

Buddhism—Among the Theory and Practice

Anna Wysokińska-Zajchowska
University of Rzeszów

The article tries to bring the issues related to problematic aspects of conceptualization of Buddhism into words closer. The author pays attention to Japanese output of 19th century Japanese idea that grasped Buddhism into the theoretical frames of western philosophy. The attempt of translating Buddhism with terminology taken from European philosophy allowed not only to refresh the general look at Buddhism, but also to bring it closer to western man. By analyzing the western philosophy, we may often come across many aspects closed to Buddhist idea although we must bear in mind the fact that those similarities can often enough create a misrepresentation. The present article as an attempt is to answer the questions: To what degree can we really speak of knowledge of Buddhism being closed in language frames? Is it possible to get to know Buddhism without its practice, based only on the philosophical studies?

Keywords: Buddhism, philosophy, religion, language, deconstruction

There are many publications about individual schools of Buddhism; many attempts are also being taken to catch a complete thought of it. Both types of publications are by all means legitimate, not only because of noticing the subtle variations in the teaching of different masters, but also because of the elements that are common for all the schools. However, the present article is not going to be focused nor on the analysis of a chosen school, nor on presenting the general assumptions of Buddhism.

Although the teaching of Buddhism required putting it into the language frames, then bringing it into philosophy wasn't so obvious for many researchers. For this reason, the humanistic studies, in my opinion, owe a lot to the Japanese period of Meiji. It was the Japanese in XIX century that looked at Buddhism through the philosophical theories of West. Presentation or an attempt of translating Buddhism with terminology taken from European philosophy lets us not only to refresh the general view of Buddhism, but also to create a connection between reasoning of East and West. Despite the fact that this procedure allowed the researchers to approach the understanding, there will always be some understatement about studies of Buddhism. The lack of full understanding is not caused by a mind limits or even ignorance that is sometimes assigned to the western civilization. The problem is a result of an issue that not only Buddhism but also other religions must face rationalization. Japanese philosopher and Buddhist Enryo Inoue, referring to Kant's phenomena and noumena, tried to present the division what seems to be philosophical and available to learn in Buddhism and what is beyond human's mind (Inoue 2006, 621).¹ Although the issue itself isn't available for us, together with the development of studies, we accustom the knowledge that moves our cognitive borders and the border of what seems to be known for a human as unreachable holiness. Analyzing various text of Buddhist teachers, we can

Anna Wysokińska-Zajchowska, M.A., Department of Philosophy, University of Rzeszów, Poland; main research fields: Buddhism, Japanese Philosophy.

easily distinct the issues of an ethical character. This procedure isn't laborious for the researcher because the formulas how to proceed (or not to proceed) are often given straight. The problem seems to be the striving for truth and happiness and also the unity with the universe. All these terms cite more or less accurate connotations, but we can never be sure whether we understand them properly. Logical understanding of Buddhism proposed by Nishida Kitaro shows a certain thought scheme that we should acquire but although it approaches the researcher to the essence of consideration, it still leaves a lot of understatements. I won't therefore present here the solution to the problem because it is clearly impossible. Not without the reason, the large numbers of Buddhists meditate to divest themselves of an attachment to what is real and natural but not without reason only few manage to achieve. Pointing out on the need to get away from what we believe to be actual was postulated for many years but in a completely different area than Buddhists. Stoics and their postulate of subjection to the mind, ascetics worrying about the salvation or the Christian thinkers, all seem to notice the not only the "corruption" of the temporal world but also the "corruption of a human." Apparently none of them seem to have noticed the false of pretences of the world like the Buddhists do. For the needs of consideration, we can try to recall Platon's consideration; however in this case, leaving the cave (Platon 2009, 220-3)² seems to be impossible because, according to Buddhist thought, exit may turn out to be shadow. Being in the area where classical logic does not apply, where simultaneously a stone is and isn't a stone, striking to get to know something that clearly cannot be known seems to be unfounded. In this case, referring to Kant's world of noumena appears to be the best solution even in the name of a fight with what's unknown.

Human being is a kind of abstract, indefinite absolute that depending on the culture. Regardless of how is he going to be presented, it is always an anchoring. This anchor is necessary so that we are able to recall human's most essential goal anytime (Eco 2012, 40).³ Once again then do we come across something common between "them and us," since it is the perception of the human being as a creation by a being more perfect than the human not true for the Christians as well? Christians however managed better with that matter by putting God in the central place who not only is a creator but also a judge that cannot be contested or challenged. Although a faithful Christian should watch his doings in his lifetime, in case of a failure, he may always benefit from a prerogative of mercy by a strong regret which can ease the punishment. Each injustice will have a moral compensation in an unknown time (Sloterdijk 2011, 71-75).⁴ Following Saint Augustine's thought, a human can feel almost entirely dismissed from responsibility for his own doings because he is born with the God's mercy which leads him to a path of right choices. Buddhism does not offer such possibility; law of karma is identical for all the people and what lies ahead for this or that human's life depends on doings which are left for the judgment without questioning for an eventual intention or potential contrition. It is true that everyone has a free will and can decide about his way, however those ways despite their similarities are almost impossible to compare. A struggle to prove which creed is the right on is completely unfounded because each of it in its assumptions has the same precepts. The universalism of some attitudes may lead to a conclusion that none of mentioned hereby religions cannot vote for being the one and only.

Buddhism seems to be understandable on the basis of the possible comparisons. However, we must remember that we only talk of the aspects that can be easily found and read. What about our knowledge of the abstract issues, which can be so troublesome for the philosophers even if they separate them from Buddhism? How to know or even bring closer to the reader what is noumenal and what in principle should be unknowable and simultaneously knowable? The researcher has to admit a possibility of stepping across the logic, and just

like Umberto Eco in his consideration about the absolute spoke about impossibility of a circle's middle existence that has the middle everywhere but without the perimeter (Eco 2012),⁵ we have to realize that such a "circle" is possible or even move a step further and admit that it's possible to actually name it a circle. Adopting impossibilities becomes a priority here if we want to overcome the barriers that were imposed on us by ourselves. Can we therefore truthfully speak about anything if we apply the assumption that everything is possible?

Limiting Buddhism to philosophy, we undoubtedly expose ourselves to some vague hints, but simultaneously we can say that it is philosophy which is the only competent discipline, which by being limitless allows us to research Buddhism. The overcome, that is possible in philosophy, is the only mean to apply the existence of a circle that hasn't got a perimeter. However, the excessive theorizing may be dangerous—marginalization of the spiritual sphere. This problem has been brought to the pedestal in many polemics with a new, philosophical side of Buddhism. An attempt of a peculiar systemizing of Buddhism by translating it into a philosophical language of West leads to a certain fake. Inoue presents a reference to the western tradition that causes putting the labels which allowed us to get to know Buddhism from the scientific side but prevented us from striving to edification, so the most important matter was skipped. A person that wanted to study the teachings of Buddha would follow the philosophical path not the Enlightenment path (Atsushi 2015, 15).⁶ Even though referring to phenomena and noumena shows the researcher a certain thought direction, it realizes the existence of a unknown sphere, so referring to Kant seems to be a kind of an abuse and a rather naive attempt of western philosophy adaptation. It isn't only about a change of meanings and certain overrating that Yoshitani faulted, but a potential possibility of Enlightenment that could abolish the noumenal part of the world. D. T. Suzuki pays attention to differences between knowing through an actual practicing and knowing only through the concepts. A language that is not able to illustrate the reality uses the terms and concepts that more or less illustrate the world. To get to know Buddhism, one must truly experience it in the theoretical concept as well as the practical to the line of the mysticism. We therefore must notice the line between the two spheres, knowing that undertaking the practical aspects only will not bring you into the "mystical state," and won't bring the visions alive nor change the life of the meditating person. Undertaking the practices will not change the human, only a deep act of will can lead to changes and combined with meditations can bring one to Enlightenment. The experience is the basis of everything and it influences the creation of concepts although those terms used by us may have the roots in experience but are not something ultimate and unrepeatable (Suzuki 2007, 74-75).⁷ The biggest human problem, taking into consideration not only Buddhism but also the knowing the world, is the fact that we are satisfied with the terms which we treat as true and fully satisfying when it comes to knowing. Suzuki therefore pays attention to the necessity of "breaking through" the terms. If it is possible then to terminate the false perception of the world and reach the "truth," considering Buddhism we shouldn't refer to phenomena and noumena and neglect the use of Kant's terminology on the basis of the actual existence of the paradox. N. Kitaros paradox seems to be agreeable not only with Suzuki's concepts but also with the concepts given by the studies of Buddhism. Moving beyond the classical logic lets the researcher to see the imprisonment in the language schemes, although considering Buddhism, he cannot reach "the truth." In that context, adaptation of Kant's done by Inoue seems to be genuinely justified. Saying that no one can reach the truth about the all things, the philosopher talks about everyone that base their knowledge only on a shallow experiencing and staying within the given by the world terminology and also

about those who are brought up in a different culture or are guided by ignorance, and will not even try to free themselves from the fiction of their present life (Inoue 2006, 622).⁸

But would it be enough to talk about knowing Buddhism if we condensed it down to the theory? After all, we don't mean to reach the quiddity but to acquire the knowledge about one of the biggest religion of the world. The task does not seem to be complicated especially in face of basic concepts that seem to be familiar thanks to the European considerations that assume the inconsistency and continual transformations of beings, and considerations over the possibility of getting rid of suffering. The problem is that Buddhism also assumes something that in the language of European philosophy was so far absent. Restricted to experience, we often skip something that Suzuki claimed as "seeing" (Suzuki 2016, 36).⁹ It is not about the physiological process or the scientific look, but it is about the look through your intuition. In a certain sense, we can speak of confluence of H. Bergson's theory, but we must think about how much Bergson's intuitionism is confluent with Suzuki's. Certainly many researchers will put the equal sign between the Bergson's intuition and the intuition of Buddhism but it is not such an obvious matter. L. Shuming claims that we cannot speak of a complete knowing because of the fact that we still will be considering the certain frames and concepts therefore we won't reach the true matter (Hammerstrom 2015, 80-85).¹⁰ Learning about Buddhism, we may also not need psychology that seems to be foreign for Buddhism. The concept that divests ego from any kind of existence, not only joins together all the matters, but also presents the illusory of the term itself. According to D. T. Suzuki, the only way to be able to carry on the contemplations of what we describe as ego, is to move away from the psychology that can only limit us and give us a feeling of false identity (Suzuki 2016, 36-37).¹¹ Still to this day in the western culture, many factors that are known for creating "I" are being analyzed, while in Buddhism generally speaking we aim for disproving "I," although more adequate here is to refer to the logic of Kitaro's paradox "I" is not "I" and "I" is "I." We encounter here an obstacle that is hard to overcome how to illustrate something that exists in a different way from the one we know. The logic of paradox mentioned earlier seems to be a perfect form, but nothing more can be said; all we want to say is and isn't what we claim. Taking that into consideration, the sole referring to the emptiness turns out to be excessive simplification. At this point of our considerations, we notice that theory cannot truly concede the message of Buddhism. It may seem that at some point the theory hits the impassable barrier that cannot be forced even by the philosophy. Yoshitani Kakujiu speaks out about the problem of labeling caused by the western philosophy. Apparently where the study ends the faith begins, but the division between the intellectual and spiritual sphere also seems to be not the right way because mind as well as the emotions may present the mistaken view. An attempt of labeling together with a try of individual conceptualization only brings out from the object of cognition, and that brings us to the conclusion that, every attempt of conveying the studies of Buddhism based on the rules of opposites, intellect, emotion or divorcing from the context, leads to moving away from the true matter. The conflict between the imperfect language, faulty observations and the "truth" seems to be irresolvable. Although we may notice the postulate of reinterpretation in postmodernism, every kind of effort put into this process will end up by being imprisoned in concepts anyway. What is more, the postmodernism deconstruction unlike the Buddhism is logocentric, and that translates into the construction of a human. Foucault correctly emphasizes that human is "separated from the source" which brings to how will he be perceived (Foucault 2006, 298).¹² The issues that have their beginning in the human will determine him, and also immure him in time. The look at the human will depend on events and products of a given age. What seems to be an effect of an individual's will is only a reaction to

the incidents on which a human has no influence. Additionally, Lyotard emphasizes that the social bond which can be observed is formed by the language “moves.” Subject is created by the narration of its age, so it is a construction, a product of the age (Lyotard 1997, 66).¹³ “I” as a construction is a coincident look for the Postmodernists and Buddhists. Both subjects are passive, doomed to being stuck in a trap of his creation. However, we must admit that for Buddhists the deconstruction will be a liberation and for the postmodernist a home truth. Despite the coincidence of the constructionistic concept of “I” is certain, the agreement ends together with the moment when we realize that we must struggle to get to false observations since deconstruction provides completely different effects. The problem with the message of Buddhism’s thought not only involves the deconstruction of the language but mostly the deconstruction of thought, world, and perception of you in it (Loy 2017).¹⁴ Only after accomplishing of the reconstruction, in a certain sense on the personal level, we may start talking about Buddhism without problems of thought schemes. The only problem will therefore be a mystical aura which will be seen by people who didn’t acquire the deconstruction. The essence of the considerations is shown here—often hard to understand formula in reality forwards obvious truths, which seem not to recognize especially by a modern human. The problem of even indirect understanding is the result of language imperfection and that really lies within a lack of proper experience. Although over centuries it was hold that not only the researchers but also the Buddhist teachers forge its content by using unambiguous, stigmatizing terms (Atsushi 2015, 13-29),¹⁵ we cannot deny that the studies of Buddha were forwarded just by that “imperfect language.”

R. Magliola proves that Derrida’s thought turns out to be perfectly matching to “theoretical Buddhism.” Although the deconstruction of the language finds a justification even on the account of exploratory values, it will never provide a full insight into the nature of things, but can have an effect on human’s mind (Magliola 1984)¹⁶ giving him a certain kind of an impulse to aim for the enlightenment direction or (in case of people who don’t hold to Buddhism) an awareness that the analysis of sources cannot be held directly. Correction of certain elements to philosophy should therefore be understood as aiming for the goal. However, considerations are not being held for the philosophy itself but they provide an attempt to present the right way to the student. Theoretical Buddhism is therefore, in my opinion, not only a transfer of gathered by the masters, studies or compatible with the doctrine rules but, above all, an attempt of reawakening one’s mind. It is a certain kind of a closed in an imperfect language response to an unverballed premonition about a lack of correct perception and compelling desire to bury the hatchet between a faulty judgment and the reality.

Achievement of awakening enables to force the barrier dictated by the language, for Buddhists the forms of the language are equally ontologically empty like all the issues of the reality. Instead of making us self-conscious, the language provides a barrier that hinders our clear perception of reality in its true nature (Sieradzan 2017).¹⁷

Experience, practice, and at last deconstruction are the tools used for full understanding not only Buddhism, but also the world. Application of those means is essential because there are some elements impossible to be properly verbalized. The enlightenment is something that duck out of rational language and even Buddha himself spoke very little of it, but only leaded the ways that get to it (Loy 2017).¹⁸ Similarly, other great teachers of Buddhism speak of advantages sent by the enlightenment; they write about who is and who is not able to achieve it, and finally any attempts of speaking of enlightenment are treated as its absence (Inoue 2006, 622).¹⁹ J. Y. Leloup writes that in Buddhism books won’t provide us the answers to all the

questions nor will the participation in the masters' lessons (Leloup 2009, 1-12).²⁰ By the same token he emphasizes the role of meditation that has a task, inter alia, to lead to finding the answer yourself, that will spontaneously emerge after calming your thoughts down and rejecting false reality. The path of a practitioner, even in isolation from its religious dimension, can be recognized as a path of self-improvement although it will not be a process within the framework of certain professional skills. Meditation requires the abilities as a self-discipline, dedication, consistency, and finally compassion and openness. In other words, it's the spiritual self-improvement that is a result of "mind awakening." Although we can verbalize a certain outline of what can be achieved by meditational practices yet, as the enlightenment itself, changes occurring during the meditation escape from the accurate description. If we based our being in the world on the categorization and intellectual analysis, we would miss what is elusive or mistakenly interpret surround us phenomenon. Even though philosophical approach often locates the human in the world, it doesn't give the answer on the individual level and the potential concentration of the attention on the freely specified Logos exposes us to omit or reduce the role of your own being by, for example, throwing in your lot with God, appealing to determinism etc. Bearing in mind different, especially characteristic for the western world, consideration, we may think about those in which Buddhism will fit into. This consideration will bring you in the tough areas that cause disputes to this day: Buddhism—religion or philosophy. Inoue, Kitaro, and Suzuki saw both philosophical and religious dimension of Buddhism. Although Kosho Uchiyama does not deny that elements of philosophy occur in Buddhism, he emphasizes that it is a completely different way of searching for the truth than in the Greek or German philosophy.

Buddhism is pragmatism—orientated, in both theory and practice. The theoretical and practical parts are complementary and it is a mistake to base analyses only on one of those spheres. Undoubtedly for a western researcher, a problem is also that he is rooted in his own culture that determines the look at the certain phrases. Although knowing Buddhism without joining its devotees would be impossible, we have to bear in mind that it will be a largely limited knowing. The limitation will be the effect of an excessive attachment to meanings and also possibility of getting to know only those factors that don't require any commitment on the spiritual level.

Notes

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