



Schopenhauer and Buddhist View on Counselor, Morals and Life

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Abstract

Arthur Schopenhauer, a German pessimistic philosopher (1788-1860), proclaimed that suffering is the direct and immediate feeling of realizing that life, mind and knowledge obviously fail here. For him the morals of mediation insight into the essential identity, the identity with all sufferings of all beings, is the insight by which the original egoism is overcome. The Buddhist moral concept suggests cultivation of loving kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karunā*) and in the same way minimizes the desire and reduces one's own ego. The essence of the Buddhist teaching formulated in the first sermon given by the Buddha as the Four Noble Truths is that unhappiness and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) are caused by the ego and four types of clinging (*upādāna*). The practice of Buddhism combines the essence of the Four Noble Truths and the practical detailed explanation of the Eightfold Noble Path divided into three groups: morality, concentration, and wisdom.

Keywords: Four Noble Truths, Morality, Suffering (*dukkha*), Clinging (*upādāna*).

¹T.W. Rhys Davids, (2004) *Pali English Dictionary*, Oxford: The Pali Text Society, p. 324. Dukkha tr. as formation or formation after sukha or unpleasant, painful, causing misery. Depend on the context it is also mean pain, entailing sorrow or trouble. In English there is no equal word which can cover the same ground as in Pali. In English it is important to use half synonyms, no one of which is exact.

Introduction

On February 22, 1788 Arthur Schopenhauer was born in Gdansk (present Poland) as the son of a merchant and a writer. His mother gave the spiritual magnitudes of his time to him and introduced him to some intellectual persons such as W. V. Goethe, and his father provided cosmopolitan education.

In 1809, after the death of his father, he began to study medicine, later he switched to philosophy. In 1813 he received his doctorate. A year later he began to write his main scientific work “The World as Will and Representation”. This work represents an attempt to regard the basic principle of the world not as a rational one but as an irrational one. The focus is placed on the will, which has neither reason nor goal and yet represents the driving force of being. In 1831 he fled to Frankfurt am Main after the outbreak of the cholera epidemic. Other writings appeared in a late phase, such as “The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics,” in which he refutes free will, “Parerga and Paralipomena”, and “Aphorisms of Wisdom of Life”. On September 21, 1860 he died in Frankfurt am Main.

Schopenhauer's Suffering

From the night of unconsciousness awakened to life, the will finds itself as an individual in an endless and limitless world, among countless individuals, all striving, suffering, erring; and as if by a terrifying dream, he hurries back to the old unconsciousness. This is how Schopenhauer describes the will, life, and suffering.

Following the Schopenhauerian idea, the suffering of life is essentially inevitable and without the fulfilment of pain imperfect striving and the experience of a fulfillment that cannot be stabilized, especially in load and boredom². In his opinion, man is trapped in a cycle of refusal and greed, which will end only with death. In the moment in which the desired is achieved it is not the feeling of satisfaction that arises but the desire to want other things. The experience of suffering is that which drives people to philosophy, which in the end is nothing but an attempt to understand the existence of suffering in the world and thus to endure suffering. The will to gain

²Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, (1969) New York: Dover Publications, Inc. tr. E. F. J. Payne, Vol. I. p.260.

knowledge is linked to the experience of suffering. The will to know relates to the experience of suffering. Suffering is perceived as something disturbing and cannot be accepted as reality. Suffering is perceived as unjustified and inappropriate, which includes a charge and constitutes a justification. Schopenhauer tries to justify this with his philosophy and to refute the reproach of the unjust. The recognition of the will to live is quite a practical way of life. The fact that all are suffering is what justifies a will-renounced life style. Accordingly, the negation of will is the supposedly better form of life, since way of life leading to salvation explains and concludes the analogy between the conceptions of Schopenhauer's salvation. A denial or optimistic view in his opinion is a "really wicked way of thinking, a bitter mockery of the unspeakable suffering of mankind".³ Optimism gives the feeling of correctness and conveys a view of the world as a real reality.

Buddhism and Suffering (*Dukkha*)

Life in the continuing cycle of birth and death is ultimately painful (*dukkha sacca*). The inevitable sufferings of birth, old age, disease and death destroy the foundation of lasting happiness. This fact must be clearly understood. Suffering is the constant underlying all existence; it comes about because we bind ourselves to a world in which nothing is sustainable and can be preserved. Suffering is more than pain, sadness, tribulation, fear, experience, isolation, certainty of death, etc. Suffering is part of our self-created nature. Suffering is the fundamental characteristic of every existence, for in everything that arises and takes place, the end is always co-established. Impermanence, transience, lack of essence are thus the characteristics that are attached to all existence and are characterized by the term "suffering". This first truth of Buddhism states that all worldly forms of existence are transient and imperfect (*dukkha*) and can never fully satisfy us. The cause of all suffering is greed, hatred and delusion. To reach true happiness, these causes must be overcome (*samudaya sacca*). So, this second truth contains the root cause analysis of the suffering material existence. The cause of this suffering is found in our own mind: it is the desire for material sense gratification (*Tanhā*).

³Ibid. p. 326.

Schopenhauer's Moral and Ethic

Schopenhauer argues that the world is a world of appearance that can be traced back to a blind massless will. For him the will is the basic principle of the essence of the world, and thus explains life. In moral contemplation, suffering is contradictory because suffering is present and does not end. The moral thought does not play down suffering, but rather serves to recognize it in its reality and retrace it to the essence of the world. On the one hand, it is morally unfair to deny or belittle the reality of suffering; on the other hand, it is morally impossible for such a metaphysical injustice to exist. The compassion in Schopenhauer's concept of suffering plays a major role and forms the basis of his moral understanding. Morality, in his opinion, is a form of individual recognition of the suffering of others. This implies the necessity of trade, that is, of becoming active. Which, in turn, leads the compassionate beyond what is possible, namely to disinterested actions. The moral value of actions, according to Schopenhauer, springs from an immediate, felt, and not from an abstract knowledge. The grasping of moral meaning and the moral evaluation of actions is possible in this context for the individual. The evaluation of good and bad is based on the agreement with the own will urge. Which affirms that whatever contradicts him is bad, and what suits him is good. Capturing the moral meaning of terms such as compassion, justice, and philanthropy is also intuitively grasped. Knowledge is a subjective one and goes beyond the knowledge of one's own will. Just as man intuitively recognizes his own desire for will and the provocation and rejection of the urge of will through an action, so he can do so with other people. In this context Schopenhauer speaks of vivid knowledge. The act from pity is an act that puts one's self or self-interest into the background and is carried out not for the sake of self-will, with the aim of reducing others' grief or counteracting the emergence. It is conspicuous in moral actions that you cannot be justified, an action can only be justified if the reason of the action is traceable, or a benefit can be defined. On the other hand, moral actions are disinterested actions, any attempt to substantiate moral actions, that is, grounds for stating why we should act morally, inevitably leads to the reasoned action being no longer moral. For Schopenhauer, the absence of a reasoning is equivalent to the lack of self-interest, which ultimately leads to the conclusion that there is no motive for action, which excludes moral action. He excludes this kind of reasoning because of the experience that teaches us that such genuine moral acts occur, even though we do not understand how they are possible. For him, the contradiction is interpreted as a proof of the illusory character of our world and as a guide to the understanding of what lies behind it. The identification of one's own experience with that

of a stranger, which contradicts the principium of individuation, which I nevertheless undertake in moral action, then points to an actual existing identity. Basically, we are all the same because the will that underlies us is the same, time and space are the foundations of difference, are mere forms of intuition that are not valid for the thing.

Compassion morality is the result of the insight into the essential identity, identity of all sufferers, of all beings, insight through which the original egoism is overcome. Compassion is the foundation of morality, the only truly moral motive, the real selfless virtue, the basis of all free justice and philanthropy. Only the action born of compassion has moral value. Pity is participation in the suffering of another. In the other we suffer ourselves. Here the partition that separates the beings is abolished, and the non-me becomes the ego in a sense. Out of the comprehension of the appearance of individuality comes the justice and the goodness of the mind, the compassion, the pure love. But when man recognizes his own ego in all beings and his own suffering in their suffering, above all his life and his pleasures shudder. The will now turns against itself, affirms the (individual-bodily) life ever weaker, it has become clear-sighted through knowledge and denies life. Suicide is of no use, for death then only affects the appearance of the will, not itself. On the other hand, asceticism in all its ways (poverty, mortification, chastity, etc.), which weakens the will to live, redeems us more and more from life. When death comes, he meets an already almost extinct will. "For the one who ends so, the world has ended at the same time." For us, this nirvana is nothingness, while in itself it is the highest, but our world is nothing. The denial of the will to live, this "self-abolition of the will", this sudden turn of the will toward oneself, is an act of the freedom (guided by knowledge) of the will. Here is the only point where his freedom enters immediately.

Buddhism's Moral and Ethics

The central and fundamental aspect as a natural process of which operates with all our volitional actions which does not affect the external agency and beyond all Buddhist doctrines and Buddhist traditions is the karma. The ethics in Buddhism begins with the rotation of the Dhamma wheel and the doctrine of the early Buddhist tradition. *The Four Noble Truths* and thus the ethics stand in the center of Buddhist thinking and acting. It was the aim of the Buddha to find solutions to ethical problems in the society, the remainder of his life was devoted to propagating the definitive solution he had discovered and encouraging others to implement it. From that result is the invitation, which he spreads to

participate in the highest and best form of human life, to live a noble life. The aim of Buddha was not simply the attainment of an intellectual vision of reality or the mastery of doctrine in main, but the living of a full and rounded human life.

Following the *Sutta Piṭaka* there is the *Cūla Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta*⁴ in which the young Brahmin *Subha*⁵ asks the Buddha about the inequality among human beings in terms of being superior or inferior. The answer he got from the Buddha was that all living beings are the owner of their actions, heirs to their actions, they have their actions as their refuge and that it is action or karma that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior. Generally karma also can be translated as action but encompasses intentional actions, volitional and willful, which give a result. The mind (*citta*)⁶ itself is unable to produce any mental, verbal, or physical action. Actions that are wholesome, unwholesome, or a combination of both volitions are considered as karma. The aim in Buddhism is to escape from all sufferings by eliminating defilements (*kilesa*) of craving, aversion, and ignorance. In general, the Buddha's teaching describes the volition (*cetana*) as one mental state (*cetasika*) which arises together with (*citta*) consciousness. Following the rule of karma, which is related to mental formations, the five aggregates perform the psychology and physiology of individual personality. Volition is the intention determining factor. The *Paticca Samuppada* explains how beings come and continue to exist based on the circles of rebirth. In the Buddhist concept of morality and ethic, body and morality are inextricably connected and linked to each other, which can be easily understood from the precepts (*sīla*) that contain both. The close relationship Buddhists posit between body and morality means that the formation of ethical persons is conceived of as a process of both physical and moral transformation, affecting the entire complex of body, feelings, and thoughts. Buddhism knows no prohibitions in the classical sense, believers profess to believe through the threefold refuge (*tisarana*) as the refuge in the Buddha, the doctrine, and the community. An

⁴MN iii202, Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli, (1995) *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, pp. 1053-1057.

⁵G.P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, (1997) Oxford: The Pali Text Society, p. 1229. *Subha Sutta* the real name for *Cūla Kamma Vibhaṅga Sutta*.

⁶T.W. Rhys Davis, (2004) *Pali English Dictionary*, Oxford: The Pali Text Society, p. 265. *Citta* tr. as shine, to be bright, variegated, manifold, beautiful; tasty, sweet, spiced depend on in which the word are be used the meaning change.

⁷Ibid p. 271. Belong to ceta mental, with *citta* it is to be taken as supplementing, mind and all that belongs to it, mind and mental properties.

exact translation is difficult here because the refuge in the actual sense includes an entire attitude to life.⁸ In the rule of karma, future happiness is a consequence of karma as a direct consequence or continuation of the maintenance of a satisfying behavior in the present, which is backed by the threefold refuge and the precepts. The teaching of the Buddha is grouped by three headings as *sīla* (moral conduct), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). The *sīla* also can be classified into 2 groups as *abhisamācārika sīla*, which is based on the good behavior, and the *ādibrahmacariyaka sīla* of the beginning of the Brahma faring. *Abhisamācārika sīla* represents the basic moral conduct that applies to all Buddhists.⁹ *Sīla* or moral conduct is the principle of human behavior that promotes orderly and peaceful existence in a community. It yields in particular a very special benefit. It can be concluded that ultimately, all the Buddhist schools regard ethics as a means of keeping one's mind and life pure and free from negative influences. The concept of the precepts is not only for the purity of the mind and living in harmony, but also to maintain and preserve good physical health. So the mind is regarded as a stream or river, which must be kept clean and constantly checked for pollution, good spiritual health is to be maintained. To do good, avoid evil and keep the mind pure is the essence of Buddha's teaching. Everything we are is the result of our past, and how we have dealt with or failed to deal with life is what determines our state of mind very much.

Schopenhauer's on Liberation

The liberation from suffering as described in the Four Noble Truths is considered a cognition that always and absolutely exists, but only to be understood in succession. This is due to the fact that they need to be understood not only intellectually, but must also be experienced, which requires comprehension as an attitude of consciousness, which is to internalize and consolidate. Only in this way is it possible to bring knowledge and motive in line with the action. This process depends on the successful integration and intellectual insight in the practice of daily life and the resulting certainty of experience. Consequently, the pure insight is not enough; their application is necessary for the goal of redemption from suffering.

⁸Regarding the Pali we have from Rhys Davids and Stede: Savana: (Cp. Vedic.) shelter, house, refuge, protection.

⁹Frank Hoffman, (2013) New York: Pali Buddhism, Routledge, p. 24.

Compassion has a dominant role and function in Schopenhauer's ideal. In his belief compassion is a fundamental condition of morality. In his opinion, the harm done to another is a harm done to oneself. The concept of the world as a willing idea acts as objectifying over empiric principle. The will is only cognition according to his philosophy and the world an idea. If one regards the will as a thing in itself, deviating from the world, the will is groundless in its appearance although the occurrence is free of all multiplicity but follows the rules of time and space. The connection of the contemplations is possible in the aesthetic contemplation, which is an escape from inseparable split between the world on the one hand and the will on the other. This conflict is the basis of all suffering. Contemplation allows gaining the conceptual knowledge of the pattern. For Schopenhauer, happiness is the absence of sorrow, and rightly only the absence of injustice. Positive and negative are not pure evaluations, but only to be understood as a mere sequence. Wrong and misfortune are not positive as a basic disposition, but only because they are the first to exist. Schopenhauer pursues the thought of a will-less insight, which by the consciousness of other things is so high that the recognition of one's own self no longer exists. Only in this condition it is possible to perceive the world purely objectively. An aesthetic view allows one to overcome the will and to grasp the concepts and ideas. The aesthetic contemplation of the cognition of the pure idea and thus the overcoming of the will is provided with purposefulness, goal-directedness to a transcendent ideal that brings meaning and purpose to the world. It would be daring to assert that endless suffering, of which the world is full, is without foundation and is based only on a coincidence. What may appear extraordinary to us as a single misfortune is in fact not unusual, but it is the rule. In everyday life we hardly perceive what we feel as pleasant or uncomfortable until Schopenhauer comes to a contraction with our will, that is, the negativity of well-being and happiness as opposed to the positivity of pain.¹⁰ Schopenhauer explains that the reason why we are suffering and not being able to overcome it is the weakness of the knowledge more than the knowing of the will. It is also possible that in some way somebody can overcome it by the way of knowledge of the kernel of the things, not the real insights or even intellectual realization but based on the experience of mercy. In other words, will itself cannot be abolished by anything except knowledge.¹¹ Thus, the cardinal cause of suffering is the will to live. That there is an

¹⁰ R.J. Hollingdale, (1970) *On the Suffering of the World*, London: Penguin Books Ltd., pp. 3-5.

¹¹ Arthur Schopenhauer, (1969) *The World as Will and Representation*, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., tr. E. F. J. Payne, Vol. I. p.398.

escape from suffering is the relation between ultimate wisdom and discernment which indicates changes in the knowledge. The differentiation of intellectual application in an existential state, as it were, is the result of the compassion towards all beings.

Conclusion

Now Schopenhauer's strategy to be happy is certainly not suitable. He says that wealth does not make a person happy if one can live well, that is the result of today's society. The instructions of Schopenhauer are difficult to communicate with the feeling of happiness (to have few friends, and to live in solitude). Only by negation of the will can salvation be found. Schopenhauer rejected the affirmation of the will. Schopenhauer condemned the urge for existence and well-being since, it is to be equated with egoism, which corresponds to all human actions; egoism is unlimited in its nature. Man desperately wants to preserve his existence, wants to liberate himself from pain, which includes all want and deprivation, wants the greatest possible sum of wellbeing, and wants every enjoyment he is capable of. Everything that opposes the striving of his egoism arouses indignation, anger, hatred, which must be destroyed, for the affirmation of one's own individual will goes hand in hand with the negation of all other individuals, which egoism divides into friend and foe. Only the sexual act is the complete affirmation of life, because through this want of life new life arises. On the other hand, he also meant who takes the life as it is with all the suffering and nevertheless finds satisfaction in it, which affirms the life and thus also the will. Schopenhauer has chosen the path of renunciation of will, which means that he has lived in asceticism: sparse diet, perfect chastity, voluntary poverty, willing wrongdoing. The will must be deliberately broken. The goal of asceticism is to become free from the world, from the will. Because the focal point of the will is the sex drive, perfect chastity is the most characteristic phenomenon of asceticism. Of course, asceticism immediately recalls Buddhism. The goal of man would be to reach Nibbana. Schopenhauer concludes the first version of his main work with the following words: "To whom this world is nothing, Nibbana is everything; to whom this world is everything, Nibbana is nothing". When humanity goes out, the consciousness, with it the idea, as well as the world, vanishes. The state of salvation has been reached. If man dies, the will is no longer bound to time. He becomes a thing that be the will in the purest art.