can be translated into English as "love." Normally, the word "love" in Buddhism is related to attachment and suffering, except for some forms of inspirational love, called *chanda*, which is the source of energy for achievement. It is the joy and delight to learn and endure all difficulties along its way to the final result. In practice, *chanda* can grow stronger and be consciously cultivated. *Chanda* is, therefore, the foremost factor for all achievement, and it can be cultivated and translated into energy (*viriya*) in pursuit of the goal, concentration (*citta*) and creative analysis (*vimangsâ*) which in return feeds back to enliven the flame of *chanda*.

The growth of knowledge, according to Buddhism, is not merely a success of intellectual and impersonal discipline, but needs emotional and spiritual involvement. Accordingly, the four principles, *chanda*, *viriya*, *citta*, and *vimangsâ*, work together in a cyclic order the cognitive level of the mind, in a balance of the middle-way that maintains the state of wellness of the body and mind, and does not corrupt or destroy health.

In modern application, we may say that a researcher should begin his career with an appropriate attitude. He should aim neither for wealth nor fame. His attention should be entirely dedicated to the advancement of knowledge. Neither success nor failure, the proving or disproving of one's hypothesis, should hinder one's determination. *Chanda* converts failure and bad experiences into a good lesson on life, which can create new energy and an improved plan for better work. But success is not a reason to be proud of; if one is not careful it could result in disaster for future efforts. Rumors, criticism and words of praise always move a fool. On the other hand, a true researcher should take the professional stance that the research itself is the reward and joy of life!

Hindrances to Knowledge

Wisdom and knowledge always have positive meaning in Buddhism, but this does not mean that the religion has a negative view of emotion. In fact, emotions in Buddhism are seen as sources of energy and creativity. However, an emotion that occurs out of balance with intelligence is, according to the Buddhist perspective, harmful. Interestingly, the Buddha always told his followers to transcend pleasure and joy when they hear someone praising the Buddha, and not to be angry or displeased with anyone criticizing him.[16] He suggested they find out the Truth of whether what

[16] "*Brahmajâlasutta*," The Perfect Net, the first sermon in the *Book of the Long Discourse of the Buddha*, Pali Text Society, DN I, 1- 46.

they heard was true or not. They should free their mind from all the bias or prejudice (*agati*),[17] which are namely:

chanda-agati: the bias of love,
dosa-agati: the bias of hatred,
moha-agati: the bias of delusion, and
bhaya-agati: the bias of fear.

Each category of bias can exist as a subjective attitude or shared value within a community, institution or even a nation. It is manifest by clouding judgment and decision- making. The above *Kâlâmasutta* lists the ten possible ways that can mislead one's judgment and should therefore be avoided.

Self-love is, of course, the root of all the biases. According to the Buddha, the love of self, body and mind, is the root of all motivation, thought and behaviors: "Sprung from love, sorrow. Taking flight because of love, fear."[18] The attachment to the self distorts one's perception of reality and prevents one from discovering the Truth. History shows us that bias is not merely a personal value, but it can be shared in a community and culture, and even on national and global levels. Buddhists believe that one will be entirely free from bias and prejudice as soon as one completely purifies one's mind. Then, one will see things in the world as they really are instead of being painted with colors of greed, hatred and delusion. Without wisdom, anyone may get lost and be victim to one's own prejudice.

Buddha's Classification of Errors

A non-enlightened person is subject to making mistakes, with intention or without intention, through the force of greed, hatred, and delusion. One may break rules, social laws and order, by doing things just to entertain one's ego. The Buddha classified the cause of mistakes into six types,[19] based on the intention and motive of the act, namely:

1. Shamelessness: making mistake intentionally,
2. Stupidity: making a mistake without sufficient knowledge,
3. Justifying an action with doubt,
4. Justifying an action which should not be done,
5. Abstention from taking action that needed to be done,
6. Lack of mindfulness: making a mistake without proper attention.

The six causes of wrong and mistakes are seen in general as motivated by the force of ignorance or wrong knowledge, which clouds the human consciousness.

In the broadest sense, ignorance (*avijjâ*) is seen in Buddhism as the root of all evil and unwholesome acts. It is the opposite of the knowledge through which one gains enlightenment.

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[17] The *Book of the Long Discourse* of the Buddha, *Dîgha Nikaya Suttapitaka*, Pali Text Society edition, DN III, 182, 228; The *Book of Gradual Sayings*, *Anguttara Nikaya Suttapitaka*, Pali Text Society edition, AN II, 18.

[18] *Dhammapada*, verse 213.

[19] *Book of Monastic Discipline*, *Vinayapitaka*, Pali Text Society Edition, Vin V, 102.

With this interpretation, every one is fallible. One good purpose in life is to learn the correct way and not to allow the mistakes of the past to repeat.

In the application of this philosophy, mistakes should be seen not as failures, but as lessons to be learned. They teach us to be wiser, stronger and nobler in our conduct and attitude toward our fellow human beings.

Buddhist Universal Principle of Uncertainty

If the Buddha were asked whether there is any principle which is universal, this would be his answer: "Yes, there is: the principle of uncertainty; there is nothing else more certain than uncertainty itself." The principle may sound opposite to the Buddhist concept of causality. Since Buddha's teachings offer no room for any phenomenon to occur by chance, there ought to be definite ways to forecast or calculate natural events. The principle of uncertainty, according to Buddhism, is applied to all phenomena: Everything is changing all the time. There is no single point in space and time that is unchanging. Every material object, thought, concept, and emotion varies with time in the eternal flux of change. They emerge into temporary existence, then change, and then decay. Apart from Nirvana there is no permanent reference. Nirvana is, therefore, the ultimate goal of Buddhist practices. It is also described as the Supreme Bliss, which can be realized through the cultivation of morality and meditation.

When this principle is applied in academic research, we see the significance of rules and protocol in the setting of research methodology. No scientist or researcher would like to admit that his discovery is uncertain. Uncertainty is what we all are looking to eliminate or minimize. In fact, all religions offer solutions for their followers to get rid of this undesirable part of nature. But the fact of life is that uncertainty remains: our plans and expectations are always subject to change beyond our control. Every religion and system of belief has its theory to explain the nature of uncertainty. Presumably, the Heavenly Peace with God in monotheistic religions appeals to people with the same message as Nirvana to Buddhists. Efficiency is measured by the ability to achieve control over uncertainty.

The question facing every religion is, "How to make our religion last longest?" The Buddha was also challenged by this. As a result, he created a system of discipline for his followers to decrease all the possible uncertain risk from their practices. The principles are designed to reduce every possible degree of uncertainty and unpredictability of outcome.

The discipline is not the timeless Dharma that the Buddha found, it is a social innovation that was made to minimize the chance of uncertainty in the future. The discipline is therefore subject to change and adaptation, whereas the Dharma is a part of the unchanging natural world. Following this model, a research project should be designed to offer less room for uncertainty, but should be practical and flexible enough for adjustment.

Applied Monasticism (Vinaya) in the Academic World

The Buddha offered a good example for his unique invention of monastic rules for his followers, which allowed Buddhist communities to grow and to remain the oldest surviving religious communities ever known to the world.

Buddhist monks in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia are still practicing the rules, which cover all conduct and relationship among themselves and with the external society, that originated not far from the time of the Buddha, circa 5th Century BC. The system is called the *Vinaya* (meaning,

leading to excellence). The *Vinaya* is not a part of the Truth that the Buddha discovered in this meditation; it was added later into community lives to decrease the degree of uncertainty in society. The system is laid down on community principles. Its purpose is to bind each member of the community together with a common concern for each other. The rules also cover all responsibilities of the community requisites, so that each property is properly shared and its use maximized. This rule creates the least burden for the society to support the monastic community and causes the least harm to the environment. Most importantly, the system of rules allows each member of the community to be supportive of the others in their personal quest for enlightenment.

The *Vinaya* also supports two key principles for spiritual development: one is self-criticism, the other is to seek out a life-long spiritual partnership with a *kalyânamitra*[20] (which means "a good friend") for a mentor. These two principles diminish bias and prejudice that could arise otherwise from one's personal experience in meditation and training. The Buddha broke away from what was the contemporary norm that a practicing ascetic should live a solitary life, and made a strong statement that community life was an essential part of spiritual growth: "A*kalyânamitra* is the entirety of spiritual life."[21]

Discipline, protocol, partnership, networking, organizations, and research institutions are also necessary parts of academic life. They minimize the chance of uncertainty and mistake. Moreover, the goals and founding principles of each system should be in accord with the academic ethics of the researchers, as well as with the common good of the human family. According to this model, research should not be motivated for the wealth or fame of the researchers, but for a fair distribution of justice in the world.

Following these principles means that researchers should not be rewarded for making a significant discovery. The Buddha provided a good example of pointing out virtue and success among his disciples. He said some were more pious and austere than him. "One should criticize those who deserve criticism and praise those who are worthy of praise,"[22] the Buddha told his followers. Doing so perpetuates the good values of the community, and diminishes the risk for decay. Any community that takes an indifferent stance toward progress or decay is defective and bound for doom. Worst of all is the community that promotes those who deserved to be blamed, and punishes the worthy for praise! Such a community simply has no future.

Buddhism in an Academic World: an Ethics-based Intelligence

The Buddha said that the Dharma transcends time. It was practiced over two millennia ago, when iron was first introduced, and the means of traveling were limited to the use of horses, donkeys, and bullock-carts. And it needs to be practiced in our 21st century, with supersonic jet planes, space exploration, e-commerce, genetic engineering, and the internet. People continue to argue about the uncertainty of their future, the mystery of life, and the best way humankind should conduct its living. Corruption, violence, war, and natural catastrophes still occur. The nature of dissatisfaction as experienced by the human family has not changed; some are more threatening than ever. Everywhere around the world people still cry for justice, non-violence, and compassion. It is ironic that when human knowledge has become most advanced, the world is seeing more and more people marginalized; the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. More money is flowing out of the developing countries to the wealthier, developed nations. Our modern

[20] Literally, a beautiful friend; Sanskrit: *kalyâöa*, (beautiful) + *mitra* (friend). Pali: *kalyâöamitta*.

[21] *Book of the Kindred Sayings, Samyutta Nikaya Suttapitaka*, Pali Text Society edition, SN V, 3.

[22] *Book of the Middle Sayings, Majjhima Nikaya Suttapitaka*, Pali Text Society edition, MN III, 231.

civilization definitely has a serious imbalance at its foundation. The tremendous advances in science and technology exacerbate the polarization of the world, between the rich and the poor nations. The academic society must take a sincere look into this problem.

Our libertarian system of world economy, the so-called free-market economy, has much for which to be blamed. Major funding for research and technology comes from world-class business enterprises. These giant international corporations have recruited troops of scientists and technicians to develop technology to improve corporate profits for their investors. New discoveries in the world of science and technology are no longer transparent and accessible to anyone who is interested. They are under copyright or patent laws, so without the mandate of the international community there would be no future discovery or findings. New knowledge is always the ground for the new seeds of investment. The logic behind this corporate funding is greed. The over all result is often more destruction of natural resources, including human resources, where the poor majority serves to increase the quality of life of the rich. If we continue this path, the process will lead to rapid destruction of our eco-system, widespread social unrest, global pollution, and destruction of health.[23] Ultimately, the world will turn inhabitable.

Several examples of the exploitation of human resources are succinctly illustrated in David Korten's *When Corporation Rules the World*. Nike, the world famous foot-ware company, subcontracted to hire 75,000 children in Indonesia. Each child was paid 15 cents an hour, while Michael Jordan, a US basketball superstar who promotes the Nike shoes was paid $20 million dollars in 1992 for a half minute TV ad.[24] The amount of money he earned equals the payment of all of those children who work 12 hours a day for almost half a year!

Knowledge is a form of power, and power without control is always dangerous. Unfortunately, in the world of modern science and technology, justice does not exist but is simply a value judgment of society. Researchers in natural science feel that academia has nothing to do with them. The lack of a philosophical dimension allows the logic of the market to consume the judgment of modern scientists. Knowledge is subject to trade and a buildup of capital. There has never been a time in world history when scientists and technicians were employed in high-tech corporations in such large numbers as in the present century. When human knowledge is used for empowering capitalism, the worst of times can be foreseen. This double-edged sword can bring much more harm than good.

Taking the model of the Buddhist Middle Way, in the Noble Eight-fold Path, intelligence should be supplemented with ethics. Morality always reminds one that gain increases one's responsibility to share. The conscientiousness of sharing should be incorporated into every process of academic and professional training, and, even more, perpetuated in working life.

Balance for the Future World

The future of the earth and the human race is dim. It appears that the knowledge of modern science and technology has been used to satisfy a minority group of people who own major corporations. Their ambitious expansion of power is propelled by nothing else but greed and egoism. As long as this situation continues the human race is heading toward its own destruction. One of the means to solve this immediate calamity is to boost up the common concern among thinkers, scholars and scientists to find a global ethics.

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[23] *World Resources*, 1998-99, pp. 1-36.

[24] Korten, D. *When Corporations Rule the World*, Kumarian Press, 1995, p. 111.

This ethics should not be grounded on any particular faith or religious dogma, but in the common future of the whole of mankind, in a balanced earth where the rights of individuals are respected, lives are valued, and the environment is preserved.

Globalization should not be a process of international expansion of production units (to maximize revenue), the building of networks for currency trade, or the branching of new franchises into the Third World. It should be the growth of a global network of responsible individuals who share a common vision for the well-being of the human family and the planet Earth.

Scientists, academics and thinkers should be in the frontline in setting the priorities for achievements with practical codes for individuals to follow as a fair share for every responsible member of the human family.

The model of Buddha's administration of his community can be a good example for setting ethical standards for responsible researchers. Knowledge, as power in society, needs to be checked and guided. It is time for the world to establish a school of ethics for the balance of the future world, developing a common trust and vision for the good of everyone, rather than rooting morality in the legends and myths of the distance past or in the current accumulation of material comforts and luxuries.

At the international level, the transfer of knowledge and technology should be encouraged. Centers of advanced education in the developed countries should provide sufficient distribution of scholarship for students from Third World countries. The focus of development should include literature, arts, democracy, global ethics and human rights as well as science and technology. The Buddha was right in pointing out the image of leaves in the forest to illustrate the vastness and complexity of the natural world, as well in pointing out that the few leaves he held in his hand were important to solve the mystery of mankind.

Conclusion

The promotion of original academic and scientific research from the peoples of Southeast Asia, including Thailand, has been limited. One possible reason is that the way modern knowledge is introduced pays little regard to existing cultures. Yet a dialogue between modern science and the traditions of wisdom of Asian antiquity may presage a great yield. Buddhism is unique in that its method is similar to that of science in its approach to life and reality; its teachings therefore could have great impact.

In line with all spiritual traditions, Buddhism is rich with myths, rituals and supernaturalism. But Buddhist philosophy, the foundation and core of the religion, can be directly applied in academic research, both at the level of the individual for the improvement of creativity and efficiency, and at the level of global institution. According to Buddha, religion has nothing to do with God or the Prime Cause, which is beyond the limit of reasonable proof, and is only subject to speculation. Religion is about the nature of the Universal Truth and the practical quest to attain it, which is accessible by all --regardless of gender, class or social upbringing. Apart from challenging the belief in the existence of God, the Buddha took an unusual approach in teaching that people should not blindly believe myths, legends, traditions, or even in the Buddha himself. Instead, and unlike most religions that are based on belief, each Buddhist should believe what they s/he proves her/himself --through experience.

Buddhism includes a set of principles that can be employed in the analysis of the nature of human suffering and causality of the natural world. In the countries where the majority of the

people are Buddhists, for instance in Thailand, Buddhism could be a good introduction to modern academic training and critical analysis.

Buddhist doctrines can breathe life into the work of researchers and academics in the pursuit of their knowledge. Existing Buddhist social institutions such as monasticism and the Sangha reflect the importance of discipline, protocol, partnership and organization in the academic arena. The principle of self-introspection and self-criticism can be of great use to improve the work of researchers and uplift the standards of academic achievement. The good that comes out of the dialogue between Buddhism and academic scientists will benefit not only Buddhists and researchers, but the whole of humankind.

In our age of globalization, Buddhism can provide a direction for global development so that humankind works together in bridging the gap created by the unbalanced distribution of justice. Science, on the other hand, can sharpen Buddhist ways of thought, filtering away the superstitious cults and unnecessary rituals adopted by Buddhist ancestors, to be more specific and closer to the original core of the Buddha's teaching.

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