# A Buddhistic-Christian Probe of the Endangered Future

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IT HAS NOW become incumbent upon philosophers everywhere to reflect in the wider framework of a roughly unified international "planetary culture" which was seen to be emerging as early as Hegel and Marx, both of whom thought of it as a community of self-corrective discovery and understanding. By the time of William Ernest Hocking and Arnold Toynbee there was little doubt that the world, as Hocking put it, "is becoming a single unit for mankind, but men and women are slow in accepting their global interdependence." Men and women in the physical and social sciences have long been aware that their work is being done in a community unlimited in scope. Reviewing accounts recently published of the damage caused by the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Lewis Thomas speaks as follows out of his work in the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York:

> We live today in a world densely populated by human beings living in close communication with each other all over the surface of the planet. Viewed from a certain distance the earth has the look of a single society, a community, the swarming of an intensely social species trying to figure out ways to become successfully interdependent. We obviously need, at this stage, to begin the construction of some sort of world civilization.[1]

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[1] From his review of *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*, by the Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, trans. Eisei Ishikawa and David L. Swain (New York: Basic Books, 1981); and of *Unforgettable Fire: Pictures Drawn by Atomic Bomb Survivors*, ed. Japan Broadcasting Corp. (New York: Pantheon, 1981), in *New York Review* (September 24, 1981), p. 3.

While most philosophers continue to teach and write as though insights from unknown parts of the world could be ignored, the profession as a whole is alive with cross-cultural meetings and discussions where the longest thoughts of cultures previously not in close communication are revitalizing the deliberations of those who have thought most deeply about the endangered future. Attracting less attention than absolutistic nations parading their nuclear missiles and delivery systems, philosophers are sifting through the ideas of the newly encountered cultures of mankind, joined together in their work by the shared understanding that men and women want something more to look forward to than what Gunnar Myrdal calls "the great technological breakthroughs yet to come."[2]

Philosophy is in the initial stages of a renaissance, after years of neglect in the shadows of spectacular technological and industrial growth. "Philosophers are now more responsible than anyone else for the future of mankind; I am full of fight and belief for the future." These are the words of Professor Kuczynski of Warsaw, who is working on a reconstruction of Marx's concept of *praxis*. The most famous Marxist intellectual in Europe was writing what he called "the ontology of social existence" when he died a decade ago. "The aesthetics of everyday life," he wrote, "is the key to the solution of the question of the meaning of man's existence."[3] Lukacs looked to "the Budapest School" to continue his leadership in European Marxist thought. In Czechoslovakia, Zbynek Fiser has published two books on the ontological nature of being, as well as one on Buddhism; both books reject the long reign of substance from its ancient origin with the Atomists and Aristotle in Greece. The true ontological model, Fiser believes, is non-substantial, and in this, he writes, "the Oriental philosophies come closer to understanding reality than the West, with Buddhism closest of all."[4]

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[2] *Asian Drama: An Inquiry Into the Poverty of Nations* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1968), Vol. I, p. 702.

[3] Kenneth Megill, "Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness*," *Social Praxis* 1,1 (1973), pp. 97–98; also Howard Press, "The Existential Basis of Marxism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* XXXVII (March 1977), pp. 331–45.

[4] *Buddha* (Praha: Orbis, 1968). See Oldrich Prochazka, "Zbynek Fiser and 'The Consolation of Ontology,' " *Crane Review* X, 1 (Fall 1967), pp. 1–16. "Man is not an unfree cog in a world machine," Fiser writes. "Man is not deprived of his meaning by the lack of an immortal soul. Just the contrary, state the Buddhists. Due to this lack, man acquires a creative meaning, a significance, and a dignity" (quoted by Prochazka, p. 11).

These words from Eastern Europe serve to illustrate the philosophical renaissance, because they penetrate the conventional wisdom and rigid ideological stance of politics. They bear witness to the burgeoning need everywhere for rational discourse to move against the prevailing winds of doctrine. They are echoed in the West, where Norman O. Brown has written that what he called "the real fight" is not the political fight; "the next generation needs to be told that the next move is from politics to life."[5] And David Hall argues in a new book that "the society of the future will be less inclined toward a God who is 'from age to age the same' and more desirous of a god or gods who can help make sense of the immediate flux of experience and its relation to the next emergent moment."[6]

Hall's work reminds one of Nirvana, the only reality we ever experience—the moment in which the flower is at an unprecedented stage of blooming and the creativity of the passing moment is putting the finishing touches on the essential artistry of life.[7] Hartshorne suggests that God be defined in ways that yield insights necessary to prevent cosmic anarchy, insights that enable men and women to contribute to a permanent treasury of achievement, instead of merely to their perishing days and years. Similar thoughts were expressed a half century ago by Nishida Kitarō, whose profoundly Buddhist philosophy found a central place for the qualities that are alive in the passing *now*, qualities that constitute what he called "pure experience," which awaken men and women to the almost secret bond of intuitive love, that mystery not obvious in ordinary experience holding the universe together, or, to put it more closely to Nishida's deeper meaning, the mystery that "pours its fullness forth out of the formlessness of the aesthetically breathtaking *now*." According to

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[5] "Reply to Herbert Marcuse," in Theodore Roszak, ed., *Sources* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), pp. 248–53. The real fight is to put an end to politics, to penetrate politics to the creator spirit which is life itself. "From politics to life": to perceive in all human culture the hidden reality of "the Holy Communion as the basis of community," and "the language is the language not of reason but of love."

[6] *The Uncertain Phoenix: Adventures Toward a Post-Cultural Sensibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1981). The closing words of Hall's book are: "The way is now open to us to recognize the manyness of our religious experiencing, the variety of ways we encounter the holy. Our name is Legion . . . and our gods are many."

[7] From the "Nirvana: The Aesthetic Center of Life" chapter of his forthcoming book *Buddhism's Encounter with American Thought* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982).

Nishida, pure experience, "pure feeling," is impersonal, neither mine nor yours, I or Thou, subject or object, time or space, but the life out of which all are formed.[8]

These are some of the long, long thoughts found in philosophers at work in the manyness of an increasingly interdependent world. Philosophers are made by times like these, when mankind seems to be reaching for deeper syntheses than can be found in the encapsulated culture-worlds of the past, when new options are needed by people who can no longer find richness of life within their own confining social womb, when political and ecclesiastical traditions are no longer able to use their linguistic symbols to enthrall, nor the military-industrial complex conduct all intercultural discussions through official self-reinforcing channels.

In philosophy today, the gods are Legion, and reasoning can no longer be cut away, as separable from experience that is concrete and alive. Philosophy must now help the individual to take the abstract citizen, consumer, laborer, lover back into himself and enable him to take responsibility for a world suddenly emancipated from the taken-for-granted intellectual confinements of the past. The weight of tradition is being weakened—by technology, communication, travel, migration—and people are forced to choose their most basic beliefs. Philosophers disagree too much to tell them what to believe; the task of the philosopher is to clarify the options and provide reasons to which beliefs can appeal. The responsibility of philosophy is centered here.

No obstacle looms larger to all efforts "to figure out ways to become successfully interdependent" than the one to which the remainder of the present essay is devoted. The major source of retardation endangering the future planetary civilization about which so much has been written is not the autonomous nation whose wars have made our century infamous for all time. *The major obstacle is the kind of selfhood in which the terrors of the modern nation are rooted. It is this archaic legacy of a self-substance, mutually independent of all others, which supports the entire superstructure of Western nations.* Whatever a person learns from family, peers, other persons, books, newspapers, television and internal subconscious experience such as dreams—all is organized around the demands and interests of a self that maintains its strict identity through

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[8] *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, trans. David A. Dilworth (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970), pp. 248–49.

change. This is one of the major sources of alienation, the great scourge of life in the West. The way Marx put it in his essay, "On the Jewish Question,"[9] the relationships that hold sway in the political state "leave the reality of the individual untouched; this is why man in his accidental existence, man as he comes and goes, man as he is corrupted by the whole organization of our society is lost to himself, given over to the domination of inhuman conditions, *believing that life in the political state is the true life even though it leaves one's individuality untouched.*"

The behavior of this modern nation is a complicated consequence of the way its citizens perceive themselves, what they presuppose regarding the meaning of their lives, and how they assume life is to be analyzed, understood, and changed. The nation is their delusions and compulsive drives projected onto the larger screen; it incorporates those insatiable altars of glory (to use Karen Horney's phrase) on which individuals sacrifice their lives. The troubles nations have with one another are also vastly compounded versions of the difficulties individuals and social groups have with one another, difficulties traceable in the last resort to the illusions of the encapsulated substantial self. People either confirm or deny and move to abolish the lines that divide the social classes which are so prominent a part of European life. Individuals in the United States either reinforce or move against the racial and ethnic minorities of which the nation is so largely composed.

Hitler and Stalin, and in our own time Ronald Reagan and Menachem Begin, are for the most part answers to their respective people's self-encapsulated prayers. And behind the prayer is the sacrosanct and counterfeit politics of one of the oldest and most deeply-rooted assumptions of non-Buddhist areas of the world—the generic, self-justifying, independent, substantial self.

To perceive and probe the hidden metaphysical confusion of the self has become the essential problem endangering the future of mankind. It is to perceive what kind of self is daily sustaining conditions throughout the world that kill 15.5 million infants under four years of age every year, half of them from malnutrition or starvation. It is to perceive the kind of self that continues to advertise cigarettes while demanding still more

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[9] First published in the *Deutschfranzosische Jahrbucher* (February 1844), pp. 182–214. See David McLellan, *Karl Marx: Early Texts* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), pp. 85–114; also T. B. Bottomore, *Karl Marx: Early Writings* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963; London: Watts, 1963).

conclusive proof that millions of men and women are smoking themselves to death. It is to discover what kind of self-perceptions are involved in imaginative schemes for economic and social improvement of relations between rich and poor, North and South, East and West, which tend year upon year only to exacerbate the problem and make cynics of otherwise responsible men and women. It is to make a start, at least, in wondering how much evidence would be enough to turn our attention to the real reason why racial issues in Rhodesia and South Africa, and religious issues in the nations of Islam, do not yield to the best-laid plans of the most intelligent men and women of our time. It would be a start if we began to wonder if all the famous statements of "civil rights" and "human rights," and recent efforts to create an international monetary and industrial system no longer controlled by the West, carry anyone any farther than the logical absurdity of mutually independent substantial selves too deeply entrenched in the incompleteness of self-understanding to solve the problems that threaten the species with extinction.

It is worth wondering, for example, why everything that characterizes human experience is found in the natural world—except the self endowed upon everyone at birth; and, conversely, why everything found in the natural world is found in human experience—except these illusory selves. In the research institutes of quantum mechanics, microbiology, and high-energy physics, nothing is found which resembles such independent and irreducible substances; nothing is found that is not further analyzable in the context of which it is an organic part.

It is one of the strangest coincidences of our time that the discoveries exposing the illusions of the barbaric self come to us, not from psychology and the social sciences, as one might expect, but from the science usually considered most remote from the interiority of life. Quantum physics supports a perception of reality disallowing the possibility of anyone living a purely private existence independent of contemporaries. Elementary particles studied in high-energy physics are seen to be in immediate connection, each a set of relationships reaching outward to other things.[10] The more we penetrate into the submicroscopic world, the more we see the world as a system of inseparable components, an unbroken wholeness of which each man or woman is an integral part.

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[10] Henry Stapp, "S-Matrix Interpretation of Quantum Theory," *Physical Review* D-3 (1971), p. 1303.

Fritjof Capra draws the obvious conclusion:

> Most of today's physicists do not seem to realize the philosophical, cultural and spiritual implications of their theories. Many of them actively support a society which is still based on the mechanistic, fragmented world view, without seeing that science points beyond such a view, towards a oneness of the universe which includes not only our natural environment but also our fellow human beings. I believe that the world view implied by modern physics is inconsistent with our present society, which does not reflect the harmonious interrelatedness we observe in nature. To achieve such a state of dynamic balance, a radically different social and economic structure will be needed: a cultural revolution in the true sense of the word. *The survival of our whole civilization may depend on whether we can bring about such a change.*[11]

It is time to penetrate more deeply into the nature of our own experience, at least to wonder if the self is one thing and what happens to it is another, or, if like every other entity in nature, it is to be understood in terms of the way it is interwoven with what we have called "the unbroken wholeness of the world." Modern technology has suddenly given large-scale organizations such unimaginable power that it cannot be used constructively without more penetrating revisioning of the nature of the self. How explosive this situation is can be seen in the remark by Whitehead, that "the whole literature of the European races on the subject of 'personal identity' is based upon notions which, within the last hundred years, have been completely discarded."[12]

Any concept of the self is an effort to express the limitlessness of human experience within the limits of language, and as such it is apt to be surrounded with the atmosphere of absurdity. How can the self be construed in its full concreteness, in the way it is interwoven in the web of existence, such that its present enjoyment is enhanced by aiming at a good which is not and cannot be its own? This is the essential question Buddhism has been asking for more than two thousand years. Buddhism was first to perceive the illusion in the idea of a plurality of selves mutually external to each other, the fundamental alternative being the universal participation

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[11] *The Tao of Physics* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1975), pp. 307–308.

[12] *Essays in Science and Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 67.

of selves in the lives of one another, formulated in the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), meaning the interpenetration and co-origination of each entity for good or evil in all the others. As this formula suggests, society is more fundamental than substance, and self-interest loses its privileged metaphysical ground. Nothing has a self-established nature (*svabhāva*) either beyond or above or within the great "Stream of Being." Man has fabricated the supposititious self and used it disastrously as the living center of his behavior. Men and women cling hardest of all to the illusion that at the core of their being there is an indestructible, unitary, coherent Soul.[13] *What is really real is the non-existence of any independent substance. Creative co-origination is all there is.*

As insight is won into the real nature of our experience, it becomes clear that the basic motivation in every reality-oriented man or woman is for the increasing vividness and harmony of quality that makes each fugitive moment unique forever. Buddhism's probing opens experience to the aesthetic foundations of the world.

The essential question is formulated in the Christian tradition in a somewhat different way. How can the self be understood in the fullness of what is really real, such that the basic appeal is never for something that is its own, but rather for something more general and yet more concrete, the appeal of life for life, acting now to protect life in self and others, and tomorrow to enrich life in people yet unborn? Most, or many, thoughtful Christians would recognize this question as their own. Many would dismiss it as unrealistic or unattainable, and therefore not worth dwelling upon. Most Christian philosophers have been, and for the most part remain, trapped in the not further analyzable entities whose self-love reputedly does not contradict love for selves equally alone in the ontology of a living world. Hartshorne puts the metaphysical confusion of the Christian in the simplest terms: "To love oneself as identical with oneself and the other as not identical with oneself is not, whatever else it may be, to love thy neighbour as oneself. Rather it is to put a metaphysical difference between the two loves. To make self-centeredness, no matter how subtly or ingeniously, the first principle is a strange misuse of reason. It is time religious people faced the 'as yourself' and made up their minds about it."[14]

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[13] See my *Buddhism: The Religion of Analysis* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), especially Chapter IV, "The Indispensable Key," p. 82.

[14] *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1970), p. 200.

> For me it is virtually self-evident that neither individual nor national self-interest can be *the* principle of action for a truly rational animal. Not even sub-rational animals in fact derive all their other-regarding behaviour from self-concern. The notion that self-preservation is *the* law of nature is poor biology. Species-preservation is closer to the true law.[15]

The only major American philosopher to have probed deeply in Buddhist thought throughout his long career, Hartshorne draws the following conclusion:

> At this point Buddhism and a Christianity or Judaism that understands itself are at one. The difference between self-love and love of others is not metaphysical, nor anything absolute, but a relative matter.[16]

It is surpassing strange that a society looking for a whole series of discoveries in the eighties to transform the world as the first two industrial revolutions transformed Europe and America should simply take for granted in the most uncritical and even belligerent way a concept of Self that regulated personal feelings and provided a measure of social solidarity in pre-modern societies, but now prevents a global community from taking firm root in the concrete experience and most reliable knowledge about the entire natural world.

What accounts for the tenacity with which this self-serving assumption of personal identity is held? Why the cloud of unknowing hovering over the experience of every man or woman, unaware that life is fully actual and concretely real only in its momentary states? Why the long captivity to self-serving illusions, incapacitating individuals from experiencing themselves as centered in the novel forms of togetherness incarnate in the momentary *now*? Why this strange inability to see that egocentric motivations, as the Buddha saw, constitute a way of "writhing in delusion"?

There are three answers to the question of the Self's strange, imperious, irrational rule, one stemming from the nature of language, another from the influence of the group in which one's life is interwoven. A third answer, stressed particularly in the Buddhist perspective, is the whole matrix of compulsive drives which appear to constitute the Self as a

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[15] *Ibid.*, pp. xix-xx.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 200–201.

functioning person but are the clue to suffering of all kinds.[17]

Man imagines that he merely speaks, when actually his language becomes the rule of life, the categories becoming his linguistic prison and his cage. Indo-European languages especially serve to sustain the illusion of the substantial Self, so that philosophers like David Hume have felt called upon to allocate huge expenditures of energy in efforts to dispel the illusion. There is no thinker but the thoughts, no perceiver but the perceptions. If Descartes had taken his stand with the evidence, he would have said, not *cogito ergo sum*, but "there are thoughts"; not *dubito ergo sum*, but "there are doubts." It is conventional language which has crippled our understanding. Just as auditory clichés limit our ability to hear, and visual stereotypes our ability to use our eyes, so language limits our conscious experience of the inner workings of life.

A second answer concerning the strange grip of the illusory Self has more to do with those social motivations that seem to hang in the atmosphere as we come of age. Willy-nilly, most people go along with the program culture imposes, with the result that cultural irrationality is deeply entrenched in the lives of all of us. Perhaps the most dramatic simple illustration is ready at hand in the career of the most widely read American writer, Ernest Hemingway. Reading the series of little vignettes published under the title, *The Moveable Feast* (1964), we are able to look down the long vista of Hemingway's future suicide. He tells us in his own words about the apartment in Paris, his wife and small child, and the small group of writers and artists of the same approximate age, and one slowly comes to understand why he blew out his brains when his writing days were over. *The Moveable Feast* reveals Hemingway squeezing everything from each passing day, exploiting every joy and friendship for the predetermined end of becoming a writer, having no organic relationship with the human community and the rest of nature, except the food and sex and excitement shared with the animal kingdom at large. In the preface of a novel written about himself and his friends, he said, "You are all a lost generation," but Hemingway never discovered why they were lost. Hemingway was the fruit of a pathological individualism—self-interest raised to the level of an ideology—writing prose on subjects of the narrowest individual significance—a quarrel between a girl and her lover in a railway station, the tragedy of a man having his testicles shot away

[17] See *Buddhism: The Religion of Analysis*, pp. 67–92.

in a war, the mind of a bullfighter. With all his literary skill, Hemingway lived away from life, locked into self-centeredness, violating the basic rule of life that aesthetic quality is never a means to an end, never the fruit of experience, but experience itself in its vividness, intensity, and harmonious flow. Hemingway did nothing to help his readers penetrate beyond the menagerie of cultural atmosphere and social motivations into the concreteness of life itself in its natural, spontaneous, qualitative flow. Hemingway *lived* the self-destructive Self.

The irrational tower of the substantial Self is its own matrix of compulsive, unconscious drives. An impermanent creature in a changing world, man hangs like a leech to some part of that world, even if he has to invent the irrational Self to relieve the stress. *Taṇhā*, compulsive clinging, is a style of life. Western research has long been at work on compulsive hungers, one of the chief sources of the career of consumerism in modern life. Research is filled with case histories of grown men ruled by the traumatic experiences of a child, such as the famous engineer with a bridge-building career, who was afflicted as a child with nocturnal enuresis; or the leading vacuum-cleaner salesman in New England who had been frightened as a small child over the presence of bacteria in dust. Both cases come from the Harvard psychological clinic.[18] The literature abounds with studies of narcissistic passions and emotional dependencies all of which serve to bear out the basic insight of the Buddha regarding the way suffering is rooted in man's own compulsive drives. Central to the suffering is the fabricated Self who suffers, the falsified ego that organizes the aesthetic wonder of this world in accordance with goals and goods for which more or less exact specifications have been drawn. This is the third source of the Self's imperious self-justifying rule over all the possibilities of an emerging world. Unconscious motivational drives attach themselves to the self-centered person for numerous reasons we need not discuss in this context, such as the indeterminacy at the center of a normal human being (associated directly with one's possibilities for all-sided growth), or the machinations of the pseudo-self whose unnatural status must be defended at all costs, or the infection spread from one individual and generation to the next by the philosophy of substance and substantial selves.

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[18] Henry A. Murray, *Explorations in Personality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938).

It is a matter of survival as civilized communities today that we reexamine human experience, and experience it in all its immediacy and spontaneity, seeking to rediscover what it means to be persons related as individuals to the rest of nature, including people from beyond our self-encapsulated ancestral societies and nations. This is an interest that cannot be limited without falling into unreason. "Logicality inexorably requires that our interests shall not be limited. They must not stop at our own fate, but must embrace the whole community. This community, again, must not be limited, but must extend to all races of beings with whom we can come into immediate or mediate intellectual relation."[19] Unlimited continuance of inquiry into the social nature of experience is an indispensable requirement of logic, according to America's foremost philosopher of logic and science.

Philosophers have only construed the world in different perspectives from their self-encapsulated libraries and conceptual systems; the point, however, is to experience it in whatever intensity and harmony it embodies, to attend to its changes as each fleeting moment follows upon the heels of another. The point is to feel the concreteness of the flower at an unprecedented stage of blooming, and to feel the feelings of other moments in the stream of becoming. Dim and fragmentary though it may be, our experience yet "sounds the utmost depths of reality," and the primitive experience is feeling, vague and unformed. This, Hartshorne argues, is the "true empiricism" of process philosophies originating in Heraclitus, Fechner, Lequier, Bergson, James, Peirce, Whitehead and some aspects of Dewey. In a book on Whitehead's philosophy, Hartshorne writes as follows:

> The true empiricism, Whitehead said, will not try to invent an absolutely different concept from that of experience, with its aspects of feeling, memory, love, freedom, and so on, in order to explain the nonhuman, but will generalize these aspects so that, though we can only dimly imagine how, they will cover all possible forms of individual existence, not only from particles to man, but even from man to God.[20]

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[19] *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934, 1960), Vol. V, par. 654; hereafter referred to as CPP.

[20] *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935–1970* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. 131.

Feeling is the essence or root of experience. "The world is felt first and only then, perhaps, known."[21] "One is immediately conscious of his feelings; but not that they are feelings of an ego; the self is only inferred; there is no time in the Present for any inference at all."[22] We find the same reflection upon experience in Nishida, who interpreted the loftiest moral ideal of Japan—loyalty—as the expression of what he called "pure feeling." "The object of feeling," he wrote, "cannot be intellectually determined nor frozen spatially; it is infinite movement; indeed, while it has form, it is the formless; herein a culture of feeling can be conceived." Japan, he said, is "a culture neither of eidos nor of ritual, but one of pure feeling."[23]

Examination of experience in its immediacy and intensity led Peirce to his category of Firstness: "*What the world was to Adam on the day he opened his eyes to it, before he had drawn any distinctions, or had become conscious of his own existence—that is first, present, immediate, fresh, new, initiative, original, spontaneous, free, vivid, conscious, and evanescent.*"[24] "*It is sufficient to go out into the air and open one's eyes to see that the world is a living spontaneity.*"[25]

The more anyone wins fundamental insight into what is actually taking place in one's own experience, the more awareness grows that events too elusive and fleeting to arouse more than feeling are gone before they can be taken into account. Each of these events joins with all the others to produce the portrait of our lives, a portrait created each moment as qualities lead us to make choices as the world turns. No man or woman is so poor as to be unable to participate in a human career consisting of events incompletely determined in advance, events flowing through the extensive continuum of the world at large. Even prior to conscious thought, experience on nonverbal levels is being judged for its vividness, intensity, breadth and harmony, and for the contrasts evoked in its organic fullness as it passes. Each moment inherits along innumerable lines—"the Many become One and are increased by one"—creatively forming the relevant qualities into a new organic unity in a universe that is alive to its microscopic depths. Much of life is compulsive and habit-ridden, but every

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[21] *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, p. 76.
[22] CPP, Vol. V, par. 462; see also CPP, Vol. VII, pars. 538–40.
[23] *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy*, pp. 248, 252.
[24] CPP, Vol. I, par. 357.
[25] CPP, Vol. VI, par. 553.

moment taken fully into account is actually a synthesis of old and new, and thus a novel form of togetherness in an emerging world. Depending upon one's level of awareness, whether sound asleep and "dozing one's life away like a dirty beast," or quick and awake to what is really the case, each individual is nonetheless involved in a process of self-creation. Increasing awareness lifts an individual more vividly into a universe that is always new, into a richness of quality never experienced in the past. All individuals have the unity of the universe as their common ground. Everyone and everything play a role in shaping the self-surpassing organic whole. The whole world conspires to produce a new creation, and at the same time presents to the passing moment its opportunities and its limitations.[26]

*Personal identity is found in this process of aesthetic enrichment, enabling us to inherit more perceptively and vividly the legacy of qualities experienced in the past.* The base line of personal identity is not the substantial Self with a nature of its own (*svabhāva*), existing from the first moment of its birth and acquiring and containing whatever occurs. Each passing moment is an occasion of experience with its own unity, the outcome of creative synthesis whereby the many events of the past live forevermore in the novel emergent *now*. There is no other unity from which the oneness of momentary experience can be derived. It has nothing as its object; it is self-enjoyed; it is self-created; and, in turn, it becomes part of the cumulative immortal past gathered into another novel form of togetherness in moments that follow. The fleeting moment itself possesses nothing, is contained by nothing, simply and fundamentally *is*. It is free, therefore, to feel and to celebrate life, whether the fleeting moments be part of its own series or belong to another person's stream of becoming.

The identity and order of an individual's life, therefore, is either found in these passing moments where we become creators of ourselves and of one another—or the identity and order are thrown overboard, one imperceptible dribble at a time. The individual enjoyment, Whitehead writes, "is what I am in my role of a natural activity, as I shape the activities of the environment into a new creation, which is myself at this moment; and yet, as being myself, it is a continuation of the antecedent world."[27]

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[26] A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926), pp. 112–15.

[27] *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1938, 1966), p. 166.

The self-surpassing oneness of life carries creative power so great that even locked away in their own self-systems men and women have a sense of their own creativity half forgotten. Crippled by self-centeredness, each is still a participant in the interiority of a world that is novel, original, spontaneous, and organically one.

This is the social vision of personal identity surfacing in the writings of Hartshorne, Whitehead, and Peirce. Hartshorne believes that much dispute about personal identity is chiefly dispute about words. "*The latest subject,*" he argues, "*contains all that there is to the unity of the self as actual; the latest subject contains the whole self.*"[28] "My awareness of my past tends to be more vivid and direct than of the past of others, but this is no absolute difference."[29] The unity of the personality is merely one prominent strand of the society of subjects experiencing unifying experiences of certain data fusing themselves into a novel formation, each personality organically linked, indeed *embodied* in others at every stage of its growth. Each career continues to live and breathe and have its being in the total matrix of its connective growth, and every person continues to live in others very much longer than superficial observers think. This is what Peirce wrote. The selfhood we attribute sometimes to ourselves, he argued, "is for the most part the vulgarest delusion of vanity."[30]

The leading theologian at the University of Chicago forty years ago, attracting students from all over the United States, was Henry Nelson Wieman. Coming out of Harvard just before the arrival of Whitehead, Wieman probed deeply into the works of the great Englishman and, along with Hartshorne, was responsible for lifting Process Philosophy to dominance for the first time in graduate studies in philosophy and religion at Chicago. Whitehead's concepts of prehension and creativity appear in Wieman's work in his extensive writings about "Creative Interchange," the ultimate source of value, the central loyalty of human life. Creative interchange forms and reforms the world, sustaining an experience of unshakable security and fresh rejuvenation even in the absence of any belief. "Indeed," Wieman writes, "when all beliefs and hopes fade out and one commits himself to whatever might possibly give any meaning to

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[28] "The Structure of Givenness," *Philosophical Forum* (1960–1961), p. 31.

[29] "Personal Identity from A to Z," *Process Studies* 2, 3 (Fall 1972), p. 213.

[30] CPP, Vol. VII, par. 571; see also Vol. VII, pars. 573–77.

life beyond his knowing, and does it with full acceptance of the unknown consequences no matter what they may be, then and only then does there rise up out of the flow of felt quality in the fulness of its power the sense of ultimate security, bringing with it intimations of a way of life never yet experienced. This kind of commitment," Wieman continues, "*to a process and not to any belief* seems to purge life of its corruptions by clearing away all established ways of living, all beliefs and other structures, thus enabling creativity to bring forth ways of living more fit to deal with the new conditions and with problems heretofore never encountered."[31] Some observers thought of Wieman as propounding a kind of social mysticism generalized to the world at large. The social nature of experience provides ceaseless occasions of ecstasy viewed as the experience in another (whether that other be another human being, a natural or "artificial" object, or oneself in the immediate future) of that creativity that sustains the world.

No "non-identity," therefore, ever separates fellow-creatures from one another when the bifurcating Self, through analysis and meditation, is retired as a source of confusion. This is the basis for both personal identity and compassion in the Buddhist orientation. Fleeting events (*khaṇa-vāda* or *kṣaṇa-vāda*) either fall into more or less definite strands of becoming, or the self of each person is inescapably non-identical with its fellow-creatures, including all creatures in the ecosystem of life. In the first alternative—the Buddhist perspective—people form their identities as social facts in the course of their growth. In the latter alternative—the self-centered, culture-encapsulated way of the modern world—individuals find their own experiences confused and habit-ridden, and afflicted with the ruin that is reflected in their faces, alienated from all that is really real. Their unnatural non-identity with other lives generates ever fresh occasions for violence and authoritarian control over the living world.

The whole of Buddhist philosophy in all its branches is permeated with perspective on the creativity incarnate in the momentariness of life. Behind the vast background of feeling and quality barely touched by the forms of conscious thought, a background to which the human species gives some evidence presently of awakening, lie the creative energizing intuitions of life itself. The Buddhist term for the truly singular events is *khaṇa-vāda*, moments in what might be called the micro-process of

[31] "Intellectual Autobiography," p. 43, an unpublished paper in the Archives of Southern Illinois University; italics mine.

millions of daily experiences beyond the grasp of memory, perhaps, and for the relatively gross scale and measure of our perception as well.

This is the creativity implied in the notion of *karma*, that persons are self-created and that no deity can therefore be held responsible for any of the details. Everything in the world creates itself as it passes and becomes a part of a new creation. In his widely read inquiry into Western interpretations of Nirvana, Guy Richard Welbon comments that "creativity pervades both the way and the goal of Buddhism," and that "ignoring its presence would be to imperil any attempt to understand the Buddhist Nirvana," and to overlook the major distinction between Buddhism and its Hindu background.[32] Creative synthesis of past data into present *khaṇa-vāda* is what is going on in the momentary *now*. Herbert Guenther agrees. "This," he says, "is the Buddhist conception of the unconditional realness of what there is."[33] "Creative forces," he writes, "are all that exist."[34]

Buddhism is mankind's most persevering effort to participate in the creativity incarnate in the passage of what Malalasekera called "the fulfilled *now*." This, Hartshorne writes, "is Whitehead's profoundly original discovery anticipated only in ancient Buddhism."[35] It is not a mere metaphor that we are members one of another in a world that is creative in every cell. In the midst of an essay on "the structure of givenness," Hartshorne stops to make the following observation:

> I would about as soon die as give up this notion. It makes the injunction, Love thy neighbor as thyself, metaphysical good sense, as the usual substance doctrine does not. The Buddhists had just this in mind for many centuries, in all branches of Buddhism. I think they have a precious lesson to teach Christians at this point. It is time to rejoin the Buddhist tradition, the most subtle of all very old international philosophical religious traditions.[36]

In both Christian and Buddhist thought, the art of loving involves the penetration of all the egocentered compulsive drives and delusions

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[32] *The Buddhist Nirvana and its Western Interpreters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 304.

[33] *Buddhist Philosophy in Theory and Practice* (New York: Penguin, 1971), p. 19.

[34] *Philosophy and Psychology in the Abhidharma* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1974), p. 241.

[35] *Whitehead's Philosophy*, p. 130; see also p. 5.

[36] "The Structure of Givenness," p. 31, and "Personal Identity from A to Z," p. 215.

that prevent men and women from participating in the fullness of experience and taking responsibility for preserving the endangered future. The art of loving is the art of unlearning whatever obscures the matrix of relations we bear with other human beings and with the speechless world's living creatures. It is the art of responsible caring which involves the uprooting of the false self and its alienated social reality, opening individuals more fully to the undifferentiated, qualitative, aesthetic continuum which in but different ways Buddhism and Christianity think of as the love that is the natural state when one's experience is free, when it is calm, when it is at peace—qualities self-evidentially given in immediate experience as ego-installed impurities are removed.[37]

Civilizations up to now have thwarted and destroyed the intensity and richness of human experience, confining feeling to insatiable wants and to what is purely local, habit-ridden, parochial and familiar. Most of the poignant beauty and compassion of a creative world have thereby been lost. This is part of the angry past that is alive in everyone today. A new civilization without limits is now assuming responsibility for life on the planet, a civilization based for the first time in the individualized universe demanded by the aesthetic enjoyment of life, in that dimension found in our experience in comparison with which all else is a distraction, a delusion, a fallacy of misplaced concreteness, part of the labyrinth surrounding the independent, irreducible, substantial, fabricated Self on which "the whole literature of the European races has been based." By their efforts to dispel the fog and help their fellow-creatures discover what is really real in their own experience, philosophers can fulfill the role Professor Kuczynski assigns and become "more responsible than anyone else for the future of mankind." It has been the thesis of this paper that the thread of Ariadne is to be found in the Buddhist-Christian reflections on the self—the thread that leads out of the labyrinth into the unspeakable beauty of this world, the thread that can preserve the endangered future as a scene of responsible action.

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[37] Hartshorne states the Christian position perhaps as forcibly as it has ever been expressed: "*My most basic hunch about the meaning of life is that love or feeling-of-feeling is the primary principle, explanatory of everything, including givenness. . . . There are many reasons why this social structure has been missed by most philosophers. It is the stone rejected of the builders, the almost secret bond of intuitive love which holds the universe together. I cannot imagine that there is any other bond which can do this*" ("The Structure of Givenness," pp. 35–36; italics mine).