BUDDHISM AND HUMANISM

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Man, a being born to learn

Man is not only a being born to live in society, as Aristotle said (*Politikón* A, p. 1253 a 3); he is also a being born to acquire, communicate and accumulate knowledge. From the very moment he appeared on earth, man was condemned to learn and to teach. He had to learn how to kindle the fire for cooking his food, for warming himself in winter, for keeping off dangerous beasts, he had to learn to build a refuge to protect himself from weather and dangers of the forest and the nights, to get skins to cover his body, to manufacture tools and weapons in order to defend himself from the animals that disputed with him the space of survival and power. He had to learn how to live with other beings similar to him, to fix the limits of what he could do and do not, to establish hierarchies, respect and obedience. Afterwards, he discovered or invented the world of gods, of demons, of all the supernatural beings that dwell in his imagination or in the wideness of space, in the heights of heaven or in the depths of waters and forests. He had to learn how to deal with them, to conquer their good will or to appease their anger. He had to learn all these and many other countless things in order to survive and to lay the foundation of the culture that he was creating, without knowing it and even without wishing it.

And even now, when our cultures are well established although badly off, we have to learn every moment something new that is imposed on us by the constantly changing social, economic and political conditions of the world, by the permanent technological progress, and by the each time greater increase of communications.

Transmission of knowledge

Due to obscure instincts of survival of the human species or due to confused feelings of love or due to a wise valuation of knowledge, whose efficacy he had experienced, man learnt to transmit the knowledge he had acquired to friends, to sons, to disciples, who in their own turn transmitted that knowledge to others in a succession of masters whose beginning is lost in time.

Knowledge accumulated, thanks to an uninterrupted transmission from one generation to another, by anyone or by experts in the art of keeping in their

memory what they trusted to it.

In the beginning, it was an oral transmission, from mouth to ear, but afterwards man invented writing. And he put in writing all the knowledge that had been acquired, transmitted and accumulated by his own generation and by previous generations: codes of behavior, treatises on the rites and ceremonies with which gods are worshiped or the different stages of life are marked, texts on the methods to cure, to build, to fight, to make love, to educate children ... And libraries were collected, in which was kept, like a treasure, all that had been learnt, and thanks to which its transmission to future generations was assured.

Utilitarianism of knowledge / To know only in order to know

All this knowledge was originally marked by the sign of utilitarianism. It was a useful knowledge that served to something, fundamentally for surviving, for preservation of life in a harsh and compassionless world, into which man had been thrown, without being consulted, naked, weaponless and ignorant. And this knowledge served also to make life more tolerable and pleasing, to enrich it with some kind of agreeable experiences.

But, when circumstances became more favorable and men felt less the pressure of the necessities of survival, a tendency was born in many of them to acquire, transmit and accumulate knowledge without any special purpose, without immediate benefits: *to know only in order to know*.

The activity of the mind, which wishes to know only in order to know, can be applied to very diverse objects: beings, things, facts, acts, processes, with the aim to classify them, to establish their nature, to discover their causes, to determine the laws that regulate them.

This activity can be superficial or deep, limited or wide, and can give more importance to any one of the indicated purposes.

Knowledge in Buddhism

Buddhism, since its beginning, held knowledge in high estimation designating it by the words *jñāna, prajñā*, etc. The act, which initiated Gotama's new life as a Buddha, was an act of knowledge: Enlightenment (*bodhi*) - the highest manifestation of Knowledge, Intelligence, Consciousness, in which reality reveals itself in its absolute totality to the mind of the wise who with extraordinary effort and energy has qualified himself for that supreme experience. The fact that the word *Buddha*: "He who awoke to truth", "the Enlightened", "He

who knew", is employed since that moment in relation to Gotama in order to express the perfection and superiority which raise Him above all beings - this fact indicates the pre-eminent place that knowledge possesses in the Buddhist scale of values. The *avidyā*, ignorance, the opposite to knowledge, is considered by Buddhism, as the root of all evils, which must be destroyed in the same way or even more than the pernicious tendencies and proclivities to act in an evil manner and to transgress the ethical norms. To such an extent did Mahāyāna Buddhism appreciate knowledge constituted by Enlightenment that in Mahāyānist *sūtras* what the Buddha announces to His *Bodhisattvas*, as the supreme achievement of their efforts, practices and merits, is that they will become *buddhas*, that is to say, that they will possess that knowledge which locates the person that possesses it in the transcendent level of superior beings. Owing to that, one has the impression that the Mahāyāna, more than a religion of *Nirvāṇa*, is a religion of *Bodhi*, Enlightenment, Knowledge in its most intense and pure form. Moreover, knowledge of the true nature of things, of the truth of reality, which constitutes the Perfection of Knowledge (*Prajñāpāramitā*) and which is centered in the idea of Voidness, i.e. Universal Insubstantiality, is an indispensable unavoidable requisite for any person who enters the salvific Path taught by Buddhism. Without this knowledge it is not possible to realize, in its plenitude and complete efficacy, the Moral Discipline, whose essence is detachment and the sentiment of universal compassion. The Moral Discipline also constitutes, together with Knowledge, the indispensable condition, the unavoidable requisite for the success of Buddhist effort.

Owing to the high appraisal of knowledge, since their first periods, Buddhists as a Community exerted themselves to reach the knowledge of the true nature of things. It was an eager and constant search starting from the brilliant intuitions of Śākyamuni, which took shape in bold and magnificent philosophical systems. Schools followed one another, investigating by themselves and bringing to perfection the results reached to by their predecessors. New fields for reflection were incessantly opened; new paths were discovered for research. All the sects and schools into which Buddhism was divided as an effect of its intense intellectual and spiritual life participated in this search and contributed to the promotion, deepening and diversification of knowledge.

Buddhist thought as a philosophical reflection

Buddhist thought was to a large extent a reflection of philosophical inspiration, carried on by rational analysis. The historical circumstances compelled Buddhist thinkers to locate themselves in an almost exclusively logical ground. Buddhist thinkers had to confront during many centuries Hindu thinkers who maintained theses, which had been consecrated by a long tradition as being beyond any doubt and controversy. In defense of the revolutionary teachings they hold: insubstantiality of all (*nairātmya*), non-existence of God (*Īśvara*), non-existence of soul (*ātman*), equality of all persons and of their social condition and human rights, non-violence as a universal duty – in defense of these teachings Buddhist thinkers could not adduce the texts that express Buddha's opinion, since this opinion did not possess, for Hindus, any authority. Thus they were obliged to have recourse to arguments of reason and to construct strong rational fundaments for the doctrines they presented.

The pre-eminent function that philosophical reflection had in Buddhism did not hinder the appreciation and practice of yogic meditation (*dhyāna*), not only as a practice that controls and calms the mind, liberating it from emotions and passions, and increasing in this way its functional efficacy, but also as another path or method of knowledge, which, in collaboration with the study of the Buddhist Scriptures and the philosophical reflection on the doctrines they teach, allows to reach a more complete grasping, of intuitive nature, of truth.

Aim of knowledge in Buddhism

Notwithstanding the great value that Buddhism attached to knowledge, Buddhism adopted in relation to knowledge the same attitude as Hinduism. Knowledge has not in itself its own purpose; it serves to obtain something that is not only external to and different from it, but even superior to it. The Buddhist endeavors to reach the highest degree of knowledge, Enlightenment; to become a *buddha*, an enlightened being endowed with eminent qualities and attributes, who will obtain his World of Buddha (*buddhakṣetra*), conceived as a magnificent paradise, where he will guide to Liberation millions of beings during millions of Cosmic Periods, carrying on in this way a task of compassion, to finally enter, when he so decides, into Supreme *Nirvāṇa*, which, near or far, has always been the last goal of Buddhist Path. Knowledge is only a simple means, a mere *sādhana*, in the same way as Moral Discipline.

Among the two indicated attitudes in relation to knowledge, which

should be elected in regard to Buddhism? Shall we study Buddhism only with the desire to know for mere knowledge's sake or shall we study it with an aim that is beyond simple accumulation of knowledge? And in this case which is that aim? We think that in the study of Buddhism both attitudes can be present, harmoniously interwoven.

Buddhism as a field of knowledge for the sake of knowledge

Buddhism offers a large field for the exercise of *knowledge for mere knowledge's sake*. It spread through vast regions of Asia: India, Sri Lanka, South East Asia, Tibet, Central Asia, China, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan, which in many moments were at the head of human civilization. It maintained itself in those regions during many centuries. It influenced the history and culture of many nations, formulated philosophical systems, gave rise to manifestations of intense religious life, produced literary works, inspired schools of art. And, what Buddhism produced in the diverse fields in which it was active, was characterized in general by richness, variety, deepness and the interest it awakes. Buddhism utilized many languages for the transmission of its teachings. The philosophers, artists, writers, saints, who represented Buddhism, were innumerable.

Buddhism offers therefore a rich treasure of facts to inventory, to analyze, to connect among themselves, to explain; of languages to describe and interpret; of texts to edit and to translate. Buddhism will never cease to provide the historian, the philologist, the anthropologist, the archaeologist and other scholars with valuable subjects for their research, inquiry, curiosity and intellectual eagerness to increase knowledge. What has been done, under the inspiration of knowledge for mere knowledge's sake, is immense. Japanese, Indian, European, American scholars have done a wonderful task of erudition, which is able to compete in quantity and quality with the task, which has been done in the field of Classical Greek and Latin Studies. They have accumulated, studied and interpreted a huge mass of facts, they have deciphered languages; they have established trustworthy and rigorous editions of Buddhist texts. Much still remains to be done, and is being done now.

Buddhism as a spiritual force

But Buddhism is also a *powerful spiritual force*, which always has had and has at present an irresistible attraction. It inculcates in the individual *positive*

attitudes; it formulates, as explanation of the reality in which we exist, *profound principles*, which amaze owing to their adequacy to the experience man has of that reality and owing to their deep sense of modernity; and it also extols *noble ethical norms*.

Buddhism with some of his teachings can make a valuable contribution to the notion of a modern Humanism, which aspires to bring human nature as much as possible to its perfection.

Attitudes that can be contributed by Buddhism to a modern Humanism

Adhimukti, open-mindedness, receptivity

Among the positive attitudes that Buddhism can contribute for a universal modern Humanism, one of the most interesting is that expressed by the Sanskrit word *adhimukti* (*shikō* in Japanese).

Adhimukti is an important word in the Buddhist texts, especially in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Its interpretation is an object of discussion. Tsugunari Kubo (*The Fundamental Philosophy of the Lotus Sutra with respect to the Practices of the Bodhisattva*, Chapter Two, *Part Two*, pp. 45-50, and *Summary of Contents*, pp. 7-8) - rightly in our opinion - interprets it as "open-mindedness", "mental openness", and "receptivity".

Adhimukti is the capacity of the mind to keep itself open in face of a new message, to grasp it, to comprehend it. Without that open-mindedness, grasping and comprehension, it is impossible to adhere to any message that reaches us for the first time, whatever beneficial and excellent it may be. The contrary of *adhimukti* is mental occlusion, which produces the *a priori* refusal of any idea, thesis or doctrine that does not fit in with the patterns, which previously have already taken possession of our mind.

Adhimukti is a quality that is highly valued in the *Bodhisattva* who has made progress in the Path that leads to Enlightenment. It is *adhimukti* which allows him to receive the each time deeper manifestations of Truth. *Adhimukti* is an indispensable requisite also for the disciple that begins being initiated in the Doctrine, which in so many ways has to shock him with its bold novelties.

Adhimukti can be brought from the intellectual realm to that of feelings. It can be conceived, in this case, as the capacity of a man to react in face of a new stimulus that affects his sensibility, to live experiences not lived before in the realm of emotions, and in the realm of artistic creation.

Adhimukti, as the capacity to receive and assimilate new forms of

thinking and feeling, constitutes the basis of a true *Humanism*, which intends to develop the possibilities of the personality, enriching it, enlarging it, diversifying it, and refining it.

Adhimukti is also the attitude that must be possessed by any one who wishes to know Buddhism in order to take from it new elements that contribute to his intellectual and emotional perfection.

Tolerance

Tolerance is another Buddhist attitude. The tolerant person allows others to have ideas different from his own ones, and, besides that, even allows them to think that their own ideas are the best and the true ones. Intolerance limits the freedom of the individual as it submits him to a foreign idea, which forcibly imposes on him a determinate way of thinking, feeling and acting. *Imposition* is in itself a form of *violence*. Intolerance is, almost always, accompanied by *aggressiveness* - oral aggressiveness, manifested in harsh words directed against those that do not think in the same way one does; mental aggressiveness inherent in the feelings of malevolence, anger, contempt, and devaluation against those that have different ideas; aggressiveness in violent acts intended to hinder the expression of different ideas, to try, by any means, that these ideas cease to exist, and even to destroy those that harbor them. The Buddha said that the tears shed by men during their reincarnations surpassed the water of several oceans; we could say, in a similar way, that it also surpasses the water of many oceans the blood shed by actions inspired by violence originated by intolerance: religious wars, forced conversions, ideological persecutions.

The Buddha expressly advised his disciples to limit themselves to teach the Doctrine but to abstain from extolling what they approve and from underestimating what they disapprove, adopting thus a moderate path free from praises, free from criticisms, which does not lead to an imposing attitude:

> *Ussādanañ ca jaññā apasādanañ ca jaññā, ussādanañ ca ñatvā apasādanañ ca ñatvā n' ev' ussādeyya na apasādeyya dhammam eva deseyyāti* (*Majjhima Nikāya* III, *Araṇavibhaṅgasutta*, p. 233, PTS edition):
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> "One should know how to extol, one should know how to depreciate; but even knowing how to extol and knowing how to depreciate, one should neither extol nor depreciate - one must simply teach the

Dharma".

A similar idea guides the great Buddhist King Aśoka (reigned 273-232 B.C.) in his *Rock Edict XII*: "The Toleration Edict" of noble inspiration. In this important Edict that could also be called "The Universal Religious Concord Edict" Aśoka expresses that he grants honors and gifts to all religious communities of India. In fact, Aśoka honored and supported not only the Buddhist Community, to which he belonged, but also Jain, Brahmanical, Ājīvika ones.[1] Aśoka wants that all religious communities live in peace, harmony and concord among them, and with this aim recommends them to respect one another, not praising oneself, not blaming the others – much less (we may add) to try to suppress by force the religious communities that do not think as one´s own does. Aśoka goes further: he wishes that people "should listen" (*sruṇāru*) to the doctrines of the others, and even more: "should desire to listen" (*susuṃsera*) to them – an advise well established in Buddhist tradition to open one's mind and most effective to eliminate hidden suspicions. Aśoka remarks that he who acts against the precept of mutual respect hurts not only the other religious community he undervalues but also the own one.

We give the text of the Girnar version of the *Rock Edict XII* (1-7) according to E. Hultzsch edition, pp. 20-21, with translation:

> 1 (A) *Devānaṃpiye Piyadasi rājā savapāsaṃḍāni ca pavajitāni ca gharastāni ca pūjayati dānena ca vividhāya ca pūjāya pūjayati ne*
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> 2 (B) *na tu tathā dānaṃ va pūjā va Devānaṃpiyo maṃñate yathā kiti sāravaḍhī asa savapāsaṃḍānaṃ* (C) *sāravaḍhī tu bahuvidhā*
>
> 3 (D) *tasa tu idaṃ mūlaṃ ya vacigutī kiṃti ātpapāsaṃḍapūjā va parapāsaṃḍagarahā va no bhave aprakaraṇamhi lahukā va asa*
>
> 4 *tamhi tamhi prakaraṇe* (E) *pūjetayā tu eva parapāsaṃḍā tena tena prakaraṇena* (F) *evaṃ karuṃ ātpapāsaṃḍaṃ ca vaḍhayati parapāsaṃḍasa ca upakaroti*
>
> 5 (G) *tadaṃñathā karoto ātpapāsaṃḍaṃ ca chaṇati parapāsaṃḍasa ca pi apakaroti* (H) *yo hi koci ātpapāsaṃḍaṃ pūjayati parapāsaṃḍaṃ va garahati*
>
> 6 *savaṃ ātpapāsaṃḍabhatiyā kiṃti ātpapāsaṃḍaṃ dīpayema iti so ca puna tatha karoto ātpapāsaṃḍaṃ bāḍhataraṃ upahanāti* (I) *ta samavāyo eva sādhu*

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[1] Cf. Vincent A. Smith, *Asoka. The Buddhist Emperor of India*, pp. 61-62.

7 *kiṃti añamaṃñasa dhaṃmaṃ sruṇāru ca susuṃsera ca* (J) *evaṃ hi Devānaṃpiyasa ichā kiṃti savapāsaṃḍā bahusrutā ca asu kalāṇāgamā ca asu …*

1 (A) "The King Beloved by the Gods, Who looks on all with kindness, honors all the religious communities, whether ascetics or householders, and he honors them with gifts and honors of various kinds.
2 (B) But the Beloved by the Gods does not value either gifts or honors so much as the increase of the excellence of all the religious communities. (C) Now, this increase of the excellence may occur in many forms.
3 (D) But its root is the control of language: there should not be out of place the praise of one´s own religious community or the blaming of the religious communities of others, or praise and blaming should be very light
4 as proper occasions arise. (E) In fact, other religious communities are to be honored in one or another way. (F) Acting in this way, one promotes his own religious community and benefits the religious communities of others.
5 (G) Acting otherwise one hurts one´s own religious community and does wrong to the religious communities of others. (H) Whoever praises his own religious community and blames the religious communities of others,
6 all this out of attachment to one's own religious community, with this thought: 'Let us glorify our own religious community' - he, by doing so, all the more injures his own sect, (I) therefore meeting together indeed is good,
7 so that they should listen or should desire to listen to the doctrines of one another. (J) For this is the desire of the Beloved of the Gods: that all religious communities be well versed therein[2] and hold a sound doctrine… [3]

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[2] I. e. in their own doctrines and in the doctrines of the other religious communities.

[3] Aśoka´s attitude is amazingly opposed to that of Theodosius II (5th century A.D.), the Christian Emperor of Rome, who in the Book XVI of his *Legal Code*, published in Constantinople in 438, dictated severe laws against all persons who did not belong to the Christian faith, and refers to them with harsh words. See *Code Théodosien*, *Livre XVI*, Volume

Buddhism had necessarily to be tolerant. Its essential position contrary to violence hindered it from adopting an attitude of intolerance, which, as we have already said, is almost always accompanied by a spirit of aggressiveness.

It contributed to Buddhist tolerance the consciousness that truth has many aspects or facets and that generally man perceives only one of these aspects, clings to it and, in order to defend it as the only existing one, adopts violent attitudes, as we shall see later on.

This relativistic and tolerant attitude was corroborated in Mahāyāna Buddhism by the doctrine of the two truths: the relative truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*) and the absolute truth (*paramārthasatya*). Since man, normally, can only reach the relative truth, which does not correspond to the real nature of things, that is incomplete, provisory, liable to be surpassed, and perfectible, it is foolish to adhere to it as if it were the absolute truth.

Objectivity

In a small treatise attributed to Nāgārjuna, the most outstanding thinker of the Mādhyamika School of Buddhist Philosophy, *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdayakārikā*, "Stanzas on the Essence of Dependent Origination",[4] is found a famous stanza (6, according to Gilgit manuscript) that has been quoted many times in Buddhist texts and that states a most important Buddhist attitude: *the search for objectivity*, not only in any theoretical activity of mind, but also in the practical behavior of everyday life. The stanza reads as follows:

nāpaneyam ataḥ kiñcit prakṣeptavyaṃ na kiṃcana /
draṣṭavyaṃ bhūtato bhūtaṃ bhūtadarśī vimucyate //

"Nothing from reality must be suppressed,
nothing must be added to it,
reality must be seen as it is in truth:
who sees reality attains Liberation."

One must be objective, must be limited to what one perceives, without adding any thing to the representation in the mind or without suppressing from it any

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I, Sources Chrétiennes Nº 497.

[4] Translated into Spanish and commented by F. Tola and C. Dragonetti, in *Revista de Estudios Budistas*, México-Buenos Aires, No. 12, Octubre 1996, pp. 54-63.

thing of any nature.

A clear and intelligent comment of this attitude is given already in one of the most ancient Buddhist texts, the *Udāna* I, 10, p. 8 (PTS edition):

> *… diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati…*
>
> "… in the seen there must be only the seen, in the heard only the heard, in the thought only the thought, in the cognized only the cognized…"

Man must perceive reality without adding to that perception by the sense-organs any thing which does not belong to the object, any thing which comes from his positive or negative feelings or from his prejudices or from his friendliness or unfriendliness.

Aśvaghoṣa (flourished between 50 B.C. and 100 A.D.), *Saundarānanda*, Canto XIII, stanza 44, has the same stanza, with some variants, as the one presented by Nāgārjuna in his just quoted treatise on Dependent Origination. Aśvaghoṣa introduces in his poem this stanza in relation with the control of the senses that the Buddhist has to exercise, thus with an openly moral intention. If man perceives objects just as they are in themselves, *without adding* to them qualities that are created just by human subjectivity and that objects really do not possess in themselves, he will not be dominated by sensuality.

Maitreya's *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* V, 21, the founder of the Yogācāra School of Buddhist Philosophy, refers to this attitude in relation to the conception of emancipation: it should be seen as it is in reality, nothing should be added to it, nothing should be taken away from it. Sthiramati (middle of the 6th century A.D), considered as one of the great masters of the Yogācāra school, in his *Ṭīkā ad Madhyāntavibhāga* I, 8, p. 23, Pandeya ed., refers to the same attitude in connection with his own conception of the Absolute in the context of Buddhist idealistic theories.

Buddhaghosa (first half of the 6th century), the great Buddhist commentator, in his *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, a commentary to the *Dīgha Nikāya*, p. 12, takes this attitude as an hermeneutic rule for the interpretation of the Buddha's words that should be respected as they essentially were said: without adding to nor suppressing from them any thing that could change their essential meaning – a principle that should be followed by any study of any text in any

context.

Awareness of manysidedness and perpectivism

According to the notion of *manysidedness* all has many aspects or faces, and according to the notion of *perspectivism* it is possible to perceive any object from different points of view, each of which gives a different vision of the object. Both ways of seeing reality are in truth two forms of referring to the same fact: *manysidedness* takes the object as reference and maintains that everything presents itself to our view in multiple forms; *perspectivism* takes the subject as reference and maintains that one or another of those multiple aspects are perceived according to the place in which the subject is situated, according to the point of view he adopts. Buddhism considered *manysidedness* as well as *perpectivism* as true ways of conceiving reality: *manysidedness* as an essential characteristic of the object of knowledge and *perpectivism* as an essential characteristic of the cognitive act. Both of them put a limit to common and general knowledge, depriving it of the claim of granting a *unique truth*, of being of *universal validity*, and imparting to affirmations a wise moderation. To be always aware of manysidedness of things and of the perspectivist nature of perception and cognition is another attitude exalted by Buddhism. Many Indian thinkers, Buddhists and non-Buddhists[5], have partaken of these conceptions.

The Buddhist monk Suhemanta affirmed in *Theragāthā* 106:

sataliṅgassa atthassa satalakkhaṇadārino /
ekaṅgadassī dummedho, satadassī ca paṇḍito //

"Things have hundreds of attributes,
hundreds of characteristics;
the ignorant sees one of them,
the wise, hundreds."

Let us add, following a common expression in the Buddhist texts, that the Buddha could see "with his divine, pure, and superhuman eye" *all of them*.

[5] Cf. for instance Bhartṛhari, *Vākyapadīya* I, 74, II, 136, II, 482, II, 484. See also F. Tola and C. Dragonetti, *Aportes desde la Filosofía de la India: Multilateralidad, Perspectivismo, Tolerancia, Inclusivismo, rechazo de todo Etnocentrismo*; and Jan E.M. Houben, "Bhartṛhari Perspectivism (1): The *Vṛtti* and Bhartṛhari's Perspectivism in the First *kāṇḍa* of the *Vākyāpadīya*", in *Beyond Orientalism*, pp. 317-358.

The well known story of the blind men and the elephant told by the Buddha himself in *Udāna* VI, 4 and 5 constitutes a good illustration of these principles of *manysidedness and perpectivism*. In this text are presented blind men who touched each one only one part of the body of an elephant and each one of them got in this way his own limited and as such erroneous idea of what an elephant is, and trying each of them to impose on the others his own idea, violently disputed one another. Buddha concludes His narration (*Udāna* VI, 4) with the following words:

viggayha naṃ vivadanti janā ekaṅgadassino //

"Men, who perceive only one side of things,
adhering to it, quarrel with one another."

Paṇḍita Aśoka, a Buddhist author who lived *circa* 1000, in his important treatise *Avayavīnirākaraṇa*, "The refutation of the whole", p. 8 (Sanskrit text in F. Tola and C. Dragonetti's ed. = p. 26 of their English translation), clearly describes the nature of perception according to Buddhism, pointing out the *partiality* it involves in itself and its *dependence* on the place the subject who perceives is located: what is visible of any object is only a part of the object: there is no difference between an object either covered or uncovered: in both cases it is only *partially* seen; we never see the totality of the object, because we do not perceive the parts of the object that are in the rear side, opposite to the front side in which we are, and the parts that are between both sides. Paṇḍita Aśoka adds that the vision of the object also depends on the position of the perceiver at the moment of the perception.

The thesis that we always have a partial vision of objects is also referred to as a Buddhist thesis in Hindu authors as Uddyotakara, *Nyāyavārttika, ad* II, 1, 32 (p. 471, Munshiram Manoharlal edition, reproduced by Rinsen Books in Japan), and Vācaspati Miśra, *Nyāyavārttikatātparyaṭīkā ad* II, 1, 32 (p. 474, Munshiram Manoharlal ed.), when they explain the Buddhist point of view concerning perception.

Emotional detachment in judgments

Not to be emotionally involved in the matter one is handling is an attitude extolled by Buddhism in order to have the capacity to judge with entire freedom and to keep oneself calm and endowed with equanimity in order to discriminate between good and evil, between true and false. Any feeling

added to the judgment is considered by Buddhism as an obstacle for reaching the truth in any field of knowledge. Thus detachment is a norm of very great significance in Buddhist Ethics that could benefit mind in its critical activity. This is clearly taught, for instance, in *Dīgha Nikāya* I, 1 (*Brahmajālasutta*), pp. 2-3, PTS edition:

> *5. 'Mamaṃ vā bhikkhave pare avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Dhammassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Saṃghassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ, tatra tumhehi na āghāto na appaccayo na cetaso anabhiraddhi karaṇīyā. Mamaṃ vā bhikkhave pare avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Dhammassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Saṃghassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ; tatra ce tumhe assatha kupitā vā anattamanā vā tumhaṃ yev' assa tena antarāyo. Mamaṃ vā bhikkhave pare avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Dhammassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Saṃghassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ; tatra ce tumhe assatha kupitā vā anattamanā vā api nu tumhe paresaṃ subhāsitaṃ dubbhāsitaṃ ājāneyyāthāti ?'*
>
> *'No h' etaṃ bhante'.*
>
> *'Mamaṃ vā bhikkhave pare avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Dhammassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Saṃghassa vā avaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ, tatra tumhehi abhūtaṃ abhūtato nibbeṭhetabbaṃ: "Iti pi etaṃ abhūtaṃ, iti pi etaṃ atacchaṃ, n'atthi c'etaṃ amhesu, na ca pan' etaṃ amhesu saṃvijjatīti".'*
>
> *6. 'Mamaṃ vā bhikkhave pare vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Dhammassa vā vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Saṃghassa vā vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ; tatra tumhe na ānando na somanassaṃ na cetaso ubbillāvitattaṃ karaṇīyaṃ. Mamaṃ vā bhikkhave pare vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Dhammassa vā vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Saṃghassa vā vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ; tatra ce tumhe assatha ānandino sumanā ubbillāvitā tumhaṃ yev' assa tena antarāyo. 'Mamaṃ vā bhikkhave pare vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Dhammassa vā vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ Saṃghassa vā vaṇṇaṃ bhāseyyuṃ; tatra tumhehi bhūtaṃ bhūtato paṭijānitabbaṃ: "Iti p' etaṃ bhūtaṃ, iti p' etaṃ tacchaṃ, atthi c' etaṃ amhesu, saṃvijjati ca pan' etaṃ amhesū na ca pan' etaṃ amhesuti".'*

> "5. 'O monks, if others blame me or blame the Doctrine or blame the Community, you should not, on that account, either feel anger or discontent or displeasure. O monks, if others blame me or blame the

Doctrine or blame the Community, and if on that account you should be angry or offended, that would be for you an obstacle. O monks, if others blame me or blame the Doctrine or blame the Community and if, on that account, you should be angry or offended, would you then be able to judge what is well said or what is badly said in what is said by the others?'

'No, Sir.'

'O monks, if others blame me or blame the Doctrine or blame the Community; then you should distinguish what is wrong as wrong in this way: 'For such a reason that is false, that in not true, that is not found in us, that does not exist in us'.'

6. 'O monks, if others praise me or praise the Doctrine or praise the Community, you should not, on that account, feel either joy or happiness or exultancy. O monks, if others praise me or praise the Doctrine or praise the Community, and if, on that account, you should be filled with joy or you should be filled with happiness or you should be exultant, that would be for you an obstacle. O monks, if others praise me or praise the Doctrine or praise the Community, then you should acknowledge what is true as true in this way: 'For such a reason that is true, that is not false, that is found in us, that exists in us'."

Emotional attachment is a hindrance not only for moral progress but also for the intellectual activity which intends to reach truth.

Thorough examination of the case

To be conscious of the necessity of a *thorough examination of any matter* one is dealing with – as for instance a situation which one wants to solve, a person on whom one is going to emit a judgment, a question (of whatever nature it may be) for which one tries to find an answer - is another attitude inculcated by Buddhist teachings that could be integrated in a modern notion of Humanism. A previous thorough examination is the only way to get a correct knowledge of any matter; *and a correct knowledge* is the *sine qua non* condition in order not to go astray and to reach a conclusion in terms of good sense, justice, and truth.

The text we have chosen to illustrate this Buddhist attitude especially concerns the knowledge of the true nature of other living beings, but its teaching can be applied in a broader sense to the examination of any case in any context.

Udāna VI, 2, pp. 65-66, tells that on a certain occasion the king Pasenadi of Kosala asked the Buddha if all those ascetics that had just passed by not far from them were Buddhist holy men (*Arhants*) or men in the way of acquiring that holy condition. The Buddha answers:

> *Dujjānaṃ kho etaṃ mahārāja tayā gihinā kāmabhojinā puttasambādhasayanaṃ ajjhāvasantena kāsikacandanaṃ paccanubhontena mālāgandhavilepanaṃ dhārayantena jātarūparajataṃ sādiyantena: ime vā arahanto ime vā arahattamaggaṃ samāpannā´ti.*
>
> *saṃvāsena kho mahārāja sīlaṃ veditabbaṃ tañ ca kho dīghena addhunā na ittaraṃ manasikarotā no amanasikārā´paññavatā no duppañña; sabbyohārena kho mahārāja soceyyaṃ veditabbaṃ tañ ca kho dīghena addhunā na ittaraṃ manasikarotā no amanasikārā´paññavatā no duppañña; āpadāsu kho mahārāja thāmo veditabbo so ca kho dīghena addhunā na ittaraṃ manasikarotā no amanasikārā´paññavatā no duppañña; sākacchāya kho mahārāja paññā veditabbā sā ca kho dīghena addhunā na ittaraṃ manasikarotā no amanasikārā´paññavatā no duppañña´ti.*

"If they are *arhants* or they have entered the path that leads to *arhantship* – this is something difficult to know for somebody as you, O Great King, who are a householder, enjoying the pleasures of the senses, leading a life encumbered with children, taking delight in the aroma of sandal wood from Benares, wearing garlands, perfumes and unguents, and who finds pleasure in the possession of gold and silver.

O Great King, it is living together with a person that one may know his morality, and that too for a long time and not for a short time, and only if one observes him attentively and not carelessly, provided that one be intelligent and not a fool. O Great King, it is dealing with a person that one may know his purity, and that too for a long time and not for a short time, and only if one observes him attentively and not carelessly, provided that one be intelligent and not a fool. O Great King, it is in times of misfortune that one may know the strength of a person, and that too for a long time and not for a short time, and only if one observes him attentively and not carelessly, provided that one be intelligent and not a fool. O Great King, it is talking with a person

that one may know his wisdom, and that too for a long time and not for a short time, and only if one observes him attentively and not carelessly, provided that one be intelligent and not a fool."

According to Buddhism for any examination of things and beings that intends to attain a true knowledge of their respective nature many special intellectual and moral qualities are required on the part of the person who carries it out. For instance, as in the case of the King Pasenadi of Kosala referred to by the text of the *Udāna* just quoted, he cannot be immersed in a frivolous and mundane life full of attachments, dedicated to sensuality in its manifold manifestations, dominated by covetousness. He, endowed with energy, has to keep a deep concentration of mind centered only on the elected object; basically he must possess intelligence, capacity to grasp and to understand, and lucidity.

These qualities, and those connected with them, constitute important elements of Buddhist Ethics - attention, mindfulness, concentration of mind; energy, effort, earnestness; intelligence, wisdom, lucidity, considered by Buddhists as *moral* qualities to be developed, as we shall see later on.

Freedom of thought and personal effort to attain truth

Another important attitude explicitly recommended by the founder of Buddhism himself is that of *freedom of thought* one must assume in relation to any opinion, theory, religious or political doctrine that is to become an object of adhesion or faith.

On one hand, one should not adhere to any opinion *by authority*, i.e. only because it is maintained *by Tradition* or *by one's own Master or Teacher* or *by any Holy Scripture* or *by someone endowed with knowledge and expert in the Holy Texts*. On the other hand, one has not to be guided in his thought and action *only by logic and reasoning*. It is necessary to examine, to analyze, to study *by oneself* any idea on any matter one is to adopt, taking also into account the opinion of wise persons with experience and knowledge in that field and considering the consequences that idea could have if it is put into practice.

The first text we have chosen to illustrate this attitude belongs to the most ancient period of Buddhism and is found in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* I (*Kesamuttisutta*), pp. 188-193, PTS edition.[6]

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[6] Cf. F. Tola y C. Dragonetti , *Budismo. Unidad y Diversidad*, pp. 159-176, where the complete Spanish translation of the *Kesamutisutta* is included with a previous commentary there on. See also *Aṅguttara Nikāya* II, *Bhaddiyasutta*, p. 191.

On a certain occasion the Buddha came to the village of Kesamutta/Kesaputta, where the Kālāmas people lived. They told the Buddha:

2. *Santi bhante eke samaṇabrāhmaṇā Kesaputtaṃ āgacchanti. Te sakaṃ yeva vādaṃ dīpenti jotenti, paravādaṃ pana khuṃsenti vambhenti paribhavanti opapakkhiṃ karonti. Apare pi bhante eke samaṇabrāhmaṇā Kesaputtaṃ āgacchanti. Te pi sakaṃ yeva vādaṃ dīpenti jotenti paravādaṃ pana khuṃsenti vambhenti paribhavanti opapakkhiṃ karonti. Tesaṃ no bhante amhākaṃ hot´eva kaṅkhā hoti vicikicchā – ko si nāma imesaṃ bhavantānaṃ samaṇānaṃ saccaṃ āha ko musā ti?*

*"*O Lord, some *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* come to Kesaputta/Kesamutta. They proclaim and expound their own doctrine, but they criticize, despise, abuse and revile the opposed doctrines. And afterwards, O Lord, other *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* come also to Kesamutta/Kesaputta. They also proclaim and expound their own doctrine, but they criticize, despise, abuse and revile the opposed doctrines. And when we listen to them, O Lord, doubt arises in us, uncertainty arises in us: 'Who among these venerable *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* tells the truth, who lies*'*? "

The Buddha answered them:

3. *Alaṃ hi vo Kālāmā kaṅkhituṃ alaṃ vicikicchituṃ. Kaṅkhāniye va pana vo ṭhāne vicikicchā uppannā.*
Etha tumhe Kālāmā mā anussavena mā paramparāya mā itikirāya mā piṭakasampadānena mā takkahetu mā nayahetu mā ākāraparivitakkena mā diṭṭhinijjhānakkhantiyā mā bhavyarūpatāya mā samaṇo no garū ti, yadā tumhe Kālāmā attanā va jāneyyātha – ime dhammā akusalā ime dhammā sāvajjā ime dhammā viññugarahitā ime dhammā samattā samādinnā ahitāya dukkhāya saṃvattanti ti – atha tumhe Kālāmā pajaheyyātha.

"It is proper that you doubt, O Kālāmas, it is proper that you feel uncertainty. Your uncertainty has arisen in relation with a doubtful matter.

Do not be guided, O Kālāmas, by mere hearsay or by tradition or by what you have heard or by somebody's proficiency in the

Holy Scriptures or by a mere logical inference or by a mere methodological inference or by the mere reflection on the causes or by an obsequious compliance with any theory or by the mere appearance of likelihood or by thinking that the *samaṇa* (ascetic) who holds it is your Master. When you, O Kālāmas, by yourselves reach the knowledge: 'These things are bad', 'These things are blameworthy', 'These things are blamed by the wise', and that these things, when performed and undertaken, lead to harm and sorrow, then indeed you should reject them, O Kālāmas."

Other important text concerning this attitude preached by the Buddha is from a later period of Buddhist development and belongs with all probability to a Mahāyāna Sūtra. It is quoted by the two great Buddhist philosophers of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka School (a synthesis of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra): its founder Śāntarakṣita (flourished in the 8th century), in his work *Tattvasaṅgraha* 3587, p. 1115, Bauddha Bharati Series edition, and his illustrious disciple and commentator, Kamālaśīla (*circa* 740-795), in the Introduction of his commentary *Pañjikā ad Tattvasaṅgraha*, p. 15, Bauddha Bharati Series edition, and in his work *Nyāyabindupūrvapakṣasaṃkṣipta*, preserved only in Tibetan (*Sde-dge edition, Tanjur*, *Tshad-ma*, *Tōhoku* 4232, *We*. 92a^2-99b^5), p. 93 a (= p. 185 *Sde-dge*, Delhi edition). Kamālaśīla also comments this stanza said by the Bhagavant *ad Tattvasaṅgraha* 3586-3587.

The text, attributed to the Buddha himself and addressed to his monks, says, according to Śāntarakṣita and Kamālaśīla, *Tattvasaṅgraha* 3587:

tāpāc chedāc ca nikaṣāt suvarṇam iva paṇḍitaiḥ /
parīkṣya bhikṣavo grāhyaṃ madvaco na tu gauravāt //

"As gold is accepted by the experts
after testing it by heat, cutting and rubbing with the touchstone,
my word, O monks, is to be accepted
after being carefully examined
- not out of respect for me."

It is an astonishing and unparalleled attitude of the founder of Buddhist Culture to ask his followers to submit his own teachings and words to a severe scrutiny before accepting them, and not to adhere to them *by mere respect* for his person.

Principles that can be contributed by Buddhism to a modern Humanism

Buddhist vision of the universe

Buddhism has elaborated a *conception of the universe* that overwhelms with wonder by its magnificence and by its features of modernity. We mention some of the *principles* upon which this conception is constructed.[7]

Buddhism maintains that the empirical reality as a whole, with its worlds, universes, men, the transient gods, etc., the processes that take place in it and the laws that govern it, has had no temporal beginning. To the eternity of time that Buddhism attributes to it corresponds the infinity of space. The empirical reality extends in an unlimited way in the ten directions of the space. This unlimited space is occupied by millions of millions of worlds, disseminated in all the regions. The countless universes in the unlimited space are peopled by an infinite number of beings. As the beings, the Buddhas are also numberless; they are located in the past, the present and the future and in all the extension of space. Their function, inspired by Compassion, is to save all beings in whatever world they may exist, and lead them to Enlightenment. Buddhism does not want that anyone remain outside Salvation. Buddhism has also a dynamic conception of reality. This manifests itself in the peculiar doctrine of the *dharmas*. The *dharmas* are the elements, the constituent factors of all that exists. *Dharmas* are *unsubstantial*, i.e. they do not possess an own being; *dharmas* are *impermanent*, *instantaneous* or *momentary*, as soon as they appear, they disappear, and are replaced by other *dharmas*; thus reality is an accumulation of *dharmas*, in a process of vertiginous constant *replacement* and *change*. The dynamic nature manifests itself not only in the *dharmas* that constitute the foundations of reality, but also in reality itself, taken as a whole, since it is in a beginningless process of cyclic alternance of creations and destructions.

The empirical reality as conceived by Buddhism is not a chaotic universe. The empirical reality is submitted to *laws* or *principles* that regulate its existence and behavior, which determine what, necessarily, must happen. Thanks to these laws or principles the universe appears as an organized system, as a *cosmos*.

Universal causality and universal interdependence and interconnection

Among these laws or principles two are of a foremost importance: *the*

[7] Cf. Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, "Buddhist Conception of Reality", in *Journal of Indian Council for Philosophical Research*, Volume XIV Number 1, 1996, pp. 35-64.

law or principle of causality and *the law or principle of universal interdependence and interconnection*.

All that exists is for Buddhism under the sway of *causality*. Nothing exists owing to hazard, casually. Everything is the product of the conjunction of a multiplicity of causes.[8] And at the same time everything that exists produces effects of many kinds.[9] Thus every thing is a product of causes and a producer of effects.

The strictest causality, which governs empirical reality in its entirety, implies, as a corollary, the *interdependence and interconnection of all that exists*, since every thing is produced as an effect by the conjunction of a multiplicity of things that act as causes; and consequently each of these things that act as causes is in its own turn produced as an effect by the conjunction of a multiplicity of other things that also act as causes, and so on in a beginningless backwards process. A similar process has place in relation to effects. Each thing that is produced as an effect, acting in its own turn as cause, in conjunction with a multiplicity of other things, which also act as causes, produces other things; and so on in a forwards process without end. The result of this interdependence of causes and effects, which pervades the whole reality, is a "net" that relates among themselves all existent things - momentary, evanescent, interconnected by causal relations, acting all of them at the same time as causes and as effects.[10]

A most important Buddhist doctrine is that of *karman*, according to which every action, good or bad, gives rise to merits or demerits and demands necessarily reward or punishment in this life or in other future existences. The whole destiny of beings depends for Buddhism on their deeds, on their *karman*, i.e. on the moral quality of the actions they have accomplished in their previous existences. But the incidence of the *karman* of any individual is not limited to him; together with the *karman* of other individuals it possesses a collective force that determines the destiny of the universe: its destruction, its new creation, the special features it is to possesses in its new stage of existence, the events which

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[8] See in our article quoted in note 7, pp. 45-47, the numerous Buddhist texts that illustrate the universality of causality.

[9] See in our article quoted in note 7, pp. 52-53, the texts referring to this aspect of causality that has to do with the *karman* belief in the retribution of actions.

[10] See in our article quoted in note 7, pp. 49-52, the texts that illustrate the constitution of the net of relations among all things.

will occur in it, etc.[11] The universal power of the individual *karman* as maintained by Buddhism is a most impressive manifestation of the interdependence and interconnection that rule our world.

Reflection and observation confirm that all in our reality is mutually dependent and connected. It has always been known that societies and men have innumerable dependencies. Each generation that constitute society depends on the preceding generations, inherits their possessions, and benefits itself with their work, their discoveries, their struggles, their sufferings, their experiences. Each society is what it is thanks to what it has been before. Each man in his turn has depended on his parents for coming to life and for surviving, has depended on his teachers for developing himself, and depends on other men for living. And all men depend on the air, on the sun for working, on the night for rest. And besides that it has also been known that societies and men are frequently affected by what happens to other societies and men, or by what other societies and men do, even if they have only a neighborhood relation.

Solidarity

The Buddhist conviction is the knowledge that interdependence and interconnection originated by causality dominate our reality, and that this knowledge produces a sentiment of *solidarity*: what directly affects a part of the members of a community, indirectly affects the others members; what directly affects a part of nature, indirectly affects other parts or the whole nature. And the damages caused to others –human beings or nature- by selfishness or greed revert through the force of the same mentioned principles against the perpetrators of the actions. This sentiment of solidarity can be accompanied or not by moral feelings centered around the moral concept of *ahiṃsā*, which forbids doing any harm to others not only human beings, but also animals, plants, and even inanimate objects. When this sentiment of solidarity works by itself, without any relation with moral norms, the process is similar to the reaction of anybody who decides to do or not to do something only because he knows that there is a physical law, acting against which -by doing or not doing- he will face evil consequences.

Buddhist Culture has always been aware, in a degree unknown to other cultures, of the extraordinary importance of *causality* together with

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[11] See in our article quoted in note 7, pp. 53-56, the texts referring to the power of *karman* in relation to the creation of the world.

interdependence and *interconnection* and of *solidarity* derived from them, as shown by the universality granted to these *principles* in the Buddhist cosmology. It has been always considered that the causal principle (under the name of *pratītyasamutpāda*) possesses among the Teachings of the Buddha a supreme status: it is identified with the *Dharma* or "Doctrine" of the Buddha, it is called the *ariyo nāya*, the "Noble Buddhist Method", it was discovered by the Buddha during the night in which He attained the *Bodhi*, "Enlightenment"; and it is well known that the *pratītyasamutpāda* theory is mentioned, explained, commented, in a brief or large form, in numerous Buddhist texts. And many times the Buddha is extolled as the supreme Master, because of being the discoverer of this theory.[12]

In the West, on the contrary, scarce attention has been paid to solidarity in the sense just described and founded on the principles of causality, interdependence and interconnection – solidarity of mankind with animals, plants and inanimate nature. This attitude is perhaps due to the Western predominant religious belief that man is the king of creation and all the rest is submitted to him, liable to be consumed and destroyed if necessary for him, without moral or material consequences. Probably, at least in a certain way, this attitude has been the cause of dangerous situations humanity is facing at present: as for instance the problem of the climate change for whose solution the sentiment of universal solidarity can be a powerful ally.

A valuable contribution that Buddhism may offer to the notion of a modern Humanism is the idea of the *necessary and unavoidable solidarity* of all with all, based on the three *principles* we have referred to.

Peculiar moral values that can be contributed by Buddhism to a modern Humanism

Buddhism has a very noble, rich and complex system of Ethics. For the purpose of this article we shall limit ourselves to two special moral values it extols. A peculiar characteristic of these two values is that, in a general way, they are not included as *moral values* in other Ethics. These two moral values are: *kṣānti* in Sanskrit, *khānti or khāntī* in Pāli (*nin or ninniku* in Japanese), and *smṛti* in Sanskrit, *sati* in Pāli (*nen* in Japanese).

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[12] See our article quoted in note 7, pp. 47-52.

Kṣānti

In the Pāli Canon there are frequent references to *khānti* as a moral value incorporated in the Buddhist Ethics. *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, *Suttantamātikā* Nº 147 (Nālandā edition p. 289 = § 1341 PTS edition) defines *khānti* enumerating its diverse aspects:

> *yā khānti khamanatā adhivāsanatā acaṇḍikkaṃ anasuropo attamanatā cittassa – ayaṃ vuccati khānti /*
>
> "*Khānti* is tolerance, forbearance (or endurance), absence of violence, absence of rudeness (in speech), benevolence of mind".

But it is in the Mahāyāna period of Buddhism that the concept of *kṣānti* acquires a significance more preeminent, as is shown by the fact that it becomes one of the *Six Pāramitās* or moral practices required of Bodhisattvas in order to progress in the Buddhist Path, and it is dealt with in numerous Mahayānā texts. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Unrai Wogihara edition, p. 189, refers to the three kinds of *kṣānti*, which are to be practiced by Buddhist householders as well as mendicants and says:

> *parāpakāra-marṣaṇā-kṣāṃtiḥ duḥkhâdhivasanā-kṣāṃtiḥ dharma-nidhyānâdhimokṣa-kṣāṃtiś ca.*
>
> "*Kśānti*: the endurance of the wrong (or offense or injury or hurt or despise or disdain) coming from others; *kśānti*: the forbearance of pain (or sorrow or trouble or difficulties); *kśānti*: open-mindedness that should accompany the profound reflection (which aims at the comprehension) of the *Dharma*."

From these three Mahāyānist explanations of the word *kṣānti* it is the third one that we consider as an important contribution to a universal modern Humanism.

The same *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Unrai Wogihara edition, p. 195, explains the third meaning of *kṣānti* in the following terms:

> *tatra katamā bodhisattvasya dharma-nidhyānâdhimukti-kṣāṃti. iha bodhisattvasya samyag-dharma-pravicaya-suvicāritayā buddhyā aṣṭa-vidhe adhimukty-adhiṣṭhāne adhimuktiḥ su-saṃniviṣṭā bhavati. ratna-guṇeṣu tattvârthe buddha-bodhisattvānāṃ mahā-prabhāve hetau phale prāptavye'rthe ātmanas tat-prāpty-upāye jñeya-gocare ca.*
>
> "Which is the *kṣānti* of the Bodhisattva, that is the open-mindedness

that should accompany the profound reflection (which aims at the comprehension) of the *Dharma*? In this matter the open-mindedness of the Bodhisattva, with his mind well-trained in the correct examination of the *Dharma*, becomes extremely firm in relation to the eightfold basis of open-mindedness: the merits of the Three Jewels, the true meaning of reality, the great power of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the cause, the effect, the aim to be obtained, the own means for its attainment, and the range of what is to be known."

The *Lotus Sūtra*, Nanjio-Kern edition, p. 136, line 10, p. 266, line 1, p. 327, line 4, p. 419, line 6, p. 437, lines 1, refers to the third meaning of *kṣānti* and relates it to a special Mahāyānist thesis that maintains that the *dharmas* have no origination: *anutpattikadharmakṣānti*: "intellectual receptivity to the truth that states of existence have no origination (*utpatti*)" (cf. F. Edgerton, Volume II: *Dictionary*, *sub voce*). The *Lotus Sūtra* indirectly extols the moral value of *kṣānti* presenting it as a great accomplishment for those Bodhisattvas or persons in whose mind this "intellectual receptivity" is produced.

It is interesting to remark that in two passages of the *Lotus Sūtra*, p. 230, line 7, and p. 290, line 12, Buddha himself declares that His Teaching (*dharmaparyāya*) is "not acceptable, unwelcome to the whole world" (*sarvalokavipratyanīka*) and "not believable by the whole world" (*sarvalokāśraddadhanīya*, *sarvalokāśraddheya*). And in *Lotus Sūtra*, p. 290, line 12, He points out the reason of that: because "it has not been explained before", because "it has not been taught before" (*abhāṣitapūrva*, *anirdiṣṭapūrva*). It was the lack of *kṣānti* in the persons that listened to the new teachings of the Mahāyāna and the extreme novelty of these teachings if compared to those of the Hīnayāna what caused these reactions of rejection in those persons. The monks and nuns whom Sadāparibhūta approached in *Lotus Sūtra*, Chapter XIX, were people completely devoid of *kṣānti*. Something similar had to happen with the members of the Hindu society in India that heard for the first time the astonishingly novel message of Buddhism.

Kṣānti could constitute a most valuable and wise contribution to the notion of a modern Humanism, when transferred from the eightfold Buddhist matters (*adhiṣṭhāna*) to the domain of any human intellectual activity: Science, Philosophy, Politics, Religion, Aesthetics, Social Sciences, etc.

Kṣānti inculcates the will to cultivate in oneself the capacity to listen to and to learn a novel idea, theory, doctrine, opinion, etc. without any *a priori*

negative feeling of dislike, antipathy, violence, aggressiveness, disdain, rejection even before examining and evaluating them and discovering their good elements, worthy of respect and able to contribute to human moral and intellectual progress.

The lack of *kṣānti* has always hindered the dialogue, the personal enrichment, and the harmonious social relations, and what is worse than that, has provoked destructive and bloody reactions of intolerance.

Kṣānti is most necessary in this epoch, in which globalization is creating multiple contacts among very diverse human communities, in which Humanity is facing serious threatening situations for whose overcoming a universal, respectful, and peaceful collaboration is needed, and in which Sciences are discovering realities that displace traditional beliefs and oblige to assume new attitudes.

Smṛti

The word *smṛti* has two different meanings: "memory" and "attention". Both meanings are included in the subtle definition that Patañjali gives in *Yogasūtras* I, 11:

> *anubhūtaviṣayāsaṃpramokṣaḥ smṛtiḥ /*
>
> "*smṛti* is the non complete disappearance (from the mind) of a perceived object".[13]

In the Buddhist theory of the *satipaṭṭhāna* (Pāli) / *smṛti-upasthāna* (Buddhist Sanskrit), diversely translated as "field of mindfulness" or "application of mindfulness", *smṛti / sati* is understood in its second meaning of "attention" or its synonyms (consciousness, intentness of mind, wakefulness of mind, mindfulness, alertness, lucidity of mind, conscience; intent contemplation and mindfulness, earnest thought, application of mindfulness).

This theory is explained or referred to in many Buddhist texts belonging to the different periods of Buddhist development. In the Pāli Canon there are two *suttas* that expound it in a detailed way: in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. II, the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Suttanta* XXII, pp. 290-315, PTS edition, and in the *Majjima Nikāya*, Vol. I. 10, the *Satipaṭṭhānasuttam*, pp. 55-63, PTS edition. The Mahāyānist text Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, Chapter XIII,

[13] See F. Tola and C. Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali. On Concentration of Mind*, *ad locum*, pp. 34-37; cf. also *ad* I, 20, pp. 72-74.

Smṛtyupasthānapariccheda, pp. 228-241, Cecil Bendall edition, also dedicates to it a whole chapter where the author quotes several Mahāyānist Sūtras that refers to it.

The *satipaṭṭhāna* /*smṛti-upasthāna* teaching intents to develop in man a *permanent, complete and deep state of awareness of all* that occurs, inwards, in his own body and mind, outwards, in the other beings and the external world, how does that originate and cease to be, which is its nature, which are its constituent elements as revealed by the analysis. The Buddhist texts point out in detail the corporeal and mental activities and things, which are the object of the awareness' application. In the Buddhist context awareness has of course a Buddhist moral function and a Buddhist religious aim: the purification of beings, the overcoming of suffering, the acquisition of knowledge, the attainment of *Nirvāṇa*.

It is possible to extract from the Buddhist theory this *smṛti / sati* moral value and introduce it in the notion of a modern universal Humanism as a very positive element broadening its range of application to common everyday behavior or to any field of human activity, in both cases not necessarily religious or moral:

The *smṛti / sati* norm *prevents* man from being a prey to states of inattentiveness or carelessness that hinder him to perceive or grasp or being conscious of situations around him that entail, for himself or for others, *danger or threats* of physical or moral nature.

The *smṛti / sati* norm, making conscious a greater number of the processes of any nature that arise, develop and strengthen in man, *increases the field of consciousness* diminishing the dark areas of the unconscious beyond individual control.

The *smṛti / sati* norm, being essentially related to the mind activity of attention, involves a profound and meticulous analysis of the object of perception or reflection and thus *grants* man *a richer and truer knowledge of reality*, not only of the outer world but also of his own subjectivity.

In this way the *smṛti / sati* norm constitutes *an education for freedom* inasmuch man becomes, to a larger extent, master of his own decisions and actions and is not blindly impelled by forces that have unconsciously taken possession of him.

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Buddhism thus with its mentioned *attitudes* of receptivity, tolerance, objectivity, awareness of manysidedness and perspectivism, emotional detachment in judgments, thorough examination of the case, freedom of thought and personal effort to attain the truth; with its mentioned *principles* derived from its conception of the universe: universal causality, universal interdependence and interconnection, solidarity; with its mentioned *peculiar moral values*, as *kṣānti*, *smṛti*, is able to play a central role in the nowadays most necessary promotion of a modern universal Humanism for the ethical and intellectual progress of man, which would result in his harmony with other men and nature, fulfilling in this way the noble Buddhist aspiration of the happiness of all sentient beings: *sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā* : "May all beings be happy".

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