

BUDDHIST AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

**EDITED BY
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Preface

I

A good beginning to an anthology of essays on comparative Buddhist and western philosophy would be to present arguments against the possibility or desirability of such studies. Indeed, much has been said as to why just such an undertaking as this volume should *not* be attempted, and those of us who do such work have gained quite a lot from these criticisms. In a sense, one learns more about a project from how it should not be done than from how it should.

Basically, we have found four types of objections to doing comparative east-west philosophy :

(1) The criticism of the western philosopher that there is nothing in the Indian tradition that merits being called "philosophy" in the first place, and thus western critical methods are misapplied and wasted;

(2) The criticism of the Buddhist who feels that western philosophy is so materialistic, reified and academic that it misses the point of philosophy, which should be *mokṣa*, the spiritual transformation of the person;

(3) The critique of the Orientalist which in essence holds that it is truly a lifetime's work to master the traditions, languages, histories and so forth of any one tradition, and therefore any attempts at serious comparative studies must necessarily be superficial; and

(4) The claim of the Buddhist that all attempts at east-west comparisons have been instances of the westerner "reading into" Buddhism all sorts of inappropriate prejudices and blikis.

Actually points (3) and (4) are correlative, if not identical, but we prefer to treat them separately due to the different historical perspectives brought to bear on each of them.

While we do not, in the final analysis, accept any of these positions as valid, we do feel that each of them is significant and quite worthy of the attention of a scholar of east-west thought. No claim is born out of a vacuum, and there are causes and conditions which led to each of these statements, causes and conditions which must be regarded seriously if comparative philosophy is to remain on the forefront of modern scholarship.

Buddhism and Modern Philosophies of Existence
BHIKKHU NĀNAJĪVAKO

Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā ti-
sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā ti-
sabbe dhammā anattā ti-
yadā paññāya passati
atha nibbindati dukkhe,
esa maggo visuddhiyā.

(All factors of existence are transient—
all factors of existence are painful—
all phenomena are without a self [-noumenon]
He who wisely realises this
becomes disgusted with suffering.
This is the path to purity.

Dhamma-padam, 277-279

TRANSIENCY, suffering and non-existence of a permanent self are three essential characteristics (*ti-lakkhanam*) of the *Buddha-dhammo*. The essential marks characteristic of all trends of existentialist philosophies—from the Catholic to the Marxist extremes—can also be summarised in three fundamental conceptions: a barely ‘humanistic’ approach, the situation of ‘anguish’ as its central problem, and the doctrine of nothingness or ‘nihilation’ of the world. This last feature, most specific and also most comprehensive within the scope of our comparative study, should not be understood in the sense of idealist, prevalently Kantian theories of knowledge, but primarily as an *a*-cosmic attitude to the human ‘being-in-the-world’ or existence, as a specific determination of the rather equivocal first principle of ‘humanism’.¹

Should we look for a complete formal analogy at first sight between the characteristic features of the original Buddhist statement and the tentative existentialist counterpart as stated above, then the principle of *aniccam* (transiency) could easily be adequated to the existentialist idea of ‘temporality’ as the basic constituent factor of the ‘human reality’ (according to Sartre’s free translation of Heidegger’s German term *Dasein*,

‘here-being’ or simply existence) as I shall try to show in a later section. The Pāli term *dukkham* has recently been translated preferably as ‘anguish’ or even ‘unsatisfactoriness’² *Anattā*, the negation of an ‘in-it-self’, or *noumenon* in the back-stage of phenomena, is a structure dependent on ‘temporality’ (*aniccam*); it will be explained in the part of the present essay dealing with the theory of nothingness (*suññatā-vādo*).³

Since all philosophies of existence broadly agree in their basic assessment of these aspects of the actual human situation, they have been able, in the 20th century, to make also a good deal of their analyses on a common ground by adapting prevalently the principles of the same method conducive to their ends, viz. the phenomenological method as laid down by Edmund Husserl in his transcendental logic. The wide area of their common endeavours, despite irreconcilable ideological differences, could, however, be constituted only due to a fact of much deeper existential importance and urgency—the fact that the philosophies of existence are first of all concerned with the precarious human condition in the world. Having in view this urgency, true philosophers, perhaps for the first time in history, have been able to abstract to a considerable extent from the formulation of their specific *views* and ultimate metaphysical ends, by giving priority to a concise formulation of the actual *problems* and to an unbiased analysis of the immediately given (‘pre-reflective’) phenomenon of human experience. Husserl’s method of transcendental analysis, though not arising from the same considerations, had the advantage of an emphasis on refraining from propounding theories but serving “purely descriptive” purpose.⁴

From a Buddhist approach, the first important constataion should be just the coincidence in this capacity of abstracting from ideological ‘views’ or biases (*ditṭhi* in the teaching of the Buddha, Greek *doxa* in Husserl’s phenomenology) in approaching phenomena (*dhammā*) *yathā bhūta*, “as they have come to exist”. This preliminary noetical condition, consisting in the critique of the purport of speculative world-views, has been very explicitly elicited by the Buddha in the *Brahma-jāla-suttam* (D. 1)⁵, whose specific analysis from a modern standpoint cannot be undertaken in this place. The only point that has to be singled out in this connection is that any such coincidence of an archaic logical method with a modern one would be of no avail for us if there were not at the same time a coincidence also in the subject of its application, for the sake of which the principal criteria of the method have been formulated. This coincidence is given above all in the stress on the *exclusively* humanistic interest in philosophical problems. The meaning of ‘existential humanism’ has therefore to be explained in the first place.

The ‘right views’, the first step on the ‘eight fold path leading to the

cessation of suffering', are determined by the *exclusive* interest in the "teaching specific to the buddhas" (*yā buddhānam samukkaṃsika dhamma-desanā*), concentrated on the problem of suffering :

Whether the dogma prevails that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal..., there still remains birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair, for the extinction of which *in the present life* I am prescribing. (M. 63)

I teach only what is suffering and the liberation from suffering. (*passim*)

The formulation of the humanist principle in *Aṅguttara-nikāyo*, IV, 5,5, has become one of the most often quoted in modern contexts :

...I do proclaim that in this very fathom-long body, with its feelings and mind, is the world, the world's arising, the world's ceasing, and the path leading to the world's ceasing,...

which is the Eightfold Path of the Buddho. Here the cycle of the worldliness and of world-views comes to the closure of its round.

This text could easily be supported by extensive corroboration from the stand-point of any modern philosophy of existence. In another context⁶ I have compared, rather as a matter of curiosity, the quoted *suttam* with a statement by Schopenhauer, who, from an Asian point of approach, should be considered as the most significant among the precursors of the contemporary existential thinking in Europe. The following pointers are characteristic of Heidegger's and Sartre's interpretations of the *co-extension of the world with the human-reality* (*Dasein* in Heidegger's terminology).⁷ According to Heidegger :

The fallenness of *Dasein* must not be taken...as a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status'. Not only do we lack any experience of this ontically, ontologically we lack any possibilities or clues for interpreting it.—('Falling' in this world a human being) has not fallen into some entity which it comes upon in the course of its being...; it has fallen into the world, which itself *belongs to its being*. (p. 176)

Dasein is its world existingly. We have defined *Dasein's* being as 'worry'. The ontological meaning of 'worry' is temporality. We have shown that temporality constitutes the disclosedness of the 'there', and we have shown how it does so...*The unity of significance...is the ontological constitution of the world*, [and only] in so far as *Dasein* temporalizes itself, a world *is* too...If no *Dasein* exists, no world is 'there' either. (pp. 364 f.)

The 'world' itself is something constitutive for *Dasein*. (p. 52)

Sartre :

Thus it is the upsurge of the for-itself (i.e., personal consciousness) in the world which by *the same stroke causes the world to exist* as a totality of things, and *causes senses to exist* as the objective mode in which the qualities of things are presented. What is *fundamental is my relation to the world*. ...*My body is co-existence with the world*. (pp. 294 f., 382 f.)

If there is a world, it is because we rise up into the world suddenly and in totality...But *our upsurge is a passion* in this sense that *we lose ourselves in nihilation in order that a world may exist*. (p. 437, 538)

There is no absolute beginning which without ever having a past would become past. Since the For-itself, qua For-itself, has to be a past, it comes into the world *with* a past. These few remarks may permit us to view in somewhat different light the *problem of birth* . . . There is a metaphysical problem concerning birth in that I can be anxious to know how I happen to have been born from that *particular* embryo; and this problem is perhaps insoluble. (p. 114 f., 184 f.)

One Indian term used by Sartre very often and considered untranslatable is 'avatar'. The idea of 'rebirth' (*punar-bhavaḥ*), tacitly alluded to between lines, could be understood and explained best in connection with the wider meaning of Sartre's 'avatar', if it had to be explicitly defined or asserted from a similar viewpoint today.

Such modern coincidences shed simultaneously a proper light on an old misunderstanding created by superficial and tendentious readers of the basic discourses of the Buddho not only in the western world but also, and much earlier, in Indian traditions alien to Buddhism, to whom *sammā-diṭṭhi*, the 'right views' in the Eightfold Path seem to restrict, if not to contradict, the rejection by the Buddho of *diṭṭhi* or world-views in the widest meaning of this term, not only in his critique of the antinomies of the speculative Reason in the *Brahma-jāla-suttam*, but also in other statements on "the thicket of views, the wilderness of the contortion of views, the vacillation of views, the fetter of views", where "no untaught ordinary man bound by the fetter of views is freed by birth, aging and death, by sorrow and lamentation, from pains, griefs and despair; he is not freed from suffering, I say." (M. 2, 7)

What is pointed out very clearly by the Buddho as wrong in *all world-views* without exception is the *direction of the view* and its intention, the delimitation of the subject of philosophical interest and discussion, the ultimate misunderstanding on the nature of *problems* to be discussed from

a standpoint more than merely 'analogous' to that of the contemporary philosophies of existence. Throughout a series of texts the humanistic standpoint of the Buddha denotes an essential and very explicit *a*-cosmic intention. May it suffice here to add his first utterance after the awakening :

Through many births I wandered in the stream of existence seeking but not finding the builder of this house (the world). Sorrowful is it to be born again and again. But now, o house-builder, you have been seen. You will not build the house any more. All your rafters are broken, your ridge-pole is shattered. The mind is beyond doubt, attained is the end of craving. (*Dhamma-padam*, 153-4)

On this point, in one specific respect at least, the Buddha is still in advance of most contemporary philosophers of existence. According to him, an *a*-cosmic philosophy has necessarily to be also anti-ontological, i.e., it cannot be construed as a philosophy of Being. The ultimate aim, *nibbāna*, or "extinction without remainder" (*nir-upadhisesa-nibbāna*) is formulated by the Buddha (with particular reference to the Self-principle, *attā*) in terms of a rational principle of extreme precision attainable to a scholastic system of formal logics—his *cātu-koṭīkam* (tetra-lemma) :

Neither being, nor non-being, nor both being-and-non-being, nor neither-being-nor-non-being—

can express the existential purport and content of our human reality. The word 'being' (lat. *esse*) or any other derivate from the verb 'to be' cannot adequately enough express the immediate insight (*vipassanā*, cf. Sartre's "pre-reflexive Cogito") of existence, or the essence of actuality (as *paramāttho* or ultimate aim).⁸

Analogous anti-ontological tendencies have been expressed by Jaspers, Berdyaev, and several French philosophers (G. Marcel was the first to point out the problem), mainly against Heidegger and Sartre.

According to Jaspers, his philosophical "elucidation of existence is not ontology."⁹ This means that the problem of human existence can be reduced to that of being or not-being in it-self or as a transcendence. Berdyaev gives a short explanation of the same thought in its historical aspect as follows¹⁰ :

The construction of an ontology has been philosophy's highest claim [since its origins] ... At times it has appeared as though human thought was in this respect pursuing a phantom. The transition from the many to the one, and from one to the many was a fundamental theme in Greek philosophy. In a different way the same topic has been fundamental in Indian philosophy also. Indian thought has been disquieted by

the question : how does being arise out of non-being ? It has to a large extent been focused upon the problem of nothingness, non-being and illusion.

Here again it seems to be much more than a matter of curiosity to compare such reflections on the history of philosophy with the judgment of the Buddha on both the vedantic monism (in the early upaniṣads) and the sāmkhya dualism in two identically formulated suttas of the *Samyutta-nikāya* (XXXV, 23-26) :

Bhikkhus, I will teach you *the all* [...the duality, in the second version]. Listen to it. And what, bhikkhus, is the all [...the duality] ? It is eye and object, ear and sound, nose and scent, tongue and savour, body and tangible things, mind and mind-states. That is called the all [...the duality]. Whoso, bhikkhus, should say : 'Reject this all, [...duality], I will proclaim another all [...duality]'—it would be a mere talk on his part, and when questioned he could not make good his boast, and further would come to an ill pass. Why so ? Because it is beyond his scope to do so. I will show you a teaching, bhikkhus, for the abandonment of the all [...of the duality] ... The eye must be abandoned, objects must be abandoned, eye-consciousness must be abandoned, eye contact must be abandoned. That enjoyment or suffering or neutral state experienced which arises owing to eye contact—that also must be abandoned, ... Mind must be abandoned, mind-states, mind-consciousness, mind-contact must be abandoned ... This, bhikkhus, is the teaching for the abandonment of all [...of the duality] ... by fully knowing, by comprehending it ... Without fully knowing, without comprehending, without detaching himself from, without abandoning the all [...the duality], one is incapable of extinguishing suffering.

On another occasion¹¹ Berdyaev discusses the question : "Why is ontology impossible?" His answer is:

Because it is always a knowledge objectifying existence. In an ontology the idea of being is objectified, and an objectification is already an existence which is alienated in the objectification. So that in ontology—in every ontology—existence vanishes. There is no more existence because existence cannot be objectified. It is precisely in this respect that I feel myself rather close to Kierkegaard... It is only in subjectivity that one may know existence, not in objectivity. In my opinion the central idea has vanished in the ontology of Heidegger and Sartre... I believe that Jaspers is more nearly right than Heidegger...

In the same sense Jaspers speaks of the ontologisation of existence as

a "degradation to object". Both Jaspers and Berdyaev use in this connection the metaphor of "congealing" genuine being into a knowledge-of-being. The metaphor was coined earlier by Bergson in his vision of the "*élan vital*" in the descending "precipitation". The following reflections of Jaspers on the controversial subject of ontologism in contemporary philosophies of existence summarize at the same time his basic assessment of the existential danger, or the essential *dukkha*-factor (to express it in brief in terms of our comparative context) of the contemporary technical civilization (problem elaborated extensively in his book *Man in the Modern Age*):

The ideal followed by ontologies is the perfectioning of the rational structure of the objectified world. Technical sciences have to help us to bring about engineered existence. Whenever I grasp Being, it becomes affected by a relativisation due to another Being which I have not grasped. However, as potential existence, *I am able to lift myself up from bondage*. My chains will thus become the material of Being... Ontology deceives us by its attempt to absolutize something wherefrom the other ought to be deduced. As an attempt to bind us to objectified Being, *ontology sublates freedom*.¹²

Berdyaev recognized in his critique of Heidegger's philosophy that "as a man Heidegger is deeply troubled by this world of care, fear, death and daily dullness". Yet, beyond that sincerity, "the depth of existence does not make itself felt" in his philosophy.¹³ Kierkegaard, on the contrary, "did not wish to create an ontology or metaphysics, and he did not believe in the possibility of an ideational philosophy; he believed in an expression of existence...Kierkegaard's philosophy of existence is an *expressionist philosophy*—one might say: it is the expression of the existence of Kierkegaard. Here the knowing subject is existential."¹⁴

It should be noted, however, that neither Jaspers' nor Berdyaev's critique of ontologism can any longer be considered, without considerable misunderstandings, as adequately referring to Heidegger's phenomenological conception of Being (*Esse, Sein*). Especially in his later critical and polemic writings, Heidegger rejects emphatically the traditional understanding of ontology as "degradation" of Being to object, for reasons similar to those adduced by Jaspers and the Kierkegaardian trend of Christian existentialism, whose "subjectivism" is, however, refuted by Heidegger with good reasons in his arguments *against irrationalism*, or rather against the falsified positivist conception of rationality.

In *Being and Time* (p. 106) Heidegger speaks of "a 'subjectivity' which perhaps uncovers the 'reality' of the world at its most real; it has nothing to do with 'subjective' arbitrariness or subjectivistic 'ways of taking' an entity

which 'in itself' is otherwise." In his later, shorter and polemical, writings he uses the word 'subjectivity' (*Subjektivität*) for the first meaning, adequate to his own understanding, against 'subjectivity' in the second meaning typical for idealist and pseudo-dealist, positivist 'objectifying' philosophies. Thus in his letter to Ernst Jünger (*Zur Seinsfrage*¹⁵) Heidegger emphasises "the subjectivity (not subjectivity) of the human being" and rejects the idea of a "subjectivistic subjectivity of the human being" (p. 224). His critique of the "subjectifying (*Subjektivierung*) of entities into mere objects" (p. 180) presupposes, on the other hand, that both "subjectivity and objectivity are based on a specific disclosure of 'being' and of 'human being'" (p. 236). The whole argument is based on the idea of a "totality (*Inbegriff*)... encompassing the subject-object-relation" (p. 239). The conception of 'the encompassing' (*das Umgreifende*) is still more characteristic for Jaspers' approach to the same problem.

The rejection of the reproach of irrationalism (directly dealt with in *Nachwort zu: "Was ist Metaphysik?"* op. cit., p. 101 ff.) follows the line of the same ontological argument applied to the misconception of the idea of *Logos* and logics: "A reflection following this course is not directed against logic but aims at a sufficient determination of the *Logos*" (p. 306). In the *Letter on 'Humanism'* (to Sartre; pp. 146-7) Heidegger formulates the problem of essential thinking as follows: "Can the endeavour to bring thinking back to its (proper) element be called 'irrationalism'?" The proper primeval "element of thinking is Being" (*Esse, not ens; Sein, not Seiendes*). "In simple terms, thinking is the thinking of the Being." "In the technical interpretation of thinking, Being as its /proper/ element has been sacrificed." Such technical transformation has been "sanctioned by 'logics' since the times of the Sophist and of Plato." The Greeks, in their high times, have thought without such titles as 'logics', 'ethics', 'physics'. Their thinking was not even called 'philosophy'. "These names appear only when the primordial thinking has come to its end... Since these times 'philosophy' has been in a permanent need of justifying its existence in confrontation with the 'sciences'. To that end the safest means seemed to be for philosophy "to raise itself to the rank of a science. But just this effort was the sacrifice of the essence of thinking. Thinking is thus judged by an inadequate standard... The strictness of thinking, unlike the strictness of the sciences, does not consist only in the artificial, i.e., technical-theoretical exactitude of concepts..."

In this light Heidegger's critique of the traditional understanding of 'ontology', since Aristotle, can be summed up in his argument that the rejected type of ontology (though until now the only one historically extant) mistakes 'entities' (*Ens, Seiendes*) for 'Being' (*Esse, Sein*), and thus already at the primeval source of knowledge (Sartre would call it "the

pre-reflexive Cogito") abandons truth as "transparency of Being" (Greek *aletheia* in Heidegger's interpretation) for mere 'idea' (already in its Platonic meaning).¹⁶

Emmanuel Mounier has defined Existentialism as "a reaction of the philosophy of man against the excess of the philosophy of ideas and the philosophy of things."¹⁷ This definition sums up Mounier's criticism of Kantian philosophy. It was the aim of Kant's philosophy, too, to determine the transcendental limits of the possible human knowledge. Yet it seems to Mounier that philosophers of the Kantian trend, "in league with scientists, are bent on ridding the world of man's presence," in order to make it "a world composed purely of matter, i.e., of pure hypotheses... Thus the concept of existence was seen to be being drained, little by little, of its substance, and, if one may say so, to be being steadily filled with *nothingness*... Worldly concern has destroyed man, and man in his turn is frittering away the world."

Berdyayev, on the contrary, was very much interested to defend and not to abandon the importance of Kant's outset at those problems. From the beginning to the end of his book *The Beginning and the End* he endeavours to elicit an existentialist interpretation of Kant's philosophy as a whole. Its historical import is expressed in the first chapter in statements as the following few:¹⁸

When Kant appeared the tragic side of the act of knowing came to light... It is not true to say that Kant makes an end of all metaphysics; he merely makes an end of metaphysics of the naturalistic rationalist type, metaphysics which are derived from the object, from the world, and he reveals the possibility of metaphysics based on the subject, of a metaphysics of freedom... The scientifically knowable world also is itself an illusory world as the philosophy of the Upanishads recognizes... Kant recognizes that there is a metaphysical need implanted in our nature; it is deeply inherent in reason.

Agreeing with Berdyayev I would venture to extend the essential meaning of his statement also to the *Buddho's attitude to metaphysical questions* of existential, viz. a-cosmical, import, especially against all those who seem to believe that even a religion is *possible* on purely 'pragmatic' and 'practical' grounds, ignoring the metaphysical depth of all the statements quoted here until now from his discourses in Pāli suttas.

The whole problem of Kantian criticism as rediscussed in this new light can be very adequately compared, on the other hand, with the results of the analysis of the *same* basic antinomies of Pure Reason as elicited in an archaic context by the Buddho in the *Brahma-jāla-suttaṃ*. Without returning to this argument at present,¹⁹ I wish to quote only its conclusion in

view of two particular references to the subject under discussion:

Whosoever *samaṇā* and *brāhmanā*... put forward various propositions with regard to the past and to the future, they all of them, are entrapped in the net of these 62 modes of speculation; this way or that they may flounder, but they are included in it, caught in it.

1. Kantian philosophy, too, one might say today, though seeing its own being caught in the "net of Brahma", or in categorial structures of the scientifically objectified world, is still determined to remain in it. For this reason it has been criticized already by Schopenhauer, while Bergson, in the same sense, used the simile of a fisherman's net for the leaky logical structure of our intellect.

2. Buddho's exclusive reference "to the past and to the future not to the "being in itself" in the back-stage of phenomena (*dhammā*) which he denies, points at another motive characteristic for the exclusively humanistic interest of modern existential thinking. It is the tremendous emphasis, on both sides, on the importance of the present moment, on "getting rid of (morally) unskilled states of mind (*akusala-dhammā*), *here and now*, the uprising of skilled states":

Let not a man trace back a past or wonder what the future holds... Instead, with insight let him see each thing presently arisen. (M.10)

No existentialist philosopher of today could lay more emphasis on the terrifying feeling of man's "thrownness" in his actual world-situation, on his "being abandoned by gods" (Heidegger), on his restless and presentless "being catapulted from the past into the future" (Ortega y Gasset), than did the Buddho in the often repeated "simile of the burning turban", or in the condensed expression of his famous "fire sermon" in a verse of *Dhamma-padāṃ*, 146:

—Bhikkhus, when one's turban or head is ablaze, what is to be done? ...

—Why laughter? What pleasure can there be where all is ever burning?²⁰

II. SUFFERING (DUKKHAṀ)

In his first discourse (*Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana-suttaṃ*) the Buddho defined *suffering* (*dukkhaṃ*), the fundamental subject of his entire teaching, in these simple terms:

This, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering, separation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering, in short the five constituents of grasping are suffering.

The five constituents of grasping and of existence in general are defined by the Buddho in another connection as follows:

Hence the annihilation, cessation and overcoming of corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness, this is the cessation of suffering, the end of disease, the overcoming of old age and death.

(S. XXII, 30)

Schopenhauer, in connection with his own constation of the same facts, quotes an analogous statement by St. Augustine (*De Civitate Dei*, XIV, 6):

For what are desire and joy but the will to consent to what we want? And what are fear and sadness but the will not to consent to what we do not want?

Schopenhauer's conclusion²¹:

However varied the forms in which man's happiness and unhappiness appear and impel him to pursuit or escape, the material basis of all this is nevertheless physical pleasure or pain. This basis is very restricted, namely health, nourishment, protection from wet and cold, and sexual satisfaction, or else the want of these things. Consequently, in real physical pleasure man has no more than the animal.

For Kierkegaard the "sickness unto death" (compare Sartre's *Nausea*) arises from his realization that "the objective situation is repellent, and the expression for the objective repulsion constitutes the tension and the measure of the corresponding inwardness". In such existential situation "truth will confront the individual as a paradox. Gripped in anguish and pain of sin, facing the tremendous risk of the objective insecurity, the individual believes".²² This is the existential foundation of the want for religion.

The comparison with the Buddho on this point is probably the most striking:

...He then hears a Perfect One expounding the teaching for the removal of all grounds for 'views', of all prejudices, obsessions, dogmas and biases; for the stilling of all processes, for the relinquishing of all substrata

of existence, for the extirpation of craving, for dispassion, cessation, extinction (*nibbānaṃ*). He then thinks: "I shall be annihilated, I shall be destroyed! No longer shall I exist!" Hence he grieves, is depressed and laments; beating his breast he weeps and dejection befalls him. Thus, bhikkhus, is there anxiety about realities in the internal. (M.22)

In this connection it seems to me very important from the Buddhist standpoint not to slight or to disregard as a mere historical incident the fact that the first introduction and subject of 'meditation' taught by the Buddho was "on the loathsome (*asubha-kammaṭṭhānaṃ*).²³ The first effect of this instruction was so strong that it caused a wave of suicides in the early community. Only after such negative consequences the Buddho was induced by his disciples to elaborate a wider range of subjects and methods of practising concentration (*samādhi*) as ultimately formulated in his *sati-paṭṭhāna-suttas* (cf. D. 22, M.10). Yet, he never renounced the basic importance of the loathsome subjects. Out of 40 subjects (*kammaṭṭhānaṃ*) classified in the *Visuddhi-maggo* by Buddhaghosa in seven sections, 11 subjects, in two sections, pertain exclusively to this group, while in the section of "ten recollection", the "mindfulness of death" and the "mindfulness occupied with the body" can equally be considered as loathsome. The subject of the "mindfulness of death" has been raised to the central problem of existential philosophy by Heidegger. Sartre, in criticizing Heidegger's metaphysical conception on this point does not at all attempt to tone down the emphasis on its importance.

The follower of the Buddhist method of purification (*visuddhi-maggo*) has to undergo a transformation of his animal or biological genus (*gotraṃ*) as a consequence of his choice of liberation from *āsavā*, or ignorance-born passions of our animal nature. This process of vital transformation is called by the Buddho *gotra-bhū*. In Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhi-maggo* (XXI, 95 ff), "the ordinary man" is characterized as he who "takes the five constituents of existence as 'I and mine'." "After entering upon the right way and seeing the three characteristics" (of impermanence, suffering and non-being of a permanent self-principle or 'soul'), the "apparent" or "illusory" nature of these constituents is necessarily intuited "as terror... like the time when a man is frightened on waking up and seeing the fire. Knowledge of desire for deliverance is like that man's looking for a way out". Ultimately "change-of-lineage is like the man's getting out... Fruition-knowledge is like his staying in a safe place". In *Paṭisambhidā-maggo* (I, 66) the question is discussed: How is it that understanding of emergency and turning away from the external is change-of-lineage knowledge?" The

series of arguments in the answer to this question culminates in the last one²⁴:

It enters into non-despair, thus it is change-of-lineage. It enters into cessation, *nibbānam*, thus it is change-of-lineage.

In a poetical section of the Visuddhi-maggo (XXIII, 15) on the "asceticism's fruit", Buddhaghosa derives "its calm from lack of worldliness".

This dimension of freedom, conceived just as a biological fact of *gotrabhū* (Nietzsche was right in emphasizing the difference of Buddhism from Christianity just on such biological and "hygienic" functions, cf. *Ecce Homo* and *The Antichrist*, sect. 20) is confirmed also by Sartre (though in a footnote) in a statement which, besides that, seems to be his epitome of the central conception of Schopenhauer's philosophy²⁵:

These considerations do not exclude the possibility of an ethics of deliverance and salvation. But this can be achieved only after a radical conversion which we can not discuss here.

Yet, the importance of this subject, even for the interior necessity of Sartre's dialectical logic, could neither remain concealed nor be denied. It results most clearly from the concluding definition of the human being at the end of *Being and Nothingness*²⁶: Man, who "is not what he is, but is what he is not," because he is only a "pro-ject" propelled from the past into the future, or an "ek-static being" and therefore a being continually "missing" not only his own essence, but even his own present—"man is a useless passion".

The central chapters in Heidegger's main work, *Being and Time*, are the chapters on *Conscience*. Even Sartre points out that Heidegger's main concern was to produce a treatise on ethics. In the concluding sentence of *Being and Nothingness* Sartre commits himself to "devote a future work" to ethics, though such a work by him has not appeared later.

In the second chapter of the second half of *Being and Time*, Heidegger discusses the problem of "conscience as the call of care" (Section 57). The first half of the book was concluded with an ontological analysis of the central conception of the whole treatise, the *existentiale*, or 'Dasein's character'²⁷ of Care. The basic 'ontical' meaning of this term is interpreted (in sec. 42) as 'worry' or 'grief'. As it can be seen from the continuation, there is no doubt that this primary meaning of Heidegger's central conception is essentially the same as the meaning of *dukkham* in Buddhist interpretation. In the same central paragraph (42) of his treatise Heidegger reveals the historical, almost accidental, provenience and inspiration of

this fundamental conception. The aim of the first part of the book was to "exhibit Care as the Being of Dasein," of "that entity which in each case we ourselves are, and which we call 'man'." "There is an ancient fable," continues Heidegger, "in which Dasein's interpretation of itself as 'care' has been embodied." Heidegger considers it as a "pre-ontological illustration" of his own "existential-ontological interpretation of Dasein as care." This Latin fable of *Cura* "has come to us as No. 220 of the Fables of Hyginus" and was rediscovered by Herder, from whom "Goethe took it over and worked up for the second part of his Faust":²⁸

Once when Care was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. Care asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While Care and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: "Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since Care first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called *homo*, for it is made out of *humus* (earth).

In Heidegger's interpretation:

This pre-ontological document becomes especially significant not only because 'care' is here seen as that to which human Dasein belongs 'for its lifetime', but also because this priority of 'care' emerges in connection with the familiar way of taking man as compounded of body [earth] and spirit...In care this entity has the 'source' of its being...The entity is not released from this source but is held fast, dominated by it through and through as long as this entity 'is in the world'. 'Being-in-the-world' has the stamp of 'care' which accords with its being. It gets the name '*homo*' not in consideration of its being but in relation to that of which it consists [*humus*]. The decision as to wherein the 'primordial' being of this creature is to be seen, is left to Saturn, 'Time'...The very 'emptiness' and 'generality' which obtrude themselves ontically in existential structures, have an ontological definiteness and fulness of their own. Thus Dasein's whole constitution itself is not simple in its unity, but shows a structural articulation; in the existential conception of care this articulation becomes expressed.

Thus in this 'pre-ontological' nucleus of Heidegger's philosophical inspiration ultimately also the problem of nothingness (at the end of the sec. 42), the last and most important aspect of our analogy, appears in connection with the 'structural articulation' of the human self-being in and as 'temporality'.

When reading the ancient and forgotten *Cura* fable and Heidegger's footnote information on his painstaking research of its historical provenience, one almost might exclaim (as in several other instances of Heidegger's philological research-work in forgotten archives) with astonishment: *Cur tanta cura?*—Why so much trouble? Has not, e.g., Schopenhauer, nearly one hundred years earlier, in elaborating his philosophy of care, anxiety and unalienable suffering as the core of man's being in the world, indicated with no less painstaking but much more voluminous bibliographical documentation a considerable share of Buddhist source-material in his life-long study of the same basic problem (notably in the interval between the first and the second volume of his main work, *The World as Will and Representation*)?²⁹ In the meantime these sources have become not only easier of access in reliable translation and scholarly interpretation, but also very popular, particularly in Germany. As a matter of fact, Heidegger, in his advanced age, when made aware of such analogies (also by some Japanese research fellows among his own students), read D.T. Suzuki's *Essays on Zen Buddhism*, and said that this was exactly what he has endeavoured to say all his life long.³⁰ Heidegger's predilection for Taoism was well known much earlier. Yet, had he followed this cultural influence deeper and earlier in his career, would it still have been possible for him to qualify it merely as "pre-ontological Dasein's interpretation of itself"?

In the philosophy of Karl Jaspers a stronger emphasis is laid on man's capacity of reasoning than on his primordial existential 'moods'. A continuous effort is dedicated to the sublimation of such moods as care, anguish and suffering by "the philosophical faith" (*der pailosophische Glaube*), or rational justification or reasonable belief in the possibility of transcending. I shall quote only one symptomatic passage from his *Existenz-philosophie*.³¹

In as far as human reality, on its lowest existential level, has to be considered merely as a "determined being", it finds its expression in "an interested life, having its aim in itself, limited, subordinating everything to the condition of its own well-being, and only to that extent endowed with feelings of sympathy and antipathy in establishing communications with others, exclusively for the sake of a determined interest." In such a determined being, there is "exhilaration in life's self-accomplishment, and suffering for what gets lost thereby. From a confrontation of both, however, there results the shortcoming of merely determined being, there results the

boredom of repetition, and the dread of facing the extreme situation of shipwreck. Every determined being bears in itself destruction. No idea, no thought can ever enable us to clearly envisage the happiness of existence as an unobstructed possibility. There is no lasting and permanent happiness, no happiness that once fully comprehended would remain self-sufficient." On a higher spiritual level "there is deep contentment in the totality, but also the torment of irreducible incompleteness. From a confrontation of both there arises the disharmony and perplexity in view of the disintegration of each totality... In existence there is *faith and despair*. From a confrontation of both there arises the desire of eternal peace where despair has become impossible and faith transformed into contemplation." This is the ideal of "the perfect reality".

To a Buddhist reader, already the style of these statements may suggest the reminiscence of a *suttam* on the same subject :

...What is the cause, what is the reason of the defilement of beings ?

Indeed, Mahāli, if body were entirely painful, affected by pain, disposed to pain, and not to pleasure, beings would not get attached to body. But, Mahāli, it is because body is also pleasant, affected by pleasure, disposed to pleasure and not to pain, that beings get attached to body. Due to attachment they are bound and due to that bondage they are defiled ...[The same is repeated for feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.]

But what, lord, is the cause, what is the reason for the purification of beings ?

Indeed, Mahāli, if body were entirely pleasant, affected by pleasure, disposed to pleasure, and not to pain, beings would not get disgusted with body. But, Mahāli, it is because body is also painful, affected by pain, disposed to pain and not to pleasure, that beings get disgusted with body. Being disgusted they become detached and due to detachment they are purified... [The same is repeated for feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.]

(*Mahāli Suttam*, S. XXII, 60)

In the last of his voluminous works, *The Great Philosophers*,³² Jaspers dedicated, also in this connection, particular attention to the problem of "the philosophical faith" in the chapters on St. Augustine and Kant. Yet, before entering in the analysis of Christian and modern European traditions, in the first part, on "paradigmatic individuals," Jaspers tries to approach the teachings of the Buddha and of Confucius on the same level with Socrates and Jesus, with the intention to find out "what they have in

common and how on this common ground they characteristically differ."

It is characteristic for Jaspers, in comparison with Heidegger, that he ranks Confucius higher than Lao-tzu. According to Jaspers, "the essential difference between Lao-tzu and Confucius is that Lao-tzu follows a direct way to the *tao*... while Confucius takes a detour by way of the human order" to reach the same end (p. 70). As for the Buddha, his doctrine "is represented in the texts as a body of knowledge, expressed in propositions and rational sequence to normal consciousness" (p. 38). In the "Concluding Considerations regarding Paradigmatic Individuals" (Socrates, Buddha, Confucius and Jesus) the following common features are singled out among other :

They do not conform to the prophet type characterised by vision and ecstasis... They speak in parables, dialectical contradictions, conversational replies; *they do not fixate* ... In them a chasm has opened. The world is not in order ... In each case we find a characteristic relation to these basic elements of human existence, death, and suffering... None of them is interested in metaphysical speculation on the science of nature. There are large realms that they have no desire to know. (pp. 100, 101, 104)

At the end of the same volume Jaspers found his most congenial approach to Buddhist and Asian thought in a lengthy chapter on Nāgārjuna, the founder of Buddhist metaphysics.³³

At this last stage of his life and work Jaspers underwent also a characteristic reorientation from a notoriously Eurocentric position towards Asian tradition. In his endeavours to establish a religiously informed philosophy of culture adequate to the critical position of "man in the modern age",³⁴ and especially at the time when he wished to give a conclusive expression to his idea of the "philosophical faith", in his lectures at the end of the second world war,³⁵ Jaspers was visibly oppressed by the heavy burden of Biblical tradition to which he felt himself still committed, realising not less clearly than Kierkegaard, how tragically "absurd" and untractable it was for any reasonable modern approach. The turning point toward a more adequate appreciation of Asian perspectives in spiritual culture must have followed shortly after the *Philosophical Faith*, and is felt, at least by a Buddhist reader, in the chapter on Nāgārjuna's metaphysics of nothingness as a positive relief.

III NOTHINGNESS (*Suññatā*)

The problem of nothingness, or nullity (Pāli suññatā, Sansk. śūnyatā;

cf. Sartre's term 'nihilation')³⁶ is the deepest metaphysical point reached by both the ancient Buddhist and the modern existential philosophies. Nonetheless it had become the main stumbling-block already for traditional commentarial interpretations of the teaching of Buddha (in the Pāli Canon), while in the case of modern philosophies of existence it can be considered as the boundary-stone wherefrom paths and trends diverge, aiming at different metaphysical solutions. Speaking of rare predecessors in European philosophy, it is just their exceptional character which makes the unmistakable impression that even so distant thinkers as Meister Eckhart (13-14 century) and Sartre discuss the same problem of ineluctable 'nihilation' of human existence.

A comparative eliciting of this subject should proceed by distinguishing and comparing three different aspects and historical strata of its formulation :

- A—the standpoint of European philosophies of existence;
- B—the aspects of the *suñña-vādo* and *ākhiñcaññāyatanaṃ* (theory of nullity and sphere of no-thing-ness) in the Pāli *suttas*;
- C—the development of the *śūnya-vādaḥ* in the mahāyāna philosophy.

An adequate differential presentation of these facets cannot be undertaken within the limits of the present survey. The aspects B and C will therefore be dealt with explicitly in a subsequent essay. The following approach from the standpoint A will contain only implicit references to the extensive Buddhist literature on topics relevant for further comparative studies.

For the preliminary orientation of the reader it may suffice to add the following short and often quoted text from *Samyutta-nikāyo*, XXXV, 85, which can be reliably considered also as the canonical basis of the later teaching in the philosophical literature of the *mahāyāna* on the "double nihilation", since Nāgārjuna's time :

...The Venerable Ānando said thus to the Exalted One :
'The world is nothing' is the saying, lord. Pray, lord, how far does this saying go ?

Because the world is nothing in itself and for itself [*suññam attena vā attaniyena vā*], Ānando, therefore it is said that the world is nothing. And what, Ānando, is nothing in itself and for itself ? [The organs of] sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and the mind; their objects and the [corresponding types of intentional] consciousness, are nothing in themselves and for themselves. That is why, Ānando, it is said that the world is nothing...

As for the doctrine of "double nihilation" in the later *mahāyāna* philosophy, here are a few characteristic explanations from a treatise of Nāgārjuna's school:³⁷

The two aspects of nihilation [*śūnyatā*] are: (1) nihilation of being [*sattva-śūnyatā*], (2) nihilation of phenomenon [*dharma-śūnyatā*]. To say that there is no *ātmā* [self] is a statement of *sattva-śūnyatā*; to say that there is no phenomenon is *dharma-śūnyatā*.

In what concerns oneself [*adhyātma*], the Buddha always applies his knowledge that there is no 'self' [*anātma-jñāna*], and in what concerns the outward world [*bahirdhā*], he always contemplates the nullity of phenomena [*dharma-śūnyatā*]. He sees the true character of the phenomena [*bhūta-lakṣaṇa-dharmā*]³⁸—he realises that there is no self *ātmā* and no being [*sattva*].

1. MEISTER ECKHART

For the initial formulation of the problem of nothingness or nullity in European philosophy we may refer to Meister Eckhart:³⁸

The disciple inquired: "What is the soul made of?"—"She is made out of nothing."—"Where did God get the nothing he made the soul out of?"—"Some say he got it in himself. That is not the case for in God is not nothing...There is getting nothing from inside or out...So runs the argument that the nothing is gotten from nowhere...And this soul has by rights absolute *freedom from herself and things...She sinks eternally, but never touches bottom...God with his uncreatedness supports her nothing-at-all...The soul has dared to come to naught and, failing by herself, to reach herself, she swoons away ere God comes to her rescue... What does emptiness mean? It means a turning from creatures... Creatures enclose a mere nothing of God wherefrom they cannot disclose him... Holy Scripture cries aloud *freedom from self*."*

(a) In the analysis of Pāli texts an essential difference will be singled out between the *idea* of nothingness as "nullity" (*suññatā*) and the transcendental *experience* of the "sphere of nothingness" (*ākāśa-āyatanam*) realised as a noematic region by the contemplative mind (*arūpa-jhānam*). Meister Eckhart's statements, quoted above, include characteristic pointers for his use of both terms, as 'nothingness' and 'voidness'.

(b) A modern Japanese philosopher of particular interest for our survey, Nishida Kitarō who "thought it was his mission to make Zen Buddhism intelligible to the West,"³⁹ condensed the basic idea of his best known work, *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, in a *tanka*

poem based on the same simile of bottomless sinking as underlined above in Meister Eckhart's version:

There is something bottomless
Within me, I feel,
However disturbing are the waves
of joy and sorrow,
They fail to reach it.

Not less striking at first glance appears the similarity of Meister Eckhart's statement "God never spoke but one word, and that is still unspoken,"⁴⁰ to some of the best known Zen *koans* on the paradox character of silence.

2. SÖREN KIERKEGAARD

Existentialist philosophers of the 20th century agree almost without exception in acknowledging Kierkegaard as the 'father' of modern existentialism. From my standpoint, whose initial orientation is not Eurocentric, the position of the most prominent precursor should rather pertain to Arthur Schopenhauer as the first modern philosopher who recognised his indebtedness to Indian and particularly to Buddhist precedents in dealing with basic existential problems specified as the *tertium comparationis* in the present essay. As for Kierkegaard, in his insistence on the "absurdity" of basic existential problems there appears at the first sight an obviously prevalent influence of Christian theology on the formations of his thought. In some of his historical considerations he even admits the possibility of rational solutions of such *paradoxical* problems without their exaggeration *ad absurdum*. The best known is his analysis of the case of Socrates.

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*,⁴¹ Kierkegaard distinguishes the alternative approach of Socrates from his own Christian attitude to the apparent absurdity of existence and thus comes closest to what I would term the rational solution of a logical paradox as propounded by Nāgārjuna in the early Buddhist philosophy:

(a) The "Socratic principle" according to Kierkegaard:

In the principle that subjectivity, inwardness, is the truth, there is comprehended the Socratic wisdom, whose everlasting merit it was to have become aware of the essential significance of existence, of the fact that the knower is an existing individual. For this reason Socrates was in truth by virtue of his ignorance, in the highest sense in which this was possible within paganism.

(b) Interpretation in analogy to Nāgārjuna :

The *paradox* emerges when the eternal truth and existence are placed in juxtaposition with one another; each time the fact of existence is realised, the paradox becomes more clearly evident.

(c) The "absurd" of the Christian position :

What now is the *absurd*? The absurd is—that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that God has come into being, has been born, has grown up, and so forth...

A Buddhist's Postscript ; *Quo usque tandem credere quia absurdum* ?!

At the beginning of the II Chapter above, on Buddha's Noble Truth of Suffering, the analogy of Schopenhauer was quoted with reference to the "restricted basis" on which "man's happiness and unhappiness appear". On this subject Kierkegaard seems to come closer to the Buddhist analogy in its later philosophical development than Schopenhauer to whom the basic Pāli formulation was well known.⁴² Kierkegaard tries to reduce the "restrictedness" of this "basis" further, to the purely negative value of nothingness :

Life is a masquerade... Your occupation consists in preserving your hiding place... In fact *you are nothing*; *you are merely a relation to others*, and what you are, you are by virtue of this relation... When the enchantment of illusion is broken, when existence begins to totter, then too does despair manifest itself as that which was at the bottom. Despair is a negativity, unconsciousness of it is a new negativity.

This is Kierkegaard's "sickness unto death".

The Buddho often compared the seeking of a permanent self (or 'soul') behind and beyond ("apart from") the "five constituents of grasping" to the attempt of a foolish man to find a core of hard wood by removing one after another the leaves of a banana plant. Thus in *Saṃyuttaṃ XXII, 53*, he teaches :

Bhikkhus, should one say : "Apart from body, from feeling, from perception, from the activities, I shall explain how consciousness comes and goes, or how it disappears and emerges, or how it increases, unfolds and attains its full expansion"—he would not be able to do so.

3. ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

In Schopenhauer's philosophy of nothingness, the motive of the 'groundlessness' of both man's 'self' and the 'things', constitutive for his 'being-in-the-world' and consequently, for the fundamental problem of the

metaphysics of conscience—the problem of freedom as liberation *from* the world, re-emerges in its full strength :⁴³

The groundlessness of the will has actually been recognised where it manifests itself most distinctly, that is, as the will of man; and this has been called free and independent... As soon as we enter into ourselves ...and wish for once to know ourselves fully by directing our knowledge inwards, we lose ourselves in a bottomless void... Therefore, if anyone ventures to raise *the question why there is not nothing at all rather than this world*, then the world cannot be justified from itself; no ground, no final cause of its existence can be found in itself; it cannot be demonstrated that it exists for its own sake, in other words, for its own advantage. In pursuance of my teaching, this can, of course, be explained from the fact that the principle of the world's existence is expressly a groundless one, namely a blind will-to-live, which, as thing-in-itself cannot be the principle of sufficient reason or ground...

This sounds almost as an explicit modern interpretation of the basic teaching of all *mahāyāna* philosophies on the "double nullity" (*śūnyatā*) of the self and of the world, a teaching to whose Buddhist origins Schopenhauer refers also explicitly.⁴⁴

The question underlined in the quoted text, "Why is there not nothing at all rather than this world ?", alludes to the historical link of Schopenhauer's philosophy of nothingness with its European antecedents. This question is raised characteristically, in the last part of the second volume of the *The World as Will and Representation*, written at a later stage of the philosopher's life. The same question was formulated, or rather reformulated, by Schopenhauer's elder contemporary, Schelling (whom Schopenhauer disliked almost as much as he disliked Hegel), in his *Philosophy of Revelation*. In the 20th century, most existentialist philosophers have returned to the same question and re-examined it, often without quoting its source. Yet, going to the bottom of this romanticist precedent would bring us straight to Schopenhauer's antipode in metaphysics, Leibniz. Heidegger, in his letter to Ernst Jünger on the problem of nihilism,⁴⁵ mentions that his own famous lecture, *What is Metaphysics*?, ended with the question : "Why is there not nothing at all rather than being ?... a question put in this wording by Leibniz and taken over by Schelling."

4. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

After Schopenhauer and immediately under his influence the increasing interest in Buddhism specifically finds its strongest affirmation in the philosophy of Nietzsche. His influence on later philosophers of existence is

best confirmed by voluminous studies dedicated to him by Jaspers and Heidegger.

Nietzsche dedicated the first part of his last and most important work, *The Will to Power*, to the problem of *European nihilism*.⁴⁶ What does he mean by 'nihilism' in this context? How far does his problem coincide with the problem of nothingness compared in our context with the Buddhist *śūnyatā-vadaḥ*?

With reference to the first question, similarities with the Russian nihilism in the 19th century (Herzen, Pisarev, Bakunin) are obvious, though Nietzsche never referred explicitly to these thinkers.⁴⁷

Explicitly Nietzsche recognises only Schopenhauer as his "precursor". An enthusiastic acknowledgement of Schopenhauer's influence on the formation of Nietzsche's thought is contained in his early essay on *Schopenhauer as Educator*.⁴⁸ The problem of nihilism in Nietzsche's philosophy of culture arises from his attempt of critical transvaluation and "overcoming" of Schopenhauer's pessimism:

"With Schopenhauer the philosopher's mission dawns; it is felt that the object is to determine *values*" (W.P.- Sec. 422). Thus "pessimism is a preparatory state to nihilism" (Sec. 9). "Nihilism is the absolute repudiation of worth, purpose, desirability" of values on which a specific culture is based ("Plan" for book I. on nihilism). In the subtitle of the first book on nihilism Sec. (1) "nihilism" is defined "as an outcome of the valuations and interpretations of existence which prevailed heretofore." "The consequence of nihilism (disbelief in all values) is a result of moral valuation" (Sec. 8).

The limit of Nietzsche's agreement with Schopenhauer's and Buddhist pessimism is emphasised in statements as the following:

Under certain circumstances, the appearance of the extremist form of pessimism and actual nihilism might be the sign of a process of incisive and most essential growth, and of mankind's new conditions of existence. (Sec. 112).

Dissatisfaction, nihilism, might be a good sign...Suffering and the symptoms of decline belong to ages of enormous progress. (Sec. 111-112).

Schopenhauer declared high intellectuality to be the emancipation from the will: he did not wish to recognise the freedom from moral prejudices which is coincident with the emancipation of a great mind; he refuses to see what is the typical immorality of genius; he artfully contrived to set up the only moral value he honoured—self-effacement, as the one condition of highest intellectual activity: "objective" contemplation. (Sec. 382).

The analysis of Nietzsche's numerous references to Buddhism would leave little doubt about his explicit knowledge of the Buddhist origin of the expression "beyond good and evil". In his *Beyond Good and Evil* (3rd Ch., "The Religious Mood", section 56) he claims to have looked "with an Asiatic and super-Asiatic eye, inside and into the most world-renouncing of all possible modes of thought—beyond good and evil, and no longer like Buddha and Schopenhauer, under the delusion of morality."

Here are a few statements from *The Will to Power* referring directly to India and Buddhism:

European pessimism is still in its infancy...it has not yet attained that prodigious and yearning fixity of sight to which it attained in India once upon a time, and in which nonentity is reflected...(Sec. 31)

The level of these nihilists is by no means a low one. Only think of the conditions in which Buddha appeared! (Sec. 55)⁴⁹

Our age, in a certain sense is mature (that is to say decadent) just as Buddha's was. (Sec. 239)

A European Buddhism might perhaps be indispensable (Sec. 132)

Even purely *moral* valuation [as, for instance, the Buddhistic] terms in nihilism: Europe must expect the same thing! (Sec. 19)

...This is the European form of Buddhism, that *active negation*, after all existence has lost its meaning. (Sec. 55)

Nietzsche comes closest to the basic ontological meaning of the Buddhist *śūnya-vādaḥ* in such statements as: "Mankind does not advance, it does not even exist" (Sec. 90).

It is not possible here to go any farther into his direct and positive interpretations of Buddhism, based in the first place on his often repeated quotation of *Dhamma-padam*, 5:

Enmities are never appeased by enmity, but they are appeased by non-enmity. This is the eternal law.

According to Nietzsche "this is not a moral advice, this is an advice of physiology", or of "hygiene".⁵⁰

5. HEIDEGGER AND SARTRE

About the middle of the twentieth century the problem of nothingness in the 'phenomenological ontology'⁵¹ has been determined by the dialectical opposition of two ontological standpoints. The antithetical situation was

created by Sartre's criticism of *Heidegger's thesis*:⁵²

The Being of entities is founded in the nihilation of Nothing; or

Dasein is the null basis of its own nullity;

against which Sartre opposes his colourful affirmation of an anti-Husserlian realism.⁵³

Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of Being—like a worm.

The anti-ontological trend, as we have seen in Ch. I, has singled out other possibilities of discussing the problem in different dimensions even before the dialectical antinomy was formulated in ontological terms.

While for Sartre "nothingness can nihilate only on the foundation of being", so that no idea of nothingness is conceivable which would not be "supported by being",⁵⁴ at the outset of Heidegger's ontology there appears to be a conception which comes closest to the 'double nihilation' postulated by Nāgārjuna's interpretation of *śūnya-vādaḥ* as both a nihilation of the world and of the human 'being-in-the-world'. In terms taken over and adapted by Sartre from Kant and Hegel we can speak both of the nullity (*śūnyatā*) of the world's being 'in itself' and of the nullity of man's being 'for himself'. Sartre also recognized in explicit terms that for Heidegger there was no 'negative absolute', an insinuation against which especially Buddhist philosophers were always particularly sensitive in order to exclude attempts of reducing their thesis by indirect arguments to the absolutist metaphysics of their Vedāntic opponents.⁵⁵

Heidegger, while establishing the possibilities of a concrete apprehension of nothingness, never falls into the error which Hegel made; he does not preserve a being for Non-Being, not even an abstract being.

In order to show that Heidegger's coincidence with the Buddhist philosophy here is not merely a speculative figment constructed on an occasional intersection of metaphysical theories, it may suffice to refer again to the chapter of central importance in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, on "Conscience as the Call of Care", in which we find the deduction of the thesis on the "nullity of the world" from the basic truth of suffering ('anxiety'):

Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety; and, as the most elemental way in which thrown *Dasein* is disclosed, it puts *Dasein's* being-in-the-world face to face with the nothing of the world; in the face of this nothing, *Dasein* is anxious with anxiety about its ownmost potentiality-for-being...Anxiety is anxious in the face of the nothing of the world...[To the man who thus realizes that] the world has the character of completely lacking significance [anxi-

ety reveals then his own] nothing and nowhere within-the-world...on the basis of this *insignificance* of what is within-the-world.

That is why man can be defined as "the substitute of Nothing."⁵⁶

The analogy with Buddhism in Heidegger's approach to the problem of nothingness can be extended still farther in the direction of the 'no-self' (*an-attā*) thesis. I do not intend here to discuss Heidegger's important analysis of the "inauthentic self" imposed by social pressure of the impersonal "they" (*das Man*), which could very adequately be explained also in analogy with the *māyā-vādaḥ* of the Advaita Vedāntaḥ. Although Heidegger will not pursue the problem of nihilation of the world or of the self's constitutive "subjectivity" beyond the already traced limits of his phenomenological investigation as far as Nāgārjuna, his contribution to the transcendental analysis of the self-problem, contemplated in the light of insights essential to Buddhist philosophy, has disclosed still deeper aspects on different levels. Sartre, on the other hand, while abandoning from the very outset the thesis of the world's nihilation, tries to strengthen the thesis of the nullity of the selfhood of "human reality".

(a) *The range of the Self-problem*

At the beginning of the quoted chapter on "Conscience as the Call of Care", Heidegger formulates the problem of man's "authentic self" in contrast with the "inauthentic they-self" (*das Man*):

The self, however, is proximally and for the most part inauthentic, the they-self...Conscience summons *Dasein's* self from its lostness in the 'they'. The self to which the appeal is made remains indefinite and empty in its 'what'.

Thus, at its outset, the call of conscience, originating from anxiety, is a call to..., directed toward an inner emptiness (*śūnyatā*). Its intentional object is a *surmised entity of faith and hope*, or a postulate of belief:⁵⁷

What if this kind of 'giving-itself' on the part of *Dasein* should lead our existential analytic astray and do so, indeed, in a manner grounded in the Being of *Dasein* itself? Perhaps when *Dasein* addresses itself in the way which is closest to itself, it always says "I am this entity," and in the long run says this loudest when it is "not" this entity. *Dasein* is in each case mine, and this is its constitution; but what if this should be the very reason why, proximally and for the most part, *Dasein* is *not itself*?... Not-being-itself functions as a positive possibility of that entity which, in its essential character, is absorbed in a world. This kind of *not-Being* has to be conceived as that kind of Being which is

closest to Dasein and in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part...[In anxiety] Dasein finds itself face to face with the "nothing" of the possible impossibility of its existence...The idea of "transcendence"—that man is something that reaches beyond himself—is rooted in Christian dogmatics, which can hardly be said to have made an ontological problem of man's Being.

In what does consist the relation of interdependence between "human reality" as Dasein and the postulated "Self-subsistence" ?

Ontologically, Dasein is in principle different from everything that is present-at-hand or real. Its "subsistence" is not based on the substantiality of a substance but on "the *Self-subsistence*" of the existing self whose being has been conceived as care. The phenomenon of the *Self—a phenomenon which is included in care*—needs to be defined existentially in a way which is primordial and authentic, in contrast to our preparatory exhibition of the inauthentic they-self. Along with this, we must establish what possible ontological questions are to be directed toward the "self", if indeed it is *neither substance nor subject*.⁵⁸

On this point Heidegger's theses on the character of the Self, relevant to our comparative study, can be summed up as follows :

1. Selfhood pertains "*explicitly* to the structure of care" or "anxiety" (*dukkham*)

2. "and therefore of temporality". Temporality (*aniccam*) constitutes "the meaning of the being of that entity which we call Dasein". As such "temporality reveals itself as the meaning of authentic care". Thus it is the character of temporality and historicity (*aniccam*) which imparts to care or worry (*dukkham*) its ontological meaning.⁵⁹ The ultimate reason of this existential interdependence (*paṭica-samuppādo*) is disclosed by the temporal interpretation of "non-self-constancy" (*anattā*).⁶⁰

3. "Thrown" into its own precarious structure of "temporality" and "historicity", the self realizes its existential situation in the challenge to the authenticity of its "primordial Being" as "potentiality-for-being-a-whole."⁶¹

Is man then "a useless passion", "sufficient to prove that human reality is a lack", "a being which is not what it is and which is what it is not", as Sartre ultimately defined it ?⁶² Was the Buddha right in rejecting Uddālaka Āruṇi's thesis "*tat tvam asi*" by his statement "*na me so attā*" and by negating the "potentiality-for-being-a-whole" ?⁶³

As for Sartre, his conclusion, quoted above, is based on his adaptation of Heidegger's analysis of "man's ecstatical being", and we can sum it up now in Heidegger's original version.

(b) *Man's ecstatical being (aniccam)*

What makes the authentic being-a-whole of Dasein possible with regard to the unity of its articulated structural whole ? [It is the] anticipatory resoluteness [which is] *being towards* one's ownmost, distinctive potentiality-for-being [B.T., p. 325]⁶⁴...The totality of the structure [is thus constituted] on the existential ground of temporality, i.e. on the same ground on which] care has been traced back and defined ontologically (p. 351) ..Temporality constitutes primordially the totality of the structure of care [by making possible] the unity of existence, facticity and falling [p. 328].

Thus it is care and preoccupation that drives Dasein ultimately "towards itself from that which it concerns itself," or from the "inauthentic future" (p.337), where "it entangles itself in itself, so that its distracted non-tarrying becomes *never-dwelling-anywhere*" (p. 347),⁶⁵ due to "the craving for the new" (p. 346). This is called "the temporality of falling" as mentioned above in the basic ecstatic structure of Dasein's temporality.

"As care, Dasein is essentially ahead of itself" (p. 337). Therefore, "the primary phenomenon of primordial and authentic temporality is the future" (p. 329). "The ecstatical unity" of the three temporal ecstases through which the "human reality" is permanently "thrown", or "catapulted" (Ortega y Gasset) towards a future, from a past, through the momentariness of the present, forms its existential "horizon" or "horizontal scheme". The whole possibility of "being-in-the-world" "lies in the fact that temporality, as an ecstatic unity, has something like a horizon" (p. 365). "We therefore call the phenomena of the future the character of having been, and the present, the *ecstases* of temporality" (*ecstasis* in its original Greek meaning of 'standing outside'). "Temporality is not, prior to this, an entity which first emerges from *itself*; its essence is a process of temporalizing [in the unity of the ecstases]" (p. 329). With reference to Heidegger's "temporal interpretation of understanding and state-of-mind," the three "primary ecstases" are interpreted in short as follows :

Just as understanding is made possible primarily by the future, and moods are made possible by having been, the third constitutive item in the structure of care—namely, *falling*—has its existential meaning in the *present*" (p. 346).

The phenomena of the 'towards...', the 'to...', and the 'alongside...', make temporality manifest as the *ek-statikon* pure and simple. *Temporality is the primordial 'outside-of-itself' in and for itself.* (p. 329) The world is transcendent (because it has) its ground in the horizontal unity of ecstatical temporality. (p. 366).

The analogy with the general Buddhist theory of momentariness, *kṣāṇika-vādaḥ*, resolving substance into process, is too obvious here to require any explicit comment. "Man's position in the universe" (Scheler) converges here toward the realization of the 'double nullity' as elicited in Nāgārjuna's existential dialectic: In the 'world' process of *saṃsāro* and in the momentariness of his "own" present, man's desperate situation ultimately results in his attempt to look for his own "entangled" self "in a way of finding which arises not so much from a direct seeking as rather from a fleeing" (B.T., p. 135). *Ek-stasis is escape*. What is man then trying to escape from in his ecstatic transcendence?—The fear of death; the ultimate *nidānam* in the eternal circle of *paṭica-samuppādo* (dependent origination of existence). In its structure man's being is a "being-towards-death".

Thrownness into death reveals itself to Dasein in a more primordial and impressive manner in that state of mind which we have called "anxiety". Anxiety in the face of death is anxiety "in the face of" that potentiality-for-being which is one's ownmost, not-relational, and not to be outstripped. That in face of which one has anxiety is being-in-the-world itself. That about which one has this anxiety is simply Dasein's potentiality-for-being. (p. 251)

(c) *The problem of freedom*

Has then the 'philosophical belief' in transcendence no other, deeper meaning? What would be the repercussion of the negative answer on the problem of freedom? For Sartre this aspect of the problem of 'nihilation' has become the central issue and motive of existential thinking. Dostoevsky made him aware of the deepest dilemma concerning religion from this bias.⁶⁶

The existentialist thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with him...Dostoevsky said, "If God didn't exist, everything would be permissible." That is the very starting point of existentialism. Indeed, everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because *neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to*.

The underlined statement sounds too much as a stray quotation from the Buddha's "sayings". In Sartre's famous interpretation:

Man is condemned to freedom...His existence precedes his essence...Thus there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it...Such is the first principle of existentialism.

Sartre could perhaps have found a more adequate and straightforward parallel for these thoughts in a less theistic formulation of the Buddhist *śūnya-vādaḥ* by Nāgārjuna:

For him who admits nihilation (*śūnyatā*) all appears to be possible. For him who does not admit nihilation, nothing appears to be possible. (*Madhyamaka-kārikā*, XXIV, 14).

Since Scheler, at least, modern European philosophy is fully aware of the fact that the problem of freedom cannot any longer be adequately formulated as a question of will's practical or pragmatic activity. 'Activistic' solutions are no more sufficient. The problem of freedom has become the ultimate ontological problem of man's Being. Not the possibility of action but the possibility of being is now at stake.

What can *freedom as transcendence* mean? It obviously can mean—and that is the critical minimum of any possible meaning of freedom—'liberation' (*mokṣaḥ*) from 'being' and 'Being' (empirical and ontological). Restrained to this minimum of strictly rational requirement remains—as far as I know—only the most rigorous attitude of the Buddhist *śūnya-vādaḥ* in its interpretation of *an-ātmā* and *nirvāṇam*. In Nāgārjuna's words:

The thought, "I am not and I shall not be; nothing is mine and nothing will be mine," has a horrifying meaning for the fool; for the wise it means the end of horror.

(*Ratnāvalī*, I, 26)

(d) *The problem of nihilism*

Heidegger's basic formulation of the problem of nothingness is contained in his inaugural speech at the University of Freiburg, *What is Metaphysics?* (1929). In his much later Post-Script to the same text (*Nachwort*, 1943), and in some other still later references, especially in the letter to Ernst Jünger, *Zur Seinsfrage* (On the Question of Being, 1955), Heidegger took a defensive position against critics who had misunderstood his "philosophy of nothingness" as a "perfect nihilism". His principal intention was to show in what sense "the nothing had to be understood as the subject-matter (*Gegenstand*) of metaphysics in general."⁶⁷

In his letter to E. Jünger, Heidegger points out again that his conception of "the nothing as subject of metaphysics" results from his criticism of the scientifically oriented classical ontology where entities (*Seiendes*) have been constantly mistaken for Being (*des Sein*). The intentional regions of sciences can consist only of entities. The primordial ontological question, concerning the "crossing over" from entities to "the Being of entities" remains necessarily excluded from the scientific intention, and therefore

also neglected and repressed by scientifically oriented 'ideational' philosophies.⁶⁸ It remains "forgotten" and waiting to be rediscovered by pure metaphysical reflection in renewed efforts to attain *aletheia* (the primeval clearness of insight, Heidegger's analogue to Buddhist *vipassanā*) by "destroying the history of ontology". This was the task, undertaken by Heidegger at the beginning of *Being and Time* (sec. 6).

A scientifically oriented philosophy, limited to the exclusive knowledge of entities, can conceive of "that which is no entity at all (i.e. the Being) only as 'nothing'. "That was the reason why Heidegger's basic lecture on metaphysics initiated an inquiry into "this Nothing" specifically, and not into any fortuitous or indetermined meaning of "the" Nothing. This inquiry revealed first the insight in the condition of human existence as Dasein ("being-there") suspended (*hineingehalten*) in "this" Nothing, into a situation completely different from being-an-entity. Questions concerning the primordial relatedness of entities to the Being as a whole (we might add: in its Vedāntic meaning and purport) "must be answered before the problem of Dasein's totality can be dismissed as nugatory", or better to say, as mere 'nihilation' (*als nichtiges*).⁶⁹ This statement, earlier than Heidegger's specific discussion of the ontological deficiency of scientific philosophies, seems to me to contain the *criterion* by which he will later approach the problem of 'nihilism', particularly in discussing it with E. Jünger, whereby his intention was not to reject its deeper meaning and justification but rather to determine its proper and essential metaphysical limits. Therefore he insists, also against Jünger, to remain in this discussion "on the line" of nihilism itself rather than to "cross the line" in order to refute the nihilist argument. To translate it in terms of our comparative study of the problem, I would not agree that Heidegger, at least at this stage, adopted a Vedāntic solution of the problem of the Being as a whole, but rather that he endeavoured to realize and recognize its importance as one of the alternative possibilities of explicit metaphysical insight. It should appear obvious, not only for historical reasons, that the *śūnya-vāda* alternative, as authentic Buddhists understand it, could by no stretch of imagination be construed to an analogon of modern scientifically minded 'positivism', and still less reduced to any form of the early Indian *lokāyata* proto-scientific trend.⁷⁰

The same consideration regarding the inner development of Heidegger's metaphysical thought may at the same time help us to explain and justify Sartre's explicit endeavour, at the beginning of *Being and Nothingness*, to lay a stronger emphasis than Heidegger on the basic affirmation of the primacy of the Being.

In this equivocal situation between Being and Nothing, Heidegger's initial attitude is rather that before taking either an affirmative or a negative

stance, the metaphysician should first try to learn how to attain a state of "mindfulness" and to listen to "the voice of silence", which alone may "teach him how to experience the Being in the Nothing".⁷¹

Here, however, the required quality of mindfulness of the "meditating philosopher" (as Husserl in his *Cartesian Meditations* designated the master of phenomenological reduction—*epoché*) presupposes again—just as in Buddhist texts on existential dread, quoted above⁷²—the utmost existential courage to face and to endure (*auszuhalten*) the realization of the Nothing in its full purport, which means to look "into the chasm of horror" for the last "recess of Being, hardly ever entered upon," through whose "clearing (*Lichtung*) alone any whatsoever entity has to return to what it is and what it might be."⁷³

This is how "the Being of entities is grounded in the Nothing of nihilation" (*Im Nichten des Nichts ist das Sein des Seienden begründet*)—according to the initial thesis of Heidegger's lecture on the subject of metaphysics.

(e) Karma, "the ripening fruit"

Ultimately the problem of nihilism in Heidegger's interpretation appears to converge upon a metaphysical position analogous to that of *avidyā*, or metaphysical 'nescience', in Indian philosophies. The discussion of the specifically Buddhist aspects of these problems has to be left for a forthcoming paper on the same subject.⁷⁴ In the present survey I wish to single out, with reference to Heidegger, one more similarity resulting, on the Buddhist side, from the basic conception of *avijjā* as the outset of *paṭicca-samuppādo* (the vicious circle of 'dependent origination' of the 'being-in-the-world'). Based on this metaphysical 'nescience' (or lack of *aletheia*, "undisclosedness" in Heidegger's meaning of the Greek term) between Being and Nothing, the integrity of our human-reality depends on the *circulus vitiosus* of 'interdependent origination' or 'double nihilation' of both our 'self' and its 'being-in-the-world'. In Nāgārjuna's formulation:

Dependent origination is what we call nihilation (*śūnyatā*)...because anything whose origin is dependent is no-self.

(*Madhyamak-kārika*, XXIV, 18, 22)

In being that what it appears to be, this ~~Being~~ (as Heidegger tries to express it in writing⁷⁵) in its nihilation is an effect of *karma* or purposive activity. *Paṭicca-samuppādo* is thus an early attempt of critical analysis of the essentially activist structure of the human entity (since, as Heidegger

would say, the world has not its origin in anybody's "gaping at" but in the effort of "procurement").

A comparative analysis of the Buddhist approach cannot be undertaken here. It is only with reference to Heidegger's approach to the entire complex of existential values that I wish to point out the emergence of a new *vitalistic theory of causality* in modern philosophy. Its first formulation, identical not only in its significance but even in its wording with the Indian theory of *karma*, was propounded by Bergson: The self (*le moi*) "lives and develops itself as an effect of its own hesitations until a free action is detached from it *as if it were an overripe fruit*."⁷⁶

The same expression, already familiar to European philosophy at the time of *Being and Time*, is used by Heidegger, and explained as follows:⁷⁷

When, for instance, a fruit is unripe, it 'goes towards' its ripeness. In this process of ripening, that which the fruit is not yet is by no means pieced on as something not yet present-at-hand. The fruit brings itself to ripeness, and such bringing of itself is a characteristic of its being as a fruit. Nothing imaginable which one might contribute to it would eliminate the unripeness of the fruit, if this entity did not come to ripeness of its own accord. When we speak of the 'not yet' of the unripeness, we do not have in view something else which stands outside, and which—with utter indifference to the fruit—might be present-at-hand in it and with it. What we have in view is the fruit itself in its specific kind of being... The ripening fruit, however, not only is not indifferent to its unripeness as something other than itself, but it is that unripeness as it ripens. The 'not-yet' has already been included in the very being of the fruit, not as some random characteristic, but as something constitutive. Correspondingly, as long as any Dasein is, it too *is already* its 'not-yet'.

The implicit emphasis laid on the difference from the 'classical' European mechanistic theory of causality is obvious enough. On the same page Heidegger brings his conception of *karma* immediately into relation with the last *nidānam* in the chain of the Buddhist *paṭica-samuppādo*:

With ripeness the fruit *fulfills* itself. But is the death at which Dasein arrives, a fulfilment in this sense? With its death Dasein has indeed 'fulfilled its course'. But in doing so, has it necessarily exhausted its specific possibilities?... For the most part, Dasein ends in unfulfilment, or else by having disintegrated and been used up. Ending does not necessarily mean fulfilling oneself. It thus becomes more urgent to ask *in what sense, if any, death must be conceived as the ending of Dasein*.

Arising out of this situation, the problem of *karma*, implicitly felt as an "anticipatory resoluteness" in "concrete working out of temporality" aiming at "an authentic historizing of Dasein" (p. 382), is further discussed as the existential problem of "Dasein's authentic potentiality-for-being-a-whole" (p. 309).

Since "those possibilities of existence which have been factually disclosed are not to be gathered from death," "we must ask whence, in general, Dasein can draw those possibilities upon which it factually projects itself." The answer is:

The resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factual possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them *in terms of the heritage* which that resoluteness, *as thrown, takes over*. In one's coming back resolutely to one's thrownness, there is hidden a *handing down to oneself* of the possibilities that have come down to one, but not necessarily *as having thus come down*. (p. 383)

In other words, the 'heritage' of a '*tathāgato*'⁷⁸ has not to be understood here as a passive facticity of historically 'objectified' social tradition and behaviour, which in Heidegger's terms should be called '*unauthentic heritage*'. Unlike the social study of external history, Dasein, in its intimate 'ripening', "never comes back behind its thrownness" (*ib.*). The critical term 'thrownness', whose meaning should be better determined on this point, is an obvious Christian 'cypher' for a karmically determined situation. This historical connotation of the term could possibly reveal an apparent deficiency of our analogy, had not Heidegger, fortunately for us and more explicitly than any other existentialist philosopher, explained it, in the same context, by an "attribute" synonymous with the basic First Noble Truth of the Buddha—*dukkham*:

Before we decide too quickly whether Dasein draws its authentic possibilities of existence from thrownness or not, we must assure ourselves that we have a full conception of *thrownness as a basic attribute of care*. (*Ib.*)

This inquiry will show how the karmic phenomenon has to be comprised within the scope of the central theme of Heidegger's philosophy as a whole, in response to the "call of conscience". It will disclose itself as the awakening call which alone may liberate us from our lost condition (*Verlorenheit*) and thrownness in *avijā*, or metaphysical 'nescience'. Only in giving heed to it "Dasein understands itself with regard to its potentiality-for-being" in its mindfulness and resoluteness "to take over in its thrownness—right under the eyes of Death—that entity which it is itself, and to take it over

wholly." Here "resoluteness is defined as a projecting oneself upon one's own being-guilty—a projecting which is reticent and ready for anxiety" (p. 382).

A few recapitulations, recurring as basic themes throughout Heidegger's book, could, in my understanding, be taken as direct definitions of the Indian notion of *karma*. (They will be underlined by me in the following quotations.)⁷⁹

The call is the call of care. Being-guilty constitutes the being to which we give the name of 'care'. In uncanniness Dasein stands together with itself primordially. Uncanniness brings this entity face to face with its undisguised nullity, which belongs to the possibility of its ownmost potentiality-for-being...*The appeal calls back by calling forth* [*Der Anruf ist vorrufender Rückruf*]: it calls Dasein forth to the possibility of taking over, in existence, even that thrown entity which it is. (p. 286-7)

We have seen that care is the basic state of Dasein. The ontological signification of the expression 'care' has been expressed in *the definition: ahead-of-itself-being-already-in* [*the world*] as being-alongside entities which we encounter [*within-the-world*]. (p. 249)

If the term 'understanding' is taken in a way which is primordially existential, it means to be projecting towards a potentiality-for-being for the sake of which any Dasein exists. In understanding, one's own potentiality-for-being is disclosed in such a way that one's Dasein always knows understandingly what it is capable of. It 'knows' this, however, not by having discovered some fact, but by maintaining itself in an existential possibility. The kind of ignorance which corresponds to this, does not consist in an absence or cessation of understanding, but must be regarded as a deficient mode of the projectedness of one's potentiality-for-being. Existence can be questionable...When one understands oneself projectively in an existential possibility, *the future underlies this understanding*, and it does so as a coming-towards-oneself out of that current possibility as which one's Dasein exists...Temporality does not temporalize itself constantly out of the authentic future. This inconstancy, however, does not mean that temporality sometimes lacks a future, but rather that the temporalizing of the future takes various forms. (p. 336)

This seems to explain one step further the "hesitation" of the self "until a free action is detached...as an overripe fruit," as Bergson expressed the limits of freedom as release (*mokṣaḥ*) within the scope of a karmical determination. Just as Schopenhauer did in his direct interpretation of Buddhism, Heidegger too cannot avoid using the term 'destiny', or 'fate',

for the lack of a better equivalent in European terminology.

Heidegger insists on an implicit consciousness of *karma* in the experience of 'care' as Dasein's "understanding of itself in being-guilty" (p. 292). He equally insists on the fact that even "phenomena with which the vulgar interpretation has any familiarity point back to the primordial meaning of the call of conscience when they are understood in a way that is ontologically appropriate" and that "this interpretation, in spite of all its obviousness, is *by no means accidental*" (p. 294).

And yet, the call of conscience is "a *keeping silent*...Only in keeping silent does the conscience call; that is to say, the call comes from the soundlessness of uncanniness, and the Dasein which it summons is called back into the stillness of itself, and called back as something that is to become still." (p. 296). A Japanese student in Heidegger's seminar has interpreted once this course of thoughts in terms of a few Zen *kōans*⁸⁰. A follower of Ramana Maharshi could do it just as well to Heidegger's full satisfaction. In a Buddhist interpretation, however, the implicit reference to 'nihilation' in *avidyā* ('nescience') on this turning point would bring us immediately to the acosmic 'ground' (*bhūmi*) of contemplative introversion (*dhyānam*) where the whole problem of nothingness originates and finds its ultimate solution in a dimension which cannot be pursued any further in the present context. At the other end, from his European bias, Sartre will try later to explain the "reticence" of the "silent call of conscience" in terms of his "existential psychoanalysis", but also in occasional allusions to problems that could be termed parapsychological, as in statements quoted at the beginning of our Ch. I, above, and in a few works of fiction (e.g. a short story from the Spanish civil war, "The Wall", in which a case of clairvoyance is acknowledged).

For Heidegger's understanding of 'destiny' (*Schicksal*) its necessary connection with the feeling of *guilt* (*karmic disbalance*) is essential, though the problem of a possible balance or of an ultimate settlement and release from suffering (*vimutti*) is not raised. All that he can do on this point is to insist on caution against "overhasty" solutions of *the ultimate existential question*:

But it remains all the more enigmatic in what way this event as destiny is to constitute the whole 'connectedness' of Dasein from its birth to its death. How can recourse to resoluteness bring us any enlightenment? Is not each resolution just *one* more single 'experience' in the sequence of the whole connectedness of experiences?...Why is that the question of how the '*connectedness of life*' is constituted finds no adequate and satisfying answer? Is our investigation overhasty? Does it not, in the end, hang too much on the answer, without first having tested the

legitimacy of the *question* ? (p. 387)

Speaking of the problem of re-emergence or "recurrence" of existential situations in their essential dependence on destiny in Dasein's "historizing" course, Heidegger does not even indirectly attempt to formulate an idea analogous to 'rebirth' (*punarbhavaḥ*) in Indian religious thought, though his sensitivity for the "enigmatic" remainder of the problem traced above is able of a still closer approach to this complex issue :

Dasein can be reached by the blows of destiny only because in the depths of its own being *Dasein is destiny*. (p. 384)

Therefore, when its "historicality is authentic, it understands history as the 'recurrence' of the possible, and knows that a possibility will recur only if existence is open for it fatefully, in a moment of vision (*schicksal-halft-augenblicklich*), in resolute repetition" (p. 391-392).

6. KARL JASPERS

In connection with the problem of nothingness two structures essential to Buddhist philosophy are discussed also by Jaspers, though without direct reference to the Buddhist *alternative* and the difference of its ultimate solution :

(1) *the middle way* "between the nothing and the all, existing always *only as a passage*" to the level of a higher moral and spiritual attitude, and not the Buddhist *puṭhujjano's* ('worldling') being satisfied with mediocrity;

(2) *the sphere of nothingness* (Buddhist *ākāṣaṇṇāyatanaṃ*) within the structure of the "comprehensive infinity" of contemplative stages corresponding to the *arūpa-jhānaṃ*.⁸¹

It can be safely taken for granted that Jaspers, while dealing with these problems in his earlier works, as quoted in the following interpretation, had no adequate and explicit knowledge of their analogous formulation in Buddhist philosophy. Only much later, in his last work (as mentioned in Chapter II, above), he must have realized the astonishing similarity of his approach to the problem of nothingness with Nāgārjuna's formulation of the 'middle way' (*madhyamā pratipat*). As for the *arūpa-jhānaṃ* structure, it seems most improbable that Jaspers ever became explicitly aware of this analogy. Otherwise his interpretation of the "stages of meditation" in the chapter on the Buddha in *The Great Philosophers* would have been more accurate.⁸²

The advantage of Jaspers, in comparison with Heidegger, has been soon felt and attributed to his anti-ontological attitude by religiously minded thinkers sensitive to the turning of the whole problem of Being and Nothingness into an essentially 'meditative' dimension of introvert consciousness. This turning was carefully avoided by Heidegger, from whose ontological philosophy the term 'consciousness' was explicitly eliminated.

N. Berdyaev had in view the advantage of the same antiontological attitude, at least for his strictly Christian position, in the following critical remarks :⁸³

Without nothingness there would be neither personal existence nor freedom...But Heidegger is perhaps the most extreme pessimist in the history of the philosophical thought in the West. He is entirely concerned with the fact that human existence is *cast out* into the world. This being cast out...is the fall. But from what elevation can all this be seen? *Heidegger does not explain whence the power of getting to know things is acquired*. He looks upon man and the world exclusively from below, and sees nothing but the lowest part of them.

Jaspers, in the *Existenz Philosophie*, formulates the problem of nothingness as an explicit antinomy to the ontological thesis of the speculative Reason :

Reason feels attracted by elements absolutely extraneous to its own nature. In the effort to prevent its own failure as a nothing, it strives to make plain, and to find a tenable expression for, all that "occult passions" may produce by "nullifying the law of illumination" in the event of their own self-destruction. Reason insinuates itself wherever unity is being destroyed, in order to extract one more truth to prevent that "metaphysical break-down" in which Being itself would be disarranged. Actually, a feeling of nothingness assails us in the very moment when we believe to have succeeded in "transforming the whole reality into thinkability." In this moment there emerges the thought that there is no need of any whatsoever reality, and that "the nothing of the thinkability is self-sufficient." Thus "immanence imposes itself as authentic Being, because *immanence alone is knowable*."

All this seems to be a strictly sufficient explanation of the thesis (not adopted by Jaspers) of the Buddhist *vijñāna-vādaḥ* school as formulated in the titles of several philosophical treatises dealing with *vijñaptimātratā-siddhiḥ*, or the idealist "thesis that there is only cognition."

In his effort to reject this conviction existentially, Jaspers considers it as the last entrenchment in the "desperate battle" for a life ending in nothing;

as the ultimate "hardly concealed" residue of that existential dread whose most dramatic descriptions can be found in Buddhist texts (quoted in preceding sections) on the subject of "the change of lineage" (*gotra-bhū*).

Out of this classical "cleavage",⁸⁴ unavoidable to any historical form of 'first philosophy', the question about the possibility of a 'middle way' arises with logical necessity. And Jaspers cannot formulate it better than the Buddha did :

THE MIDDLE WAY

"Between the nothing and the all, existing always only as a transition," unable to attain his self-perfection in an "all-encompassing totality", man, in any whatsoever mode of human reality, exists only as a "historical entity"—or as a phenomenon of 'temporality'—*aniccam*.

As a "being-determined-in-categories" human reality (Dasein) is located "between nothingness and being-too-much (*Uebersein*)," i.e., the all-encompassing "fullness" of Being. Therefore in Dasein 'everything is ambiguous.'⁸⁵

Nothingness itself—as one of the two 'poles' of Dasein's transcendental constitution (to express it rather in terms of Husserl's transcendental logics)—has a double meaning : The first is "actual nothingness (*in der Tat*)" : "I go out of the world, I instantly lose the 'air' of the 'here-being' Dasein, I fall to nothing"—for lack of *prāṇaḥ* as we might add from the standpoint that will be discussed in the following section. In—its second meaning, "nothingness is the authentic being, since it is the non-being of any determined something. Being and Nothing become identic. Nothing is the indetermined fullness." This double meaning of nothingness as identity of Being and Nothing, on the one hand, and the absolute Nothing, on the other, is expressed as the contrast between "being-too-much" the *Uebersein* unattainable to our merely "historical" Dasein,⁸⁶ and its being-not-at-all. While nothingness remains indetermined, "fullness" appears to Jaspers as a reliable "*signum*" or index of infinite experience. Should we take the other alternative in this ancient dispute between Vedānta and Buddhism, Jaspers, obviously siding with the Vedāntins,⁸⁷ cautions us that in facing the nothing as absolute non-being, there is "the horror from possible transcendent chasm." What should we answer ? Perhaps that the obvious advantage of his choice is existential but not necessarily logical to the same extent.

THE SPHERE OF NOTHINGNESS (*ākīñcaññāyatanaṃ*)

Jaspers started his career as professor of psychology in Heidelberg. He is also well known as the author of a voluminous treatise on psychiatrics.

In connection with this it seems to me that his anti-ontological approach to the problem of nothingness has penetrated into some deeper aspects of subjective experience, just because he refused to limit his investigation to the ontological constitution of the world, as did Heidegger, and thus necessarily turned in the direction of the ancient Buddhist alternative where nothingness is the ultimate subject of spiritual contemplation (*jhānaṃ*). (Whether his alternative theory of explaining the world by a method of "cypher-reading" can be accepted as adequate, or not, is a different question.)

His initial question (in *Philosophie*)⁸⁸ was : How is the nothing as transcendent voidness, or absolute nothingness, *thinkable* ? There is a tendency to limit his first conclusions to such statements as : The absolute non-being can only be conceived through the possibility of being; and this possibility is already Being (cf. Sartre !). In the next statement Jaspers seems to reveal Ramana Maharshi's method of spiritual self-contemplation within the void : In my *being silent* there is for me the certainty of a unique manner in which absolute non-being is impossible. In thinking the Being as Nothing, the thought-dialectic is developed to the point of the impossibility of thinking. There dialectical thought reaches its own impossibility, which, however, is illuminating.

In *Existenz Philosophie*, a deeper layer of contemplative consciousness seems to be reached in earnest consequent proceeding with the same method. There can be no doubt that at least the structure described by Jaspers in one place corresponds exactly to the stage of transition from the first and second *arūpa-jhānaṃ* to the third, i.e., the attainment of the "sphere of no-thing" (*ākīñcaññāyatanaṃ*) upon abandoning the spheres of the "infinity of space" and of its conscious "comprehension" : Upon having entered the "space of infinite comprehensiveness" we have to face a double possibility : (a) From one side I can submerge in the immensity of the infinite and be absorbed in the nothing. (b) Instead of this it may occur that, in a state of terror and excitement, I may be "saved" by an ecstatic uplift to something specifically determined...Ultimately, disclosing its "infinite comprehensiveness" the Being will "stream toward me from all its primeval sources."

In a concluding, typically Christian turning towards the redeeming power of love, Jaspers discards the alternative of equanimity (*upekkhā*), the highest term in the Buddhist conception of "immeasurable" (*aatmaññā*) attainments in *sammā samādhi*. Like the brāhman Dhānañjāni (in *Majjh.* 97) he chooses to remain in "the low world of god Brahmā" attainable "in "a state of mind endued with loving-kindness (*mettā*), pervading...the whole world everywhere in every way..."

Nevertheless, in such statements European philosophy of the twentieth century has regained a clear understanding of the basic principle of "perennial philosophy" (*sanātana dharmah*) that there are philosophies which cannot even be thought if "the meditating philosopher" does not live in accordance with them. Or, as the French Christian philosopher Jean Wahl (author of a well-known book on Kierkegaard) has put it in a lecture: "We are concerned with questions which, strictly speaking, belong to solitary meditation and cannot be subjects of discourses."⁸⁹

7. NISHIDA KITARŌ

Nishida's philosophy of nothingness is an interpretation of the *śūnyatā-vādaḥ* for the explicit purpose "to make Zen-Buddhism intelligible to the West."⁹⁰ The understanding of *śūnyatā* (nullity) in the basic Pāli *suttas* (*suññatā*, cf. especially the *Cūḷa suññatā-suttam*, 121, in the *Suññata-vaggo* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*), in keeping with the acosmic attitude of the Buddha against all world-views (*ditṭhi*), pertains to the highest levels (*āyatanaṃ* of purely contemplative introversion (*arūpa-jhānaṃ*). In later Mahāyāna philosophy, since Nāgārjuna, the idea of *śūnyatā* was expanded, as a principle of dialectical reasoning, to satisfy (the requirements of a renewed metaphysical interest in cosmological problems, and thus developed to a theory of knowledge. The idealist character of this gnoseology can easily be explicated also from the primordial structure of phenomenological reduction of mind's states (*noesis*) and contents (*noema*) in the meditative proceeding according to the *jhāna* method. In a forthcoming essay, dedicated to the original Buddhist approach to this problem, I propose to specify how far the title 'meditation', even in this context, can be interpreted in terms of Husserl's transcendental reduction—*epoché*. In the same context it will be necessary to distinguish the said two aspects of the *śūnya-vādaḥ*, strictly acosmic meditative dimension from the dialectical one, as to their intrinsic intentionalities, and to correlate them critically as aspects of transcendental constitution of their respective categorial regions.

Nishida was not unaware of such comparativistic possibilities. On various occasions he discussed problems of Kant's, Hegel's and Husserl's philosophies as topics of fundamental importance for the structure of his own system. In the conclusion of our present attempt to approach such common problems from the western direction, Nishida's comparativistic endeavours can be pointed out only in a few fragmentary indications.

In his *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*,⁹¹ the idea of the world as "intelligible universal" is elicited from the lowest level of the "universal of judgment" to the universal of the "intelligible self", and to the ultimate "location" of even that universal in the "place of absolute nothingness":

With regard to the Universal, three stages or layers can be discerned by which three worlds are defined. First, there is the universal of judgment...Second, there is the Universal of self-consciousness...Third, there is the Universal which contains something that transcends the depth of our conscious self. Everything that has its place in this last enveloping universal, and is determined by it, belongs to the intelligible world. (p. 69).

On the second, middle and intermediate level of self-consciousness, pure logical intentionality transforms itself into will:

Will forms the basis of self-consciousness, and self-consciousness forms the very basis of judgment...The physical natural world becomes the teleological world (p. 79)...

Transcending the basis of the will, one reaches the standpoint of the self, which has transcended the so-called conscious self. It goes without saying that the intelligible self in this sense can neither be determined as objective 'being' within the Universal of judgment, nor as psychological 'being' within the Universal of self-consciousness. *It can no longer be determined at all as 'being'*, like an object of knowledge (p. 100)...The more the Universal returns to itself, the more the 'place' approaches to nothingness (p. 104)...That which envelopes even the intelligible universal, and which serves as 'place' for our true self, may be called the 'place of absolute nothingness' (p. 134)...The deeper one sees into one's own self, the more one is suffering; the suffering soul is the deepest reality in the intelligible world (p. 128).

Therefore the urge to transcend it, the idea of liberation, even of 'nihilation', has been haunting human mind since its first awakening to "intelligibility".

Before going over to Nishida's explication of the essentially religious nature of this urge towards freedom, a few points of comparison with European philosophies of existence may find here their proper place:

(1) Here, in Nishida's words, the same way is traced in broad lines along which Schopenhauer had found his approach to Buddhism: Will was identified by Schopenhauer with "thirst" for life, a basic Buddhist term (*taṇhā*, *trṣṇā*). The negation of the will-to-live brought him to the acceptance of the ideal of *nibbānaṃ* (*nirvāṇam*) as "extinction", and ultimately to the idea of nothingness as he found it expounded in the "*prajñā-pāramitā* of the Buddhists."⁹²

(2) With reference to our earlier discussion of Heidegger's understanding of nothingness as Dasein's being "suspended" in the specific ("hist")

nothing of its existential situation, it is interesting to note how close Nishida's "placing" of the "intelligible self" into "no place" and "enveloping" it there by nothingness, comes to the same image of the precarious condition of our human reality.

(3) We need not presume a direct influence of Schopenhauer upon Nishida's interpretation of the intrinsic "will character of the self" in terms of Buddhist doctrine of existential "thirst" (*trṣṇā*). On the other hand, the basic doctrine of all later philosophies of existence, as formulated by Kierkegaard, is restated almost verbally by Nishida too :

In this sense, our acting, first, determines the 'being' in the intelligible world (p. 110).

"Acting" here stands for existence, while "intelligible being" in this context comes closest to Heidegger's understanding of Being (*Sein-esse*, not entity) as essence. Though this principle of existence determining essence is deduced by Nishida only as a corollary of the fundamental Buddhist theory of will as existential "thirst", it would be difficult to exclude the probability of Nishida's direct or indirect acquaintance with Kierkegaard's dialectical deduction of the same principle under the influence of Hegelian dialectics. Unlike Kierkegaard, Nishida recognized his positive indebtedness to Hegel above all other western influences.

From this point of agreement with Kierkegaard's central thesis, a short and straight way brought both thinkers—the Christian and the Buddhist—to the ultimate solution of the problem of freedom in the sphere of the religious consciousness. Here only Nishida's version can be singled out in a few pointers :

Therefore, similar to the contradiction in the will, one must suffer from *the contradiction in oneself*, the more the deeper one is and the deeper one sees one's self. To free oneself of this contradiction, and to see the last basis of one's own self, is the religious consciousness (p. 129).

As mentioned above, Nishida's *śūnya-vāda* consists in his insistence that "the intelligible universal" (whose noematic content consists of the idea of truth, the idea of beauty, and the idea of good) "can not be the last universal; there must be a universal which envelopes even the intelligible universal; it may be called the place of *absolute nothingness*. That is the *religious consciousness*. In the religious consciousness, body and soul disappear, and we unite ourselves with the absolute nothingness...There is neither 'true' nor 'false', neither 'good' nor 'evil'. The religious value is the value of negation of value" (p. 130).

Conscience, seeing the free self itself, is self-contradicting...As determined by the universal of absolute nothingness...the act of religious

'experience'...is a determination without mediation by concept...It is only through absolute negation of the self that it becomes possible 'to live in God'...(Such a proposition) is however, in my opinion, not deep enough (either). If one is really overwhelmed by the consciousness of absolute nothingness, there is neither 'me' nor 'God'; but just because there is absolute nothingness, the mountain is mountain, and the water is water, and the being is as it is. (pp. 130, 135, 137)

Ultimately, it is "from the standpoint of the universal of absolute nothingness that philosophy tries to clarify the specific 'determination' of each enveloped universal." Such determination of the universal "may be called 'reason' in the widest sense of the word." Though, however wide this sense may be in its extension, the philosopher should always bear in mind that "since philosophy has transcended the standpoint of the intelligible self, it has already transcended art and ethics, and even the religious aspect of life" (p. 139), and this appears to be its ultimate acosmic attainment.

ANNEXE 1

Russian Nihilism in the 19th Century

Thomas G. Masaryk in *The Spirit of Russia—Studies in History, Literature and Philosophy* (English transl., New York 1919) compared some aspects of Nietzsche's nihilism with precedents in the Russian nihilist and anarchist revolutionary movement about the middle of the 19th century. The following few pointers from V.V. Zenkovsky's *A History of Russian Philosophy* (London 1953), may be of interest also for analogies with some of the later authors included in our survey, who either referred directly to the political aspect of modern nihilism (Heidegger in his correspondence with E. Jünger) or to its reflection in the classical Russian literature of the same epoch (Heidegger's references to Tolstoy, and Sartre's to Dostoevski) :

In *Herzen's* philosophy of despair, hopelessness, and disbelief, "nihilism" meant "the most complete freedom...science without dogma, unconditional submission to experience and un murmuring acceptance of the consequences" (Zenkovsky, p. 296).

Pisarev insisted on the restriction of "the work of the mind to problems which are evoked by the immediate demands of life" and denied significance to scientific researches which are not related to "living needs". While Masaryk compared him to Nietzsche, Zenkovsky considered that "no one else is as close intellectually as he is to that other nihilistic genius, *Leo Tolstoy*" (*ibid.*, p. 337 ff)

Reading *Bakunin's* dialectical defence of nihilism and anarchism, we are often lively reminded of basic existential issues on which Sartre tries to revolutionize Heidegger's views. In his endeavour to "formulate a mysticism of negation and conflict", Bakunin attributes to Death an existential importance which reminds us of Heidegger's viewpoint: "Death, the complete destruction of individuality, is the highest fulfilment of personality..., that is why death occurs in the supreme moments of life." On the question of atheism the depth of Bakunin's insight might have influenced Sartre (who avows the influence of Dostoevski in his criticism of French rationalist and later positivist superficiality in dealing with this question). In 1849, Bakunin wrote: "You are mistaken if you think that I do not believe in God; but I have wholly given up comprehending Him through science and theory...I seek God in men, in human freedom, and now I seek God in revolution." And later: "If God exists man has no freedom, he is a slave. But man can and must be free, therefore God does not exist." (Compare Sartre's conclusion: "Man is condemned to freedom.") (Cf. Zenkovski, op. cit., pp. 245-256.)

On the opposite pole of the later religious thinkers, who affirmed themselves in emigration, in the generation of N. Berdyaev, Leo Isakovich Shestov was the first and most enthusiastic Russian supporter of the existentialist movement in Western Europe. It may suffice to mention the titles of some of his works on this subject:

Dostojewski und Nietzsche—Philosophie der Tragödie.
(Köln 1924).

L'Idée de bien chez Tolstoi et Nietzsche
(Paris 1949, posthumous).

All Things Are Possible (London 1921, with a Foreword by D.H. Lawrence).

Kierkegaard et la philosophie existentielle (Paris 1936).

One of his earlier writings, published still in Russia (1905), mentioned by Zenkovsky, had the title *The Apotheosis of Groundlessness*.

In a wider context special attention should be paid to the influence of the same ideas, under direct influence of Nietzsche, on the formation of Aurobindo Ghose's revolutionary ideology at the earlier stage of his political activity, but also in his later reflections, especially in *The Human Cycle* (written in 1916-1918) and in some other writings of the same epoch. Remarkable are his positive appreciations of "anarchism as a rational principle of society", whose "realisation in spiritual society" will remain

an essential "ideal of intellectual" endeavours towards this ultimate aim. In one of his minor studies (*Heraclitus*, 1916-17) he criticizes Nietzsche because "he affirms Becoming only and excludes Being from his view of things...like the Buddhists". (Cf. the note on Sri Aurobindo in my essay "The Philosophy of Disgust—Buddho and Nietzsche", in *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 1977.)

ANNEXE 2

Max Scheler on the "soul-substance"

Max Scheler remained a staunch defender of a strictly Roman Catholic position of personalist monotheism until the last short period of his philosophical activity (1921-1927), when he renegated his "theist" standpoint "in some *highest* questions of metaphysics and philosophy of religion" (as he formulated this change in the Foreword to the third edition of his main work, *Formalism in Ethics and the Ethics of Material Values*). Yet, still in the earlier period, and notably since the first edition of the same work (in 1913-1916), he had clearly recognized from the very beginning of his phenomenological investigations the necessity to reject the idea of a *soul as ontical entity*, or "soul substance" as an inadequate hypothesis.

In Scheler's basic personalistic conception the substantialist idea of soul is resolved in the higher constitutional structure of Personality. In this first version he insists on the necessity of conceiving God as the highest "idea of person", in which "there is no more 'I' and no more having-a-soul (*Beseeltheit*)," since we cannot confront God "either with an outward world of with a You." (*Formalismus...*, 4th ed., *Gesammelte Werke*, Vol. 2, Bern Francke, 1954, p. 487.)

Apart from such speculations it is characteristic for Scheler's penetrating insight in the essential evidentness of psychical phenomena that he did not hesitate from the very beginning to fully agree even with Kant's "Refutation of the Argument for the Substantiality of the Soul" as maintained by "the rationalism of his time" (Mendelssohn; cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, and Scheler, op. cit., p. 387), though in other respects Scheler's book was in the first place meant to be a criticism of Kant's Philosophy.

Here are a few pointers from *Formalismus...*, characteristic for Scheler's position in this question:

"Against erroneous attempts of a certain kind of philosophy to consider man as a *species of nature* endowed with specific 'faculties' of speech, of morality, of reasoning, and even with a so-called immortal soul-substance", Scheler denies "explicitly any whatsoever significance of such attempts" in discussing the problem of "man's position in the All" (pp. 304, 303).

"Since the concept of soul and the concept of body do not represent classes of absolute objects, the question about their possible interaction is also meaningless." The whole problem appears to arise arbitrarily "out of its own...as it was very correctly observed already by Kant." Connections between psychical and physical events can be properly explained only as being effected by the integrating activity of a person. Even the acts of another person are never disclosed to our understanding in the form of "causal deduction" from given movement (or 'behaviour') to the acting soul. A person "is" only as the concrete unity of acts accomplished by that person, and only in their actual accomplishment."

Thus "the idea of person" has to be "sharply distinguished" from such "concepts of the real or of thing" as the presumed "soul-substance". 'Person' "does not mean anything psychical at all." The phenomenology of inner experience should not any longer (at least since Kant) be misunderstood as "psychology".

In order to reconcile the results of his actual phenomenological analyses with his Christian beliefs, Scheler had, at that time, to restrict the still valid meaning of his concepts of both "soul" and "self" in explicit distinction from the meaning of "person" in the central conception of his personalist philosophy. (Cf. pp. 487-9 and 512.)

NOTES

1. Heidegger's rejection of the term 'humanism' in his discussion with Sartre (cf. *Brief über den "Humanismus"*, 1946) is based on his objections against equivocal and misleading connotations by which the meaning of this term has been overloaded throughout centuries, and particularly in modern history of ideas, since the Renaissance. There is no disagreement about the fundamental principle of existential ontology that 'being' has to be understood as "man's being-in-the-world".
2. See I.B. Horner's translation of *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha* (*Majjhima-nikāya*) in the Pali Text Society Translation Series (London). I found the interpretation of *dukkha* as "unsatisfactoriness" first in Nyanatiloka's *Guide through the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka*, section on Yamaka V, p. 140 (Ed. Lake House Bookshop, Colombo 1957).
3. For basic Pāli texts on *anattā* see my paper "Why is Buddhism a Religion?" in *Indian Philosophical Annual* Vol. VI, 1970. In *Mahāyāna* texts the *tri-lakṣaṇa* formula is extended to four or five propositions, interpolating the statement *sūnyāh sarva-dharmāh* between the statements on *dukkhāh* and *anāmanāh*. See for these variations the synopsis in E. Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna*, Tome III, pp. 1369-1370. Ed. Institut Orientaliste, Louvain 1970.
4. Max Scheler was, however, the first of Husserl's followers who explicitly dismissed the limitation to a "picture-book phenomenology", in the Preface to the first edition of his main work, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* (1916). Heidegger, instead of formulating theories, prefers to propound his ideas as "theses" e.g.: "The substance of man is existence", "Primordial time is finite"; on *Dasein*: "The Being of this entity is constituted by historicity", etc. (cf. *Being and Time*, original German ed., pp. 314, 331, 382.)
5. Cf. "My Approach to Indian Philosophy", section on Buddhism, in *Indian Philosophical Annual*, Vol. II (1966). The discourses of the Buddha are quoted in the

sequel mainly from the Pali Text Society editions, London, with necessary adaptation. References are to the serial numbers of the *suttas*, preceded by the initial letter of the collection (*nikāya*): M.-*Majjhima*—, D.-*Digha*, S.-*Saṃyutta*, A.-*Aṅguttara-nikāya*.

6. Cf. *Schopenhauer and Buddhism*, Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1970, pp. 86-7.
7. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time* (in the sequel B.T., page numbers follow the German ed., text adapted from the English translation by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, Harper and Row Ed., 1962). J.P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (in the sequel B.N.; first page no. follows the English translation by H.E. Barnes, The Citadel Press New York, 1966; second page no. follows the original French edition, Paris, Gallimard, NRF, 1943). Italics are partly mine.
8. On this principle of the Buddha and its analogies in anti-ontological trends in modern philosophies of existence, see also my paper, "Aniccā, the Buddhist Theory of Impermanence", in *The Basic Facts of Existence I, Impermanence*, Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1973.
9. Cf. K. Jaspers, *Philosophie*, 2nd ed., Berlin 1948, p. 662.
10. Cf. N. Berdyaev, *The Beginning and the End*, New York, Harper, 1957, p. 91.
11. Discussion following Jean Wahl's lecture, *A Short History of Existentialism* Engl. transl., New York, 1949.
12. *Philosophie*, p. 814.
13. op. cit., p. 117.
14. Discussion with Jean Wahl, op. cit.
15. This and the following quotations from Heidegger's minor writings are from his *Wegmarken*, ed. Klostermann, Frankfurt/M. 1967.
16. Cf. "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit", in *Wegmarken* p. 124 ff.
17. *Existentialist Philosophies—An Introduction* by Emmanuel Mounier. Engl. transl., London, 1948, pp. 2, 8, 11.
18. op. cit., pp. 8, 9, 14.
19. See on this subject my paper quoted in footnote 5 above, and also "Dependence of punar-bhava on karma in Buddhist Philosophy" (under my lay-name Cedmil Veljačić) in *Indian Philosophical Annual*, Vol. I, 1965.
20. Since T.S. Eliot, in his *Waste Land*, referred to "the Buddha's Fire Sermon (which corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount)," reference to this specific text (cf. *Vinaya-piṭakam, Mahā-vagga I, 21*) has been made also by several other poets, as I shall try to show in a forthcoming essay on Eliot's and later poetry.
21. *The World as Will and Representation* (in the sequel quoted as WWR from E.F.J. Payne's translation, Dover Publications, New York, 1958). Vol II, Sec. 153. Cf. my *Schopenhauer and Buddhism*, p. 42 f.
22. *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, edited by R. Bretall, Princeton, 1951, p. 219.
23. Cf. *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, LIV, 9, and a more extensive documentation on this subject in my essay "The Philosophy of Disgust—Buddha and Nietzsche", in *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch* 1977.
24. Quotations from *Visuddhi-magga* are from the English transl. by Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli *The Path of Purification*, Colombo, 1956.
25. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 388 (484) n.
26. P. 708 (in the original French ed.)
27. "Because *Dasein*'s characters of being are defined in terms of existentiality, we call them 'existentialia'." They have to be clearly distinguished from what we call 'categories'—characteristics of being for entities whose character is not that of *Dasein*. (B.T., p. 44).
28. B.T., 42, pp. 196-200.
29. The chapter on "Sinology" in *On the Will in Nature* (2nd German ed. 1854, pp. 119-120) contains a list of 23 books on Buddhism recommended by Schopenhauer. See my *Schopenhauer and Buddhism*, pp. 23-24, section 0.9.

30. Cf. Introduction to Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism*, Doubleday Anchor Books ed., New York, 1956.
31. Berlin, 1938 (free translation from my notes).
32. *Die grossen Philosophen I*, ed. Piper, München, 1957. English transl. ed. R. Hart-Davis, London 1962.
33. This chapter is unfortunately not included in the English translation of selected chapters from *The Great Philosophers*.
34. Title of the English transl. (London 1959) of Jaspers' book *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (1931).
35. *Der Philosophische Glaube*, radio talks 1947, published by Piper, München.
36. The inadequacy of the translation of the Buddhist term *śūnyatā* (Pāli *suññatā*) by 'emptiness', adopted by most western interpreters, has been pointed out only recently in some critical works. Thus H.V. Guenther in his *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice* (Penguin ed, 1972. p. 224) explains his rejection "on the following consideration: *śūnyatā* is not a container that can be emptied nor is there anything that could be taken out of *śūnyatā*. The choice of the term 'emptiness' dates back to the time when under the influence of idealism mind was conceived as a container of ideas, and when the ideal seemed to be to leave an empty blankness." As we shall see in the last section of this chapter, the first original Japanese philosopher in the 20th century who dedicated one of his basic works to this problem, Nishida Kitaro in his *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, did not hesitate to use the philosophically correct term for *śūnyatā*. Among his followers on this line Prof. Shienichi Hisamatsu (Kyoto) has written an interesting paper on "The Characteristics of Oriental Nothingness", in *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol. II, 1960 (pp. 65-97).
37. *Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sāstraṃ*, quoted from E. Lamotte's French translation, referred to in footnote 3, above. Ch. XLI 9, XLI 4, XL 2.
38. The following quotations are from *Meister Eckhart* by Franz Pfeiffer, Leipzig 1857. Translation with some omissions and additions by C. de B. Evans, London, J.M. Watkins, 1924. Titles and pages: *Liber positionum*, 2-3, p. 445. *Sermons and Collations*, 6, p. 30. *Sayings*, p. 418. I have underlined the statements of particular interest for references in the sequel.
39. D.T. Suzuki's Introduction to Nishida's book, *A Study of Good*, ed. Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, 1960. See also K. Nishida, *Intelligibility and the Philosophy of Nothingness*, ed. Maruzen, Tokyo 1958.
40. op. cit. *Sermons and Collations*, 17. p. 57.
41. *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (op. cit., V.n. 22 above), pp. 215, 218, 220.
42. In *WWR*, Vol. II, (Payne p. 623), Ch. XLVIII, Schopenhauer quotes "The Four Noble Truths" from Fausbøll's Latin translation of the *Dhammapadam*. The following quotation is from *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, pp. 99, 346.
43. *WWR*, Vol. I: sec. 23, p. 113; sec. 54, p. 278 n.; Vol. II, Ch XLVI, p. 579.
44. In the concluding sec. 71 of *WWR*, I, the last sentence, in which the meaning of *nirvāṇam* is discussed, ends with the word "nothing" and a footnote according to which "this is also the *prajñā-pāramitā* of the Buddhists, the 'beyond all knowledge', in other words, the point where subject and object no longer exist". In Ch. XLVIII of Vol. II. p. 608, Schopenhauer explains "the teaching of the Veda" on "rebirths that are the consequence of the works in each case, until right knowledge appears and with it salvation (final emancipation), *mokṣa*, i.e., reunion with Brahma. But the Buddhists with complete frankness describe the matter only negatively as *nirvāṇa*..."
45. *Wegmarken*, p. 248.
46. Quotations in the sequel are from *The Will to Power, An Attempted Transvaluation of all Values*, transl. by A.M. Ludovici, London, Allen and Unwin, 1924 (3rd ed.)
47. See Annexure 1 on this subject.
48. On Nietzsche's attitude to Schopenhauer, see my essay "The Philosophy of Disgust—Buddha and Nietzsche", in *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch 1977*. The following quotations are from the *Will to Power*.
49. Max Weber, who had a strong influence both on the formation of the philosophical

- thought of Max Scheler and of Karl Jaspers (cf. the Introduction to *Existenz-Philosophie*), considered the place of early Jainism and Buddhism in his interpretation of the Indian classical intellectualism as typical "drawing room" "intellectualistically heterodox" ideologies, particularly in view of their atheism and disrespect for the caste system. Weber's *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, II, Bd. *Hinduismus und Buddhismus* (Tübingen 1921), appeared in English translation in 1958 (Glencoe, Ill. Free Press): *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. See also Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion* (London, Methuen, 1963) Ch. XVI, pp. 266-8, on Buddhism.
50. Cf. *The Antichrist*, section 20, and *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am so Wise?", section 6.
51. The sub-title of Sartre's book *Being and Nothingness*, that might be criticized perhaps also as a contradiction in adjecto.
52. *Was ist Metaphysik?* (early editions), and *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 305-6.
53. *Being and Nothingness*, p. 21 (57).
54. B.N., p. 21 (57).
55. B.N., p. 17 (53). See E. Lamotte, op. cit. (note 3 above) for arguments against "les élucubrations modernes concernant la présence dans le Madhyamaka d'un Absolu négatif" (p. 1227), in recent literature on this subject. Prof. Lamotte has summed up the arguments against such unwarranted assumptions of a "negative absolute" in Buddhist philosophy in the heading "Vacuity is not an entity" in the Introduction to his study on Vimalakīrti (*L'enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, Bibliothèque du Muséon, Louvain, 1962).
56. B.T., pp. 276, 343, 186, 187. *Wegmarken*, p. 247.
57. For the preceding quotations see B.T., pp. 181, 274, for the following B.T., pp. 115 f., 176, 266, 49.
58. B.T., p. 49. See also Annexure 2, on Scheler's formulation of the same phenomenological thesis.
59. B.T., pp. 332, 17, 326, 301.
60. It would be interesting to compare in a wider connection Nāgārjuna's arguments on the same subject—his deduction of *duḥkham* (suffering) from the lack of self-constancy (*an-ātmā* or *nih-svabhāvatā*) in the universal process of interdependent propagation, or rather 'nullification', of existence. Here are a few pointers in free translation from my notes: "The dependent origination of things is called nullity, because there is no selfhood in anything of dependent origin." (*Vigrahavyāvartanī*, 22)—"How should there be suffering if its origin would not be dependent, since it is the transient that is called suffering, and it cannot exist if (self-) being is autonomous." (*Madhyamaka-kārikā*, XXIV, 21) "He who has attained the insight in the dependent origination has attained the insight into suffering, its arising, its cessation, and the way thereto." (*ib.* 40).
61. B.T., p. 234.
62. B.N. (French original, 1943) pp. 708, 130, 722, 183.
63. Compare the text on *The All* from *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, XXXV, 23-26, quoted in Ch. I, above.
64. In the following sequence of quotations from Heidegger's *Being and Time*, page numbers of the German edition will be quoted in brackets.
65. Buddhaghosa conceived the entire plan of his *Visuddhi-maggo* as an answer to the question formulated in *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, I, 13, to which he reverts at the beginning of each of the three parts of his book:

The inner tangle and the outer tangle,
mankind is entangled in a tangle.
And so I ask of Gotamo this question:
Who succeeds in disentangling this tangle?
66. *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, Paris 1945. English transl. *Existentialism*, Philosophical Library, New York 1947, pp. 15-27.
67. *Wegmarken*, p. 101.
68. *ibid.*, p. 246.

69. B.T., p. 237.
70. Vasubandhu (4th c.A.D.) in his *Viṃśatikā vijñaptimātratā siddhiḥ* asks the representative of an atomistic school: "Why do you not recognize that the change of the cognitive consciousness is due to the change of activities alone? Why do you construe 'elements'?" (I, 6). It is not possible to show that an object is "either a mass of atoms or an atomic construction, because the existence of a single atom cannot be demonstrated" (III, 11), and since this cannot be demonstrated, "it is not possible to prove either that form is object of the eye" (and other material elements objects of other senses, including mind). It follows that all "is cognitive consciousness alone" (III, 15. Free translations from my notes).
71. *Wegmarken*, pp. 174, 102 f.
72. *Majjh.* 22. See Ch. II, above.
73. *Wegmarken*, pp. 102 f.
74. See my paper on "Karma—the ripening fruit" in *Kamma and its Fruit*, Wheel Publication No. 221-223, Buddhist Publication Soc., Kandy 1975.
75. Cf. *Zur Seinsfrage*, *Wegmarken*, p. 239 ff.
76. H. Bergson, *Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience*, Presses Universitaires de France, 68th ed., p.132.
77. B.T., p. 343 f. The following quotations from *Being and Time* will be referred to by page numbers in brackets. Italics are in part mine.
78. The literal meaning of *tathāgato* ("having thus come") in its widest sense is often used in *sūttas* and interpreted in commentarial Pāli literature as a designation of 'human being' in general, and not only as an epithet of the Buddha.
79. Underlined by me in the following quotations from *Being and Time*.
80. Tsujimura Koichi (University of Kyoto) in 1957. I have published the translation of his seminar paper, on "The Nothing in Zen", in my Yugoslav book on Oriental Philosophy (C. Veljačić, *Filozofija istocnih naroda*, vol. II, Zagreb 1958).
81. Where not indicated otherwise, quotations are free translations based on my notes from *Existenz Philosophie* by K. Jaspers, Berlin 1938.
82. Cf. the section on this subject in my paper "Why is Buddhism a Religion?" in *Indian Philosophical Annual*, Vol. VI, 1970.
83. *The Beginning and the End* (op. cit.), p. 116 f.
84. Term used by Jaspers to indicate the subject-object "split" (*Spaltung*) in the primordial "all-encompassing" pre-reflective awareness.
85. This and the following quotations are my free translations from *Philosophie* by K. Jaspers, Berlin 1948, 2nd ed., p. 712 ff.
86. Cf. T.S. Eliot: "Human kind cannot bear very much reality" (Th. Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*).
87. A chapter on Śaṅkara was foreseen in the plan of *The Great Philosophers*, but the author did not live long enough to write it, at a time when explicit problems of Indian philosophies flared up again in the awareness of European thought.
88. Cf. *Philosophie*, p. 712 f.
89. J. Whal, *A Short History of Existentialism*. The Philosophical Library, New York 1949.
90. See note 39 in Ch. III, 1, above.
91. Translated by R. Schinzinger, Tokyo, Maruzen, 1958,
92. WWR I, 71 (Payne's transl. p. 412).

16

Nihilism and Sūnyatā

KEIJI NISHITANI

I

ONE of the greatest and most fundamental problems all religions are now confronted with is their relation to science. The world-view prevalent in science, the scientific way of thinking in general, shows itself as absolutely incompatible with the world-view or ontology which the traditional religions have, by and large, regarded as their basis. The objection might here be raised, that such a world-view or ontology is a so-called metaphysics or philosophy, but is not a religion, nor has it anything to do with the essential life of religion. An objection of this sort has a half-truth, to be sure. But it cannot be said to be the whole truth.

When a religion comes into being concretely, that is, as a historical fact, it always has as its basis a world-view or ontology of one sort or another, even though it may be in a form in which it is not yet fully conscious of itself. For a religion, such a "philosophy" is not like clothes that one can change whenever he pleases. It is to religion just what water is to fish. It is the indispensable condition by virtue of which religion can actually come into existence. Water is neither the life of the fish as such nor its body, yet it is fundamentally linked with them. A change of the world-view or ontology is a matter no less fatal to religion than a change of salt water to fresh is to a fish.

Hence, the view that religion and science never come into conflict with each other if they remain confined within their proper limits, because each has its own proper realm and task, is not adequate for the purpose of solving the problem. A limit between two realms, a borderline, separates them from each other. But at the same time, it belongs to both of them. The crux of the problem we are now confronted with lies precisely in this borderline. In fact, it can be said that metaphysics and philosophy have

of Dependent Origination, and yet he also insists here upon the *svabhāva* as well as on a significance (the *bodhisattva*'s goal) that is perhaps nonrelational.

57. Jayatilleke, "Logic", p. 82.
58. Robinson, book review, p. 76.
59. This is well stated in the Tibetan language by Red-mda'-ba's *Commentary to Aryadeva's 'Four Hundred Verses'*, ed. Jetsum Rendawa Shonnu Lodo (Sarnath: Sakya Students' Union, 1974), p. 170: "The form and variety of natures (*dharma*) are posited as different by dint of *saṃjñā* (notions, ideas), but not by reason of the own-form (*svarūpa*) of given things (*vastu*)—because all of them being illusory, it is not possible to distinguish their own-forms."
60. Matilal, *Epistemology, Logic, and Grammar*, pp. 162-167.
61. Frits Staal, *Exploring Mysticism* (London: Penguin Books, 1975), pp. 45-47; hereafter cited as Staal, *Exploring Mysticism*.
62. Confer, Dharendra Sharma, *The Negative Dialectics of India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), p. 94; note where the example illustrates the Vedānta authority (*pramāṇa*) called 'presumption' (*arthāpatti*).
63. For Nāgārjuna's classification of the two members, nos. 2 and 10, as *karma*, see, for example, A. Wayman, "Buddhist Dependent Origination", *History of Religions* 10, no. 3 (Feb., 1971): 188. I have gone much more into the cause and effect (*hetu-phala*) side of the formula in my forthcoming "Dependent Origination—the Indo-Tibetan Tradition", special issue of *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*.
64. Staal, *Exploring Mysticism*, p. 47.
65. La Vallée Poussin, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, pp. 263.5 to 264.4.

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