NIHILISM and NIETZSCHE'S BUDDHA: A STUDY IN IRONIC AFFINITIES

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PREFACE

When I started research on this thesis, my intention was to do a relatively straight-forward comparative study of certain ideas of Nietzsche and key elements of Buddhist thought as found in the Pāli tradition, both of which I encountered as an undergraduate (somewhat superficially as it turned out). As my researches progressed, however, it emerged that I had made a rather naïve assumption: that there would be a more or less general understanding among scholars on the meaning of the key elements and ideas of both Nietzsche's philosophy and of Pāli Buddhism. Yet, my research of the extensive and still growing scholarly literature on both my subjects revealed that there are still many varying opinions and views on these key notions. Given this state of affairs, the only course left open to me was to return to the original sources themselves and form my own views on these matters. The outcome of this is reflected in the structure of the thesis in that: i) I rely mainly on primary sources; ii) there are extended passages in which I am attempting to work out my own understanding of the ideas of one of the main subjects wherein the reader might forget it is a *comparative* study. Thus the structure of the thesis reflects this approach. After all, when one embarks upon research one has little idea of where it will lead.

Some of the conclusions I have reached are certainly not wholly original. For example, the importance of the Greeks and Darwin in the formation of Nietzsche's thought. This is well attested in Hollingdale (1965) and Kaufmann (1974). However, where I agree with both Hollingdale and Kaufmann, I have reached that agreement by forming my own conclusions based upon reading Nietzsche's texts. Of the secondary sources that have influenced my thinking on Nietzsche, and without whom certain of my conclusions would not have been reached, I must mention Stack's **Lange and Nietzsche**. This work especially influenced my views on Nietzsche's concept of the natural world as an expression of the "will to power" (*Wille zur Macht*).

With regard to Buddhism, my conclusions are almost entirely my own. Although there is already a work on Nietzsche and Buddhism - Mistry's **Nietzsche and Buddhism** - my approach to the subject and the themes covered are so dissimilar to those of Mistry, that I make no reference to this work - except for one area: I am entirely dependent upon Mistry for the information on Nietzsche's known literary sources on Buddhism. Mistry's work is the source for the quotes from Koeppen's work **Die Religion des Buddha**. Fortunately, however, of the three other source works read by Nietzsche, Oldenberg's **Buddha. Sien Leben, seine Lehre, seine**

Gemeinde (1st ed.) was translated into English, Müller's **Selected Essays on Language, Mythology and Religion** Vol.II was originally written in English, and the only known Buddhist text Nietzsche read, Coomaraswamy's abridged translation of the **Sutta Nipāta**, is also in English (Mistry only mentions that Nietzsche read an English translation; I have concluded that it must have been this work as there was no other, at that time, in English). Collins (1982) was influential in my approach to the question of the *anattan* or "no-self" doctrine. Yet, again, my conclusions, especially with regard to the influence of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the *Ātman* in the formation of the doctrine of *anattan*, are derived solely from my own research. Harvey's article, *Conscious Mysticism in the Discourses of the Buddha*, strongly influenced the section on *Parinirvāṇa and the "Unsupported Consciousness"*.

For my research, in the case of Nietzsche's works, I have relied entirely on translations, mainly those of Hollingdale and Kaufmann. With Buddhism I have mainly relied on the translations of the Pali Text Society. However, to determine key terms and to clarify certain important but obscure passages, I have consulted the Pāli texts. This has resulted in my imposing my own translations of certain key terms (I have always put key terms in square brackets where appropriate) and altering some passages which I felt needed clarifying. The final responsibility of all passages quoted therefore rests with me. The only reference to Buddhist texts outside of the Pāli tradition is to the Sanskrit text of Maitreya's **Madhyāntavibhāga**. The translation here is my own. With the Upaniṣads I have relied on Hume's (1931) translation and consulted Radhakrishnan's (1953) which also includes the Sanskrit texts.

In the use of Pāli terms in the thesis, I have followed the accepted Sanskrit model and consistently used the stem form, and not the more usual nominative forms for singular and plural. Plurals are indicated by the addition of an "-s". As Sanskrit is the "mother" language, I think this makes for both simplicity and continuity. However, I have consistently used the Sanskrit term *nirvāṇa* throughout (apart from quotes from the Pāli) in preference to the Pāli *nibbāna*, as the former is the established term in the West.

Because of the limitations of my word processing software, footnote numbers that appear near the end of a page often qualify footnotes on the following page.

PART ONE
NIETZSCHE'S BUDDHISM

Introduction

On an autumn day in Leipzig, in the year 1864, the young Nietzsche - "a directionless and despairing 21-year-old"[1] - was browsing in a second-hand bookshop owned by his landlord and happened to come across a book entitled **The World as Will and Representation**. Despite being hesitant about purchasing a book by an author he had never heard of, a demon whispered in his ear: "take this book home". He obeyed the demon and consequently discovered the direction that his life had lacked. This book was to make such an impression on him that in one of his early works, **Schopenhauer as Educator**, he refers back to that day as one when he found his true self:

> *Certainly there may be other means of finding oneself, of coming to oneself out of the bewilderment in which one usually wanders as in a dark cloud, but I know of none better than to think on one's true educators. And so today I shall remember one of the teachers and taskmasters of whom I can boast,* Arthur Schopenhauer. [SE 1]

In addition to finding his true vocation in life through reading Schopenhauer, it was undoubtedly Schopenhauer who first introduced him to Buddhism and Indian thought in general. Schopenhauer saw in the Buddhist view of existence an early Indian parallel to his own: life was unconditionally unsatisfactory; it can never offer man true lasting happiness or fulfilment but only endless disappointment and sorrow. The only path out of this predicament is through the denial of life's fundamental impulse - the "will to live".

At first Nietzsche was greatly influenced by this view but by the time of his first published work, **The Birth of Tragedy**,[2] he was beginning to move away from such a pessimistic *Weltanschauung* and, in his later writings, arrived at a position diametrically opposed to it - life is not to be denied but unconditionally affirmed. Schopenhauer's philosophy was seen as a preliminary symptom of an existential

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[1] According to his own description: quoted in Janaway (1989), p342.

[2] Nietzsche's unpublished notes show that by 1868 he was already quite critical of many of Schopenhauer's ideas, particularly his notion of *Wille* as the "thing-in -itself". See Janaway (1989), p343 for reference.

disease that Europe was on the verge of succumbing to - *nihilism* (i.e., a state of despair consequent upon the complete loss of belief in the accepted world-view and its inherent values). Schopenhauer had arrived at the penultimate phase of 'pessimism'.[3] The advent of nihilism was seen as a logical outcome within the history of Western culture of an original premise of the framework of Platonism which, according to Nietzsche, became the ground of all subsequent metaphysical and religious views on man and his place in the universe. Broadly, that original premise was that existence is bifurcated into two separate asymmetrical realms, one transitory, mundane and of the nature of an "appearance", the other the eternally divine and true "reality". It was the latter that gave life its meaning and value and man his orientation within it, as well as the capacity, through reason, to discern it. The former, the natural world, was, in contrast, relatively valueless and without meaning except, perhaps, as a means of weakly reflecting that true reality. The only truly human life was one lived in pursuit of that eternal reality. But Nietzsche now saw that, as an ironic consequence of that pursuit, modern man was approaching a more honest understanding of himself and his origins as well as the cultural institutions that reflect his past history: they all had *natural* origins and any talk of non-natural or divine origins was no more than the illusory creation of human vanity. When such an understanding eventually takes root throughout Western culture it will thoroughly undermine its very structure, and Nietzsche foresees the looming possibility that nihilistic anarchy might then break out. But he also thought it possible, at least among the more educated and cultured who, it must be remembered, Nietzsche saw as his only audience, that a more civilized response to this portending disaster might be the growth of an "European Buddhism" - a cheerful and orderly response to the apparent meaninglessness of human existence. But to Nietzsche such a response would still be a form of nihilism, what he calls "passive nihilism", a "*doing* No after existence has lost its 'meaning'".[4] Such would be tantamount to accepting nihilism as the ultimate statement and judgement upon life: a European form of Buddhism which merely helps man cheerfully adjust to the seeming meaninglessness of existence. For Nietzsche such a response, although preferable to nihilistic anarchy, would be a mistaken one: it would be no more than a psychological reaction *within* that same Platonic framework which was seen to be false. If the whole two-world framework is no more than a

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[3] WP 9.

[4] WP 55.

human invention then it follows that the question as to the value of life and man's place in it is once again an open one. As he poetically puts it in the **Gay Science**:

> *At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea,* **our** *sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an "open sea".* [GS 343]

Somewhere on the "open sea" Nietzsche eventually concluded that the only acceptable response to nihilism was not the founding of a European Buddhism, but the creation of a new vision of man and existence with values not founded on some fictitious transcendental world or being, but in life as at is in the natural world, which is man's only world. Thus the possible advent of a European form of Buddhism was a danger that would obscure the sight of that "open sea", and was something he therefore wished to avoid.[5]

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[5] Nietzsche comments that "a European Buddhism might perhaps be indispensable" as one of the "many types of philosophy which need to be taught ... as a hammer" [WP 132]. The metaphor of the hammer, however, does not imply destruction but its use as a means of 'sounding out' as when one taps a bell to examine whether it rings true or is flawed. The implication here is that the "flawed" would be those who were attracted to Buddhism. See the *Foreword* to **Twilight of the Idols** for the source of this explanation.

1. The Historical Parallel

Although there were various works on Buddhism available in Europe prior to Nietzsche's time, they were mainly concerned with the late form of Buddhism as found in Tibet.[6] However, in the 19th century Buddhist texts originating in the land of the Buddha's birth, in Pāli and Sanskrit,[7] began to be studies and translated into the three main European languages - English, French and German.[8] The Sanskrit texts were from what was then known as the Northern School of Buddhism - now known as the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism - and the Pāli texts from the then Southern School - now known as the Theravāda form of Buddhism. Generally speaking, the Mahāyāna texts are later and reflect a mainly literary, mythological and philosophical development of Buddhism, whilst the Theravāda texts reflect the earlier oral tradition and are, therefore, of more historical interest regarding the character and personality of the Buddha and the India of his time. Given the considerable amount of information available to Nietzsche on the Mahāyāna, and that his references to Buddhism reflect no knowledge of or interest in the Mahāyāna,[9] I can only conclude that Nietzsche's interest was focused on its emergence as a historical phenomenon and was, therefore, limited to its Theravāda form. The reason for this, however, is that his interest in Buddhism was centred upon what he considered to be a direct historical parallel between India at the time of the Buddha and the Europe of his own milieu:

> *The same evolutionary course in India, completely independent of ours, should prove something: the same ideal leads to the same conclusion; the decisive point is reached five centuries before the beginning of the European*

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[6] These were mainly written by Jesuit missionaries. See De Jong (1987), pp8-12.

[7] The Sanskrit texts were actually discovered in Nepal in 1830 (along with some Brāhmanical texts).

[8] See De Jong (1987), p13; Sedlar (1982), p39; and Müller (1882), p168. (Note: Nietzsche was literate in both English and French.)

[9] The only mention of anything Mahāyāna-like in Nietzsche's writings is in the **Gay Science** [128] where, as a form of prayer, he sees the Mahāyāna Buddhist mantra "om mane padme hum" (properly: oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ) as a kind of "cud" for the Tibetan masses to chew so as to keep them happy and occupied.

calendar, with the Buddha; more exactly, with the Sankhya philosophy, subsequently popularized by Buddha and made into a religion. [GM iii,27][10]

Beginning with Vico, (1668-1744) various philosophers before Nietzsche had sought in the bowels of history for intelligible signs so as to make sense of their own times in terms of the past and, like augers of old, discern how the future might unfold. All, however, despite their differing views, concluded that the course of human history, at least in the West, revealed an intelligible purpose: human history was characterized by a gradual progress towards some end, and this end was, in some manner, the fulfilment of human striving and potential. Man and his actions were cosmologically central within a universe that was purposeful and inherently structured to fulfil that end. But to Nietzsche such a philosophy of history was no more than gross conceit and wish fulfilment. There was simply no evidence in the study of history to premise such a conclusion, and since the appearance of Darwin's **Origins**

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[10] The idea that the Buddha popularized the Sāṅkhya philosophy and "made it into a religion", is probably taken from Koeppen's **Die Religion des Buddha** (see Mistry [1981], p37-8). Yet it is odd that Nietzsche should state this as if it were, at that time, an accepted fact. By then he had read both Müller's **Essays II** and Oldenberg's **Buddha**, both of whom agree that "we look in vain for any definite similarities between the system of Kapila ... and ... the metaphysics of the Buddha" (Müller [1882], p213-4, who is endorsed by Oldenberg [1882], p215). Müller goes on to say "that it is difficult to understand how, almost by common consent, Buddha is supposed to have either followed in the footsteps of Kapila, or to have *changed Kapila's philosophy into a religion*" (p215, italics mine). Frauwallner states: "The relation between the Sāṅkhya to Buddhism is a long disputed and much debated question" ([1973], note 147, p384). In his view the "Sāṅkhya originated not long after the Buddha's death" (p223). Mistry refers to the Buddha's teachers - presumably Alāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta - as being Sāṅkhya philosophers (see note 36, p37). However, apart from a reference in Aśvaghoṣa's **Buddhacarita**, (a poetic biography of the Buddha written sometime in the 2nd century C.E.) to Aḷāra Kālāma being a Sāṅkhya teacher, there is no other source that I can trace that connects the Buddha's two teachers with the Sāṅkhya. Müller (p200) refers to them both as *brāhmaṇas*. Given that the **Buddhacarita** is the only source that one of the Buddha's two teachers was a follower of Sāṅkhya, it would be a questionable practice to base historical fact upon a single source that is a late piece of poetic literature. In the Pāli texts the Buddha was taught meditation by both but we are in the dark as to what philosophy they may have taught. Nor is there a reference to them being *brāhmaṇas*. The only reference is to a saying of Uddaka Rāmaputta's: "He sees, but does not see" which the Buddha says meant that although we "can see the blade of a well-sharpened razor", we cannot see its edge. (M iii,126) And although the Buddha is reported in the Pāli texts to have achieved the ultimate goals of both, the levels of consciousness called "the sphere-of-no-thingness" (*akiñcayāyatana*) of Aḷāra and "the sphere-of-neither-perception-nor-nonperception" (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*) of Uddaka, neither of these goals are connected with Sāṅkhya philosophy, and both were rejected by the Buddha as ultimately unsatisfactory.

the scientific data available tended to premise an opposite conclusion: man was the centre of nothing other than his own existence; there was no extra-terrestrial providential force or being looking after his destiny, nor was the natural world structured for his welfare any more than for any other animal. In an unpublished essay, Nietzsche pens a sceptical portrait of human vanity within such an ateleological cosmos:

> *Once upon a time, in some far out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of 'world history', but, nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die.* [TL p1]

When Nietzsche looks into the bowels of human history he does, like Hegel, discern an inner logic at work, and, also, as in Hegel's view of history, it involves the positing of an idea which is *the* object of knowledge. But, unlike Hegel's system, there is no dialectical unfolding and manifestation of that idea in the assumed hierarchical stages of the world historical process. Instead there is, at a certain point in a culture's history, Indian and Western, a realization that the root idea posited was in fact in *error*. For Nietzsche this root idea is always a *moral* idea as it involves the judgement that the highest human values, the "good" - those which gives life meaning and purpose - have their source in some other realm or being which transcends this world. In comparison with that eternal transcendent realm or being, this transitory world is relatively valueless and meaningless, even "evil". Consequently, all passions and attachments whose objects and ends are in this mundane world are also "evil", and are to be resisted and conquered by the "good" man. But, in truth, this idea of a transcendent ideal world or being has no other source than the minds of "clever beasts [who] invented knowing". The "clever beast" *par excellence* is Socrates:

> *A profound* **illusion** *that first saw the light of the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of correcting it.* [BT 15]

The root idea posited by Socrates involves the ideal that the ultimate goal of human striving is to attain knowledge of that reality which transcends this mundane

world - the realm of the "Forms" which are eternal, unchangeable, immaterial and intelligible and at whose summit stands the "Form" of "Absolute Beauty" (**Symposium** and **Phaedrus**) or "the Good" (**Republic**) which are "responsible for whatever is right and valuable in anything".[11] And, further, that this highest human attainment is "apprehensible only by the intellect [*nous*] which is the pilot of the soul".[12] Nietzsche's Socrates is a "theoretical optimist who ... ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a panacea"[13] because it can "heal the eternal wound of existence".[14] The wise man is therefore the happiest of men,[15] because "knowledge and reason have liberated [him] from the fear of death":[16] death only occurs to the body, not the soul. Thus knowledge not only leads to happiness in this life, but to immortality. The outcome of this is a turning away from life in this world: the "true philosophers make dying their profession".[17] Thus bodily appetites with their associated pleasures and the most natural human passions are seen to be a hindrance to this pursuit of knowledge, even the root of all evil.[18] Nietzsche's Socrates is even said to be "the one turning point and vortex of so-called world history" because ever since Socrates this pursuit of knowledge "became the real task for every person of higher gifts", the "only truly human vocation".[19] And, according to Nietzsche, this highest of vocations has been pursued by the "gifted" down through the whole course of Western history. In **Twilight of the Idols** he gives a rather succinct outline of this history, called "History of an Error" or *How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth.*[20]

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[11] Republic, 517c.

[12] Phaedrus, 247c.

[13] BT 15,17.

[14] BT 18.

[15] Republic, 576c-592b.

[16] BT 15.

[17] Phaedo, 68b.

[18] *ibid*, 66b-d.

[19] BT 15.

[20] TI iv.

The real world, attainable to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man - he dwells in it, **he is it.**

(Oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, convincing. Transcription of the proposition 'I Plato **am** *the truth')*

This corresponds to Socrates who, for Nietzsche, through the works of Plato, is the effective source of this idea.

2. The real world, unattainable for the moment, but promised to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man ('to the sinner who repents').

(progress of the idea: it grows more refined, more enticing, more incomprehensible - **it becomes a woman,** *it becomes Christian ...)*

Here the idea is passed on through the imbibing of Platonism by Christian theology - "for Christianity is Platonism for the people".[21] The goal now becomes more distant, it is escatologized. Plato's "Forms" are now "thoughts in the mind of God".[22] Plato's "true world" is now the Kingdom of God.

3.The real world, unattainable, undemonstrable, cannot be promised, but even when merely thought of a consolation, a duty, an imperative.

(Fundamentally the same old sun, but shining through mist and scepticism; the idea grown sublime, pale, northerly, Königsbergian.)

For Nietzsche Kant represents the beginning of the end. Kant's "real world", the noumenon, or "thing-in-itself" is no longer a proper object of knowledge. As Kant himself says, "I have found it necessary to deny *knowledge* in order to make room for *faith*".[23] In other words *belief* in the two-world framework persists, but "knowledge" is now knowledge of the limitations of "knowledge", and those limitations restrict its sphere to the world of "appearance", the phenomenal world. This, for Nietzsche, is

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[21] BGE *Preface*. This is taken from Augustine who referred to Christianity as "Platonism for the multitude". (Quoted in H. Chadwick's **Augustine**, Oxford, 1986, p25, but without source.)

[22] *ibid*, p44.

[23] **Critique of Pure Reason**, trans. N. Kemp Smith, London, 1929, p29.

the end of transcendental metaphysics. The pursuit of "truth" finally leads to the truth that there is no "truth".

> *4. The real world - unattainable? Unattained, at any rate. And if unattained also* **unknown.** *Consequently also no consolation, no redemption, no duty; how could we have a duty to something unknown?*
>
> *(The grey of dawn. First yawnings of reason. Cockcrow of positivism)*
>
> *5. The 'real world' - an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer - an idea grown useless, superfluous,* **consequently** *a refuted idea: let us abolish it!*
>
> *(Broad daylight; breakfast; return of cheerfulness and* **bon sens;**
>
> *Plato blushes for shame; all free spirits run riot.)*
>
> *6. We have abolished the real world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? ... But no!* **with the real world we have abolished the apparent world!**
>
> *(Mid-day;the moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error;*
>
> *zenith of mankind;* **INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.**)

I agree with Clark[24] that these final three stages represent stages in Nietzsche's own thinking. And, to me, Nietzsche is thereby claiming (as did Schopenhauer) to be the inheritor of the true implications of Kant's philosophy, implications which Kant, himself, because of his Christian beliefs, would not face. In **Human all too Human** he admits "there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it is hardly to be disputed. We behold all things through the human head and cannot cut off this head".[25] However, he considers that such knowledge would be "the most useless of all knowledge". Nevertheless, previous religious and metaphysical views are of value to a psychologist like Nietzsche as they possess value as "symptoms" which reveal their true source.[26] What "has hitherto made metaphysical assumptions *valuable*, ... is passion, error and self-deception".[27] Like Hume before him, Nietzsche sees reason as

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[24] Clark (1990), p112.

[25] HAH 9.

[26] TI ii,2.

[27] HAH 9.

the slave of the passions. Therefore, when one has discerned the "human all too human" "foundation of all extant religions and metaphysical systems, one has refuted them!"[28] Kant's "faith" would be such an "error and self-deception", a "symptom", and his *ding an sich,* even if it did exist, would be valueless and useless in determining how we should live as we can have no access to it or knowledge of it. Thus Nietzsche accepts Kant's view of the empirical limitations of knowledge, but rejects his "faith" since this only tells us what we desire, not what is. Nietzsche therefore claims to see the implications of Kant's philosophy, even though Kant can't.[29]

I would suggest that stage 5 represents Nietzsche's notion of "active nihilism", where one actively frees oneself from the values, goals, convictions, articles of faith and unconscious assumptions founded upon the two-world framework, in other words until "the horizon appears free to us again". Stage 6 would then be the "open sea" where the creators of new and critically honest values venture out and transcend nihilism. Nihilism as a "transitional stage"[30] would then be completed.[31] However, outside of Nietzsche's own thinking, after Kant comes the "Death of God"[32] and the rise of science (by "science" Nietzsche means science in the broad sense connoted by the German *Wissenschaft*). Science then takes over from religion[33] and continues with a secularized form of the Socratic ideal in the pursuit of scientific knowledge: "Hence the image of the *dying Socrates* ... liberated from the fear of death, is the emblem that, above the entrance gate of science, reminds all of its mission - namely, to make existence appear comprehensible and thus justified".[34] Thus science still works within

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[28] *ibid.*

[29] Nietzsche's views on Kant are probably derived from his reading of Lange. See G. Stack (1983), Ch. viii.

[30] WP 7.

[31] When Nietzsche refers to himself as a nihilist [WP 25] he is only a nihilist in the sense here of "active nihilism", i.e., nihilism that destroys the old "lies" as a *means* to creating something new. Nihilism persists only as long as the "error" persists. Once the "error" has been completely eradicated, nihilism ends. Thus Nietzsche would no longer be a nihilist but a creator of *new* values.

[32] GS 343.

[33] This is also Freud's view in his **The Future of an Illusion.**

[34] BT 15.

the two-world framework and although it no longer accepts that the "true world" is in any sense that sought by religion, it is still conditioned by the Socratic notion that knowledge of "reality" is the true goal of all human striving, and that realizing that goal will somehow bring mankind happiness and human fulfilment - at least in this world. For Nietzsche this is now a baseless assumption: why *should* a deeper knowledge of the phenomenal world be, *a priori*, connected with *our* happiness and fulfilment? Thus "science also rests on a faith; there simply is no science 'without presuppositions'".[35] However it is through scientific pursuits that these presuppositions are eventually brought to light. For example, in Nietzsche's stage 4 he mentions "positivism" which sees science, and philosophy based upon scientific method, as the only means to knowledge. Yet Comte, the founder of positivism, assumes that progress is a necessary law of human history.[36] But to Nietzsche this is a baseless assumption. This comes to light, later, with Darwin, where man becomes just another animal without any necessary laws to guarantee his future progress. "God is dead" but the cultural and philosophical implications of this event will take time to be seen.[37] When they are we shall have reached Nietzsche's "conclusion" of the original Socratic premise: the pursuit of "truth" finally reveals the truth that what we saw as "true" was in fact an error, a product of self-delusion and wish-fulfilment. But stage 6 in Nietzsche's *History of an Error* will not come to pass through any historical necessity: there is the danger of nihilistic anarchy breaking out or of a European Buddhism establishing itself as a consequence of "passive nihilism". Stage 6 only comes to be if a path of "active nihilism" is followed.

Obviously, in India, this "conclusion" was not the outcome of science, but it too, without science, arrived at the same conclusion. But not having an Indian Nietzsche, India went along the erroneous path of "passive nihilism", which rather than seeing nihilism as a "transitional stage", and surpassing it, sees it as the ultimate statement upon life: life actually is without any possible meaning or value. This is a path Nietzsche now fears may appeal to many in the West, as when the source of their esteemed values - the "real world" - can no longer be believed in, there will be, in response, a deep sense of loss, even the feeling of an oncoming "awe-inspiring *catastrophe*"[38] as life then *appears* to lack any truly human aim or purpose, and mankind's deepest questions find no answers. For those not strong enough to respond

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[35] GS 3.

[36] See Edwards (1967), Vol.6, p415.

[37] GS 343.

to this challenge the appeal of a cheerful and refined nihilistic and non-theistic religion like Buddhism might be irresistible. But what led Nietzsche to find a similar historical cycle in India?

As I said earlier, Nietzsche's interest in Buddhism was mainly historical. He conjectured that a similar "evolutionary course" to the one just sketched had already occurred in India, and that it reached its conclusion at the time of the Buddha. Somewhere in the distant past of Aryan-cum-Brāhmanical culture, that "same ideal" as the one posited by Socrates must have been posited by some "clever beast" of an Aryan. However, Nietzsche doesn't tell us who that Aryan Socrates might have been or when this "same ideal" was posited. Yet he would have taken from the books he read on India and Buddhism, and perhaps from the unrecorded discussions he no doubt had with fellow philologists who were specialists in Sanskrit and Indian studies,[39] a general impression that the "same ideal", in the sense of a belief in the two-world structure of existence combined with the notion that all that is of value has its origin in the "other world" and that knowledge of that "other world" was the ultimate purpose of all human striving, had its parallels in the religio-philosophical traditions existing prior to the birth of the Buddha. For example, he would have read in Müller's **Buddhist Pilgrims**[40] that in the first book of the **Ṛg-veda**:[41] "rebellious reason" sought for "the idea which had yearned for utterance ... the idea of a supreme and absolute Power" behind all the many gods.[42] This *may*, in Nietzsche's mind, have corresponded to his notion of Socrates searching, by means of the intellect, for the reality underlying all appearance. However it has more affinity with the pre-Socratics and Nietzsche would have been all too aware of that. Müller then goes on to relate how out of the Vedas two antagonistic strands developed, one of

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[38] BT 18.

[39] Welbon (1968) reckons that Nietzsche did in fact learn some Sanskrit at Leipzig from Max Müller's first teacher, Herrmann Brockhaus. But he gives no source for this. (p185) However, if as I've suggested, Nietzsche's interest in Buddhism was historical it would not have been Sanskrit that would have interested him so much as Pāli.

[40] pp239-40.

[41] **Ṛg-veda**, I 164,46. Müller (1881) does not provide an approximate date for this book but just mentions that the "original poetry of the Veda" - by which I presume he means the **Ṛg-veda**, oldest of the four Vedas - is around 1600 BCE. Although the dating of the **Ṛg-veda** is not exact, it is adjudged to have been composed between 1500 and 900 BCE with books 2 to 7 understood to be the earliest, followed by books 8, 9, 1 and 10, in that order. Thus book one is a later work. See Basham (1989), p8.

reason - the Brahmanical philosophy - and one of faith - the Brahmanical ceremonial - in which the former "threatened to become the destruction of all religious faith".[43] The philosophical strand, developed in the early *upaniṣads*, eventually blossomed into a variety of philosophical schools, who "were allowed to indulge in the most unrestrained freedom of thought," and in whose philosophies "the very names of the gods were never mentioned".[44] Here, however, we do find a form of thinking that might fit part of the "same ideal", at least for Nietzsche's purpose: the idea that "there existed but one Being, without second; that everything else was but a dream and illusion, and that this illusion might be removed by a true knowledge of the one Being".[45] Without this "true knowledge", what we accept as "reality" is likened to a dream or an illusion. Such an image may have appeared to Nietzsche to have affinities with the image of the Divided Line from Plato's **Republic**, where the state of "illusion" would loosely correspond to *Eikasia* or "illusion", and "true knowledge" to *Noesis* or "knowledge of the Good itself".[46] However, in Müller's outline, this idea only appears just before the birth of the Buddha.[47] Thus if Nietzsche was to base his historical theory on Müller the time scale between the "idea" and the "conclusion" would be no more than 100 years at most, whereas its Western counterpart extends over some 2,300 years. However, I will show later how such a difference in time scale may be rationalized.

Oldenberg, in his book **The Buddha**, states that:

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[42] Müller (1881) does not bring out the important point that this move towards monism was not initially theistic. *Brahman*, at first conceived of as the magic force or power inherent in the recitation of the "hymns" of the Vedas during sacrifice, eventually came to be looked upon as a kind of impersonal power underlying the whole universe. Later, this *brahman* came to be seen by many in theistic terms as the supreme god *brahmā*. Nevertheless, *brahman*, as an impersonal absolute, has remained an integral part of the more philosophic schools of Hinduism down to the present day (See Basham [1989], p29). Oldenberg (1882) does not bring this point out either.

[43] *ibid.* p243.

[44] *ibid.* p244.

[45] *ibid.*

[46] See Melling (1987), pp 106-8.

[47] Müller (1881), p245.

Invariably, whenever a nation has been in a position to develop its intellectual life in purity and tranquillity through a long period of time, there recurs that phenomenon, specially observable in the domain of the spiritual life, ...: an old faith, which promised to men somehow or other by an offensive and defensive alliance with the Godhead, power, prosperity, victory and subjection of all their enemies, will, sometimes by imperceptible degrees, ... be supplanted by a new phase of thought, whose watch-words are no longer welfare, victory, dominion, but rest, peace, happiness, deliverance.[48]

He then proceeds "to trace step by step the process of that self-destruction of the Vedic religious thought, which has produced Buddhism as its positive outcome".[49] The first step is found in the final book of the **Ṛg-veda**, where we have what a modern Indian scholar sees as "possibly the oldest expression of philosophic doubt in the literature of the world" and "a landmark in the history of Indian thought".[50] I quote the two most important verses from Oldenberg's book:

Who knows the secret? Who proclaimed it here,
Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
The gods themselves came later into being -
Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?

He from whom all this great creation came,
Whether His will created or was mute,
The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven,
He knows it - or perchance even He knows not.[51]

After this initial burst of agnosticism which, incidently, occurred at about the same time as the search for some underlying power behind all phenomena, the *brahman/ātman*,[52] Oldenberg sketches the various views found in the literature that succeeded the Vedas and which, aside from that spurious burst of scepticism, he

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[48] Oldenberg (1882), p3.

[49] *ibid.*, p18.

[50] Basham (1989), p24.

[51] Oldenberg (1882), pp16-17.

describes as "[t]hat imbecile wisdom which knows all things", but in reality is without any depth of understanding.[53] However, by the time of the early *upaniṣads*, thought acquires depth as man now "looks for the essence of the essence, for the reality, the truth of phenomena, and the truth of the true".[54] What eventually emerges is the notion of the *ātman/brahman* seen as the true reality behind all diverse phenomena. Gaining knowledge of this deeper reality led to what Oldenberg calls "the origin of monastic life in India", as consequent upon gaining such knowledge one renounced the world: "Knowing him, the *ātman*, Brahmans relinquish the desire for posterity, the desire for possessions, the desire for prosperity, and go forth as mendicants".[55] But, according to Oldenberg, there still "remained for Indian speculation the task of finding its way back from this ultimate ground of all being to the empirical state of being, to define the relation which subsists between the *ātman* and the external world".[56] The outcome of this speculation was that many "may have felt that thought had reached a chasm, over which to throw a bridge was not in their power".[57] And as knowledge of the *ātman/brahman* was the ultimate goal of all human striving and such knowledge led to renouncing the world, combined with the seemingly impassable chasm between *ātman* and the phenomenal world, there arose "an ever increasingly bitter criticism of this world" and "the birthplace of Indian pessimism".[58] The world is a world of sorrow, but "the *ātman* ... dwells afar and untouched by the sorrows of the worlds".[59] Thus "[m]an must separate himself from all that is earthly, ... must live as though he lived not".[60] What then follows is the extension of the mendicant life outside the preserve of the Brāhmanical tradition with various teachers "who profess to have discovered independently of the Vedic tradition

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[52] *ibid.*, pp24ff.

[53] *ibid.*, p22.

[54] *ibid.*, p23.

[55] *ibid.*, p36.

[56] *ibid.*, p31. This is a quotation in Oldenberg from "The Brāhman of the Hundred Paths".

[57] *ibid.*, p41.

[58] *ibid.*

[59] *ibid.*, p42.

[60] *ibid.*, p60.

a new, and only true path of deliverance".[61] Oldenberg then describes a rather gloomy picture of a people who are fast becoming disaffected with life, where even "the young, wearied of life before life had well begun ... [were] eager for renunciation".[62] Eventually the "earnest thinkers of the masculine, classical period of Brāhmanical speculation" gave way to the 'heterodox' thinkers, the *samaṇas* ...

> *... a younger generation of dialecticians, professed controversialists with an overweening materialist or sceptical air, who were not deficient in either the readiness or the ability to show up all sides of the ideas of their predecessors, to modify them, and to turn them into their opposites. System after system was constructed, it seems, with tolerably light building material. We know little more than a series of war-cries: discussions were raised about the eternity or transitoriness of the world and the ego, or a reconciliation of these opposites, eternity in the one direction or transitoriness in the other, or about the assertion of infiniteness and finiteness of the world, or about infiniteness and finiteness at the same time, or about the negation of infiniteness as well as finiteness. Then sprung up the beginnings of a logical scepticism, and the two doctrines, of which the fundamental propositions run, "everything appears to me true," and "everything appears to me untrue," and here obviously the dialectician, who declares everything to be untrue, is met forthwith by the question whether he looks upon this theory of his own also, that everything is untrue, as likewise untrue. Men wrangle over the existence of a world beyond, over the continuance after death, over the freedom of the human will, over the existence of moral retribution.*[63]

If one had to fit the "same ideal" of Nietzsche's Socrates into this exposition of Oldenberg, it would be within certain aspects of the early Upaniṣadic tradition. Here there is the search for some underlying reality beyond the plurality of phenomena combined with the idea that knowledge of this reality represents the highest human attainment and is, therefore, the ultimate goal of human endeavour. The "chasm" which emerged in trying to reconcile the *brahman* with the world of phenomena does have a general affinity with the irresolvable problems Socrates had in trying to

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[61] *ibid.*, p65.

[62] *ibid.*

[63] *ibid.*, pp67-67.

reconcile the "Forms" with their phenomenal counterparts - the problem of "participation". And there is also the underlying pessimism (in relation to the world) of this ideal which leads the philosopher to renounce the world and the ordinary pleasures of life as they now become a hindrance to the achievement of the goal. Oldenberg's statement that "[m]an must separate himself from all that is earthly, ... must live as though he lived not",[64] must have reminded Nietzsche of the passage in the **Phaedo** where Socrates says that the philosopher must train "himself throughout his life to live in a state as close as possible to death", and "that true philosophers make dying their profession".[65] In both cases the pleasures of the body have to be renounced.[66] And, according to Müller, all this was the outcome of "rebellious reason". Thus there are, in both Müller and especially Oldenberg, certain affinities between aspects of the early Upaniṣads and Socrates which Nietzsche would have easily discerned, and which could be construed as having some affinity with his "same ideal". However, in temporal terms, the parallel diverges. As Oldenberg has it: "Wherever a Socrates appears, Sophists cannot fail to follow".[67] But whereas the Sophists of Greece made no lasting impression upon Western culture, Socrates's "same ideal" lived on through the ages in the garb of Christian Theology, into modern times where, according to Nietzsche, it is now being thoroughly undermined, the "Sophists" of ancient India - the *samaṇas* - were much more effective: they made a lasting impression upon Indian culture and, in the case of one particular *samaṇa*, the Buddha, upon the whole of the East.

Although their philosophies were diverse and in some cases completely opposed to one another, all the *samaṇas* were united in rejecting the authority of the *brāhmaṇas* and the Vedas. As Oldenberg mentioned, "[w]e know little more [of what they taught] than a series of war-cries" and for what we do know we are almost entirely dependent on the Buddhist texts, especially the *sāmañña-phala sutta*. Oldenberg mentions the views of two, Makkhali Gosāla and Pūrana Kassapa, of whom the former is said by the Buddha to be "the worst of all erroneous teachers".[68] He was a strict determinist claiming that man had no power in determining his own life and denied the existence of any moral law. However, after thousands of lives in

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[64] *ibid.*, p60.

[65] **Phaedo**, 67a-b.

[66] In the case of the **Symposium**, however, they are sublimated - a notion that, as I shall later show, is central to Nietzsche's own philosophy.

[67] Oldenberg (1882), p67.

various forms, all of which are strictly determined, every person eventually puts an end to suffering. Pūrana Kassapa also denied that there are any moral actions: "If a man makes a raid on the south bank of the Ganges, kills and lets kill, lays waste ... burns ... he imputes no guilt to himself; there is no punishment of guilt". And so too with what many regarded as moral actions such as performing good works: "there is no reward for good works".[69] Oldenberg also gives the views of Ajita Kesakambalī, without mentioning him by name: "the wise and the fool, when the body is dissolved, are subject to destruction and to annihilation; they are not beyond death".[70] Thus, as Oldenberg has it, the *samaṇas* "wrangle[d] over the existence of a world beyond, over the continuance after death, over the freedom of the will, over the existence of moral retribution", whether the universe was infinite or finite, eternal or transitory or even whether such a thing as truth or knowledge was possible or not. To Nietzsche, much this would have had a modern ring to it: the growth of scepticism and materialism; the denial of any form of life after death in some other world; the denial of any reality other than the natural world; the denial of a moral order independent of man; the growth of atheism and agnosticism and the deterministic elements of scientific positivism. Even the questions as to whether the universe was infinite or finite, eternal or transitory,[71] would have reminded him of Kant's antinomies. All in all, in a general sense, all this would have appeared to Nietzsche to have affinities with what he saw around him - the undermining of the values that formed the foundation of Western culture through the unbridled pursuit of knowledge, and the subsequent feeling of uncertainty and moral despair as an effect of that pursuit felt among those whom Nietzsche would have seen as his audience.[72] And he would have

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[68] *ibid.*, p68.

[69] *ibid.*, p69.

[70] *ibid.*, p69.

[71] These were questions raised by some *samaṇas* when they met the Buddha. The Buddha saw them as irrelevant to the religious life.

[72] In a letter by H. von Kleist, quoted by Nietzsche (in Goudsblom [1980], pp36-7), we can get an idea of the kind of affect Kant had on some: "I recently became acquainted with the Kantian philosophy - and must now quote you a thought from it, though I do not imagine that it will shake you as deeply or as painfully as it did me. We cannot decide whether that which we call truth is the real truth or whether it only seems so. If the latter is the case then the truth that we amass here does not survive death, and all efforts to acquire an asset which follows us to the grave are in vain ... My sole, my highest goal has floundered and I no longer have an aim".

noted that, in India ...

> *At this time of deep and many-sided intellectual movements, which had extended from the circles of the Brahmanical thinkers far into the people at large, ... when dialectical scepticism began to attack moral ideals - at this time, when a painful longing deliverance from the burden of being was met by the first signs of moral decay, Gotama Buddha appears on the scene.*[73]

And because "[our] age is in a certain sense ripe ... as the age of the Buddha was",[74] "Buddhism is silently gaining ground everywhere in Europe"[75] as an answer to that growing insecurity and moral decay. But as Nietzsche saw Buddhism as thoroughly nihilistic, he wanted to counter any influence it might have.

2. How Nietzsche saw Buddhism

The essence of what Nietzsche means by nihilism is most clearly stated in the **Will to Power:**

> *Extreme positions are not succeeded by moderate ones but by extreme positions of the opposite kind. Thus the belief in the absolute immorality of nature, in aim- and meaninglessness, is the psychological necessary effect once the belief in God and the essentially moral order becomes untenable. Nihilism appears at this point ... because one has come to mistrust any "meaning" in suffering, indeed in existence. One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered* **the** *interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain.* [WP 55]

The root of nihilism is an act of self-deception: man "project[s] ... value [and meaning] into the world"[76] such as "God", "soul", "moral law", "aim", "being",

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[73] Oldenberg (1882), pp69-70.

[74] WP 239.

[75] WP 240.

[76] Nietzsche is no doubt borrowing from Feuerbach's idea that God is the projection of the highest human qualities which are, as yet, only potential in man. For man to retrieve his own power he must withdraw these projections. See GS 285.

"unity", and thereby invents a "*true* world" which is "*a purely fictitious world*" to create for himself a sense of security and purpose: they make his life meaningful "*in order to be able to believe in his own value*". But eventually this "fictitious world" is seen by some for what it is: an act of self-deception. And so when these values and categories are "*pull[ed] out* again ... the world looks *valueless*". The *effect* of all this upon those who see it and are affected by it is a psychological state of depression and despair, the "recognition of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the 'in vain', insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and regain composure ... as if one had *deceived* oneself all too long".[77] To be overcome by all this creates the ground for "*passive* nihilism", a *Weltanschauung* expressive of the psychological condition of the "decline and recession of the power of the spirit".[78] Life and the world now *appear* as if they were worthless and meaningless *because* they are seen through the dull eyes of spiritual weariness. Thus, in a sense, "passive nihilism" is just another "projection" onto the world, the world seen and interpreted through the eyes of a psychological malaise which prevents the world being seen from a healthier and less blinkered perspective. As Nietzsche remarks, "the world might be far more valuable than we used to think".[79] Thus "passive nihilism" must be understood for what it is: an expression of "weariness of spirit", and be resisted and overcome. This requires "*active* nihilism", "a sign of increased power of the spirit". "Active nihilism", which understands the roots of nihilism, sees nihilism as "only a *transitional stage*".[80] It is "an active force of destruction"[81] with regard to our previous religious goals and values and their modern secular expressions which, to Nietzsche, were, for example, John Stuart Mill's "Utilitarianism", Kant's categorical imperative (conscience substituted for God), *faith* in science, and egalitarianism and socialism with their blind faith in the "eventual triumph of truth, love, and justice" and "equality of the person"[82] all which are secularized Christian ideals - the "equality of the person" being the secularized form of "we are all equal before God". But, as Nietzsche remarks in **Zarathustra**, now that God is dead, "let us not be equal before the mob".[83] Such

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[77] WP 12.

[78] WP 22.

[79] WP 32.

[80] WP 7.

[81] WP 23.

[82] WP 30.

secular expressions are rooted in the same nihilistic assumptions. The result of "active nihilism" is "complete nihilism",[84] the end of nihilism when man can begin to look at the world and himself with fresh eyes and a deeper understanding of himself, having put the old self-deceptions behind him. But Buddhism, being a form of "passive nihilism",[85] was a threat to this end of nihilism.

Buddhism was such an "extreme position of the opposite kind", a "rebound from 'God is truth' to the fanatical faith 'All is false'; Buddhism of *action*".[86] The Buddha's response to the possible "awe inspiring catastrophe" of his own time was to found a religion which rather than help people *overcome* the newly felt meaninglessness of existence, which would have been "active nihilism", simply helped them *adjust* to it with a certain degree of cheerful acceptance: "the supreme goal is cheerfulness, stillness, absence of desire, and this goal is *achieved*".[87] Although the Buddha avoided what Nietzsche considered the greatest danger resulting from loss of belief - destructive anarchy, a *bellum omnium contra omnes* - he nevertheless failed to understand nihilism for what it is - a *Weltanschauung* expressive of a psychological reaction of despair that comes from seeing through the illusion man was living under, that "the world does not have the value we thought it had",[88] and concluding that the world, therefore, must be worthless and meaningless. The Buddha, not seeing the root of nihilism, accepts nihilism as the ultimate statement upon existence: life is without any inherent value or meaning or purpose. Indeed it is quite the opposite: it

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[83] Z iv,1.

[84] WP 28.

[85] WP 23.

[86] WP 1. The source of "All is false" is probably the *uraga-sutta* (Discourse on the Snake) from the **Sutta Nipāta**. Nietzsche mentioned in a letter to Gersdoff, in December, 1875, that he had read an English translation of the **Sutta Nipāta**. This must have been the translation by Sir M. Coomaraswamy, (London, 1874) as it was the only English translation available at that time. Verses 10 - 13 from that translation read: "The priest, who does not look back to the past or look forward to the future, being freed from covetousness ... lust ... hatred ... ignorance, (and believing) that *all is false*, gives up Orapára, as a snake (casts off its) decayed, old skin" (italics mine). Nietzsche himself makes use of the simile of the snake sloughing its old skin: see GS *Prelude in Rhymes*, 8; GS 26 and 307. He also uses another refrain from the *khaggavisāṇa-sutta* (Discourse on the Rhinoceros Horn) of the **Sutta Nipāta**: "walks lonely like the rhinoceros", at D 469.

[87] A 21.

[88] WP 32.

"is now considered *worthless as such*" and the only enlightened response to it is a "nihilistic withdrawal from it, a desire for nothingness".[89] Consequently, if human existence has to be given an aim it must reflect this ultimate judgement and present a goal appropriate to it. The Buddha gives us *nirvāṇa*, the ultimate panacea, a state of complete desirelessness wherein all terrestrial troubles and existential *Angst* will be extinguished, and even death will be met with nothing more than a sigh of ultimate relief. Thus Nietzsche sees Buddhism as "a religion for the end and fatigue of civilization", where the cultured yet fatigued, who have "grown kindly, gentle, over-intellectual [and] who feel pain too easily",[90] can escape from this worthless existence and "withdraw from pain into that Oriental Nothing - called Nirvana".[91]

To attain *nirvāṇa* is to attain a state of "cheerfulness, stillness, absence of desire, and this goal is *achieved*".[92] Thus the Buddhist path does lead "to an actual and *not* merely promised *happiness on earth*".[93] And, although Nietzsche does not directly mention it, this discovery of a method which leads from a state of despair and depression to one of "happiness on earth" must correspond to what the Buddhist tradition sees as Gotama's *bodhi* or "enlightenment", i.e., that which makes him a Buddha or "Enlightened One". The Buddha then reveals the *dharma* or "Teaching" of the way to achieve what he had achieved. The essence of this, according to Nietzsche, is to refrain from action motivated by "desire": "'One must *not* act' - said ... the Buddhists, and conceived a rule of conduct to liberate from actions".[94] One is to be liberated from this sorrowful web of existence by denying to the desires their outlet in action: "action binds one to existence"[95] and thereby ensnares one in its net. The only desire permitted in this scheme is the "yearning for nothing".[96] However, this is not morality speaking, but "hygiene": Buddhism is not a "struggle against *sin*", but a "struggle against *suffering*" which is simply a physiological fact. It therefore has

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[89] GM ii,21.

[90] A 22.

[91] GS *Preface*.

[92] A 21.

[93] A 42.

[94] WP 458.

[95] WP 155.

[96] BT 21.

the "self-deception of moral concepts behind it - it stands in my language, *beyond* good and evil".[97] The Buddha's teaching is a cure for the "state of *depression*", which Nietzsche sees as a physiological state arisen among the more gentle and civilized, and which rests upon "*two* physiological facts ... *firstly* an excessive excitability of sensibility which expresses itself as a refined capacity for pain, *then* an over-intellectuality, a too great preoccupation with concepts and logical procedures under which the personal instinct has sustained harm to the advantage of the 'impersonal'". To counteract this the "Buddha takes hygienic measures", such as ...

> ... *life in the open air, the wandering life; with moderation and fastidiousness as regards food; with caution towards all alcoholic spirits; likewise with caution towards all emotions which produce gall, which heat the blood;* no *anxiety, either for oneself or for others. He demands ideas which produce repose or cheerfulness - he devises means for disaccustoming oneself to others. He understands benevolence, being kind, as health-promoting.* Prayer *is excluded, as is* asceticism*; no categorical imperative, no* compulsion *at all, not even within the monastic community (-one can leave it-). All these would have the effect of increasing that excessive excitability. For this reason too he demands no struggle with those who think differently; his teaching resists nothing* more *than it resists the feeling of revengefulness, of antipathy, of* ressentiment *(-'enmity is not ended by enmity': the moving refrain of the whole of Buddhism ...). And quite rightly: it is precisely these emotions which would be thoroughly* unhealthy *with regard to the main dietetic objective. The spiritual weariness he discovered and which expressed itself as an excessive 'objectivity' (that is to say weakening of individual interest, loss of centre of gravity, of 'egoism'), he combated by directing even the spiritual interests back to the individual* person. *In the teaching of the Buddha egoism becomes a duty: the 'one thing needful', the 'how can* you *get rid of suffering' regulates and circumscribes the entire spiritual diet ...* [A 20]

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[97] GM iii,17. This statement in the **Genealogy of Morals** represents a shift in Nietzsche's view of Buddhism. In his previous work, **Beyond Good and Evil**, he says that the Buddha, like Schopenhauer, was still "under the spell and illusion of morality" and not beyond good and evil [56]. This change may have come from his reading of Oldenberg who states that Buddhist morality was only "a means to an end" [1882, p289].

Nietzsche obviously takes the notion of the Buddha as the "supreme physician"[98] quite literally, rather in the manner of a Victorian doctor who sends his out-of-sorts patients to the seaside for the sea-air, and warns them off too much alcohol and rich food as well as any activity that might stimulate and over-excite their sensibilities, such as getting into heated discussions about philosophy and religion!

Nirvāṇa is therefore the outcome of a life of "enlightened" self-interest. The Buddhist practitioner simply avoids all actions that have a disturbing or "unhealthy" effect upon himself and develops attitudes whose effect is calming and health promoting and conduces to cheerfulness: "when evil is hated, [it] is not for its own sake, but because it opens the way to states that are harmful to us (unrest, work, care, entanglements, dependence)". It is an extremely simple life , living "entirely in *positive* feelings ... peaceable, good-natured, conciliatory and helpful", reflecting the absence of the usual worldly desires, because "one impoverishes the soil in which [such] ... states grow".[99] Only the bare necessities of life are accepted. In this state the Buddhist can happily accept the fact that the world is without inherent meaning or value, without feeling depressed or anxious. To attain *nirvāṇa* is to overcome the sense of loss and depression felt when life was seen to be without the value and meaning we thought it had by following the Buddha's prescription of living a healthy life. As a consequence one learns cheerfully to adjust to the world's nihilistic reality.

It is hardly surprising then that the Buddha's ideal recruit was one who was "good and good natured from inertia (and above all inoffensive); also from inertia, this type lived abstinently, almost without needs".[100] The Buddha's genius was to understand "how such a [late] human type must inevitably roll, ... into a faith that promises to *prevent* the recurrence of terrestrial troubles (meaning work and action in general)".[101] Buddhism may even have owed its origin and sudden spread throughout India to a "tremendous collapse and *disease of the will*".[102] And Nietzsche, who liked to suggest physiological origins to replace transcendental ones, puts forward, with a certain irony, the notion that "the spread of Buddhism (not its origin) depended

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[98] Nietzsche would have come across this in Coomaraswamy's (1874) translation of the **Sutta Nipāta**, p119. Oldenberg (1882, p191), also mentions the notion of the Buddha as a physician.

[99] WP 342.

[100] GS 353.

[101] *ibid.*

[102] GS 347.

heavily on the excessive and almost exclusive reliance of the Indians on rice which led to a general loss of vigour".[103]

Despite the fact that Nietzsche understood Buddhism to be nihilistic and thus to be avoided, he does find some worthy aspects to it when contrasted with that other nihilistic religion, Christianity. For example, whereas Buddhist nihilism appears after a long spell of refined cultural activity which culminates in lofty philosophic reflection - reflection which unearths the "truth" of its moral and religious structures - Christianity owes its origins to the crude and ill-constituted who, full of resentment and vengefulness, attack life itself.

> Buddha against the "Crucified". *Among the nihilistic religions, one must always clearly distinguish the Christian from the Buddhist. The Buddhist religion is the expression of a fine evening, a perfect sweetness and mildness - it is gratitude toward all that lies behind, and also for what is lacking: bitterness, disillusionment, rancour; finally a lofty spiritual love; the subtleties of philosophic contradiction are behind it, even from these it is resting: but from there it still derives its spiritual glory and sunset glow.*
>
> *The Christian movement is a degeneracy movement composed of reject and refuse elements of every kind: it is not the expression of the decline of a race, it is from the first an agglomeration of forms of morbidity crowding together and seeking one another out. .... it is founded on a rancour against everything well-constituted and dominant: ... It also stands in opposition to every spiritual movement, to all philosophy: it takes the side of idiots and utters a curse on the spirit. Rancour against the gifted, learned, spiritually independent: it detects in them the well-constituted, the masterful.* [WP 154]

This is the main distinction Nietzsche makes between the two nihilistic religions: Buddhism has no ground in *ressentiment* against life whereas Christianity - or, as we might say, Christendom - is a product of it.[104] Both are 'anti-life' but whereas the former is coolly and rationally led to this view, the latter forms it re-actively as an expression of *ressentiment* - *ressentiment* against those it sees as more powerful than itself: the Romans. The Buddha understands that "nothing burns one up quicker than the affects of *ressentiment*"[105] and therefore forbids it. Christianity, however, is fuelled by it.

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[103] GS 134.

Thus, although Buddhism, along with Schopenhauer and Christianity, adheres to the view that it is "better *not* to be than to be",[106] it offers a healthier or more "hygienic" response to life. It struggles against the bare fact of suffering without the "unhygienic" illusion of sin and its corresponding sense of guilt - it has "the self deception of moral concepts behind it" and is, therefore, "*beyond* good and evil".[107] And it is because Buddhism is more "health" promoting that it is slowly gaining ground in Europe as a cure for "diseased nerves".

As it is not my task to evaluate the contrast Nietzsche gives between Buddhism and Christianity nor to offer a critique of his views concerning Christianity, I shall simply address the obvious question: are Nietzsche's views on Buddhism correct?

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[104] For Nietzsche, "Christendom" was Paul's creation. In the **Antichrist** he says: "The word 'Christianity' is already a misunderstanding - in reality there has been only one Christian, and he died on the cross" [39]. Then along came Paul, "the antithetical type to the 'bringer of glad tiding', the genius of hatred, of the vision of hatred, of the inexorable logic of hate" [42]. Through Paul, Christianity, which Nietzsche saw as a "beginning to a Buddhistic peace movement" [*ibid*], became, through Paul, "mankind's greatest misfortune" [51].

[105] EH i,6.

[106] WP 685.

[107] A 20.

To ask whether Buddhism is or is not a form of "passive nihilism" is to ask whether the *summum bonum* of Buddhism, *nirvāṇa*, can be understood in this sense. In other words, is the seeking after the goal of *nirvāṇa* "a sign of weakness"[108], a consequence of the "decline and recession of the spirit"[109] and a pervading "state of *depression*"[110] that comes from seeing that the world does not have the value we thought it had? Is the attainment of *nirvāṇa* the fulfilment of "the instinct of self-destruction, the will for nothingness"[111], a kind of pre-Freudian *Thanatos*, "the striving for peace and extinction"[112] finding its consummation? Although Nietzsche does not refer directly to any specific Buddhist doctrine, the doctrine he most likely has in mind in this context, and which I shall use as the framework within which to approach this question, is the doctrine of the Four Aryan Truths (*catur-ariya-sacca*).[113] For example, Nietzsche's whole judgement upon Buddhism turns on what he sees as its response to "the struggle against *suffering*". Its final goal and answer is to "withdraw from pain into that Oriental Nothing - called Nirvana".[114] Here we have the first and third of the Aryan Truths: "suffering" (*dukkha*) and the "cessation of suffering" (*dukkha-nirodha*) which is synonymous with *nirvāṇa*. The second Truth, "the origin of *dukkha*" (*dukkha-samudaya*) which is "craving" (*taṇhā*), Nietzsche links with Schopenhauer's *Wille* and, like Schopenhauer's *Wille*, "craving" is to be extinguished. The fourth Truth is the "Aryan Eightfold Way" (*ariya-aṭṭaṅgika-magga*) or the various practices which lead to *nirvāṇa*. Following these practices, which Nietzsche thinks of as physiological remedies such as "caution towards all emotions which produce gall"[115], allows the Buddhist, who previously found life too

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[108] WP 23.

[109] WP 22.

[110] A 21.

[111] WP 55.

[112] Edwards (1967), Vol.7, p109.

[113] In Part 1, however, I will only cover the first three "Truths". The whole of Part 2 will cover the forth "Truth" in the comparative study of Nietzsche's "self-overcoming" (*Selbstüberwindung*) and the Buddhist's "mind-development" (*citta-bhāvanā*).

[114] GS *Preface*, 3.

painful and depressing, stoically and cheerfully to await the day when he assumes he will be consumed in the great Nothingness called *nirvāṇa*.

1) "**Suffering**" or ***dukkha***

In **Zarathustra**, obviously drawing upon the Buddhist tradition of the "Four Sights" without mentioning it[116], he says of the first three sights:

> *They encounter an invalid or an old man or a corpse and straight away say "'Life is refuted!" But only they are refuted, they and their eye that sees only one aspect of existence.* [Z ii,9]

Although he sees Buddhism as "the only really *positivistic* religion history has shown us ... as it no longer speaks of 'the struggle against *sin*', but, quite in accordance with actuality, 'the struggle against *suffering*'",[117] the Buddha, because of his supposed refined weariness, can only see "one aspect of existence", that "life is only suffering". He does not see as Nietzsche does that suffering can also be seen as "the ultimate liberator of the spirit";[118] that requires "active nihilism", which is "a sign of strength".[119] That life is "suffering" or *dukkha* is, indeed, the first of the Buddha's Four Aryan Truths, but what Buddhism means by *dukkha* has connotations not associated with the term "suffering",[120] although it does include painful experiences, both mental and physical (*dukkha-vedanā*):

> *"And this, monks, is the Ariyan truth of* dukkha*: birth is* dukkha*, and old age is* dukkha*, and disease is* dukkha*, and dying is* dukkha*, association with what is not dear is* dukkha*, separation from what is dear is* dukkha*, not getting*

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[115] A 20.

[116] His source is probably Oldenberg (1882), p109.

[117] A 20.

[118] GS *Preface*, 3.

[119] WP 22-3. See also WP 382, 585, 686, 852-3, 910, 1004, and 1052 for nihilism as sign of strength.

[120] See PTS Dictionary.

what you want is dukkha - *in short the five aggregates of grasping* [upādāna-khandhas] *are* dukkha. [Vin.i,9]

Dukkha, however, is more than just physical and mental pain as it can also include what the majority of mankind would regard as the opposite of suffering, i.e., pleasure and happiness. This apparent contradiction is resolved when the full connotation of the term is examined. According to the *suttas*, there are three kinds of *dukkha*: "suffering *qua* suffering" (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), "the unsatisfactoriness of unenlightened existence" (*saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*) and "suffering by way of transformation" (*vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*)[121]. "Suffering *qua* suffering" is traditionally interpreted as simply painful physical and mental experiences (*dukkha-vedanā*). "Suffering by way of transformation" means that although our present state may be one of happiness, if we are aware that our happiness is inextricable linked with factors which are outside of our control or which are liable to change, then this awareness itself is a form of *dukkha* or "unsatisfactoriness". However, the most important form of *dukkha*, because of its all-inclusiveness, is *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*. *Saṅkhāra* is an extremely difficult technical term to translate as it depends very much upon context. Here, however, it is used in its widest sense of any activity "which determines, [or] conditions", as well as "that which is determined [or] conditioned".[122] In other words, all unenlightened (*avijjā*) activity as well as the consequences of such activity, are *dukkha*. Any thought, desire or deed which springs from an unenlightened state, a state which does not "see things as they are in reality" (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*), as well as their consequences, are *dukkha*. In the **Abhidharmakoṣabhāṣyam** of Vasubandhu, there is an extensive discussion of *dukkha* which reveals that when Buddhist thinkers began to work out the implications of these three kinds of *dukkha* as found in the Sūtras, they often arrived at differing conclusions. For example, as the Buddhist Path depends upon conditions for its unfoldment then surely it, too, must be *dukkha*. This seems to be the Theravāda position in the **Kathāvatthu**,[123] to which Vasubandhu replies:

The Path is not suffering, because the definition of suffering is to be hateful.

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[121] D iii,216

[122] S.Z. Aung (1910), pp273ff.

[123] XV,II.5.

Now the Path is not hateful to the Aryans because it produces the extinction of all the sufferings of arising.[124]

Nevertheless, despite Vasubandhu's attempts, the fact must remain that as the Buddhist Path is itself dependent upon natural conditions for its unfoldment, it too must be subsumed under *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*. And what about the Goal, *nirvāṇa*? If its realization is dependent upon the Path then must not it, too, be in some sense conditioned and, therefore, come under *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*? Yet *nirvāṇa* is said to be the cessation of all *dukkha* (the third Aryan Truth); it is also referred to as the "Unconditioned" (*asaṅkhata*). I shall return to these questions later. For the time being I will pursue the question as to the meaning of *dukkha*.

The relativity of *dukkha* can be seen in the **Mahāvibhāṣāsāstra**,[125] where it is said that compared to the *dukkha* of the beings in various hell realms (*nārakas*), the *dukkha* of the animals seems pleasant; and compared to the *dukkha* of the human world, the *dukkha* of the various *devas* or "divine beings" seems pleasant. And, as Vasubandhu comments:

The Aryans make of existence in the most sublime heaven (bhavāgra) an idea more painful than do fools make of existence in the most dreadful hell (avīci).[126]

Obviously, *dukkha* is not some quality inherent in objects themselves, but is part of a subject's perspective on things. From the perspective of an Aryan or "nirvānized" person who "sees things as they really are", even the prospect of unrelenting bliss in the highest reaches of the Buddhist cosmos, the *bhavāgra*, where the life span is said to be 80,000 *kalpas* (the equivalent of billions of earth years), is seen as *dukkha*.[127] Even if one ignores such cosmologies as being too fantastic, they have their experiential "subjective" counterparts as mental states systematized in the various Abhidharmas. These form the substance of Buddhist "psychology". And, according to Buddhism as well as the other Indian traditions for whom the practice of

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[124] AK, p901 of L.M. Pruden's translation, (1988-90) Vol.iii.

[125] Note 29 in Pruden (1988-90), Vol.iii.

[126] *ibid.* p900.

[127] *ibid.* p471.

"meditation" *(bhāvanā)* is an essential part of the religious life, states of overwhelming bliss and rapturous happiness can be attained here and now. Yet, at least from the Buddhist point of view, such experiences are a form of *dukkha* even though they are necessary aspects of the process which culminates in *nirvāṇa*. They are *dukkha* in that one can experience them whilst still being a *puthujjana* or "non-Ariyan". In other words, they can be experienced without attaining *nirvāṇa*, without completing the process culminating in "the cessation of *dukkha*" (*dukkha-nirodha*), the third Āryan Truth. Thus any spiritual attainment short of *nirvāṇa* is, in this context, *dukkha*. And, somewhat ironically, the Buddhist texts clearly state that even if one were to become the "Great God", *mahā-brahmā*, who erroneously thinks he is "the Maker and Creator, the ... Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be",[128] this would also be a state of *dukkha*!

From what has been said so far, Nietzsche's charge that Buddhism is pessimistic as it sees life as suffering is obviously wrong if it is taken in the sense that it sees life as only "suffering *qua* suffering" (*dukkha-dukkhatā*). When Buddhism refers to the goal as being "the cessation of *dukkha*" (*dukkha-nirodha*) it is a misunderstanding on Nietzsche's part to interpret that solely as a "withdraw[al] from pain" or as being no more than the ending of a "state of *depression*".

With regard to how the Buddha himself appears in the texts, he hardly conforms to some Nietzschean "gentle Gotama, meek and mild". The Buddha, shortly after his "Awakening" (*bodhi*), encountered the naked ascetic, Upaka, who, being impressed by the Buddha's appearance, asked him: "whose *dhamma* do you profess?" The Buddha then addressed Upaka in verse:

> *Victorious over all, omniscient am I,*
> *Among all things undefiled,*
> *Leaving all, through death of craving freed,*
> *By knowing for myself, whom should I follow?*
>
> *For me there is no teacher,*
> *One like me does not exist,*
> *In the world with its* devas
> *No one equals me.*

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[128] D i,221.

For I am perfected in the world,
The teacher supreme am I,
I alone am all-awakened,
Become cool am I, nirvana-attained.

To turn the dhamma-*wheel*
I go to Kasi's city,
Beating the drum of deathlessness
In a world that's become blind. [Vin.i,7]

Upaka, however, was not that impressed. He replied: "It may be (so), your reverence", shook his head, and went off on his own way. It is certainly ironic that the Buddha, who was capable of having such an effect upon young worldly people, had no effect upon this particular fellow "renouncer" (*samaṇa*) who was, nevertheless, initially impressed by the Buddha's appearance.[129] Whether the Buddha was or was not what he claimed to be, the figure that comes across in the Pāli texts (which is our only source) is not one of a man weary of life who has discovered nothing more than a universal cure for depression. The common epithets of the Buddha are the bull (*usabha*), the elephant (*nāga*) and the lion (*sīha*). He is compared to a bull bursting free of his bonds or an elephant tearing down creepers.[130] Like a lion he is fearless[131] and "roars his lion's roar" (*sīhanāda*) to quell the other teachers.[132] He is "a bull among men, a noble hero (*paravaṃvīra*) ... a conqueror (*vijitāvin*).[133] In the *bhayabherava sutta* (Discourse on Fear and Terror) the Buddha relates how, before his "Awakening" (*bodhi*), he sought out "frightening and horrifying" places in forests at night so as to conquer his fear and terror. At his birth, "Brahmins skilled in signs" are said to have predicted that as he was "endowed with the thirty-two marks of a Great Man (*mahāpurisa*) ... only two courses are open. If he lives the household life

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[129] As Schumann (1989) remarks regarding this encounter with Upaka, "It would have been easy for the compilers of the Pāli Canon to have cut out this episode, which is somewhat detrimental to the Buddha's image. That they did not do so speaks for their respect for historical truth" [p63].

[130] Sn. 29.

[131] Sn. 213.

[132] M i.68.

[133] Sn. 646.

he will become a ruler, a wheel-turning righteous monarch (*rājā cakkavattin*) ... But if he goes forth from the household life into homelessness, then he will become an Arahant, a fully enlightened Buddha".[134] The idea is that the heroic qualities required to become a "righteous monarch" are also those required to become a Buddha. Indeed, as I shall attempt to show later on, the qualities required to become a Buddha seem to be similar to those required to become a Nietzschean *Übermensch*. The impression one derives from the Pāli texts is of a very virile, energetic and supremely confident man of attractive appearance - quite the antithesis of someone who was weary with life.

From a recently published work by Mohan Wijayaratna,[135] which relies entirely upon the Theravāda Canon, despite the fact that some of the Buddha's disciples did, indeed, enter the Buddhist monastic life because of some painful experience, "many of the Buddha's disciples were young people. To join him, most of them had abandoned wealth, a life of luxury, and even a young wife"[136] (sic). And from the impression the texts give us, it does not appear that these young people were weary of life, that they might have thought it "better *not* to be than to be",[137] that they were forms of "degenerating life",[138] decadents whose instincts were in decay resulting in a state of depression. They seemed relatively happy and fun-loving young men who were deeply impressed not only by what the Buddha said but by his very appearance, his vitality and energy.[139] If the Buddha had been a peaceful yet rather cowed and world weary sort, it is highly unlikely that he would have made such an impression upon so many young people. It is difficult to believe that they renounced their previous way of life simply because they found it too burdensome and depressing. It is more likely that they renounced it because of something they were attracted to, which perhaps appealed to their sense of adventure and the promise of a more fulfilling and meaningful life. In comparison to the latter, their old lives were *dukkha*. In the case of the thirty or so young "friends of high standing", who were on a picnic with their wives, and who encountered the Buddha in some woods whilst

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[134] D ii,17ff.

[135] Wijayaratna (1990).

[136] ibid., p4.

[137] WP 685.

[138] TI ix,36.

[139] Wijayaratna (1990), p5ff.

searching for a courtesan (one of them had no wife) who had made off with their belongings, what the Buddha actually communicated to them is in all probability not exactly what the texts tell us - we are given a stock passage frequently connected with "conversions" - it is, nevertheless, basic Buddhist doctrine. He arrests their attention by asking them: "which is better for you, that you should seek for a woman or that you should seek for yourself (*attan*)". The stock passage then continues ...

> *... the Lord talked a progressive talk ... on giving, ... on moral habit, ... on heaven, he explained the peril, the vanity, the depravity of pleasures of the senses, the advantage in renouncing them.*
>
> *When the lord knew that [their minds] were ready, malleable, devoid of hindrances, uplifted, pleased, then he explained to them the teaching on* dhamma *which the awakened ones have themselves discovered: Ill, uprising, stopping, the way. And just as a clean cloth without black specks will take a dye easily, even so ...* dhamma-*vision, dustless, stainless, arose [in them] ... that "whatever is of the nature to uprise, all that is of a nature to stop".* [Vin.i,22]

Leaving aside for the time being the doctrinal implications of "seeking for yourself (*attan*)," it is quite clear that these young men and many others, at least according to the Buddhist texts, were *inspired* by the Buddha and it was this fact that led them to give up their worldly pursuits and become "monks" (*bhikkhus*). Others may have been enticed by the Buddhist view of the religious life as expressed in the **Dhammapada**, where the image of the Buddhist life does not correspond with Nietzsche's talk of gloom and despondency, and whose terms are stronger than his own references to "cheerfulness":

> *Happy, indeed, we live,*
> *we who possess nothing.*
> *Feeders on rapture we shall be*
> *as the Radiant* devas. [Dhp 200]

Given such a view of the religious life, it is understandable how some young men "of high standing" might forfeit the prospect of a successful and relatively happy worldly life in order to become "feeders on rapture", even though, before their encounter with the Buddha, such a prospect had never entered their minds. And it

would surely have taken more than a sweet and mild[140] but wearied form of life to convince them of such a prospect.[141]

Personally, I find it difficult to see how such young men, who were in all probability enjoying life, could be inspired to give up their previous way of life so as to follow a materially austere religious path whose final aim was nothing short of complete existential suicide. How could such a prospect sit side by side with being a "feeder on rapture"? Even assuming that the Buddha was a cunning pied-piper, if his teaching did not, in time, bring the promised results, then surely many of these people would have eventually deserted him - after all, what young person would be happy living a sexually abstinent life on one begged meal a day, and no possessions other than three pieces of cloth for clothing and a begging-bowl. But, at least according to the texts, this was not the case. And, if this is the case, it would not be so surprising if many young men "of high standing" who, prior to encountering the Buddha were quite content with their lot, should give up the "household life" and take up the "homeless life" under his direction. It is difficult to believe that all the Buddha did was to show them the way to fulfil their "instinct of self-destruction"[142] by becoming "nirvānized". I find it more reasonable to assume that the Buddha convinced them that in comparison with the prospect of the life he now opened up to them, their previous lives were "unsatisfactory" (*dukkha*) as were, by implication, the lives the vast majority of mankind led. And it would also make sense to see that the reason their previous way of life now appeared "unsatisfactory" (*dukkha*) was because, relatively speaking, it was existentially less fulfilling. What the Buddha offered them was the prospect of a more meaningful ideal of what a human being can become. I will return to this interpretation of *dukkha* later, and make now one final point concerning the notion of *dukkha*.

If many were weary of life it could, in the Indian context of a vista of endless rebirths, make sense to take up a life that held out the prospect of becoming extinguished once and for all. After all, it would not make sense to commit suicide as one will simply return to face life all over again. In a depressed state the thought of

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[140] WP 154.

[141] One could, of course, make a comparison with Socrates, another arch *décadent* according to Nietzsche, who had to drink the hemlock after being accused of corrupting the youth of Athens. But Socrates was not offering them complete "extinction" as an ultimate reward for becoming a philosopher. If he had, then the likes of Alcibiades would no doubt have found him much less attractive.

[142] WP 55.

such a prospect of endless becoming could appear unbearable. And even if people were not depressed and weary of life, which is the impression the Pāli texts give, it could nevertheless be argued that the prospect of endless "again-becoming" might appear to many - perhaps the more reflective types - as a burden they would rather do without, even though they were not too dissatisfied with their present lot. And, this being the case, the notion of putting an end to all future rebirth and thereby becoming extinct, might be appealing. It is true that the Buddha does refer to the goal in terms of the end of the cycle of rebirth or, more correctly, "again-becoming" (*puna-bhava*) which is synonymous with *nirvāṇa*, but the question as to what "no-more-again-becoming" (*apuna-bhava*) or *nirvāṇa* actually means, I shall again defer until later. But, as I have intimated, from the Buddhist perspective one would be giving up more than an endless series of *ordinary* lives. According to the Buddhist teaching on *kamman*, what one becomes in the future is dependent upon how one acts in the present, which isn't to say that whatever one experiences in the future is *directly* a consequence of present action (*kamman*).[143] To the degree that one acts "skilfully" (*kusalatā*) the consequences (*kamma-vipaka*) will be correspondingly pleasant. It is therefore possible, through "skilful action" (*kusala-kamman*), to be reborn as a *deva* in some blissful heaven where, according to the tradition, all one's desires are instantly met. And, if one continues with "skilful actions", it must be possible to continue as a *deva* even after the effects of the actions that put one there in the first place have died away. Thus the possibility of a perpetually blissful existence in some heaven or other is entirely within one's own power: whatever change occurs would always occur within that state and, providing one's actions were appropriate, maintain it. It does seem rather perverse, then, if *nirvāṇa* did mean total extinction, to turn one's back on the prospect of unending bliss and prefer extinction. Yet even if one could dwell for ever in such a state this would still fall under the category of *sankhāra-dukkhatā*, so in what sense could endless bliss be regarded as a form of *dukkha*? How is it possible to become dissatisfied with such a heavenly prospect? After all this prospect, or something akin to it, seems to be the religious goal of a large part of mankind. Again the Buddhist answer to this will depend upon what *nirvāṇa* actually is as such a prospect is *dukkha* only in contrast to *nirvāṇa*. Nevertheless, I think that enough has been said to show that according to the teachings of Buddhism the notion that life is *dukkha* does not correspond to Nietzsche's interpretation of it, i.e., *that life is simply suffering*. Nor does the image

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[143] See A i,249ff.

the texts convey regarding the person of the Buddha give the impression that he was weary of life, that he was a Nietzschean *décadent*. And neither is it the case that the main reason people turned away from ordinary life to follow the Buddhist path was that they were simply weary of life and depressed. Nietzsche, nevertheless, does think that the Buddhist way of life, unlike what is claimed by other religions, actually fulfils its promises. Its followers do overcome their supposed weariness and depression and become relatively happy,[144] overcoming their "suffering" through achieving a state of bovine-like contentment in which they can contemplate their eventual extinction at death in the knowledge that this is the only way of life that accords with reality and truth.

2) The cause of *dukkha* is "craving" (*taṇhā*)

Although Nietzsche does not say anything directly on the notion of *taṇhā* or "craving", he does refer to the fact that in Buddhism it is the "drives" and "desires" producing particular actions which "bind one to existence".[145] This, indeed, is what Buddhism does say about *taṇhā*: "for craving [*taṇhā*] sews one to this ever-becoming birth",[146] which is *dukkha*. He goes on to add that because Buddhism is supposed to see existence as meaningless it follows that such drives and desires must also be meaningless: Buddhists "see in evil a drive towards something illogical: to the affirmation of means to an end one denies". The idea here is that as in Buddhism it is through our actions, past and present, that we suffer in this life and continue to suffer beyond it, and as the goal is to put an end to continued existence and all *dukkha*, it would be illogical for a Buddhist to act on these drives as this would affirm the antithesis of his goal: continued existence and *dukkha*, i.e., *saṃsāra*. And, as existence is now seen to be pointless and meaningless, any actions which affirmed existence would be affirming that meaninglessness and would therefore be themselves pointless and meaningless. Thus because they "seek a way of non-existence ... they regard with horror all affective drives"[147] and "conceived a rule of conduct to liberate one from action",[148] that rule being "[o]ne must *not* act".[149] Some "good" actions, however, are permitted but "only for the time being, merely as a means - namely, as

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[144] A 20.

[145] WP 155.

[146] A iii,399.

[147] WP 155.

a means to emancipation from *all* actions",[150] *nirvāṇa* being the state of "emancipation from all actions".[151] The kind of drives Nietzsche has in mind are such as "*ressentiment*", "enmity", "revengefulness" and "all emotions which produce gall, which heat the blood" or cause "anxiety". All these and similar affects are "thoroughly *unhealthy* with regard to the main dietetic objective", which is to "get rid of suffering".[152]

This appears to be Nietzsche's understanding of the second Āryan Truth, that the origin of *dukkha* is *taṇhā*, the latter being the ground state from which spring all those affects (*saṅkhāras*) which produce *dukkha* and which "bind one to existence".[153] Being emancipated "from *all* actions" is to achieve a state of "stillness, absence of desire", which is *nirvāṇa* or the "waning of craving" (*taṇhā-khaya*).[154] I will take up the notion of *taṇhā* and its implications in relation to Nietzsche's concept of will to power later, for the present I will simply outline the notion for contrast with Nietzsche's "affective drives".

The Term Taṇhā

Taṇhā is literally "draught" or "thirst" and, as Mrs. Rhys Davids comments, "the word Taṇhā is found mainly in poetry, or in prose passages charged with emotion. It is rarely used in the philosophy or the psychology".[155] Figuratively, it means "craving, hunger for excitement, the fever of longing"[156] and it is in this latter sense

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[148] *ibid.*

[149] WP 458.

[150] WP 155.

[151] It must be noted that in Buddhism *kamman* or "action" is threefold: *kāya-kamman* or "bodily-action", *vaci-kamman* or "speech-action" and *mano-kamman* or "mental-action" (See A i,110). To experience an affect such as hatred is therefore considered an act even though it is not verbally or physically expressed.

[152] A 20.

[153] A 21.

[154] S i,136.

[155] PTS Dictionary.

[156] ibid.

that it is used in the *suttas*. It can never be adequately translated by "desire" as *taṇhā* is always negative and contrary to the pursuit of the Buddhist path, whereas certain desires such as *chanda*, as in *dhamma-chanda* or "desire for the Dharma", are integral to the Buddhist path. Buddhism has no general term for emotion *per se* but, on the whole, refers only to particular emotions and affects. Nevertheless, I would suggest that *taṇhā* is best understood as the generic term for the emotional ground and support for what Buddhism calls *akusala-dhammas* or "unskilful states of mind"[157] of which the most common trilogy is *lobha* or "clinging-attachment", *dosa* or "ill-will" and *moha* or "delusion". They are also known as the three *akusala-mūlas* or "unskilful roots"[158] in the sense that they nourish secondary *akusala-dhammas* such as *rāga* or "sensuous passion", *pema* or "quasi-sexual affection", *sneha* or "lust", *kāma* or "sensual desire", *macchariya* or "avarice", *uddhacca* or "restlessness" in the case of *lobha*; *issā* or "jealousy", *vihiṃsā* or "cruelty", *paṭigha* or "repulsion", *upanāha* or "resentment", *makkha* or "rage", *paḷāsa* or "spite" in the case of *dosa*; and *diṭṭhis* or "opinionated views", *māna* or "conceit", *vicikicchā* or "perplexity", *kusīta* or "laziness", *kukkucca* or "worry" in the case of *moha*. All of these are grounded in *taṇhā* and are destroyed when *taṇhā* is permanently eradicated - in other words, when *nirvāṇa* is attained. One may wonder at this point whether there is any corresponding ground for the *kusala-dhammas* or "skilful states of mind" but, at least as far as the Pāli texts go, there is no corresponding term for a ground for the *kusala-dhammas*.[159] There are, however, three corresponding *kusala-mūlas* in *alobha* or "non-clinging-attachment", *adosa* or "non-hatred" and *amoha* or "non-delusion". Although these *kusala-mūlas* are grammatically negative they are said to imply something positive: *dāna* or "generosity" in the case of *alobha*, *metta* or "loving-kindness" in the case of *adosa* and *paññā* or "understanding" in the case of *amoha*.[160] If I were to proffer a corresponding positive counterpart to *taṇhā* I would suggest something like *dhamma-chanda*, "desire for the Real or True". These *kusala-mūlas* and their secondary

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[157] M i,98ff.

[158] D iii,214.

[159] This may be why later schools came up with notions such as the *tathāgata-garbha* or "seed of Buddhahood" and the *ālaya-vijñāṇa* or "store-house consciousness" which attempt to explain how beings, despite the influence of *taṇhā*, can attain Buddhahood.

[160] Nārada (1968), pp104-5.

derivatives would correspond to Nietzsche's "good" actions which are the "means to emancipation from all actions". But, again, this is something I will take up later.

As Nietzsche does not say too much about *taṇhā* my comments will be brief. He is quite correct in seeing that for Buddhism many affects, drives and actions do indeed "bind one to existence" or, in Buddhist terms, to "continual re-becoming" (*puna-bhava*) and *dukkha*. And, although Nietzsche does not actually mention the term *taṇhā*, the affects he mentions such as *ressentiment*, enmity and revengefulness are good examples of the kind of *akusala-dhammas* rooted in *taṇhā* that do lead to *puna-bhava* and *dukkha* (in the sense of *dukkha-dukkhatā*). Yet he sees the effects of such actions as being almost immediate and physiologically based, for example they "heat the blood", "produce gall" and cause "anxiety". But Buddhism, although not denying that there may be some immediate effects and that some of these may well have physiological symptoms, sees that effects may indeed take lifetimes to manifest, as they manifest only when the conditions are appropriate. Therefore, at least as far as Buddhism is concerned, as the *kamma-vipakas* or "effects of action" can take lifetimes to manifest and can also "ripen" in realms other than the human one,[161] the notion of *kamman* or "action" and *kamma-vipaka* or "effect of action" must transcend the physiological.

The reason, according to Nietzsche, that Buddhists abhor these affects and drives that create *puna-bhava* and *dukkha* is that they "seek a way of non-existence".[162] But one of the three kinds of *taṇhā* mentioned in the texts is *vibhava-taṇhā* or "craving for extinction", the others being *kāma-taṇhā* or "sensual craving" and *bhava-taṇhā* or "craving for [any form of] existence".[163] It could of course be argued that although the goal is to become extinct, it is wrong to crave for it as this very craving will hinder one in achieving it. After all, the second Āryan Truth does say that *any* form of *taṇhā* will result in *dukkha* and will, in Nietzsche's terms, "bind one to existence". Thus if one wished to become extinct at death, "craving" for that end would result in the opposite and that really would be *dukkha*! Again, this question will find its resolution later when I deal with *nirvāṇa*. Nietzsche, however, was probably misled here by Oldenberg who translates *vibhava-taṇhā* as "craving for power".[164] Although the prefix *vi-* can be an intensifier and *vibhava* can, in other contexts, mean "power", in

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[161] A iv,63.

[162] WP 155.

[163] D iii,216.

the case of the compound *vibhava-taṇhā* the prefix is a negative one. Thus *vibhava* denotes the opposite of *bhava*, i.e., "non-becoming" or "non-existence".[165]

3) Nirodha or the Cessation of *dukkha* (which is *nirvāṇa*)

Despite the fact that the issue whether or not *nirvāṇa* entails complete annihilation at the death of a nirvānized person has been disputed since the middle of the 18th century in the West, the debate among scholars both East and West still continues. For example, two recent publications, both of which are slightly modified doctoral theses, **A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God** by Gunapala Dharmasiri and **Rationality and Mind in Early Buddhism** by Frank J. Hoffman, claim that according to the Pāli texts the nirvānized person is completely annihilated at death - absolutely nothing except the decaying material body remains or continues in any form after death. On the other hand Peter Harvey in his recent **Introduction to Buddhism** and, more fully, in his article *Conscious Mysticism in the Discourses of the Buddha*,[166] argues for the continuance after the death of the nirvānized person of some kind of mysterious "consciousness" (*viññāṇa*) which is "objectless" (*anārammana*) and "unsupported" (*appatiṭṭha*). As such antithetical views can be derived from the same texts, is it the case that the texts are so ambiguous that both views can be supported; or is it the case that one view is simply wrong? My own view is that both Dharmasiri and Hoffman are wrong. And as Nietzsche also sees *nirvāṇa* as implying complete annihilation he, too, must be wrong.

The Meaning of the Term Nirvāṇa

The term *nirvāṇa* or, in Pāli, *nibbāna*, breaks down into the prefix *nir-* (*nis-*) meaning "out", "away" and the $\sqrt{vā}$ meaning "to blow", and so *nirvāṇa* quite literally means "blown out" or "extinction". It also implies "health, the sense of bodily well-being (probably, at first, the passing away of feverishness)"[167] and so "become cool", "calmed", "refreshed".[168] In ordinary Sanskrit or Pāli parlance one would refer to the *nirvāṇa* or "extinction" of a fire, and this is a common image associated with *nirvāṇa*

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[164] Oldenberg (1882), p211.

[165] See PTS Dictionary.

[166] K. Werner (1989), pp82-102.

[167] PTS Dictionary.

in the Pāli texts. In Buddhism, however, there are in fact two *nirvāṇas*, *nirvāṇa* and *parinirvāṇa*, the prefix *pari* meaning "complete" or "full". Sometimes the two are synonymous, but where a distinction is made *nirvāṇa* refers to the attainment of *bodhi* or "enlightenment" and *parinirvāṇa* to the state or lack of it at the death of a nirvānized person. Therefore, the question whether the final goal of Buddhism is, as Nietzsche sees it, to become non-existent, refers to *parinirvāṇa*. *Nirvāṇa*, in Nietzsche's terms, would then be the attainment of the state of "cheerfulness, stillness [and] absence of desire", a state of "non-action", prior to attaining *parinirvāṇa* or annihilation at death.

As a technical term for a religious goal, *nirvāṇa* does not appear in either the *vedas* or the classical *upaniṣads*, although it does appear in the *bhagavad-gītā*[169] as *brahma-nirvāṇa*, "Nirvāṇa that is Brahman". However, as the *bhagavad-gītā* was written after Buddhism was established, it is reasonable to assume that the former borrowed from the latter. As Zaehner remarks, the *bhagavad-gītā* "seeks to adopt the Buddhist ideal into its own theistic framework"[170] by identifying *brahman* with *nirvāṇa*.[171] The only other references to there being a goal of *nirvāṇa* besides that of Buddhism are two mentioned in the **Majjhima Nikāya**, and a list of five *nirvāṇas* mentioned in the **Dīgha Nikāya**. In the former case, the first[172] involves a rather cryptic statement which the commentary makes sense of as meaning *nirvāṇa* as a state of temporal well-being and therefore "mistaken by the worldling for the real thing".[173] In the second, the wanderer Māgandiya refers to a *nirvāṇa* which is said to have "been spoken [of] by earlier teachers of teachers of the wanderers". However, when asked what he means by this *nirvāṇa*, it again turns out to be nothing more than good physical health and well-being.[174] In the other instance, there are said to be some

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[168] Monier-Williams, Sanskrit Dictionary.

[169] 2.72 and 5.24-5.

[170] Zaehner (1969), p215.

[171] Basham (1989) also remarks that "the use of the word several times in the *bhagavad-gītā* suggests that this philosophical stratum belongs to a period when Buddhism was well known" [p89].

[172] M i,4.

[173] Kv 404.

[174] Mi, 509.

samaṇas and *brāhmaṇas* who think that "the self realizes the highest *nirvāṇa* here and now", in one or other of five ways: either through pure indulgence of the five senses or through the attainment of one of the four *jhānas* or "levels of meditation".[175] All of these are rejected by the Buddha as being *miccha-diṭṭhis* or "false-views". In Buddhist doctrine, although the attainment of these *jhānas* are steps on the way to *nirvāṇa*, - they constitute part of the development of the *kusala-dhammas* - they are still part of *saṃsāra*. To see them as the goal which is the end of *saṃsāra* is therefore a *miccha-diṭṭhi*.

From these examples it is clear that *nirvāṇa*, as a term for the goal of the religious life, was used by some of the Buddha's contemporaries and even predecessors among the *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*, even though it may only have been one epithet among many. And, despite the literal meaning of the term, none of these views directly support the view that *nirvāṇa* entails annihilation. Nevertheless, the notion that the person who attains one of these *nirvāṇas* is annihilated at death cannot be ruled out: in the same *sutta*, under one of the "seven ways [that] maintain the ... annihilation [*uccheda*] of a living being", it is said that a "self" [*attan*] which is "divine [*dibba*], having form [*rūpa*], made of mind [*mano-maya*]" does survive the death of the physical body but is eventually annihilated after an unspecified period of time as a *deva*.[176] Perhaps this is why the Buddhists came up with the term *parinirvāṇa*, a specifically Buddhist term which links *nirvāṇa* and death. But, again, from other passages in the same *sutta*, it is also possible to link the attainment of one of these *nirvāṇa*s with the notion that the *attan* survives death and dwells eternally in one of the realms of the *rūpa-loka*, in a divine, mind-made form. I have to conclude, therefore, that apart from the literal meaning of the term there is no direct evidence outside the Buddhist texts that *nirvāṇa* was connected with the notion of annihilation.

Nirvāṇa *and the Image of Fire*

Fire was a central element and symbol in most, if not all, early human cultures, but nowhere was it more significant and pervasive than in the Aryan sacrificial culture of North India. For example, in the **Ṛg-veda**, which precedes the birth of the Buddha by some 500 years, it is fire, as the essence of life and divineness as Agni,

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[175] Di, 36-38.

[176] This, at least, is how the commentary glosses what is a very unclear passage. See Walshe's translation (1987), note 75, p542.

which carries the dead man on the cremation pyre to unite with his ancestral "fathers".[177] Elsewhere, Agni is even said to *be* all gods: "In you, O son of strength, are all gods".[178] He is immanent in the cosmos in that "[h]e exists on all levels, is the basis of all, hence appears in the waters, in the stones, in the herbs, is 'the head of heaven, earth's centre', 'engendered by the gods' yet 'father of gods'[179] and their giver of immortality. He is common to all men (*vaiśvanara*), their very centre (*nābhiḥ*) ... immortal guest midst mortal beings".[180] Fire, as *tapas* or "heat", in the *nasādīya* or "Creation Hymn",[181] is seen as the primordial creative urge which then gives rise to (interestingly enough from a Buddhist perspective) *kāma* or "desire", the "first seed of mind". Fire is therefore "the catalyst that brings about the change from one quiescent state to another, dynamic state of being"[182] and, as *tapas*, is "*an active power*, the mediator, translator, transformer of the profane to the sacred".[183] In the early *upaniṣads*, where the fire ritual of the *vedas* becomes internalized as *tapas*, this immanent aspect of fire is used as an image of both the individual and universal aspects of *brahman/ātman*. The *ātman* or "soul" is likened to the latent fire in wood which through the "friction" of the recitation of the sacred syllable ***oṃ***, allows the immanent *ātman*, which is also *brahman*, to be seen.[184] From these and other examples it is clear that the image of fire in Āryan culture is linked to the notion of some universal and immanent creative essence of which fire, lightning and the sun are only its most visible palpable manifestations. Since this was the prominent cultural background against which the Buddha taught and, assuming that he had knowledge of it and did not want to be misunderstood, any use of the image of fire in his teaching

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[177] X.16. It is interesting to note that here the causative of *nir√vā, nirvāpayati*, is used in verse 13: "Now Agni, quench [*nirvāpayatī*] and revive the very one you have burnt up".

[178] V.3.11.

[179] I.69.1.

[180] Miller (1985), p97.

[181] X.129.

[182] Miller (1985), p97.

[183] Knipe (1975), p78.

[184] See *śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*, 1.13ff.

would take that background into account. In fact it is probable that his intended meaning can only be comprehended within the context of that background.

The image of a fire being "nirvānized" or "extinguished" in relation to the person attaining the final goal is a common one in the Buddhist texts, as the following examples show.

> *The Wise are quenched* [nibbanti] *just like a lamp.*[Sn.235]

> *Just as a flame blown out by the force of the wind ... goes to a setting none can reckon, so a sage released from his psycho-physical embodiment* [nāma-rūpa] *goes to a setting none can reckon.* [Sn 1074]

> *Just as the bourn of a blazing spark of fire*
> *Struck from the anvil, gradually fading,*
> *Cannot be known,- so in the case of those*
> *Who've rightly won release and crossed the flood*
> *Of lusts that bind, and reached the bliss unshaken*
> *The bourn they've won cannot be pointed to.*[Ud viii,9]

> *To him from craving utterly set free*
> *Extinction* [nibbāna] *of the burning flame hath come.*
> *And to his heart* [citta] *Release (and Liberty).*[A i,236]

Given the Āryan cultural background outlined above, if we ask what kind of impression these images of *parinirvāṇa* would have made upon the Buddha's audience, many of whom were Brāhmans, we should have to assume that they would not in the least suggest complete annihilation. A fire, on being extinguished, on being "nirvānized", would be thought by many to pass on to some mysterious state which is both immanent and transcendent. Yet Dharmasiri, whilst admitting that this was a common Indian tradition, thinks that because it belonged to the Brāhmanical tradition and the Buddha rejected Brāhmanical metaphysics, he would also have rejected the metaphysical implications of such imagery. But, whilst I would agree that the Buddha did indeed reject the Brāhmanical metaphysical implications of this imagery, I would not conclude as Dharmasiri does that *parinirvāṇa* implies nothing more than complete and total annihilation.[185] Surely, given that the Buddha was aware of the beliefs associated with this imagery, he could, if he had wanted to, have made it unambiguously clear that at the death of a "nirvānized" person there was no

"thereafter", no matter how subtle, indeterminable and mysterious. This would have been a rather straightforward thing to do and requires no subtlety of thought either to communicate or understand. Of course, it could be argued crudely that the Buddha did not want initially to frighten people off with the idea of annihilation and let them imagine in their Brāhmanical way that he was only showing them another better way to put an end to *saṃsāra*. He simply used the fire imagery as a means of conversion, as a "sweetener", before eventually revealing to them the real truth that annihilation was the only way to end *puna-bhava*.[186] But, at least according to the Buddhist texts, there is no evidence of such duplicity. As the *tevijja sutta* of the **Dīgha Nikāya** makes clear,[187] the Buddha, probably with some irony, actually shows some Brāhmans how to achieve their goal of "union with *brahmā*".[188] Two young Brāhmans ask him to resolve a dispute as to which of their respective Brāhman teachers shows "the only straight path ... to union with Brahmā". He points out to them that none of the Brāhman teachers "learned in the Three Vedas", going back the earliest times, "has ever seen Brahmā face to face" and that what they say and teach is therefore "laughable, mere words, empty and vain". Such Brāhmans, being "encumbered with wives and wealth ... full of hate ... impure ... undisciplined", cannot "have any communion, anything in common with ... Brahmā", and therefore it is not possible that such Brāhmans "after death ... be united with ... Brahmā". The Buddha, however, claims to "know Brahmā and the world of Brahmā, ... and the path of practice whereby the world of Brahmā may be gained". This is achieved through practising *sīla* or "ethical conduct", the cultivation (*bhāvanā*) of *samādhi* or "concentration" and the four *brahma-vihāras*[189] or "abodes of Brahmā", *mettā* or "loving kindness", *mudita* or "sympathetic joy", *karuṇā* or "compassion" and

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[185] Dharmasiri, p180.

[186] Oldenberg (1882) mentions that the Buddha, when asked directly about the existence or non-existence of the *attan*, avoids a direct answer as the truth might be too much for the "weak" [pp273-74].

[187] See also *subha-sutta* of **Majjhima Nikāya**, Vol.ii.

[188] *Brahmā sahavyatā* can also mean "companionship with *brahmā*". As Walshe remarks, "Rhys Davids has been accused of mistranslating *sahavyatā*, thus implying a mystical union rather than merely belonging to the company of Brahmā. But the Brahmins had explained to the Buddha that they were puzzled because different teachers interpreted the path to Brahmā in different ways. Thus both interpretations may well be implied" [p43]. In other words, although the neuter form of *brahman* - the impersonal Absolute of the early *upaniṣads* - never occurs in the Pāli texts but only the masculine *brahmā* - the creator god - the more "mystical union" of the Upaniṣadic type might also be implied in this episode.

upekkhā or "equanimity". The young Brāhmans accept this as the true way to union with Brahmā and set out with this goal in mind whilst at the same time becoming disciples of the Buddha. The irony is that they set out to achieve their Brāhman goal by following his teachings. However, it is clear from this episode that what the Buddha rejected was not that union with Brahmā was a figment of the imagination as Nietzsche thinks it is but rather that, from the Buddha's point of view, although such a goal is attainable and is, relatively speaking, worthwhile, in the final analysis it is *dukkha* or "unsatisfactory" as it does not, as is claimed, bring an end to rebirth in *saṃsāra*. So what the Buddha rejects is the interpretation of this goal.[190] Therefore, as I see it, as the Buddha accepted that such goals could be attained and was aware of the misunderstandings that might arise in his audiences through the association of the idea of union with either *brahman* or *brahmā* with the image of a fire being "nirvānized", when he says that whatever happens after the death of a "nirvānized" person they cannot be "reckoned" or "pointed to", he is using the positive aspect of the imagery to point to something beyond its common association whilst, at the same time, negating that association. We are left with a positive something beyond reckoning which is not simply a nothing.

In another episode which I think brings more weight to this interpretation and indicates just what is permanently annihilated in the fire imagery, the wanderer Vacchagotta questions the Buddha as to the state of a *tathāgata* - another term for a "nirvānized" person - after death, whether he exists, doesn't exist, both exists and doesn't exist, neither exists nor doesn't exist. The Buddha replies:

But if someone were to question you thus, Vaccha: That fire that was in front

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[189] In Buddhism, compound forms of *brahma-* do not necessarily refer to *brahman* or *brahmā*, but usually mean "excellent" as in *brahma-cariya*, the "life of excellence". The goal of the *brahma-cariya*, being *nirvāna*, goes beyond any "abodes of *brahmā*" - if that is what is meant by the *brahma-vihāras*.

[190] One interesting point that emerges from this encounter is that although they became his disciples their goal was not *nirvāṇa*. He only taught them two of the threefold division of the path, *sīla* and *samādhi*, and not the final and necessary step for the attainment of *nirvāṇa* - *paññā* or "transformative insight". Why he did not teach them the final step is a matter for conjecture - perhaps he thought that they would not be interested or that they were not ready. However, it does reveal the Buddha's attitude to spiritual goals other than his own. If he thought them worthwhile, he encouraged them. After all, if they concerned *sīla* and *samādhi* then they were also aspects of the Buddhist path culminating in *nirvāṇa*.

of you and that has been quenched - to which direction has that fire gone from here, to the east or west or north or south? [M i,487]

Vacchagotta replies that none of these apply. It simply does not make sense to talk of the fire as literally going anywhere after it is extinguished. The Buddha then says that it is similar with the *tathāgata* or liberated person at death: it simply does not make sense to talk of them going anywhere after death. Now this "not going anywhere" could be taken to mean total extinction despite what I've said about the fire imagery, but the Buddha does go on to compare the *tathāgata* to a "great ocean" which "is deep, immeasurable, [and] unfathomable". Now if a *tathāgata* did become completely extinct at death, then what is "deep, immeasurable and unfathomable" about that. After all, there were many people then (as there are today) who believed that at death we are completely annihilated. And when this is added to the explicit statement that to say a *tathāgata* does not exist after death does not fit the case, does this not imply that whatever happens after the death of a *tathāgata*, they at least do not become completely extinct?

In this *sutta* and in others the Buddha does say what is in fact annihilated. Here it is the *pañca-khandhas* or "five aggregates", the physical and psychological constituents that constitute a sentient being which, since they are identified as the "fuel" which keeps the fire burning, are said, in the case of a *tathāgata*, to be "cut off at the root, made like a palm-tree stump that can come to no further existence and is not liable to arise in the future". In the case of a "non-nirvānized" person this "fuel" is not destroyed at death and so the fire can be rekindled, life after life. These *khandhas* are the five "collections" into which a person, for pragmatic purposes, can be analysed. There is *rūpa*, which is all that is other than our subjectivity, our bodily form. Then there the four aspects which constitute our subjectivity; *vedanā* or "sensation" or "overall feeling tone", which is either pleasant, unpleasant or indifferent; *saññā* or "apperception", in the sense of the processes through which present experience is assimilated to past experience, and includes recognising and naming; *saṅkhāras* or "affective and volitional dispositions", both potential and actual, and which are identical with *kamman*; and, lastly, *viññāṇa* or "consciousness", which in this set-up is passive and simply "lights up" the rest. The question is, therefore, are there any indications in the texts as to whether there is anything outside of these *pañca-khandhas* which could be said to continue after they have been completely destroyed? If there is, then *parinirvāṇa* does not imply

complete and unconditional annihilation. However, before dealing with this aspect, I will continue the theme of what is said to be annihilated.

I have no doubt that the Buddha used the image of fire somewhat ironically. In the Brāhmanical culture fire was *the* religious symbol and so for the Buddha to associate it with what is contrary to the *brahma-cariya* or "life in pursuit of excellence", with what has to be overcome and eventually extinguished, must have had an impact whose irony was so obvious that no allusion was necessary. In the **Itivuttaka** the Buddha states:

> *Monks, there are these three fires. What three? The fire of lust, the fire of hate, the fire of delusion.* [Itv.92]

He then goes on to say that these three *akusala-mūlas* are to be extinguished by the "Wise" (*dhīra*). However, in the Brāhmanical *śrauta* sacrificial ritual, the triple character of Agni is symbolized by three sacred fires: the *gārhapatya* or "fire belonging to the lord of the home", the *āhavanīya* or "fire of the offering", and the *dakṣina* or "southern fire".[191] And as it was a spiritual duty to maintain these three sacred fires and never allow them to go out, for the Buddha to refer to the goal of the religious life in terms of the extinguishing of three fires and to identify them with the three *akusala-mūlas*, the very "roots" of the anti-spiritual life, and also to add elsewhere that it is by extinguishing these three fires that makes one a *real* Brāhman,[192] the term *nirvāṇa* must have gained a potency quite beyond its negative connotations. Here we have if not a clear reason for dissociating the extinction of fire with annihilation, at least a perspective on the Buddha's *use* of this imagery which should make us cautious in interpreting it too literally. The Buddha is identifying the image of fire with all that is to be overcome and eventually destroyed, with all that hinders what he sees as the truly religious life whose goal is *nirvāṇa*. And, as I showed earlier, in the case of the young Brāhmans, even hinders the goal of union with *brahmā*, making for a double irony.

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[191] Hopkins (1971), p14ff.

[192] See the *brāhmaṇavagga* of the Dhammapada.

In the Pāli texts, *ucchedavāda* or the "doctrine of annihilation" is associated with the *samaṇa* Ajita Kesakambalin, a materialist and contemporary of the Buddha. According to the *sāmaññaphala sutta*, he taught that "the talk of those who preach a doctrine of survival [after death] is vain and false. Fools and wise, at the breaking up of the body, are destroyed and perish, they do not exist after death".[193] In the *brahmajāla-sutta*, there is a list of seven varieties of *ucchedavāda*: the one mentioned by Ajita and six others, each of which has a subtler immaterial version of the self than the preceding one, and each makes the claim: "It is this self [*attan*] that at the breaking-up of the body is annihilated and perishes, and does not exist after death". All these views are said by the Buddha to be *miccha-diṭṭhis* or "wrong-views",[194] and as such form no part of his doctrine. Yet, despite this denial, *ucchedavāda* did, at least in the minds of some, come to be associated with the Buddha. For example, in the **Vinaya** the General Sīha asks the Buddha whether there is any way in which it could be said: "The recluse Gotama asserts annihilation [*uccheda*], he teaches a doctrine of annihilation [*ucchedavāda*]?". The Buddha replies that there is: "I indeed assert the annihilation of passion, hatred, stupidity; I assert the annihilation of manifold evil and wrong states (of mind)".[195] Here, at least, the sense in which the Buddha can be said to teach *ucchedavāda* is unambiguous: he teaches the annihilation of the *akusala-mūlas* and their evolutes, which amounts to the third Āryan Truth, the annihilation of the ground of all *akusala* states: *taṇhā* or "craving". The reason that general Sīha and others came to doubt whether the Buddha was an *ucchedavādin* or not, is probably due to their understanding, or misunderstanding, of the doctrine of *anattan*. For example, elsewhere the Buddha is accused of being a *venayika* or "nihilist" because "he lays down the cutting off [*uccheda*], the destruction, the disappearance [*vibhava*] of an existent entity". The Buddha denies that he ever taught such a doctrine: "Formerly I, monks, as well as now, lay down simply *dukkha* and the stopping of *dukkha*".[196] In other words, as I just mentioned above, he only teaches the annihilation of *taṇhā*, *taṇhā* being the cause of *dukkha*. However, earlier in the

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[193] D i,55. Yet, elsewhere, Ajita is listed among those who on discussing the fate of a disciple after death, say, "So and so is *reborn* thus and thus" [S iv,297, Italics mine].

[194] D i,34-36.

[195] Vin.i,233. This is repeated at A iv,180 and, with a Brāhman interlocutor, at Vin. iii,2.

same *sutta*, we have what is probably the real reason why the Buddha was accused of being a *venayika*. He is asked: "might there be something subjective that does not exist?" He replies:

> *There might be, monk. In this case, monk, the view occurs to someone: '... after dying I will become permanent, lasting, eternal ...' He hears* dhamma *as it is being taught by the Tathāgata ... for tranquillizing all the activities, for casting away all attachment, for the destruction of craving, for dispassion, stopping, nibbāna. It occurs to him thus: 'I will surely be annihilated, ... I will surely not be.' He grieves, mourns ... and falls into disillusionment. Thus, monk, there comes to be anxiety about something subjective that does not exist.* [M iii,136-7]

Here we have a reason why some might have thought the Buddha taught *ucchedavāda*: they understood that if they followed his teachings they would eventually be annihilated at death. But, according to the Buddha, this is due to their imagining "something subjective that does not exist", and that "something", as is clear from the rest of the *sutta*, is the *attan* or "Self". As it does not exist, and never has existed, it makes no sense to think of it as being annihilated. From the Buddhist point of view, the Buddha is not an *ucchedavādin* as he does not teach the annihilation at death of something which actually exists. It is only those who think that "after dying I will become permanent, lasting, eternal" or who hold some such view of the *attan* as an eternal and everlasting entity, who will see the Buddha as an *ucchedavādin*, who will see the *anattan* doctrine as an annihilationist doctrine.[197] But, if there is no *attan*, what is there? And if there is "something", what happens to *that* at *parinirvāṇa*? That no one is recorded as having put this question to the Buddha is rather odd. Indeed, I am not aware that it has been raised anywhere in the Buddhist tradition which, if true, is even more odd. However, I will address that question later. As the *anattan* doctrine is central to the notion that Buddhism is nihilistic (it is the *attan* that is said to be annihilated), an examination of that doctrine is essential in any attempt to determine whether Buddhism is nihilistic or not.

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[196] M iii,140.

[197] As Mrs. Rhys Davids (1912, p140) remarks, accusing the Buddha of being an *ucchedavādin* is like accusing a bachelor of beating his wife.

What I will attempt to show here is that when Buddhism denies the existence of the *attan* it is not proposing that our empirical and subjective experience of ourselves as individuals is somehow an illusion, a mere figment of our deluded imagination. What it is attacking, as we shall see, is the *diṭṭhi* or "view" that within or behind our phenomenal experience - an experience which it sees as being in continual flux - there is some unchanging, transcendental, autonomous and eternal noumenal "Self" (*attan*), "soul" (*jīva*), "person" (*purisa*) or some such spiritual essence which remains untouched by our phenomenal experience, and is the true source and even cause of our existence. However, the *anattan* doctrine is not only an attack upon such *diṭṭhis* or "views" but is, more importantly, an attack upon deep-seated inner attitudes which are the fuel of such *diṭṭhis*, summed up in the oft repeated phrase: "This is mine; this I am; this is the self of me".[198] And just as the image of fire being extinguished when put in its cultural setting reveals more than the isolated words convey, so too with the Buddhist doctrine of *anattan* when understood against the Brāhmanical background.

In the early Brāhmanical tradition, the movement towards the internalization of the sacrifice and the consequent esteem given to the inner meaning of the rituals over their simple external expression, collected in the *āraṇyakas* or "Forest Books", gave rise to an increased status for the individual who had knowledge of these things. As Hopkins comments:

> *This development led to a conclusion that was only slowly recognized: if the individual person had the power of the sacrifice ... then he was also by identity the Puruṣa, creator of the Cosmos, who had brought forth his own form by his inherent creative power. Phenomenal man by this reasoning was but an extension of his own inner nature.*
>
> *But what* was *the essential self of man? The term introduced into Vedic inquiry was the common word for "self",* ātman, *used generally as a reflexive pronoun. From this general usage,* ātman *was given a more specific meaning as the essential part of man, his basic reality. At times this was taken to be the trunk of the body as distinguished from the limbs. Gradually, however, the* ātman *was distinguished from the gross physical body; it was the* inner *self, the principle or entity that gave man his essential nature.*[199]

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[198] S iii,186, and elsewhere.

Thus, in Brāhmanism, the ordinary, everyday pronoun *ātman* also became the term to designate the spiritual essence of man, akin to the term "soul" as used in the West. In the Upaniṣads, the *ātman* also became identified with the world: as the *vaiśvānara ātman* or "Universal Self" and as "the All" identified with *brahman*.[200] Given the importance of the doctrine of the *ātman* in the Brāhmanical tradition and the fact of the prominence of the doctrine of *anattan* in the Pāli texts, I have little doubt that the formulation of the latter was at least partly influenced by the Buddha's opposition to Brāhmanism.

The entire *religieux* at the time of the Buddha were summed-up in the compound *samaṇa-brāhmaṇa*, the former member being the term for all the non-Brāhmanical ascetics and religious teachers, including the Buddha, the latter including both the orthodox Brāhman priests and the Brāhmanical equivalent of the *samaṇas*. Yet among the six recorded *samaṇa* teachers there is no reference to an *ātman*, understood as a spiritual entity, in any of their doctrines as recorded in the Buddhist texts. Admittedly, some of the questions raised in the Pāli texts regarding the *ātman* are introduced with the phrase "some *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*", implying that the *ātman* speculation did extend beyond the Brāhmanical tradition. Nevertheless, as far as recorded doctrines go, the term *ātman* is absent from the doctrines propounded by the *samaṇa* teachers who we can assume were contemporaries of the Buddha. Of the six main *samaṇa* teachers, Pakuddha Kaccāyana and Niganṭha Nātaputta[201] are recorded as referring to a *jīva*, but it seems that only in the latter's case does the *jīva* refer to something like a "soul". For Kaccāyana, the *jīva* was only one of seven eternal and indestructible *kāyas* or "elements" and probably refers to something akin to a "life-force".[202] Thus, it is only the Jainas who have a conception of a spiritual essence or "soul" akin to the Brāhmanical *ātman*, the liberation of which is the goal of the religious life. Yet, as Collins remarks, "the term *ātman* has no use - whether positively or negatively - as a technical term in Jainism".[203] The most likely reason for this absence is that as all the *samaṇas* rejected Brāhmanism they would also most probably reject its technical religious language - at least as far as their own doctrines

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[199] Hopkins (1971), p37

[200] *Chān. up.* V.11 and *bṛh. up.* I.4 respectively.

[201] Better know as Mahāvīra, the leader of the Jainas.

[202] The term *jīva* also means simply "life" or "life principle".

[203] Collins (1982), note 7 on p275.

go - even when, as in the case of the Jainas, they had a conception that was akin to the *ātman*.[204] However the Jainas were, as were all the *samaṇas*, non-theistic, and had no notion of a merging of the *jīva* with some theistic Absolute, personal or non-personal.

Outside Brāhmanism, it is only in Buddhism that the term *ātman* is ever used to denote the Ātman in the Brāhmanical technical sense and then only ever in the negative as *anātman*. This, to me, suggests that an aspect of the *anattan* doctrine is clearly an attack upon the very core of Brāhmanical religious tradition. References to the *jīva* in the Pāli texts are restricted to the oft repeated question as to whether the *jīva* is the same as or different from the body. However, the Buddha never gives a direct answer but simply replies that such questions do not conduce to leading the religious life:

> *Where, brother, there is the view: "*jīva *and body are one and the same", or the view, "*jīva *and body are different things", there is no* brahma-cariya. [S ii,51

However, there is no corresponding *ajīva* doctrine in Buddhism, only an *anātman* doctrine. Nevertheless, the *anātman* doctrine does imply that there is no *jīva* as the Jainas conceive of it. So what do the texts say about the *attan* that the Buddha is denying?

The Term Attan

As was shown earlier, the term chosen to stand for "the essential self of man" in early Brāhmanism was the Sanskrit term by which one referred to one's everyday self, *ātman*: as a reflexive pronoun it means "himself", "oneself", "myself", "yourself", etc. But as a substantive noun it refers to *the* "Self" as the essential reality of man.[205] As neither Pāli nor Sanskrit use capital letters nor have a definite article,

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[204] In Jinism, the individual *jīva*, whose natural state of unlimited "insight" (*darśana*), "knowledge" (*jñāna*), "energy" (*vīrya*) and "happiness" (*sukha*) is not actualized because of *karman* which leads to becoming embroiled in *saṃsāra*, when finally liberated from *karman*, ascends to the summit of the cosmos where it dwells eternally in its natural state. See Frauwallner (1973) Vol. 1, p199ff.

[205] Warder (1984), p185, on *attan*.

there is no way other than context to determine whether the term refers to some metaphysical entity, the "Self", or one's empirical self. In isolated contexts this can lead to an ambiguity of meaning. However, the issue is slightly further complicated in the case of *anātman* as the latter is also a compound, the *an-* being a negative prefix, which gives rise to even greater ambiguity, even though it is grammatically established that it is almost always a *karmadhāraya* compound.[206] As Matilal points out, objecting to the usual translation of the *karmadhāraya* compound *a-vidyā* as "ignorance", implying simply an absence of knowledge, "the Sanskrit term *avidyā* (Pāli: *avijjā*), although grammatically negative ... does not [necessarily] mean negation (or absence or lack) of anything. For it is well known in Sanskrit grammar that the negative particle in a Sanskrit compound does not always express simple negation or absence".[207] He goes on to suggest that as "*vidyā* means knowledge of reality, or ultimate knowledge, or simply, knowledge, *avidyā* [is best understood as] something that is liable to be mistaken as such". In other words, *avidyā* is not simply a lack of knowledge, but *thinking one has knowledge when one has not*. On the other hand, it may simply mean absence of knowledge, i.e., "ignorance". Taking what Matilal has done for the term *avidyā* and applying this grammatical gloss to the term *anattan*, the statement '*x* is *anattan*' *could* be interpreted as implying 'do not mistake *x* as *attan* (because the *real attan* is something other)'. Thus when the Buddha states that the *khandhas* are *anattan*, this *could* be interpreted as stating that no aspect of our phenomenality can be regarded as the *attan*, but over and beyond our phenomenality there exists our true noumenal nature, a kind of Upaniṣadic Ātman. This kind of interpretation has had its followers.[208] On the other hand, it could be interpreted as an unconditional denial that there is such a thing as the *attan*. Others[209] have equated the goal of Buddhism with *anattan*, saying that *nirvāṇa* is *anattan* - which, if this were the case, would be an unambiguous denial that it is something like the Upaniṣadic Ātman. However, among the profusion of statements about and epithets

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[206] A *karmadhāraya* compound is one in which the relation between the two members is in the nominative case, and what is known as the *prādhānyam* or "syntactical predominance" falls on the second member. An example is "blue-lotus", a lotus that is blue. In the case of *anātman*, the ambiguity is due to the first member being the a negative prefix, *an-*.

[207] Matilal (1985), p321-2.

[208] See: Rhys Davids (1925), Chowdary (1955), and Nakamura (1977).

[209] Johanson (1969), p133

for *nirvāṇa* in the Pāli texts, I can find only *one* direct reference to *nirvāṇa* being *anattan*. This is found in the *Parivāra* section of the **Vinaya**.

> *All compound things are impermanent, unsatisfactory, constructed and* anattan. *Just so with* nibbāna*: it too is a designation meaning* anattan. [Vin.v,86]

Given that *nirvāṇa* is here said to be *anattan* this, at least, is a clear denial that whatever *nirvāṇa* is, the goal of Buddhism is not seen as some union with or realization of the Upaniṣadic Ātman. And despite the fact that this single statement equating *nirvāṇa* and *anattan* is found in what is reckoned to be a late work, there are other indirect statements which imply that *nirvāṇa* is *anattan*. For example, there are many references to the phrase "all *dhammas* are *anattan* (*sabbe dhammā anattā*)". As the term *dhammā* is generally understood to include both "compounded" (*saṅkhata*) phenomena and the "uncompounded" (*asaṅkhata*) and the latter is a synonym for *nirvāṇa*,[210] this is a clear statement, though indirect, that *nirvāṇa* is reckoned *anattan*. As I shall show in the following section, an important aspect of the *anattan* doctrine is an attack upon the Upaniṣadic Ātman, as well as some deep-seated psychological attitudes, which leaves no room for the notion that the *anattan* doctrine, despite its grammatical ambiguity, implies some unspoken Upaniṣadic Ātman over and above what is said to be *anattan*. However, we are still left with the dilemma as to whether *nirvāṇa*, being *anattan*, is an annihilationist doctrine or whether, after the death of a nirvānized person, a further state of being exists over and beyond what is "blown out" - a further state of being, that is to say, that Buddhism refuses to characterise by reference to a concept of selfhood, where "selfhood" is understood as implying inherent existence. Digressing from the Pāli texts and looking at later Indian Buddhist philosophy, it is interesting to find that such issues were far from being resolved. For example, we find the 4th century Indian Buddhist philosopher, Maitreya, dealing with a similar issue. By this time the notion of *anātman* tended to be replaced by the notion of *śūnyatā* or "emptiness",[211] yet the same problems in interpretation existed. Some of the Buddhist community thought that others had fallen into a too literal and

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[210] See S iii, 82-3 and 133; M i,288; A i,286-7; Dhp. 277-279. The reason *dhammā* is here understood to include both *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata dhammas* is contextual. It forms part of the trilogy: *sabbe saṅkhārā anicca / sabbe saṅkhārā dukkha / sabbe dhammā anattā*. The term *dhammā* is used as it can include both *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata dhammas*. If only *saṅkhāras* were *anattan*, then there would be no need to use the all inclusive term, *dhammā*.

one-sided understanding of the notion of *śūnyatā* tantamount to annihilationism. They feared that if such a nihilistic interpretation of *śūnyatā* gained prominence, it might actually destroy the Buddha's Dharma.[212] To counteract what he saw as an emerging nihilistic tendency and to clarify the real meaning of *śūnyatā*, Maitreya, in his **Madhyāntavibhāga**, distinguished two kinds of *śūnyatā*:

> *Now the non-existence of persons and dharmas*
> *is, in this regard, certainly śūnyatā.*
> *Yet the real-being of that non-existence*
> *is another kind of śūnyatā.*[213]

If we substitute *anattan* for *śūnyatā*, the first kind of *śūnyatā/anattan* would correspond to the notion that all phenomena (*dhammas*) are *anattan*: no phenomena, whether subjective or objective, has any quality associated with the term *attan*.[214] However, Maitreya, to counteract a nihilistic interpretation of *śūnyatā*, goes on to posit another kind of *śūnyatā/anattan* which is the "real-being" (*sad-bhāva*) of the very "non-existence *(abhāva)* of persons and *dharmas*", i.e., what is "left over" when one realizes the *śūnyatā/anattan* of persons and phenomena, and which could be said to continue after *parinirvāṇa*. He goes on to say:

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[211] That these two terms are quite synonymous in meaning can be seen from the statements "all *dhammas* are *anattan*" and "all *dharmas* are *śūnya*". All *dhammas* are *anattan* because they arise dependent upon conditions. And all *dharmas* are *śūnya* because they also arise dependent upon conditions. The state of being such is *śūnyatā* or "emptiness", or *anattatā* or "non-selfness". The later term, however, does not (as far as I am aware) appear in the Pāli texts, but would be the Pāli equivalent of *śūnyatā*.

[212] See: Williams (1989), p81-2, and Kalupahana (1987), p128ff.

[213] *pudgalasyātha dharmāṇām abhāvaḥ śūnyatā 'tra hi*
tad abhāvasya sadbhāvas tasmin sā śūnyatā 'parā.[1,20]

The Sanskrit text is taken from Kalupahana (1987) which is based upon Gadjin M. Nagao's edition.

[214] I would understand by *dhammas*, all phenomena whatever. To refer to a rock as being *anattan* is an obvious extension of the meaning of the term *attan* beyond the human domain. As we saw in the Upaniṣads, the term *ātman* extended its meaning, and when identified with *brahman*, was the sole reality "behind" the appearance of all phenomena. To say that rocks are *anattan* implies that rocks do not possess such a reality beyond their phenomenality. This will become clear in the next section.

It is neither defiled nor non-defiled,
neither pure nor impure
because of the luminosity of mind
and the adventitiousness of the defilements.[215]

Here we have a statement that although *pudgalas* and *dharmas* have none of the qualities associated with the notion of *attan*, this mere absence of an *attan* does not imply nihilism: there is a deeper reality "behind" what we imagine to be *pudgalas* and *dharmas*, and that reality is talked about in terms of "luminosity of mind" of which the defilements and impurities - the cause, both here and in the Pāli texts, of our imagining an *attan* which has no real existence - have only a contingent (*āgantuka*) relationship. And, if we look in the Pāli texts for some hint of Maitreya's second kind of *śūnyatā*, for a reality beyond mere absence, there are a few passages that could be interpreted in this sense. For example, there is a similar reference to a "luminous mind" (*pabhassara citta*) which is also said to be "defiled by adventitious defilements" (*āgantukehi upakilesehi upakiliṭṭham*).[216] There is also said to be a *viññāṇa* which is "without attribute" [*anidassana*], "boundless" [*ananta*], "all-luminous" [*sabbato-pabha*] and is identified by the Pāli commentator, Buddhaghosa, with *nirvāṇa*".[217] Thus what Maitreya says about *śūnyatā* could be applied to *anattan*: over and above the *anattan* of *puggalas* and *dhammas* there is another kind of *anattan* talked about in terms of "luminosity of mind". And this "luminous mind", which alone seems to be a kind of transcendent reality, is identified by Buddhaghosa with *nirvāṇa*. However, I will return to this subject later when dealing with what, if anything, can be said to exist beyond *parinirvāṇa*. The digression was just to illustrate how this seeming grammatical ambiguity has been the source of much debate concerning the nature of the ultimate goal within the Buddhist tradition, a debate that still continues down to the present day.[218] I will now examine what the Pāli texts are actually denying with the doctrine of *anattan*.

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[215] *na kliṣṭā nāpi vākliṣṭā śūddhā 'śūddhā na caiva sā*
prabhāsvaratvāc cittasya kleṣasyāgantukatvataḥ. [1,22]

[216] A i,10.

[217] M i,329-30 and D i,223. The Pāli commentator, Buddhaghosa, identifies this "luminosity" with *nirvāṇa*. Mentioned in Ñāṇananda (1971), p62-3.

Views of the Attan *in the Pāli texts.*

There is a profusion of views on the *attan* scattered throughout the Pāli *suttas*, some of which, taken out of their cultural context, are rather inaccessible to us. All these views can, however, be grouped under six main aspects, the first four of which, I suggest, correspond to views found in the Upaniṣads. Firstly, the *attan* as identical with "the All"; secondly, as some sort of "mind"; thirdly, as being a "controller"; fourthly, the subject who both acts and experiences the fruits of action; fifthly, as a "view" or *diṭṭhi* which is a hindrance to the *brahma-cariya*; and, sixthly, as a deeply rooted psychological attitude.

a) *Ātman* (*attan*) as "the All".

One theme running through the early Upaniṣads is that of the individual *ātman* - the microcosmic *ātman* - being non-different from either the "Universal Self" (*vaiśvānara ātman*), the "Cosmic Person" (*puruṣa*), *brahman*, or simply "this All" (*idaṃ sarvaṃ*) - all these terms being roughly synonymous - corresponding to a kind of macrocosmic *ātman*. What I will attempt to show here is that it is these particular conceptions of the *ātman* that the Buddha (or those who compiled the texts) is attacking as part of the *anattan* doctrine. If this is the case, then here we have conclusive proof that the Buddha and at least some of his audiences were quite aware of such Upaniṣadic conceptions, at least on a general level, despite the fact that there are no direct references to the Upaniṣads by name in the *suttas*. As examples of the Upaniṣadic notions we have, in the *bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad*, the following:

> *In the beginning this (world) was only the Ātman, in the shape of a Person* (puruṣa)*. Looking around, he saw only himself. He said first: 'I am.' Thence arose the name 'I'. He knew: 'I, indeed, am this creation, for I emitted it all from myself.' ... Verily, he who has this knowledge comes to be in that creation of his. ...*
>
> *One should worship with the thought that he is just one's* ātman, *for therein all these become one. That same thing, namely this* ātman, *is the trace of this*

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[218] For a discussion of this debate within the later Indian tradition and its history within the Tibetan tradition down to the present day, see S. K. Hookam's **The Buddha Within**, SUNY, 1991. Here the two kinds of *anattan/śūnyatā* are replaced by the *Rangtong-Shentong* ("self-emptiness/other-emptiness") distinction.

all, for by it one knows this All. ... He finds fame and praise who knows this. ... Verily, in the beginning this world was brahman. *It knew only itself: I am* brahman. *Therefore, it became the All. Whoever of the* devas *became awakened to this, he indeed became it; likewise in the case of seers; likewise in the case of men. ...*

Whoever thus knows 'I am brahman*!' becomes this All; even the* devas *have not the power to prevent his becoming thus, for he becomes their* ātman. [I.4,1-10]

Now this ātman .. *is the world of all created things.* [I.4,16]

For where there is duality [dvaita] *... there one sees another; there one smells ... hears ... speaks to ... thinks of ... understands another. Where, verily, everything has become just one's own* ātman, *then whereby and whom would one smell* (etc.)? [II.4.14 and IV.5,15]

This shining, immortal puruṣa *who is in the earth, and with reference to oneself ... is in the body, he, indeed, is just this* ātman, *this immortal, this* brahman, *this All.* [II.5, 1-14]

[*brahman*] *is your* ātman, *which is all things.* [III.5,1]

...everything here is what this ātman *is.* [IV.5,7]

In the *chāndogya upaniṣad* we have:

Verily, this whole world is brahman. *Tranquil, let one worship it as that from which he came forth, as that into which he will be dissolved* [at death], *as that in which he breathes.* [III.14,1]

That which is the finest essence - this whole world has that as its ātman. *That is Reality* [satya]. *That is* ātman. *That art thou, Svetaketu.* [VI.8,6ff]

The ātman, *indeed, is below, ... above ... to the west ... to the east ... to the south ... to the north. The* ātman, *indeed, is this All.* [VII.25,2]

The seer [ṛṣi] *sees only the All, obtains the All entirely.* [26,2]

From all this we have the equation, *puruṣa* = *ātman* = *brahman* = *idaṃ sarva* or just *sarva*, "this All" or just "the All". I have capitalised "all" (*sarva*) and included the definite article as *sarva* in these quotes is a synonym for ***the*** *puruṣa* etc. and is, therefore, to be regarded as a substantive noun. And it is this synonym for *brahman* etc., that provides a link between the Upaniṣadic conception of the *ātman* and one aspect of the Buddhist doctrine of *anattan*.

In the *sabba-sutta*, the Buddha states what he understands by "the All" (*sabba* in Pāli, *sarva* in Sanskrit):

> *Brethren, I will teach you 'the all.' ... It is the eye and visual object, ear and sound, nose and scent, tongue and savour, body and things tangible, mind and mind-states. That, brethren, is called 'the all.'*
>
> *Whoso, brethren, should say: 'Rejecting this all, I will proclaim another all, - it would be mere talk on his part, and when questioned he could not make good his boast ... because ... it would be beyond his scope to do so.* [S iv,15]

Here, the Buddha is answering the *samaṇa* Jāṇussoṇin's question as to "the all" and I would assume that given that the question was not simply Jāṇussoṇin's but was a topic of general interest among the *religieux*, "the all" must refer to something comparable with "the All" of the above Upaniṣads, which is also a synonym for the *ātman/brahman*. I would suggest that the Buddha's conception of "the all", above, is an explicit rejection of the Upaniṣadic notion of "the All", and therefore the *ātman/brahman*, as the latter conception implies a metaphysical something over and above what he teaches as "the all", knowledge of which he appears to reject here for epistemological reasons: "it would be beyond his scope to do so". For example, in relation to the senses and their objects, which constitutes the Buddhist "all" above,[219] the *chāndogya upaniṣad* adds the *ātman* over and above the "all" as the agent for whom the senses (including the "mind" [*manas*]), are mere instruments.[220] In the

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[219] It must be remembered that the scope of possible objects of the "mind sense" or *manas* goes quite beyond the scope of what modern Western philosophy and psychology would consider as part of their field, i.e., other worlds and beings, clairaudience, claivoyance, etc. Such aspects of the human condition are considered normal in both Buddhist and other contemporary systems. They all belong to the domain of the "senses" (*indriyas*).

[220] 8.12,4.

kaṭha upaniṣad we have the "hidden, eternal *brahman*", the "one inner *ātman* (*antarātman*) of all things ... corresponding in form to every form, and yet is outside [of them all]".[221] And in the *bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad* we have the second of the two forms (*rūpa*) of *brahman*: the "formless" (*amūrta*) as opposed to the "formed" (*mūrta*), the "immortal" (*amṛta*) as opposed to the "mortal" (*martya*), the "moving" (*yat*) as opposed to the "unmoving" (*sthita*), the "true [being]" (*tyat*) as opposed to "actual [being]" (*sat*), and the "Real of the real" (*satyasya satyaṃ*), the "not this, not that" (*neti neti*).[222] I would suggest that it is some such views as these that the Buddha is rejecting as "mere talk", as they can all be subsumed under "the All" outside of "the all" mentioned by the Buddha above.

Later[223], in the same group of *suttas*, the Buddha refers to the "conceit" (*maññita*) of "being the all or in the all or coming from the all", which I would understand as being directed at the following Upaniṣadic views quoted above: that whoever awakens to the identity of *brahman* and the world and knows "I am *brahman*", becomes it, in other words becomes "the All"; that one's microcosmic *ātman*, being identical with *brahman*, is "in all things"; and, the microscopic *ātman*, being created by *brahman*, must come from "the All". The Buddha is therefore dismissing such views as mere conceits, although they may very well spring from dhyānic experiences in meditation but be considered, by the Buddhists, as a misunderstanding of such experiences resulting in the conceited view that one is "the All".

There may also be a touch of irony about what the Buddha, in some other *suttas* from this group, says about "the all". Rather than, as in the Upaniṣads, identifying the goal with "the All", the Buddha teaches that one should abandon "the all" by "fully knowing and comprehending it" because "without fully knowing and comprehending it ... without detaching himself from, without abandoning the all, a man is incapable of extinguishing *dukkha*". "The All" is "on fire with the blaze of lust, hatred and stupidity, the blaze of infatuation, the blaze of birth, decay, sorrow and grief, woe, lamentation and despair".[224] "The all" is therefore to be abandoned as it is *dukkha*. Could the Buddha here have in mind the Upaniṣadic notion that *brahman*

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[221] *Kaṭha up.* 5,6 and 9.

[222] *Bṛd. up.* II.3, 1-6.

[223] S iv,23.

"consists of bliss" (*ānanda-maya*),[225] alluding to the fact that rather than being *ānanda*, "the All" is quite the opposite![226]

Elsewhere[227] the Buddha refers to the six *diṭṭhiṭṭhānāni* or "six grounds of speculative views", the sixth of which is a clear allusion to the Upaniṣadic notion of the identity of the *ātman* with "the All", here called the "world" (*loka*):[228] "That which is the world, that is the *attan*. After dying I will become permanent, lasting, eternal, not liable to change ... he regards this [world] as: 'this is mine, this I am, this is my *attan*'". Later, in the same *sutta*, with this view in mind the Buddha asks:

> *If a person were to gather or burn or do as he pleases with the grass, twigs, branches and foliage in the Jeta Grove, would it occur to you: The person is gathering us, he is burning us, he is doing as he pleases with us?*
>
> *"No, Lord". What is the reason for this? "It is that this, Lord, is not our* attan, *not what belongs to the* attan".[M i,141][229]

Here the Buddha is bringing a very down to earth approach into the Upaniṣadic metaphysics of the *ātman*: if "everything here is what the *ātman* is"[230] then the *ātman* must also be these twigs and branches. If someone burned these twigs and branches they must be burning the *ātman*. And, if that *ātman* is our true self, then our true self

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[224] *ibid.*, 18-20. At Itv. 3-4 there is a similar treatment of "the all" which concludes with the verse:

> *Who, having known the all in all its parts,*
> *And who finds no pleasure in any of it,*
> *By full comprehension of the all*
> *He truly escapes all* dukkha.

[225] *Taittirīya up.*2.8 and elsewhere.

[226] Under the doctrine of the four "perversions" (*vipallāsas*) of *saññā, citta* and *diṭṭhi*, there is the *vipallāsa* of seeing that which is *dukkha* as pleasant, and that which is *anattan* as *attan*. (See A ii,52).

[227] M i,135ff.

[228] Regarding the term *loka*, the PTS Dictionary says the term is used to denote "the comprehensive sense of 'universe'". In other words, it can be synonymous with "the all" as defined by the Buddha, above.

[229] No doubt some Brāhmanical intellectual would not have acquiesced so easily as the Buddha's audience did here.

[230] *Bṛd. up.* 4.5,7.

is being burned. Yet, when these twigs and branches are being burned, what is our experience? Is there any part of us that feels it is being burned? No. Therefore it does not make much sense to claim "that which is the *loka*, that is the *attan*".[231]

Given the above, we have, as an aspect of the *anattan* doctrine, a clear denial of the Upaniṣadic notion of the *ātman* as "the All".

b) *Ātman* (*attan*) as "mind".

One common topic in the Pāli texts is that the *attan* is identical or in some relation to one of the five *khandhas* or "accumulated constituent factors". For example, in relation to *rūpa*, which in this context can be taken as the "physical body", some are said to "regard the body as the *attan* ... regard the *attan* as having body, body as being in the *attan*, the *attan* as being in the body", saying "I am the body ... body is mine".[232] Others are said to hold the same view with regard to one of the other *khandhas*, identifying either *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāras* or *viññāṇa* as the *attan* in one of these ways. The Buddha's response to these various views is to reply that if we empirically examine these *khandhas*, we will see that they are all unstable, that they alter and change and can therefore bring sorrow and grief in their wake.[233] One cannot say: "this is mine: I am this: this is the *attan* of me".[234] The implied but unspoken view assumes that the *attan*, if it exists, must be unaffected by and be beyond all change and sorrow. As all the *khandhas* are said to be unstable and change and are, therefore, *dukkha*, none can be said to be the *attan*. To identify the body as the *attan* implies *ucchedavāda* as at death the *attan* would be annihilated. However, among the majority of *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* who accepted rebirth and who sought a way to end it, and whom the Buddhists classified as *sassatavādins* or "eternalists", the *attan* was often identified with what was thought to transcend the death of the physical body and was seen as some kind of *viññāṇa*, *citta* or *manas* all of which, in this context, can be loosely translated as "mind". In the early *upaniṣads* it was this

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[231] S iv,23. This point is also mentioned in Norman (1981).

[232] S iii, 3ff

[233] Of course, they could also change and bring happiness, etc.; but the implication is that, in the case of the psychic *khandhas*, one is seeking for something permanent and unchanging. Thus one is bound to end with having one's desires frustrated.

[234] S iii,3ff.

"mind", identified as both the *puruṣa* or "person" and the *ātman*, that was thought to transmigrate and also be capable of liberation from rebirth through knowledge of or union with *brahman*. For example:

> *This person* [puruṣa] *here in the heart is made of mind* [mano-maya], *is of the nature of light* [bhā], *is like a little grain of rice ... This very one is ruler of everything, is lord of everything, governs this whole universe, whatever there is.* [Bṛd. up. 5.6]
>
> *This* ātman *is* brahman, *made of consciousness* [vijñāna-maya] ... [4.4.5]
>
> *This space that is within the heart - therein is the person* [puruṣa], *consisting of mind* [mano-maya], *immortal, resplendent* ... [Tait. up.I.6.1.]

The *ātman*, passing at death from one embodied form to another, is compared to a caterpillar passing from one blade of grass to another.[235]

Elsewhere in the *bṛhadāraṇyaka*, the *puruṣa* is also said to be made of *vijñāna* (*vijñāna-maya*).[236] In all probability it is these and similar views about the essence of the person that the Buddha has in mind when he declares that as none of the psychic *khandhas* can be said to be immortal and unchanging they cannot, therefore, constitute the *ātman* as found in the *upaniṣads*. For example, the *puruṣa* above was said to be "like a little grain of rice" and, elsewhere, the *ātman* is said to be "smaller ... than a mustard seed or grain of millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet ... within the heart".[237] When the Buddha was asked whether there is any *khandha* that was "permanent, stable, by nature lasting, unchanging, like unto the eternal", he replies that there is no such thing even if one's self could become (*atta-bhāva*) as small as "a little piece of cowdung".[238] Although there are no direct references to the *upaniṣads* in

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[235] *Brd. up.* 4.4.3-5. The new bodily form may be more beautiful than the earthly one and be "like that of a father [*pitryaṃ*], or a Gandharva (*gāndharvaṃ*), or a *deva* (*daivaṃ*), or like Prajāpati (*pājāpatyaṃ*), or like a *brahmā* (*brāhmaṃ*), or of other beings", depending upon ones deeds. There is no "disembodied" mind or consciousness, it is always embodied but as is obvious, not necessarily physically embodied.

[236] 2.1.16-17.

[237] *Chan. up.*3.14.3.

[238] S iii,143.

the Pāli texts, this association of a small piece of cowdung replacing the grain seed as an image of the *ātman* may well be another example of the Buddha's ironic sense of humour in regard to Brāhmanical beliefs.[239]

Yet among the Buddha's own disciples there were some who saw the *viññāṇa-khandha* as some sort of *attan*. For example, the *bhikkhu* Sāti thought that the Buddha taught: "just this one and the same *viññāṇa* runs on and is reborn again and again".[240] When asked by the Buddha what he understood by *viññāṇa*, he replies: "It is this, Lord, that speaks, that feels, that experiences now here, now there, the fruition of deeds that are lovely and that are depraved". Sāti is then upbraided by the Buddha for misunderstanding his Dhamma and misrepresenting him. Buddhism certainly does teach that it is *viññāṇa* or its synonym, *citta*,[241] also referred to as the *viññāṇa-sota* or "stream of consciousness",[242] that transmigrates from life to life.[243] However, this *viññāṇa* is said to be so capricious and fickle that it would be "better ... if the untaught manyfolk approached this body ... as the self rather than the mind"[244] as the body at least persists for a lifetime, whereas the mind is constantly changing from moment to moment.[245] Sāti's error was to think that it was the "self same" (*anañña*)

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[239] At D ii,64, the Buddha says that "some declare the *attan* to have form [*rūpin*] and be minute [*paritta*] ... have form and be boundless [*ananta*] ... be formless [*arūpin*] and minute ... be formless and boundless". At *kaṭha up.* II,20, the *ātman* is said to be "more minute than the minute [*aṇu*], greater than the great", which, again, may be the view of the *ātman* the Buddha is denying. Walshe translates the phrase *rūpī me paritto attā* as "the self to be material and limited". However, *paritto* also means "minute". Also, in this context, to translate *rūpin* as "material" is a little misleading as I would understand the phase to refer to the *attan* as belonging to the *rūpa-loka* which, whatever it is, is not "material" as that term is understood in the West. The beings who inhabit the *rūpa-loka* are said to be entirely invisible to ordinary mortals like us.

[240] M i,256ff

[241] "But this, brethren, that which we call *citta*, that we call *manas*, that we call *viññāṇa*, that arises as one thing, ceases as another, both by day and by night" [S ii,93]. However, it cannot be only the *viññāṇa-khandha* that transmigrates as the latter is not wholly synonymous with *citta*. *Citta* has affective and conative attributes that are not included in the *viññāṇa-khandha* which consists of different consciousnesses associated with each of the six senses, the sixth or "mental" sense - *mano-viññāṇa* - being no more than "representative cognition". To bring in both the necessary affective and conative aspects what transmigrates would have to include aspects of the *saṅkhāra-khandha*. Interestingly, the *aitreya upaniṣad* has the following: "That which is heart (*hṛdaya*) and mind (*manas*) - that is conception (*saṃjñāna*), perception (*ājñāna*), consciousness (*vijñāṇa*) ... ." [III.1.2].

[242] D iii,105.

[243] See S i,38

viññāṇa that transmigrates,[246] that *viññāṇa* was some unchanging essence equivalent to the Upaniṣadic *ātman* that, despite phenomenal change, remains in essence unchanged from life to life. However, when I come to examine what, if anything, can be said to continue after *parinirvāṇa*, as we have already seen in regard to the "luminous *citta*", there may be good reason for Sāti thinking that there was more to *viññāṇa* than the ordinary ever-changing mind.

c) *Ātman* (*attan*) as "Controller".

Another view in relation to the *khandhas* that the *anattan* doctrine denies is that of the *attan* as some controlling, ultimate power:

> *Body, brethren, is not the* attan. *If body ... were the* attan, *then body would not be involved in sickness, and one could say of body: 'Thus let my body be. Thus let my body not be.' But ... in as much as body is not the* attan, *that is why the body is involved in sickness ...* [S iii,67]

The same formula is applied to the other *khandhas* with the same conclusion: how can one call something the *attan*, the "I", "mine", if is not capable of complete control.[247]

Although it may be doubtful that some actually held the view that the *attan* was identical with one or other of the *khandhas* as formulated by the Buddhists - the five *khandhas* being a specifically *Buddhist* doctrine - the *ātman* was also identified, in the *upaniṣads*, as the hidden source of the psychic functions: the *ātman* is that ...

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[244] A ii,93. Here it is also said that *viññāṇa* = *citta* = *manas*.

[245] *ibid*.

[246] See Collins (1982), p104. That it is the "self same" *viññāṇa* that Sāti says transmigrates is not brought out in the PTS translation: "it is that this consciousness itself runs on, fares on, not another".

[247] See also, M i,231, where the wanderer Saccaka, who thinks all the *khandhas* are the *attan*, has to admit that he has no ultimate power over any of the *khandhas*. It is probably something akin to the "Inner Controller" (*antaryāmin*) of the *bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad* [3.7] that the Buddha has in mind here. In the individual the *antaryāmin* is said to be "the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the ununderstood Understander" who controls all the individual's faculties from within: "He is your *ātman*, the *antaryāmin*, the Immortal". See also Collins (1982), p97.

Whereby one sees, ... hears ... smells ... articulates speech ... discriminates the sweet and the unsweet; that which is the heart and mind (manas) - *that is consciousness* (saṃjñāna), *perception* (ājñāna), *discrimination* (vijñāna), *intelligence* (prajñāna), *wisdom* (medhas), *insight* (dṛṣṭi), ... *thought* (mati), ... *impulse* (jūti), *conception* (saṃkalpa), *purpose* (kratu), *desire* (kāma), *will* (vaśa). [Ait. up. 4.5]

I would suggest that it is something akin to the above that the Buddha or those who compiled the texts had in mind when denying that the *attan* is the real essence of any of the five *khandhas*, or has complete control over them. The Buddha was simply implying that there are no grounds supported by experience for claiming that our psychic life could be reduced to or be seen as being an expression of some hidden, eternal and unchanging controlling source which was not only identified as our true "Self", but was also, as *brahman*, the noumenal panentheistic source of all phenomena whatever.

d) *Ātman* (*attan*) as "agent".

The incident with Sāti also relates to the agential aspect of the *anattan* doctrine. One of Sāti's errors was to see *viññāṇa* as the agent who both acts and experiences "the fruition of deeds that are lovely and that are depraved". The Buddha was often asked: "is pleasure and pain brought about by one's self ... [or] by another ... by both ... by chance?"[248] Or: "He who does the deed, is he the one to experience [its fruit] ... [or is he] not the same as he who experiences?"[249] The Buddha's reply is that to say one and the same person acts and experiences the karmic fruit is to fall into the extreme of *sassatavāda* while to see the doer of the deed and the experiencer as ontologically distinct is to fall into the other extreme of *ucchedavāda*.[250] The Buddha, "not approaching either extreme, teaches the Norm by the middle [way]"[251] which amounts to the doctrine of "conditioned co-production" (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). The general principle of this doctrine is illustrated by a standard Indian analogy. From milk we can derive curds, from curds butter, from butter ghee, from ghee cream of ghee.[252] To see cream of ghee as essentially milk in another form corresponds to the

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[248] S ii,21. "Another" here probably means one's previous "self" in this or in a previous life. However, it could also mean that whatever happens to one's self is entirely determined by "fate".

[249] S ii,76.

sassatavādin view; to see cream of ghee as essentially different from milk corresponds to the *ucchedavādin* view. The Buddhist view, the "Middle Way" (*majjha-magga*), is to see that without milk there can be no curds, without curds there can be no butter, etc. To say that ghee is essentially milk in another form is to posit a trans-empirical and unchanging essence, "milk", behind the appearance of ghee. To see milk and ghee as entirely separate is to deny continuity of conditional process which, transferred to the spiritual life, denies the efficacy of one's actions in determining what one will become in the future.[253] In other words, it denies that there can be any spiritual life. The *majjha-magga* maintains individual continuity - without the milk there can be no ghee, and the ghee will only come from milk, not clay - whilst denying that there is an unchanging trans-empirical entity corresponding to the *ātman* passing from one stage to the other, unchanged. Applied to the above question addressed to the Buddha concerning the "doer" and the "experiencer", Buddhist doctrine affirms a conditional continuity between them whilst denying that there is any trans-empirical "doer" remaining unchanged within or behind that conditional continuity who then experiences the fruits of his previous action: the "doer" and the "experiencer" are conditionally related but they are not one and the same.

e) *Anattan* as a *diṭṭhi*

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[250] *Bṛh. up.* 4.4.5 has: "The 'doer of the good' [*sādhukārin*] becomes good. The 'doer of the bad' [*pāpakārin*] becomes bad". From a Buddhist perspective, this could be taken as a *sassatavādin* view: the doer and the experiencer are the *same* individual, i.e., the "doer" remains unchanged through time. In the *maitrī upaniṣad* [III,2], however, there are said to be two *ātmans*, an "elemental self" (*bhūtātman*) and an "immortal Self" (*amṛtātman*). It is said that only the *bhūtātman* is effected by the fruits of actions and undergoes transmigration while the *amṛtātmañ* is like a drop of water on a lotus, i.e., it is unaffected by such doings. Yet, although the *amṛtātman* is not effected by the fruits of actions, nevertheless, it is said to be the "causer of action" (*kārayitāra*) and dwells unseen within the *bhūtātman*.

[251] A ii,23.

[252] D i,201. The Upaniṣadic view is seen in *śvet. up.* [I.15], where the *ātman* is compared to the butter in the cream, meaning that the unchanging essence of the cream is butter, the cream being only another appearance of butter.

[253] The very syntax of our grammar determines that I say "what one becomes". This might be taken as implying that the "one" who acts now and what that "one becomes" are the self same "one". However, from the Buddhist view point, this would be to be misled by the structure of our language. Buddhism uses the terms such as *ātman* without implying that it corresponds to some trans-empirical entity. See Harvey (1983-4).

The anti-metaphysical and pragmatic attitude of early Buddhism is well illustrated in the *alagaddupama sutta* or "Discourse on the Parable of the Water-Snake".[254] Here, the Buddha points out that to misunderstand the *purpose* of his teaching, his Dhamma, to grasp it incorrectly, is like grasping a large water-snake by the wrong end: the result will be painful if not fatal. To understand the meaning of the Dhamma, like grasping a water-snake correctly, requires skill. This "skill", in the case of the Dhamma, amounts to constantly bearing in mind its purpose and heuristic nature as well as verifying it empirically through "intuitive wisdom" [*paññā*]. To treat the Dhamma as a system of metaphysics to be argued about and defended, or as a set of beliefs that one simply adopts in order to become a Buddhist, is to miss the whole point of the Dhamma. To illustrate this the Buddha compares his Dhamma to a raft, built only for the purpose of crossing over a great river. The shore we find ourselves on and from whose material the raft is built - as well as the river itself - is *saṃsāra*. Reaching the safety and security of the other shore is to attain *nirvāṇa*. But, if, after having crossed over a man were to carry the raft around with him and not put it down, this would be to misunderstand the whole purpose of the raft. He should simply put it down and go his way:

> *In doing this, monks, that man would be doing what should be done with that raft. Even so, monks, is the Parable of the Raft,* Dhamma *taught by me for crossing over, not for retaining. You, monks, by understanding the Parable of the Raft, having renounced* [right] dhammas, *how much more so wrong* dhammas. [M i,135][255]

This parable clearly states the *purpose* of the Buddha's Dhamma as well as illustrating the dangers of forgetting that purpose.[256] And, although the parable does

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[254] M i,130ff.

[255] *Dhammas* and *adhammas* are here probably best understood as "(right) teachings/ doctrines" and "wrong teachings/doctrines". Horner's PTS translation has "should get rid of (right) mental objects, all the more wrong ones" [MLS vol.I, p174], which I think misses the point. The term *dhamma* has so many meanings, but the context here favours "teaching/ doctrine". At M i,401ff., *adhamma* corresponds to *micchā-diṭṭhi* or "wrong view" and *dhamma* to *sammā-diṭṭhi* or "right view". I light of this later definition, the Buddha is therefore making quite a radical statement: even *sammā-diṭṭhis* have eventually to be given up, let alone *micchā-diṭṭhis*. That **all** *diṭṭhis* have to be abandoned is the theme of *aṭṭhaka-vagga* in the **Sutta Nipāta**. Yet, even a modern scholar like Norman, in his recent translation of the **Sutta Nipāta**, misses the whole point by consistently translating *diṭṭhi* by "(wrong) view".

not bring out this point, the purpose of the Dhamma could only be forgotten whilst within *saṃsāra*, not *nirvāṇa*, as not knowing the purpose of the Dhamma would be equivalent to the third *samyojana*[257] or "fetter", and one could not even become a *sotāpanna* or "stream-entrant", let alone attain *nirvāṇa*, whilst subject to this *samyojana*. This pragmatic slant of the Dhamma is further illustrated in the **Vinaya**. The *bhikkhunī*, Mahāpajāpatī, asks the Buddha to teach her "Dhamma in brief so that I, having heard the Lord's Dhamma, might live alone, aloof, zealous, ardent, self-resolute". The Buddha replies:

> *Of whatsoever* dhammas, *Gotamid, you can assure yourself thus: "These* dhammas *conduce to passions, not to dispassion; to bondage, not to detachment; to increase of (worldly) gains, not to decease of them; to covetousness, not to frugality; to discontent, not to content; to company, not to solitude; to sluggishness, not to vigour; to delight in evil, not delight in good." Of such* dhammas *you can with certainty affirm: "This is not the* Dhamma. *This is not the practice. This is not the Master's message".*
>
> *But of whatsoever* dhammas *you can assure yourself (that they are the opposite of what I have just said), of such* dhammas *you may with certainty affirm: "This is the* Dhamma. *This is the practice. This is the Master's message".* [Vin.ii,258]

The message of both the parable of the raft and the Buddha's reply to Mahāpajāpatī leaves no doubt as to the pragmatic and heuristic nature of Buddhist doctrine and practice. Whatever is effective in helping the disciple along the way to *nirvāṇa* can be classified as the Buddha's Dhamma, can become part of the raft even if it was not actually taught by the Buddha himself.[258] This pragmatic nature of Buddhist doctrine has obvious implications for the *anattan* doctrine: as it is a part of the raft can we take it as being some ultimate truth statement as to the real nature of things, independent of its pragmatic context? To do so, it could be argued, would be

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[256] As Nāgārjuna, obviously with this parable in mind, states in regard to *śūnyatā*: "To understand [the doctrine of] *śūnyatā* incorrectly destroys one of meagre intelligence. Knowledge incorrectly understood is like a snake wrongly grasped" **[Mūlamadhyamakakarāika,** 24,11].

[257] The point of this *samyojana, sīlabbata-parāmāsa* or being "attached to the rules of training", is not to forget their *purpose* and treat them as ends in themselves. This is the second of the three *saṃyojanas* which, upon breaking, one becomes a "stream-entrant" or *sotāpanna*, bound for complete *nirvāṇa* within seven more life-times.

to mistake some aspect of the raft as being the further shore itself and, to carry on the analogy, grasp the snake by the wrong end. If this is the case, then one could not take the *anattan* doctrine as a statement *about* the nature of the further shore, about *nirvāṇa*, unless it is understood in the *via negativa* sense of telling us what *nirvāṇa* is not, about where *not* to look for liberation. As regards the actual purpose of the *anattan* doctrine, the **Aṅguttara Nikāya** informs us:

> *To get rid of complacent view, cultivate impermanence; to get rid of self-view, cultivate the thought of not-self* [anattan]*; to get rid of wrong view, cultivate right view.* [iii,447]

Here, the purpose of the doctrine of *anattan* is said to be for getting rid of "self-view" [*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*] and, as the **Saṃyutta Nikāya** informs us, *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* means to regard "body as the *attan*, ... *attan* as having a body, ... body as being in the *attan*, ... *attan* as being in the body ... and so with *vedanā, saññā, sankhāras* and *viññāna*".[259] And, as with all *dhammas*, when it has served its purpose it too must be given up. Yet the doctrine of *anattan* could still be a truth statement as to the ultimate nature of things (including us, of course) as there must be some *necessary* relationship between the conceptual expression, *anattan*, and the way things really are in some objective sense independent of how we would like them to be or how unenlightened beings like ourselves think of them. It is only *sammā-diṭṭhis* such as "all *dhammas* are *anattan*", combined with a deeply purified and concentrated mind, that lead to *yathā-bhūta-ñaṇa-dassana* or "knowledge and vision of things as they are in reality".[260] The *diṭṭhi*, "the world is in reality a cream bun", will not; it would be classified as a *micchā-diṭṭhi*. Thus, the notion that even *sammā-diṭṭhis*, such as the doctrine of *anattan*, have eventually to be given up does not necessarily entail that, because of their pragmatic nature, they are not to be taken as truth statements as to the way things really are, in so far as that can be expressed in concepts - if there is at

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[258] That what is called *buddhavacana* or "the word of the Buddha" extends beyond what the Buddha said or is reported to have said, can be seen at **Dīgha Nikāya** ii, 123ff, where it is stated that if whatever is said is "found to conform to the *suttas* and *vinaya*, then the conclusion must be: 'Assuredly this is *buddhavacana*'". In other words, if it conforms to the melioristic principle outlined in the Buddha's reply to Mahāpajāpatī.

[259] S iii,102.

[260] A iv, 336.

all any "way things *really* are". I would suggest that to "give them up" means not to cling to them as *diṭṭhis* and, for example, use them in disputes with others who have other *diṭṭhis* as a means of self-aggrandisement; not to mistake a mere intellectual grasp of them as being equivalent to the realization of their truth. To use them in these and other ways would be to mistake their purpose. The person who has realized their truth can dispense with them as *diṭṭhis* as he does not need them, they can be of no purpose for him, except as a means of helping others come to the same realization as to the way things really are.

f) The Psychological Aspect of *anattan*

As we saw earlier, when Mahāpajāpatī asked the Buddha to teach her "Dhamma in brief" the Buddha gave her a kind of "Nietzschean hammer", a principle upon which to test the soundness of any particular practice or teaching: does it lead towards the development of *kusala* mental states and final liberation or not. The doctrinal underpinning of this principle is the doctrine of *paṭicca-samuppāda* or "dependent co-origination", succinctly stated as:

> *This being, that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises; this not being, that becomes not; from the ceasing of this, that ceases.* [S ii,28, 70 and 95]

Nirvāṇa can only be attained, can only be something "that becomes", when certain factors and conditions - the *kusala* mental states the development of which constitute the path - are met. The Buddhist path consists, at least in principle, of a set of conditions which eventually fulfil the state of "this being" upon which "that [*nirvāṇa*] becomes". Obviously, many of the factors of the Buddhist path will not in themselves be directly related to the attaining of *nirvāṇa*, but will be secondary and tertiary conditions for the arising of conditions more directly related to the attaining of *nirvāṇa*. Many factors, however, will be a hindrance to the arising of conditions necessary for attaining *nirvāṇa*, and it is in relation to these that the *anattan* doctrine is linked.

The ground condition that is antithetical to the Buddhist path is, as we saw, *taṇhā* which, as primary condition, can give rise to all kinds of secondary mental and emotional *akusala* states such as *lobha, dosa, māna, moha*, etc. *Taṇhā* is connected with the *anattan* doctrine as it is also the ground condition of intellectual and speculative activity expressive of *micchā-diṭṭhis*, one of the most prominent and deeply rooted of which is "the 'I am' conceit" (*asmi-māna*). This can be seen by

comparing two formal expositions of the principle of *paṭicca-samuppāda*. The common "link" *(nidāna)* is "feeling" (*vedanā*), which comes to be dependent upon "contact" (*phassa*) between a sensitive organism and the external world. In one version of the formula,[261] in dependence upon *vedanā* arises "apperception" (*saññā*) which becomes the condition for the arising of "reasoning" (*vitakka*),[262] which in turn becomes the condition upon which "conceptual proliferation" (*papañca*) and other more prolific conceptualising processes come to be.[263] It is here that we find all *diṭṭhis*, including the notion "I am". In the other formulation, *vedanā* gives rise to *taṇhā* which, as condition, can develop into "grasping" (*upādāna*) upon which one becomes involved in the whole process of "becoming" (*bhava*) in *saṃsāra*.[264] We therefore have two stems arising from *vedanā*:[265] one, being concerned with *taṇhā* and *upādāna*, I will call the affective stem; the other, which reveals that our thinking is conditionally linked to our "feelings",[266] I will call the intellectual stem. That these two stems are in parallel indicates their inter-connectedness, i.e., the inter-dependence of our affects and psychological attitudes with our thinking and views. Here we have a connection between psychological attitudes and conceptual expression within which we can see a link between views on the *attan* and certain states of mind which Buddhism sees as a hindrance to attaining *nirvāṇa*. This link may also answer the question as to why a nirvānized person would want to express themselves in terms of the doctrine of *anattan*.

The "'I am' conceit" unfolds as the following:

> *Where there is the conceit, "I am", there is the thought, "I am in this world; I am thus; I am otherwise; I am not eternal; I am eternal. Should I be; should*

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[261] M i, 111-12.

[262] In the sense of the mind's initial steps in reasoning.

[263] Ñāṇananda (1971) refers to *papañca* as "the tendency of the worldling's imagination to break loose and run riot" [p4]. The translation of *papañca* as "conceptual proliferation" is taken from this work, which is subtitled: "An Essay on 'Papañca' and 'Papañca-Saññā-Saṅkhā'".

[264] Various.

[265] As we will see in Part Two, with reference to *citta-bhāvanā*, there is a third stem that can arise from *vedanā*, corresponding to the unfolding of the spiritual path culminating in *nirvāṇa*.

[266] Buddhism considers *vedanā* to be threefold: "pleasant" (*sukha*), "painful" (*dukkha*) or "neutral" (*adukkha-asukha*).

I be in this world; should I be thus; should I be otherwise. May I become; may I become in this world; may I become thus; may I become otherwise". [A ii,215]

"I am", that is a conceit. "This I am", that is a conceit. "Embodied shall I be", that is a conceit. "Disembodied shall I be", that is a conceit. "I shall be conscious", that is a conceit. "Unconscious shall I be", that is a conceit. "Neither conscious nor unconscious shall I be", that is a conceit. [S iv, 202]

All such views are considered to be "lusts, barbs, imposthumes (!), obsessions (*papañcitas*) and vain imaginings (*māna-gatas*)".[267]

This seems rather strong language with which to judge the simple thought "I am". The most probable reason for this is that the expression "I am" is, in Buddhist thought, not only inextricably connected with the ground of all "unskilful" states of mind, *taṇhā* but, as we shall see, is, on subtler levels, seen as reaching up into the higher states of meditational and religious experience which, although forming part of the path, fall short of *nirvāṇa*. The cruder aspects of *asmi-māna* are, are obviously antithetical to the Buddhist path: thoughts of "I am" provide the ground for notions of "me" and "mine" which, in turn, *can* lead to states of greed, possessiveness, ill-will, etc. Here, the link between *taṇhā* and *asmi-māna* is quite clear. But can the thought of "I am" not also sit comfortably alongside "unselfish" states of mind such as "generosity" (*dāna*), "friendliness" (*mettā*), "sympathetic joy" (*muditā*) and other states regarded as aspects of the Buddhist path? Why would Buddhism regard such thoughts as "I am being generous" or "I care about the welfare of others" as being a hindrance, ultimately, to attaining *nirvāṇa*?

In this regard, I think there are two aspects which can help illuminate the *anattan* doctrine. Firstly, the *asmi-māna* reaches right up into what Buddhism regards as the most subtle and refined states of unenlightened being. It even extends beyond that: after destroying five of the ten "fetters" (*saṃyojanas*) by which one becomes a "non-returner" (*anāgāmin*), bound only for spontaneous birth in some refined heaven-world (*rūpa* or *arūpa-loka*) from where they will attain *nirvāṇa* without returning to this world (or any *kāma-loka*), there is still, albeit in a refined form, the "fetter" of "[refined] conceit" (*māna*) remaining.[268] Consequently the notion of "I am", in a very

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[267] S iv,203.

refined form, is still present even *after* one has become a "non-returner", the penultimate stage on the Buddhist path before attaining "complete enlightenment" (*saṃyak sambodhī*) and becoming an *arahant*. However, if we ask what it means to be a "non-returner", to be one who has sufficiently "seen things as they really are" such that they are bound to attain *nirvāṇa* from some refined state of being beyond life in this world and still not have fully destroyed the *asmi-māna*, I can only imagine that having destroyed the five "lower fetters" (*orambhāgiya-saṃyojanas*), one of which is "self-view" (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*),[269] because one of the remaining "fetters" is *māna* or "[refined] conceit", one can still be subject to such thoughts and feelings as "I am". But, because one has a sufficient degree of "transformative insight" (*paññā*), these subtle and refined notions of "I am" or "me and mine" will be insignificant in determining one's actions or understanding of way things really are. In other words, their consequences will be such that one cannot be reborn in the *kāma-loka*, nor can they ever mask whatever *paññā* one has gained. An example might help. If an alcoholic had a deep enough insight into how his alcoholism is destroying his and his family's life, although he may continue to experience the urge to consume alcohol, if his insight into its effects was sufficiently deep, these urges would not find an outlet in habitual drinking, they could not determine that he would *be* an alcoholic. In his actions he would be relatively free from alcoholism and, if his insight into his condition was sufficiently deep, could never again fall back to being an alcoholic. Returning to the Buddhist tradition, if one destroys all ten "fetters", then one is said to be completely free of any thoughts of "I am", "me and mine" and any action which is even subtly determined by such notions. Hence the notion "I am" is still present to some degree even after one has sufficient *paññā* into the fact that ultimately the notion "I am " is incompatible with "seeing things as they really are". The notion of "I am" is almost the last residual echo expressive of the unenlightened mind before becoming fully nirvānized. It is therefore referred to as the "one thing to be abandoned":[270] the mind, having finally "gone away from all ideas of 'I' and 'mine'

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[268] D iii,237.

[269] See M i,299ff., where Dhammadinnā, on being asked how *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* comes to be, replies that it is because we regard "*rūpa* as the *attan* or the *attan* as having *rūpa* or the *attan* as in *rūpa*" and so on with the other four *khandhas*. Given this we can say that the fetter of *sakkaya-diṭṭhi* is concerned with the kind of *diṭṭhis* relating to the Upaniṣadic Ātman and other kindred *diṭṭhis*.

[270] S iii,83.

... is utterly liberated",[271] having "burst delusion's net" and attained the "happiness supreme"[272] - a synonym for *nirvāṇa*.

The second point is that, as we saw, *all* doctrines and *diṭṭhis* have to eventually be given up, let alone wrong doctrines and *diṭṭhis*. I would understand this as implying that as long as the notion "I am" is still overtly influential in determining one's being, no matter how "spiritual" that state of being is, there is always the possibility of becoming attached to Buddhist doctrines (i.e., grasping the snake by the wrong end) which, in turn, can give rise to states such as gross conceit which are, of course, a hindrance to attaining *paññā*. As long as the notion "I am" is not countered by some degree of "insight", then even if one attains deep dhyānic experience, the notion "I am" can not only cloud one's ability to "see things as they really are", but actually give rise to spiritual delusions, i.e., thinking one has attained liberation when one has not, as well as using the "power" that can come through attaining such states for egoistic ends.

This leads me to see another link between the *anattan* doctrine and some statements found in the *upaniṣads*. The *anattan* doctrine can also be seen as an attack upon the very language of liberation used in the *upaniṣads*. As examples of the language of " I am" (*asmi*), we have:

Joyless are those worlds called,
Covered with blind darkness.
To them after death go those
People that have not knowledge [vidyā],
that are not awakened [buddha].

If a person knew the Ātman
With the thought "I am he" [ayam asmi],
With what desire [iccha], *for love* [kāma] *of what*

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[271] Vin.i,3.

[272] See S iii,130. Here, even for one who has broken the five lower "fetters", the notion of "I am" is still present in a subtle form, and is probably an aspect of the eighth *saṃjojana*, *māna* or "[refined] conceit". It is compared to the scent of a lotus: one cannot say whether the scent belongs to either "the petals or the colour or the fibres of it" any more than one can say the feeling of "I am" is due to one of the *khandhas*. Yet, the venerable Khemaka concludes: "Nevertheless I see that in these five *upādāna-khandhas* I have got the idea of 'I am'; yet I do not discern that I am this 'I am'".

Would he cling to the body?[273]

Whoever thus knows "I am brahman!" [brahma-asmi] *becomes this All.*[274]

The first thought of the primordial Ātman is "I am" [*asmi*], which is supposed to be the reason why we refer to ourselves as "I".[275] Elsewhere,[276] Uddālaka Āruṇi teaches his son, Śvetaketu:

> *That which is the finest essence - this whole world has that as its ātman. That is Reality* [satya]. *That is Ātman. That art thou* [tat tvam asi].

If Śvetaketu did realize this truth, then his answer would be in the first person singular , "I am that" (*eso 'ham asmi*), which is linguistically identical to the phrase "I am that" (*eso 'ham asmi*) found throughout the Pāli texts and regarded as a *micchā-diṭṭhi* in connection with the *atta-diṭṭhi*.[277] Thus the very language used in the Upaniṣads in relation to attaining liberation and truth is the very target that Buddhism attacks in its *anattan* doctrine; it sees such views as an actual *hindrance* to liberation - another case of Buddhist irony!

Having seen the relationship between states of mind and conceptual expression, if we ask what state of mind, from a Buddhist perspective, would express "liberation" in terms of "I am *brahman*" or "I am that", or see the goal in terms of selfhood, in terms of *ātman*, the obvious conclusion is that such a mind is still shackled by "delusion" (*moha*), has still not "seen things as they really are" and therefore lacks *paññā*. To talk about liberation and the goal in such terms is considered a hindrance to attaining the Buddhist goal of *nirvāṇa*, even though one could attain what Buddhism would recognize as higher "spiritual" states of meditative consciousness and hold such *diṭṭhis*.

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[273] *Bṛd. up.* 4.4,11-12.

[274] *ibid.* 1,4,10.

[275] *Bṛd. up.*1.4,1.

[276] *Chand. up.*6.8,6-16,3.

[277] This phrase is always part of the common trilogy: "That is mine, that I am, that is my self" (*etaṃ mama, eso 'ham asmi, ma eso attā*). See S iii, 165, 181, etc. Norman (1981) notes in reference to the *alagaddūpama-sutta*: "The phrase *eso 'ham asmi*, 'I am that', is the *tat tvam asi* 'Thou are that' of the Upaniṣada [sic] looked at from the second person" [p23].

We also have a possible answer to why a nirvānized person would teach a doctrine of *anattan*. Given that such notions as we find in the early Upaniṣads were obviously around at the time of the Buddha, the Buddha may have singled them out, considering that such references to liberation and the goal in terms of "I am that" and *ātman* were hindrances to attaining *nirvāṇa*. To counteract such views he taught an antithetical doctrine of *anattan*. Thus the *attan* that is negated in the *anattan* doctrine is the Upaniṣadic *ātman* and its related notions of there being some essential, eternal and unchanging element within the individual which is his true *attan*, and is also the essential reality of all that is, as well as the affects which support such *diṭṭhis*. But for Buddhism, "seeing things as they really are" is seeing the truth of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, seeing that reality is in continual flux unfolding according to certain natural "laws", and within this continual unfolding there is no unchanging essence, nor is there some transcendental entity outside of it.[278]

Parinirvāṇa *and the "Unsupported Consciousness"*

As I said earlier, Harvey[279] provides the most recent attempt to argue for a post-*parinirvāṇa* state by examining the notion of an "unsupported" (*apatiṭṭhita*) and "radiant" (*pabhā*) consciousness as mentioned in the Pāli *suttas*. His main theme is that as "the *suttas* indicate that *nibbāna* during life is such a state of consciousness [as above], it is very likely that it is so beyond death, too",[280] i.e., a post-*parinirvāṇa* state. However, I do not want simply to reproduce his arguments - most of which I agree with - but, using most of the *sutta* material he cites combined with some further material he does not cite, give what I see as a slightly clearer and more convincing argument for there being some kind of post-*parinirvāṇa* state.

Passages that lend themselves to such an interpretation are:

> *Monks, there is a not-born* [ajāta], *a not-become* [abhūta], *a not-made* [akata], *a not-compounded* [asaṅkhata]. *Monks, if that not-born, not-made,*

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[278] If, as I mentioned earlier, there is some transcendent "luminous mind" (*pabhassara-citta*) or equivalent state of being beyond *parinirvāṇa*, it, too, being *anattan*, would also be without any unchanging essence; it, too, could be said to be in continual flux. But the "laws" it unfolds under, as I shall suggest in Part Two, would be those of the *dhamma-niyāma*, i.e., some "transcendent order".

[279] Werner (1989), pp82-102.

[280] *ibid.* p84.

not compounded were not, no escape [nissaraṇa] *from the born, the become, the made, the compounded would be known here. But since, monks there is a not-born, not made, not compounded, therefore an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded is known* [paññāyati]. [Ud 80-81]

Monks, there is that sphere [āyatana] *wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air; wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor that of infinite consciousness, nor the sphere of no-thingness or that of neither apperception nor non-apperception; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together, nor sun and moon. There, monks, I declare there is no coming* [āgati] *or going* [gati], *no duration* [ṭhiti] *or decay* [cuti] *nor coming to be* [upapatti] *; it is without support* [apatiṭṭhita], *without result* [appavatta] *and has no foundation* [anārammaṇa]. *This, indeed, is the end of* dukkha. [Ud 80]

If we ask what is it that is referred to as the "unmade", etc., - all of which are epithets for *nirvāna* - the only direct but negative reference I can find is in the **Saṃyutta Nikāya** where the Buddha asks: "what, monks, is the 'uncompounded' [*asaṅkhata*]?" and replies, "the destruction of greed [*lobha*] ... hatred [*dosa*] ... and delusion [*moha*]".[281] Given this and the fact that the "unborn", etc., are synonymous with *asaṅkhata*, we can see that what the Buddha is declaring in the former quotation is not some noumenal realm (a "world beyond" is denied in the latter quotation) that we can escape to but a state of being that we can attain to here and now, a state free from being affected by greed, hatred and delusion and their many secondary and refined derivatives, i.e., *nirvāṇa*. When the Buddha declares: "there is that sphere [*āyatana*]",[282] he is saying that there is an escape from all states and ways of being that are determined in any way and to any degree by *lobha, dosa* and *moha* and their secondary derivatives;[283] and that *that* is to attain *nirvāṇa* which is free from such

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[281] S iv,358.

[282] At A iii,20 and D iii,241, there is a reference to "the five spheres [*āyatanāni*] of release [*vimutti*]", which make it clear that by *āyatana* is meant the unfoldment of the *ṇidānas* from *pāmujja* through to *samādhi* and then on to some degree of *vumutti*. *Ayatana* does quite literally mean "sphere", "place" or "abode" but the standard use of the term in Buddhism is in regard to the "spheres of perception" which includes both the organ of perception and its object. In Buddhism it therefore connotes a whole "field" of *experience*. Given this, when the text here refers to a "sphere" it would be a mistake to interpret it as connoting some "place". It seems to me, given the manner in which Buddhism uses this term, that here an attainable "state of being" is meant.

determination. Understanding *asaṅkhata* in this way also solves some of the difficulties that arise in seeing *saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata* as being discontinuous, i.e., if we are "compounded" beings, being "compounded" how can we ever become "uncompounded" when whatever we do, being an *expression* of our "compoundedness" [*saṅkhatatā*], can only "compose" something that is also "compounded" [*saṅkhata*]. On its own, the notion of *asaṅkhata* seems a little inaccessible. But, with this statement that to attain the state of being *asaṅkhata* is to be free from determination by saṃsāric activities - that one's future being can no longer be "composed" [*saṅkhata*][284] by such activities - we are not left with some state that is in itself *asaṅkhata*, but only one that is *asaṅkhata* **in relation to** certain factors summarized by "saṃsāric activities". This, therefore, leaves open the possibility that *nirvāna* is not so much an *asaṅkhata* state in itself, but may in fact be "composed" (*saṅkhata*) of other elements - elements that form no part of "saṃsāric activities". After all, the Buddha, as a fully nirvānized person *does* respond to the world, even though his response is not in any way "composed" of or "conditioned" by any trace of saṃsāric activity. He responds to the world, for example, with "compassion" (*karuṇā*). Therefore, we could talk about the Buddha's mind as being "re-composed" by his experience of *bodhi*, which then becomes "composed" of affects such as "compassion" which are free from any determination by saṃsāric activities. And we could speculate that such affects "compose" a different *type* of being whose activities are *nirvāṇic* and who, due to his "nirvāṇic composition" which, in relation to a "saṃsāric composition" is *asaṅkhata*, at death leaves behind the whole saṃsāric cosmography - a cosmography "put together" [*saṅkhata*] and determined by "saṃsāric activities" [*saṅkhāras*]. And, being free from such determinations, is also free from being "made" [*kata*] or "composed" [*saṅkhata*] or "born" [*jāta*] or "becoming"

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[283] In order not to keep repeating this rather clumsy phrase, I shall simply refer to "saṃsāric activities". As the "derivatives" include such affects as ordinary human kindness, etc., to continually reduce it all to *lobha, moha* and *dosa* seems a little petty and negative.

[284] The term *saṅkhata* can be taken in many ways. It can mean "compounded", "constructed", "confected", "created", "put together", "prepared", and "conditioned". But here I occasionally translate it as "composed" as I think in some contexts it is more appropriate than the more usual "compounded" - a term I find too "static" and one that does not lend itself to the fact that it is a consequence of the *saṅkhāras* which "compose" it. Nevertheless, in some contexts "compounded" , "conditioned" and even "determined" seem more appropriate.

[*bhava*] as any kind of being that could be born within *samsāra*. Thus there is "no more *puna-bhava*" within *saṃsāra*.

However, there is a further possibility. We have, firstly, a purely *saṅkhata* being - an "unenlightened" being composed of saṃsāric dispositions; secondly, an "enlightened" being who, being embodied within *saṃsāra* due to his past *saṅkhāras*, is now a nirvānized mind operative within *saṃsāra* and interacting with the world. This leaves the possibility of a third kind of being who, at death, being completely dissociated from the last vestiges of his past "unenlightened" activity, i.e., free from any kind of *saṅkhata* embodiment within *saṃsāra*, no longer even manifests the kind of affects such as *karuṇā* that arise through the interaction of a nirvānized mind within *saṃsāra*. Thus we have the possibility of another mode of being beyond that which might be said to be "composed" of such "enlightened" affects as *karuṇā - karuṇā* being a response to beings within *saṃsāra* - a mode of being that is *asaṅkhata* even in relation to the second kind of being which, in turn, is *asaṅkhata* in relation to the first. However, this is pure speculation, and for it to be even a possibility, we must try and establish that there is something beyond *parinirvāṇa* and return to the notion of the "unsupported" [*apatiṭṭhita*] consciousness.

Along with *asaṅkhata* and the other epithets for *nirvāṇa*, is the notion that *nirvāna* is a state "without support" [*apatiṭṭha*] which is elsewhere referred to as a state of "unsupported consciousness" [*apatiṭṭhita viññāṇa*]:

> *If desire* [rāga] *for the element* [dhātu] *of form* [rūpa], *monks, is abandoned ..., by that abandonment of desire its foothold* [ārammaṇa] *is cut off. As a consequence, there is no support* [apatiṭṭha] *for consciousness. Likewise, by abandonment of desire for the elements of feeling, apperception, volitional activities and consciousness its footholds are cut off. Thereby there is no support for consciousness.*
> *Therefore, that unsupported* [apatiṭṭhita] *consciousness has no growth and is without volitional activity* [anabhisaṅkhāra] *and is released* [vimutta]*; by its release it is steadfast* [ṭhita]; *by its steadfastness it is contented* [santusita]; *in its contentment it cannot be disturbed* [na paritassati]; *not being disturbed it just by itself becomes completely nirvānized* [parinibbāyati]. *Then it knows* [pajānāti]: *"destroyed is birth, lived is the excellent life, done is the task, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter.* [S iii,54]

Here we have a form of *viññāṇa* that is distinct from the *viññāṇa* which is a *khandha* - this latter being a form of consciousness that is "supported" by and

determined by "desire" [*rāga*] for any of the *khandhas*. Thus this "unsupported consciousness", being included among the many epithets for *nirvāṇa*, is also synonymous with the *asaṅkhata* implying that it is a state of consciousness beyond any determination by saṃsāric activities. Yet this "unsupported consciousness" is still within the life of a nirvānized person, so we must ask what happens to it at *parinirvāṇa*?

If such an "unsupported consciousness" exists, and it exists unsupported by and undetermined by any of the factors that constitute saṃsāric existence, including the *khandhas*, when the *khandhas* finally cease at *parinirvāṇa*, then surely, if that *apatiṭṭhita viññāṇa* can exist unsupported by them in life, it can also exist unsupported by them after *parinirvāṇa*. After all, what *could* cause it to cease if it exists independent of what dies, of what is "extinguished" [*nibbuta*]? And as there are now no *saṇkhāras*[285] there is no affective power to determine the "going" [*gati*] of this consciousness. If it "goes" anywhere, wherever it "goes" it will be beyond any possible determination - any possibility of being "composed" [*saṅkhata*] by saṃsāric influences. As the above quote tells us, "it knows: 'destroyed is birth, lived is the excellent life, for life in these conditions there is no hereafter'". Thus what the nirvānized person "knows" is what *will not happen*, i.e., that there can be no more births determined by saṃsāric influences, which leaves room for the fact that they may not actually know what *will happen*. I will return to this point later.

There is a similar theme in another passage but here, instead of an "unsupported" *viññāṇa*, we have simply *citta*.

> *If, monks, a brother's* citta *is free from the desire for the element of form (likewise feeling, apperception, volitional activities, consciousness), and is released from [them] by not grasping after the biases* [āsavas], *then by its release it is steadfast* [ṭhita], *by its steadfastness it is contented* [santussati], *in its contentedness it cannot be disturbed* [na paritassati], *by being free from disturbance it by itself attains complete* nibbāna. *Then it knows* [pajānāti]*: destroyed is birth, lived is the excellent life ...* [S iii,44]

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[285] At least not the saṃsāric sort. Whether one could call the activities in the world of the nirvānized mind such as *karuṇā* a *saṅkhāra* or not, and whether they have any consequence "outside" of saṃsāric existence or not, is a matter that, as far as I'm aware, is not addressed anywhere.

Here we have an almost identical account as the quotation above but with *citta* replacing the *apatiṭṭhita viññāṇa*. Although the text does not directly state it, from what is said this must be an *apatiṭṭhita citta* and, that being the case, whatever applies to the latter must also apply to it. We therefore have the nirvānized state described both in terms of *viññāṇa* and *citta* which are both *asaṇkhata* in relation to *saṃsāra*.

A further facet to add to this is a reference to two forms of *viññāṇa* referred to as "streams" [*sotas*]: a "stream of consciousness" [*viññāṇa-sota*] "that is established in this world and the next", and one "that is not established either in this world or in a world beyond".[286] This latter *viññāṇa-sota* can be taken as a nirvānized stream of *viññāṇa*, referred to by the Buddha as the "fourth attainment of vision [*dassana-samāpatti*]" which he claims to "fully comprehend", and says that "beyond it lies nothing further to comprehended".[287] Here we have a shift from the more static language of "states" to the dynamic language of "streams" [*sotas*] - a language more suitable to Buddhist doctrine which sees things as processes continually becoming and unfolding according to certain conditions. The former "stream", the saṃsāric one, is the round of *puna-bhava*, of continual re-becoming within *saṃsāra*. But through the "fourth attainment of vision" this "same" *viññāṇa-sota*, on becoming nirvānized, is then free from being "established" anywhere within *saṃsāra*. In other words, all the epithets for *nirvāṇa* above apply to it as well, leaving us with another image of *nirvāṇa* - *nirvāṇa* as an "unsupported" *viññāṇa-sota*, imbued with such qualities as *karuṇā* and *paññā*.

One final aspect of this "unsupported" *viññāṇa* or *citta*, also mentioned in Harvey,[288] is its "luminosity" [*pabhā*]. When the Buddha was asked: "Where do the four great elements [*mahā-bhūtas*] ... no footing find"? He replies:

> *Where* viññāṇa *is non-manifest* [anidassana], *boundless* [ananta], *all luminous* [sabbata pabhā]. *Here it is that earth, water, fire and air find no footing find* [na gādhati]. [D i,223]

Collating all these facets together, we can build up a picture of the kind of mind that finally becomes "parinirvānized". It reveals itself as a dynamic "stream" of

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[286] D iii,105.

[287] *ibid.*

[288] Harvey makes no reference to the passages about the released *citta* or the *viññāṇa-sota*.

viññāṇa or *citta* which is "unsupported", free of being determined by saṃsāric influences - all that constitutes "unenlightened" activity - it is "boundless", "luminous", "steadfast", "contented", beyond being "disturbed", "liberated", "blissful", full of "compassionate" activity expressive of "vision" and "insight" as to the nature of reality, etc. And given that all this goes on "unsupported" and beyond determination by all that constitutes *saṃsāra*, how *could* it all suddenly stop and be completely destroyed simply as a result of the *khandhas* - which it is free from and unsupported by - becoming "extinguished"? The image of a nirvānized, radiant "stream" of *citta* or *viññāṇa*, full of the energy of *karuṇā* illuminated by *paññā*, does not lend itself to the view that at the death of a nirvānized person absolutely nothing continues. To me it just does not make sense. Surely some kind of "nirvānized mind-stream" must continue free from all that "makes up" *saṃsāra*. And, being free from all saṃsāric "composition", although such a one cannot appear within *saṃsāra* - only beings determined and "composed" by saṃsāric activities can be so born - must "appear" somewhere else. This brings me to the question as to why the Buddha remained silent when asked directly whether the "parinirvānized" individual continues after death.

Of the many answers that have been aired, I would like to add one possible answer that, as far as I am aware, has not previously been mentioned. This possible answer is that the Buddha simply did not know. When Vacchagotta, having heard claims that the Buddha was "all-knowing" [*sabbaññū*] and "all-seeing" [*sabbadassāvin*], asked the Buddha whether this was true, the Buddha replied that such claims "are misrepresenting me with what is untrue, not fact",[289] and goes on to say that all he ever claims to know is the "three-fold knowledge" [*tevijja*]: i) that he could recall his *previous* lives as far back as he wished; ii) that he could, "with the purified *deva*-vision ... see beings as they pass hence and come to be"; iii) and that he *knew* he had destroyed all those conditions by which he could have been born again somewhere *within* the saṃsāric cosmography. This is all the Buddha ever claimed to know. As he has never died before as a *Buddha* and, as the encounter above with Vacchagotta reveals, makes no claim to know anything over and above this "three-fold knowledge", how *could* he know what happens at *parinirvāṇa* as that would be quite beyond his or anyone else's experience. Perhaps, being a nirvānized *viññāṇa-sota* imbued with all the qualities listed above, with supreme confidence he just

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[289] M i,482.

calmly and radiantly looked forward to his demise, anticipating some new as yet unknown unfolding of the great wonder of being. Perhaps that is the answer.

> *There is no measuring of one who goes beyond* [atthangata].
> *That no longer exists by which he might be spoken of.*
> *When all conditions* [dhammas] *have been removed,*
> *all ways of telling are also removed.* [Sn 1076]

Conclusion

I think a reasonable case has been made which refutes Nietzsche's claim that Buddhism is a form of "passive nihilism", that it teaches a goal which ends with the individual being completely annihilated at *parinirvāṇa*. But how did Nietzsche reach this conclusion? Was he misled by his sources?

The only recorded sources for Nietzsche's acquaintance with Buddhism are Oldenberg's **Buddha**, Müller's **Selected Essays** (Vol. II), Koeppen's **Die Religion des Buddha** (2 Vols.), Coomaraswamy's abridged translation in English of the **Sutta Nipāta**, and what he read in the works of Schopenhauer. Mistry mentions that he may have "possibly ... drew information on Buddhism from his friend Ernst Windisch, the Buddhologist, to whose Sanskrit studies he refers to in his correspondence" to his Sanskritist friend, Deussen, and another friend, Rohde.[290] However, nothing directly relating to Buddhism or Indian thought is found in any of these letters. This is surprising as, given the attention Nietzsche gives to Buddhism in his writings, one would have expected to find some mention of his thinking in this area in his letters to his life-long friend, Deussen, who was a Sanskrit scholar. Yet, as Sprung remarks, in his life-long correspondence with Deussen, "Nietzsche ... never once bothered to seek information from or discuss issues [relating to Buddhism or Indian thought in general] with him".[291] What we are left then are the above works as the only definite and available sources of Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism.

Of the works on Buddhism, Koeppen's was the first Nietzsche read.[292] For Koeppen, *nirvāṇa* "is ... first and foremost the total extinction of the soul, the extinction in nothingness, plain destruction ... Nirvana is the blessed Nothingness: Buddhism is the gospel of annihilation".[293] Here we have a source for Nietzsche's view that the Buddhist *nirvāṇa* implies total annihilation of the individual at death. But what about the later works of Müller and Oldenberg?

Müller seems to have had a change of mind as to whether *nirvāṇa* is annihilationist or not. For example, in his essay, *Buddhism*, he says that in Buddhism ...

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[290] Mistry (1981), p16.

[291] Sprung (1983), p174.

[292] Mistry (1981) records that Nietzsche borrowed Koeppen's work from the university library at Basle during the winter semester of 1870-71.

[293] Koeppen, p306, translated by Mistry (1981), p179.

True wisdom consists in perceiving the nothingness of all things, and in a desire to become nothing, to be blown out, to enter into the state of Nirvâna. Emancipation is obtained by total extinction, not by absorption in Brahman, or by recovery of the soul's true estate.[294]

Yet Müller is bemused by the apparent contradiction between Buddhism as a philosophy and as it is found existing in the world.

How a religion which taught the annihilation of all existence, of all thought, of all individuality and personality, as the highest object of all endeavours, could have laid hold of the minds of millions of human beings, and how at the same time, by enforcing the duties of morality, justice, kindness, and self-sacrifice, it could have exercised a decidedly beneficial influence, not only on the natives of India, but on the lowest barbarians of Central Asia, is a riddle which no one has as yet been able to solve.[295]

He attempts to resolve this apparent dilemma by distinguishing between "Buddhism as a religion and Buddhism as a philosophy. The former addressed itself to millions, the latter to a few isolated thinkers".[296] In another essay, *The Meaning of Nirvāṇa*, Müller begins to have doubts whether Buddhism is annihilationist or not and comes up with another distinction. He thinks that, perhaps, in relation to the Buddhist Pāli texts, only the later Abhidhamma[297] - what he calls the "system of metaphysics" - is actually nihilistic, as well as the *prajñā-pāramitā* literature of the later schools of thought which taught the doctrine of *śūnyatā* or "emptiness". He comments:

The only ground, therefore, on which we may stand, if we wish to defend the founder of Buddhism against the charges of Nihilism and Atheism, is this,

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[294] Müller (1881), p219. The essay is dated 1862.

[295] *ibid.*, p246.

[296] *ibid.* p246. This is from the essay *Buddhist Pilgrims* (1857).

[297] The Pāli canon is divided into "three baskets" (*tripitaka*), the *suttas*, the *vinaya* or book of "discipline", and the *abhidhamma* which is an attempt to analyse, define and systematize what is found in the *suttas*. It is generally accepted to be the work of monks.

that, as some of the Buddhists admit, the "Basket of Metaphysics" was rather the work of his pupils, not of the Buddha himself.[298]

He then proceeds to wonder whether the *nirvāṇa* taught by the Buddha, as distinct from the annihilationist creed found in the Abhidhamma, was in fact a "self-ness, in the metaphysical sense of the word - a relapse into that being which is nothing but itself", i.e., what is referred to above as "the soul's true estate". Eventually, in the next essay, he decides that "the sayings of the Buddha [that] occur in the first and second parts of the canon ... are in open contradiction to ... metaphysical Nihilism",[299] as when one examines the sayings found in the **Dhammapada**, "one recognizes in them a conception of Nirvâna, altogether irreconcilable with the Nihilism of the third part of the Buddhist Canon".[300] Müller therefore comes to distinguish between the earliest teachings found in the *suttas*, teachings that he sees if not reflecting what the Buddha actually taught, are as near to the Buddha as we can determine, and the Abhidhamma and even later Mahāyāna *prajñā-pāramitā* teachings, both of which he considers as thoroughly nihilistic. Only the latter's conception of *nirvāṇa* is nihilistic. The earlier doctrines found in the *suttas* are not, implying that whatever the Buddha taught it was not annihilationism.

Along with Koeppen, Oldenberg's description of northern India at the time of the Buddha as being in a state of spiritual malaise, no doubt influenced Nietzsche's view of India. Yet Oldenberg, when it comes to the status of *nirvāṇa*, does not think it implies complete annihilation.[301]

In the religious life, in the tone which prevailed in the ancient Buddhist order, the thought of annihilation has had no influence.[302]

If anyone describes Buddhism as a religion of annihilation, and attempts to develop it therefrom as from its specific germ, he has, in fact, succeeded in

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[298] *ibid.*, pp287-86. This essay is also dated 1857.

[299] *ibid.*, p303. The essay is *Buddhist Nihilism* (1869).

[300] *ibid.*, p305.

[301] See Oldenberg (1882), pp265-85 for his account.

[302] *ibid.*, p265.

wholly missing the main drift of the Buddha and the ancient order of his disciples.[303]

After discussing two of the verses I have used above from the **Udāna**[304], he finally concludes in a more poetic tone:

For the Buddhist the words "there is an uncreated" [akata] *merely signify that the created can free himself from the curse of being created - there is a path from the world of the created out into the endlessness. Does the path lead to a new existence? Does it lead into the Nothing? The Buddhist creed rests in delicate equipoise between the two. The longing of the heart has not a nothing, and yet the thought has not a something, which it might firmly grasp. Farther off the idea of the endless, the eternal could not withdraw itself from belief than it has done here, where, like a gentle flutter on the point of merging in the Nothing, it threatens to evade the gaze.*[305]

Given the views found in both Müller's later essays[306] and in Oldenberg's work on *nirvāṇa*, it is odd that Nietzsche gives no consideration to their conclusions about *parinirvāṇa*, in spite of the fact that he knew both Müller and Oldenberg were eminent scholars in the field of Pāli Buddhist studies, and their works were representative of the latest Pāli scholarship. Why he paid no attention to them we can only surmise. Perhaps the Sanskrit and Pāli scholars he talked with at the university of Basle convinced him that both Müller and Oldenberg were wrong. But, given our present sources, this is impossible to determine. Even Nietzsche's "mentor", Schopenhauer, whose works were no doubt his first contact with Buddhism, does not interpret *parinirvāṇa* as nihilistic. His view is a little akin to Oldenberg's.

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[303] *ibid.*, p266.

[304] Ud. 80 and 81.

[305] Oldenberg (1882), pp284-85.

[306] Oldenberg (footnote on p283) favourably quotes Müller, from the latter's introduction to his translation of the **Dhammapada** (1881), referring to the above verse from the **Udāna**: "This surely shows that even for Buddha [sic] a something existed which is not made, and which, therefore, is imperishable and eternal".

> *If* Nirvana *is defined as nothing, that means only that* Samsara *contains no single element that could serve to define or construct* Nirvana.[307]

Nirvāṇa, for Schopenhauer, was "denial of the will" and *saṃsāra* "the affirmation of the will".[308] In his later **Parerga and Paralipomena**, he says that ...

> ... *the* denial of the will-to-live *does not in any way assert the annihilation of a substance, but the mere act of not-willing; that which hither to* willed *no longer* wills. *As we know this being, this essence, the* will, *as thing-in-itself merely in and through the act of* willing, *we are incapable of saying or comprehending what it is or does after it has given up this act. And so* for us *who are the phenomenon of willing, this denial is a passing over into nothing.*[309]

From what Schopenhauer says elsewhere,[310] to achieve *parinirvāṇa* would be the equivalent to a return to some state of "primordial being", which is not too far removed from what both Müller and Oldenberg were hinting at. Therefore, given Nietzsche's known sources, it is clear that however he arrived at his view that Buddhism was a form of "passive nihilism", that it succumbed to annihilationism, it was not due to his being influenced by the views of either Müller, Oldenberg, or even Schopenhauer.

To conclude this first part I will look at another influence on Nietzsche which I think may reveal the real source of his considering Buddhism to be a form of "passive nihilism": the opinions and ideas about culture and religion he absorbed somewhat uncritically from his reading in the field of anthropology.

As Thatcher remarks, Nietzsche, "like other revolutionary thinkers of his time ... seeks a new understanding of man by revealing the hidden sources of human life, culture and civilization".[311] Just as Darwin was revealing man's animal origins, anthropologists such as Tylor and Lubbock were revealing - or thought they were revealing - the natural origins of certain aspects of contemporary civilisation,

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[307] WWR ii,608.

[308] WWR ii, p609.

[309] PP ii,p312.

[310] PP ii, p400.

especially the natural origins of our religious belief. The crucial idea that Nietzsche borrowed from them, and used in his own work, was that the origin of all belief in a world other than the natural world stems from the fact that in our dream life we seem to encounter another world. As Lubbock writes:

> *During sleep the spirit seems to desert the body; and as in dreams we visit other localities and even other worlds, living, as it were, a separate and different life, the two phenomena are not unnaturally regarded as complements of one another. Hence the savage considers the events in his dreams to be as real as those of his waking hours, and hence he naturally feels that he has a spirit which can quit the body ... When they dream of their departed friends or relatives, savages firmly believe themselves to be visited by their spirits, and hence believe, nor indeed in the immortality of the soul, but in its survival of the body.*[312]

Nietzsche, obviously with this passage in mind, writes:

> Misunderstanding of the dream. *The man of the ages of barbarous primordial culture believed that in the dream he was getting to know a* second real world: *here is the origin of all metaphysics. Without the dream one would have had no occasion to divide the world in two. The dissection into soul and body is also connected with the oldest idea of the dream, likewise the postulation of a life of the soul, thus the origin of all belief in spirits, and*

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[311] Thatcher (1983), p293. Thatcher's articles (1983 and 1982) on the influences of the anthropological works of Tylor, Bagehot and Lubbock on Nietzsche's thinking are most illuminating. He clearly illustrates that many of Nietzsche's views on the origins of morality, custom and religion were, at times, almost direct borrowings from the works of Bagehot and Lubbock. The key theme of these anthropologists is the notion of "survivals" - groups of surviving "savages" whose cultures have remained relatively unchanged from ancient times through to the present. From their field studies, they concluded that in recording the beliefs and habits of these "survivals" they were, like palaeontologists, discovering the real origins of our own more sophisticated systems of morality and religion, origins which, in the course of time, are forgotten. As Thatcher remarks, quoting Lubbock, "'the earlier mental stages through which the human race has passed are illustrated by the condition of existing, or recent, savages,' allowing us to recognise that many primitive ideas are still 'rooted in our minds, as fossils are embedded in the soil'" [p269].

[312] Quoted in Thatcher (1983), p297, from Lubbock's **The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man** (1870). According to Thatcher [p295], Nietzsche acquired a German translation of the third edition in 1875.

probably also of the belief in gods. "The dead live on, for *they appear to the living in dreams": that was the conclusion one formerly drew, throughout millennia.* [HAH 5]

Nietzsche, building on the ideas he found in Lubbock and others, thinks he now understands the natural origin of the two-world framework, the duality of body and soul and belief in the survival of the latter after death, as well as belief in spirits and even the origin of metaphysics - all have a genealogy whose original source is the world of dreams, in the fact our primitive ancestors thought that they encountered another world in their dreams. He does not seem to consider any other possible source, as "[w]ithout the dream one would have no occasion to divide the world in two". In time, this two-world schema, as it is passed on from primitive times through the generations - its origin having been forgotten - becomes so established, becomes almost an *a priori* category inherent in all our thinking, that it informs all religious and philosophical thought and speculation. Nietzsche even sees the continuance of this schema into the domain of contemporary science in the form of the pursuit of some "true world" beyond the world of the senses. What we are therefore presented with is "the history of an error".[313] Yet this "error" is not always detrimental to human development, as in the case of the Greeks whose conception of the Olympian gods was "a mirror image of the most successful specimens of their own class ... an idealization, not an antithesis, of their own nature".[314] They "made poetry out of reality, instead of yearning to escape from it".[315] In the Greek gods, "*the animal* in man felt deified and did *not* lacerate itself, did *not* rage against itself!"[316] The Greeks even blamed their gods rather than themselves for their misfortunes. But, since Plato, through Christianity and metaphysics and on into the modern world, the two-world framework has been grasped as a means of escaping from and condemning the natural world. For those for whom life is too much of a burden, who suffer from life and even want to revenge themselves upon life, the "other world" becomes something to escape to, becomes a justification for turning one's back upon the natural world and condemning it as evil and worthless. Consequently, given this "revealed" genealogy

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[313] In TI iv, Nietzsche recounts this "History of an Error" only from Plato onwards. But its genealogy obviously reaches far back into man's primitive past.

[314] WC, p377.

[315] *ibid.*, p359.

[316] BT ii,23.

of the two-world schema from his anthropological reading, when Nietzsche encounters Müller's and Oldenberg's interpretations of *parinirvāṇa* as implying some "eternal realm" that the nirvānized person passes into at death, and given that other scholars judged Buddhism to be annihilationist, he would be highly suspicious of any talk of some state beyond the natural world and would most likely judge that this was an interpretation of *décadents* reading their own wishes and values into Buddhist doctrine.[317]

When we add to this the accounts, especially in Oldenberg, of an age grown weary of metaphysical speculation, where agnosticism was rife among the philosophers, where the old morality and religious beliefs were being gradually undermined and within which Nietzsche saw an historical parallel to his own time - events which precede the Buddha - we have a reason why Nietzsche may have rejected the views of Müller and Oldenberg concerning *parinirvāṇa*. The Buddha arrives on this stage as an atheist, having rejected the established religious tradition, Brāhmanism. He teaches a religion of "self-redemption" making no appeal to any divine being or realm. His teachings have regard only to "natural laws" and is therefore regarded by Nietzsche as a "profound physiologist". And as Nietzsche understands the Buddha as discovering "the necessary conditions out of which alone [morality] can grow", and having discovered these conditions "no longer wants it (Buddhism)",[318] which I would understand as implying that the Buddha rejected the "two-world" schema, one can understand how Nietzsche sided with those who interpreted *parinirvāṇa* as annihilationist: given that there is no other world than this natural world and *nirvāṇa* is a state one achieves in this world, as *parinirvāṇa* entails the end of *saṃsāra* and *saṃsāra* is the only world, Buddhism must therefore be annihilationist. However, as I've argued above, I think Nietzsche was wrong.

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[317] A case could certainly made against Müller in this regard. Müller struggled for a definition that would encompass all religions and which would be grounded in the natural world. However, as his **An Introduction to the Science of Religion** - a "science" based upon philology - and his **Natural Religion** show, he struggled to fit Buddhism into his scheme. Eventually, he came up with a definition within which Buddhism might fit: "*Religion consists in the perception of the infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man*". **[Natural Religion**, p188]. *Nirvāṇa*, to fit into this definition, would be the "perception of the infinite" and *parinirvāṇa* the passing over into that infinite.

[318] WP 151.

PART TWO
IRONIC AFFINITIES

Introduction

One common and general feature shared by both Nietzsche and Buddhism is the centrality of man in a godless cosmos.[319] Both, therefore, look to man and not any external power, being or numinous source for their respective solutions to what they perceive as the problem(s) of existence. For Nietzsche the problem is the on-coming nihilism; for Buddhism it is the unsatisfactory nature of what the vast majority of mankind seem to regard as a meaningful and purposeful human existence. Both see man as an ever-changing flux of "forces" possessing what may generally be called physical and psychological aspects. And within this "flux" there is no autonomous or unchanging subject corresponding to such terms as "self", "ego" or "soul". Both also emphasize the hierarchy that exists or can exist between individuals and within the individual's own nature. For Nietzsche the postulated pinnacle of his hierarchy was the *Übermensch*, a goal which no one has yet attained but which is a potential, if not for all, at least for some. In the case of Buddhism the pinnacle is said to have been realised and attained in the person of Gautama the Buddha some 2,500 years ago. Another common feature shared by both is that their respective goals are to be achieved through a process of "self-overcoming" (*Selbstüberwindung*). These are some of the seemingly common features that will be examined in this chapter.

Nietzsche's View of Man

Although Nietzsche's proposed answer to the prospect of nihilism - the creation of new values - was a task he did not complete, he did leave us with his monistic alternative and replacement for God, which would have functioned as the arbitrator for the creation of new values - his *Wille zur Macht* or "will to power". It is only through this notion that one can make overall sense of Nietzsche. It brings together and unites much that in isolation seems pointless and even contradictory. And it is what links his key notions such as "culture", "art", "morality", "philosophy", etc., as well as providing a continuity between his earlier and later writings, despite the fact that the will to power did not explicitly appear until *Zarathustra*. It is, as I shall

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[319] Buddhism accepts the existence of "gods" and other "spirit-like" beings found in Indian cosmology, but they play no essential part in the Buddhist spiritual life. For a good account of this see Southwold (1978).

show, an explanatory principle modelled upon Nietzsche's understanding of human nature and the natural sciences, and it provides a new and interesting perspective on human history and culture. It was also to be the basic premise upon which a post-nihilistic future could be built.

As I said in the previous chapter, the idea that "God is dead" is not simply a theological - or anti-theological - statement, but also a cultural one, i.e., an idea with far-reaching cultural implications. The bifurcation of existence into "mundane" and "transcendental", "worldly" and "divine", "appearance" and "reality", conjoined with the understanding that all that is good, meaningful, worthy and real has its source and origin in that which somehow transcends this ordinary world and life had, according to Nietzsche, been undermined through the pursuit of one of the West's highest values - *truth*. Truth has won but the consequence is that "the highest values devaluate themselves".[320] The source of "truth", the "real world", has been negated by truth, so what now is the status of that world previously seen as "appearance"? Nietzsche replies:

> *We have abolished the real world: what world is left? The apparent world perhaps? ... But no!* With the real world we have also abolished the apparent world! [TI iv]

What we are therefore left with is simply "the world" or, more correctly, the world and life as encountered and interpreted by its own latest prodigy, man. And when the man, Nietzsche, contemplates life and the world he eventually concludes that it is "*will to power which is the will of life*".[321] And as it is life as he saw and understood it that was to be the ground upon which any future values were to be built, it follows that *power* was the criterion of evaluation: the greater quantum of power a thing or person manifested the greater value it possessed. And it also follows that any attempt to evaluate and interpret human institutions such as religion, science, philosophy, politics, etc. and the ideologies they give rise to, as well as the individuals who create and express themselves within these, will also be evaluated in terms of power. As Nietzsche puts it: "What is the objective measure of value? Solely the quantum of enhanced and organized power".[322] And even "valuation itself is only this will to power".[323] It is through this notion that the world and life become

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[320] WP 2.

[321] GS 349.

"intelligible". Just as Nietzsche's early mentor, Schopenhauer, had "filled-in" Kant's noumenal "thing-in-itself" with *Wille*, Nietzsche replaces Schopenhauer's *Wille* with his will to power and interprets Schopenhauer's goal of "the denial of the will to live" as merely a rather sick expression of the will to power. However, despite the assertiveness of his statements, Nietzsche, unlike Schopenhauer, never considered his notion that the world is will to power to be a metaphysical truth, but only a working hypothesis derived from his study of life both in its subjective aspect, his "psychological observations", and in its objective aspect, his readings in the realm of natural science.

The most succinct expression of this hypothesis unifying both the subjective and objective aspects of existence under the single principle of will to power, is found in **Beyond Good and Evil**. Nietzsche states his premise:

> *Granted that nothing is 'given' as real except our world of desires and passions, that we can sink to no other 'reality' than the reality of our drives ... is it not permitted to make the experiment and ask the question whether this which is given does not suffice for an understanding even of the so-called mechanical (or 'material') world? I do not mean as a deception, an 'appearance', an 'idea' (in the Berkeleyan and Schopenhaueran sense), but as possessing the same degree of reality as our emotions themselves - as a more primitive form of the world of emotions in which everything still lies locked in mighty unity and then branches out and develops in the organic process ... as a kind of instinctual life ... as an* antecedent form *of life?*
> [BGE 36][324]

What Nietzsche is saying is that our unmediated and direct reality is our "subjective" experience and that the primary events that constitute that experience are our various drives, emotions and passions. They are the "given" and, as Nietzsche explains elsewhere, they are also the primary forces that give form to and construct our perceptions, relations and understanding of the world as object. In other words,

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[322] WP 674.

[323] WP 675.

[324] Nietzsche does not, on the whole, distinguish between "affect" (Affekt), "desire" (Begier), "passion" (Leidenschaft), "drive" (Trieb), "instinct" (Instinkt), and "emotion" (Gefühl). On the whole, I will use the term "affect" as a synonym for them all, as is Nietzsche's tendency.

on the basis of this "given", Nietzsche takes a further step and says that as the only world we have direct access to is our "inner" world, we can only attempt to understand the objective world of nature by "employ[ing] man as an analogy to this end";[325] we can only understand nature in our own image.[326] And, as Nietzsche's "psychological observations" led him to conclude that the fundamental principle governing our inner life is the will to power, on the premise that we can only understand the natural world in our own image, it follows that: "The world seen from within, the world defined according to its 'intelligible character' - it would be 'will to power' and nothing else",[327] Interestingly enough Nietzsche's mentor, Schopenhauer, says something along the same lines, (which contradicts Nietzsche's statement regarding Schopenhauer in BGE 36):

> *The double knowledge which we have of the nature and action of our own body, and which is given in two completely different ways,* [i.e. as the subjective and objective aspects of our bodily experience] *has now been clearly brought out. Accordingly, we shall use it further as a key to the inner being of every phenomenon in nature. We shall judge all objects which are not our body ... **according to the analogy of this body**. We shall therefore assume that as, on the one hand, they are representation, just like our body, and are in this respect homogeneous with it, so on the other hand, if we set aside their existence as the subject's representation, what remains over must be, according to its inner nature, the same as what in ourselves we call* will. *For what other kind of existence or reality could we attribute to the rest of the material world?*[328] (Emphasis mine)

But why did Nietzsche desire to extend his notion of the will to power from the exclusively human arena to one which encompasses existence *per se*, given that his "given" was the "world of desires and passions"? My answer is that Nietzsche, as the title of Copleston's book has it, was primarily a "Philosopher of Culture", and within the contemporary culture of his time the prestige of the natural sciences was a

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[325] WP 619.

[326] GS 112.

[327] BGE 36.

[328] WWR, pp104-5.

growing influence in any discourse on man and the world (for example, Kant included in his philosophical writings, **The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science**). The natural sciences were beginning to present an atheological world-picture within which man's supposed divine ancestry was being relegated to mere poetic fiction - Nietzsche, in his hyperbolic style, would call it a *lie*. As a philologist, Nietzsche had first hand experience of the destructive effect the sciences were having: "the philologists, who are the destroyers of every faith that rests on books".[329] However, his scientific interests and knowledge extended far beyond the confines of philology and included physics, chemistry, physiology and anthropology.[330] Thus any philosophy of man that Nietzsche proposed must, if it were not to be undermined by science, be actually underpinned by it. Such sciences would be "the foundation-stones of new ideals"[331] which "prepare the way for the future task of the philosophers".[332] Science, in itself, cannot create values but actually requires "a value creating power, in the *service* of which it could *believe* in itself".[333] To this end scientists are to become the servants of value creating philosophers like Nietzsche himself.[334] The contrary state of affairs with science being the dominating force could, in Nietzsche's view, be disastrous for man. As he puts it in an earlier work:

> *Is life to dominate knowledge and science, or is knowledge to dominate life? Which of these two forces is the higher and more decisive? There can be no doubt: life is the higher, the dominating force, for knowledge which annihilated life would have annihilated itself with it.* [UH,10][335]

As it is his understanding of human nature that is the prime analogate in his attempt to understand the natural world, any scientific theory that could act as a foundation-stone and serve his axiology would of necessity have to reflect his prior

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[329] GS 358.

[330] See list of scientific books read by Nietzsche in Middleton (1969), note 22, p64.

[331] D 453.

[332] GM i,17.

[333] GM iii,25.

[334] BGE 211.

[335] We saw earlier how the pursuit of truth can lead to nihilism.

principle of the will to power, or at least be susceptible to modification in serving that end. Yet in his scientific reading he could not but conclude that the dominating *Weltanschauung* was the mechanistic one, a view that was antithetical to his own view of human nature. And as he assumes that whatever we understand we can only do so in our own image, it follows that the prevailing view of the world of nature as a mechanism must reflect an assumed if not conscious view of human nature. And to reduce human nature or, by implication, life, to a machine-like mechanism is, for Nietzsche, symptomatic of a sickly and weak form of life. One influential scientist who, for Nietzsche, symbolized this view and whom Nietzsche therefore saw as a danger, was Charles Darwin. To counteract Darwin and what he symbolized Nietzsche had to find an antithesis to the mechanistic view of nature. This he found in the figure of the 18th century Jesuit scientist R.J. Boscovitch, whose view of nature was not mechanistic, but dynamic. In Boscovitch Nietzsche found his "servant"; in Boscovitch's dynamic theory of nature he uncovered his "foundation-stone". But, before I examine Nietzsche's response to Darwin and Darwinism and his "cure" for these, Boscovitch, I must present my understanding of how Nietzsche come to his view of human nature as best represented through the principle of will to power.

The Greek Paradigm

Throughout the whole history of Western culture there has only ever been a single people who, in terms of Nietzsche's view of culture, achieved a perfect form of it: the Greeks[336] from Homer through to Socrates, the peak of whose culture was during the 6th and 5th centuries.[337] They have been "the only people of genius in world history"[338] because they created so many great individual human beings,[339] beings who "shine in the radiance of a higher humanity".[340] The reason Greek culture threw up so many great individuals is to be found in its attitude towards and creative response to the "given" of **Beyond Good and Evil** 36 - "our world of desires and passions". Succinctly stated, the Greeks Nietzsche so admired did not alienate man from nature,

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[336] WC p344. Here Nietzsche means "the younger Greece" [PTG, p2].

[337] HAH 68.

[338] WC, p360.

[339] *ibid*, p348.

[340] *ibid*, p344.

they did not seek to explain what is best and most worthy in man by appealing to some higher non-natural source, but saw what greatness individuals had achieved as a continuation of nature, as having its roots solely in "our world of desires and passions":

> *... the "natural" qualities and the properly called "human" ones have grown up inseparably together. Man in his highest and noblest capacities* is *Nature and bears in himself her awful twofold character. His abilities generally considered dreadful and inhuman are perhaps indeed the fertile soil, out of which alone can grow forth all humanity in emotions, actions and works.* [HC p51]

The Greeks accepted that human nature contains some "dreadful and inhuman" forces but their genius, according to Nietzsche, was in their methods of dealing with them. The paradigmatic method is found in the **Works and Days** of the 8th century poet, Hesiod. Hesiod sees two Eris-goddesses upon the earth, or two forms of "Strife", a cruel one who "makes battles thrive, and war"; and the other "first-born child of blackest Night" who "is good for mortal men" because, through envy, she makes "even lazy men to work". Thus "potter hates potter, carpenters compete,/ And beggar strives with beggar, bard with bard".[341] Nietzsche comments that "this is one of the most noteworthy Hellenic thoughts and worthy to be impressed on the newcomer immediately at the entrance-gate of Greek ethics".[342] It is "the most noteworthy of Hellenic thoughts" because, firstly, it cautions those taking up Hellenic studies to leave behind them at the "entrance-gate" their own Christian notion of ethics if they wish to comprehend the Greeks; and, secondly and more importantly, it shows that the natural passions of "jealousy, spite, envy, [can incite] men to activity but not the action of war to the knife but to the action of *contest* ... [making of Eris] ... a *beneficent* deity".[343] The Greeks did not judge envy, spite and jealousy and other human passions and desires as being either moral or immoral in themselves: they were simply amoral and natural. But they could be used by men, as in Hesiod's example, either destructively by becoming "dreadful and inhuman" - the "bad" Eris - or creatively - the "good" Eris, which, through the notion of "contest" or *agon*,

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[341] HC p54-55. Translation taken from Hesiod (1973) in preference to Mügge's.

[342] *ibid*, p54.

[343] *ibid*, p55.

becomes a pursuit of "excellence" or *aretē*. Hence: "the Greek knows the artist *only as engaged in a personal fight*".[344] And even ...

> *Plato's dialogues* [are] *for the most part the result of a contest with the art of the orators, the sophists, and the dramatists of his time, invented for the purpose of enabling him to say in the end: "Look, I too can do what my great rivals can do; indeed I can do it better than they. No Protagoras has invented myths as beautiful as mine; no dramatist such a vivid and captivating whole as my* Symposium*; no orator has written orations like those in my* Gorgias *- and now I repudiate all this entirely and condemn all imitative art. Only the contest made me a poet, a sophist, an orator".* [HC, p37-38]

Here is the primary source of Nietzsche's answer to nihilism. Nihilism unfolds as the truth dawns that humanity's esteemed values and special place in the cosmos are nothing other than human inventions. In reality there is no ontological separation between man and nature - man is *homo natura*; there is no other world than the natural one - the natural world *is* reality. But in the two-world system the natural world is judged to be antithetical to the "good", man's natural desires and passions are seen as "evil". Therefore if we negate the "good" we will remove all that keeps the "evil" in check, our morality, resulting, according to Nietzsche, in the fearful prospect of a brutal world of a *bellum omnium contra omnes* becoming rampant - a return to a completely animal-like existence. But, following Hesiod and the Greek model, there need not be a *bellum omnium contra omnes* as the outcome of this nihilism. There is not only the "bad" Eris but also the "good" Eris which, manifesting as *agon*, reveals to Nietzsche the way out of nihilism whilst "remaining true to the earth":[345] the "sublimation" (*Sublimierung*) of the drives and passions of *homo natura* towards the creation of a new type of man - the *Übermensch*. For the latter to come about, however, the *agon* must shift from being between individuals to one between the vying drives and passions *within* the individual, what Nietzsche calls "self-

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[344] HC. Translation from Kaufmann's VPN, p37.

[345] Z *Prologue*,3. To "remain true to the earth" means not to "believe those who speak to you of superterrestial hopes" ... "Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy, but God died, and thereupon the blasphemers died too. To blaspheme the earth is now the most dreadful offence". One could also add that to conclude that because "God is dead" life no longer has any meaning or purpose would be, in Nietzsche's eyes, an even more "dreadful offence". As he declares in this section: "The *Übermensch* is the meaning of the earth".

overcoming" (*Selbstüberwindung*). It is this path of "self-overcoming" that constitutes Nietzsche's answer to nihilism, that is his proposed replacement for the old, displaced "spiritual quest". And it was the Greeks who supplied him with his paradigm.

Nietzsche and Darwin

As Kaufmann correctly claims, Nietzsche was "aroused from his dogmatic slumber by Darwin, much as Kant was a century earlier by Hume".[346] Nietzsche's direct references to Darwin extend throughout both his published and unpublished writings (Mostert lists 52 in the as yet incomplete Colli and Montinari edition of Nietzsche's complete works), from his attack on David Strauss for seeing Darwin as "one of the greatest benefactors of mankind",[347] to his own denial that his notion of the *Übermensch* was Darwinist: "scholarly oxen have suspected me of Darwinism".[348] Nietzsche saw Darwin and Darwinism, and the sciences in general, as a nihilistic threat to Western Culture, and a much more dangerous one than any system of metaphysics could ever be: they were *empirically* based; they had *facts* as their premises; and these facts will gradually make us "deaf to the siren sounds of old metaphysical bird-catchers who have all too long been piping to [man] 'you are more! you are higher! you are of a different origin!'".[349] Darwin and Darwinism are a danger not simply because of their "facts" which, on the whole, Nietzsche accepts,[350] but because of what he sees as their baseless optimism, an optimism that goes back to Socrates: "Socrates is the prototype of the theoretical optimist who, with his faith that the nature of things can be fathomed, ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a panacea".[351] Darwin, like many other scientists, is still unwittingly working within the Christo-Platonic framework whilst the product of his labours actually undermines that very framework:

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[346] Kaufmann (1974), pxiii. Note: Mostert (1979) disagrees.

[347] DS 7.

[348] EH iii,1.

[349] BGE 230.

[350] See UH 9.

[351] BT i,15.

> *It is still a* metaphysical faith *that underlies our faith in science - and we men of knowledge of today, we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive* our *flame from the fire ignited by a faith of old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is* divine. [GM iii,24]

This "baseless optimism" is, according to Nietzsche, derived from an unconscious and unquestioned assumption rooted in the "faith of old" that the pursuit of truth will lead to the "divine", that truth is now the ultimate panacea: when science finally reveals the truth of the world, we shall then enter "heaven", even though that "heaven" is here on earth. But Darwin is still listening to the dying echoes of the "siren songs of the old metaphysical bird-catchers" as the penultimate paragraph of his **On the Origin of Species** shows:

> *As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Silurian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection.*[352]

Perhaps this paragraph exemplifies what Nietzsche has in mind when he wonders: "to what extent the fateful belief in divine providence ... still exists ... to what extent Christian presuppositions and interpretations still live under the formulas 'nature', 'progress', 'perfectibility', 'Darwinism'".[353] In the above quote, Darwin does seem to exhibit an "absurd trust in the course of things"[354] which the facts of his theory cannot back up. And the "unconscious consequence" of "this long belief in divine dispensation" is that it is "as if what happens were no responsibility of ours".[355] As Nietzsche rather dramatically puts it in the **Gay Science**: "Whither is God? ...I will

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[352] Darwin (1859), p489.

[353] WP 243.

[354] *ibid.*

[355] *ibid.*

tell you. *We have killed him* - you and I". Thus speaks the madman to those in the market place; but they just "stared at him in astonishment". He concludes:

> *I have come too early ... my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way ... deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars* - and yet they have done it themselves. [GS 125]

When the "deeds" are finally "seen and heard" their nihilistic consequences will have dawned - so Nietzsche thinks. Darwin's theory of natural selection working upon random variations is such a "deed", but Darwin does not fully grasp the consequences of his own deeds.[356]

Even modern writers do not seem to grasp this point. With reference to the above quotation from Darwin, C.U.P. Smith writes: "this [statement of Darwin's] could easily be read by the unwary as a support for the idea of progression up the *scala naturae*".[357] And Nietzsche, being one of the "unwary", "never saw that Darwin had broken free from this time-honoured philosophy, [therefore] ... his understanding of evolution remained pre-Darwinian".[358] Yet Darwin himself says:

> *The inhabitants of each successive period in the world's history have beaten their predecessors in the race for life, and are, in so far,* **higher in the scale of nature**.[359] (Emphasis mine)

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[356] From Darwin's autobiography, it is quite clear that Darwin was not so naive: he eventually lost his Christian faith and ended up an agnostic as a direct result of his scientific investigations. But in a sense this goes toward proof that Nietzsche was at least partly correct: Darwin's theory gives no evidence of any divine dispensation at work in nature. And when the real consequences are perceived there will be little room for blind optimism regarding man's future. Indeed, quite the opposite. Perhaps some who see the consequences will be driven to join the suicides as in Robert Louis Stevenson's story, **The Suicide Club**, where one member on being asked why he joined the club, said that he had been induced to believe in Mr. Darwin: "'I could not bear' said this remarkable suicide, 'to be descended from an ape'".

[357] Smith, C.U.P. (1987), p70.

[358] *ibid*, p71.

[359] Darwin (1859), p345.

It does seem very easy to become one of Smith's "unwary". Indeed is it not Smith, himself, who is here one of the "unwary"? However the source of this ambiguity in Darwin's **Origins** is Darwin's own mind. Regarding the related topic of "design", he says in a letter to Asa Gray before becoming an agnostic:

> *I am conscious that I am in an utterly hopeless muddle. I cannot think that the world, as we see it, is the result of chance; and yet I cannot look at each separate thing as the result of design.*[360]

Gillespie relates that: "Darwin's relationship to the idea of intelligent design was constantly ambivalent",[361] and that: "Design was a nagging doubt that never left Darwin's mind".[362]

Nietzsche would see this as an excellent example: Darwin has, in his theory, effectively killed off any notion of divine providence or design; yet he cannot fully accept the conclusions of his own findings because he is still conditioned by his previous beliefs. Take away those beliefs and hopes and what we are left with from the standpoint of man's previous values is a neutral, valueless cosmos without any given meaning or purpose. Such can only lead to a "*bellum omnium contra omnes*"[363] and that, for Nietzsche, is tantamount to nihilism: Therefore when Darwin's doctrine ...

> *... of the lack of any cardinal distinction between man and animal - doctrines which I consider true but deadly - are thrust upon the people for another generation ... no one should be surprised if the people perishes of petty egoism, ossification and greed, falls apart and ceases to be a people; in its place systems of individualist egoism, brotherhoods for rapacious exploitation of non-brothers ... may perhaps appear in the arena of the future.* [UH 9]

Whether Nietzsche actually read any of Darwin's books is difficult to determine. Mostert relates that: "In the debate on Darwinism, Nietzsche actually remained an

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[360] Quoted in Gillespie (1979), p87.

[361] *ibid*, p86.

[362] *ibid*, p88.

[363] DS 7.

outsider. Only Darwin's essay *Biographical Sketch of an Infant* (1877), had evidently been read by him (cf. his letter to Paul Reé, August 3/4, 1877) There seems to be no further evidence that Nietzsche ever read any of Darwin's works".[364] However one book that was held in much esteem by the young Nietzsche was Lange's **The History of Materialism**, which contains a chapter on *Darwin and Teleology*. Stack relates that: "Lange saw clearly the revolutionary implications of Darwin's theory of evolution by means of natural selection and saw that it dealt a death-blow to any Platonic, Aristotelian or Christian belief in a teleology in nature".[365] But whether Nietzsche actually read Darwin or not or, as his remarks concerning the protective markings of creatures remaining unchanged even in a new environment indicate,[366] he did not fully understand how natural selection actually works, his overall critique still stands: Darwin has contributed to that "truth" which undermines the cultural values of the West for the reasons I have outlined.

1) Nietzsche's Response to Darwin.

Nietzsche accepts the general conclusion of Darwin's theory, that man's ancestor is the ape:

> *Formerly one sought the feeling of grandeur of man by pointing to his divine* origin*: this has now become a forbidden way, for at the portal stands the ape, together with other gruesome beasts, grinning knowingly as if to say: no further in this direction!* [D 49]

This represents one of those truths, perhaps *the* truth, whose consequences are nihilistic: they are the deeds that "kill God" and thereby destroy our cultural and religious values. And man, or at least the cultured individual, seeing his values and his whole *Weltanshauung* dissolve before his eyes, will perhaps see himself as no more than a more complex but unhappy ape. But there is a gulf between deed and the realization of its consequence and, in the meantime: "One therefore tries the opposite direction: where mankind is *going* shall serve as proof of his kinship with God. Alas this, too, is vain!".[367] Consequently any optimistic response to Darwin's theory in the sense of looking to man's guaranteed progress up the *scala natura* is, according to

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[364] Mostert (1979), p239.

[365] Stack (1983), p156.

[366] WP 684.

Nietzsche, a grand delusion. So what future, if any, could we look forward to given this theory? What kind of values could it create, if any? And, more importantly, what kind of being does Darwin's theory favour, which would give us a pointer to the way mankind may actually go? These were the areas Nietzsche considered important and were the reasons why I consider Kaufmann's claim that Darwin awoke him "from his dogmatic slumber"[368] is correct.

2) **The Future.**

Regarding mankind's future, Nietzsche cannot see how mankind, as a species, can now differ from any other species in not being superseded by some future species.

> *The becoming drags the has-been along behind it: why should an exception to this eternal spectacle be made on behalf of some little star or for any little species upon it! Away with such sentimentalities.* [D 49]

And, although Nietzsche does not spell it out, to me it follows that if we take Darwin's theory seriously, it is entirely conceivable that we shall be superseded by some better adapted species to whom we shall be the apes: "What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment? And just so shall man be to the *Übermensch*: a laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment".[369] But with Darwin's theory this possible future species will not, according to Nietzsche, be *Übermenschen*, and it may be that this future species, if they inherit some of our traits, may decide to terminate our species just as we have done to some others. Or, again, inheriting from us our taste for good meat, may decide on gastronomic grounds to farm us as fodder for their kitchens; or use us as we use other species for scientific experiments as we will be nearest to them in the *scala natura*. Of course, all this is highly improbable: our species is far too ubiquitous on the planet so that if any new and "favourable" mutation did emerge, it would probably meet various fates none of which would be likely to guarantee the propagation of its advantage. Our species can be extremely jealous! Also, remaining within our own species, there can be no unconditional guarantee for our future. Today we know only too well that a

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[367] D 49.

[368] Kaufmann (1974), *Preface*, pxiii.

[369] Z *Prologue*,3.

global nuclear war may terminate our species - but not *all* species: perhaps the cockroach or the ant would survive. And, in Darwin's terms, they would of necessity be the *fittest* and, in the evaluative language Darwin sometimes slips into, the *higher* species.[370] We would become just another extinct species for some possible future paleontologist to puzzle over. Or, again, what if we were to be "invaded" by some of Fred Hoyle's "space-bugs" which simply wiped us all out. As Flew remarks in his **Evolutionary Ethics**:

> *An individual, ... or a species can perfectly well have many splendid endowments without this ensuring that it has what is in fact needed for survival: men who are wretched specimens, both mentally and physically, may and all too often do kill superb animals; and the genius has frequently been laid low by the activities of unicellar creatures having no wits at all.*[371]

Some of the examples I have given may not be probable, but they are possible and illustrate that there are no *a priori* reasons for us to assume any guaranteed ascent up the "Great Chain of Being" towards some state of perfection. Indeed, there are no reasons even to assume our continuation as a species. The human species, like any other species, is a contingent one. Given certain natural happenings, what has happened to any other species may happen to us. As we know only too well today, our environment, which is that which we adapt to (or which "selects"), is under no obligation to remain favourable to us. One does not have to indulge in science fiction to see the unsoundness of that optimism expressed by Darwin in the penultimate paragraph of his **Origins**.

3) **The Values.**

The main thrust of Nietzsche's attack on Darwin and Darwinism, however, is an axiological one: inherent in Darwin's theory is the notion that *survival* is what matters and that what survives is therefore *best*. But what kind of values can be derived from this fact? All that can be derived from this is that those variations who procure enough to eat without too much hardship and who procreate the most, will tend to survive. Those who do not will die out. But while this may account for the evolution

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[370] Darwin (1859) does once admit that some of the "fittest" would "be abhorrent to our ideas of fitness" [p437].

[371] Flew (1967), p19.

of barnacles and giraffes and for the emergence of early man, it can hardly give us guiding values or even hope for the continuation of what Nietzsche would consider a truly human life. All it can point to concerns our *animal* nature, albeit in a more sophisticated form: even our human characteristics such as self-consciousness will be subordinated to our instinct to survive and procreate. To this Nietzsche comments:

> *Yet let us reflect: where does the animal cease, where does man begin? ... As long as anyone desires life as he desires happiness he has not yet raised his eyes above the animal, for he only desires more consciously what the animal seeks through blind impulse. But that is what we all do for the greater part of our lives: usually we fail to emerge out of our animality ...* [SE 5]

Darwin's theory, divested of its unsound optimism, will do little to help us "emerge from our animality" but will, in fact, when its consequences are understood, help undo the few steps man has taken in the direction of humanity, as Nietzsche sees it. Man has, according to Nietzsche, achieved a degree of true humanity, but it was a step founded upon an *error*:

> *Without the errors that repose in the assumptions of morality man would have remained animal. As it is, he has taken himself for something higher and imposed sterner laws upon himself.* [HAH 40]

Through "imposing sterner laws upon himself" man has, in the process, become more than animal. (However, as animals do not impose laws upon themselves, man must be in some sense distinct from the animals in order to impose laws upon himself!) He has achieved a degree of civilization and distanced himself from the *bellum omnium contra omnes* - at least in some places and for varying periods. However as this was achieved through an "error", which is here the belief in the divine origin of morality and human nature, and Darwin's theory shows this to be an "error", then if we simply remove the "error" without a means of creating a new non-erroneous morality and view of man as "humanity" as a replacement, "we [will] also remove [what] humanity, humaneness, and 'human dignity'"[372] we have achieved. Therefore it may come to pass "that man has emerged from the ape and will return to the ape".[373] But: "precisely because we are able to visualize this prospect we are

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[372] GS 115.

perhaps in a position to prevent it from occurring".[374] This, I think, is the crux of Nietzsche's "anti-Darwinism": the acceptance of Darwin's theory can only help undo what civilization and culture - what "humanity" - man has achieved. The only values that Darwinism could provide concern the survival and propagation of one's group, whether tribal or national, over and against other groups. And this, for Nietzsche, is tantamount to nihilism: our only values will be expressive of our "animality", not our "humanity". The defining characteristic of our "humanity", therefore, is not some "will to survive" or concern about the biological propagation and survival of the human species. Even the pursuit of happiness as some ultimate panacea is unacceptable to Nietzsche: "Evolution does not have happiness in view, but evolution and nothing else".[375] In Nietzsche's terms, "evolution" means the will to perfection through a process of "self-overcoming", and that must supersede all else. Nietzsche does not want "Darwinism as philosophy"[376] as rather than encourage an ideal of an evolution towards perfection, it will *counteract* such an ideal.

4) What Kind of Being?

Nietzsche, being "able to visualize this prospect", turns towards human history and culture to find a solution to it, and so "prevent it from occurring". The goal of all culture, as Nietzsche would like to see it, is "the procreation of genius",[377] and those whom he sees as geniuses "are those true *men, those who are no longer animal, the philosophers, artists and saints*; nature, which never makes a leap, has made its one leap in creating them".[378] It is, therefore, "the fundamental idea of culture ... to promote the production of [these] ... and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature".[379] Nature, as Nietzsche sees it, gives us a pointer to where the goal of humanity lies: in its rare "leaps" or, as he elsewhere calls them, "lucky hits",[380] in

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[373] HAH 24.

[374] *ibid.*

[375] D 108.

[376] WP 422.

[377] SE 3.

[378] SE 5. But at WS 198, he quotes with approval: "the fundamental principle that nature never makes a leap".

[379] *ibid.*

defiance of Darwin's *natura non facit saltum.* His idea of culture is to move from nature to *nurture*, from "lucky hit" and "obscure impulse" to "conscious willing".[381]

> *Anyone who believes in culture is thereby saying: "I see above me something higher and more human than I am. Let anyone help me to attain it, as I will help anyone who knows and suffers as I do: so that at last the man may appear who feels himself perfect and boundless in knowledge and love, perception and power, and who in his completeness is at one with nature, the judge and evaluator of things".* [SE 6]

Nietzsche accepts that this is not everyone's notion of what culture is, and comments: "how extraordinarily sparse and rare knowledge of this goal is",[382] and "how dull and feeble is the effect [nature]... achieves with the philosophers and artists! How rarely does it achieve any effect at all!"[383] In other words, the "obscure impulse", even among what philosophers and artists there have been, is still *too* obscure and what potential there was, was never fully expressed. Nevertheless, what "lucky hits" nature has so far thrown up on the stage of human history, may one day ...

> *... live contemporaneously with one another; thanks to history, which permits such a collaboration, they live as that republic of genius of which Schopenhauer once spoke; one giant calls to another across the desert intervals of time and, undisturbed by the excited chattering dwarfs who creep about beneath them, the exalted spirit dialogue goes on.* [UH 9]

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[380] This notion of "lucky hits/strokes" is taken from Lange. Lange used the term *glücklicher Zufall* or "lucky accident". See Stack (1983), p166. This seems to be contradicted by his views on the Greeks of whom, as we saw earlier, he claimed "created many great human beings" and who "shine in the light of a higher humanity". Here it was not a question of "lucky hits" but of a conscious methodology revolving round the notion of *agon*, a notion Nietzsche himself borrows and uses as the paradigm for his answer to nihilism. Perhaps the "lucky hits" refer to those who came after the Greeks, perhaps ...

[381] SE 6.

[382] *ibid.*

[383] SE 7.

Communication "across the desert intervals of time" is made possible through the medium of culture. It is there one finds one's "true educators and formative teachers [who] reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is",[384] bringing to consciousness what was "obscure impulse". However, such "liberators" can only indicate and provide the initial spark of inspiration: "No one can construct for you the bridge upon which ... you must cross the stream of life, no one but yourself alone ... your educators can only be your liberators".[385] Therefore, "culture is liberation".[386] What one is liberated from is one's animality. and the latest fashionable ideas such as Hegel's "world-process"[387] and other "parochial" notions: "It is parochial to bind oneself to views which are no longer binding even a couple of hundred miles away. Orient and Occident are chalk-lines drawn before us to fool our timidity".[388] In other words it is quite possible for Plato or the Buddha to be one of these "educators", whereas some contemporary leading thinker may not be. Culture, as Nietzsche sees it, is not bound by space nor time but only by unique individuals. Therefore any talk of a "*goal of humanity* cannot lie in its end but only *in its highest exemplars*".[389] And this "goal of humanity" will not be found *outside* of life or in some other world, but *in* it.

What I have said so far is, of course, mainly early Nietzsche - Nietzsche still under the influence of the German *Naturphilosophie* and Schopenhauer, tinged with the spirit of Classical Greece. Nevertheless he did not waver from his notion of what the aim of culture should be: "A people is a detour of nature to get six or seven great men".[390] And, although the triad of artist, philosopher and saint did not appear in his later writings (the latter two were mostly deemed to have been *against* life), they were only replaced by a more distant ideal, the *Übermensch*, a kind of extrapolation from life's "highest exemplars" - a fuller and more complete expression of what they

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[384] SE 1.

[385] *ibid.*

[386] *ibid. Bildung*, translated here as "culture", also means "education".

[387] UH 9.

[388] SE 1. No doubt Nietzsche is referring to Hegel's philosophy of history.

[389] UH 9.

[390] BGE 126.

signify, which the later Nietzsche expressed in terms of *power*. But the type of being he sees being favoured by Darwin's theory is the very opposite of this ideal:

> *Supposing ... that this struggle* [for existence] *exists - and it does indeed occur - its outcome is the reverse of that desired by the school of Darwin ... namely, the defeat of the stronger, the more privileged, the fortunate exceptions. Species do* not *grow more perfect: the weaker dominate the strong again and again - the reason being that they are the great majority.*[TI ix,14]

Nietzsche sees Darwin's theory, at least as applied to human kind, as a reversal of what he sees as the ideal of humanity, of what constitutes a more perfect and evolved human being. The premise underlying this reversal is his notion that the "fundamental instinct of life ... [is] *the expansion of power* ... [which] frequently risks and even sacrifices self-preservation".[391] To be actively and fully alive requires that one be "continually shedding something that wants to die".[392] Thus any restriction or resistance to further change necessitated by life's urge to grow and expand - which is Nietzsche's view - will be detrimental to life itself. But Darwin's fundamental characteristic of life is the instinct of self-preservation - those who survive in the struggle for life being the more evolved and perfect expressions of their type. Consequently Nietzsche concludes that: "the wish to preserve oneself is a symptom of a condition of distress"[393] and those motivated by such are, according to his premise, the "weak", not the "strong". Nietzsche's "strong" - the "lucky hits", "geniuses", etc. - are always singular and rare and embody a fuller expression of his notion of life than those who surround them. They are the "*sovereign individual*[s] ... liberated ... from the morality of custom" (i.e. the group's *mores*), who are "autonomous" and "independent"[394] and who "aspire after a secret citadel where [they are] ... *set free* from the crowd, the many, the majority".[395] For them life itself is art:

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[391] GS 349.

[392] GS 26.

[393] GS 349.

[394] GM ii,2.

[395] BGE 26.

they are both artist and the work of art, Goethe being Nietzsche's most concrete example of this type. But ...

> *The more similar, more ordinary human beings have had and still have the advantage, the more select, subtle, rare and harder to understand are liable to remain alone, succumb to accidents in their isolation and seldom propagate themselves.* [BGE 268]

The "higher type" or "lucky stroke of evolution" is therefore more likely to "perish most easily". What they are cannot be inherited biologically: "The brief spell of beauty, of genius, of Caesar, is *sui generis*: such things are not inherited. The *type* is hereditary". The genius is of "incomparably greater complexity - a greater sum of co-ordinated elements: so its disintegration is incomparably more likely. The 'genius' is the sublimest machine there is - consequently the most fragile". Hence "the expression 'higher type' means no more than this - perish more easily".[396] The "lower types" are, unfortunately, more likely to survive and be the great majority, though not always: Goethe and other "exemplars" did survive; but the fruits of their labours were not passed on through their loins, but through the medium of culture.[397] And it is such "fruits" that constitute human progress. Nietzsche therefore sees Darwin's theory as an actual threat to human progress as it does not favour the "higher types", but the mediocre majority. It emphasises "adaptation" which for Nietzsche implies conforming to accepted *mores*, in his terms a symptom of "weakness", rather than creativity, which requires "strength".[398] In Darwin it is the environment which is "creative" as it "selects". Thus external conditions are the primary determinants, not the individual. When, in the human context where the external conditions are social, the individual will be the product of that society, will become a member of the "herd". But whilst Nietzsche sees the importance of a stable society as a precondition for the arising of the "sovereign individual", if the very goal of that society is simply to preserve itself as it is and even look upon any "sovereign individual" as a threat to its own ends - even as "evil" - then life, itself, is under threat from a more decaying form of life, a more stultified form of life.

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[396] WP 684.

[397] However, see Nietzsche on "breeding" higher types at TI ix,47.

[398] GM ii,12.

What Nietzsche wants to avoid is the replacement of the old metaphysical and religious values which hold our culture together and represent our "humanity", our "cultural evolution", by new scientific ideologies such as Darwinism:[399] he does not want "Darwinism as philosophy".[400] Darwinism may point to the biological truth of man's evolution from the ape, but if it were to become a replacement philosophy of man it could only "destroy the existing evaluations";[401] it cannot create guiding cultural values. At most, as with the rest of science, it can only help deconstruct our past beliefs by "dissolving all firmly held belief".[402] In this way the "horizon clears" leaving the way for those who can to create new cultural values:

> *All the sciences have from now on to prepare the way for the future task of the philosophers: this task understood as the solution of the* problem of value, *the determination of the* order of rank among values. [GM i,17]

Thus "mediocre minds" such as Darwin's are useful for a while: they "prepare the way" by undermining the old values rooted in the "lie" of the two-world system. But "mediocre minds" which are well suited to scientific work can only create, in human cultural terms, mediocrity: Darwinism as a replacement philosophy of man will, therefore, favour the "herd-type" of man, the mediocre man who, being enclosed in his narrower animal-like horizon of survival and biological propagation, is more likely to prosper and multiply: "The mediocre alone have the prospect of continuing on and propagating themselves - they are the men of the future, the sole survivors".[403] They are Darwin's "fittest" and, in any Darwinian Philosophy, most "evolved" type representing humanity at its as yet most progressive and most valuable. Such, for Nietzsche, is the "naïveté of English biologists".[404] In the society

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[399] A modern equivalent might be "Dawkinsism"! Richard Dawkins, the author of **The Selfish Gene** (1976), **The Blind Watchmaker** (1986) and other works that could be classified as "scientism", espouses the kind of philosophy that Nietzsche saw as a danger.

[400] WP 422.

[401] *ibid.*

[402] SE 4.

[403] BGE 262.

[404] GM i,17.

of his day this culminates in the looming possibility of "the *democratic* movement [which] inherits the Christian", where the community or herd is now "the *saviour*"[405] and which breeds the "perfect herd animal ... the pygmy animal of equal rights and equal pretensions".[406] Darwinism, as a philosophy, can lead to the "*collective degeneration of man*".[407]

Search for a Scientific Basis for the Will to Power

Nietzsche's response to Darwin was part of his overall attitude to the growth and emerging philosophical influence of 19th century science. From the Newtonian paradigm of the universe as an "intricate machine" which "bespeaks an all-powerful Creator",[408] we encounter the Laplacian version which maintains the "intricate machine" minus the "all-powerful Creator". In the now famous retort to Napoleon's question: "M. Laplace, they tell me you have written this large book on the system of the universe, and have never mentioned its Creator", Laplace replied: "I had no need of that hypothesis".[409] For Laplace "Nature was ... a complete mechanical system of inflexible cause-and-effect, governed by exact and absolute laws, so that all future events are inexorably determined".[410] The fundamental units of this machine were the atoms which, whilst varying in shape, were impenetrable and indivisible substances possessed of extension, density and, when effected by external forces, mobility. In themselves, however, they were inert, lifeless lumps. Although the "external forces" were not completely and accurately known, Laplace assumed that in time they would be. When that day came it would then be possible in principle, if not in actuality, for someone who had all the relevant information, and who possessed "superhuman intelligence", to calculate with precision the future course of the universe and, by implication, the future of mankind.

As a modern scientist notes,[411] here we have a shift from the domain of the science of mechanics to a philosophical view known as "mechanism" or "mechanistic

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[405] BGE 202.

[406] BGE 203.

[407] *ibid.*

[408] Barbour (1966), p36-7.

[409] *ibid.*, p58.

[410] *ibid.*, p59.

materialism". Darwin fits in with this view in that evolution is also mechanistic: it has no "inner" direction or goal; the link between organism and environment is mechanistic; and the evolution and survival of an organism is primarily determined by external forces. Consequently:

> *The combination of mechanistic materialism and Darwinian evolution seems to present us with a picture of the world comprised of powerful forces that manifest no purposes. Man is understood as a complex physio-chemical mechanism that is subject to numerous natural forces and an evolutionary process over which he has no control.*[412]

Succinctly stated, what we have is a reductionist view of existence in which all life-processes are reduced to the mere movement of atoms, determined by universal laws. Nietzsche saw such a mechanistic view as nihilistic as it deprives human existence of any possible value and meaning:

> *A "scientific" interpretation of the world ... might ... be one of the* ***most stupid*** *of all possible interpretations of the world, meaning that it would be one of the poorest in meaning. This thought is intended for the ears and consciences of our mechanists who nowadays like to pass as philosophers and insist that mechanics is the doctrine of the first and last laws on which all existence must be based as on a ground floor. But an essentially mechanical world would be an essentially* ***meaningless*** *world. Assuming that one estimated the* ***value*** *of a piece of music according to how much of it can be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas: how absurd would such a "scientific" estimation of music be! Nothing, really nothing of what is "music" in it!* [GS 373][413]

Just as a scientific analysis of a Mozart symphony cannot evaluate it as a work of art or determine what the human being Mozart might have been trying to express in a

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411 Bohm (1957), pp36-38.

412 Stack (1983), p186.

413 At WP 624, he says, "the calculability of the world, the expressibility of all events in formulas - is this really 'comprehension'? How much of a piece of music has been understood when that in it which is calculable and can be reduced to formulas has been reckoned up?"

symphony, mechanism, as a philosophy of life, is quite useless in any evaluation of life, in any attempt to understand what a human being is, or what human goals are *worthy* of being pursued. Nietzsche feared that in his day this mechanistic philosophy, a science for nihilists, was well on its way to becoming the victorious world-view. However, when he read Lange's "treasurehouse" he "found a means by which to undermine dogmatic materialism and mechanism":[414] a dynamic theory of nature.

To undermine mechanistic materialism and give his agonistic view of human-nature derived from Hesiod and the Greeks the support of a scientific footing, Nietzsche appropriated Boscovitch's dynamic theory of nature.[415]

> *As for materialistic atomism, it is one of the best-refuted things there are; and perhaps no scholar in Europe is still so unscholarly today as to accord it serious significance ... thanks above all to the Pole Boscovitch who, together with the Pole Copernicus, has been the greatest and most triumphant opponent of ocular evidence hitherto. For while Copernicus persuaded to believe, contrary to all the senses, that the earth does* not *stand firm, Boscovitch taught us to abjure belief in the last thing on earth that 'stood firm', belief in 'substance', in 'matter', in the earth-residuum and particle atom:* ... [BGE 12][416]

In Boscovitch's theory of matter,[417] the atomic lumps of inert matter are replaced

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[414] Stack (1983) p224. Nietzsche refers to Lange's **Geschichte des Materialismus** as: "a real treasure-house to be looked into and read repeatedly". Quoted in Stack (1983), p13, from a letter to von Gersdorff. Stack's first chapter is called "The Treasure-House".

[415] Stack (1983), p224. As Stack goes on to say: "What has come to be called 'Nietzsche's physics' [by Kaufmann (1974), p262] is, in point of fact, not *his* at all. Virtually every aspect of the structure of the natural world is derived from the views of Boscovitch and from the physical theories that are examined by Lange. That he has come to be credited with having developed a physics is testimony to his understanding of the fundamental principles of a rather complex theory".

[416] Boscovitch was no Pole. He was actually born in what is now Dubrovnic of Serb and Italian parentage.

[417] Nietzsche actually read Boscovitch's **Philosophia Naturalis** in 1873. In a letter to Peter Gast he refers to Boscovitch as: "the first to demonstrate mathematically that, for the exact science of mechanics, the premiss of *solid* atomic points is an unusable hypothesis". Quoted in Stack (1983), p39.

by *Kraftcentren*: indivisible, dimensionless, point-like "force-centres". The "stuff" that constitutes what we call "solid matter" is, in fact, better described as a "constellation of forces", and what we conceive of as "impenetrability" and "solidity" are no more than the experience of "repulsive force". Yet, according to Nietzsche, on the basis of human analogy and to make life "intelligible", this theory "still needs to be completed: an inner-will must be ascribed to it, which I describe as 'will to power,' i.e., as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive".[418] Science can only ever be a "means", it can only "serve"; it can never "explain" but only "describe".[419] It is up to the creative philosopher-artist[420] to *use* it, to give value and meaning to what science describes. This is what Nietzsche is attempting here: by adding a primitive *nisus*, a "creative drive for power", to Boscovitch's *Kraftcentren*, he is putting forward a hypothesis derived from his study of the natural sciences that might help *explain* the natural world, *explain* evolution, *explain* human history and human nature *and* form an axiological basis for taking man through this on-coming nihilistic phase of human history. His "higher types", those he sees as "geniuses" and "creators" must, as a consequence of the demise of the two-world system, be returned to nature, be interpreted as products of the natural world; their urge to create must now have a *natural* origin, and, in its most fundamental and primitive state, that urge is transposed back into the most basic discernable units underlying all nature: the *Kraftcentern* which, with Nietzsche's added *nisus*, become *Willens-Punctationen* or "will-points".[421] Therefore it is only through what Nietzsche appropriated from Boscovitch and others that we can now make sense of his "experiment" previously mentioned in **Beyond Good and Evil**: on the basis of human analogy we may hypostatize the material world "as possessing the same degree of reality as our emotions themselves - as a more primitive form of the world of emotions in which everything still lies locked in mighty unity and then branches out and develops in the organic process". Our affects, Nietzsche's prime analogate, are seen as the latest

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[418] WP 619.

[419] GS 112.

[420] In the **Birth of Tragedy** [15 and 16] Nietzsche refers to an "artistic Socrates" who would embody the Dionysian passion of the artist and the Apollinian intellect of Socrates, thereby integrating art and science. The world-view that emerges, being scientifically based, will give "an anti-metaphysical view of the world - yes, but an artistic one" [WP 1048].

[421] WP 715. See Stack (1983), pp 171-173.

"fruits" in a dynamic continuity whose roots are the forces studied by physics. Consequently, there is no "matter" but only something more analogous to "will" struggling with "will", wherein "*all* efficient force" could be defined as "*will to power*"; and the "world seen from within, the world defined according to its "intelligible character", would be "'will to power' and nothing else".[422]

In his published writings this scientific underpinning of his monistic principle of the will to power is only ever hinted at as, for example, his *one* reference to Boscovitch and the quote from **Beyond Good and Evil** above. Most of his thoughts in this area are found scattered throughout his unpublished notes, revealing that he was occasionally seriously occupied with and reflecting on the scientific theories of Boscovitch and others he had read. But there is no fully worked out philosophy of nature.[423] What we are left with is the general outline of the principle of the will to power encompassing the whole of existence as a hypothetical explanatory principle. It is proposed to help man reinterpret and understand not only the natural world and human history and institutions but, more importantly, his own self without reference to any realm or world other than the natural world. And, allied with the paradigm of sublimation derived from Hesiod, it can help man fashion new values and a new morality to replace the now untenable values rooted in the two-world system. However, it is to his conception of man as an expression of the will to power that we must now turn.

Man as Will to Power

What emerges from Nietzsche's excursions into the worlds of physics and biology, from his attempt to "'*naturalize*' humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature",[424] is a view of man as an entirely naturally evolved organism who is best described as an embodied constellation of natural forces, what he calls "under-wills" or "under-souls", which are continually in flux.

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[422] BGE 36. In the **Will to Power** Nietzsche says: "The will to accumulate force is special to the phenomena of life, to nourishment, procreation, inheritance - to society, state, custom, authority. Should we not be permitted to assume this will as a motive cause in chemistry too? - and in the cosmic order?" [689]

[423] Using the still uncompleted **Nietzsche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe**, eds. G. Colli and M. Montinari, Berlin and New York, W. de Gruyter, Stack has formulated what can be formulated of Nietzsche's philosophy of nature based upon his unpublished notes.

[424] GS 109.

What we refer to as the "body" can therefore be likened to "a social structure composed of many souls".[425] Within such a perspective, the old duality of material body and immaterial soul or mind drops away, being resolved into what Lange and others called the "unknown third"[426] (i.e. *Kraft* or *Macht*). The terms "body" and "soul" when used by Nietzsche in this context, simply refer to two aspects of a single organized whole - the "soul" or "souls" being the inner movements, what we sense as emotions, impulses, etc., and the "body" being simply a word for the whole nexus.[427] As Stack adequately sums it up:

> *What we call the "body" is a symbol for an interplay of forces, a "colony" of living subjects that have various gradations of power and are subject to a kind of "division of labour." From time to time the "sovereigns" in this colony change. ... The self is the body, but the body is a multiplicity of feeling, willing and thinking "subjects" that comprise, at any stage of life, a hierarchy of* Kräften. *If at different stages of life there are different arrangements of these "forces," then, in a sense, there are different "selves." Insofar as the multiplicities comprising the body are continually changing, and insofar as dominant "forces" are not constant, the self of an individual is a process, a gradual process in which one bodily self is replaced by another and so on.*[428]

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[425] BGE 19.

[426] *ibid*, p104 and elsewhere. For Nietzsche, this "unknown 'third'" was interpreted as the will to power. Although "unknown", it was not, for Nietzsche, another Kantian "thing-in-itself", not a "true world" but "*another kind* of phenomenal world, a kind 'unknowable' for us" [WP 569]. Questions about what "things-in-themselves" might be like, apart from our perception of them, is a meaningless question as it implies that some "thing" can exist, in-itself and property-less, outside of all relations with other "things": "The properties of a thing are its effects on other 'things': if one removes other 'things', then a thing has no properties, i.e., there is no thing without other things, i.e., there is no 'thing-in-itself'" [WP 557]. The world "is essentially a world of relationships" [WP 568] and our concept of a "'thing', is only a relational concept", making the notion of the "'thing-in-itself' ... an absurd conception" [WP 583]. Nietzsche's heuristic notion of will to power is therefore best understood as a *relational* concept, it constitutes his understanding of the most primitive and all-embracing relationship between "things", whether those "things" be *Kraftcentren*, viruses, people or nations. The will to power is not a "thing-in-itself".

[427] Stack (1983), p174-5.

A human being can therefore be regarded as a "body" in the above sense, a body considered as an organisation consisting of various levels of hierarchical activity from the atomic through to what we regard as entirely human activities. The whole is not fixed but is a dynamic process of only relative stability: we are recognisably the "same" person today as yesterday, but not so the infant and the 80 year old. Our affects, however, are often much less stable though they usually have some habitual pattern more or less peculiar to each person. Given this picture, as Stack says, it then becomes possible to talk about different phases of this process of "bodying", of there being different "selves", an idea that has obvious affinities with the Buddhist doctrine of *anattan*.

To Nietzsche, one very important consequence of such a view of the "body" is that, from a holistic perspective, there must be some kind of continuity, some relationship between the "lower" and the "higher" aspects, between our "chemistry" and our humanity. As the genealogy of our humanity can no longer be traced to some "God" it must therefore have a natural origin, and Nietzsche wonders whether "the moral, religious and aesthetic conceptions and sensations" may be sublimations of our "chemistry". He asks: "what if this chemistry would end up by revealing that in this domain too the most glorious colours are derived from the base, indeed from despised materials".[429] He suggests that the hitherto philosophical and religious answers to questions "about the *value* of existence, may always be considered first of all as symptoms of certain bodies".[430] There can no longer be such an activity as purely abstract and free-floating, objective thinking dissociated from the "body": we "are not

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[428] *Ibid.*, p174-5. To say as Hollingdale does that Nietzsche "was a thoroughgoing materialist", whose materialism "derived ... from Friedrich Albert Lange's **History of Materialism**" (Appendix D in his translation of **Twilight of the Idols**) is to completely misunderstand what Nietzsche gained from Lange: a dynamic theory of nature that attempts to overcome the duality of mind and matter. As Nietzsche himself says: "There are no eternally enduring substances; matter is as much of an error as the God of the Eleatics" [GS 109]. It is a strange materialist who does not believe in the existence of "matter".

[429] HAH 1. It is often difficult to determine whether Nietzsche is being entirely ironic or not. "Chemistry" can be taken metaphorically or literally. I would consider it as purposely ambiguous with the literal interpretation being considered a real possibility. In **Daybreak** he wonders whether "our moral judgements and evaluations ... are only images and fantasies [analogous to our dreams] based upon physiological processes unknown to us" [119]. Interestingly, at the time of writing **Human All Too Human**, Nietzsche relates that: "A downright burning thirst seized hold of me: thenceforth I pursued in fact nothing other than physiology, medicine and natural science" [EH vi,3]. He obviously considered physiology to be of extreme important to our understanding of human nature.

thinking frogs, nor objectifying and registering mechanisms with their innards removed".[431] Our thinking, our *mental* activity, is now envisaged as an activity of the "body", as an outcome of the various relations, struggles and movements of our "under-wills" and "under-souls" rising to consciousness as thought. What we call "conscious thinking is secretly directed into definite channels by [our] instincts."[432] As such, our thinking and philosophizing cannot be completely dissociated from our "body". Rather, they are better understood as particular expressions of it. Future philosophers will now need some "knowledge of physiology"[433] so as to be able to diagnose moral, religious and philosophical systems as expressions of, or, better, "symptoms" of the "health" or "sickness" of the "body". He therefore proposes that the "body" and "physiology" are the best starting points and guides to a new philosophy of man: the "body" now being a "much richer phenomenon" than the old soul, being "even more attractive, even more mysterious" and, being "more tangible", it allows "clearer observation".[434]

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[430] GS *Preface*, 2.

[431] *ibid*, 3.

[432] BGE 3

[433] WP 408. However, Nietzsche reckoned that psychology should become the "queen of the sciences" [BGE 23]. Given the central importance of the affects, drives, etc., in his philosophy of man, this is hardly surprising.

[434] WP 489, 492, 532 and 659.

Although physics, chemistry and the other natural sciences are now considered as indispensable to the new philosopher in any study of man, I think that one has occasionally to treat Nietzsche's comments on the estimation of our chemistry in forming our humanity as being an example of methodological irony. He is not a simple reductionist who regards the highest human achievements as no more than the expression of complex chemical processes. Such a position would be incongruous: he does not understand such processes in terms of mechanistic materialism but as particular constellations of "forces", and the constellation "man" cannot therefore be reduced to the mere goings on in the minute constellations called "atoms"- the constellation is not simply the sum of its parts. There is a continuity as both are interpreted as expressions of the will to power, but the constellation "man" represents a more complex and evolved - and therefore "higher" - expression. By drawing attention the physiological he is simply stressing the new necessity of finding a *natural* as against any metaphysical explanation of human nature, and reminding us that the vastly complex workings of our "bodies" are relatively unknown - even "mysterious" - to us. And, in a manner of speaking, it is primarily the "body" and its mysterious workings that has produced the highest human creations - what else is there to a human being now that we are entirely natural creations. Therefore the study of the "body" is essential to any new philosophy of man.

In this context, Nietzsche credits the Buddha as being a "profound physiologist"[435] as he sought *natural* causes in his analysis of the human condition and proposed *natural* remedies for its existential *Ängste*. The Buddha, according to Nietzsche, grasped that the growing state of depression that had arisen among many of his contemporaries had a "physiological" - a natural - origin, due to a combination of "excessive excitability of sensibility which expresses itself as a refined capacity for pain" and "an over-intellectuality ... under which the personal instincts have sustained harm to the advantage of the 'impersonal'".[436] In other words, man has become

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[435] EH i,6.

[436] Oldenberg refers to the condition of "spiritual over-excitement [and] exhaustion of the nervous system" being a common condition among many of the Buddha's contemporary *religieux* [p,316]. He also considers that the "Buddha's preaching of deliverance is compared to the work of a physician" [p,191]. In the Pāli *suttas* [A iv,340], the Buddha is called a "physician" [*bhisakka*].

alienated from his natural, more basic life affirming instincts. The Buddha's *physiological* cure for this state was ...

> *... life in the open air, the wandering life; with moderation and fastidiousness as regards food; with caution towards all alcoholic spirits; likewise with caution towards all emotions that produce gall, which heat the blood;* no *anxiety, either for oneself or for others. He demands ideas which produce repose or cheerfulness - he devises means for disaccustoming oneself to others. He understands benevolence, being kind, as health-promoting.*[A 21]

Nietzsche goes on to say that the Buddha counteracts the harm done to the "personal instinct", the "loss of centre of gravity", by redirecting "the spiritual interest back to the individual *person*" thereby making "egoism ... a duty: the 'one thing needful', the 'how can *you* get rid of suffering' regulates ... the entire spiritual diet". The Buddha also warns against such harmful affects as: "the feeling of revengefulness, of antipathy, of *ressentiment*" because such emotions are "thoroughly *unhealthy*": they make the "body" "sick". And, as he comments elsewhere, this "is *not* morality that speaks thus, it is physiology that speaks thus".[437] Hence Nietzsche credits the Buddha with the insight that there are only natural causes and origins,[438]

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[437] EH i,6. No doubt much of this is based on Oldenberg. For example, Oldenberg relates that: "God and the Universe trouble not the Buddhist: he knows only one question: how shall *I* in this world of suffering be delivered from suffering" [p,130. Italics mine]. He also relates that: "the decided advantage of moral action over the immoral arises wholly and solely from the consequences to the actor himself" [p,286] and that it is therefore "the means to an end" [p,289]. And, elsewhere: "The most important part of a moral action does not lie according to Buddhist notions in duties which are owing externally, from man to man, ... but in the scope of his own inner life, in the exercise of incessant discipline ... The ego ... here becomes for ethical speculation a determinate power, before which everything external vanishes into the background as something foreign" [p,305]. He then quotes some verses from the **Dhammapada**: "By thine ego spur on thy ego ... For the protection of the ego is the ego ... First of all let a man establish his own ego in the good". The term he translates as "ego" is *attan*. Here, however, it is not the metaphysical "Self" that is meant, but our empirical "self".

[438] Again, the source of this is probably Oldenberg. Once "the belief in the *Atman* itself had been effaced or lost, ... the ruler over the world's longing for deliverance there remained no more god, but only the natural law of necessary concatenation of causes and effects. There stood man alone as the sole operative agent in the struggle against sorrow and death; his task was, by the **skilful knowledge of nature**, to aim at gaining a position against it, in which he was beyond the reach of its sorrow-bringing operations" [p,324. Emphasis mine].

there are no supernatural causes or origins, no revelations.[439] In Nietzsche's language, all we find is "Human, all to Human".

While it is true that the Buddha's teachings appeal only to the natural order of things and reckon man himself as his only saviour, what Buddhism considers "natural" greatly exceeds anything Nietzsche or science would consider natural. The Buddhist cosmos as found in the Pāli *suttas* - an entirely natural cosmos governed by natural laws - is full of *devas*, *gandhabbas*, *brahmās* and other strange beings who inhabit other worlds and who, when they enter the human world, go about unperceived by ordinary mortals. Even the "God", Brahmā, who deludedly thinks he created the cosmos with its beings - at least according to the Buddhist texts - comes to be dependent upon natural laws and conditions and is therefore a natural being having entirely natural origins. If the Buddha is then to be regarded as a "profound physiologist" in the sense that his *logos* is only concerned with what is entirely *phusis*,[440] what the Buddha would have regarded as "physiological" reaches into what Nietzsche and science - and other religions - would regard as the super-natural.

To give an outline of the Buddhist view of the natural order of things there is the notion of the *pañca-niyāmas*, or the "five orders" or "five kinds of natural causal patterns".[441]

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[439] The nearest equivalent to our notion of "revelation" at the time of the Buddha was the concept of *śruti*, literally "hearing", which when applied to the Vedas carried the notion of "revealed" text. These texts were handed down from generation to generation, word for word, and were seen as the sacred and authoritative source of Brāhmanical tradition. In denying their authority, the Buddha was also denying the notion of revealed scripture in the sense that what is revealed could not be known through natural means. In a sense, then, the Buddha is a "revealer", but he only reveals what is open to all who have eyes to see. And what is seen is the natural world as it really is. However, there may be another piece of Buddhist irony in that all Buddhist *suttas* begin with the phrase: *evam me sutam*, "Thus have I heard", with the implication that what follows was the "word of the Buddha" or *buddha-vacana*. *Suta* is the Pāli form of Sanskrit *śruta*, a past participle, *śruti* being the feminine noun. This correspondence between the Buddhist notion of *śruta* and the Brāhmanical notion of *śruti* would surely not have been lost on the Buddha's contemporaries, especially as many of the interlocutors in the *suttas* were Brāhmans. *Buddha-vacana* therefore replaces Brāhmanical *śruti* and, as I have shown that *buddha-vacana* is essentially what accords with certain natural verifiable principles underlying all Buddhist doctrine, the Buddha may have been implying that **real** *śruti* is something you can only verify by yourself alone, something each person has to discover for themselves. As the **Dhammapada** has it, the Tathāgatas only declare the Way, but: "You yourselves must strive" [276] in order to realise it. Ultimately, one cannot rely upon tradition, sacred or otherwise, but only one's own efforts. As Nietzsche rightly says, Buddhism is a "*religion of self-redemption*" [D 96].

1) *utu-niyāma* - the physical, inorganic order.
2) *bīja-niyāma* - the physical, organic order.
3) *citta-niyāma* - the psychological order.
4) *kamma-niyāma* - the moral order.
5) *dhamma-niyāma* - the "Reality" order.

The first four *niyāmas* are relatively straightforward. The *utu-niyāma* applies to such phenomena as earthquakes, the changing of the seasons, etc.; the *bīja-niyāma* to changes in seeds and plant-life; the *citta-niyāma* to the processes of perception and non-volitional consciousness; and the *kamma-niyāma* to the relations between volitional actions and their consequent dispositional effect upon the actor. But what the *dhamma-niyāma* involves seems to require a more accessible account than what the commentary refers to. The commentator, Buddhaghosa, gives an account of the events in the Buddha Vipassin's life as found in the **Digha Nikāya**[442] as an example of the workings of the *dhamma-niyāma*, such as the fact that his mother carries him for ten instead of the more usual nine months; that she can have no sensual thoughts about men between conception and giving birth; naturally observes the *pañca-sīla* or "five precepts" of moral action during this time; gives birth to Gotama standing up;

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[440] If we take the term *logos* as "explanation" or "rationale" then "physiological" can be taken as an explanation or teaching that appeals only to what is *phusis* or "natural". Thus, in principle and on its own terms, Buddhism is a "physiological" teaching in this extended meaning of the term as its teachings are primarily focused on the natural processes that go on "inside" man, and the natural laws that govern them. Given Nietzsche's view of the world as will to power, whether one called Buddhism a physiological or psychological teaching would not matter. And it is reasonable to refer to the Buddha as a "profound psychologist", given the centrality of "mind" (*citta*) in his teachings.

[441] This listing does not appear in the *suttas* but is a commentatorial systematizing, probably by Buddhaghosa, of types of conditionality found in the *suttas* (see Rhys Davids [1912], p119 and Buddhaghosa's account in his **Atthasālini** or "*Expositor*", Vol. II, p360). However, as we shall see, the fifth *niyāma* is in need of a little more explanation than the others. The term *dhamma-niyāmatā*, however, does appear once in the *suttas*, but there *dhamma* means "nature" *per se*: "Monks, whether there be an appearance or non-appearance of a Tathāgata, this causal law of nature (*dhātu-dhammaṭṭhitatā*), this orderliness of nature (*dhamma-niyāmatā*) prevails: the relatedness of this to that" [S ii,25]. This *sutta* makes it quite clear that all the Tathāgatas or Buddhas do is reveal what is already there, reveal the nature of things summed up in the phrase: "the relatedness of this to that" (*idappaccayatā*). The *niyāmas* represent the different levels of *idappaccayatā*.

[442] See footnote 3, on p8 of the Rhys Davids' translation. Although it is the previous Buddha, Vipassin, who is mentioned in this context, it is clear that what follows applies to all *bodhisattas* entering their last life prior to becoming Buddhas.

dies after birth and is reborn in the Tusita deva-world; cannot become sick during this period; when Gotama is born *devas* are the first to welcome him into the world; and "this ten-thousand-fold-world-system trembles and quakes ... and an immeasurable light shines forth".[443] As the *sutta* goes on to say: "This monks, is the nature of things (*dhammatā*)". Various writers have other ideas about what the *dhamma-niyāma* signifies. Mrs. Rhys Davids gives a rather interesting Platonic interpretation comparing the *kamma-niyāma* to the "why we should be good" and the *dhamma-niyāma* to the "why we try to better our good, by".[444] She defines the *dhamma-niyāma* "as the order of things concerned with the production by the cosmos of its perfect or norm type" (i.e., a Buddha). However, this seems to me to be reifying a natural principle and turning it into a kind of force active in the cosmos for the production of Buddhas. It could answer the question as to *why* someone who lacks none of the comforts and prospects a successful worldly-life offers should give it all up and become what amounts to a "beggar" in search of the ultimate answer to life's deepest questions; it *could* be interpreted as the *cause* of such action. However, I see no reason to interpret it in such a metaphysical manner as the "cause" could be found simply in the human condition: being dissatisfied with one's life may be all the cause necessary to seek and eventually discover something more deeply satisfying, a process that can go on and on once one has begun to comprehend the "laws" of one's nature. I see no reason to assume some necessary metaphysical "cause" to explain why a human being goes out in search of a more meaningful and satisfactory existence, and can eventually have an insight into the true nature of things, an insight that is "transformative" in the sense that they become, in the process, a radically and permanently changed human being, what Buddhism calls a Buddha. Therefore I see no reason to interpret the *dhamma-niyāma* in any reified sense.

Sangharakshita, in his account of the *niyāmas*, shows how the *niyāmas* contradict the common and simplistic account of *kamman*. For example, if one catches a fever it may be the result of a sudden change of temperature (*utu-niyāma*), a virus (*bīja-niyāma*), mental strain (*citta-niyāma*), past *akusala-kamma* (*kamma-niyāma*) or a consequence of gaining some "transformative-insight" or *paññā* (*dhamma-niyāma*). However he reckons on there being some reality over and beyond the *dhamma-niyāma*: "the five *niyamas* not only all act upon another, but are collectively acted upon and influenced by the higher and wider containing reality of the Universal

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[443] D ii, 12ff.

[444] Rhys Davids (1912), p120.

Consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*)".[445] However, I think this is uncritically to conflate early and late Buddhist doctrines from a Mahāyāna perspective.

On the other hand Kalupahana, who, apart from Mrs. Rhys Davids and Sangharakshita, is the only other writer I've found who tries to give some account of these *niyāmas*, gives an unmetaphysical account which, on the whole, I would agree with. For example he says that "the development of insight can change the normal process of perception". This "change" is, nevertheless, "still a causal process where each state is conditioned by the previous state".[446] In other words post-insight activity, being rooted in what I would call a "transformative-insight" or *paññā*, unfolds quite naturally according to a different order of things such that one is free from the order of things wherein one could respond with any degree of *lobha, dosa,* or *moha*. A Buddha quite *naturally* responds to the *dukkha* of others with "compassion" or *karuṇā*; quite *naturally* cannot feel ill-will towards anyone regardless of what they do to him; quite *naturally* responds with "friendly concern" or *mettā* to all other beings - such responses as these would make for a better understanding of the *dhamma-niyāma* at work. Thus the *dhamma-niyāma*, in my own opinion, can be best understood as referring to the natural unfoldment of the activity of an enlightened being, the natural unfoldment of a nirvānized *viññāṇa-sota*, in the world. This, I think, makes more sense than ten month pregnancies![447]

Given this, all five *niyāmas* can be seen as being unified by the single principle of *praṭicca-samuppāda* or "conditioned co-production", giving events on each level a

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[445] **The Three Jewels**, p70. He refers the reader to Takakusu's **Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy**. However, Takakusu makes no reference to the *niyāmas*. According to Vasubandhu, the *ālaya-vijñāna* or "store-house-consciousness" "ceases to exist at the attainment of Arhatship (*arhattva*)" [**Triṃśatika**, v.5]. Here, the *ālaya-vijñāna* would be equated with the *kamma-niyāma*, not the *dhamma-niyāma*. However, Takakusu is dealing with later Yogācāra thought which introduces a reality beyond the *ālaya-vijñāna*, the *amala-vijñāna* or "taintless consciousness". This is probably what Sangharakshita had in mind.

[446] **Causality**, pp139-40. Although Kalupahana does grasp this point, he does not work it out very satisfactorily. Nor does he directly mention that this is the operation of the *dhamma-niyāma*. However, I take it that he implies it.

[447] To see such happenings at the birth of the Buddha as the effects of the *dhamma-niyāma* is more than problematic. The *Buddha* was "born" at Bodhgayā some thirty or so years later. It was the "unenlightened" being Gotama who was born at Lumbini, and being "unenlightened" only the first four *niyāmas* would have been operative. In the Pāli *suttas* I can find no mention of any extraordinary events happening at the time of Gotama gaining *bodhi*. However, in Aśvaghoṣa's account in his **Buddhacarita**, when Gotama gained *bodhi* events such as *māndārava* flowers falling from the sky and beings in the lower realms experiencing a moment of joy, do occur.

"natural law" (*dhamma*) according to which they unfold. Therefore the whole multidimensional universe comes under this single principle. As the Buddha says: "Whoever sees *paṭicca-samuppāda* sees the "truth" (*dhamma*), whoever sees the "truth" sees *paṭicca-samuppāda*",[448] a clear statement that the highest kind of knowledge attainable concerns the *natural* order of things. And with this perspective, Nietzsche's account of the Buddha's application of natural laws to help his contemporaries overcome their malaise obviously falls short of what Buddhists understand by natural law. Nevertheless, it is quite probable that Nietzsche's idea of the Buddha as a "profound physiologist" is his own attempt to fit the Buddhist doctrine of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, an account of which he would have read in Oldenberg,[449] to his own historical perspective.

What the relationship between the *niyāmas* is, how they might interact and influence each other, is not specifically mentioned anywhere in the texts or commentaries. As Guenther comments, Buddhism is so interested "in man as he appears to himself and the way in which it becomes possible for him to develop spiritually ... that the external physical world ... has more or less completely been lost sight of".[450] Buddhism is almost solely concerned with the *kamma-niyāma*, with our *saṅkhāras* or "volitional affects", as a way to the *dhamma-niyāma* and shows no interest whatsoever in any scientific approach to the physical world, apart from subsuming it under the principle of *paṭicca-samuppāda* and seeing it as *annica* and *anattan*. The spiritual life requires no necessary knowledge of how a cell or the liver works. Yet Nietzsche, with his "body" as a hierarchy of forces does, on occasions, suggests that it is within the workings of the "mysterious body" that our fate, unknown to us, is determined. However, as I've said, I interpret such proposals as methodological irony reminding us that we do not *know* the extent that such factors, what he calls "these little things"[451] - such as the food we eat, our metabolism, where we live, our climatic environment - condition how we interpret and interact with the world. In any case, the "little things" are "of greater importance than anything that has been considered of importance hitherto" such as the "merely imaginings": the "*lies* from bad instincts of sick ... injurious natures - concepts 'God', 'soul', 'virtue',

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[448] Mi, 191-2.

[449] Oldenberg (1881), p223ff.

[450] Guenther (1959), p144.

[451] EH ii,10. See the whole of EH ii on this topic.

'sin', 'the Beyond', 'truth', 'eternal life' ..." We have therefore "to begin to *learn anew*"[452] and we have to start from that which is tangible and observable, even though not fully known, and that is the "body" and the "little things".

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[452] *ibid.*

1) The "Little Things"

Just as Nietzsche recommends that we begin again and "learn anew" by paying attention to the "little things" and the workings of the "body" in order to determine what formative effect they might have in forming our *Weltanschauungen* (which implies that if we do discover such determinations, we can then begin to *free* ourselves of their influence), Buddhism also considers such factors as important in the development of self-awareness, which is central to the practice of *brahma-cariya*. Both see the relationship between the subject and his environment as reciprocal and mutually conditional, although not necessarily symmetrical.[453] Both want to bring this more into focus in order to create a greater degree of freedom for the subject to develop. On the environment's side we have Nietzsche's "little things" and the Buddhist's *rūpa-khandha* (here understood as the objective world). On the subject's side we have Nietzsche's "body" or, for our present comparative study, his "given", our experience of ourselves as embodiments of fluctuating forces - our drives, feelings, emotions, desires, passions, instincts - all of which I will subsume under the term "affects"; and, in the case of Buddhism, the four "subjective" *khandhas*. Both see the environment as effective in the formation of our subjectivity - our outlook, character and general disposition - without our usually being aware of it. This can result in us, as subjects, and without any understanding of what we have done, creating a whole *Weltanschauung* about how the world really is, which is no more than a rationalization of the effect the world has had on us.

In both cases, however, these two aspects are not symmetrical, they are not of equal importance. Although Nietzsche acknowledges that we are rather ignorant of the extent that our environment may have had in conditioning and forming our being as well as our *Weltanschauung*, he nowhere considers that all we have to do in order to become *Übermenschen* is to find and live in the right environment and climate, eat

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[453] Whether it is the subject or the environment (which includes parents, society, culture, etc.) that has the larger say in forming the individual depends upon the "power" of the individual. For Nietzsche the "herd-type" is hardly more than the product of his environment and has no real independence of action or thought apart from what has been formed by the environment. The "higher-types", having more "power" are able, to some degree, to assert themselves over and against the "herd". This is the main reason Nietzsche dislikes Darwinism: it favours the "herd-type" by over-emphasising the part that the environment plays in determining the "fittest". The problem being that in Nietzsche's scheme, his "fittest" are all to easily swamped by the lowly "herd-types".

the right kind of food, and simply sit back and passively await a kind of dialectical transformation into an *Übermensch*. One can become an *Übermensch* only by engaging in a process he calls *Selbstüberwindung* or "self-overcoming", which is essentially the internalization of the will to power, a matter of a struggle or an Hellenic *agon* between the various affects *within* the individual. The primary aspect is the subject. For Buddhism also the primary aspect involves the subject engaging in a kind of "self-overcoming", a struggle within the *saṅkhāra-khandha* between various affects. Yet, although the subjective aspect is the primary one, it is only by becoming aware of how we have been conditioned by the external world we live in, of how one's pet *Weltanschauung* may have been formed under the influence of one's environment, that one can begin to "learn anew". Both consider the environment as initially important, but its influence must eventually be overcome. In the past it has influenced, to some degree or other, our present disposition towards the world, and for the future it can either help or hinder both "self-overcoming" or *brahma-cariya*. In Nietzsche's case all this is a matter of "learning anew", but Buddhism has already formed its views on these matters and, ironically enough, as we shall see, could have assisted him in forming his path of "self-overcoming".

If I had to sum-up the Buddhist Path in a word, it would have to be *citta-bhāvanā*,[454] "mind-cultivation" or "mind-development" which, as I shall show, has strong affinities with Nietzsche's "self-overcoming". Although *citta-bhāvanā* falls into the subjective aspect, what we might call mind working on mind, Buddhism has always recognized the importance played by the external conditions one lives under and how they can either help or hinder the path of *citta-bhāvanā*. The most thorough and systematic example of this is found in Buddhaghosa's **Visuddhimagga** or *The Path of Purification*, written in Pāli during the 5th century C.E. Not only does Buddhaghosa examine the most beneficial environment for the practice of *citta-bhāvanā*, but also considers the more specific and formative interaction between a type of environment and the character type it tends to produce, a good example of the reciprocal relationship between the objective and subjective aspects mentioned above.

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[454] *Bhāvanā* is the term that is usually translated in the West as "meditation". However, its scope extends beyond the practice of "sitting meditation", a practice specifically aimed at developing *samādhi* or "mind-concentration" by various methods. What one is trying to "cultivate" (*bhāvanā*), whether in sitting meditation or in everyday activities, are *kusala* or "skilful" states of mind, i.e., a mind concentrated and imbued with affects such as *mettā* or "friendly concern", *sati* and *sampajañña*, "mindfulness and clear comprehension" and other *kusala-dhammas* which provide the necessary conditions for the further development of *paññā*. Thus *nirvāṇa* can be seen as the culmination of *citta-bhāvanā*.

In its classification of psychological types, Buddhism recognizes six predominant temperaments: "greed-temperament" (*rāga-carita*), "hate-temperament" (*dosa-carita*), "deluded-temperament" (*moha-carita*), "faith-temperament" (*saddhā-carita*), "intelligent-temperament" (*buddhi-carita*) and "speculative-temperament" (*vitakka-carita*).[455] Each, according to Buddhaghosa, benefits from a particular environment. I shall quote generously his advice to hate and greed temperaments on the kind of environment most suited to each as an example of his thoroughness.

> *What suits what kind of temperament? A suitable lodging for one of greedy temperament has an unwashed sill and stands level with the ground, and it can be either an overhanging [rock with an] unprepared [dripledge], a grass hut, or a leaf house, etc.; it ought to be splattered with dirt, full of bats, dilapidated, too high or too low, in bleak surroundings, threatened [by lions, tigers, etc.,] with a muddy, uneven path, where even the bed and chair are full of bugs. And it should be ugly and unsightly, exciting loathing as soon as looked at. Suitable inner and outer garments are those that have torn-off edges with threads hanging down all around like a 'net cake', harsh to the touch like hemp, soiled, heavy and hard to wear. And the right kind of bowl for him is an ugly clay bowl disfigured by stoppings and joins, or a heavy and misshapen iron bowl as unappetising as a skull. The right kind of road for him on which to wander for alms is disagreeable, with no village near, and uneven. The right kind of village for him in which to wander for alms is where people wander about as if oblivious of him, where, as he is about to leave without getting alms even from a single family, people call him into the sitting hall, saying 'Come, venerable sir', and give him gruel and rice, but do so as casually as if they were putting a cow in a pen.*[456]

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[455] In a sense there are only three, corresponding to the three "roots" or *mūlas* found in the *suttas*: "greed" (*lobha/rāga*), "hate" (*dosa*) and "delusion" (*moha*). As Buddhaghosa comments, the "faith, intelligent and speculative temperaments" are, respectively, what the "greed, hate and deluded temperaments" develop into when they build up some positive *kamman* [Vol.1, p103]. However, as Buddhaghosa makes clear, we are talking about a prominent disposition only. A person of "greed-temperament" also has aspects of the other temperaments and vice versa. Although this doctrine of *caritas* is only found in the commentaries and the **Visuddhimagga**, it is clearly a development of what is found in the *suttas*, and a further application of the principle of *paṭicca-samutpāda*.

[456] **The Path of Purification**, Vol.1, p109-10.

And so the text continues in like manner for another half a page. The recommended conditions for the hate type, are, however, quite the opposite.

> *A suitable resting place for one of hating temperament is not too high or too low, provided with shade and water, with well-proportioned walls, posts, and steps, with well-prepared frieze work and lattice work, brightened with various kinds of paintings, with an even, smooth, soft floor, adorned with festoons of flowers and a canopy of many-coloured cloth like a Brahmā-gods's divine palace, with bed and chair covered with well-spread clean pretty covers, smelling sweetly of flowers, and perfumes and scents set about for homely comfort, which makes one happy and glad at the mere sight of it. The right kind of road to his lodgings is free of any sort of danger, traverses clean, even ground, and has been properly prepared. And here it is best that the lodging's furnishings are not too many in order to avoid hiding-places for insects, bugs, snakes and rats: even a single bed and chair only. The right kind of inner and outer garments for him are of any superior stuff such as China cloth, Somāra cloth, silk, fine cotton, fine linen, of either single or double thickness, quite light, and well dyed, quite pure in colour to befit an ascetic. The right kind of road on which to wander for alms is free from dangers, level, agreeable, with a village in which to wander for alms is where people, thinking 'Now our lord is coming', prepare a seat in a sprinkled, swept place, and going out to meet him, take his bowl, lead him to the house, seat him on a prepared seat and serve him carefully with their own hands. Suitable people to serve him are handsome, pleasing, well bathed, well anointed, scented with the perfume of incense and the smell of flowers, adorned with apparel made of variously-dyed clean pretty cloth, who do their work carefully.*[457]

And so on with less specific advice for the deluded, faithful, intelligent and speculative temperaments. These are examples of the thoroughness and attention to detail that the Buddhists gave over to what Nietzsche would have recognized as his "little things". Buddhaghosa even tells us how to recognize the types by watching how they sweep a path, wash their robes, what food they eat and how they eat it, even by the way they walk.[458] More important, though, is their attitude to the world.

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[457] *ibid.*, pp110-111.

The greed type "seizes on trivial virtues, [and] discounts genuine faults", whereas the hate type "picks out trivial faults, [and] discounts genuine virtues". The deluded type simple "copies what others do". Further, the greed-type is prone to "such states as deceit, fraud, pride, evilness of wishes, greatness of wishes, discontent, foppery and personal vanity", the hate-type more prone to "such states as anger, enmity, disparaging, domineering, envy and avarice", and the deluded-type to "such states as stiffness, torpor, agitation, worry, uncertainty, and holding on tenaciously with refusal to relinquish".[459]

What emerges from this is a recognition of a formative and reciprocal relationship between the environment and the individual within which the character of a person, and thereby their perspective on the world and life, is to some degree or other formed. One can come to have a particular disposition either through "previous habit" and/or the "elements and humours"[460] (i.e., one's bodily constitution), or through a "previous root cause". "Previous habit" means, for example, in the case of the greed-temperament, that one "formerly had plenty of desirable tasks and gratifying work to do, or has reappeared here after dying in a heaven". In other words, the environment was wholly pleasant and agreeable resulting in one becoming predisposed to seeing the world from a particular, conditioned perspective, to seeing the world as a place offering only enjoyment and satisfaction. Out of this certain character traits tend to arise such as those listed above. In the case of the hate-temperament, it is the opposite: the environment was wholly disagreeable predisposing one to see the world from the opposite perspective, as full of hostility, conflict and pain and, therefore, something to be on one's guard against. This type therefore tends to be predisposed to looking for faults, etc. Interestingly, one can become a deluded-type if one "has formerly drunk a lot of intoxicants and neglected learning and questioning, or has reappeared here after dying in the animal existence", implying that a life-stye of much drinking and little learning is the equivalent of an animal-like existence! However, Buddhaghosa introduces the first explanation with the phrase: "as some

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[458] *ibid.*, pp106-108.

[459] *ibid.*, p108.

[460] Nietzsche would no doubt have found Upatissa's reference to the possible link between the balance of the "elements" within the individual (i.e. the elements of fire, air, water and earth) and one's "humour-type" (i.e. "phlegmatic-type" [*semhika*], "bilious-type" [*pittika*] or "windy-type" [*vātika*]) on one's outlook on life, very interesting. This really would constitute Buddhist physiology in the narrow sense of the term.

say" which, as the translator informs us, is a reference to the Elder Upatissa's **Vimuttimagga** or *Path of Freedom* where this particular explanation is found. And as he prefaces Upatissa's account with "apparently", this indicates that Buddhaghosa does not agree with it, especially the reference to "elements" and "humours". He seems to agree with a second account which says that one's temperament "is governed by previous root cause", meaning that one comes to be of a particular temperament because one was previously of that temperament which, of course, is no explanation of how one came to be of that temperament in the first place. For example one's previous actions (*kamman*), being rooted in greed (because that was one's temperament), will predispose one to be of greed temperament in the present, telling us nothing about how it came about that one's temperament was rooted in greed in the first instance, nor about what part the environment played in character formation. Buddhaghosa's own account of the way in which a particular kind of environment can help one overcome the defects of one's present temperament does imply that the environment can play an important role in the formation of temperament and, therefore, in influencing one's *Weltanschauung*. Yet even Buddhaghosa does not seem to see the implications of what he is outlining in his advice on the kind of environment most suited to a particular character type, i.e., that the environment can be a formative influence upon the disposition of one's character. The point Buddhaghosa is trying to illustrate assumes this. The *dosa-carita*, through the practice of *sati* and *sampajañña*, by consciously putting himself into an environment that is the opposite of one that supports his character disposition, that will respond to him in a manner whose tendency would dispose him to become a *lobha-carita*, can begin to break-down his habitual reactions to the world and, more importantly, his way of seeing the world. In this way his perspective on the world, as well as his experience of himself, will eventually broaden. His mind will then become more malleable and open to change, and some knowledge of the way his own being unfolds in accordance with the principle of *paṭicca-samutpāda* can be gained. In this way Buddhism considers the "little things" to be of some importance, and one need not be a victim of them but can even use them to one's advantage. However, real *citta-bhāvanā* is a matter of mind working on mind, and although the environment can have its role to play at the onset, it becomes less relevant as one progresses.

Nietzsche's "little things", however, seem more an account of his own unsuccessful attempts to find an environment which would alleviate his consistent ailments. Since he was a schoolboy he suffered vicious and prolonged headaches and attacks of vomiting. Even sunlight was at times so unbearable that he had to wear dark glasses. He eventually was forced into an early retirement at the age of 31 by his recurring

illnesses, and then spent much of his time "in search of the climate in which he would suffer least"[461] in order to carry on writing in relative peace. Therefore, when he says on "the question of *place* and *climate*" that one should ...

> *Make a list of the places where there have been gifted men, where genius has almost necessarily made its home: they all possess an excellent dry air. Paris, Provence, Florence, Jerusalem, Athens - these names prove something: that genius is* conditioned *by dry air, clear sky - that is to say by rapid metabolism, by the possibility of again and again supplying oneself with great, even tremendous quantities of energy.*[462]

This was not so much because all the geniuses he admired happened to be born in climates where the air was dry (Goethe certainly wasn't), but because he found that his symptoms were sometimes alleviated in dry air, especially mountain air. However he did think that the sea-air of Venice did him good, which is hardly dry.[463] As well as searching for propitious climatic conditions, he also experimented with various kinds of diets as *he* also suffered from intestinal problems. Yet he found no diet or environment that would sustain his ailing health for very long. Thus his comments on the relation between the German diet and the German spirit are not offered as serious physiology, just Nietzsche grumbling. And, interestingly enough, he once concluded that "he was convinced that all the physical symptoms 'were deeply intertwined with spiritual crises, so that I have no idea how medicine and diet could ever be enough to restore my health'".[464] However, it may well be that many of these symptoms were no more than the effects of congenital syphilis, which may have been the prime cause of his eventual breakdown. However, we will never really know. What is remarkable about all this is that despite his real physical suffering, he managed to write as he did. Nevertheless, when one compares Nietzsche's account of his "little things" and their

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[461] Hayman (1980), p225.

[462] EH iii,2. Interestingly, he wrote this in Turin which he had first visited a couple of months earlier because "I have heard favourable reports of the *dry* air there". (Quoted from a letter in Hayman, p315.)

[463] *ibid*, p225.

[464] *ibid*, p181.

effects on our outlook with the Buddhist account, it is the latter that is more considered and makes more basic psychological sense.

Of far more interest is the comparison between Nietzsche's notions of the "body" and "self-overcoming" with the Buddhist *khandhas* and its conception of *citta-bhāvanā*.

2) The "Body" and the *Khandhas*.

As we saw earlier, Nietzsche viewed the person as a constellation of various fluctuating forces whose individual and collective *nisus* was expressed in terms of a striving to overcome all resistance and accumulate more power, i.e., the will to power. This is the "body", the "subject as multiplicity".[465] And although he considers that we know little about the workings of this "body" and how all these hidden forces effect us, there is little doubt that *the* important forces are our affects, our "given". It is through working on and with the affects that comprises his "self-overcoming", that constitutes the process of qualitatively higher expressions of the will to power, a process that he considers will eventually bring forth his new kind of being, the *Übermensch*. Therefore, although we may know little of the workings of our unconscious "under-wills", the fact that he considers that whatever goes on in the "body" terminates as our affects,[466] and that such affects are "symptoms" of the sickness or health of the "body" thereby giving us the necessary general diagnosis, the fact that "self-overcoming" is a matter of our working with the affects means that knowledge of the unknown workings of the "body" is not of immediate importance. Science may aid an athlete by prescribing a diet based upon knowledge of nutrition which helps increase performance. However, the diet in itself will not make an athlete out of anyone. And the athlete can go far without the aid of science. Nietzsche's "little things", like the Buddhist's, are no more than aids to "self-overcoming", and much can be done without them.

Nietzsche's affects are nothing other than the whole gamut of a person's subjective experience. They include "love", "pity", "enmity", "generosity", "sexual-desire", "jealousy", "pride", "joy", "despair", "ambition", "*ressentiment*", "gratitude", "cunning", "vigour", "magnanimity" and many other urges, aspirations, etc. Even conscious activity such as thinking is understood as nothing more than "the relationship of these drives to one another".[467] Our intellectual capacity, rather than

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[465] WP 490.

[466] D 128.

having some divine source, developed naturally from our evolutionary past, even from things illogical.

> *The course of logical ideas and inferences in our brain today corresponds to a process and a struggle among impulses that are, taken singly, very illogical and unjust. We generally experience only the result of this struggle because this primeval mechanism now runs its course so quickly and is so well concealed.* [GS 111]

This "primeval mechanism" that "now runs its course" and ends as what we experience as a conscious activity, has become, in man, "instinctual",[468] rather like the workings of the liver. This is why Nietzsche considers we can diagnose ideas as symptoms of the overall health or sickness of the body. Ideas that are "anti-life" or which affirm another better world than this one, are no more than the intellections of a sick body, a body that has become weary of life, feels impotent, or which has suffered too long.[469] Man is, therefore, nothing other than "the totality of his *drives*"[470] which ebb and flow in a continual flux of becoming formed, to a greater or lesser degree, by the stimulus afforded by the environment. Our past struggles form an instinctual pattern which unfolds as "us" - different patterns unfolding as different individuals who, having a common evolutionary past, share the more basic patterns and the more animal-like instincts in common. However, the "higher-type", through "self-overcoming", can bring about affects not shared by the common man, can influence the way his being unfolds and add distance between himself and his animal past, and his fellow men. This, for Nietzsche, is how to truly affirm life.

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[467] BGE 36.

[468] Nietzsche uses this term in the sense that what we do instinctively springs from what we have become. If though "self-overcoming" we become generous, then our generous activity is "instinctual", it expresses what we actually are. In contrast to this he deprecates the kind of moral activity that is overtly self-conscious, that expresses not what we actually are but how we *think* we should behave. The latter, being non-instinctual, is superficial and inauthentic in comparison, and can even be disingenuous.

[469] "For the condemnation of life by the living is after all no more than the symptom of a certain kind of life" (TI v,5). "It was suffering and impotence - that created all afterworlds" (Z i,3).

[470] D 119.

For Buddhism, also, man is "subject as multiplicity", he is also "the totality of his *drives*". What he is at any given moment is a psycho-physical complex that has come about as a consequence of his past affective-action which then, in itself, becomes the basis for present affective-action and so on. This is *saṃsāra*, the continual and habitual "round". When Buddhism analyses man into five *khandhas* the affective and formative *khandha* is the *saṅkhāra-khandha* which is simultaneously formative and formed, depending upon whether one looks from the present to the past, i.e. how the present come to be, or from the present into the future, i.e. how the present will form the future becoming. In the former case the *saṅkhāras* are the "results" (*vipakas*) of former "actions" (*kammans*) which, given present similar circumstances, predispose us to act in a similar manner. In the latter case, actually acting in a similar manner sets up similar predispositions for the future. Therefore unless man can change the pattern of the *saṅkhāras* - their "constellation" to use a Nietzschean term - can change his affective life, he will not develop spiritually but will remain very much as he is or become even more spiritually degenerate.

That the *saṅkhāra-khandha* is the methodologically cardinal *khandha*, a fact that is often overlooked, is brought out in the **Saṃyutta Nikāya**:

> *And why, brethren, do you say* 'saṅkhāras'*? Because they compose* [abhisaṅkharonti] *a compound* [saṅkhata]. *That is why, brethren, the word* 'saṅkhāras' *is used. And what compound do they compose? It is the body they compose into a compound of body. It is feeling that they compose into a compound of feeling. It is perception they compose into a compound of perception; the activities into an compound of activities; consciousness into a compound of consciousness. They compose a compound, brethren. Therefore the word* saṅkhāras *is used.* [S iii, 86]

In other words the present individual, who is conceived of as an aggregate of five *khandhas*, comes to be *composed* by the formative activity of the past *saṅkhāra-khandha*. Thus the three other "subjective" *khandhas* of our present experience, "feeling", "apperception" and "consciousness", are determined primarily by our past "willing", leaving "self-overcoming" a matter of the *saṅkhāra-khandha*. It is only this *khandha* that forms the *volitional* aspect[471] of the person. As that volitional aspect is conceived of as a multiplicity, what we have is a multiplicity of what we could call *wills*. Past "wills" become present dispositions, which predispose present "willing" to "will" in a particular manner which, in turn, sets up future dispositions, and so on. Not only do they set up the future dispositional aspect of *saṅkhāra-khandha*, but they

all "compose" the other future *khandhas*. As this process is considered to span many lifetimes, what is "reborn" are these dispositional *saṅkhāras* which "compose" the character of the "new" person, form a kind of "psycho-genetic" constitution.

This is as much as we can derive from the *suttas* concerning the *saṅkhāra-khandha*, that it can be conceived of as a plurality of "wills". However, if we ask what these "wills" are we have to turn to the various *abhidharmas*, which "filled-in" the *saṅkhāra-khandha* with the variety of emotions and affects found in the *suttas*. What emerges is a list of what Nietzsche would have classified as affects or "wills". In terms of *akusala* affects we have "hate" (*dosa*), "envy" (*issā*), "selfishness" (*macchariya*), "worry" (*kukkucca*), "greed" (*lobha*) "opinionatedness" (*diṭṭhi*), "conceit" (*māna*), "mental obduracy" (*thīna*), "sloth", (*middha*), "unreasonable scepsis" (*vicikicchā*), "vindictiveness" (*kodha*), "resentment" (*upanāha*), "hypocrisy" (*makkha*), "spite" (*paḷāsa*), "deceit" (*māyā*), "dishonesty" (*sāṭheyya*), "mental inflation" (*mada*), "malice" (*vihiṃsā*), "lack of moral shame" (*ahirīka*), "lack of propriety" (*anottappa*), "mental restlessness" (*uddhacca*), "lack of confidence" (*asaddhā*), "lust" (*sineha*), "laziness" (*kusīta*) "carelessness" (*pamāda*), "forgetfulness" (*musatī*), "inattentiveness" (*asampajañña*), "sexual infatuation" (*pema*), and "desultoriness" (*vikkhepa*). Curiously, when it lists the *kusala* affects some of those one would expect to find such as "friendly concern" (*mettā*), "compassion" (*karuṇā*), "sympathetic joy" (*muditā*), "generosity" (*dāna*), do not appear in the *abhidharma* lists. In fact the first and the last affects do not appear in any. The *kusala* affects listed are "confidence" (*saddhā*), "mindfulness" (*satī*), "moral shame" (*hirī*), "moral propriety" (*ottappa*), "greedlessness" (*alobha*), "hatelessness" (*adosa*), "non-viciousness" (*ahiṃsā*), "vigour" (*viriya*), "diligence" (*apamāda*), "equanimity" (*upekkhā*), "non-delusion" (*amoha*), and "alertness" (*passaddhī*). In the Theravādin *abhidhamma* we also have "alertness" (*passaddhī*), "agility" (*lahutā*), "elasticity" (*mudutā*), "adaptability" (*kammaññatā*), "proficiency" (*pāguññatā*), and "uprightness" (*ujukatā*) of *viññāṇa* and *kāya*, the latter being all the *kusala* factors collectively. *Cetanā* or "will" is listed as one of the "omnipresent-mental-factors" (*sabba-citta-sādharaṇas*) meaning that it is a constant factor present, to some degree,

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[471] At S iii,60, the *saṅkhāra-khandha* is defined as "the six seats of 'will'" (*saṅcetanā*), the "will" being sixfold as it responds to all of the six avenues of sense experience - the "mind" (*manas*) being regarded as a "sense" (*indriya*). Each affect can therefore be seen as a particular "will". This is why the term *saṅkhāras* is sometimes translated as "volitional forces". The *saṅkhāras*, as affects, can therefore be regarded as a collectivity of particular "wills" in the sense of Nietzsche's "under-wills".

in all our experiences. However, it would be a mistake to see it as something separate from the various affects listed above. It is always present because it is an integral aspect of each and every affect, in the sense that it is a characteristic of being an affect. It is not that one feels generous then *cetanā* comes along and provides the necessary "will" to *be* generous. Generosity *is* an affect, a drive, a *saṅkhāra*, and is, therefore, a particular case of "willing". As Guenther, in criticism of the translation of *cetanā* as "volition" comments, "*cetanā*, to state it plainly, is something that corresponds to our idea of stimulus, motive, or drive".[472] Generosity is a particular "drive" or "will" and we therefore have a correspondence in kind between Nietzsche's view of man as "the totality of his drives" which is his "body", and the Buddhist conception of man as being an embodied collection of *saṅkhāras* or, one could say, "drives".

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[472] Guenther (1959), p44.

It is rather odd that in the thorough analysis of the affects found in the various Abhidharmas *taṇhā*, which is so prominent in the *suttas*, is not listed. Perhaps this is because, I as suggested earlier, *taṇhā* is not an actual affect or emotion but the generic term for the common ground of all *akusala* affects, the three "root" (*mūla*) affects being *lobha, dosa* and *moha*, from which the secondary *akusala* affects, as listed above, develop. But does this imply that the *kusala* affects have a separate ground? This would give rise to a Buddhist version of the duality of good and evil with *taṇhā* being the "evil" aspect[473] and some unmentioned ground filling in the "good" aspect. In latter Mahāyāna thought, the notion of the *dharmakāya* or "Dharma-body" seems to fill such a role in the sense that the *tathāgatagarbha* or "embryo of Buddhahood", the reflection of the *dharmakāya* in us, is seen as the "cause" of beings seeking *bodhi*. Therefore there is something "in" us that is not of the saṃsāric order and which, when affected by this higher order of the *dharmakāya*, results in us seeking to attain a state which is beyond the saṃsāric order, *nirvāṇa*. But is there anything similar in the Pāli texts? The only instance that I can find that could be construed along similar lines is a passage from the **Aṅguttara Nikāya** where the Buddha, having recently attained *bodhi*, wonders: "Ill at ease dwells the man who reverences not, obeys not. What if I were to dwell doing honour and paying reverence to some recluse or brāhman, and serve him?" But, after surveying the cosmos, he concludes that:

> *But not in this world with its* devas, māras, brahmās, *not in the world of* devas *or mankind do I behold any other recluse or brāhman more perfect in virtue than myself, whom honouring I could dwell reverencing, obeying and serving*. (A iii,20)

The *sutta* ends when the "god" Brahmā Sahampati reminds him what previous Buddhas did, after which the Buddha "dwelt honouring, reverencing, obeying and serving that very Dhamma which has been well comprehended by me". Thus if there

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[473] *Taṇhā* could never be the actual equivalent of "evil". The kind of affects that give rise to an evil like Belsen would be the secondary affects derived from the primary affects of *dosa* and *moha*. Thus *taṇhā* is not in itself "evil" but is a ground from which, given certain conditions, evils like Belsen can arise. But, under other conditions, a society like the one we have now in Britain can arise. The *ground* for both is the same.

is some equivalent ground in opposition to *taṇhā*, it seems that this Dhamma reverenced by the Buddha might be it. Perhaps this is the *dharmakāya* of the later Mahāyāna, which in Pāli would be *dhammakāya*. However, as this *sutta* mentions previous Buddhas, does the fact that Gotama the Buddha never considered reverencing *them* mean that after their *parinirvāṇas* those Buddhas no longer exist? Perhaps, being in an altogether different realm, they were not available? Or perhaps, having only been a Buddha for a few days, Gotama had not fully realized his whole Buddha potential, rather like a blind man who, having gained the power to see, does not see all that his eyes can reveal to him all at once. However, the point is that the Dhamma here *could* be something like the Platonic "Good" or the "Beautiful", *could* be an opposite ground to *taṇhā*. When this ground is weakly perceived in the "cave" of ordinary life, it acts as a stimulus to search for some spiritual path which, in the case of Buddhism, is the means of developing the *kusala* affects. It is these affects which form the conditional ground for the arising of *paññā* or "transformative insight", also known, interestingly enough, as opening the "Dhamma-eye" or *dhamma-cakkhu*.[474]

However, I also think a more monistic as opposed to a dualistic approach is equally valid and, although it is speculative, could bear fruit in linking Nietzsche's will to power with the Buddhist *taṇhā*.[475] To facilitate this comparison I shall put *taṇhā* in a Nietzschean evolutionary context. *Taṇhā*, as I have suggested, can be seen as the ground out of which spring the three most basic affects: *lobha, dosa* and *moha*. They are always, however, seen from an ethical perspective and judged to be hindrances not only to spiritual development, but to civilized society. However, we can see them as simply natural basic forces that were *necessary* for the evolution and survival of early man and without which man would not have evolved: *lobha* as the urge to acquire the necessities for survival and *dosa* as the urge to defend one's possessions and fight aggressors. As *moha* is the dimness of mind in relation to the truth of the spiritual life it is no more than lack of cognizance of this fact. In early man it would be a state of mind with very limited horizons: eating, copulating, hunting, basic co-operation with others and, in moments of quiet consciousness, the

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[474] See D i,86 and elsewhere.

[475] Stack (1983) mentions that "the emphasis upon the centrality of the 'urges', 'cravings', and 'drives' in man that are said to be derived from a more primitive form of 'affect' (= the will to power) suggests something analogous to the Buddhist concept of *tṛiṣṇā*" [*taṇhā*] (p265). Although I agree with Stack's statement, I would not accept the rather uncritical and general remarks made by Susuki in his **Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist** concerning *taṇhā*, upon which Stack bases his statement.

first glimmerings of "why"? In a more developed and civilized society life is not so dominated by the more basic aspects of pure survival giving room, through social interaction, reflection and cultural communication through generations, to a more Lamarckian kind of evolution within which the more developed and refined affects can emerge. Modern man is therefore not so continually dominated by the need for primitive and basic survival. However, these crude and atavistic urges still erupt under certain conditions such as war, etc., implying that, on the whole, we are not wholly free of them and the *Weltanschauungen* they give rise to. From a Buddhist perspective, the fact that we can be kind and considerate to others and our behaviour on the whole can be considered reasonably civilized and not dominated by these now seemingly atavistic urges and drives, does not imply that we are wholly free from them. As long as *moha* is still present there is the permanent possibility, under certain conditions, of falling victim to their influence. Nevertheless, our more civilized affects can be seen as developments of these more primitive urges: the greater freedom offered by a more civilized society offers a greater range of objects to respond to and therefore a corresponding greater potential for the development of more "civilized" affects to emerge. This, in principle, would be the Buddhist position reflecting the principle of *paṭicca-samuppāda*. Without these more primitive and cruder affects, civilization as we know it with its more refined affects and conditions for spiritual development would not have arisen.[476] However, according to the Buddhist position, these latter affects are still linked to *taṇhā*, still, in some manner, characterized by *taṇhā*.[477] Therefore *all* the affects listed by Buddhism, which are imbued to some degree with *moha*, are characterized by *taṇhā*. Yet the *Weltanschauungen* that these various affects give rise to can range between a crude animal-like view of existence to the more refined view which encompasses the world of art, literature, and a world full of *angels, devas* and *brahmās* and kindly beings who shun the cruder aspects of existence. To me, it seems that the notion of *taṇhā* is in need of modification, and the model I will use to attempt this - which will also link *taṇhā* with the will to power - is that of *Erōs* as found in Plato's **Symposium**.

Here, Socrates makes the interesting point that as *Erōs* desires beauty and "one desires that which one lacks", *Erōs* "lacks and does not possess beauty".[478] Hence *Erōs*, as a state, is one of desiring that which one lacks. And, as Diotima latter

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[476] Nietzsche makes much of this point, that what we civilized people regard as "good" could not have come to be without the previous "bad". See BGE 229.

[477] This is a position that could be disputed, but the reason it can be so disputed is, I think, because the texts themselves are not entirely unambiguous.

informs Socrates: "the truth is that we isolate a particular kind of love and appropriate for it the name of love, which really belongs to a wider whole. ... [therefore love is a] generic concept [which] embraces every desire for good and for happiness".[479] The same could be said of *taṇhā*: it is a state of "thirsting" after what one lacks which, relative to one's self, would appear as "good". Out of that state of "thirsting-cum-lacking" would emerge the urge to acquire what one saw as "good" - *lobha* - which may entail a fight to get it or, when one acquired it, the force to defend it - *dosa*. If *taṇhā* is a state of "thirsting", and we remember that the word was a poetic term, does not "thirsting" imply a desire for what one lacks or thinks one needs, and cannot that lack cover the range of development from the cruder aspects of survival to man's more spiritual needs? Cannot the unenlightened be said to "thirst" after *bodhi*?

Socrates also makes a Hesiod-like distinction in alluding to the two-fold nature of *Erōs*: the desire to "procreate" either physically or spiritually. The former brings forth children whilst the latter creates beauty of mind and character. Yet this latter *Erōs* can be seen as the "spiritual" aspect of the former - its sublimation. Thus we have two forms of *Eris* and *Erōs*, one crude and the other embodying the notion of further development through the sublimation of the former, a device that can be applied both to Nietzsche's will to power and the Buddhist *taṇhā*: the will to power in its crude form and in its sublimated form as "self-overcoming"; *taṇhā* in its crude form and in its sublimated form as *dhamma-chanda* or "desire for the Dhamma". So how can *taṇhā* come to be seen as possessing a dual nature?

As it is formulated in the "Four Ariyan Truths", *taṇhā* is seen as the "cause" of *dukkha*. But, as I pointed out, *dukkha* is not simply "suffering-qua-suffering" but as *saṇkhāra-dukkha* encompasses all experience short of complete *bodhi*. In other words, *dukkha*, in a more subtle form, is a component factor of the "Ariyan Path" in all its diverse manifestations. Therefore as *dukkha* stretches all the way to *bodhi* and its "cause" is *taṇhā*, then so, too, must *taṇhā* as "cause" stretch all the way to *bodhi*: no *taṇhā*, no *dukkha*. The link between *taṇhā* and the upper reaches of the Buddhist path is established. Yet the use of *taṇhā* in the Buddhist texts is entirely negative and considers only its crude and anti-spiritual aspect. Therefore I think a revision of the scope of *taṇhā* is called for. Its more efficacious side (i.e., the part it can be seen to play as a kind of spiritual "thirst"), needs to be considered and this can be brought out by seeing an evolutionary continuum between its crude and primitive state and its

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[478] **Symposium**, 199e - 200e.

[479] *ibid.*, 205a-b.

more "evolved" manifestations. After all, does not "thirst" seek to finally "quench" itself which, in this analogy, would be the final "drinking" of the waters of *bodhi*. Therefore I would suggest that an *Eris* and *Erōs* type of distinction as we have above can be a useful convenience: *taṇhā*, in its more non-regenerative aspect is simply *taṇhā*; and *taṇhā* in its more regenerative aspect could be linked to what the texts refer to as *dhamma-chanda* - *chanda* or "desire" here being seen as a sublimated form of *taṇhā*, *taṇhā* in pursuit of the Dhamma. The switch from one to the other would come by way of an "epistemic shift", a matter of a change in the way one sees life, corresponding to the first *aṅga* of the "Eightfold Path", "right-view" (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). Thus *dhamma-chanda* can be understood as *taṇhā* affected and changed by *sammā-diṭṭhi*; a sublimated form of *taṇhā* becoming cognizant of the possibility of quenching its "thirst".

Nietzsche also covers a similar distinction, although not fully stated, in his notion of will to power. The will to power in its crude and basic human form is concerned with conquering others, cruelty, tyranny, crude egotism, etc. Yet he sees the only possible way to deal with this aspect of existence is not to crush it - which would be equivalent of the will to power unable to come to terms with itself - but to follow Hesiod's example and use its very nature to overcome itself by rechannelling the affects. Following Hesiod's example, the crucial and spiritual point is what he calls "self-overcoming", which is not concerned with overcoming externals but overcoming the non-regenerate side of one's nature, for example the *need* to make others feel one's power.

Both *taṇhā* and the will to power share the common ground of a state of "needing": the will to power to "vent itself" and attain some temporary gratification; *taṇhā* to express itself in an affective form to temporarily gratify itself. This "needing", which is a form of *dukkha*, in the case of Buddhism is said to be finally "quenched" (*nibbuta*) in *nirvāṇa*; but Nietzsche does not seem to envisage some ultimate state wherein the will to power ceases its continual striving. Indeed, he talks of an "Eternal Recurrence", a kind of eternal *saṃsāra* without *nirvāṇa*.[480] Of course, there is no *the* will to power apart from the affects, just as there is no abstract *taṇhā* apart from the affects. What we are referring to is a common characteristic *shared* by all the affects: the *need* to discharge in a polarized context, the poles being the *need* on the one hand and the object of opportunity on the other. Generally speaking, both are striving from a lesser to a greater. Yet nothing is guaranteed. Both the will to power and *taṇhā* can lead to the most brutal and cruel forms of society, just as they can lead to a flowering of civilization. What makes for the difference in the Buddhist context is a matter of "seeing" (*dassana*), a matter of becoming cognizant of the fact

that the life one is leading is not satisfying deeper needs (i.e. *dukkha*). This then becomes the condition whose aspect allows a certain freedom to "see" new opportunities. In Nietzsche's case it is not quite so clear, especially as he attaches little importance to the role of consciousness and awareness. In Buddhism, they are central.

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[480] Although much has been written about the "Eternal Recurrence", like Magnus (1978) I would interpret Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence as an *existential imperative* in the manner of Kant's categorical imperative. It is a "test": if one can affirm the prospect of being eternally "reborn" into this world without any desire or hope of ever escaping to some other world or of finally becoming extinct, then one passes the test: one affirms life unconditionally. Nietzsche does say: "We deny end goals: if existence had one it would have been reached" [WP 55]. But simply denying a goal exists is hardly sufficient proof of the non-existence of such a goal. In the case of Buddhism, the goal of *nirvāṇa*, whether it is simply the end of a certain condition of being and therefore not some "final" end or whether it is some final end, it is something "discovered". Thus, if we paraphrase Nietzsche, it hardly makes sense to say that if there is some further state of being to be discovered, it would have already been discovered.

"Self-overcoming" and Citta-bhāvanā

In **Twilight of the Idols** Nietzsche comments:

> *There is a time with all passions when they are mere fatalities, when they drag their victim down with the weight of their folly - and a later, very much later time when they are wedded with the spirit, when they are 'spiritualized'.* [TI v,1]

One can deal with this "folly" either stupidly or intelligently. The stupid way, for Nietzsche, is exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount from the New Testament: "If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out", which he understands as an ordinance to "*exterminate* the passions and desires merely in order to do away with their folly". To Nietzsche this itself is "merely an acute form of folly", a folly shared by "all the moral monsters [who] are unanimous that *'il faut tuer les passions'*".[481] It is folly because "the Christian who follows that advice and believes he has killed his sensuality is deceiving himself: it lives on in an uncanny vampire form and torments him in repulsive disguises".[482] No affect can be annihilated, but if denied some outlet will become "internalized" and assume a secondary form, for example *ressentiment* or "righteous" hatred of those who allow their sensuality a freer expression.[483] However I'm not concerned here with chasing the proto-Freudian "uncanny vampire form[s]", but want to concentrate on what Nietzsche sees as the intelligent response to the folly of the passions. Again, he turns to the Greeks as an example:

> Greek prudence. - *Since the desire for victory and eminence is an inextinguishable trait of nature, older and more primitive than any respect for and joy in equality, the Greek state sanctioned gymnastics and artistic contest between equals, that is to say marked off an arena where that drive could be discharged without imperilling the political order. With the eventual decline*

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[481] TI v,1. "The passions must be killed". But to attempt this is to attempt "to attack life at its roots".

[482] WS 83. Nietzsche here is referring to the same quote from the Sermon on the Mount.

[483] This process of "internalization" is similar to the way the "primary" affects become "secondary" affects in Buddhism. For example, if straightforward "anger" is repressed and not acknowledged, it can develop into a "secondary" affect such as "spite" or "resentment" - a more foul and insidious form.

of the gymnastic and artistic contest the Greek state disintegrated into turmoil. [WS 226]

The Greeks, following Hesiod's example, found a method of dealing with the combative drives which allowed them expression[484] and, in the case of the artistic *agon*, created some of the jewels of Western culture. And as we saw in the **Symposium**, which is one of those jewels, also tried to deal with our sensual passion in the form of *Erōs* in a less barbaric manner than "castration".[485] The **Symposium** is also the link between Hesiod's method of dealing with potentially destructive affects for the sake of social stability and government and the further development of more civilized life forms, and the conscious internalization of that method in the form of Nietzsche's "self-overcoming". Socrates' account of the possible sublimation of *Erōs* from its cruder physical expression into a pursuit of the "forms" of Beauty and Truth has nothing to do with the stability of the state or society, but is solely concerned with the transformation of the individual from a relatively crude state of being into one who naturally expresses a beauty of mind and character. It is strange, therefore, that although Nietzsche "nominated Plato's **Symposium** as his *Lieblingsdichtung*, or favourite poetry, at the time of his graduation from Schulpforta",[486] his comments about Socrates fail to mention this aspect, focusing mainly on his other reported dialogues where his attitude to the passions is more disparaging and is considered by Nietzsche to be another example of "folly". It is strange because the model in the **Symposium** accords in principle with Nietzsche's notion of "self-overcoming",[487] rather than the "unintelligent" method. This may be because he considered the

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[484] Elsewhere, in the unpublished essay **We Classicists**, Nietzsche comments: "Nature, [with the Greeks,] isn't denied but merely *ordered*, restricted to specific days and religious cults. This is the root of all spiritual freedom in the ancient world; they sought to release natural forces moderately, not to destroy them or suppress them". Translated by William Arrowsmith (1990), p375.

[485] TI v,2.

[486] Tejera (1989), p94.

[487] At GM iii,8, Nietzsche refers to the transformation of sensuality by the sight of beauty into, as in the case of Schopenhauer, "the energy of contemplation and penetration". He also comments: "As for the 'chastity' of philosophers ... this type of spirit has its fruitfulness somewhere else than in children". These are clearly influenced by the **Symposium**.

Symposium to be Plato's own work before he was corrupted by the decadent Socrates:

> *Compare Plato, who was diverted by Socrates. Attempted characterization of Plato* apart from *Socrates: Tragedy - profound view of love - pure nature - no fanatical renunciation. The Greeks were evidently* on the point *of discovering a* type of man still higher *than any previous type when they were interrupted by the snip of the shears.* [SW][488]

Selbstüberwindung or "self-overcoming" is connected with Nietzsche's other notions of *Sublimierung* or "sublimation", *Vergeistigung* or "spiritualisation" and *Selbstaufhebung* or "self-suppression". For example, in the **Genealogy of Morals** he says:

> *All great things perish of their own accord, by an act of self-supression* (Selbstaufhebung)*; this is the law of life, the law of the* necessary *"self-overcoming"* (Selbstüberwindung) *in the essence of life.* [GM iii,27][489]

Both Kaufmann and Stack agree that Nietzsche uses the term *Aufhebung* bearing in mind the Hegelian connotation of "the dialectical transition in which the lower stage is both annulled and preserved in a higher one".[490] However, in Nietzsche's usage the carry-over is not necessarily always to a "higher". The example Stack quotes is Nietzsche's view of the drive to religious asceticism. Over a long time scale and moving from one cultural *Weltanschauung* to another, it becomes "repressed" (*Aufhebung*) only to emerge in another form as "the discipline of scientific enquiry or scholarly attention to detail".[491] The modern scientist expresses the "same" ascetic drive as the old religious ascetic, but in a new cultural context. We can also, in

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[488] Nietzsche comments in the **Genealogy of Morals**: "Plato, the greatest enemy of art Europe has produced" [iii,25]. This is no doubt the Plato of the **Republic**, the corrupted Plato.

[489] This is Stack's (1983) translation on p74. Kaufmann translates both *Selbstaufhebung* and *Selbstüberwindung* as "self-overcoming" with the latter in inverted commas as it is in Nietzsche's text. I agree with Stack here in translating *Selbstaufhebung* as "self-supression" as in this instance it brings out the necessary part played by "suppression" in the act of *Selbstüberwindung*.

[490] This definition is taken from Charles Taylor's book, **Hegel**, p119, as I think it the clearest definition.

Nietzsche's terms, say that the drive has been "sublimated". But, in this instance, it has not been "sublimated" to a "higher" level, it has not been consciously transformed into an expression of a greater quantum of power, but is the result of unconscious processes.[492] The conscious dialectical process is reserved only for *Selbstüberwindung*. Yet, in "self-overcoming" there is, as in Hegel's notion, both "annulling" (*Aufhebung*) and the "preservation" of the main characteristic of the drive in its "higher" form. This is also why Nietzsche is against Darwinism as it understands the evolution of life in terms of "survival" and "self-preservation". *Real* evolution, however, is "self-overcoming", is the antithesis of "self-preservation": "All great things perish of their own accord, by an act of "self-suppression"; this is the *law of life*, the law of the necessity of "self-overcoming". Or: "*What is life?* - Life - that is: continually shedding something that wants to die".[493] Evolution is not primarily about preservation, but about overcoming whatever has been attained by "sublimating" it through, on the one hand, an act of "suppression", which is the necessary condition for its "overcoming" and, on the other, by cultivating a different context within which a new and "higher" form of expression can be manifested. How Nietzsche sees this as being accomplished I shall examine shortly. The point here is that when Nietzsche refers to "sublimation" and "spiritualisation" he is not necessarily implying "self-overcoming", but sometimes the process by which drives can "change form" on roughly the same level, as in the example of asceticism.

Although "self-overcoming" is really the central theme of Nietzsche's answer to nihilism, like many other aspects of his philosophy it is not sufficiently worked out; he has left no clear, detailed account of how "self-overcoming" is to be achieved. We have only suggestions and hints. For example, as "self-overcoming" is concerned with transforming some aspect of our nature into a higher form we must have some clear notion of the goal we are trying to attain. Yet all we have from Nietzsche is that whatever that goal might be, it is a "higher" goal if it represents an expression of a greater quantum of power.[494] However he does give us some clues, but only clues.

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[491] See Stack (1983), footnote on p74 and Kaufmann (1974), pp236-238. The example of the drive to asceticism being "sublimated" in this way is found in **The Genealogy of Morals**, Section iii. However, he does regard its latest manifestation as more noble, yet still nihilistic [GM iii,23 and 26].

[492] Another example Nietzsche gives is that of the Christian concept of "truthfulness" which is "translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price" [GS 357]. For other examples of the different ways in which Nietzsche sees "sublimation" without "overcoming", see WP 667 and HAH 1.

[493] GS 26.

And what about the specific method or methods for achieving this end? Again we are given no more than clues. Yet despite the unfinished nature of his account, we can construct an overall outline of his central theme of "self-overcoming".

As to how one might assess what Nietzsche regards as a "greater quantum of power", I will take some specific examples he gives as a model from which to try and determine both the general overall direction and goal that "self-overcoming" has, and what a "greater quantum of power" is in terms of the affects, i.e., what affects are supposed to express a greater quantum of power than others.

Sexual-desire/sensuality→	love (*agape*)
revenge→	justice and gratitude
enmity→	*agon*: seeing value of having enemies
urge to punish guilty→	forgiveness
judging others→	mercy
tyranny→	law-giving
lust for power/to conquer→	philosophy/knowledge

The latter represent an "overcoming" of the former, represent a greater quantum of power. And the former, relative to the latter, are "bad".[495] To Nietzsche, they form a continuum:

> *All these motives, whatever exalted names we call them, have grown up out of the same roots as those we believe evilly poisoned; ... Good actions are sublimated evil ones; evil actions are coarsened, brutalized good ones.* [HAH 107]

These examples also reveal Nietzsche's conception of what he considers true morality, the "naturalization" of morality which is a "*healthy* morality" as it affirms life.[496] Thus his notion of morality rests upon "self-overcoming": an action is "moral" if it is concerned with "self-overcoming", with turning a base affect into a not so base

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[494] In **Daybreak**, Nietzsche comments that: "Only if mankind possessed a universally recognised *goal* would it be possible to propose 'thus and thus is the *right* course of action': for the present there exists no such goal"[109] . However, he does think one can "*recommend* a goal" which would entail imposing a new moral law upon oneself. Later, Nietzsche proposed his "universally recognised *goal*" - the *Übermensch*.

[495] The sources for these, are, respectively: TI v,3; HAH 44; TI v,3; D 202; GM ii,10; HAH 206; HAH 261, BGE 9 and WP 423.

affect or simply expresses the latter . However, I will come back to this aspect later. The "bad" is what is to be overcome and this amounts to "petty envy", "vengefulness", "covert revengefulness", "pity", "wrath", "choler", the various "lusts", "lack of integrity", "lack of control of instincts", "lying", "*ressentiment*", "hate", "humility", "fear", "inertia", "deception", and "fanaticism". In contrast to these are what Nietzsche considers as "good": "honesty", "bravery", "courage", sense of "justice", "strength of character", "mastery of wrath and revenge", "self-control", "discipline", "patience", "unpretentiousness", "magnanimity in victory", "gratitude", "independence of mind", "love", "intellectual stoicism", "non-attachment to one's opinions", "healthy egoism", "instinct for freedom" and "contempt for all great vanities". If there are only natural causes and in our evolutionary history "everything has [therefore] become",[497] and what we regard as our virtues "are really refined *passions*"[498] as they can now only have a natural source, what are we to make of the relationship, if any, between Nietzsche's "good" and his "bad"? Are the former all sublimations of the later; are they the "overcomings", the refinements of the latter? Or is it the case that at least some of the "good" are just as natural to our affective constitution as sexual desire is. And, further, if all has become does sexual desire not represent an overcoming of something we know not what?

One can understand what Nietzsche is trying to achieve: he posits that all our affects, both the "bad" and the virtuous, are natural, are even our own creations. And when he puts on his psychologist's hat and peers, with his penetrating gaze, into the history of the human psyche in the light of its now evolutionary past, he sees an underlying trait characteristic of all nature which he calls the will to power, *the* fundamental and most pervasive characteristic of life. In this context he sees that many of our inherited Christian virtues, rather than reflect our affirmation of life, in fact reveal our weakness in the face of life. Yet we are, after all, essentially will to power, so we gain a feeling of some kind of power by condemning life in the world, and affirm a higher world that is our "real" world, a world we, as "souls", really belong to. We revenge ourselves upon life. But the root cause of such creations is our own weakness and, as such, expresses a will to power become morbid, become sick. It becomes so sick in some cases that it actually *resents* what relatively healthy expressions of life it encounters, and tries to cunningly undermine them, infect them

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[496] TI v,4.

[497] HAH 2.

[498] WP 2.

with its invented virulent "virtues" which attack relatively healthy, albeit crude, forms of life.[499] But, given this scenario, it seems very simplistic to assume that: "Good actions are sublimated evil ones; evil actions are coarsened, brutalized good ones" (which implies a "chicken and egg" relationship between the "good" and "evil"). How does one sublimate "weakness"? How does one sublimate "sick" affects such as *ressentiment*? One can imagine the "crude" but "healthy" being sublimated into the "refined" and "more healthy". Using this analogy, the only course for "sick" affects such as *ressentiment* would be for them to lose their "sickness" and be resolved back into the crude but relatively healthy condition they were in before catching (or inventing) the "virus". Then they could be sublimated. This would entail a classification, as with the Buddhist's lists of affects, into primary and secondary affects: the "crude but healthy" and the "sick", with the former comprising the basic raw material fit for sublimation. This would make sense of some of what he says about Hellenic culture: they give the crude and even brute-like affects a play-ground rather than try and crush them or make them feel they are somehow "evil". There is no urge to "castrate" them whereby they go underground and become "vampires" sucking the blood of life. The Greeks keep the crude material of life alive and under some control. But how did they produce artistic *agon* from gymnastics? Is this possible?

Sublimation itself, as Nietzsche conceives of it, seems a little simplistic: a matter of 'affect A' becoming 'affect B', a straight forward and uncomplicated continuum from one to the other, the "same" energy transformed into an enhanced form. But if, for example, the energy that constitutes sexual desire is sublimated into "love", and the latter represents a greater quantum of power than the former, where does the "extra" power come from? Was there some "hidden", potential energy associated in some way with, or having some affinity with, sexual desire that was not being actualized? Nietzsche, referring to "the 'chastity' of the philosophers",[500] claims that in such instances "the greater energy ... *uses up* the lesser", implying that 'affect A' (the sexual drive) is "used up" by an already existing and stronger 'affect B' (the urge to artistic creation) to produce 'affect C' which, relatively, represents a greater quantum of power. Chastity is a necessary condition for the more enhanced creative drive to give fully of itself, as sexual activity will decrease the necessary tension

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[499] At WS 224, Nietzsche comments: "for youthful, vigorous barbarians Christianity is a *poison*; to implant the teaching of sinfulness and damnation into the heroic, childish and animal soul of the ancient German ... is nothing other than to poison it".

[500] GM iii,8.

required for the creative urge to fully manifest. Thus, in this example, it is not the case of a single transformative continuum between 'affect A' and 'affect B', but a matter of the energy available as sexual desire being "used up" for a higher end for which a necessary condition is another "higher" affect - the impulse towards that end - which already exists in some degree. This raises the problem of where the "higher" affect comes from in the first instance, if it is not also the sublimation of some other drive? One can see an analogous connection between the impulse to artistic creation and sexual desire as is shown in the **Symposium**, and as is alluded to by Nietzsche above - they both wish to "create" and bring something into the world. But is the latter simply the "higher" form of the former. Or is it that the "suppression" of the former is a necessary condition for the emergence of the latter - the latter being present in some degree or other, or perhaps one of Nietzsche's "under-wills" lurking under the surface of consciousness ready to emerge given the operative conditions? However, there are no answers to these questions in Nietzsche's writing, so I shall now consider what else Nietzsche has to say about dealing with the drives and affects.

Practically the whole of Nietzsche's reflections and advice on how one can work on and with our affects and so "recreate" ourselves, is found in a few extended dicta in **Daybreak** and one in **Twilight of the Idols**. Firstly, he considers that we have so far been blind to the possibility of self-development:

> What we are at liberty to do. - *One can dispose of one's drives like a gardener and, though few know it, cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis; one can do it with the good or bad taste of a gardener ... one can also let nature rule and only attend to a little embellishment and tidying-up here and there; one can, finally, without paying any attention to them at all, let the plants grow up and fight their fight out among themselves ... All this we are at liberty to do; but how many know we are at liberty to do it?* [D 560][501]

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[501] Interestingly enough, in the **Republic** we have: "to say that it pays to be just is to say that we ought to say and do all we can to strengthen the man within us, so that he can look after the many-headed beast like a farmer, nursing and cultivating its tamer elements and preventing the wilder ones growing" [589a-b]. What Nietzsche says here puts other seemingly deterministic and anti free-will statements into context. When he says that: "The individual is, in his future and in his past, a piece of fate" [TI v,6], it implies that the individual, being unaware of his actual "liberty", becomes a victim of chance happenings, i.e., "a piece of fate".

"Disposing of one's drives like a gardener" requires "weeding", "pruning" and cultivation through "nourishment". With respect to "weeding" and "pruning", he gives us a few hints as to his gardening methods.

> *First, one can avoid opportunities for gratification of the drive, and through long and ever longer periods of non-gratification weaken it and make it wither away.* [Secondly] *one can impose upon oneself strict regularity in its gratification: by thus imposing a rule upon the drive itself and enclosing its ebb and flood within firm time-boundaries, one has then gained intervals during which one is no longer troubled by it - and from there one can perhaps go over to the first method. Thirdly, one can deliberately give oneself over to the wild and unrestrained gratification of a drive in order to generate disgust with it and with disgust to acquire a power over the drive: always supposing one does not do like the rider who rode his horse to death and broke his own neck in the process - which, unfortunately, is the rule when this method is attempted. Fourthly, there is the intellectual method of associating its gratification in general so firmly with some very painful thought that, after a little practice, the thought of its gratification is itself at once felt as very painful. ... Finally, ... he who can endure it and finds it reasonable to weaken and depress his* entire *bodily and physical organization will naturally thereby also attain the goal of weakening an individual drive: as he does, for example, who, like the ascetic, starves his sensuality and thereby also starves and ruins his vigour and not seldom his reason as well.* [D 109]

However, Nietzsche acknowledges that the fact "*that* one *desires* to combat ... the drive at all ... does not stand within our power", as "at bottom it is one drive *which is complaining about another*". The intellect is simply the "blind instrument" at the service of the particular drive. In **Twilight of the Idols** he refers to "pruning" the individual by subjecting certain drives to "iron pressure so as to permit another to come into force, become strong, become master".[502] The "weeding" and the "pruning" are therefore concerned with the "suppression" (*Aufhebung*) aspect of "self-overcoming". But, again, we are here not talking about 'affect A' becoming 'affect B' but of creating room for 'affect B' to come into its own through the action of 'affect C', and of 'affect A' simply "withering away". We are speaking here of

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[502] TI ix,41.

conflict, not continuity, with 'affect A' being "suppressed" by 'affect C' which, rather like "spirit" in Plato's tripartite soul, takes sides. And, if we regard one as "higher" or "better" and that is supposed to represent a greater quantum of power, why is there such a struggle? Indeed, if the "lower" wins", does not that make it the "higher" as it must obviously express a greater quantum of power! There again, perhaps one sees that a particular drive has more potential for creative human fulfilment than the other and so wants to give it room and cultivate it. But this would be making axiological judgements that require some standard for judgement to take place against, and this is hardly the work of a "blind instrument". Yet, perhaps the contrast between the drives creates the conditions from which to judge: the conflict itself creates the necessary ground upon which judgement can be made in favour of the "higher", that ground being a new perspective - a kind of "epistemic shift" - unlocked by the tension which offers the "promise" of something more exalted. But there again:

> Overcoming of the passions. - *The man who has overcome his passions has entered into possession of the most fertile ground; like the colonist who has mastered the forests and swamps. To* sow *the seeds of good spiritual works in the soil of the subdued passions is then the immediate urgent task. The overcoming itself is only a* means, *not a goal; if it is not so viewed, all kinds of weeds and devilish nonsense will quickly spring up in this rich soil now unoccupied, and soon there will be more rank confusion than there ever was before.* [WS 53]

Here, it is a matter of "planting" something new and good in the "suppressed" and now fertile soil. But where does the seed come from here? Nietzsche seems to discredit the idea of considered and conscious choices as all choices are simply a matter of one drive vying with another or others for expression. In this sense the only "seeds" we have available are the "*drives* which constitute [our] being", of which "we can scarcely name even the cruder ones: their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of their *nutriment* [which] remain wholly unknown to [us]?"[503]

On the question of nutriment it seems we are again the victims of chance:

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[503] D 119.

> *... our daily experiences throw some prey in the way of now this, now that drive, and the drive seizes it eagerly; but the coming and going of these events as a whole stands in no rational relationship to the nutritional requirements of the totality of the drives: so that the outcome will always be twofold - the starvation and stunting of some and the overfeeding of others.* [D 119]

This all seems to raise more questions than it answers. We do not know too much about the forces that constitute our being; we have no specific goal except that whatever it is it represents a greater quantum of organized power; and we are not quite sure about what kind of nourishment the particular drives we may wish to cultivate need. The only hints forthcoming from Nietzsche are that somehow the healthy and potentially higher type, like any animal, "instinctively strives for an optimum of favourable conditions under which [they] can expend all [their] strength and achieve [their] maximal feeling of power".[504] The first step for the aspirant is to "become master over his wrath, his choler and revengefulness, and his lusts", as any attempt "to become master in anything else, is as stupid as a farmer who stakes out his field besides a torrential stream without protecting himself against it".[505] Nietzsche also calls this "the *first* preliminary schooling in spirituality": we have to learn "*not* to react immediately to a stimulus, but to have the restraining, stock-taking instincts in one's control. Learning to *see*" is a case of "'strong will power'".[506] Thus we know the first step and have an idea of what kind of drives have to be "suppressed". Even though we seem to be completely reliant on "instinct". However, the relationship of "learning to see", being an aspect of the condition of one's being, may be fruitful. I shall look at that later.

With this and the "bad" affects listed above, we now have a good idea of the kind of affects that are to be "suppressed". And as to what is to be cultivated, we can assume that the list of "good" affects points the way. We will need to be "honest", especially with ourselves; we will need "self-control" and "patience" and also "courage" as we are, after all, "our experiments and guinea pigs"[507] and cannot be entirely sure where we are going. Then "independence of mind" and "intellectual stoicism" tempered with an undogmatic and unattached stance to one's own opinions

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[504] GM iii,7.

[505] WS 65.

[506] TI viii,6.

and views. And "love" and "justice" are to be cultivated. From this it seems there are two kinds of affects necessary for "self-overcoming": the stoical kind which stand in relation to what has to be overcome, and the affects that are to be cultivated within this fertile space. But it is still not clear how we are to go about developing the latter, nor where they come from in the first instance? I shall end this discussion with an attempted model.

To picture what Nietzsche is trying to express from the various glimpses of his often uncompleted thoughts, an Hegelian-like dialectical model may help. Hegel has his central concept of *Geist* which, in its Absolute form, is the Idea of Freedom. In its actual but incomplete and concrete form it is that Idea as found in some degree expressed in the world. There is therefore a creative tension set up between the Ideal and the actual, between potentiality and actuality, which forms the condition and ground upon which an "epistemic shift" can occur. This "epistemic shift" occurs in some individual who then sees the incompleteness of the previous expression and "posits" a more complete expression of the Idea of Freedom which, whilst "suppressing" the old, creates a fuller expression of it in the new. And so the dialectic continues until, as Hegel envisages it, the tension is finally resolved when the actual completely expresses the potential. In Nietzsche's case the will to power replaces *Geist*, and the tension in this case is between a fundamental *nisus* to express a greater quantum of organized power and the present state of organized power: whatever one is, there is always some at least potential urge to overcome it. In Hegel's system the dialectic unfolds towards a definite end determined by the Idea of Freedom. But in Nietzsche's case there is no pre-formulated, *a priori*, goal, no envisaged end. And in Nietzsche's case, nothing is predetermined: the will to power can go astray, can attack itself and become sick, with whatever potential man had never becoming actualized.

Both also rely upon certain individuals, those within whom the "epistemic shift" occurs, showing the way forward. In Hegel's case these are the "world historical individuals", in Nietzsche's the artists and philosophers and, to some degree, certain religious types. However, as far as Nietzsche is concerned, such higher types are no more than "man's *lucky hits*".[508] No doubt with Hegel in mind he says: "No, the *goal of humanity* cannot lie in its end but only *in its highest exemplars*",[509] these "highest exemplars" being the "lucky hits" whom nature "has made its one leap in creating".[510]

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[507] GS 319.

[508] GM iii,14.

It is these "accidents" of blind nature which reveal to Nietzsche the direction humanity's goal lies in and, to some degree, the kind of processes that were involved in bringing them about, for example the kind of culture they were nourished by. So it is necessary to capture that "obscure impulse" of nature and replace it "with a conscious willing".[511] This "obscure impulse" has been determined by Nietzsche to be the will to power. However, trying to determine the way ahead will be something of an experiment.

Hegel has his "unhappy consciousness" as a conflict-ground, a necessary tension for the dialectic from which a search springs seeking to ease the tension. For Nietzsche the counterpart is the feeling of being in a prison from which springs "a search for means of escape" which opens the possibility of discovering "a new path which no one knows".[512] Thus we have the conflict-ground, the tension necessary for some kind of Nietzschean dialectic: the *nisus* of existence creating a tension within the individual between what he is and what he could become, between a certain configuration of forces which is his old self and an emerging dissatisfaction felt as a result of some new but unconscious factor seeking to express itself, a kind of "psychic mutation". Or, as he also suggests, the stimulus comes from outside, in some cultural context - perhaps the sight of something beautiful - from which there "arises in us the scent of a kind of *pleasure* we have not known before, and as a consequence there arises a new desire",[513] the expression of which would elevate us. The potential outcome would entail a new configuration of the forces, a "new" self which expresses a greater quantum of power than the previous one. And even though this fuller expression may be only momentary, it will reveal to one the direction one's live should take. But if one never found such "nutrition" or a way out of the tension, one may simply be tortured by such tension and never find a resolution. So, according to Nietzsche, (apart from the Greeks,) those who have done so relied more on luck than design. But in doing so, they become exemplars of a kind. What they held as human and valuable are man's beacons. Thus we are left with the idea that our "nourishment" is to be found within what higher expressions of culture - "culture

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[509] UH 9.

[510] SE 5.

[511] SE 6.

[512] HAH 230 and 231.

[513] D 110.

is liberation"[514] - we have and it is left to each to find his own source of inspiration. Nietzsche gives his own, personal example:

> *Let the youthful soul look back on life with the question: what have you truly loved up to now, what has drawn your soul aloft, what has mastered it and at the same time blessed it? Set up these revered objects before you and perhaps their nature and their sequence will give you a law, the fundamental law of your own true self. Compare these objects with one another, see how one competes, expands, surpasses, transfigures another, how they constitute a stepladder upon which you have clambered up to yourself as you are now; for your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be. Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is, something in itself ineducable and in any case difficult of access, bound and paralysed: your educators can be only your liberators.* [SE 1]

This is Nietzsche's tribute to his "liberator", Schopenhauer, whose work, **The World as Will and Representation**, sparked off the young Nietzsche in the direction of philosophy. Thus, apart from a general outline of the factors and hints involved in "self-overcoming", we are left to find our own way. The process does seem rather sketchy and bereft of any definite goal - a matter of experiment and trial and error. And we are still left with questions like: "what does it mean to say to 'love' requires a greater quantum of organized power than to hate?" Or "how does the world look from such a perspective; can it tell us anything about the way the world is constituted?"

In turning to the comparable Buddhist notion of *citta-bhāvanā*, it does seem, ironically enough, that the Buddhists were on to a similar theme. But, having worked it out more systematically with practical methods to follow it through, one could use Buddhism as a means of filling in and completing Nietzsche's sketchy outline.

The Buddhist notion of "self-overcoming" is most clearly expressed in the **Dhammapada**:

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[514] SE 1.

Though he may conquer a thousand times a thousand men in battle, yet he indeed is the noblest victor who would conquer himself. [Dhp 103]

The real battle for "power" is within the individual. As Nietzsche says: "man is a war",[515] a statement that, if taken out of context as many of his statements are, can be misconstrued. Both Nietzsche and Buddhism agree that the primary forces within this battle are the various drives and passions that we are. As we saw in Nietzsche's account of "self-overcoming", there are two aspects - a "suppression" aspect and a "nourishing" aspect - and as the Buddhist notion of *citta-bhāvanā*[516] entails a similar method, I shall compare these first.

Both of these aspects are found in the sixth "limb" (*aṅga*) of the Eightfold Path, "right effort" (*sammā-vāyāma*).[517] There are four such "efforts", two relating to the "suppression" aspect, and two to the "nourishing" aspect.

And, what monks, is Right Effort? Here ... a monk rouses his will, makes an effort, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives to prevent the arising of unarisen evil unwholesome mental states. He rouses his will ... and strives to overcome evil unwholesome mental states that have arisen. He rouses his will

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[515] BGE 200

[516] The term "*citta*" is often translated as "thought" and although in later more philosophical texts this is usually what it means, here and in the Pāli texts generally, the term has conative and cognitive aspects quite beyond what we might mean by "thought". Even the common translation "mind" is insufficient, as in Buddhism "mind" is not in any manner distinct from "emotion". For example, in the *abhidhamma* what we would call an "affect" is seen as a *cetasika*, usually translated as "mental event", i.e., an event happening in a *citta*. However, even this is only a manner of speaking as in the Theravāda *abhidhamma* there are 69 *cittas*, each *citta* being a particular configuration of *cetasikas*. Thus there is no *citta* apart from *cetasikas*, and as *cetasikas* are what we would call "affects", a "mind" is a particular configuration of "affects", what we might call a "mind-set". Just as there is no fixed, unchanging *attan* in Buddhism, neither is there an unchanging substantial "mind". Therefore, when we talk about *citta-bhāvanā* and translate it as "mental-development", it is more a development of the affects than of "mind". And, further, as the affects are intrinsically related to "understanding" (*paññā*) and "seeing" (*dassanā*), the more cognitive aspects of the path, *citta-bhāvanā* is also a development of the "power" (*bala*) to "see things as they really are" (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassanā*). As Nietzsche also sees each affect as having its own "perspective" on the world, its own way of interpreting events, we have a link between Nietzsche's will to power and *citta-bhāvanā* in terms of "seeing" being dependent and conditioned by the affects.

[517] Sometimes *vāyāma* is replaced by *padhāna*, "striving" or "exertion". In meaning, they are more or less synonymous.

... and strives to produce unarisen wholesome mental states. He rouses his will ... and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have arisen, not let them fade away, to bring them to greater growth, to the full perfection of development. This is called Right effort. [D ii,312-313]

The first two "efforts" are concerned with "suppression", the latter two with "nourishment" and "cultivation" (*bhāvanā*). And these two aspects represent the basic ground of all that is concerned with "self-overcoming" in Buddhism: the "suppression" and final extinction of all *akusala* affects; and the cultivation, development and perfection of all *kusala* affects. The whole edifice of Buddhist practice and doctrine is concerned solely, in some degree or other, with the development of this ground, this "raft", which is a *means* to the development of "transformative-insight" (*paññā*) and corresponds to the above "self-conquering". And, interestingly enough, there is some correspondence between Nietzsche's ways of dealing with unruly drives and the four "right efforts".

There is a correspondence between Nietzsche's advice that one "can avoid opportunities for the gratification of the drive" which can eventually "make it wither away", and the first of the "right efforts", the "effort to avoid" (*saṃvara-vāyāma*) *akusala* affects not arisen, from arising. In Buddhism, this practice is mainly concerned with the preliminaries to "meditation" (*jhāna*) practice, and the "avoidance" is simply a matter of staying away from all that might stimulate the "hindrances" (*nīvaraṇas*) of "sensuous desire" (*kāma-chanda*), "ill-will" (*vyāpāda*), "sloth and torpor" (*thīna-middha*), "restlessness and anxiety" (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), and "unreasonable doubt" (*vicikicchā*). The meditator simply tries to avoid *any* external stimulus by withdrawing to some secluded spot in the forest. But at other times, when in the everyday world, the effort in avoidance is a matter of practising "mindfulness" (*sati*) and "clear-comprehension" (*sampajañña*) so as to "guard the senses" (*rakkha-indriyas*). Thus, for example, if one was practising chastity, one would avoid contact with sexually stimulating women (in the case of heterosexual men), and erotic films and books. And if one does happen to encounter them, then one is alert to what effect they may have on one's "mind". One would also avoid argumentative people and such like in order to lessen the opportunities for ill-will to arise. If one cannot, then one has to be alert to what effect the situation is having on one's bearing. By being so alert through the constant practice of "mindfulness" and "clear-comprehension", the ground for the arising of *akusala* affects is minimised, if not avoided. However, the "senses" (*indriyas*) here include the "mind-sense" (*mano-indriya*) whose objects are our own thoughts and emotions, and it seems they can

arise without any external stimulus and, being more subtle, are more difficult to guard against. Therefore the Buddhist, by having a clear idea of the kind of affects he wants to avoid being stimulated in himself, and having recourse to a tradition that has worked out various relations between kinds of situations and corresponding affects can, through being alert to the psychological dynamics that exist between himself and the world, has recourse to various methods of dealing with the possible effects that his environment may stimulate. He is therefore in a good position to "prune" his responses, "prune" his "willing". In Nietzsche's terms, he is attempting to make a first step in creating a "rational relationship to the nutritional requirements" of his drives by starving some of their nourishment. However, one outstanding feature of the Buddhist way is the centrality and importance that "mindfulness" and "clear-comprehension", awareness and self-consciousness, bring to bear on "self-overcoming". Nietzsche is often disparaging about "consciousness",[518] seeing it as some insipid epiphenomenon having little or no bearing on "self-overcoming". Yet, surely Nietzsche's venture assumes its importance, as how would one be capable of "self-overcoming" if there was no clear consciousness of what was going on in the "self" and its responses to certain aspects of its world. How could he claim to discern as much as he has without relying upon his consciousness in discern it?

Another off-shoot from this is the importance both Nietzsche and Buddhism give to the basic sensations of pleasure or pain in process of "willing". To Nietzsche the dynamics of the relationship "is actually a mechanism that is so well practised that it all but escapes the observing eye".[519] He then goes on to say: "for will to come into being an idea of pleasure and displeasure is needed", and that whether we interpret it as one or the other is a matter for the intellect. He sees this process as usually pre-conscious. However, what is of interest is the connection between willing being conditional upon and conditioned by the general sensations of either pleasure or

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[518] For example, he says: "consciousness (*Bewusstein*) does not really belong to man's individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature", and that "whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization. Ultimately, the growth of consciousness becomes a danger; and anyone who lives among the most conscious Europeans even knows that it is a disease" [GS 354]. Yet, he also says that it is "through lack of self-observation" that the passions are "allowed ... to develop into ... monsters", rather than "joys" [WS 37], implying that "self-observation" is essential to any method of "self-overcoming". I fail to see how one can have "self-observation" without "consciousness".

[519] GS 127.

displeasure. When Buddhists practice "guarding the doors of the senses",[520] i.e., being acutely aware of how sense objects affect us, one aspect of this practice is to try and discern, as they arise, the conditional relations between the consecutive *nidānas* of "sense-impression" (*phassa*), "feeling-sensation" (*vedanā*), "thirst" (*taṇhā*) and "grasping" (*upādāna*), which is essentially an analysis of the process of "willing" (*sañcetanā*). Each *nidāna* is viewed as a collective "causal ground" for arising of the following one.[521] If the "feeling" is pleasant there is the tendency for a grasping-like affect to arise - the urge to acquire - if unpleasant, the tendency for an averting-like affect to arise. In both cases, willing is very much conditioned by basic sensations that arise though contact with sense objects. Thus what Nietzsche is referring to is an aspect of a standard Buddhist practice which, given Nietzsche's disparaging comments about the role of consciousness, ironically enough revolves around a high degree of self-consciousness and purposeful alertness. One is left wondering just how Nietzsche came up with his version. Surely not through "instinct" alone?

A further point is that both see a development from this process of willing rooted in the sensations of pleasure and pain (or "neutral feeling" in the Buddhist case) to one of conceptualizing about the object, and both consider that much of this conceptualizing is little more than unconscious rationalization. For Nietzsche: "the most delicate sensations of pleasure and displeasure constitute the genuine raw material for all perceiving"[522] which, if there is a "preponderance of feelings of displeasure over feelings of pleasure [becomes the unacknowledged] *cause* [for example] of a fictitious morality and religion".[523] In Buddhism it is this raw material

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[520] *Indriyesu gutta-dvāra*. This practice is always accompanied by "mindfulness" (*sati*) and "attentive-comprehension" (*sampajañña*). See especially D i,63, 70; S ii,218; iv, 103, 112, 119sq., etc.

[521] The process, up to *vedanā*, is more or less outside of one's control, being conditioned by the "effects" (*vipākas*) - directly and indirectly - of our past *kamman*. As we are relatively "passive" in relation to this, it is not an aspect of our "willing" and is therefore not karmic, i.e., will not tend to produce a future effect. If the latter were the case, we would have determinism. However as a past "residue" it forms the ground for present action (*kamman*), present "willing", which need not be determined by that ground. To the extent that it is we set up an habitual "round", *saṃsāra*, responding in a similar way determined by this ground which is itself the effect of acting in a similar manner in the past. Therefore, the practice of "guarding the doors of the senses", in Buddhism, plays a crucial role is attempting to free the individual from habitual responses as it is only by becoming aware of how one "mechanically" responds to situations that one can start the process through which one can become free of them. This also makes it clear why "mindfulness" and "clear-comprehension" are so central to Buddhist practice.

[522] P 67.

of willing that also gives rise to "conceptual proliferation" (*papañca*), i.e., all "views" (*diṭṭhis*) whether about the weather, people, or the nature of existence. This is the reason why, in its final stance on matters conceptual, it says that the liberated person holds no *diṭṭhis*:[524] he sees how they arise conditioned by circumstance, context, quality of emotion, etc., and even though they may be "useful" (*upaya*) in helping others towards *nirvāṇa*, can be used as a *means*, does not hold-on to them as *he* has no need of them.

The second "right effort", the "effort to overcome" (*pahāna-vāyāma*) already arisen *akusala* affects, again bears some affinities with the methods suggested by Nietzsche. The latter, as we saw above, suggests: "the intellectual method of associating its gratification ... with some very painful thought that ... the thought of its gratification is itself ... felt as painful". The Buddhists suggest something similar: "if their arise evil unskilled thoughts associated with desire ... aversion ... confusion ... then the peril of these thoughts should be scrutinized", so that one understands: "these are thoughts that are of painful results".[525] Contemplating the consequences is seen by both as an effective measure in dealing with some affect that one wants to banish. However, the Buddhists have no methods corresponding to Nietzsche's "imposing a strict regularity in its gratification", or "giving oneself over to wild ... gratification ... in order to generate disgust with it", or "to weaken and depress his *entire* bodily and physical organization" so as to weaken the drive. For the Buddhist, one can develop disgust with a drive without going to such active extremes, purely by contemplating the consequences.[526] However, in principle, indulgence could very well lead to disgust, but the act of indulging can throw up added complications, especially if it involves another person. For example, with the sexual drive, in the case of the possibility of catching the Aids virus, the "after the act" method might be too late. Other methods suggested by Buddhism are to attend to some *kusala* aspect and divert the mind away from the *akusala* affect arisen; pay no attention to the arisen *akusala*

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[523] A 15.

[524] Sn 787. Nietzsche might interpret such a stance as sign of strength: "Freedom from convictions of any kind, the *capacity* for an unconstrained view, *pertains* to strength" [A 54]. Unfortunately this *sutta* was not included in Coomaraswamy's abridged translation of the **Sutta Nipāta** read by Nietzsche.

[525] M i,119.

[526] The Buddhists also have their "extreme" methods. For example, to counteract sexual desire, one can contemplate festering and bloated corpses in some cremation ground.

affect and let it drift away; or simply grit one's teeth and "with tongue pressed against the palate", wilfully subdue it.[527] Other methods are found elsewhere in the *suttas*. Nietzsche could therefore have learned a few extra methods from the Buddhists. And, more importantly, also come across practices such as the "Four Foundations of Mindfulness" which enhance and refine the methods outlined above by increasing one's power of awareness, and capacity to direct it.

In both cases, we have not been concerned about "sublimation" but "suppression" as a necessary aspect of creating what Nietzsche called the "most fertile ground ... on which the seeds of good spiritual works" can be sown. But Nietzsche, as we saw, is not too forthcoming on either what is to be developed or the means to it. Nevertheless, there are correspondences. For example, both agree that the sort of affects one has to conquer and "suppress" are such as "wrath", "envy", "vengefulness", the "lusts", "lying", "hate", "inertia", "fanaticism", etc. And that this entails "discipline", "patience", "strength of character", "mastery of wrath and revenge", "self-control" - to use Nietzsche's terms. These are all aspects of the first two "right efforts". All of the affects Nietzsche wants to be overcome are all considered by the Buddhists to be *akusala* affects. But what about any corresponding *kusala* affects? The affects Nietzsche considers worthy of development also have affinities with the Buddhist's *kusala* affects. But to create a ground of correspondence around the notion of "power" - which is Nietzsche's criterion for determining a "good" affect - I shall examine what it is the Buddhists want to develop, what methods they use, and try and show that it is some such model that Nietzsche would have approved of as a means of "self-overcoming", try to show that what the Buddhists are trying to develop could be talked about in terms of "power".

The third and fourth "right efforts" inform us what it is the Buddhists are trying to achieve: to bring into being *kusala* affects not yet arisen, and both maintain and bring to a greater degree of perfection those already arisen. And all this endeavour is a *means* to a further end, the development of "transformative insight" (*paññā*). However, when we examine what the texts say about what *kusala* affects we are to "cultivate" (*bhāvanā*), we are often simply presented with another "list" - a "sub-list" - which is meant to explain some aspect on the first list. For example, if we ask what the texts say about what is to be cultivated (one of the list of four "efforts") we are told: "the seven 'limbs of enlightenment'" (*sambojjhaṅgas*) - another list. And each of these "limbs" reveals a further "list", for example, the "four foundations of

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[527] *ibid.* 121.

mindfulness" in the case of *sati-sambojjhaṅga*. So, rather than play at Chinese boxes, I think a more simple and methodologically practical approach is more revealing, and to this end I shall cite the "cultivation of lovingkindness" (*mettā-bhāvanā*) practice as found in the **Visuddhimagga**. Here we find a clear example of "sublimation" proper, i.e., the transference of an affect from one object to another, so as to sublimate it into a "higher" state. Buddhaghosa's account is rather long and detailed, so I will just give the salient points.[528] Despite the ubiquitousness of the *anattan* doctrine, the first step of the practice is to "cultivate" (*bhāvanā*) *mettā* towards one's own self.[529] To this end one can recollect happy and contented moments in one's life and wish that one's life will be happy and fulfilling, thereby giving the mind room for such appropriate affects to arise. Then, from that state of healthy self-regard one calls to mind a friend[530] and, on the basis of being in a state of "self-love", a feeling of friendliness towards the friend can arise naturally.

Although Buddhaghosa refers to the "love" one has both to oneself and the friend as *mettā*, this does not seem correct simply because both these affects can be said to be quite natural to all, in other words not something most people would have to make an effort to develop. There is no inconsistency between having a feeling of friendship towards one person whilst hating another. Also, such affects can involve a good deal

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[528] See **Visuddhimagga**, p296ff.

[529] The point here is that if one does not have a healthy regard for oneself, then the prime condition necessary for developing *mettā* towards others is absent. Buddhaghosa quotes the **Udāna**: "Since aye so dear the self to others is, / Let the self-lover [*atta-kāma*] harm no other man" [47 and at S i,75]. If one "loves" oneself in the sense of wanting a happy and fulfilling life (narcissism is not what is meant) and reflects that this is what others want too, then the ground for developing a more friendly and less hostile relationship with them can be formed. This is the point. Interestingly, Nietzsche says: "Always love your neighbour as yourselves - but first be such as *love themselves*" [Ziii,6], otherwise: "Your love of your neighbour is your bad love of yourselves" [Zi,16]. We simply "do not love ourselves enough" [*ibid*]. Therefore, Nietzsche would agree that the first and necessary step in developing "love" towards others would be learn to "love" ourselves.

[530] Buddhaghosa mentions that an appropriate object here is either one's spiritual teacher, an equivalent, or one's preceptor or his equivalent, reflecting the conditions of a monastic life. But obviously, in a non-monastic context, other friends whom one shares "skilful" experiences with, for example when they have helped one, shared things with one, etc., are adequate substitutes. Buddhaghosa, however, warns against using friends that one has sexual feelings towards (in a monastery, this would imply homosexual feelings, unless some lay visitor of the opposite sex is meant) or who have died. Reflecting on such friends will more than likely give rise to sexual desire and grief respectively. And when such affects are present, *mettā* is more difficult to develop.

of attachment and could give rise to petty jealousies, etc. Consequently, I would not class them as *mettā*. *Mettā*, as a *kusala* affect, must be distinct from them if it is meant to be more than ordinary friendliness. Yet these more everyday affects are the only conditions out of which *mettā* can spring. Therefore, it seems to me that the real task starts at stage three. Here we are trying to extend ourselves, *overcome* our natural inclinations by thinking about someone whom we have little or no feeling towards, someone we feel quite indifferent to, what Buddhaghosa calls "a neutral person". The underlying context here is that if one's mind is imbued with the feeling of friendliness which has extended beyond one's own self to a good friend, that is the ideal condition within which to contemplate some "neutral person". In making them the object of one's concentrated mind, one then tries to think kind and caring thoughts about them. In this way feelings of kindness may arise towards them as one is already in a friendly state of mind. Then, in the fourth stage, one tries to do the same with someone one normally feels hostile towards, an "enemy". If one can come to develop kind and friendly thoughts towards a person one normally hates the sight of, *that* is surely what *mettā* is as distinct from more ordinary feelings of friendliness. One *has* overcome the "self" that started the practice, which was incapable of such affects towards an enemy.[531] Although Buddhaghosa does not add on a fifth stage, he does refer to extending *mettā* "with unspecified pervasion" to all sentient beings throughout the cosmos. As it is a further extension it can be seen as a fifth stage.

What we have here is a kind of self-engendered dialectic. As Nietzsche comments, our affects need nourishment in the form of objects, and the processes by which they come to be nourished are arbitrary. *What* is nourished is therefore a matter of chance. But, here, by consciously selecting appropriate objects to present to the mind, one begins to have some say on the kind of affects that will be stimulated. We start from the most natural feeling people have for themselves which has an objective counterpart as a perspective on the world. It is a world that more or less revolves around "me and mine". Its perspective is therefore rather narrow and overtly self-referential and being such, *excludes* other possibilities and perspectives. Stage two opens the self up and includes another, who having their own interests and being

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[531] Therefore, when Nietzsche quotes the Buddha as saying: "Not by enmity is enmity ended, by friendship is enmity ended", and retorts that this "is not morality that speaks thus, it is physiology that speaks thus" [EH i,6], although a case could be made that Nietzsche is correct in that it is not "morality" as he uses the term, it is certainly more than physiology, unless we take the extended meaning of that term as I have suggested earlier. In this latter sense, "physiology" would be a matter of "natural law".

someone you like, extends the field of interest outside of one's own direct interests. This, of course, can be seen as a second order self-interest, yet it is a different kind of self-interest simply because one has to consider another. That "having to consider" engenders a different, even though slight, change in perspective: others are part of one's world. But it is, as I've said, the third stage that represents a real shift from the norm. The dialectic comes about when one finds oneself in stage two, open to considering others. By focusing one's mind, which is imbued with a degree of friendliness, onto the "neutral person", there is the chance of *seeing* them in a different way than before, and that *seeing* is accompanied by a "new" affect,[532] that of feeling kindness towards someone one previously felt completely indifferent to. It is a different affect, although it has, in Wittgensteinian terms, a "family resemblance" to the former. In a sense, self-interest is still there but, as the "self" has changed, so too has the "interest". Relatively speaking, compared to stage one, it shows a lack of self-interest - at least that's how it would appear to someone at stage one (unless they were a cynic), as the self-interest they manifest has, to some degree, been overcome.[533] When the mind is concentrated and more malleable, and the concentration is, in a sense, a focus of *mettā*-like energy, in calling to mind an enemy there is now an opportunity to *see* them less subjectively, i.e., see them from the narrow perspective of what wrongs they have committed against "me", etc. This new *seeing* affords the possibility of actually *feeling* differently towards them: with some degree of friendliness and kindness, which in this case is no everyday affect, but *mettā*. This is possible *because* of the condition one is in, *because* of the kind of "self" one now is

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[532] Buddhaghosa refers to "breaking down barriers" in moving from one stage to the next. We could say that there is a dependent relationship between the state of mind, the affect dominant at the time, and its perspective on the world which, from a greater perspective, is seen as a "barrier". It is a barrier in the sense that it delimits one's possible responses to any situation. A mind filled with hate is "barred" from so many other perspectives, it restricts one's perspective to a too subjective, limited and guarded outlook. In Nietzsche's terms, hate is a sign of weakness, and being such its perspective is limited: "Beauty is unattainable to all violent wills" [Z ii,13]. Thus, in developing *mettā*, one is, in a manner of speaking, overcoming barriers, overcoming one's previously narrow and overtly self-orientated perspective.

[533] Nietzsche, in a passage on the "disinterested", notes: "the great majority of those things which interest and stimulate every higher nature ... appear altogether 'uninteresting' to the average man - if he none the less notices a devotion to these things, he calls it *'désintéressé'* and wonders how it is possible to act 'disinterestedly'" [A 220]. With Nietzsche, therefore, the notion of "disinterested activity" has its origins in the fact that "higher natures" have interests beyond the scope of the ordinary person. We might say this is due to their having different "selves" which, because they "see" differently, are interested in *other* things.

or, better, has *become*. This affect, whatever its strength, is the one I would call true *mettā*, and represents a transformation of one's attitude towards the world, a matter of *seeing* the world differently. And as the "self" at stage five is a radically changed "self" from the "self" at stage one, it would not make too much sense to talk about "self-interest" at this stage, as from the Buddhist perspective, it would bear little relation to what those on stage one and two could *conceive of* as "self-interest". This also gives another dimension to the *anattan* doctrine: we have an unfolding series of "selves", none of which can be said to be the "real" self. In Nietzsche's terms, we have a new constellation of forces, a new "self" whose overall constitution exudes "love".

Buddhaghosa relates that if one can develop *mettā* in this way, and a bandit was going to kill one of the four and asked you which of the four you would choose, you would not be able to choose due to the complete impartiality of your mind towards all four. Thus there is no putting others before oneself, which is what some ethical systems would prescribe as, having attained "such concentration that in this body, together with its consciousness, he has no notion of 'I' or 'mine', or any tendency to vain conceit",[534] how would one decide? No doubt some decision could be made to resolve such an ethical dilemma, but the point Buddhaghosa is making is that one could not decide on the basis of fear for one's own life, who one likes or dislikes, etc. Perhaps, quite objectively, one might decide that one's life was worth more to the world than some other's. This possibility could not be discounted, in Buddhist terms, on *ethical* grounds as whatever one decided, it would not be determined by *akusala* factors.

We could say that this process is a straightforward example of *Selbstüberwindung*. Each "self" at each stage is both "annulled" and "preserved", in Hegel's sense of *Aufhebung*, in the following "self". What has been "annulled" are the limitations and narrower perspectives of the lower "self", yet the "family resemblance" of friendliness has been "preserved" in the higher. A Buddhist, however, would only go as far as saying that in dependence upon the conditions that constitute 'self A', 'self B' comes to be. The notion of something being both "annulled" and "preserved" would be seen to fall into the second of the four "indeterminate questions" (*avyākatas*),[535] or questions for which there is no determinate answer, in that 'self A' can be said to both exist and not exist in 'self B', i.e., be both "annulled" and "preserved". To a Buddhist, that would be saying too much. The

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[534] A i,132.

most one can say is that dependent upon the conditions that constitute 'self A', 'self B' comes to be. 'Self A' and 'self B' are categories of the mind which divide up experience for practical purposes, but existence is a fluctuating continuum with no gaps between the "bits" we categorize as 'self A' and 'self B'. Thus what actually happens is, in the limits of analysis, beyond categorical determination.

In this example of Buddhist "self-overcoming", I have used the *mettā-bhāvanā* practice, but the same can be done with other affects such as "sympathetic joy" (*muditā*), "compassion" (*karuṇā*) and "equanimity" (*upekkhā*), and this principle can be applied to all the affects that Buddhism wishes to develop and nourish. And it will be obvious that the underlying principle behind all these attempts to suppress and develop various affects is *paṭicca-sumuppāda*, the doctrine of "conditioned co-production": all affects come to be when certain conditions are present; if one wishes to eliminate some then the conditions that give rise to them have to be tackled; if one wishes to develop others then they too will only come to be when sufficient conditions are present.

The fourth "right effort" consists in maintaining and further developing those *kusala* affects already arisen. Here, for example, one can remain mindful of the "favourable concentration-mark [*samādhi-nimitta*], ... the idea of a worm-eaten corpse, ... of the discoloured corpse ... fissured corpse ... inflated corpse. This is called effort to maintain".[536] The "concentration mark" strictly refers to the object of meditation; however, I think it must extend beyond festering corpses as this practice is usually an antidote to sexual desire, and would therefore technically belong to the second "right effort". I fail to see the relationship between maintaining and developing, for example, *mettā*, and focusing one's mind on decomposing corpses![537] A more natural approach here would be to simply maintain the *kusala* states by retaining the object in mind that gave rise to them in the first place.

In order to give an account of how this Buddhist version of "self-overcoming" could be quantified in terms of a gradual development of "power", I shall view this

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[535] The four *avyākatas* can be represented as:
1. A is B.
2. A is not B.
3. A is both B and not B.
4. A is neither B nor not B.
No.3 would include being "both annulled and preserved". The Buddhist "Middle Way" is to say: "in dependence upon A, B comes to be. When A ceases, B ceases". This position claims to maintain continuity, without stating that any "thing" is either "annulled" or "preserved", views which it would see as mistaken.

[536] A i,16.

process from another perspective. In a rather neglected and progressive account of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, what Rahula refers to as "the progress of a series of deeply spiritual and psychological states",[538] we can glimpse how the Buddhists saw "self-overcoming" in terms of a dynamic, gradual accumulation of energy and "power".

> *Now with regard to extinction* [khaya] *and knowledge* [ñāṇa] *about extinction [of the āsavas] I say that they arise dependent upon conditions* [sa-upanisā], *not the opposite.*
> *And what is that condition* [upanisā] *upon which knowledge about extinction [of the āsavas] comes to be? Liberation* [vimutti] *is the answer. I say that they come to be dependent upon conditions, not the opposite.*
> *And what is that condition upon which liberation arises? Passionlessness* [virāga] *is the answer. I say that [liberation] comes to be dependent upon conditions, not the opposite.*
> *And what is that condition upon which passionlessness comes to be? Disenchantment* [nibbidā] *is the answer. I say ...*
> *And what is that condition upon which disenchantment comes to be? Knowledge and vision of things as they really are* [yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana] *is the answer. I say ...*
> *And what is that condition upon which knowledge and vision of things as they really are comes to be? Concentration* [samādhi] *is the answer. I say ...*
> *And what is that condition upon which concentration comes to be? Bliss* [sukha] *is the answer. I say ...*
> *And what is that condition upon which bliss comes to be? Calming* [passaddhi] *is the answer. I say ...*

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[537] In an interesting incident in the **Vinaya** [iii, 67ff] some monks, who were "contemplating upon the impure" [*asubha-bhāvanā*], i.e., contemplating upon decomposing corpses to eliminate sensual lust, actually developed such a loathing for their own bodies that some committed suicide, some agreed to kill each other, and some got the "sham recluse" Migalaṇḍika to kill them. When the Buddha heard about this incident, he declared such action as entailing "defeat" (*pārājaka*), for which one is expelled from the Sangha. However, there is no attempt to deal with the issue as to how such a standard Buddhist practice can lead not to its desired goal, i.e., eliminating sensual lust, but to such self-loathing that one wants to commit suicide. Here, at least, it seems that these monks would have been better advised to do the *mettā-bhāvanā* practice. Also, from what is said elsewhere in the **Vinaya** [iii,36], the practice of the *asubha-bhāvanā* by some monks had the opposite effect: some had sexual relations with the decomposing corpses, one even with a decapitated head!

[538] Rahula (1974), p184. See also Sangharakshita (1991), pp108ff.

And what is that condition upon which calming comes to be? Rapture [pīti] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is that condition upon which rapture comes to be? Joy [pāmojja] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is that condition upon which joy comes to be? Confidence [saddhā] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is that condition upon which confidence comes to be? Unsatisfactoriness [dukkha] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is the condition upon which unsatisfactoriness comes to be? Birth [jāti] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is the condition upon which birth comes to be? Becoming [bhava] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is the condition upon which becoming comes to be? Grasping [upādāna] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is the condition upon which grasping comes to be? Thirst [taṇhā] *is the answer. I say ...*

And what is the condition upon which thirst comes to be? Feeling [vedanā] *is the answer. I say ...*

... feeling with contact [phassa] ...

... contact with sixfold sense sphere [saḷāyatana] ...

... the sixfold sense sphere with the psycho-physical individual [nāma-rūpa]

... the psycho-physical individual with consciousness [viññāṇa] ...

... consciousness with volitional activities [saṅkhāras] ...

... volitional activities with ignorance [avijjā] ...

Now ... brethren, volitional activities [saṅkhāras] *are in causal association* [upanisā] *with ignorance* [avijjā], *consciousness* [viññāṇa] *is in causal association with volitional activities, the psycho-physical organism* [nāma-rūpa] *with consciousness, the sixfold sense-sphere* [saḷāyatana] *with the psycho-physical organism, contact* [phassa] *with the sixfold sense-sphere, feeling* [vedanā] *with contact, craving* [taṇhā] *with feeling, grasping* [upādāna] *with craving, becoming* [bhava] *with grasping, birth* [jāti] *with becoming, unsatisfactoriness* [dukkha] *with birth, confidence* [saddhā] *with unsatisfactoriness, joy* [pāmojja] *with confidence, rapture* [pīti] *with joy, calming* [passaddhi] *with rapture, bliss* [sukha] *with serenity, concentration* [samādhi] *with bliss, the knowledge and vision into things as they really are* [yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana] *with concentration, disenchantment* [nibbidā] *with the knowledge and vision into things as they really are, passionlessness* [virāga] *with*

disenchantment, liberation [vimutti] *with passionlessness, knowledge about extinction (of the* āsavas) [khaye ñāṇa] *with liberation.* [S ii,30ff.][539]

The text then gives a simile describing the above in terms of torrential rain coursing down a mountainside, gradually filling up "hillside clefts and chasms" which overfill and go on to fill up "tarns ... lakes ... little rivers ... great rivers ... the sea [and finally] the ocean". Although not mentioned in the account, here we have two types of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, two kinds of dynamic unfoldment: the *saṃsāric* and the *nirvāṇic* - the latter being an account of the progress towards *bodhi*, representing the Buddhist version of the dialectic of "self-overcoming" in terms of a subject's experience. As the saṃsāric aspect, from *avijjā* through to *jāti*, is concerned with the generation of much of the same - what I will call the non-regenerative aspect - and is not, therefore, concerned with "self-overcoming", it is only the nirvānic or regenerative development that is of interest here, i.e., the *nidānas* from *dukkha* through to "knowledge about extinction [of the *āsavas*]". However, as we are once again faced with the mere bare bones of another list, I shall attempt to flesh it out.

Interestingly, the link between the saṃsāric and the nirvāṇic aspects is *dukkha*, which I would understand here as meaning that in relation to the saṃsāric process, there is a response of gradual dissatisfaction with it. The old forms of life which *were* seen as worthwhile, what one thought life was all about, no longer satisfy. *Why* this dissatisfaction should arise is never stated. Perhaps a Buddhist reply would be that as we have the potential to become more, that potential itself makes its presence felt through a feeling of dissatisfaction with the actual. In terms of Nietzsche's will to power, one could speculate that the dissatisfaction is felt due to the fact that the

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[539] Mrs. Rhys Davids remarks in a footnote to her translation: "This series has never yet won the notice it deserves as a sort of Causal Law formula *in terms of happiness*. Similar lists are also found at A v,1-6 and 311-15, the only difference being that *saddhā* is replaced with the practice of "virtuous conduct" (*sīla*) and "freedom from remorse" (*avippaṭisāra*) with the latter giving rise to "joy". Other accounts, with less *nidānas*, can be found at A iii,19, 200, 360 and iv,98-9, 335. Although each of these *nidānas* or "conditional grounds" is grammatically singular, it actually covers a plurality of conditions. As Kalupahana (1975) remarks, "While recognizing several factors that are necessary to produce an effect, it does not select one from a set of jointly sufficient conditions and present it as *the* cause of the effect. In speaking of causation, it recognizes a system whose parts are mutually dependent. ... Thus although there are several factors, all of them constitute one system or event and therefore are referred to in the singular" [p59]. Thus while each "causal ground" or *nidāna* is grammatically singular, it actually refers to a complex of conditions, here designated by the term *upanisā* which, as Kalupahana remarks, is a synonym for terms such as *nidāna, paccaya* ("condition"), *hetu* (cause) [*ibid.*, p57].

expression of the forms of one's life which are now well established have become inadequate as expressions of life's overall *nisus*, which is to overcome its actual and established expressions and go on to new, more fulfilling expressions. Going to the Buddhist tradition, this transitional stage between the saṃsāric and the nirvāṇic aspects is summed up in the "four sights". The first three sights - old-age, sickness and death[540] - are a summary of the non-regenerative conditions which when *seen* give rise to seeing non-regenerative life[541] as *dukkha*. We therefore have the conditions for an Hegelian-like dialectic: the present state, the actual, which is now seen as inadequate (*dukkha*), and a potential unexpressed state whose initial expression is the "cause" of seeing the actual as *dukkha*. This state of *dukkha*, a mixture of the actual and the potential, allows one to stand in a looser relationship to one's usual life forms, and also becomes the necessary condition for being open to new possibilities. This is where the "fourth sight" comes in. Because one is now open to new possibilities, when such a possibility presents itself one is *able* to respond to it. Prior to this one may not have even noticed them, but the *dukkha* affords the condition for a new perspective - an epistemic shift - and, therefore, a *new response* to emerge. In the tradition, the "fourth sight" was a member of the alternative *religieux*, a "wandering mendicant" (*samaṇa*), which I would take as a symbol for a new form of life, the *brahma-cariya* or "life in pursuit of excellence". The Buddha responded by leaving home in pursuit of this new life. Thus a degree of the nirvānic potential unfolds, becomes actual, and the dialectic of "self-overcoming" begins.

In the list of regenerative *nidānas*, the response to *dukkha* is *saddhā*, usually misleadingly translated as "faith". However, although *dukkha* is a necessary condition for the arising of *saddhā*, I would not count it as sufficient. In the "four sights", *dukkha* was represented by the first three sights. There, however, *dukkha* on its own was not sufficient - a fourth sight was necessary to cause the Buddha to leave home and become a *samaṇa* and pursue his quest. *Dukkha*, on its own, may simply lead to either despair, or carrying on within the old but now unsatisfactory forms of life

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[540] These are usually included along with *jāti* in the twelfth of the non-regenerative *nidānas*. As it is this *nidāna* which gives rise to *dukkha*, we can say that the first three sights give rise to *dukkha* which then becomes the necessary condition for the fourth sight - the way out of *dukkha*: the nirvāṇic aspect symbolized by the *samaṇa*.

[541] An "non-regenerative life" is one in which there is no development of *kusala* affects. In the Buddhist tradition, which accepts "rebirth", this means that each life is more or less spent in similar pursuits to the previous one, expressive of the same range of affects and their corresponding "views". Thus no *real* change occurs, just the same old habits repeating themselves in different contexts. This is *saṃsāra*.

without gaining what satisfaction one previously gained from them. Another factor is necessary for *saddhā* to arise, after all, what is it one has "confidence" (*saddhā*) in? In the fourth sight it was an alternative form of life, in the form of a *samaṇa*, that sparked the Buddha off in pursuit of the *brahma-cariya*. To me this indicates that *dukkha* alone is not enough, it is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one: another condition is required for *dukkha* to give rise to *saddhā*. And I think this also shows us what kind of response *saddhā* is: it is an energetic response to *seeing* an alternative to one's old life now characterised as *dukkha*. This is how I would interpret *saddhā* in this context, the "confidence" and energy to pursue the *brahma-cariya*.[542] As a consequence of following the *brahma-cariya* - which, according to some of the alternative *nidāna* lists, is the practice of *sīla*, or "virtuous conduct" - there arises quite naturally, as a consequence, "joy" (*pāmojja*). At this juncture, we enter states normally associated with *jhāna* or "meditation" practice: a concentrated mind filled with "joy" eventually gives rise to "rapture" (*pīti*). According to Buddhaghosa, *pīti* or "rapture" refreshes the body and mind by pervading them with energy which thrills and elates. He lists five levels of *pīti*: "slight" (*khuddikā*), which can raise the hairs on the body; "momentary" (*khaṇikā*), which is compared to flashes of lightning; "oscillating" (*okkantikā*), which is compared to waves breaking on the sea shore; "transporting" (*ubbegā*), which it is claimed can actually lift the body off the ground; and "all-pervading" (*pharaṇā*), where "the whole body is completely pervaded, like a filled bladder, like a rock cavern invaded by a huge inundation".[543] These descriptions are obviously concerned with the release, in various stages, of energy. When it all subsides by being absorbed, i.e., by one *becoming* a new and energized being - a more "powerful" being - through a process which forms the next stage, "calming" (*passaddhi*),[544] one can go on to experience a deep "bliss" (*sukha*). Remaining concentrated in *sukha* then gives rise to a state of fully developed "concentration" (*samādhi*). This latter stage represents a mind that is "concentrated, purified and cleansed, unblemished, free from impurities, malleable, workable, established and having gained imperturbability" can now be directed "to the knowledge of the destruction of the corruptions [*āsavas*]".[545] In other words, this whole

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[542] Guenther (1959) translates *saddhā* as "confidence-respect" so as to distinguish it from any misunderstanding that might arise by translating it as "faith". *Saddhā* has nothing to do with "mere belief or blind faith" (p61). Quoting from the **Aṭṭhasālani**, he adds that "confidence-respect has the nature of paving the way" (p63), in other words, it is a response that takes one onto, in the case of Buddhism, the Buddhist path.

[543] **Visuddhimagga**, 143ff.

process of *citta-bhāvanā* is a means to achieving a state of being *capable* of "seeing things as they really are" (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*), the *nidāna* that arises out of *samādhi*. The stages following on from this represent the movement from the initial "transformative-insight" (*paññā*) to the full accomplishment of *bodhi* or, as this text puts it, "knowledge of the extinction [of the *āsavas*], the *āsavas* or "biases" being the "bias" towards "sensuality" (*kāma-āsava*), "wanting to become something" (*bhava-āsava*) "speculation" (*diṭṭhi-āsava*), and "ignorance" (*avijjā-āsava*).[546]

This account of the Buddhist version of "self-overcoming" reveals it as a progressive unfoldment of energy and "power"; it involves the unfolding of new configurations of energy and "power" each of which, in agreement with what Stack said earlier in relation to Nietzsche's "self-overcoming",[547] can be viewed as the unfolding of new a "self". Therefore the Buddhist path, rather than being a relatively healthy but limp expression of life combined with the wish to eventually extinguish life, which is how Nietzsche understands it, seems more concerned with the enhancement and generation of fuller expressions of life, even though those expressions in their higher aspects may be said to take us beyond what we now understand as life. Rather than running away from life as it is *dukkha*, what unfolds as a response to *dukkha* is a life-enhancing unfoldment of enhanced states beginning with *saddhā*.

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[544] This "calming" is said to be twofold, of the "body" (*kāya*) and the "mind" (*citta*). However, as Guenther (1959) points out, it would be wrong to "translate [these] by bodily and mental relaxation" as "the Buddhist term *kāya* ... [does] not so much denote the physical body but an integrated organization and function pattern. *Kāya* comprises the function patterns of feeling [*vedanā*], sensation [*saññā*], and motivation [*saṅkhāras*]" (p,54), which, along with *citta*, reflects the calming down of the whole psychic organization of the individual into a new psychic configuration. We could say, a new "self" or using, Nietzschean terms, into a new organization of "power".

[545] D i,84. For a parallel account traversing the *jhānas*, see sections prior to this from D i,73 onwards.

[546] The unfolding of the *nidānas* from *yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana* onwards could be viewed as the operation of the *dhamma-niyāma*. After all, it is through *ñāṇa-dassana* that karmic activity is destroyed in the sense that actions arising out of *paññā* do not create karmic consequences. This would imply that the individual was free from the operations of the *kamma-niyāma* in regard to his *present* actions, i.e., his present actions do not create consequences under the law of *kamman*. This need not necessarily imply that his present actions have no consequences whatever, but only that whatever those consequences might be - if, indeed, there are any consequences - they will not bear "fruit" (*phala*) within the range of *saṃsāra*. Again, to me, this makes more sense of the *dhamma-niyāma* than 10 month pregnancies.

[547] See quote on page 122.

Consequently, one could say that the Buddhist response to *dukkha* is in principle in full agreement with Nietzsche, when he says:

> *Creation - that is the great redemption from suffering and life's easement.* [Zii,24]

Given this, Buddhism would also, in principle, agree with Nietzsche when he says:

> *What is good? - All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man.*
> *What is bad? - All that proceeds from weakness.*
> *What is happiness? - The feeling that power* increases - *that a resistance is overcome.* [A 1]

Or, at least, Buddhism can be said to attach a sense to this talk in terms of its notion of *citta-bhāvanā* as I have just described it.

The above regenerative unfoldment of increasingly energized, self-determined and concentrated states of being is certainly what Buddhism regards as "the good", and it no doubt "heightens the feeling of power". And, as "the feeling of power increases" and the various resistances and barriers at each stage are overcome, this "overcoming" certainly results in various degrees of "happiness". And all this, from the Buddhist perspective, is "natural".[548] Nothing supernatural is involved, no outside agency or "grace" is involved, just the natural order of life. When Nietzsche asks whether we know what we are at liberty to do, the Buddhist would say "yes", and with regard to his notion of "self-overcoming" could have given him more than a few hints as to how to go about it. But, can Nietzsche's "good", associated with enhanced states of "power", be compared with what the Buddhists regard as "good"? Can the Buddhist path of *citta-bhāvanā* really be seen as the unfoldment of the will to power?

Dealing with the latter point first, I would like to go back to what I said earlier about *taṇhā*, *dhamma-chanda* and the will to power. There I suggested that as some form of *taṇhā* is implicit even in the reaches of what we have seen as the regenerative

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[548] In an alternative account of the regenerative *nidānas*, the fact that each *nidāna* emerges "naturally" from the preceding one when it is fully developed, is indicated by the expression *esā dhammatā*, "this happens naturally". For an account of this term in this context, see Rahula (1974), *Wrong notions of Dhammatā (Dharmatā)*.

nidānas, this "sublimated" *taṇhā* becomes *dhamma-chanda*, or "*taṇhā* become cognizant of the way to quench its 'thirst'". I also made a connection between *taṇhā* and *dhamma-chanda*, and Nietzsche's will to power in its non-regenerative and regenerative aspects, the later being "self-overcoming". Therefore, it becomes possible to consider the non-regenerative and the regenerative *nidānas* as corresponding aspects of the will to power. But as it is only the "self-overcoming" aspect we are interested in this context, I shall confine myself to that.

In the list containing both the non-regenerative and the regenerative *nidānas*, *dukkha* follows on from the last saṃsāric *nidāna*, *jāti* or "birth", which actually stands for the whole of one's non-regenerative life. However, with reference to the "Four Noble Truths", if we ask what is it in life that gives rise to *dukkha*, it would be *taṇhā*, which in the non-regenerative *nidānas* arises in dependence upon *vedanā* or "feeling-sensation". Therefore, the point in our experience *where*, according to these non-regenerative *nidānas*, *dukkha* would arise, would have to be in the area of *vedanā→taṇhā→upādāna*, in the complex of our habit-like response to present experience. Consequently, it is just *that* response that can come to be felt as inadequate, as "unsatisfactory", as *dukkha*. Thus the usual *vedanā→taṇhā→upādāna* response is now felt to compose an inadequate and non-regenerative response to life. This opens the way, given certain conditions, for *saddhā* to emerge, which could be seen as a "sublimated" aspect of *taṇhā* - *taṇhā* responding to a more regenerative way of life, becomes "spiritualized" as *dhamma-chanda*, the "desire for the Dhamma", the Dhamma being the way of a regenerative form of life, the way to *nirvāṇa*. With this model in mind, switching to Nietzsche's terms, the *nisus* of life, the will to power, shifts from non-regenerative pursuits, to regenerative pursuits or "self-overcoming". In this way, the movement from the saṃsāric processes to the nirvāṇic, from *taṇhā* based activity to *dhamma-chanda* based activity, represents a shift from the cruder forms of expression of the will to power - subduing others, fulfilling one's various lusts, the pursuit of wealth, etc. - to its "internalization" as "self-overcoming". In this way the image of rain-water coursing down a mountainside, where it moves on from filling up clefts and overspills to become a river and finally becomes an ocean, would represent the Buddhist image of will to power, could be viewed as an accumulation of "power".

As we saw earlier, Nietzsche has no detailed account of his goal. There is the ideal of the *Übermensch* but apart from its rather dramatic introduction in **Zarathustra**, we hear little more about it in Nietzsche's further writings. And what there is, is a little sketchy. We do know that whatever the "good" is, it is whatever heightens the feeling of power through overcoming resistance to further and more

enhanced expressions of power. Yet, as to what kind of affects these represent, Nietzsche always sees them in terms of the opposite of such affects as *ressentiment*, hatred, weakness of character, inability to go against the accepted social norms and think for oneself, etc., or "love", self-determination, independence of mind, strength of character, etc., all of which Buddhism also regards as "good". The Buddha turned his back on his own society and rejected its values. Although he was the disciple of various samaṇic teachers, he showed his independence of mind in eventually rejecting them all and going off on his own. And from what we have seen of the practice of *mettā-bhāvanā*, the fourth stage of which corresponds to the stage of *samādhi* in the regenerative *nidānas*, we can say that it represents a state of "power" developed as a consequence of overcoming less "powerful" and limited expressions of oneself. No doubt Nietzsche would have acknowledged it as a state of enhanced "power" in the form of "love". Therefore, from what Nietzsche says regarding states of enhanced "power" that arise as a consequence of the process of "self-overcoming", I would have no hesitation in seeing a parallel process - but a more systematically worked out and tested version - in the Buddhist path of *citta-bhāvanā*. The "good" in both cases does have characteristics in common, and the Buddhist account of the path can be regarded as an unfolding of enhanced states of "power", the "power" to eventually "*see* things as they really are" [*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*].

The natural question that follows this is what does Buddhism mean by "seeing things as they really are"? If we turn to the *suttas* for an answer we have to conclude "not very much". This is not so surprising, however, as Buddhism is very wary about the human tendency, evident in the *suttas* among the various *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas*, to become embroiled in arguments and disputes about the various "views" (*diṭṭhis*) expounded by this or that teacher or school of thought.[549] The impression the *suttas* give is that the Buddha simply refused to become involved in any metaphysical disputes and, to counter this human tendency, emphasized the *practical* aspect of the *brahma-cariya* - the *way* to become such as can "see things as they really are", i.e., the way of *citta-bhāvanā*. What it does say, from a philosophical point of view, is a form of intellectual minimalism: that the whole of existence unfolds in accordance with the principle of *paṭicca-samuppāda* and is characterised by three "marks" (*lakkhaṇas*) - *anicca* or "impermanence", *dukkha* or "unsatisfactoriness" and *anattan* or "insubstantiality". Some have found this a little confounding. Mrs. Rhys Davids remarks:

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[549] See especially the *aṭṭhaka-vagga* of the **Sutta Nipāta**.

Buddhists concentrated their attention not on a cause or mover of the order of things physical and moral, but on the order itself. They held that this order was one of constant universal change, organically conceived, i.e., *as growth and decay and conceived as proceeding by cause and effect. Things become, as the sequels of certain assignable other things having become.*

That may all be true, we say, and intellectually noteworthy, but it leaves us cold and morally indifferent. The Buddhists may have seen, in what seemed to many the mere mechanism of a soulless universe, an eternal orderly procedure, but we do not see how they could draw thence any motive making for righteousness, let alone piety and devotion.[550]

It confounds Rhys Davids as Buddhism obviously *does* have a highly esteemed moral tradition and has "commended itself, at first and subsequently, to the intelligence of the thoughtful, as well as to the hearts of millions".[551] Although understanding the principle of *paṭicca-samuppāda* and that all things are *anicca, dukkha* and *anattan* may not seem much, this is probably because we do not see the *implications* they have for us. When Ānanda extols the principle of *paṭicca-samuppāda* to the Buddha, saying: "It is wonderful, lord, it is marvellous how profound this *paṭicca-samutppāda* is, and how deep it appears. And yet it appears to me as clear as clear!" The Buddha responds:

Do not say that, Ānanda, do not say that! This paṭicca-samuppāda *is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding, not penetrating this doctrine that this generation has become like a tangled ball of string, and covered with a blight, tangled like course grass, unable to pass beyond states of woe, the woeful destiny, ruin and* saṃsāra. [S ii,92]

Ānanda *thinks* he fully understands the doctrine but the Buddha, who does know it, thinks otherwise. We can assume that Ānanda's understanding is merely intellectual, he understands the concepts but he does not fully *know* it in the Buddhist sense of sense of "knowing and seeing" (*ñāṇa-dassana*). Whether one fully comprehends *paṭicca-samuppāda* and the *ti-lakkhaṇas* in the Buddhist sense of *ñāṇa-dassana* or not depends upon the extent to which one is affected by this understanding. If it leads

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[550] Rhys Davids (1912), p111.

[551] *ibid.* p113.

"naturally" (*dhammatā*) to the next *nidāna*, to becoming radically "disenchanted" and "disillusioned" (*nibbidā*) with saṃsāric life - of never again becoming caught-up in *saṃsāra* through activity grounded on non-regenerative affects - then one understands it in the sense of *ñāṇa-dassana*. If not, then, from the Buddhist perspective, one has not really understood it even though one might intellectually agree with the doctrinal formulation. And the *reason* one has not understood it in the sense of *ñāna-dassana*, is that one has not "overcome" one's non-regenerative nature, one has not developed one's being to such a level of "psychic integration" represented by the level of *samādhi*, which is the necessary condition for "seeing things as they really are". Without *samādhi* there is no *ñāṇa-dassana*; and without *ñāṇa-dassana* there is no real "disenchantment" - no real "disillusionment" (*nibiddā*) - with the forms of life viewed by the Buddhists as non-regenerative. Therefore, there can be no "freedom" and "liberation" (*vimutti*), no *nirvāna*, no truly effective "self-overcoming".[552]

Philosophically, this intellectual minimalism seems somewhat inadequate and even frustrating. Yet if we remember that the Buddha's Dhamma is about creating a spiritual path in the form of practical methods to aid *citta-bhāvanā* and, as I've mentioned above, from what we can gather from the *suttas* the Buddha was acutely perceptive of the human tendency, evidenced among his contemporaries, to argue and dispute about the *diṭṭhis* of the various religious teachers - which the Buddha adjudged a complete waste of time from the spiritual point of view - and actively discouraged such interests among his own disciples, we can at least understand the reasoning behind it. The whole spiritual enterprise has one aim: to *become* such as can "see things as they really are".[553] Recalling the episode in the Siṃsapā grove, there is no doubt that the Buddha decided only to proffer a few leaves as from the Dharmic aspect that was all he considered *practically* necessary. Perhaps this was an indirect encouragement for those inclined to philosophizing: if they would only get down to

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[552] There would be no "truly effective 'self-overcoming'" as, from the Buddhist perspective, all that one develops up to and including *samādhi* can be lost - one can fall away from the path into non-regenerative forms of life. Although it is nowhere directly stated in the *suttas*, it is through *ñāṇa-dassana* that one becomes a "stream-entrant" (*sotāpanna*) and, although one is still effected by non-regenerative affects to the extent that up to seven more rebirths within the "better" areas of *saṃsāra* may occur before one attains *nirvāṇa*, it is as if one has *seen* too much such that one can no longer be radically affected by them. Steady progress is assured. An indirect link between *ñāṇa-dassana* and "stream-entry" is found at S ii,68-9 and S iii,225 where "stream-entry" is achieved through "seeing" (*dassana*) such doctrines as *paṭicca-samuppāda* and *anicca*. This "seeing" is also synonymous with *paññā*, which is why I translate the latter as "transformative-insight" as after such an "insight" one is radically transformed such that certain actions and future forms of life are no longer possible.

some practical *citta-bhāvanā* and become capable of entering the "Siṃsapā grove" for themselves, only then will their intellectual appetite be fully appeased. However, I think that a few more philosophical "leaves" would not have been much of a danger. Indeed, they may have been necessary as an encouragement.[554]

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[553] With reference to *paññā*, the Buddhists recognized three levels: *suta-mayā paññā* or "understanding by way of what is heard"; *cintā-mayā paññā* or "understanding by way of reflection"; and *bhāvanā-mayā paññā* or "understanding by way of development". However, these are only mentioned once in the *suttas* - as a list at D iii,219 - and Buddhaghosa's gloss on them in his **Visuddhimagga** is less than illuminating with regard to the most important one, *bhāvanā-mayā paññā*. All he has to say is: "all understanding in anyone who has attained (an attainment) is understanding consisting in development" [439]. The first two are relatively straightforward: *suta-mayā paññā* is understanding gained through what one has heard or, in a literate society, what one has read. *Cintā-mayā paññā* is understanding that comes by way of reflection and thinking for oneself. *Bhāvanā-mayā paññā* is obviously the highest form of *paññā* as it is understanding that comes by way of *bhāvanā*, which I would take in the sense of *citta-bhāvanā*. Given this, *bhāvanā-mayā paññā* would be akin to *ñāṇa-dassana* in the sense of insight that arises out of developing *samādhi*. Attaining *bhāvanā-mayā paññā* would therefore be equivalent to gaining *yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana* and would be *paññā* proper in the sense of "transformative insight". Given that these levels of *paññā* form a continuity, what one would have "heard" would have been the *suttas*; what one would have reflected on and thought about would have been the doctrinal formulations connected with "things as they are", such as *paṭicca-samuppāda* and the *ti lakkhaṇa*: *dukkha, anicca* and *anattan*; and, when one contemplates upon these in a state of *samādhi*, "knowledge and vision of things as they really are" can arise *naturally*..

[554] Later, in India, Buddhist "philosophy" did emerge as it battled with the various Brāhmanical and other schools of thought. Yet, interestingly, one of the most prominent, the Madhyamaka, in its Prāsaṅgika form, offered no independent position itself but only entered the debate in order to point out the untenability of the opponent's position. Other Buddhist schools, for example the other branch of the Madhyamaka, the Svatantrika, and the Yogācāra were a bit more philosophically adventurous. See Williams (1989).

Conclusion

In Part One, I gave an account of Nietzsche's notion of nihilism and his understanding of Buddhism. He saw an historical parallel between the cultural developments in the India of the Buddha's age and what he saw unfolding around him in contemporary Europe. This historical parallel amounted to an emerging nihilism and consequent loss of belief in the accepted and dominant *Weltanshauung*. The Buddha's teaching was interpreted by Nietzsche as a response to the nihilism of his own time, yet that response, rather than being an answer to nihilism, was simply another from of nihilism - "passive nihilism" - which, rather than understanding that nihilism was a particular phase that could be overcome, accepted its *Weltanshauung* of a meaningless and purposeless cosmos as ultimate. The Buddha then devised a cheerful and civilised response to it. What Nietzsche feared was that Buddhism might catch hold of his contemporaries who, seeing that their old world was slowly being undermined - especially by the sciences - would see in Buddhism a means of dealing with their existential *Ängste*. To Nietzsche such a prospect could only result in a cultural catastrophe. Despite the fact, however, that some modern scholars still see Buddhism, if not exactly in Nietzsche's terms, see it as a religion whose goal entails the complete annihilation of the individual at death, upon examining the two key concepts associated with interpreting Buddhism as nihilistic - *nirvāṇa* and *anattan* - I have concluded that although it is difficult to determine exactly what is entailed by *parinirvāna*, whatever it is, it is not annihilationism, it is not nihilistic. I have also shown that a large part of the doctrine of *anattan* can be seen as simply an attack upon the Upaniṣadic notion of the *ātman*. Indeed, I would conjecture that if the Upaniṣadic goal had not been couched in terms of the *ātman*, we may never had had an *anattan* doctrine. My conclusion for Part One was that Nietzsche - and some modern scholars - are wrong to see in Buddhism a nihilistic teaching.

In Part Two I have tried to show that, ironically enough, Buddhism, rather than being antithetical to Nietzsche's aims, has actual affinities with his somewhat unfinished and sketchy attempts to find an answer to nihilism. To this end I have examined his central notion of the world as will to power and its individualization in man as *Selbstüberwindung* - which is his real answer to nihilism - and compared them with the Buddhist notions of *taṇhā* and *citta-bhāvanā*. My conclusion is that, ironically enough, it is something akin to *citta-bhāvanā* that Nietzsche was searching for as an answer to nihilism - a method rooted in man's natural psychological make-up that can result in man overcoming his present self to such an extent that he can

eventually become a new kind of being: a Buddha in the case of Buddhism, or the more hypothetical *Übermensch* in Nietzsche's case.

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