Thomas Kochumuttam

Dharmaram, Bangalore

SŪNYATĀ AND TATHATĀ : EMPTINESS AND SUCHNESS

Śūnyatā and *tathatā* meaning, respectively, emptiness and suchness, are two key terms in Buddhism with special reference to its understanding of reality. What one immediately notices about them is that neither of them says what reality is positively. The term *śūnyatā* is obviously negative in its meaning, while the term *tathatā* is not particularly negative but is not positive either. Therefore, these two terms, which are almost the central ones in the Buddhist understanding of reality, are hardly helpful towards a positive definition of reality. Does it then mean that Buddhism is overly negative in its understanding of reality? The answer to this question is generally in the affirmative. But I feel that such an answer oversimplifies the point at issue. One may be led to such oversimplification if one understands *śūnyatā* and *tathatā* as synonymously applied to reality. Of course, there is at least one text which gives the term *tathatā* as one of the synonyms (*paryāyas*) of *śūnyatā*,[1] and in a certain sense it is so as well. However, a better understanding of the Buddhist concept of reality may be possible if *śūnyatā* is understood as referring to a negative process of understanding reality, and *tathatā* as referring to reality as such. *Śūnyata* is generally understood as referring to reality short of all attributes, to reality as such, and therefore as synonymous with *tathatā*. I do not deny the rationality of this argument. But I would rather say that *śūnyatā* (emptiness) should be understood with reference to one's own mind, and *tathatā* (suchness) with reference to the object. That is, the mind should be emptied of imaginary concepts about reality so that the latter may be understood as it is. Hence I would say that *śūnyatā* is an epistemological term while *tathatā* is an ontological one. In other words, *śūnyatā* refers to the emptying of one's own mind of all prejudices about reality so as to enable the mind to have a vision of reality in its suchness. One's mind in its ordinary state of operation is full of biases, prejudices and pre-conceptions about reality. In order that one may be enabled to see the latter in its suchness one's mind should first of all be emptied of all such pre-conceptions. That is,

1. Cf. *Madhyānta-vibhāga-kārikā* (henceforward *MVK*), I. 15.

it is not the reality that undergoes the change, it is the mind. Reality is given always in its suchness, and it can be seen as such if the mind is without prjudices. This is like treating a mental patient with psychoanalysis whereby he is helped to give up the ideas and ideals in the conscious level so that what lie in his unconscious may be revealed.

Buddhism in Terms of Psychoanalysis

Eric Fromm has made a remarkable comparative study of psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism.[2] He has convincingly demonstrated that in the last analysis the method and the aim of psychoanalysis coincide with those of Zen Buddhism. Psychoanalysis attempts to awaken the unconscious in man. The distinction between *the unconscious* and *the conscious* in man, and the presupposition that the former stands for the real and the latter for the unreal are among the basic tenets in psychoanalysis. Therefore, awakening the unconscious in man amounts to putting him in direct contact with reality awakening him to reality or enlightening him to reality. This is exactly, as Fromm has shown, the aim of Zen Buddhism : enlightening of the person to reality. Again, awakening the unconscious in man is achieved in psychoanalysis not so much by logical thinking and still less by blindly accepting as by gradually getting rid of the unreal in the conscious. Logical thinking and the assistance of a psychoanalyst may be helpful to some extent, but the awakening of the unconscious in the final analysis is a rather irrational process worked out by oneself. This applies also to Zen Buddhism where neither logical thinking nor belief in the words of the Zen Master is employed as effective means of achieving enlightenment. Exercise of mind in the irrational thinking and independence from given doctrines are indeed the basic means of achieving enlightenment in Zen. In short, both psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism advocate the emptying of the mind as the final means of the awakening of the unconscious or the enlightenment. Using the Buddhist terminology we may say that the mind must be made empty (*śūnya*) before the intuition of reality as such (*tathatā*) may take place. This is true not only in Zen Buddhism but in Buddhism as a whole. Therefore I propose to look at Buddhism, through the various phases of its development, in terms of pscychoanalysis in order to better understand the meaning of and the relation between the terms *śūnyatā* and *tathatā*. However, before going to the other areas of Buddhism, I shall first clarify further the comparison between psychoanalysis and Zen

2. E. Fromm, D. T. Suzuki and R. De Martoni, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*, (London : Souvenir Press [Educational and Academic) Ltd., 1974], pp. 77–121.

Buddhism. Here, of course, I do not mean to undertake a fresh comparative study of these two movements, but shall merely summarize the findings of Fromm. Then I shall indicate how the method of psychoanalysis is applicable in the entire history of Buddhism.

The Conscious and the Unconscious

Fromm mentions three senses in which the terms *conscious* and *unconscious* are used. In the first place they may, respectively, mean *awareness* and *unawareness*. For example, one may be said to be conscious with reference to experiences of which one is aware, and to be unconscious with reference to experiences of which one is unaware. Secondly, *conscious* and *unconscious* may be taken to mean two different parts of personality, each with its own specific contents. In the third sense consciousness is identified with reflecting intellect and the unconscious with reflected experience. Of these three meanings Fromm prefers the first one which he calls the functional meaning of the terms *conscious* and *unconscious*. For the purpose of the present article we need not concern ourselves about the exact meaning of the terms *conscious* and *unconscious*. We shall use the term *unconscious* to refer to experiences of which one is unaware, and the term *conscious* to refer to experiences of which one is aware. What is important for us here is the fact that one's experiences belong to these two categories : *unconscious* and *conscious*.

Both Freud and Jung consider the unconscious as "the cellar of a house, in which everything is piled up that has no place in the superstructure"[3] which is the unconscious. They both agree that the unconscious stands for the real while the conscious stands for the fictitious. Their description of the unconscious and the conscious are apparently different, but they ultimately seem to mean the same. For Freud the unconscious is the seat of irrationality whereas for Jung it is the seat of wisdom. However, what Freud means by irrationality cannot be different from what Jung means by wisdom, for wisdom is not necessarily rational in the usual sense of the latter term. For example, the religious instinct, which for Jung is part of the unconscious and therefore also part of wisdom, is for the most part irrational. Therefore it is clear that for Jung 'wisdom' is not the opposite of 'irrational'. On the other hand, he has contrasted wisdom with the intellectuual : for him if the unconscious is the seat of wisdom the

3. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

conscious is the intellectual part of personality. Freud's valuation of the unconscious also is different from that of Jung. For the former the unconscious contains mainly man's vices, while for Jung it contains mainly virtues. But even this difference in valuation does not contradict the statement that for Freud and Jung the unconscious stands for the real as against the conscious standing for the fictitious. Even when Freud says the contents that of the unconscious is vicious, he does not mean that they are fictitious (unreal) as are those of the conscious. It may be that for Freud the distinction between the vicious and the virtuous is rather conventional and relative ; in any case it does not correspond to the distinction between the real and the unreal (fictitious). As a matter of fact, "the content of the unconscious, then, is neither the good nor the evil, the rational nor the irrational ; it is both, it is all that is human." [4]

The contents of the conscious, on the other hand, are fictitious mostly because it is socially conditioned. The society imposes its ideas and ideals on the conscious. These ideas and ideals may be fictions fabricated by the ruling minority to justify their exploitation of the majority. While filling the conscious with fictitious ideas and ideals the society also prevents one's awareness of reality. Moreover, the individuals can come to the awareness of an experience only insofar as it can be organized in thought categories supplied largely by the society. That is, one does not ever become aware of an experience as such, but only insofar as it is organized into the given categories of thought and language, and thereby distorted at least to some extent.

To condition its members with fictitious ideas and ideals may be a necessity on the part of the society for its survival. But it becomes a necessity also on the part of the individuals for their survival in the society. For an individual completely alienated from the society cannot survive ; he must therefore necessarily relate himself to the society on the one hand by accepting the given patterns of thinking, speaking and living, and on the other hand by not permitting himself to become aware of the impulses which are incompatible with the socially permissible ones. The result is that an average man is far from reality, his existence unauthentic and delusional, and his vision of reality badly distorted :

> The average person's consciousness is mainly 'false consciousness', consisting of fictions and illusions, while precisely what a

4. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

> person is not aware of is reality. We can thus differentiate between what a person *is* conscious of, and what he *becomes* conscious of. He *is* conscious, mostly of fictions ; he can become conscious of the realities which lie underneath these fictions.[5]

The psychoanalyst takes it upon himself to help the average person " become conscious of the realities which lie underneath these fictions ", make the unconscious conscious, awaken the unconscious in him, get in touch with reality, enlighten himself to realities hidden in the unconscious. Here the role of the psychoanalyst is not so much to impart theoretical knowledge as to lead the client to the deeper layers of the latter's unconscious which as a result will be transformed into the conscious. This in effect is the discovery of one's unconscious, which subsequently replaces what was so far the conscious. This discovery of the unconscious is not an intellectual act but a *total experience*, whereby,

> one's eyes are suddenly opened ; oneself and the world appear in a different light, are seen from a different viewpoint. There is usually a good deal of anxiety aroused before the experience takes place, while afterwards a new feeling of strength and certainty is present. The process of discovering the unconscious can be described as a series of ever-widening experiences, which are felt deeply and which transcend theoretical intellectual knowledge.[6]

The Zen Psychoanalysis

Fromm has shown that Zen and psychoanalysis agree on all essential points. First of all, the aim of Zen in effect is the same as that of psychoanalysis. We have seen that the latter aims at the transformation of the unconscious into the conscious so that the individual may have a direct vision of reality as it is. The aim of Zen is the experience of enlightenment, called *satori*, which in the final analysis is the same as the transformation of the unconscious into the conscious, whereby " the person is completely tuned to reality outside and inside of him, a state in which he is fully aware of it..".[7] As the transformation of the unconscious effected by psychoanalysis is an incommunicable experience, so is the enlightenment (*satori*) in Zen : Being " an

5. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-111.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

experience which no amount of explanation and argument can make communicable to others, unless the latter themselves had it previously",[8] it can never be conveyed intellectually.

As a psychoanalyst believes that an average person is prevented from seeing the reality as such, so also a Zen Buddhist believes that the vision of an average person is blurred and distorted by the many constructs of the mind, which express themselves as passions of love and hatred. Thus according to Zen, the *conscious* of the average man is filled with such passions, which have for their basis the fictitious ideas and ideals provided by the society. In other words, depending upon the given society, man develops certain ways of thinking about reality, and responds to it positively or negatively in accordance with his thinking about it. Thus man lives in a world of his imagination. He should therefore be helped to destroy his own imaginations about the world, to give up his own ways of thinking about, and responding to, the reality. Hence Zen consistently trains an aspirant to give up the inherited ways of thinking about, and responding to, reality. This explains why the generally accepted rules of logic have no place in Zen. This also explains why the theoretical content of Zen is so poor. To be precise, Zen is not a doctrine established by reasoning based on logical thinking, nor is it communicable in syntactic languages. Hence the Zen pedagogy consists of the minimum amount of reasoning and the maximum amount of irrationality. Its method "consists in putting one in a dilemma, out of which one must contrive to escape not through logic indeed but through a mind of higher order."[9] This is where *koans* find a place in the Zen system of training. *Koan* in Chinese means "a public document" or "a public announcement". But in Zen it means a short anecdote usually in the form of a conversation between a master and his disciple. There are nearly 2000 *koans* in Zen. A *koan* invariably contains a contradiction or a paradox which cannot at all be resolved by any logical thinking, and therefore leads the listener to a dilemma out of which he must emerge not through logic but through a direct vision of reality. That is, a *koan* persuades one to give up the usual ways of thinking which belong to the conscious layer of his life, and to adopt rather irrational ways of 'seeing' which

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8. D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London : Rider and Company, 1949), p. 92.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 40, quoted by E. Fromm, *op cit.*, p. 120.

belong to the unconscious layers of his personality. A few examples of *koans* will illustrate the point[10]:

> Master Chao-chou (778–897) was asked by a monk whether the Buddha-nature is also in a puppy or not. Chao-chou answered, "Mu" (nothing).
>
> Once a monk asked Chao-chou: "I am a novice, please, teach me the way." Chao-chou said, "Have had your breakfast?" The monk said, "Yes. I had my breakfast." Chao-chou said, "Go and wash the dishes!" At this moment the monk came to enlightenment.
>
> A Japanese master, Hakuin, clapped both hands, and there was a sound. Then he lifted up one hand and said, "Show me the sound of one hand."

From the above examples it is clear that a *koan* is not an intellectual discourse intended to impart any *sensible* doctrine. It does not at all answer the question raised, but even leaves the questioner in a state more confused than before. But the master allows the desciple to be led to such a confused state of mind "with the intention to awaken the student's mind to the fact that what he has so far accepted as a commonplace fact, or as a logical impossibility, is not necessarily so, and that his former way of looking at things was not always correct or helpful to his spiritual welfare. After this is realized, the student might dwell on the statement itself and endeavour to get at its truth if it has any. To force the student to assume this inquiring attitude is the aim of the *koan*. The student must then go on with his inquiring attitude until he comes to the edge of a mental precipice, as it were, where there are no other alternative but to leap over."[11] A *koan* on the one hand shuts all possible doors to logical thinking, and on the other leads one to the so far unknown depths of the mind — the unconscious. The enlightenment (*satori*) is the discovery of this unconscious through the emptying of the mind of the so far conscious experiences. Thus the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of the mind of the inherited categories of thinking and responding leads to reality as such (*tathatā*).

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10. These examples of *koan* are reproduced here from Enomuya-Lassale, "Zen Meditation" in *Studia Missionalia*, Vol. 25 (1976), p. 31.
11. Suzuki, *op. cit.*, pp. 104–105.

Psychoanalytic Method of the Buddha

What has been said about Zen Buddhism applies to other areas of Buddhism as well, including the early Buddhism preached by the Buddha himself. What the Buddha did was to ask the people to give up the traditionally accepted ways of thnking and acting and then to unconditionally submit themselves to what would consequently emerge. It was a time when the vast majority of people found themselves in the grips of the priestly superiority of the Brahmins, caste discriminations, exaggerated ritualism and religious dogmatism. These were indeed the categories under which the conscious of the average man of that time was organized, and according to which he was forced to think and act. They were the fictions imposed by the ruling minority on the average man of that time. The Buddha wanted to liberate himself and others from these fictions. For this he adopted a method of emptying the mind of all the traditionally accepted ideas and ideals of his time. First of all he refused to abide by the instructions of the traditional masters, and also to go by the conventional kinds of austerities. He then walked along the so far unknown middle way which gradually led him to the enlightenment, which was a gradual unfolding of the infinite dimensions of existence, including his own. Thus, having got in direct touch with reality, he invited others also to the same experience of enlightenment. This he did not so much by insisting on a logical system of thinking, but by systematically pursuading his followers to give up the traditional ways of thinking and acting, and to drive deep into their own unconscious to experience the reality as such. He first of all shattered the average man's belief that in one's search for truth one would be assisted by external agents such as a personal God or a *Guru*. He wisely avoided the very question of God. He did not claim to be God himself. He did not preach a God worthy of man's worship ; all he did was to show a path which he thought would definitely lead one to enlightenment. He did not ask his disciples to trust in God, nor even in him. Instead, the Buddha asked his disciples to trust in themselves : "···be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help···Seek salvation alone in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves" (*Mahaparinirvāṇa Sutta*). Again he insisted that his listeners should not accept even his teaching without testing it for themselves. In short, as a first step towards the awakening of the unconscious one is required to give up his belief in an external authority. The Buddha refused to accept also revelation as an infallible source of truth. He would not accept even logical consistency as a reliable norm of truth, for even a well-reasoned theory may be falsified by contingent facts, and an

ill-reasoned theory may be substantiated by other contingent facts. The only valid knowledge for the Buddha was 'personal knowledge' (*attanā va jāneyyātha*), 'personal higher knowledge' (*sāmaṃ yeva··· abhiññāya*) of seeing. Thus he was asking his followers to empty their minds of the usual ways of thinking about the norms of truth, and to replace them with personal insights.

Another socially accepted view of reality at the time of the Buddha was that there is a substantial soul or souls underlying the phenomena. This view of reality also was denied by the Buddha, who in its place proposed his theory of unsubstantiality (*anatta*). The latter theory simply says that what we usually take for an individual is not a single enduring entity, but only an aggregate (*samghāta*) of various psychic and bodily factors. An individual does not have a substantial soul (*atta*) to which his psychic and bodily experience can be attributed. This point is generally illustrated by the example of a chariot, an example cited in one of the early Buddhist texts called *Millindapanha*. What is a chariot? It is neither the pole, nor the axle, nor the wheels, nor the frame, nor the reins, nor the yoke, nor the spokes, nor the goad, taken singly. A chariot rather is an aggregate of all these component parts. At the same time none of the parts individually taken is the chariot. Hence 'chariot' is the name given to the collection or aggregate of various parts arranged in a certain order and proportion. Similarly, an individual man according to the Buddha is only an aggregate of so many psychic and bodily factors (*dhammas*) arranged in a certain order and proportion. The individual man is not an entity over and above the psychic and bodily factors. He is not a single substance (*atta*) undergoing the various psychic and bodily experiences. He is therefore unsubstantial (*anatta*).

Through this theory of unsubstantiality the Buddha intended to explode the Upanishadic myth of *ātman*, which was the most basic fiction governing the conscious of the average man of his time.

Yet another area where the Buddha applied his psychoanalytic method was the theory of causality. The two prevalent theories of causality then were accidentalism (*yadṛcchā-vāda*) and naturalism (*svabhāva-vāda*). According to the former theory everything in the world happens by chance, while according to the latter everything is determined by its own nature. The former denying causation altogether holds that the world is totally undetermined, while the latter holds that the world is self-determined. The Buddha rejected both these theories, and proposed the theory of conditioned origination (*pratitya-*

samutpāda) which was unheard of till then. Here again, the theory of dependent origination is not so much an explanation nor a positive theory of causality as allowing the things to speak for themselves. It merely states that things come into being depending on other things and does not attempt to explain how it so happens. No arguments are given to prove it, but the listeners are invited to see that it is so. What is important for us here is to note that the Buddha replaces the commonly accepted theories of causality with an entirely new one : he is once again asking the average man to give up the socially accepted fictions about reality.

From what has been said so far it is clear that the Buddha was attempting to rid the mind of the commonly accepted categories of thinking about, and responding to, reality. Thus he denied the current views about God, soul, means of knowledge and causality. The denial of these views was not however without a positive aim. By denying them he hoped that the reality as it is (*yathābhūta*, *tathatā*) would reveal itself. A man whose perception is conditioned by the socially accepted categories of thinking, is prevented from having the vision of reality as it is (*yathābhūta*) ; he sees reality as organized under those categories, and loves or hates it accordingly.

According to the Buddha desire (*tṛṣṇa*) is the basic factor that conditions one's understanding of reality. This desire, however, takes the form of love or hatred depending on whether the category under which a thing is presented is pleasant or unpleasant. In any case desire distorts one's vision of reality, and hence is also the root cause of suffering (*duhkha*). The term *tṛṣṇa* (*tanha* in Pali) means desire or craving or the passionate attachment or clinging to something, and as such makes one unable to look at things impartially. Indeed, according to the Buddha, this inability to look at things impartially is the characteristic mark of the state of bondage called *saṃsāra*. Hence the final liberation called *nirvāṇa*, which is the state of enlightenment, is in effect 'the complete cessation of that very thirst, giving it up, renouncing it, emancipating oneself from it, detaching oneself from it' (*Dhammaeakkapavattana-sutta*). The state of peace, serenity and tranquility resulting from the cessation of *tṛṣṇa* (and the consequent *duhkha*) is called *nirvāṇa*. It means that the state of *nirvāṇa* is nothing but the emptying of the conscious on the one hand, and the awakening of the unconscious on the other. The word *nirvāṇa* means 'blowing out', and consequently the Buddhist use of it means 'the blowing out' of the craving (*tṛṣṇa*). That is, *nirvāṇa* is the state of mind in which the hitherto conscious ways of thinking and experiencing have been

replaced by a totally new vision of reality. *Nirvāṇa*, therefore, is the positive state of serenity, tranquility and peace brought about by the negative process of blowing out the *tṛṣṇa*. In other words, *nirvāṇa* is reality as such (*tathatā*) arrived at by emptying the mind of all the conscious experiences for which the term *tṛṣṇa* stands. Hence it is easy to see how the Buddha was a 'psychoanalyst' who wished to lead his 'clients' to the awakening of 'the unconscious'.

The Scholastic Interpretation

The Buddhist scholastics, whose views are presented in the *Abhidharma* literature, continued the dismantling of the common place understanding of reality as an enduring substance (*ātma*). The Buddha had strongly denied such a substance through his theory of unsubstantiality. The scholastics in their turn interpreted the theory of unsubstantiality in terms of momentariness and atomism. The Buddha's view that there is no substance underlying the psychic and bodily factors, which make up an individual, was interpreted to mean that these factors called *dharmas*, are momentary atoms having no extension in space (*deśa-ananugata*), and no duration in time (*kāla-ananugata*). Thus the ultimate reality came to be understood as essentially instantaneous in character (*kṣaṇika*). The Buddha had taught the impermanence (*anityatā*) of reality. But the theory of momentariness (*kṣaṇikatva*) was the interpretation given by the scholastics to the Buddha's view of reality and the final effect of this interpretation on the average man's conscious was far-reaching. It demanded of him to give up the entire content of his conscious as far as the understanding of reality was concerned. He had so far thought of reality under the categories of universals, relations, continuity, etc. Now the new theory of momentariness implied that these categories are all fictitious, and that the real is the particular, unique, mutually unrelated, momentary indviduals. In other words, according to the theory of momentariness the concepts of 'universal', 'relation', 'continuity', etc., are mere mental constructs. These wrong concepts were then to be understood as the roots of all passions (*tṛṣṇa*), which in turn give rise to suffering (*duhkha*). So the final freedom consisted in getting rid of those concepts, and thus blowing out (*nirvāṇa*) of all passions. Here also, therefore, we see the application of the same psychoanalytic method of emptying the conscious so that the vision of reality as such (*tathatā*) may dawn, which in the Buddhist terminology is the enlightenment of the unconscious. In the light of this experience one sees reality as consisting of numerous elements callled *dharmas*, each of which is a separate

(*prathak*) entity or force ; as consisting of mutually unrelated sense data (*bhūtas-bhautikas*) and mental data (*citta-caittas*) ; and as consisting of momentary (*kṣaṇika*) elements which incessantly keep at once appearing and disappearing according to the law of dependent origination (*pratitya-samutpāda*). It is clear that such a vision of reality contradicts the usual ways of thinking about, and responding to, the reality, and that therefore it amounts to the abandoning of one's conscious.

The Madhyamika Dialectics

The Madhyamika school of Buddhism made the strongest use of the term *śūnyatā* with reference to our understanding of reality. If in early Buddhism *śūnyatā* meant the rejection of some views about reality in favour of some other views, in the Madhyamika school it meant the rejection of *all* views about reality making the mind absolutely empty of all concepts about reality. This emphasis on the emptiness of mind of all concepts about reality has earned for the followers of this school the name *śūnyavādins*, the followers of the doctrine of emptiness. Nagarjuna, the founder of this school, showed that all possible views about reality are invariably inconsistent and self-contradictory. For him reality (*tattvam*) is inconceivable (*buddher-agocara*), inexpressible (*prapancair aprapamcitam*), indeterminate (*nirvikalpam*) and unique (*anānārtham*). It cannot be conceived or expressed either as existence (*bhāvaḥ*) or as non-existence (*abhāvaḥ*) or as both existence and non-existence (*ubhayam*) or as neither existence nor non-existence (*na bhāva, naibhāva*). These being the only possible forms of predications, it follows that reality is beyond all predications in terms of existence. Similarly he also pointed out the impossibility of applying to reality all other categories of thought : causality, substance, relation, self and modes. Nagarjuna said that in the *samsāric* state of existence one sees reality only under those categories, which are rather the subjective forms of understanding. In other words, reality as it appears to an ordinary man is covered by those categories of thought, and hence is called the *samvṛti-satya*, the concealed truth, while the reality as such is called the *paramārtha-satya*, the absolute truth. This may be compared to the Kantian distinction between the *phenomenon* and the *noumenon*, with the difference that for Kant the *noumenon* is never an object of experience while for Nagarjuna the *paramārtha-satya* will reveal itself once the *samvṛti-satya* is removed : " The absolute is known as the reality of the appearances, what they falsely stand for. By *discovering, removing*, the superimposed character of phenomena, the true nature of the

absolute is revealed. Technically, this is called adhyāropavādanyāya — the method of removal of the ascription."[12] Here also the means leading to the realization of reality as such (*tathatā* or *paramārtha-satya*) is to empty the mind of its conscious contents, namely, the categories of thought mentioned above.

The Yogacarins' Approach[13]

The primary interest of the Yogacarins, who are the latest school in Buddhism, was to explain the *samsāra* experience and to suggest a way out of it. As Sthiramati puts it, they are concerned about the ways and means of "producing the totally intuitive knowledge proper to the Buddhas."[14] Or, in the words of the *Madhyāntavibhāga*, they are trying to find out what must be extinguished to result in one's *mukti* (release or liberation)[15]. Hence the whole system has to be viewed as converging on the main themes of *samsāra* and *mukti*.

What then is the characteristic mark of *samsāra*? Early Buddhism characterized it as *duhkha* arising from *tṛṣṇa* (desire) or *upādāna* (clinging = passionate attachment). The Yogacarins now go further and trace *tṛṣṇa* or *upādāna* itself to the arch-idiosyncrasy for discrimination between graspable and grasper (*grāhya* and *grāhaka*). Sthiramati says, '*upādāna* which is the same as craving for *pudgala* and *dharma*, is based on graspable–grasper duality, and is, therefore, of fictitious nature (*parikalpitasvabāva*)'[16] It is quite understandable why desire (*tṛṣṇa*, *upādāna* or *abhiniveśa*) and other allied passions should be attributed to the graspable–grasper distinction, for desire obviously presupposes a subject who desires and an object which is desirable. Then, the experience of *samsāra* consists basically in one's being forced to view oneself as the grasper (*grāhaka*), the enjoyer (*bhoktṛ*,) the knower (*jñatṛ*) of all other beings, which then are viewed

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12. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Concept of Buddhism* (London : Greorge Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 232.
13. This section of the present article is adapted from my "Vasubandhu the Yogacarin : a New Translation and Interpretation of Some of His Basic Works" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1978), pp. 13–20. This work is to be published soon by Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, under the title, *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience* : *A New Translation and Interpretation of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*.
14. *Madhyānta-vibhāga-kārikā-bhāṣya-tīkā* (hence for the *MVKBT*,) I. 1.
15. *MVK*, I. 5 ; 1.17.
16. *MVKBT*, III. 6.

as the graspable (*grāhya*), the enjoyable (*bhojya*), the knowable (*jñeya*). Here one cannot help mentally constructing the distinction between the subject and the object, the grasper and the graspable, the enjoyer and the enjoyable. Now, therefore, all that an aspirant to budhahood should be warned against is the idiosycrasy of the graspable–grasper distinction. And this indeed is the central message of the Yogacarins. That the graspable–grasper distinction is mere imagination of the unreal (*abhūta-parikalpa*),[17] and that, therefore, it is non-existent (*na vidyate*),[18] and illusory (*bhrāntiḥ*),[19] is repeated time and again.

Thus an individual in the state of *samsāra*, being forced to make the distinction between the graspable and the grasper, does not experience the things in themselves, but only the subjective forms of one's own consciousness. Such forms are basically those of subjectivity and objectivity. Constructed and projected by the consciousness, they cover up the things in themselves in such a way that the latter are prevented from being perceived or experienced. This leads to the Yogacarins' concept of "coverings" (*āvaraṇas*) discussed at great length in *Madhyānta-vibhāga*, Chapter II. *Āvaraṇas* include all the limitations to which one in the state of *samsāra* is subject, and "from the cessation of which issues liberation."[20] They are described as "those which prevent knowledge from coming into being",[21] "coverings which obstruct the vision of truth",[22] "coverings of non-illusory vision",[23] and so on. In short, *āvaraṇas* are those which make the experience of things-in-themselves impossible which for the Yogacarins is none other than one's bias towards subject–object distinction. They include also what have been traditionally called *kleśas*, *upakleśas*, *tṛṣṇa*, *samyojanāni*, *utpādasatya*, etc., etc.

The above discussion brings us once again to the conclusion that in order to have the vision of the reality as such (*yathā-bhūta-darśana*) one must give up the mentally constructed categories of subjectivity and objectivity which function as *āvaraṇas* (coverings) of reality as such (*tathatā*). Ultimately, therefore, the reality as such (*tathatā*) is

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17. *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāśya*, I. 2.
18. *MVK*, I. 2.
19. *MVKBT*, I. 5.
20. *MVK*, II. 17.
21. *MVKBT*, II. 1.
22. *MVKBT*, II. 3.
23. *MVKBT*, II. 3.

attained by making the mind empty of its conscious categories of thought.

Finally, the Yogacara school of logic founded by Dignaga and developed by his disciple Dharmakīrti also developed the same line of thinking in a slightly different way. To start with, they were staunch defenders of the old theory of momentariness (*kṣaṇika-vāda*). Then they based the entire edifice of their epistemology on a clear-cut distinction between the realms of things-in-themselves and common sense-experience, which they named, respectively, as *sva-lakṣaṇa* and *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*. The former is the sphere of the first order reality (*paramārtha-sat*), whereas the latter is the sphere of empirical reality (*samvṛti-sat*). The most important point about the distinction between *sva-lakṣaṇa* and *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa* is that they are contrasted, respectively, as the non-constructed and the constructed (*nirvikalpaka* and *kalpita*), the non-artificial and the artificial (*akṛtrima* and *kṛtrima*), the non-imagined and the imagined (*anāropita* and *āropita*), the unutterable and the utterable (*anabhilāpya* and *abhilāpya*), etc. In short, whatever comes within the range of empirical experience is characterized as mentally constructed, artificial, imagined, linguistically expressible and, finally unreal (*avastu*) ; whereas the things-in-themselves (*sva-lakṣaṇa*) are characterized as untouched by mental construction, artificiality, imagination, as beyond the realm of language, and finally, as real (*vastu*). Therefore it follows that to reach the thing in itself (*sva-lakṣaṇa* = *tathatā*) one must give up the conceptual and linguistic categories which make up one's conscious.

Conclusion

From the above survey of the history of Buddhism it is clear that a distinction of one form or another between the unconscious and the conscious has been a permanent feature of Buddhism, and that the enlightenment has always been thought of as resulting from the abandoning of the conscious in favour of the unconscious. Perhaps there has been a greater stress on the abandoning of the conscious than on the awakening of the unconscious. Thus, for example, the Buddha spoke more in terms of what one should give up in order to achieve enlightenment than in terms of the reality which will be intuited by an enlightened man. However, it is more than clear that according to him enlightenment implies negatively the abandoning of the commonplace ways of thinking about reality, and positively the adoption of such ways of looking at it as are inconsistent with the contents of the conscious in man. The scholastics also through the analysis of existence into an interplay of a plurality of subtle, ultimate, not further

analysable elements (*dharma*) of matter (*rūpa*), mind (*nāma=citta*) and force (*saṃskāra*) suggested that the reality as such is far from how an average person experiences it so that for him to have the vision of reality he must necessarily abandon the categories of thought with which he is familiar. The Mādhyamika renunciation of the conscious was so complete that they not only demolished the conventionally accepted set of categories of thought, but even refused to replace them by another set of their own. For them the only possible means of getting in direct touch with reality was to empty the mind of all possible views about reality. The Yogacarins reduced the contents of the conscious to the categories of subjectivity and objectivity under which alone an ordinary man is able to understand reality which in fact is devoid of subject–object characterization. They insisted that in order to have a vision of reality as such (*yathā-bhūta-darśana*) one should free oneself from the idiosyncrasy (*abhiniveśa*) for the subject–object distinction. Finally, the Yogacara logicians such as Dignaga and Dharmakīrti distinguished between the spheres of *sva-lakṣaṇa* and *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa* corresponding to the spheres of things-in-themselves and things-in-appearance. They said further that the conceptual and linguistic categories of ordinary experience reach only the sphere of *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*, which should be transcended if one is to reach the sphere of *sva-lakṣaṇa*. In other words, according to these logicians also the basic requirement for the attainment of enlightenment is to abandon the usual categories of thought and language and to allow oneself to be directly impressed upon by the thing-in-itself (*sva-lakṣaṇa*)1.

It is against such a long history of abandoning the categories of the conscious in favour of those of the unconscious that Zen Buddhism proposed to train the mind in irrational ways of looking at things in order to achieve enlightenment called *satori*. This was to put into practice what Buddhism had been saying for centuries, in different ways though. Finally, the contemporary psychoanalysis may be said to be a Western version of the Buddhist techniques used to achieve enlightenment. The comparison between psychoanalysis and Buddhist techniques is most obvious in the case of Zen Buddhism, but at least the basic points of such a comparison apply also to other areas of Buddhism. It is indeed well known that the Buddhist insights have had strong influence on the founders of psychoanalysis.

If, therefore, Buddhism is interpreted in psychoanalytic terms, then the words *śūnyatā* and *tathatā* in Buddhism will mean the denial of the categories of the conscious on the one hand and the acceptance of the reality with which one comes into direct touch in the depths of one's unconscious on the other, That is, *śūnyatā* refers to the mind that is empty of all conceptual categories while *tathatā* refers to the reality freed of all superimpositions of the mind.