

Whitehead and Buddhism on the Art of Living

NOLAN PLINY JACOBSON

Preface

Both Buddhism and Whitehead find the “foundations of the world” in the aesthetic experience, rather than, as with Kant and most western philosophers, in the cognitive and conceptive experience. The ultimate aim of life is found in the passing moment in the awakening of the live creature to more of the flow of quality in the fullness of existence. The function of reason is to transform existence by freeing life from its compulsions and fixations, vivifying the original centers of experience where men and women in the passing moment are deeply and memorably alive. The flow of quality through the perceptions, intuitions, memories, and aspirations tends to quench what Nagarjuna calls the “thirst” for organic relatedness. This flow of quality is an adequate directive for living, without appeal to anything beyond or behind the process of events. Such aesthetic growth constitutes an “evolutionary expansiveness stretching away into regions beyond our explicit powers of discernment.” As far as we know there is no limit to this aesthetic growth as men and women struggle free from their clinging to become more fully aware.

In this confluence with western Process Philosophy, Buddhism finds its organic roots in American culture and its deepest relevance to men and women undergoing the turmoil of a new axial age.

N.B. The more we bring into high relief the unlimited growth in the qualitative fullness of our aesthetic experience, the less we indulge ourselves in clinging to linguistic and conceptual systems. Any experience of ecstasy will serve to establish this fact. The exclusion of Whitehead’s theology and Buddhism’s reputed mystical and esoteric dimensions is justified on this ground. No further reference to this omission, therefore, will be made in the paper.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

I. *Another Axial Age?*

THE supreme aesthetic achievement of the twentieth century, and the act most significant for its global fallout, may prove to be the launching of the astronauts into outer space. There they were freed from the gravitational field of the earth, and they could see their planet floating like a beautiful agate in a sea of darkness, its blue oceans and grey contours of land becoming discernible every few hours in the rays of the sun. All of us watching on television participated in this extra-terrestrial perspective on the good earth; we saw from outer space the biosphere of our common astronomical home. More, perhaps, than anything millions of people have ever seen together, this perception may change the way they think about their life together. Slowly this perspective from beyond the pull of gravitational systems may wash against the divisive and compelling astigmatism of the culture-bound creature and help him to participate more flexibly in the diverse experiences and multiform culture-worlds of his fellow-creatures. All who accompanied the astronauts on the exploration of space felt their environment vastly enlarged, the old limits pushed outward by the new perception, and a sense of urgency for the preservation of the wonder-inspiring matrix of life. The event transformed people by changing their perception of themselves. This can never be forgotten.

The new perception will be liberating men and women for decades to come, reminding them of their need to encompass and correct all the hitherto unreconciled cultures of their self-justifying encapsulation in linguistic and behavioral cocoons. The perspective from beyond the window of re-entry may lure people into a sense of potency and a feeling of being more fully alive, confident of being able to move creatively and less defensively in the total atmosphere of meanings and values with which the self-isolating cultures of the past furnished a multitude of invisible caves.

If man's first ventures into space function eventually in this way, they will more than justify their tremendous cost, for the new perspective may reassure men and women concerning their ability to undergo radical change and move far beyond the limits of old perspectives without falling into the hysteria and violence that frequently accompany drastic change (MT 130), and to engage as active participants in the cross-cultural, interpersonal interchange that has become the most inescapable fact of life.

This interchange is creative insofar as it enables individuals, one by one, to acquire the perspective of others more or less fully, expanding their own conscious awareness and feeling system by awakening to more of the fullness that lies beyond any individual occasion. By multiplying the perspectives acquired in this way, this interchange enables men and women to enlarge and deepen the emerging community of mankind. It enables hitherto self-isolating people to join the human race. It has already brought to dominance in leading nations a new interest in learning, and a new appreciation is spreading for the power of control people can exercise together. It is fostering everywhere an unprecedented willingness to probe the assumptions and accumulated wisdom in the narrow parameters within which everyone has lived. Under such conditions, the nation or civilization that cannot burst through its current presuppositions, abstractions, social institutions and norms is doomed (SMW 58).

In the "space-age," as it has been called, we need physicists, exploring new sources of energy, and biologists deciphering and synthesizing the genetic code, but more than anything we need philosophers participating freely in the interchange among radically different cultures, elaborating new options to which reason can appeal, penetrating the great cloudbank of ancestral blindness that weighs upon us all, and opening up new alternatives for communities of men and women who must live in the broken greenhouses of the past and influence one another on wider and deeper amplitudes of mind than mankind could previously have imagined. We need philosophers who feel the modes of experience that characterize this new "space-age," and are able to move at the growing edge of these exceptional parameters of modern life, remembering the occasions that are still the "present level" of convention-bound experience, but remembering also that this level was itself an exceptional one in the long perspective of the past (AI 380). We need philosophers, finally, whose powers of analysis are stronger than their conceptual commitments, who encourage us to stop thinking of concepts as lifejackets in a swirling sea, and who live each day with the danger of the bewitchment and stunting of the intellect by the encapsulated linguistic systems of the past.

One of the major aims of the present essay is to indicate why philosophers who can move freely within the perspectives of Buddhism and Process Philosophy may make essential contributions as the direction of human living shifts

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

away from established culture-worlds with their linguistic and symbolic controls *over to* a process of global interaction and communication that can no longer be controlled in the framework of any traditional or contemporary institution or nation or social class.

One of the major hopes for the present essay is that people reared in the cultural orbit of Asia may find their own Buddhist perspectives enriched by meeting Whitehead and the nurturing matrix of Process Philosophy in a few of its major strands. The best chance Buddhism has of fulfilling the most exciting promise of its entire career beyond the continent of Asia may well be provided by this channel of Process Thought which shows promise just now of becoming a central feature of Buddhistic Studies in the United States.

The present essay can only suggest the great wealth of philosophic reflection in the United States with which Buddhists may be able to amplify and bring to new clarity some elements of their own experience and tradition. It is also hoped that philosophers here may find in such confrontation with Buddhist thought that the world contains another rich and far more venerable legacy of reflection in which the emphasis has always been placed upon the original centers of experience where men and women in the passing moment are most deeply and memorably alive. As a Process Philosophy, Buddhism seeks the meaning of life, "in life itself," as Malalasekera has said, "and in this search life becomes an ennobled and fulfilled Now." It is centered in meditation and analysis, in an individual's probing of his own qualitative flow, and in this respect bears a striking similarity to Whiteheadian thought. In one of the few times he italicized anything he said, Whitehead once wrote, "*The function of reason is to promote the art of life*" (FR 2).

The encounter of American and Buddhist thought as they relate to "the art of living" could have profoundly significant results, therefore, on both ends of the encounter. On the one hand, there are some reasons for wondering if the broad interest in Buddhism in the United States can ever become much more than a passing fad, an esoteric preoccupation, until it is related to what is fundamental and distinctive in American thought. On the other hand, philosophers associated everywhere with what is most creative in American thought seem to have labored unknowingly on conceptual artifacts germane to the Buddhist tradition.

II. *Some Elements of Mutual Understanding*

The encounter, therefore, between Buddhist and Whiteheadian philosophy could well have a profound impact upon those millions of men and women all across the earth today who are being released from the life style that has controlled human relations for thousands of years. Individuals widely scattered over the planet during this period in history are being liberated from the claustrophobia of conformity. The windows in their self-insulating, self-justifying cultural greenhouses are being shattered by explosive change, by the power of theoretical and applied sciences, and by the irreversible process of growing awareness and understanding between increasingly interpenetrating and interdependent culture worlds suddenly powerless to control their affairs within predictable limits. Deeper than the stresses and strains associated with their awakening from the compulsiveness and rigidity of their erstwhile state of cultural encapsulation, millions of such people are also feeling the fullness of life, the lure of new possibilities for participating in a thousand different lives. Especially among the youth of the modern world, this experience of passing their lives in a daily sense of fresh disclosure induces a feeling that in them humanity is being reborn and that the forces of creative renewal are ushering in a new axial age.

The confluence of Buddhist and Whiteheadian streams of thought may contribute in a critical degree to encouraging greater responsibility as people struggle against control systems that still endeavor to reduce life to narrow, self-isolating, defensive angles of awareness. Until now, Buddhism has been more sophisticated than other philosophies and religions in knowing that the canalization of behavior into a fully enculturated person is chiefly carried out through the agency of signs and symbols. It is the first demythologizing philosophy in history. Its respect for the extreme difficulty of penetrating the veil woven by a symbolic system is coupled with the persuasion that, as Whitehead puts it, "any factor in the universe" may be made manifest "in some flash of human consciousness. . . . We have no ground to limit our capacity for experience by our existing technology of expression" (S 134-135). Deep buried, perhaps, in our lives, but nevertheless basic for our well-being, the creativity that drives the world, "the ultimate matter of fact" intuited in our experience every day (PR 32), moves us beyond explicit presuppositions, luring us into

holding our artifacts of interpretation in a flowing, fluid manner in which fixations in awareness are overcome. By fostering participation in various disciplines of meditation which are not dependent upon signs and symbols, Buddhism takes its stand with people who must transcend the restrictiveness of a single symbolic system. Buddhism is therefore relevant and accessible to individuals of our time who must become more generously and fully aware, more confirmed in the knowledge intuited in their own experience each day that the way the past perishes is the way the future becomes (AI 305). As they become habituated to viewing and responding to their experience in this manner, they achieve what Buddhism calls "the non-clinging Middle Way."¹

Conditions no longer support the style of life that turned away from rapid change toward some unknown substratum assumed by almost all philosophers of Western Civilization to be the ultimate receptacle in which everything occurs, the transcendent reality around which everything revolves. The long love affair with permanence sought in the corners of a changing world is now over. When men and women ask for understanding today, they ask for tentative insights that come with fresh penetrations into the novel disclosures that extend their range of awareness and participation. To ask for intelligibility without

¹ In his *Mahā prajñāpāramitā lāstra*, the most comprehensive among works traditionally attributed to him, Nagarjuna taught that man, unlike other creatures, has a specific nature, is a determinate individual, but is not confined to his determinate nature, is not bound forever to his fragmentariness. *Man has a thirst to regain the dynamic, organic relatedness in which the richness of life consists.* Everyone can discover this in himself. It is the foundation of his very being. This is not an insight belonging exclusively to Buddhism or any other orientation; it is the possession of every self-conscious individual. The point is encountered everywhere in Buddhist thought. Ramanan puts it as follows: "Man is at cross roads. He is aware of the unconditioned and knows also the condition. . . . It is this sense of the unconditioned that acts as the very spring of all his activities, theoretic and practical. . . . The wise do not abandon things saying that these lead them to contradictions and conflict, viz., ignorance and passion. Having abandoned these they freely use concepts, construct even conceptual systems if need be in order to root out conflict and suffering. Opposing statements do not land them in conflict for they are free from clinging. Suffering of life does not prompt them to abandon life; they live their lives putting an end to the root of suffering. It is their mission to help all to attain to the Highest Good." K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy* (Tokyo Charles Tuttle Co., Inc. 1966), pp. 38, 41-42, 329-330.

this experience of personal growth “is to fail in understanding” (MT 66). On one occasion Whitehead remarked to Lucien Price: “I wish I could convey this sense I have of the infinity of the possibilities that surround us—the limitless variations of choice, the possibility of novel and untried combinations, the happy turns of experiment, the endless horizons opening out. As long as we experiment . . . we and our societies are alive; when we lose this sense of novelty we and our societies are dead, no matter how externally active we and they may be, no matter how materially prosperous they and we may appear. . . . Without adventure civilization is in full decay. . . . The pure conservative is fighting against the essence of the universe” (DANW 163; AI 360, 354).

The rejection of permanence, the acceptance of the transitoriness of life (*anicca*), and the absence of any unconditioned substratum (*anatta*) are the best known features that Buddhist and Process Philosophies share together. Like the Buddhists, Whitehead, who is nearer to Buddhism than all other Process Philosophers, asks us to get beyond the bifurcated self, bifurcating everything in Nature (LLP-W 490). The major living exponent of Process Thought, Charles Hartshorne, comments that in Whitehead American philosophy has finally “found its way to a view which was first clearly formulated two thousand years and more earlier by the Buddhists, with their ‘no-soul, no-substance’ doctrine” (WP 130).

Whitehead and Buddhism here find common cause against the Aristotelian notion of individual substances; far from being a mere academic matter, this notion of substance was considered by Whitehead to be accountable for much of the immorality of the modern age (WP 169). All events and processes constitute realities existing and originating interdependently, no one of which has a self-established nature (*vābhāva*) capable of accounting for the qualities we perceive in our experience. Locke was mistaken here. Each center of experience acquires its aesthetic richness from all the other moments in the stream of experience from which it has emerged, with each moment in turn contributing itself to those that follow.

Buddhism teaches people to seek their security, their identity, their sense of worth and participation, in these simple and original centers of relation. Wherever they live, whether rich or poor, pigmented or white, people are alive primarily in the memories, perceptions, and anticipations which are linked together to constitute the world where flowers bloom, birds sing, and people

encounter the issues of the day. This is the “really real” world with nothing left over, because all conditions are present in simultaneous correlation, as Govinda puts it; it is because of this living juxtaposition and dynamic succession of events in their momentariness that “the possibility of becoming free is conceivable. . . . Life knows no absolute units but only centres of relation, continuous processes of unification, because reality cannot be broken up into bits; therefore each of its phases is related to the others, thus excluding the extremes of complete identity or non-identity.”²

To those who seek their identity elsewhere, whether in knowledge, in social power, or in some goal or good for which culture-bound specifications have been formulated, even Nirvana would turn out to be the world of tragic suffering Buddhists call *samsara*. This is what Nagarjuna taught eighteen centuries ago with a philosophical impact in the East that is comparable in some ways to the influence of Plato in the West.

What we call reality is a stream of events—Buddhists sometimes called them “point instants” or “fleeting moments” (*khanavāda*)—in which “neither physical nature nor life can be understood,” as Whitehead argues, “unless we fuse them together as essential factors in the composition of ‘really real’ things whose inter-connections and individual characters constitute the universe” (MT 204f). The real point, Whitehead says, is that the essential connectedness of things can never be safely neglected. This is the doctrine “of the thorough-going relativity which infects the universe and which makes the totality of things as it were a Receptacle uniting all that happens” (AI 197).

In Process Philosophies, everything is continuous with everything else, no gulfs being possible between man and nature, mind and body, matter and spirit, science and religion, subject and object, and the place of value in a world of fact. Indeterminate situations are forever emerging out of the process of events, and are being gathered into new syntheses to become new possibilities for the adventure going on in ourselves and the rest of nature. The sense of our being individual actualities in a world of interdependent becoming is itself “the gift of aesthetic significance,” tipping us off balance beyond the finite immediacy of any one occasion of experience, making it physically and psy-

² Lama Anagarika Govinda, *The Psychological Attitude of Early Buddhist Philosophy* (London: Rider & Co., 1961), pp. 56-57.

chologically impossible for us to will that any moment should live forever (MT 165). Like the millions upon millions of actual entities constituting the human being as a complex society of "cells of experience," men and women find *their* natural rhythm of life in acquiring new increments of quality that permit fuller and more uninhibited awakening of the total organism with all its native endowments as they mature.

Increasing depth, range, and vividness of felt quality becomes the ultimate aim of life, because this is the direction in which we find "the eternal greatness incarnate in the passage of temporal fact" (AI 41). The whole purpose of those "generalizing insights" which constitute the heart of philosophy is to open these awakening moments of our experience to more of the fullness of existence, to feel more vividly and widely the qualitative flow of the universe that is reaching out on every side, expanding and creating a deeper and vaster world of interdependent relations as we live. Each of these moments or "cells" of experience is self-originating in a sense, though not literally self-achieving as a matter of fact, since the latter, as Dewey comments, "is a matter of connectedness" (LLP-W 655), a connectedness in which "the immanence of the past" is found "energizing in the present" (AI 241). Human occasions of experience do not inherit in a one-dimensional personal order alone, since each occasion is "broken into by innumerable inheritances through other avenues" (AI 243), the illustration closest to us being our bodies whose functionings are occasions of energy transference from physical nature stretching into the environment at large (AI 242). The human body is a set of occasions with its own "production of novel togetherness" emerging as an "experiential togetherness" out of the "extensive continuum" of the world at large (PR 32, 288, 147). Each occasion in this "stream of experience" is a really "decisive moment" with the past immanent in the present, "energizing" the immediate occasion (AI 241), and in turn being freshly "energized" by present happenings.

In Whitehead's universe it must always be remembered that there is absolutely nothing apart from individual actual entities and their relations, the most concrete relations being those selective prehensions which make of reality a social process. "There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real" (PR 27-28). "The world within experience is identical with the world beyond experience, the occasion of experience is within the world and the world is within the occasion" (AI 293). Whitehead refers to this as the

“paradox of the connectedness of things:—the many things, the one world without and within” (AI 293).

The universe is thus “the becoming of ever-new events” (WP 135) in a process defined as “the becoming of experience” (PR 252), now and decisive at each moment, with creation occurring at every point because every occasion is self-creative (PR 130ff). All individuals preceding and succeeding one another in these “streams of experience” constitute “a sympathetic inheritance” (WP 16), each member of necessity being self-enjoyed rather than self-interested (LP 273), even the self of the future being “also another” (CSPM 198). The ‘being’ of any occasion of experience, therefore, is “constituted by its ‘becoming.’ This is the principle of process” (PR 34–35).

Buddhism and Whitehead meet on this ground. Becoming is “no longer the enemy of permanence, but its everlasting foundation” (WP 169); notions of process and existence presuppose each other (MT 131). In Buddhism, this is the concept of “conditioned genesis,” *pratītya-samutpāda*/*paṭicca-samuppāda*, a term Nakamura translates “the interrelatedness of all things.” “Every morning is a new fact with its measure of change” (PR 207). The unity of any person or thing through time covers, as Hartshorne puts it, “an ultimate multiplicity of momentary states or ‘flashes’ of reality” (CSPM 177). “The formula,” Govinda writes, “shows itself as the necessary counterpart of the anatta-idea which emphasizes the character of existence and conceives the individual from the standpoint of life and growth, in contrast to the fossilized concept of an absolute entity which would logically call for similarly absolute (lifeless) laws.”³

Buddhism is centered in this kind of continuing analysis by individuals of their own passing moments, their own rich qualitative flow. For twenty-four centuries this inquiry and analysis has been going on, and no idea has withstood scrutiny unless it could illumine the compulsions and passions, the unexamined unconscious drives, and the widespread temptation to seek the security and renewal of human life in something beyond or behind the succession of experienced events. Wherever Buddhist perspectives have become habitual as a controlling style of life, reality is felt in each person’s experience as events linked organically in multiform relations, each event or actuality dependent upon its

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

predecessor (“dependent origination”) but independent of events that follow or are contemporary with it in any series. The actualities of the moment, therefore, are truly novel, “interrelated,” as Nakamura says, but novel forevermore.

One of the corollaries of Process Thought is its awakening from self-centered and man-centered orientations. Whitehead has no more tendency than Buddhism to place man in the center of things; man is an organic part of the natural order of events. He and the rest of nature are constituted alike by activities and occasions and their relations. The individual who enjoys an experience is creating itself in the process of that enjoyment, working like any other organism to synthesize what is relevant in the environment of other entities with which it interacts. This is what Process Thought means by an “organism” and an “environment.” Process is with us, moving out of the past already vanished into the future yet to come, nourishing the present with the transient qualities the organisms are marvelously able to experience.

“Personal identity through experiences is a property of the experiences, they are not properties of the identity, or of the ego. . . . Egocentric motivations essentially consist in metaphysical confusion. And this is why a Buddhist termed the egocentric view ‘writhing in delusion’” (PP xii, xix). This is the resolution, according to Hartshorne, of the age-old egocentric and anthropomorphic fixation in which man has lived so largely as a predator fearful of being forgotten by the matrix that spawned him. Each individual, man or beast, flora or fauna, is a sequence of occasions. The fundamental realities are the “unitary cells of experience,” the “actual occasions” in the passing moment, all self-created into a society of linear experiences accumulated as life moves on. “This is the whole point,” Victor Lowe writes, “of the descriptive term ‘organism’ which Whitehead applies to actual entities, and which supplies the very name of his philosophy. He means that an organism⁴ determines the eventual character and integration of its own parts. Its growth is motivated by a living—if generally unconscious—aim at that outcome” (UW 41). Even the simplest photon has its “urge toward a *form for realization*” (FR 25). This movement out of the grip of the past into the fullness of a present which is

⁴ An organism to Whitehead is a process which organizes actual entities into a new fact. The many become one and are increased by one. An organism is any unitary structure whose nature demands a period within which to be itself; it is thus a process.

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

advancing forever into novel forms of “togetherness,” in Whitehead’s words, is “the ultimate rhythm of the universe” (FR 20–34). This process of creative advance “is the form of unity of the Universe” (AI 231).

Buddhists have understood this person-as-process viewpoint from the beginning. “Which, now, is thy true self, that of yesterday, that of today, or that of tomorrow, for the preservation of which thou dost clamor?” The self to which a man cleaves is a constant change.⁵ It is embedded in the process of events.

For Buddhism and Whitehead alike, man and the rest of nature are constituted by activities and occasions implicated interdependently together in “a general drive toward the conformation of Appearance to Reality” (AI 380). “It is a false dichotomy to think of Nature *and* Man. Mankind is that factor *in* Nature which exhibits in its most intense form the plasticity of nature” (AI 99). We have before us here the needed corrective to the Judeo-Christian world view widely acknowledged as being partly responsible, to say the least, for the “environmental crisis.” Teaching a divinely ordained dominion of man over nature, the *Genesis* account of creation has made harmony between the two almost impossible to think and even more difficult to achieve.

Whitehead was prepared a half century ago to talk of “the habit of ignoring the intrinsic worth of the environment,” the loss of interest in the relation of each organism to its environment, and the failure to note that the “foundations of the world” are to be found “in the aesthetic experience, rather than—as with Kant—in the cognitive and conceptive experience” (RM 105). As Victor Lowe observes, “Whitehead’s philosophy generates a moral attitude toward nature by teaching that there is nothing in the universe that is really and completely dead, mere material, with which we may do as our whims dictate” (UW 28). We are here, not to bring the universe under our dominion, but to celebrate the enhancement of quality in the passing moment and free it from all temptations to arrest its energizing flow.

It is just at this point that the confluence of Buddhist and Whiteheadian Thought is most likely to be felt in the contemporary world. Both adopt the standpoint of the explorer, forever extending the range of our awareness in a

⁵ Paul Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1894), pp. 138–139.

WHITEHEAD AND BUDDHISM ON THE ART OF LIVING

universe that is beyond our ken. Of Whitehead we might well repeat his judgment of William James, that his greatness lay in the way he had left his readers with a sense of their need for more receptive minds and hearts and a readiness “to find significance in new experiences from whatever direction they might come” (LLP-W 489). Even in his so-called Platonism, Whitehead reverses the habit of the “Greek cognitive bias” that has counted so heavily in making Western Civilization a long experiment in “cultures of belief.”⁶ The Forms are there, as Lowe says, “only as so many possibilities for realization in the flux of things—possible patterns of existence and possible ways of feeling the changing world” (UW 27). Whitehead never forgets that he is working in “the creative advance into novelty” with which his philosophy is involved, and that “no thinker thinks twice; for, to put the matter more generally, no subject experiences twice” (PR 43). The Forms, therefore, are for the enrichment of experience. *The art of reasoning is part of the art of living*, part of the general task of developing powers of understanding in ways that assist in extending the range of awareness. “The elucidation of immediate experience,” Whitehead insisted, “is the *sole* justification for any thought; and the starting point for thought is the analytic observation of components of this experience” (PR 6). “The attempt of any philosophic discourse should be to produce self-evidence” (MT 67). Sooner or later, each must work out his own clarification of his experience. Each must acquire “the habit of looking for oneself” (FR 37). Everyone recognizes this as an emphasis in the teachings of the Buddha.

Intellectual analysis has the goal in Whitehead and Buddhism alike, and in similar degrees though in different ways, of producing wider and more vivid awareness of the rich novel fullness of concrete experience which no amount of intellectual mastery can express. We are here at the very heart of Buddhist meditation. Through meditation and analysis the individual becomes a positive factor in breaking the strands of purely driven behavior, or socially controlled thought, with the result that he has his creative resources freed from wishful thinking, personal prejudice, cultural bias, and the projections of compulsive passions with which uncritical, culture-bound people explore their world.⁷

⁶ Robert Bellah, *Beyond Belief* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

⁷ Nolan Pliny Jacobson, *Buddhism: The Religion of Analysis* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), Ch. 4.

Purity of heart in the Buddhist perspective is a personal discipline that flushes and purifies these compulsive attachments; it is the experience of being progressively opened to participate in feelings that interact in the mutually sustaining interdependence of the world; it is the capacity to will, to affirm, the non-clinging Middle Way in which all tendency to live *in the light of* the relative and the fragmentary is brought to an end. This heightening of awareness, this turning of attention to the vivid feelings at the heart of creation draws its sense of potency and perpetual renewal from the live creature's experience of being constituted by its own becoming.

Buddhism and Whitehead stand together in emphasizing that rational principles, intellectual habits, along with their institutional embodiments are justified only in enhancing the flow of quality in the nerve endings and tissues of life; they serve as lures for experiencing more vividly the fuller nexus of "immediate experience"; they are forms of *misunderstanding* when used as principles with which to comprehend the universe (PR 281). Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* describes "the process by which subjective data pass into the appearance of an objective world. The philosophy of organism seeks to describe how objective data pass into subjective satisfaction. . ." (PR 135).

Nothing a man ever reaches "by the highest flight of thought" or penetrates in the deepest probing of meditation and analysis, nothing within the entire range of experience is inherently incapable of becoming incarnate in the qualitative flow of the live creature's direct encounter "in the ongoings of the world about him," an encounter in which the "varied wonder and splendor of this world are made actual for him in the qualities he experiences" (AE 22).⁸ Students who have followed Dewey's writings will recognize this as one of the neglected but central features of his thought.

Whatever is constructive in our logic and conceptual formulations is capable of shedding light into the concreteness of experience to enrich and intensify the actual occasions of life. Every situation has a qualitative fullness which "absorbs the intellectual" component when we philosophize after the fashion of Whitehead and Buddhism alike. It is one of the major sources of personal and social tragedy that the opposite is impossible; the total capacity for bodily

⁸ AE refers to Dewey's *Art as Experience*, not Whitehead's *Aims of Education*, which has not been used in our essay. See "Abbreviations and Notes" at the end of the essay.

experience, the felt qualities derived from the actual occasions of life, cannot be brought into conscious awareness in their full concreteness. The result is that an individual's experiences distribute themselves on two levels, one that can be symbolized and discussed, the other level defying formulation and destined thereby to be suppressed, atrophied, and driven literally beyond conscious control. What is chosen for development in the one-sided culture worlds of the past has always been the chief factor marking out such limits to what can be spoken and shared through the forms of conscious awareness. Mankind has suffered immense damage from these forms of forced striving and unconscious compulsion which suppress the widening of awareness.

A contemporary Platonist, Robert Brumbaugh, makes the issue here before us unmistakably clear as regards Whitehead's philosophy. Brumbaugh points out that Whitehead is Plato "turned upside down,"⁹ meaning that for Whitehead the forms, patterns, and ideals employed in understanding the world are "erroneous unless they are construed in reference to a background which we experience without any conscious analysis" (LLP-W 680). The long controversies over the role of language, concepts, propositions, and all other elements of human understanding have left us with the equally long persuasion that the universals in our experience are ideas, rather than qualities, as Whitehead insists. For both Buddhism and Whitehead, and for Process Philosophy generally, the main line of reality lies in no doctrine or concept of anything within or beyond the world. "The foundations of the world" are found in the process of aesthetic enrichment enabling us to inherit more perceptively and fully the legacy of our own activities and the flow of quality in our experience (RM 105). Aesthetic description, therefore, is "the most penetrating description of the universe" (RM 76) and aesthetic order is the fundamental order.

⁹ Cf. James: "Professor Bergson inverts the traditional Platonic doctrine absolutely. Instead of intellectual knowledge being the profounder, he calls it the more superficial . . . grossly inadequate . . . enabling us to make short cuts through experience. . . . It cannot reveal the nature of things. . . . Reality *falls* in passing into conceptual analysis; it *mounts* in living its own undivided life—it buds and bourgeons, changes and creates. . . . Philosophy should seek this kind of living understanding of the movement of reality, not follow science in vainly patching together fragments of its dead results." William James, "Bergson and His Critique of Intellectualism," *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1909), pp. 252, 264.

The truth or falsity of what we understand is of vital importance, as science and logic insist, but propositions are judged in a deeper light besides. The most valid statement may be a glaring instance of the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness," emphasizing a part in isolation from its organic "interrelatedness" with events "stretching away into regions beyond our explicit powers of discernment" (SMW 93). Propositions are most significantly judged in respect to their function as "lures for feeling," luring the vivid qualities of immediate experience into ever enlarging wholes that heighten "the unity of feeling" on ever "higher levels of coordination" (PR 281, 252). Except for its services in promoting such consummatory experiences, even our truths sink to trivialities (AI 311-323) as compared, for example, with the discord and the deprivation experienced in the tameness "of outworn perfection" and the consequent "thirst" or "Eros" or "zest" for the increasing range, depth, and vividness of felt quality in which we experience the "foundations of the world" (AI 323-332, 342-358, 364-365). Linguistic meanings and vivid unities of aesthetic feeling may hamper man's development toward widening ranges of awareness. The habit of trying to incorporate the meaning of our experience in linguistic form, particularly, must be looked upon as a habit associated with the childhood of the race. Efforts to understand forms of thought apart from the concrete feelings of the fuller nexus of our lives always commit the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. They also commit millions of men and women to be imprisoned in forms of understanding that are used, not to enlarge understanding, but to control and confine what they can see and feel and do.

Insofar as our organism is spontaneously alive synthesizing the novelities accessible to each "cell of experience," each individual "cell" lays upon the universe the obligation of conforming to *it*, of making room for *it*, rather than vice versa as in the case of universal ideas (S 39). "All entities except one," Whitehead writes, "are inconsistent with the production of the particular effect which the one entity would produce" (MT 82). In this emphasis, too, Whitehead and Buddhism are found together, a fact of more than occasional importance when we remember that a world civilization appears to be taking shape, based not upon belief systems but upon forms of interchange that take into account novel forms of experience and entirely new angles of perception. This new order of life signals, perhaps, the end of the long assumption in the West that the only reality worthy of our concern is the one upon which we

can place the stamp of intelligible, linguistically-communicable form. Millions of men and women are discovering the power of the flow of quality in their experience, along with its power to change the world. It is one of Whitehead's most cautious auditors, Henry Nelson Wieman, who insists that the essence of life "is essentially and substantively quality. . . . Quality is objective fact. It is ultimate reality. It is the substance of which all is made. . . . It is energy, but energy is quality to human experience,¹⁰ and that means ultimately and absolutely for human living" (SHG 303). Two conclusions are drawn, first "the repudiation of all belief and knowledge as ultimate sources of security and value"; and, secondly, the ground of all hope for human renewal and increase of value "is the concrete fullness of quality, which is never identical except in small part with the structures by which we know it."¹¹

The art of living is "the habit of enjoying vivid values" (SMW 200). Beyond all belief and rational analysis there is an aesthetic richness, a flow of quality that is the foundation of the world. Man has his growing capacities of understanding in order to expand and deepen his enjoyment of this heartland of creation. Process philosophies, including the first one, direct attention to the passing moment to reinstate *within it* the joy and happiness customarily so irresponsibly cut away that it becomes poor in the qualities that make life unspeakably good.

In Nārada Thera's commentary on the *Abhidhamma* we find the following: "Past is gone. Future has not come. We live only for one thought-moment and that slips away into the irrevocable past. In one sense there *is* only the eternal *now*. . . . As Nibbāna is eternal it does not belong to the past, present or future. It is timeless . . . independent of time."¹²

Considerations such as these help to account for the Buddhist emphasis that Nirvana is "the eternal joy" realized with the extinction of all compulsive

¹⁰ Cf. William James, *The Energies of Men* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1917), p. 11: "Everyone feels that his total *power* rises when he passes to a higher *qualitative* level of life." Cf. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Activation of Energy*, trans. René Hague (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Inc., 1971).

¹¹ Wieman's unpublished "Intellectual Autobiography" in Southern Illinois University Archives, Carbondale, Illinois.

¹² Nārada Thera, *A Manual of Abhidhamma* (Colombo: Vajirārama, 1956), Vol. I, pp. 180-181.

clinging.¹³ In its earliest records we find Buddhism emphasizing that “what is void as to concepts is *not* devoid of happiness.”¹⁴ On the contrary, when proper conditions are provided, “*then there will be joy and happiness, and peace, and in continual mindfulness and self-mastery, one will dwell at ease.*”¹⁵ Similarly, Whitehead writes that each individual act of concrete “self-enjoyment” is an “occasion of experience,” and these are the “really real things which in their collective unity compose the evolving universe, ever plunging into the creative advance” (MT 206).

Writing out of the early sources accessible to him in Ceylon, Jayatilleke remarks as follows: “It is of the nature of things that delight arises in a joyful person, . . . [and that] . . . a person who is joyful need not determine in his mind that delight should arise in him. . . . It is *in the nature of things (dhamattā)* that joy arises in a person who lacks remorse.”¹⁶ Out of the 121 classes of consciousness which are intricately mapped and discussed in early Buddhist psychology, “sixty-three are accompanied by joy. . . . The more man progresses, the more radiant and joyful will be his consciousness. Happiness, indeed, may be called a characteristic of progress. In the course of its development it . . . grows into that serenity which radiates from the face of the Enlightened One with that subtle smile in which wisdom, compassion, and all-embracing love are mingled.”¹⁷ Of five higher states of consciousness (*jhanas*), joy is left behind only in the highest two.¹⁸

¹³ K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nāgārjuna's Philosophy* (Tokyo: Charles Tuttle & Co., Inc., 1966), p. 51.

¹⁴ Bhikkhu Nananda, *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1971), p. 75.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98 (italics in original), translated from *Digba Nikāya*, Pali Text Society Translations Series, Vol. I, p. 260.

¹⁶ K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1963), p. 448 (italics in original).

¹⁷ Lama Anagarika Govinda, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 86. Serious confusion will result if it is not clearly understood that feeling is a technical concept in Whitehead's writings, a neologism meaning “a positive prehension” (UW 45, PR 249–250). Otherwise, there could only be a complete parting of the ways when we read different Buddhist meanings of the term, such as Narada Thera, *op. cit.*, declaring that “Nibbanic bliss has nothing to do with feeling” but at the same time is called “the ultimate pleasure.” (p. 83) Feeling in Whitehead has nothing to do with its meaning in Buddhist writings.

Buddhism might appropriately be called the celebration of the joy of living. Almost alone among the philosophies of mankind it seems to be saying that joy is the natural condition of man's life insofar as it is free from special "vacuous actualities" (PR 43) that dominate what people can experience out of the fullness of the universe; it is the natural order of life, opening the doorway to a more fully human future. "The real world is the aesthetically breathtaking colorful world"¹⁹ and it is no longer necessary to infer non-unaesthetic material and mental substances whose interaction has the effect of throwing our emotive, aesthetic selves and the other directly sensed concrete facts of experience out of nature, as unreal phantasms."²⁰

All progress in attending more and more fully to the rich qualities of the passing moment, as Buddhists think of it in Burma, for example, is growth in one's awareness in the passing moment. "The being of a past moment has lived, but does not live, nor will it live; the being of a future moment will live, but has not lived, nor does it live; the being of the present moment does live, but has not lived, nor will it live."²¹ Such growth involves a disciplined struggle to divest ourselves of every bias and inflexible posture imposed upon us by mental habits and established meanings (RESM). "To set free the sense of the real

¹⁹ It should be observed, however, that for Whitehead "a million sunsets will not spur on men towards civilization" (AI 348); the "spur" is accounted for by the ever deepening and widening "selective prehensions" in which new possibilities for aesthetic unities are realized by the "diverse organisms which make up the universe." No one, moreover, ever looks at the same sunset twice, nor thinks the same thought twice. The world is made of "cells of experience" selectively prehending other actual occasions in an environment constituted by more of the same. There is only "the eternal *now*" which is to say that there is only these "cells" of experience acquiring new increments of quality, each one being "lured" into forms of togetherness that heighten the quality of wider and more inclusive levels of coordination. This increasing depth and vividness of the "actual occasions" which are the only really real things indicate the nature of "the creative advance."

²⁰ F. S. C. Northrop, "Foreword," in D. W. Sherburne, *A Whiteheadian Aesthetic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. xxv. For a Whiteheadian elaboration of "the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum," Northrop's neologism incorporating a Western meaning of Nirvana, see CN, Chs. 1, 6, 7, and espec. pp. 12-14, 108, 125.

²¹ *Vimuddhi-Magga*, in Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), p. 150.

from its moorings in abstractions constitutes the chief-most mission of the farer on the Middle Way."²²

III. *The Art of Reasoning*

It is no part of the thesis of the present essay that the vision here of the nature of reality as the flow of quality in the experienced moment is easily won. Immediately after his Enlightenment the Buddha felt deep discouragement at the thought of encouraging a similar enlightenment in others. Would men and women understand? Would they be able to penetrate their forced motivations and fabricated self-systems into the radiance of life's aesthetic center?

The convoluted obstacles winding like the ancient Labyrinth around us conceal the secret of life's ultimate source of meaning and renewal far too deeply ever to be spoken except in the most superficial way. A system of mental habits to which we are accustomed has prevailed for many thousands of years. It expresses itself in the anthropological view of culture as having an existence and momentum of its own, apart from the organic wholeness of the individuals who are its bearers. Men and women have come to their conclusions about life, either like schoolboys copying the answers out of the back of the book and from the walls of their cultural caves, or thinking in the time-honored patterns of artificial compartments sealed off, Tokugawa-like, from vital contact with life's energizing centers. In either case they have harnessed their abstractions to the task of "keeping alive" (FR 29), with little regard for the unexplored possibilities embedded in the very matrix of their own lives. The rational principles of such people throw what William James called the "really growing world" in as deep a darkness as the other side of the moon.

No individual is ever consciously aware of more than a small part of what it has selected out of the depths of life, and from the totality of things, as necessary for the achievement of its aims (PR 517). "We experience more than we can analyze . . . and we analyze in our consciousness a minute selection of its details. . . ." (MT 121). Consequently, most of what is said with our conscious minds and speech "is shallow and superficial. Only at rare moments does that deeper and vaster world come through into the conscious thought

²² Ramanan, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-248.

or expression; they are the memorable moments of our lives, when we feel—when we know—we are being used as instruments of a greater force than ourselves for purposes higher or wider than our own. Men of genius have the moments more often, but nearly everyone has had a few moments of such illumination” (DANW 368–369). This is why it is a “vicious regress,” Whitehead argues, “from the indefinite complexity of what is felt” to attempt to control life, thought, communication, memory, and aspiration under the dictates of the forms of understanding. The universe “stretches beyond our finite powers of understanding. The great thinkers from whom we derive inspiration enjoyed insights beyond their own systems. They made statements hard to reconcile with the neat little ways of thought which we pin on to their names” (MT 113).

This is why the universe in all its fullness and continuing advance into novelty can hardly be expected to come even remotely within the range of human understanding, except in special systems in specialized sciences that lose their relevance as soon as they are removed beyond their focus.

The function of reason is to foster the ultimate momentum of life, the growth of quality in experience. The art of reasoning is to find methods and ways of achieving fresh penetration into “the unknown, the unexperienced” (MT 87) beyond the “barren existence of inorganic nature” to which we seem to relapse when we acquiesce to conformity with what has been discovered and done (MT 87). Reason fulfills its function when understanding has been gained, but understanding is incomplete unless it is moving us into wider and deeper aesthetic experience in the world. “It is Reason, thus conceived, which . . . civilizes the brute force of anarchic appetite” (FR 26).

As in any form of art, it is the organic wholeness of the experience here under discussion that communicates out of one’s solitariness the new actuality ever being born in the process of becoming. All the “uncertainty, mystery, half-knowledge and doubt” of our lives serve in rational minds but to lure us to find new ways to free ourselves and one another from the grip of distractions and illusory compulsive passions and drives. Moving in this direction, we discover that the enhancement of the fleeting qualities of the present moment is the central capability of this “fecundity of nature” and that in man this capability has no apparent limit, “our lives being passed in the experience of disclosure” (MT 87).

One never feels what Hocking called "the thud and the impulse of the engines of reality" nor experiences the world afresh in its increments of new quality until one has spent much time alone in "the solitariness of one's own experience." How lucid any individual, moreover, may become concerning the "really real" things whose interconnections and individual characters "constitute the universe" (MT 204f) depends upon many factors that still remain beyond our ken.

The banks of custom, however, between which human living has been canalized are losing the force of "natural law"; global intermingling of feeling and perspective have already robbed the ancestral order of its once irresistible force (FR 32). We see the stable standards of the present age "slipping away from under us" (FR 66). We are embedded in the stream of nature, which is "never complete . . . always passing beyond itself" (PR 442), forever passing beyond belief. As Galileo said of the earth, we move, because we live in a universe we may think of as everywhere "advancing into novelty" (PR 339-340). Like the universe, we are passing beyond ourselves, using all the arts of reasoning to overcome the gravitational pull of philosophical categories, linguistic, institutionalized unconscious compulsions, and to discover in immediate experience what Dewey called "the consummatory experiences of life." In a post-Darwinian, post-Einsteinian, post-Whiteheadian age, this new perspective among sane and informed people has become one of the daily possibilities of life. In the matrix of this new perspective, such men and women experience the dynamic therapeutic and real meaning of peace. Leaving the anaesthetic connotations of the word behind them, they experience peace as "a positive feeling . . . a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, un verbalized and yet momentous in its coordination of values. Its first effect is the removal of stress of acquisitive feeling arising from the soul's preoccupation with itself. Thus Peace carries with it a surpassing of personality . . . a grasp of infinitude, an appeal beyond boundaries. . . . It results in a wider sweep of conscious interest. It enlarges the field of attention. Thus Peace is self-control at its widest,—at the width where the 'self' has been lost, and interest has been transferred to coordinations wider than personality. . . . The experience of Peace is largely beyond the control of purpose. It comes as a gift" (AI 367-368).²³

Winning through to such new perspectives, however, involves in the Bud-

dhist philosophy a purification of the deepest sources of what is thought. The vision is not won, for example, by remaining on the page of a book. The required reorganization of our mental structure and the habitual uses of reason cannot take place without meditation, analysis and deep probing in what Bergson called "the depths of our experience" at the point "where we feel ourselves most intimately within our life . . . renouncing the factitious unity which the understanding imposes on nature."²⁴ Minds long persuaded that their own deep habits were veritable extensions of nature must find ways of thrusting "intelligence outside itself," as Bergson put it with the rigid Euclidian-Newtonian form of traditional intelligence chiefly in mind. As a recent study of Bergson puts it, "the natural inertia of our thought tends to reduce this effort to a minimum; we try to reinterpret new facts in the terms of old experience; only reluctantly do we introduce new assumptions and even more reluctantly do we change the total intellectual perspective."²⁵

The transformation of intellectual perspective, in the last resort, is a transformation in what we are becoming. It leads eventually beyond egocentricity, beyond culture-bound anthropomorphic perspectives, into the clarification of what is fundamental, as the Japanese word for the Buddhist teaching, *sbūkyō*, implies. Buddhists have always warned, for example, against taking some conception of Buddha or Nirvana as a goal devoutly to be sought, because this would miss the whole point that the mind is rational when it is used to extend the range of awareness. "A man with deep thought-attachment is no better than a beast. Those whose thought-attachment is less deep are ordinary men. He who has no such attachment is Buddha."²⁶ This may serve as the Japanese model of the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness.

²³ The sense of actuality is "given from the depths of things, quite apart from any conscious purpose to bring it about, and extending beyond any finite region to the whole universe." David Lee Miller, Master's Thesis, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, June 1965: "The Significance of the Aesthetic in Whitehead's Metaphysics," p. 16.

²⁴ Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. A. Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911), p. 199.

²⁵ Milič Čapek, *Bergson and Modern Physics* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1971), p. 61.

²⁶ Shidō Munan Zenji, *Sokusbin-ki* "Descriptions of This Mind," trans. by Kobori Sōhaku and Norman Waddell, *Eastern Buddhist*, III, 2 (October 1970), p. 97.

A recent book out of Kandy asserts that people for the most part have been convention-bound, institution-centered, ego-dominated, and culture-encapsulated, "complacently perched on their cozy conceptual superstructures regarding the world."²⁷ Concepts properly understood are artifacts to be *seen through*. Buddhism is internal criticism, a philosophy using concepts to extend the range of awareness and deepen attention to the qualitative flow in experience, enabling us to celebrate the joy of living and appreciate the multiform variety of the world's aesthetic growth, its deep-rooted "habit of enjoying vivid values" (SMW 200).

What we are discovering in both Whitehead and Buddhism, then, is a new appreciation of the uses of reason and a deeper grasp of what it means to understand. Hartshorne puts the matter this way: "Understanding must justify itself by enriching the present. . . . Understanding should mean a higher mode of existence. . . . Something is wrong if understanding robs us of peace in the present, only so that we may, given luck, prolong our anxious existence into old age" (LP 240). It is a perverse sort of rationality that would consider this a philosophy of unreason. "The function of reason is to promote the art of life" (FR 2).

Buddhism is man's first systematic attempt to free himself from the tyranny of language, to borrow the title of a recent book on Wittgenstein. It is part of the art of reasoning to be free for the new creations of mind, as Einstein called them. When they have been sharpened and worn out in the process of use, concepts are given up, parked by the river of life, to use the metaphor in the Parable of the Raft. What appears to separate Buddhism and Whitehead, however, from Wittgenstein in this connection is that "the attempt to dislodge concepts at the purely intellectual level" leads on the one hand to infinite regress in thought, and leaves the conditions intact, on the other hand, which placed the high premium on conceptual attachment.²⁸ "To believe that by merely demolishing concepts or theories, one can rise above them, is to stop at the fringe of the problem."²⁹ This is the writing of a Buddhist philosopher

²⁷ Bhikkhu Nananda, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

WHITEHEAD AND BUDDHISM ON THE ART OF LIVING

who gives no evidence whatsoever of having encountered Whitehead or any other Process Thought in the West.

It has been part of the argument of the present essay that, following Brumbaugh, Whitehead must be understood as "turning Plato upside down."³⁰ There are reasons for believing, however, that the long and towering influence of Plato on Western thought over the past twenty-four centuries may be rivaled by Whitehead on a global scale for an even longer period of time. Hartshorne finds these reasons in Whitehead's unprecedented synthesis of facts from inorganic, plant and animal forms, such that it may take "a thousand or even ten thousand years of further reflection and inquiry" to explore the tremendous relational structure "which resolves the antinomies of subjective and objective, experience and thought, change and permanence, continuity and discreteness, internal relations and freedom . . ." (WP 55). The possibility Hartshorne suggests may well lead mankind to translate into Whiteheadian and Buddhist terms some of the central insights with which men and women have furnished their culture-bound cave. Plato's famous passage on the immortality of the soul, in the *Phaedo*, would take the following form:

A man of sense ought not to say, nor will I be very confident, that the description I have given of the aesthetic center of life is exactly true. Still, the venture is a noble one, with fresh encouragement in the growing sense of novelty and adventure in the world at large among people who are experiencing afresh "the interrelatedness of all things" free from the collapsing dogmatisms of the past. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about the stream of his experience who, having renounced the insatiable lures of the affluent society, and the indefinite postponement of life, as working harm rather than good, has cast off the culture-bound vulgarities now threatening the good earth. Let him be of good cheer in employing the "claws of wisdom," not in the increase of the mind's distinctive power to hate, nor its capacity for anxiety or domination over others, but in promoting that higher "tropism to the light . . . hidden below the rim of the world" (FR 51) in which we know that the

³⁰ *Supra*, p. 16.

enrichment of the qualities of the passing moment is the meaning and end of life. There may not be many decades left for the vast power of the superindustrial age to be brought under control by what is truly fundamental, transforming man's fragmentariness, his fear-driven love affair with permanence, and his temptations toward cynicism and despair.

Using his mind and all the arts of reasoning for achieving "a higher mode of existence" (LP 240) than the irrational habit of thoughtfully and artfully "keeping alive," man is ready to resume his journey into all his tomorrows, aiming in the unitary flow of perception, memory, and anticipation to intensify and vivify the quality of life.

Conclusion

It sometimes appears surpassing strange that Whitehead's thought should embody so many distinctive Buddhist traits, particularly when almost anyone in his sphere of activities would have been more likely to know Buddhism than he, and when his thinking included so many outright errors regarding the nature of Buddhism, as research by Inada has recently shown.³¹ It should be remembered, however, that Whitehead is the culminating figure exemplifying a type of analytic and synthetic thinking associated with a very large number of men who were active in many areas of inquiry, any list of which must include Charles Darwin, Claude Bernard, Ernst Heinrich Haeckel, Gustav Theodor Fechner, Henri Bergson, Samuel Alexander, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and the two Chicago professors who developed Whitehead in such different ways, Henry Nelson Wieman and Charles Hartshorne.

The confluence of insights from so many original men into the wide channel of Process Philosophy so rich in Buddhist perspectives is more intelligibly traced to objective conditions now bringing the two great traditions together. Conditions long in preparation in the West, one of these being the disintegration of the world views of both nineteenth century science and the Judaic-

³¹ Kenneth K. Inada, "Whitehead's 'actual entity' and the Buddha's anātman," *Philosophy East and West*, XXI (July 1971), p. 303.

Christian tradition, give rise to a very natural curiosity about cultural resources completely outside one's own ancestral order of life. The dissolution of the traditional religious outlooks of the West, moreover, had its counterpart in the philosophical changes of the Buddha's own lifetime.

Even Marxist scholars of Eastern Europe give evidence of acquiring an interest in Buddhism, chiefly because of its Process philosophy, and especially in those regions where the prevailing ideology appeared to be in danger of becoming more inflexible in the period before and after World War II. The most striking illustration since Lukàcs is the Czech scholar, Zbynek Fiser, who writes from Prague that the model most suitable to the swift currents of our time is that of process without substratum. Dialectical materialism, he says, needs no assistance from Buddhism, but Buddhism comes closest in his opinion to the becoming that has displaced being at the center of an evolving world.³² In the years immediately ahead we have reasons for believing that this insight regarding the fundamental congeniality of two process philosophies will be extended to include other process viewpoints which in Whitehead find their most powerful expression.

Abbreviations

The large number of different interpretations of Whitehead's work suggests the importance his writings are assuming among the most serious philosophers of our time. Scarcely any two interpretations agree on any of the major points. When one considers, along with such disagreements, the fact that the present essay endeavors to explore certain similarities between Buddhist and Whiteheadian thought, an endeavor anathematized by nearly all professional philosophers wielding the major influence in philosophical studies in England and the United States, it will be understood at once why Whitehead's own words are presented far more extensively than might seem warranted in an essay of a different kind. The following abbreviations appearing in context have permitted a fuller context of Whitehead's own thinking than could be tolerated with such frequent footnote documentation.

Whitehead

AI *Adventures of Ideas*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1933.

³² Zbynek Fiser, *The Questions of Being and Existence* (Praha: Svobodne Slovo, 1967); *The Consolation of Ontology* (Praha: Academic, 1967); and *Buddha* (Praha: Orbis, 1968).

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

- CN *The Concept of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1920.
FR *The Function of Reason*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958. (Princeton, 1929)
MT *Modes of Thought*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928.
PR *Process and Reality*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929.
RM *Religion in the Making*. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1926.
S *Symbolism, Its Meaning and Effect*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1927.
SMW *Science and the Modern World*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1925.

American Process Thought

- AE John Dewey. *Art as Experience*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1934.
CSPM Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*. LaSalle, Ill: Open Court Publishing Co., 1970.
DANW Lucien Price. *Dialogues of Alfred North Whitehead*. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1954.
LLP-W Library of Living Philosophers. P. A. Schilpp (ed). *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead*. New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1941, 1951.
LP Charles Hartshorne. *The Logic of Perfection*. LaSalle, Ill: Open Court Publishing Co., 1962.
PP Douglas Browning (ed). *Philosophers of Process*. New York: Random House, 1965. (Introduction by Charles Hartshorne).
RESM Henry Nelson Wieman. *Religious Experience and Scientific Method*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1926.
SHG Henry Nelson Wieman. *The Source of Human Good*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.
UW Victor Lowe. *Understanding Whitehead*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962.
WF Charles Hartshorne. *Whitehead's Philosophy: Selected Essays, 1935-1970*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972.
WPC A. H. Johnson. *Whitehead's Philosophy of Civilization*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962.

Buddhist Thought

The footnotes have been reserved largely for the fuller documentation they make possible of Buddhist philosophy.

Comment by the Author

Two points must be made clear which may be only implicit at best in the context of my essay. One has to do with the social implications of Whitehead's philosophy. The other has to do with the mystical dimensions of both Whitehead and Buddhism.

One of the surpassing wonders of contemporary philosophy is the difficulty almost everyone professes to have in perceiving the socially revolutionary character of Whitehead's thought. *A philosophy stressing the central significance of the aesthetic as the source of all human good and ultimately of all energy and hope is telling us something about ourselves*, something largely outside our angles of perception. A pathological condition of powerlessness is inherent in the tendency to think of the source of energy creating a higher order of civilization, not as centered in the live nexus of individualized feelings, but in accumulations of material goods and the social structures designed for their production. A world community obviously receiving its dominant direction from the proprietary consciousness of its ruling classes, reinforced by the "consumership" career of the vast majority of men and women, drives relentlessly "forward" toward ever greater affluence. It generalizes its consciousness into a universal concern to which all must become subservient. It has been successful beyond all imagining in its power to persuade people to "deaden," as Whitehead remarks, the aesthetic rhythm of their own lives, and to allow others to determine all the aesthetic features of their existence—their modes of thought, transportation, housing, shopping centers, education systems, and consumer goods. Such a society is driving recklessly toward imminent disaster, digging up its own roots, because the source of its power (the qualitative flow) remains hidden within the envelope of its own treasured idols, fantasies, and illusions. The resulting impoverishment of imagination is all that separates Whitehead from eventually being identified as one of the most radical thinkers of all time. For a sample of these social implications, see AI 124, 299, 353–354; SMW 297–298, 290–291; PR 515; MT 165; and WPC Ch. 4.

Concerning the second point, some students of Buddhism read it as being indefinite or ambiguous or undeveloped in its mystical dimensions and therefore find in Buddhism the mysticism Whitehead ranks "lower than the squirrel," the mysticism that is "overwhelmed by the sense of infinitude" (MT 107), the mere fusion of all reality into the "nonentity of indefiniteness" (MT 108). Whitehead holds this experience to be impossible or utterly unintelligible. "The mystic, in ineffective slumber, expresses the vacuity of the merely infinite" (MT 108). "Unlimited possibility and abstract creativity can procure nothing" (RM 152). Depth of actuality requires selective prehension; vivid experience requires selection and definiteness (RM 109; PR 517). Philosophy

THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

for Whitehead is mystical because for him philosophy is moved by wonder into "depths as yet unspoken" (MT 237). Edward Conze links Buddhism with "mystical intuition, trance and the power of transcendental wisdom" which alone "disclose the structure of the spiritual and intermediary worlds." He dissolves Buddhism into an esoteric mysticism and claims that this is what all great world religions have in common. Buddhism is linked with Plotinus whose teachings "took the hierarchy of levels of reality quite for granted and were indeed entirely based upon it." See his *Buddhist Thought in India* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1962), pp. 24-29, also his *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), p. 110. In Conze, Buddhism loses its integrity as the first process philosophy in history. See the vigorous opposing statement of Jean Filliozat, "The Psychological Discoveries of Buddhism," *University of Ceylon Review*, XIII, 2 and 3 (Apr-July, 1955), pages 69-82. The goal of Buddhist meditation, Filliozat argues, "is not 'ecstasy' as surmised by many scholars trying to find in European religious mysticism an equivalent for that actually pure psychological notion. It is by no means a raptus of the soul outside the body." Inada agrees with the latter type of view. "Buddhism is in actuality the most thoroughgoing naturalistic discipline the world has ever witnessed, though it is unappreciated in this light for the most part." See Kenneth Inada, "The Ultimate Ground of Buddhist Purification," *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968, 3 volumes. Vol. 2, page 146.