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DIALOG «BUDDHISM — WESTERN PHILOSOPHY» AS THE REALITY GAME: An interview with Dr. Jan Westerhoff

No one is surprised anymore by the dialogue between Buddhism and Western science, which develops the foundations of cognitive and contemplative sciences. But there have been requests for reflection on the results achieved, or even for a strategy for analytical research of the Buddhist East, which brings this dialogue to the philosophical level. And this level of discussion is, in fact, the dialogue between Buddhism and Western philosophy, which requires a new discourse that should be built on their common ground. And the first question that arises against this background is how to focus attention on the philosophical aspect of Buddhism, which orientalists usually call «Buddhist philosophy». Thus, realizing the beginning of the dialogue between Buddhist and Western philosophies, we are faced with the need to take the next, but already conscious step in the direction of this discussion. In order to make this step confident, we need to know where and how to start, and what key subjects we can rely on. Therefore, in an effort to find possible warnings against gross mistakes in such discussions, we sought the help of Western experts in the field of Buddhist studies by reading their works and talking to them. One of the well-known scholars is Professor Jan Westerhoff, who kindly agreed to give me an interview and answer some questions: whether there is a Buddhist philosophy; what are the approaches and stages of its research; what are the peculiarities of using the terms of Western philosophy in these studies; what can be the criterion for the best reading of traditional Buddhist texts; what can

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such a discussion give to contemporary Western philosophy, etc. This interview was not intended to be a conceptual deepening of either Buddhist or Western philosophy; we only tried to identify key questions that could help start a dialog between them in the right direction.

Keywords: Buddhism, Buddhist philosophy, dialogue Buddhist philosophy — Western philosophy.

Introduction

Is not it time to take a more systematic and global approach to the research of the East and pay special attention to investigations of the intellectual potential of the Buddhist tradition? In this introduction, I would love to invite you to dig a little deeper into the modern context of the issues to recognize our research motivation and to see the prospects of the Buddhist studies that are just hovering on the horizon, but towards which we are relentlessly moving.

In the situation of the current existential crisis in the center of Europe, related to the military and political aggravation of international relations, the issues of the realization of the motives and strategies of the so-called Global East are becoming key for every analytical work. In the majority, this is due to the need: to get rid of the limitations of the research methodology provoked by either intuitive or conscious Eurocentrism¹ (not to mention Nazism) (Stuchlik, 2009); to take a responsible attitude to the conceptualization of the Global East (Müller, 2020) as it is; to assess the prospects for close coexistence of civilizations with different paradigm approaches to solving humanitarian problems. At the same time, in our opinion, it is worth determining the influence of not only public religious, but also public philosophical discourses on the civilizational processes. In very this context, the tendencies of diversification of philosophy (Kalantarova, 2022a: p. 83), including through the development of interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary studies with the active involvement of intellectual traditions of the East, in particular Buddhism, become relevant.

Here we have to add that Buddhism takes a special place in this process because, at least, it was due to the natural processes of reformatting of Hinduism in early centuries BC/AD (at least, from the gnostic perspective) (Verardi, 2011: p. 71). And it should not surprise us: in short, the certain new trends came from the representative of the Kshatriya's *varna*² (we mean The Prince Siddhartha Gautama of Śākya dynasty, who was born in 6th-5th century BC, and from whom the Buddha-dharma doctrine originated) in order to make knowledge and education available to all (not just those belonging to the higher castes), according to their individual efforts and motivations

¹ History professor Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom once made a good point: «... terms such as 'Eurocentrism', 'Western-centric', and 'Orientalist' are too often being used now as all-purpose epithets that inhibit rather than launch meaningful exchanges of ideas» (Wasserstrom, 2001).

² The caste system in India segregates society into four varnas: Brahmins (scholars, priests or teachers), Kshatriyas (rulers, administrators or warriors), Vaishyas (farmers or merchants), Shudras (laborers or servants). All Sanskrit terms are provided by us in the international transliteration IAST, Tibetan — in the international transliteration Wylie.

(for everyone, after all, seeks the happiness that comes from acquiring the wisdom that reveals the truth of being, or authentic reality). Therefore, the peculiarities of Buddhism that allow us to count on the effectiveness of cultural, scientific, and especially philosophical dialogue with it include: non-sectarian and ecumenical tendencies in Buddhism in the 19th century and the subsequent revival of its political messianism (Benz, 1963: p. 1); its openness, including for the dialogue with Western science in the 20th century (which began as early as the 1980s) (Kalantarova, 2019); its tolerance of its own desacralization and secularization. In the framework of the dialog «Buddhism — Western science», for example, scientists explore the topics of philosophy of mind, cognitive sciences, contemplative sciences, neuro-phenomenology, etc.

So, we can say, that all these, in fact, prepares Buddhist discourse for the post-secular polemic³. Not to mention the non-theistic position (Duckworth, 2013: p. 106) and the pronounced skepticism inherent in Buddhist thinking (Burton, 2004: pp. 106—129), which had been noted by all Western orientalist-translators since the beginning of academic studies of Buddha-dharma in the 19th century (Hodgson, 1841: p. 98), and on which the entire «noble» philosophy (Kuzminski, 2021: p. 3) of Buddhism and principles of its social ethics are built⁴ (Benz, 1963: p. 67).

We see how all these peculiarities create the basis for the development of a constructive dialog «Buddhism — Western philosophy» in the near future. And Buddhist philosophy has prepared for this dialog. But is Western philosophy ready?

In general, in the context of the search for a way out of the postmodern trap in which Western philosophy found itself in the last third of the 20th century, intellectuals rushed to find a new reality, the debates around which flared up in the second decade of the 21st century and gave rise to the wave of the so-called «new realism» (Ferraris, 2014: p. 1). That is why, we consider, the main subject uniting all other topics together in terms of the dialog «Buddhism — Western philosophy» could very well be «reality» from a certain «philosophy of reality», which explores what is authenticated in us, in the world, what is worth realizing, what is worth defending and what is worth

³ Here we can talk not only about traditional Buddhism, but also about new trends in Buddhism — for example, Ambedkarism, named after the 20th century Indian political and statesman Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (Verma, 2022).

⁴ Ernst Benz emphasized the ambiguity of the thesis about the antagonism of Buddhism and communism, noting the organic existence of Buddhist communism (Benz, 1963: p. 176), which, for example, resulted in coexistence and mutual understanding between communism and Buddhism in ethical matters in Burma (Benz, 1963: p. 179). Also, he wrote: «The Kremlin and the Vatican, as two systems of authoritarian control over men's mind, threaten our intellectual liberties today» (Benz, 1963: p. 183). Because in that case, Buddhism takes the side of the communism and social utopia for the sake of creating acceptable conditions for further spiritual achievements of community (meditation, etc.). But such efforts in spiritual and intellectual practices require an aristocracy of spirit, which the masses of the people mostly do not possess, so the danger for Buddhists who are building a socialist state is obvious — how would not confuse successes in social security of this world with Buddhist ideals of liberation from the illusions of the world, that is, «there is the danger that Buddhists will confound their own Communism with the Marxist brand» (Benz, 1963: p. 185).

adhering to — that is the philosophy that tries to return a person from artificial things to real human life through the recognition of the value of the last one.

Therefore, Buddhist studies are relevant for us as long as questions of authenticity are relevant to us⁵ — the authenticity of cognition and perception, world and ourselves, events and other humans, ideas and our identities, etc. After all, not only does Buddhism itself call for awakening from illusions to true reality, but Buddhist philosophy also explores the possibility of authentic knowledge of this reality.

Having studied in detail the recently published monograph on Buddhist philosophy (Westerhoff, 2018) and familiarized ourselves with the range of problems that concern its author, we decided to ask the researcher about the state of affairs in the study of Buddhist philosophy in the West. And the interview we bring to your attention is actually an attempt to talk not only about the essence and starting points of the dialog between Buddhism and Western philosophy but also to demonstrate how careful and thorough the discourse of such a dialog should be.

Dr. Westerhoff is a Professor of Buddhist Philosophy at the University of Oxford, who is primarily interested in the philosophy of the Madhyamaka⁶ school and in contemporary analytic philosophy (mainly on metaphysics) (Westerhoff, s.a.).

Buddhism as a Philosophy

Olena Kalantarova: Dr. Westerhoff, I am very glad to discuss the current issues of Buddhist Studies with you. In general, I would love to talk about the diversification of philosophy, because on my opinion, it means the diversification of approaches to the recognition of reality and, possibly, the diversification of reality itself. And in particular, supporting your idea to play in Buddhist philosophy (Westerhoff, 2018: p. 2), I propose to listen how the certain Buddhist intellectual pieces sound performed by Western philosophical orchestra, while concentrating on the melodies of the Mahāyāna⁷.

So, let us move forward gradually to see how the topics will unfold, following the chain of their inner logic. And what do you think: can we answer shortly — what is Buddhist Philosophy in terms of Western philosophy and what is its prime question?

Jan Westerhoff: There is, of course, no single thing «Buddhist philosophy», as there is not a single «Western philosophy». Buddhist thought has developed for two and a half millennia in a very diverse set of cultural spheres and incorporated a variety of intellectual trajectories, which do not all agree with one another, but which all consider themselves to be related to the intellectual explication, analysis, and defense of the teachings of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni.

⁵ One of the possible and promising areas of research into Buddhist methods of determining the authenticity of phenomena is the study of the Tantric traditions of Buddhism, in particular, anuttarayogatantra (that is, the higher yoga tantra) (Kalantarova, 2022b).

⁶ «Middle Way» (Sanskrit) — one of the four main philosophical schools: Sarvāstivāda («Doctrine that everything is real», Sanskrit), Sautrāntika («<Based-On-the> sutras authority», Sanskrit), Madhyamaka, Yogācāra («Practice of Yoga», Sanskrit).

⁷ «Great Vehicle» (Sanskrit) — the Buddhist tradition, developed in the 2nd century AD and based on the Nāgārjuna's teaching of emptiness.

O.K.: It was not by chance that the title of the interview has an allusion to «The Glass Bead Game» by Hermann Hesse. Since the West nevertheless decided to play with Buddhist philosophy, what does the Western *Magister Ludi* become in this context?

J.W.: As there are many different streams of Buddhist philosophy, there are also many different approaches to its study. We can distinguish two main types. One is primarily historical, with a focus on the careful edition, translation, and commentary of Buddhist canonical texts, and their explanation against the intellectual and historical context of their times. The other focuses more on systematic elements, trying to understand what Buddhist philosophers have contributed to the discussion of topics which have intrigued thinkers since the dawn of humanity: reality, knowledge, ethics, language, suffering, death, and so forth. Of course, these two approaches are to a certain extent interdependent: we cannot investigate the Buddhist contribution to a philosophical problem without a detailed understanding of what Buddhist thinkers have actually said about the problem. On the other hand, any explanation and contextualization of a given text requires that we already have a secure understanding of the theoretical ramifications of the topic or topics the text involves. As such most Western scholars now working on Buddhist Studies probably combine the two approaches, though it is usually easy to see whether a specific contribution is more focused on textual and historical aspects, or whether it is more focused on the analysis of specific ideas.

O.K.: How would you translate the very word philosophy into Sanskrit and Tibetan in the Buddhist context? (Actually, it is a little bit of a trick question) I would like to consider three concepts: *philosophy*, *siddhānta*⁸, *grub mtha*⁹. Based on their translation from Greek, Sanskrit, Tibetan respectively, and traditional interpretations, I recognize their similarity. Do you agree with me?

J.W.: Terms like φιλοσοφία¹⁰, *siddhānta*, and so on, have to be understood in their historical and conceptual contexts, and the search for word-by-word equivalents through translations is bound to fail to account for this complexity. However, one way of conceptualizing the enterprise the Buddhists (and to an extent the Indians more generally) were engaged in as something that comes close to Ancient Greek philosophical enterprise is as the explication of dharma. To explicate dharma, a variety of epistemic instruments were employed: perception (*pratyakṣa*), reasoning (*yukti*), testimony (*śabda*), and so on, which were brought together in order to answer questions that both the Ancient Greeks and the Ancient Indians would have considered to be related to one another, questions like «What is the difference between reality and illusion?», «What makes an action virtuous?», «What justifies a specific claim as knowledge?», «How can one claim be used to rationally support another claim?» and so on. As such it makes sense that the practitioners of φιλοσοφία and the defenders of a specific *siddhānta* were engaged in cognate enterprises, though the conceptual contexts in which the terms φιλοσοφία and *siddhānta* operated were of course very different.

⁸ «Tenet», «truth», «conclusion» (Sanskrit).

⁹ Tenets, philosophical theory (Tibetan). Tibetan translation of «siddhānta».

¹⁰ «Philosophy» (Greek).

O.K.: In the Western Buddhist researches, Yogācāra is usually compared with phenomenology, and Mādhyamaka with ontology. However, Yogācāra in its radical version (Cittamātra¹¹) makes an ontological statement: only the mind exists. We see here a clear ontological maxim. And Madhyamaka, especially in its radical version (Madhyamaka-Prāsangika¹²), resorts to a method similar a phenomenological reduction to purify phenomena from their conditioned facticity. And as a philosophizing mathematician would say: then what is the meaning of such a rough rounding (that is, in the comparing Yogācāra to phenomenology, Madhyamaka — to ontology)?

J.W.: I think that such identifications can at best serve a propaedeutic function. There are certain aspects of Yogācāra I can explain to somebody familiar with the phenomenological tradition, as there are certain aspects of Madhyamaka that can be linked up with questions discussed in contemporary ontology. But if we move from 'some aspect of A is like B' to 'A is just B' we will quickly end up in absurdity. In order to explain ideas from the Classical Indian or Buddhist philosophical tradition to somebody with a primarily Western background it is helpful to show how the questions they might be interested in and familiar with are taken up in a specific way by the tradition to be explained. But if you then want to analyze the tradition further, you need to understand it as a network of ideas that are related to one another, without constantly translating these ideas into their presumed Western equivalents. You will want to understand the entire structure; how, for example, the key concepts used in Yogācāra or Madhyamaka materials relate to each other, how central claims are defended against criticism, how a tradition differentiates itself from other traditions, and so on. Once you have a good grasp of this, and thereby a working understanding of the tradition from the inside a more fruitful comparison with other philosophical traditions can ensue.

O.K.: As for the Dharmakīrti¹³ ontology, I would like to purify some points. The first one is associated with causal efficiency. So, universals are causally ineffective, so they are not real. But causal efficiency reminds me of *pratītyasamutpāda*¹⁴ (or even *arthakriyāsamartha*¹⁵) — which reflects the interdependency at the conventional level, i.e., *saṃvṛtīsatya*¹⁶. Thus, when we talk here about the causal ineffectiveness of universals, we are talking about their conventional unreality, not ultimate (at the *paramārthasatya* level)?

J.W.: This is a somewhat complex point in the exposition of Dharmakīrti's thought. On the one hand, Dharmakīrti argues that because *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*¹⁷ entities (sometimes referred to as 'universals') are not in space and time, they cannot participate in

¹¹ «Only Mind» (Sanskrit).

¹² A sub-school of the Middle Way school, which builds its evidence on the method of contradiction, so-called, *reductio ad absurdum* (Latin) or *prasaṅga* («that which forces to admit», Sanskrit).

¹³ Dharmakīrti (VII cen.) — a logical-epistemologist of Yogācāra.

¹⁴ «Dependence-arising» (Sanskrit) — Buddhist theory of Interdependent origination.

¹⁵ «Fulfillment of one's purpose» (Sanskrit).

¹⁶ The couple of terms «*saṃvṛtīsatya* / *paramārthasatya*» (Sanskrit) expresses the Buddhist approach to the truth: the conventional and ultimate truth, respectively.

¹⁷ «Generally characterized thing» (Sanskrit).

causal relations, and, causal efficacy being the mark of the real, cannot be real. However, some Tibetan commentators on Dharmakīrti have argued that there are universals that are simple mental constructs, and that these are at least conventionally real.

O.K.: Is it possible, by translating original Buddhist texts and using the principle of similarity of ideas, not to lose the soteriological component of Buddhist discourse and even to discover much more depth of the Western philosophical reflections? Will not we find ourselves in a simulated (fictional) reality one day? (Or has it already happened?)

Perhaps it is better for us to carefully bypass the interdisciplinary level (with its simple borrowing of terms from one discipline to another, the change of context and significant modulations of the interpretation of terms), and move towards the transdisciplinary level (composing an entirely new discourse with its own new terms and context)? If it is possible of course.

J.W.: The soteriological component of the Buddhist texts is of course central element of the philosophical systems these describe. However, this does not imply that one cannot appreciate these texts for their philosophical contents without accepting all their soteriological components. Much of Western philosophy is strongly influenced by Christianity, but that does not imply that in order to draw philosophical insight from Aquinas, or Leibniz, or Spinoza, say, one has to accept the Christian premises these thinkers incorporate into their systems.

Regarding the move from the interdisciplinary to the transdisciplinary, by composing an entirely new discourse with its own new terms and context I believe what is important first and foremost is a sound disciplinary understanding of what the texts we are concerned with say, and how best to interpret them in terms of their historical and conceptual predecessors, and their later expositors and commentators. Once this is achieved an interdisciplinary dialogue or a transdisciplinary fusion can proceed on a secure foundation actually based on the ideas of another tradition, rather than our ideas of what their ideas are.

Buddhist Philosophy as a Language Game

O.K.: Before engaging in interdisciplinary research, we need to conduct conscientious disciplinary research — this is the right approach and good advice. And I think I understood you correctly. In any case, this is an immutable maxim for academic pursuits. And my next question is about the key concepts you mentioned in your monograph on the Golden Ages of Buddhist philosophy, but which go beyond disciplinary boundaries, in my opinion. I mean, for example, the concept of «the fundamental nature of reality» (Westerhoff, 2018: p. 40), which you do not give a clear definition, but just contrast with «a conceptual construction» (Westerhoff, 2018: p. 235). And my question is not about the essence of this concept, but about the approach itself: how justified and correct it is. In other words, did you mean any specific term from Buddhist philosophy by the term fundamental nature of reality? If so, which one and why didn't they keep it in an authentic form? And if not, what can such an introduction of new terms give us when studying a tradition with an already established own terminology?

J.W.: I believe that the main contrast I had in mind there was one between *prapañca*¹⁸ and *dravya*¹⁹ as we find it in Abhidharma²⁰, but the distinction is of course more general, and is expressed by other pairs of terms as well (such as *saṃvṛti* and *paramārtha*, *samāropa*²¹ and *svabhāva*²², etc.) The contrast between what is fundamental and what is (merely) constructed appears in Buddhist philosophy in many forms. As such it is most straightforward to refer to the distinction without using specific Sanskrit terms that refer to a particular way in which this distinction is drawn.

O.K.: Allow me to move on to more specific issues and to focus on your own research to clarify some important points. According to your scientific profile, your first thesis was on «Ontological categories; Their nature and meaning», and the second one was dedicated to the philosophy of Nāgārjuna's²³ Madhyamaka. And now you have been investigating the philosophy of reality (please correct me if I'm a bit inaccurate in details). What are the advantages of the logic of just such a sequence of research interests: from ontological categories to Madhyamaka and further to the investigation of reality? Are you more interested in the study of Buddhism or reality?

And do you personally think that the questions of the fundamental nature of reality within the framework of such logic are soluble? Or do we need still to go beyond the framework of ontological categories, including such tools as *apoha*²⁴, *prasaṅga*, *anumāna*²⁵, and so on, into the space of some direct experience like *pratyakṣapramāṇa*²⁶ or *yogipratyakṣa*²⁷?

J.W.: Metaphysics is one of my central philosophical interests, and I have pursued this in a number of frameworks, some focused exclusively on the Western analytic tradition, and some concentrating on the Indo-Tibetan discussion. I do, of course, believe that each side of the discussion is able to learn something from the other. Specifically, in the case of ontology, we find parts of Buddhist studies that are much more invested in it than others; Abhidharma (and, and least on some understandings of it, Yogācāra) has a much greater focus on ontological discussions than Madhyamaka. But even for the former ontology is just a tool to aid soteriological progress, it is not an aim in itself.

O.K.: And now I would love to ask you about «a framework of the different interpretative options, a map of different possible arguments or solutions to a philosophical problem a given work could present, in order to determine which of these provides the best possible reading of the text» (Westerhoff, 2018: p. 284). Could you lift the veil of secrecy over the criterion of «the best possible reading of the text»? And in what direction can we work on such a criterion for evaluating the best interpretive strategy?

¹⁸ «Conceptual elaboration» (Sanskrit).

¹⁹ «Real entities» (Sanskrit) — the Buddhist notion of substance.

²⁰ «Attribution» (Sanskrit).

²¹ «Supreme law» (Sanskrit) — a Buddhist metaphysic.

²² «Intrinsic nature» (Sanskrit). It means independent real existence.

²³ Nāgārjuna (II-III cen.) — a Buddhist scholar of Mahāyāna.

²⁴ The notion of the Buddhist theory of meanings.

²⁵ The notion of the Buddhist valid inference.

²⁶ «Valid direct perception» (Sanskrit).

²⁷ «Yogic direct perception» (Sanskrit).

J.W.: I suppose one straightforward criterion for «bestness» is that it is a reading according to which the argument considered actually works. Of course one needs to differentiate this a little. When reading a text, it would be unrealistic to assume from the outset that all the arguments presented by an author are sound. At the same time, it should be our initial assumption that the author set out to present a valid argument. This does not necessarily mean we are convinced by it — we might still disagree about the premisses. It may turn out that even after our best efforts to interpret an argument we still believe there is a mistake in the reasoning, or that one or more of its premisses are implausible. In this case it is particularly important to explain why we believe the author, and possibly his commentators, would have accepted the inference, and why the logical problems were not picked up by later authors.

All of this should of course take place against the background of contextual plausibility: given everything else we know about an author; it should be plausible that he made the kind of argument we attribute to him.

O.K.: Allow me to refer to a quote from your colleague Ethan Mills (Mills, 2016: pp. 44–45) «Contrary to the theoretical interpretations of several recent scholars such as Jan Westerhoff, according to which Nāgārjuna accepts a contextualist epistemological theory, I will argue that Nāgārjuna as well as the later Madhyamaka Candrakīrti²⁸, much like Pyrrhonian skeptics, employed concerns about epistemic criteria in service of purely practical purposes. I will claim that there is no positive epistemological theory to be found in Nāgārjuna's Vīgrahavyāvartanī²⁹ and Candrakīrti's Prasannapadā³⁰». Could you give us a little insight into your view of the epistemological theory of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka and its key difference from Dignāga³¹—Dharmakīrti's cognitive study style?

J.W.: Nāgārjuna's epistemology, as presented in the Vīgrahavyāvartanī is contextualist, that is, epistemic instruments and epistemic objects depend on one another. How do I know that there are tables and chairs out there as I expect them to be? Because I can see them. How do I know that my vision is working correctly? Because it delivers information about tables and chairs as I expect them. Neither the epistemic objects (the tables and chairs) precede the epistemic instruments (vision), nor the other way round. For a foundationalist, like Dharmakīrti, some entities (such as the momentary particulars) are objectively real, and we acquire knowledge of them by means of epistemic instruments (such as perception).

O.K.: I would also love to ask you a question about the immediate prospects for the development of Buddhist Studies that have already been outlined. The prerequisites for this question of mine were fundamental studies of *the epistemological turn* of Dignāga-Dharmakīrti (Eltschinger, 2014) and contemporary explorations of *the philosophy of Buddhist tantra* (Duckworth, 2019). At the same time, I am fully aware that

²⁸ Candrakīrti (VII cen.) — a scholar of Madhyamaka.

²⁹ «The End of Disputes» (Sanskrit) — the Nāgārjuna's text (Westerhoff, 2010).

³⁰ «Clear Words» (Sanskrit) — the Candrakīrti's commentary on the fundamental text of Mahāyāna« Mūlamadhyamakakārikā», written by Nāgārjuna (Buswell, 2013: p. 1114).

³¹ Dignāga (V-VI cen.) — a logical-epistemologist of Yogācāra, the teacher of Dharmakīrti.

in your monograph you bypass tantric texts and therefore my question will look rather speculative, but I would like to hear your opinion on the prospects for this direction of Buddhist research. I mean, for example, can we call the Third Turn of the Wheel of Dharma some specific *linguistic turn* (towards *sandhyābhāṣa*³²) (Bucknell, 1986) in Buddhist philosophy (due to the discovery by Buddhist actors of the Third Turn not only the specific connections among the linguistic constructions and meanings, guiding to discussions around the three natures of existence but also the epistemic limitations of conceptual thinking per se, which needs deconstruction).

J.W.: I believe that there is a lot of philosophical interest in tantric texts, including, amongst other things, their relation to Yogācāra, their conception of language, and their understanding of emptiness. However, it will take a lot more research into these texts to gain a clear conception of their philosophical implications. Tantric texts are, after all, not philosophical treatises, and unlocking their philosophical contents presupposes a considerably more detailed study of these materials than is available at present.

Conclusions

O.K.: Allow me to summarize some of the results of our conversation. We found out that Buddhist philosophy is heterogeneous and has more than 2,500 years of history; that the process of conceptualization of the ancient Greeks and Buddhists is similar, so when we study the Buddhist intellectual tradition, we have to compile historical and conceptual approaches. At the same time, our own Buddhist studies should be going through the certain stages: propaedeutic (when we establish analogies between Buddhist and Western terms); traditional (when we explore the internal connections between ideas and concepts of the Buddhist tradition); comparative (delving into a thorough comparison of ideas, concepts, and theories between the East and the West). Also, we should take into account that the soteriological component of Buddhist traditional texts additionally requires a mandatory inter-contextual study; and the variety of Buddhist philosophical dichotomies allows us to use certain newly created terms that simplify and generalize the research picture. The criterion for our best reading of a Buddhist text may be as follows: the author's arguments should be clear to us so that we can either agree with them or find a logical error based on their contextual plausibility. You have also noted that such Western terms as ontology, phenomenology, and epistemology, when applied to traditional Buddhist philosophy, acquire a much broader field of meaning. Therefore, the tantra philosophy we have mentioned, which poses in a special way the question of the philosophy of language, may become an incredibly prospective area of research specifically against the background of the dialog between Buddhism and Western philosophy. And at the end of our interview, the last question: how would you assess the prospects for this dialog today?

J.W.: I am altogether quite optimistic about the future development of Buddhist philosophy. We have now, compared to the situation of say, 50 years ago a much better selection of editions of texts, authoritative translations, and conceptual analyses avail-

³² «Twilight language» (Sanskrit).

able, and a much more in-depth understanding of their cultural and historical context. As such we can produce a much more nuanced account of the diversity of the different Buddhist traditions and, on the basis of this, develop a more sophisticated dialogue between the philosophical currents of the Indian and the Western tradition.

O.K.: Thank you for your answers, Dr. Westerhoff. Of course, we still have many questions. But your precision of words and brevity of thought will already serve as a good lesson for students of Buddhist philosophy, especially in the first, as you called it, propaedeutic stage. And we hope that the dialog between Buddhist and Western philosophy will move us toward a deeper understanding of ourselves, so that we do not get lost wandering in various realities.

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ДІАЛОГ БУДДИЗМУ ІЗ ЗАХІДНОЮ ФІЛОСОФІЄЮ ЯК ГРА В РЕАЛЬНІСТЬ: ІНТЕРВ'Ю З Д-Р ЯНОМ ВЕСТЕРГОФОМ

Вже нікого не дивує діалог між буддизмом і західною наукою, який розвиває основи когнітивних і споглядальних наук. Але з'явилися запити на рефлексію досягнутих результатів або навіть на стратегію аналітичних досліджень буддійського Сходу, які виводять цей діалог на філософський рівень. І цей рівень дискусії — це, власне, і є діалог між буддизмом і західною філософією, який вимагає нового дискурсу, що має бути побудований на їхніх спільних засадах. І перше питання, яке виникає на цьому тлі — як акцентувати увагу саме на філософському аспекті буддизму, який сходознавці зазвичай називають «буддійською філософією». Таким чином, усвідомлюючи початок діалогу між буддійською та західною філософіями, ми стикаємося з необхідністю зробити наступний, але вже свідомий крок в напрямку цієї дискусії. Для того, щоб цей крок був упевненим, ми повинні знати, з чого і як почати і на які ключові аспекти ми можемо спиратися. Тому, прагнучи знайти можливі застереження від грубих помилок, я звернулася по допомогу до західних експертів у галузі буддології. Одним із відомих сучасних науковців є професор Ян Вестергоф, який люб'язно погодився дати нам інтерв'ю і відповів на низку питань: чи існує буддійська філософія; які підходи та етапи її дослідження; які особливості використання термінів західної філософії в цих дослідженнях; що може бути критерієм найкращого прочитання традиційних буддійських текстів; що може дати така дискусія сучасній західній філософії тощо. Це інтерв'ю не мало на меті концептуальне заглиблення ані в буддійську, ані в західну філософію — ми лише намагалися визначити ключові питання, які могли б забезпечити розвиток зазначеного діалогу у правильному напрямку.

Ключові слова: буддизм, буддійська філософія, діалог буддійська філософія — західна філософія.