Nietzsche and Samsāra: Suffering and Joy in the Eternal Recurrence

Hoyu Ishida

Whether it be his religious preoccupation with the eclipse of God, his preposterous assessment of Bizet’s Carmen as the greatest opera ever written, or his transcendence as a visionary and poet of the very Enlightenment mechanism he seems to have espoused as a critic of traditional metaphysics, again and again the advocate of the Superman uses his strident voice to describe the suffering of finite human beings. His dazzling psychological insights and his devastating destruction of cant are in constant tension with his aim to overcome nihilism and to save the modern soul not only from the idolatry of false prophets but also from the tyranny of absolute cognition yielding a meaningless universe in which to be alive. As an Apollonian, Nietzsche may be compared with Voltaire’s shredding the errors of his day, but he was also a highly self-conscious Dionysian in accord with Kierkegaard’s injunction that “truth is subjectivity.” There is no simple Nietzsche in any single tradition except those who cannot bear to face, as Nietzsche did, the terrors of existence in their awesome concreteness.1

In The Buddhist Nirvana and Its Interpreters, Guy Richard Welborn asserts that Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) was greatly influenced by Indian studies in his philosophy and works.2 Welborn says, for instance, that the title Thus Spoke Zarathustra brings to mind the reflex of the Buddhist Pali Canon: evam me sutam (“thus have I heard”), and that “passages suggesting Buddhist parallels appear on every page”3 of the Zarathustra. Welborn then singles out the three most important interrelated items among many aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy which could be influenced by or hinted at his Indian studies. These three items are: (1) the notion of the eternal return and the accompanying idea of its creative potential as the two may relate to Indian theories of samsāra; (2) Nietzsche’s Zarathustra compared to the bodhisattva ideal in Buddhism; and (3) his concept of transvaluation and its possible ties with his own understanding of the Buddhist nirvāṇa.4 Welborn, however, is not saying that Nietzsche was a Buddhist. He is insisting that there is no basic conflict between Nietzsche and Buddhism on several important issues, and that Nietzsche’s presentations reflect Buddhist influences.5

This paper first examines some of Nietzsche’s philosophy and Buddhist doctrine

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3 Ibid., pp. 191-2.
5 Ibid., p. 189.
while limiting the discussion to Nietzsche’s view on morality and equality for the herd, his theory of the eternal recurrence, and the Buddhist concept of samsâra ("transmigration; perpetual repetition in the course of mundane existence--conditioned becoming"). It then tries to see the background of Nietzsche’s philosophy in analyzing the role of his severe experiences--suffering from sickness and rejected love in his life, seeking and hopefully suggesting what then can be done as people today are living in a chaotic world of samsâra in confusion and disorder. Nietzsche accepted reality and things as they were in a Dionysian affirmation with *amor fati* ("joy of fate"), trying to live the will to power as the overman.

Nietzsche is fundamentally pessimistic about the world or the way the world is. He sees that there is no order in the world for things to correspond to; there is nothing that we can claim to be totally and absolutely true. There is neither order nor purpose in the world, neither things nor facts, nothing whatever to which our beliefs can correspond. So Nietzsche claims that our beliefs are false. This is the “incurable pessimism” of Nietzsche. Man finds it difficult and hopeless to function in such a world without supposing external source(s) of authority and significance, so we instinctively create and worship God or science, and further, conscience, reason, social instinct, history, or morality, in order to preserve ourselves.

Morality, for example, is the will to power for the herd. Nietzsche in *The Will to Power* says that in European history since Socrates, people have attempted to make moral or religious values dominate over all other values. Moral values have been the guide and judge of their “life,” “knowledge,” “the arts,” and “political and social endeavors.” He then says that three powers are hidden behind these moral values. These are: (1) the instinct of the herd against the strong and independent; (2) the instinct of the suffering and underprivileged against the fortunate; and (3) the instinct of the mediocre against the exceptional. According to Nietzsche, this movement has possessed an enormous advantage, although “much cruelty, falseness, and narrow-mindedness have assisted it.”

In his argument against Darwin’s theory of evolution or natural selection, he also mentions that while the higher types of man--the strong, the independent, the fortunate, and the exceptional--are rarely achieved and have to “maintain superiority with difficulty,” the lower or weak types--the herd--“are favored by a compromising fruitfulness,” thereby inevitably dominating society and being able to survive much easier.

Nietzsche senses that this movement of the herd is not healthy, claiming that there are problems in this tradition, especially in terms of the Christian morality that he is familiar with. In Christian morality, says Nietzsche, the occasion of the highest honors is the time when every man is considered “as an object for others.” What Nietzsche is saying here is that an individual is not highly honored or evaluated highly in morality if one considers things just for one’s own sake. However, if one puts the major priority on others, then one receives high honor. Another problem, according to Nietzsche, is the idea

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of “equality.” He says that “this is so insipid, so obviously crazy,” since “we are supposed to make exactly the same demands on ourselves as we make on others,” although it is “felt to be holy, of a higher rank”\(^{12}\) by the herd.

Ideas like “every man as an object for others” and “equality” that the herd consider as high virtues or morality have accumulated in the herd’s mind as if they are the core legitimacy for making any judgments. These ideas have formulated the superego of the herd making them believe that they have to do things for the sake of others as good moral men, and that everything is equal, thereby suppressing the id or libido of the herd. Freud said that the civilization created by the operation of the superego has produced discontent in the human species since the id is always suppressed. Nietzsche explained that this morality of the herd is the problem. People in nature like to do things freely for themselves, but not for the sake of others. If one is programed to do things willingly for others, then one is really sick. Nietzsche then says that “we all thirst after distinction”\(^{13}\) but not after equality. He seems not to be saying, however, that we should all become selfish, but that we all have different interests and interpretations. Therefore, the idea of “equality” under any condition (for example under or before God) cannot be granted. While Freud sees discontent in civilization, Nietzsche sees the notions of “every man as an object for others” and “equality” as problems of the herd.

Nietzsche says that “the whole of European morality is based upon what is useful to the herd.”\(^{14}\) Since the herd or the weak types of man can survive more easily while the strong or higher types do not last but perish easily since they have to maintain their superiority with much difficulty, explains Nietzsche, it is the herd who are the ones who have created the Western civilization and moral values. Based on these moral values and judgments, Nietzsche lists the conditions and desires that are praised: “peaceable, fair, moderate, modest, reverent, considerate, brave, chaste, honest, faithful, devout, straight, trusting, devoted, sympathetic, helpful, conscientious, simple, mild, just, generous, indulgent, obedient, disinterested, unenvious, gracious, industrious....”\(^{15}\) Nietzsche, however, says that they “are none of them felt to be ‘good’ for their own sake.”\(^{16}\) Rather, these conditions and desires are all fictions of morality, religion, and civilization, which keep people far from their drives or instincts by which they live the will to power.

For the sake of survival, preservation, and protecting themselves from the privileged ones, the herd have created their tradition or movement, though, says Nietzsche, it is sick and unhealthy. Is Nietzsche therefore saying that morality or civilization should not have been created by the herd? Should the privileged types have been the ones who govern society and are responsible for civilization? What would happen if the privileged ones created morality or civilization instead? Nietzsche does not answer these questions specifically but criticizes morality, which has dominated the Western world, and sees its values such as “every man as an object for others” and “equality” as problems, since these values have been created by the weak types of man for their survival and preservation and they have suppressed man’s drives and wills.

To Nietzsche, the world is “existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness: ‘the eternal recurrence’.” Nietzsche calls this


“the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing (the ‘meaningless’), eternally!”

He elaborates more on the existence of the world:

The world exists: it is not something that becomes, not something that passes away. Or rather: it becomes, it passes away, but it has never begun to become and never ceased from passing away--it maintains itself in both.--It lives on itself: its excrements are its food.

The world becomes itself and lives on itself. Therefore, there is no beginning nor ending. Nietzsche expounds on the world more in detail:

This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by “nothingness” as by a boundary; not something blurred or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be “empty” here or there, but rather as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence...this, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my “beyond good and evil,” without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself--do you want a name for this world?

This world repeats itself and recurs everlastingly without any specific meaning or purpose. However, Nietzsche seems to be throwing out, at the same time, a kind of hope. He says that this world is without goal “unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal” and is “without will unless a ring feels good will toward itself.” He also says that “this world is the will to power--and nothing besides!” and that “you yourselves are also this will to power--and nothing besides.”

Nietzsche seems to be advising that there is nothing wrong with the way the world is, though it may sound pessimistic and desperate. If one lives along with the way this world is, leaves oneself to it, and does not count on the superficial items such as religion, science etc., then there is a new life in affirming a new way of seeing things as they are--though full of suffering and pain, but with joy, in which there is no longer pessimism. Just by changing or converting one’s conventional or unconsciously suppressed view and being able to accept the new way, one is totally free from falsity. “This world is the will to power” and one oneself is “also this will to power,” which is the only truth and reality for Nietzsche. This affirmation of reality of the eternal recurrence with joy is called *amor fati*,

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17 Ibid., pp. 35-6.
18 Ibid., p. 548.
19 Ibid., p. 550.
20 Ibid., p. 550.
which will be discussed later.

(II)

According to Buddhism, in general, all things are composite and dependent on each other. As a corollary to the fact that all things are composite, they are transient and impermanent, since the composition of all aggregates is liable to change with time. There is no exception to this rule. Moreover, being essentially impermanent, they have no eternal self as an essence or entity, and no abiding individuality. Also, all beings are inevitably liable to sorrow. Man, for example, experiences suffering or sorrow, for he or she is attached to things, which are essentially impermanent. This threefold characterization of the nature of the world samsāra is in short a) impermanence (anitya), b) no self (anātman), and c) suffering (duhkha).

The inevitability of suffering or sorrow is explained through the teaching of cause and effect, for instance, in the Twelvelfold Formula of Causation. This formulation of the causal principle in early Buddhist texts is stated in the following way:

When this exists, that exists or comes to be: on the arising of this, that arises.
When this does not exist, that does not exist or come to be; on the cessation of this, that ceases. That is to say:
on ignorance depend dispositions;
on dispositions depends consciousness;
on consciousness depends the psychological personality;
on the psychological personality depend the six ‘gateways’;
on the six ‘gateways’ depends contact;
on contact depends feeling (or sensation);
on feeling depends craving;
on craving depends grasping;
on grasping depends becoming;
on becoming depends birth;
on birth depend aging and death.

In this manner there arises this mass of suffering. The Twelvelfold Formula of Causation traces the cause of old age and death (the cause of fundamental suffering) back to ignorance and teaches that man can totally overcome suffering or sorrow by getting rid of ignorance, thereby attaining the state of enlightenment. Thus, under the principle that all events take place in terms of cause and effect, change is to be understood as the process of events--cause and effect take place accordingly in samsāra.

In samsāra or transmigration, it is generally said that there are six rebirth realms or destinies. They are from the bottom 1) the hells, 2) hungry ghosts, 3) animals, 4) asura (“fighting beings”), 5) human beings, and 6) deva (“heavenly beings”). According to one’s karmic deeds, one is to be reborn again and again in one of these six realms and repeats everlastingly without any meaning, unless one cuts off the cycle of birth-and-death.

and becomes free from it. This world of samsâra is meaningless in a sense, since it is an unenlightened realm and is full of suffering or sorrow. Buddhism, especially Mahâyâyna Buddhism, however, does not stress the notion that man transmigrates from one life to another by births and deaths according to his or her karma, but rather that the theory of six rebirth realms describes the way samsâra is: it merely repeats itself over and over again and is beginningless and endless. One can be happy in morning feeling as he or she were in heaven, while the same person may become sad at night as if he or she were in hell. Even one telephone call could drastically change the state of one’s heart/mind—from heaven to hell or from hell to heaven. Enlightenment (nirvâna) is then total freedom from this karmic repetition.

Early Buddhism or Theravâda Buddhism has a tendency of viewing nirvâna apart from samsâra: the notion is dualistic. Therefore, nirvâna is a liberation from samsâra. On the other hand, Mahâyâna Buddhism sees that nirvâna and samsâra are one. This does not literally mean samsâra or birth-and-death is nirvâna. With realization or awareness (which means becoming a buddha), one enters nirvâna in samsâra. “Kleśa (evil passions or defilements) are then bodhi (enlightenment)” (bonnô soku bodai) and “birth-and-death is then nirvâna” (shôji soku nehan). Of course, “kleśa are then bodhi” does not literally mean kleśa are bodhi, and “birth-and-death is then nirvâna” does not literally mean birth-and-death is nirvâna. Kleśa are not bodhi and birth-and-death is not nirvâna. Yet bodhi is sustained by kleśa and nirvâna is sustained by birth-and-death. Kleśa and bodhi are extreme opposites according to our conceptual meanings, but they are closely interrelated in the sense that they share the same ground of the unity of all. Kleśa are not the same as bodhi but one cannot exist without the other. The same can be said of the interrelationship between nirvâna and samsâra.23 Nâgârjuna, for instance, expounds the sameness of both realms with the doctrine of śûnyatâ (“emptiness”). While unenlightened ones experience it as samsâra, to enlightened ones it is nirvâna. Therefore, nirvâna is to be realized in this world of samsâra. The Vimalakîrtinirdeśasûtra stresses that non-duality or enlightenment is in the world but not of the world. Among many schools of Buddhism, there are different theories as to nirvâna and samsâra, but it is always essential in any school that the notion of samsâra symbolizes perpetual repetition, impermanence, and suffering.

( III )

Arthur C. Danto in Nietzsche as Philosopher refers to Buddhism as the “Nihilism of Emptiness,” saying that Buddhism holds that:

the world we live in and seem to know has no ultimate reality, and that our attachment to it is an attachment to an illusion. Reality itself has neither name nor form, and what has name and form is but a painful dreaming from which all reasonable men wish to escape if they knew the way and knew that their attachment was to nothingness. Life is without sense and point, there is a ceaseless alternation of birth and death and birth again, the constantly turning wheel of existence going nowhere eternally; if we wish salvation, it is salvation from life that we must

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Danto’s understanding of the world as samsāra is appropriate in viewing its meaningless repetition. Danto is saying, however, that Buddhism is a nihilistic religion, since it does not advocate the ultimate reality as such and says everything is empty. This definition of Buddhism as nihilism is the way Buddhism had been introduced and understood by and among the Western schools until recently. The teaching of Buddhism, however, does not advocate nihilism but affirms the notion of true reality instead. The ultimate reality in Buddhism is called tathatā (“thusness” or “suchness”)—the state of things as they are, which is true and real in Buddhism. But the way human beings see the world is provisional and false, since they see through their own deluded interpretations. Reality maintains itself as it is; yet people interpret it differently and respectively. For instance, rain is rain, but while farmers who need water appreciate rain, baseball fans waiting impatiently for the world series to be played hate the same rain when the game is canceled. What Buddhism is saying here is that rain is not the universal cause which makes people happy or unhappy but people themselves, who are responsible for happiness or unhappiness of their own, and that people are essentially self-centered, unenlightened, and deluded. Therefore, the world looks (and is) an illusion to those unenlightened ones; and suffering or sorrow arises as they are attached to whatever is conditional and impermanent of this samsaric world. Above all, Buddhism affirms ultimate reality in terms of tathatā, though some philosophical school names it śûnyatā or emptiness, it is always basic in Buddhism that “the real emptiness is the profound being” (shin kû myô u): while “the real emptiness” was expounded by Nāgārjuna in terms of a “static” aspect of reality (such as śûnyatā), “the profounded being” could be attributed to Vasubandhu in terms of a “dynamic” aspect of reality.

When one is deluded or unenlightened, one’s world is samsāra, in which things are impermanent, changing, and transforming (or transmigrating) meaninglessly: it is the negative and pessimistic world. The whole world is beginningless, endless, and self-supporting (not increasing or decreasing).

In examining the notion of samsāra, we find that the theory of Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence has many things in common with that of samsāra. I am not insisting that both theories are identical, because while Nietzsche discusses the way the world is, Buddhist samsāra implies the realm of this mundane “unenlightened” world and is more complex (depending on schools) with the notion of karma. However, we find many similarities between the two in the way they interpret this mundane world as we have seen and in the attitude that they try to find the way out from this mess—while Nietzsche seems to be suggesting that we should go along with the way things are, affirming one’s fate and living the will to power with amor fati, Mahāyāna Buddhism generally claims enlightenment is to be attained in this realm by realizing tathatā, the state of things as they are, and by becoming “awakened.”

There seem to be, in Nietzsche’s life, two vitally important experiences which must have played a significant role in bringing about his philosophy, which sounds pessimistic

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or negative but very existentialistic and realistic when one directly faces reality of one’s life. These two elements in his experiences are “sickness” and “not being granted in love.” Nietzsche suffered from persistent headaches and eye-trouble from his childhood days and was rejected twice in marriage proposals.

In Buddha-Dharma, the First Noble Truth is “Life is duhkha” or “All existence is suffering.” Without understanding this reality, one will be unable to attain the final goal of nirvana or enlightenment. Buddhism is therefore sometimes misunderstood as a pessimistic religion because of its claim of duhkha. It is neither a pessimism nor an optimism. Accordingly, there are eight kinds of duhkha or suffering in human life: birth, old age, sickness, death, separation from beloved ones, meeting with disliked ones, and the suffering or pain from the vigor of the five aggregates composing one’s body and mind.

Nietzsche suffered from sickness throughout his life. Nietzsche was born on October 15, 1844. During the summer of 1856, at age of eleven, he was released from school because of persistent headaches and eye-trouble. In 1865, Nietzsche suffered from syphilis and he was treated by two doctors for a syphilitic infection during 1867. In 1871, at age of twenty-six, Nietzsche began to suffer from regularly recurrring periods of exhaustion, and thereafter was never really well. In 1875, Nietzsche suffered a general collapse and in the following year he was granted a long period of absence from the University of Basel because of his persistent ill-health. In April of 1879, Nietzsche suffered the worst and most protracted attack of migraine and sickness he had yet experienced. When his sister Elizabeth came to meet him in Basel, she found him apparently on the point of death. Nietzsche then petitioned the University for release from all duties. That year, he suffered severe attacks on 118 days. In 1888, Nietzsche experienced what doctors called a delusive improvement in his health, and in the last quarter of the year was the victim of a “morbid euphoria” which was the immediate prelude to complete collapse. On January 3, 1889, Nietzsche collapsed in the Piazza Carlo Alberto, Turin. When he recovered consciousness, he was no longer sane. He became paralyzed and died on August 25, 1900. Nietzsche’s major works were all written during, between, and/or after his massive suffering experiences of sickness and illness.

Although Buddha-Dharma says that life is duhkha, it is very hard to really accept it. When we get sick, we say, “Why me?” When we are healthy, we do not want to think about getting sick. Yet we do get ill. When we become seriously ill, we get depressed and weak not only physically but also spiritually. We hold a negative and pessimistic view of the world without hope for today and for the future. When we recover from sickness, however, even for a short period of time, we begin to really appreciate what we have. Just being able to feel alive again pleases us and encourages our very existence.

Walter Kaufmann says in Nietzsche: Philosophy, Psychologist, Antichrist:

> Developing the picture of the Dionysian fever, one can express Nietzsche’s point in terms of a dialectical conception of health. It would be absurd to say the work of healthy artists is eo ipso beautiful, while that of the ill must be ugly. Keats was consumptive, Byron had a clubfoot, Homer was blind and Beethoven deaf. Even Shakespeare and Goethe--Nietzsche thinks--must have experienced a profound defect: artistic creation is prompted by something which the artist lacks, by suffering rather than undisturbed good

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health, by “sickness as great stimulants of his life.”

Esthetics in art and religious awareness often play an important role in our becoming aware of being alive, being allowed to live, and being made to live. We sometimes encounter “something unbound” or “something unsurpassed.” In terms of appreciating esthetics in art, Nietzsche loved music. Even though he had a falling out with Wagner later in his life, he loved Wagner and must have continued to love Wagner and his music. Nietzsche was also greatly inspired by the Ode to Joy in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. He experienced, through and after his suffering of massive attacks of illness, the emotional and sensual joy of the Dionysian world of art, which must have helped Nietzsche break out of his shelled “self” or “ego” and become aware of something unbound, some hope—the hope for the will to power. This hope he could not find in the traditional Western theology or philosophy. This is where Nietzsche got separated in his philosophical conclusion from Schopenhauer (1788-1860) in whose understanding the final stage or step involved a negation of the will to live. Nietzsche was not able to negate the eternal recurrence. He saw it as it was. As Nietzsche says that “this world is the will to power,” and that “you yourself are also this will to power—and nothing besides,”

If we put this in the metaphor of Buddha-Dharma, it is like a lotus flower painfully but beautifully growing up and blooming through the mud. In terms of religious experience according to William James, Nietzsche can be categorized as a person of “the twice-born” or “the sick soul” type, as compared to “the once-born” or “the healthy-mindedness” type. Shinran (1173-1262), the founder of Shin Buddhism, has something in common with Nietzsche insofar as both are in the same category.

The second important element of Nietzsche’s personal experiences in forming the core of his philosophy is his rejection from two marriage proposals. First in 1876, Nietzsche proposed marriage to Mathilde Trampedach and was turned down. The second time he was rejected was when he proposed marriage to Lou Salomé. Walter Kaufmann says in Nietzsche:

Nietzsche’s relationship to Lou Salomé (1861-1937) had been far closer and meant much more to him. She was, he thought, of very unusual intelligence and character, and she had written a “Hymn to Life” which he considered magnificent and set to music. Later, long after his break with Lou, he had the poem published with the score and still referred to it with high praise in Ecce Homo. He had found a person to whom he could speak of his innermost ideas, receiving not only intellectual understanding but a response based on Lou’s own experience.
Nietzsche not only was in love with Lou but needed her as a life partner, though she was seventeen years his junior. Lou was only twenty-one years old when she met Nietzsche. But she was the least strait-laced and most entertaining woman Nietzsche had yet met. Lou was a new-style liberated woman dedicated to independence. She was also the most intelligent and Nietzsche fell in love with her. At Lucerne in May, 1882, Nietzsche proposed to her in person and was again rejected. Along with his physical suffering, he also had mental, spiritual, and sensual suffering. His sense of existence of himself was surely gone! He was deprived of everything he clung to. He must have experienced the bottom of life, hell. Nietzsche was emotionally and physically exhausted this year.

In January of the following year, 1883, however, Nietzsche wrote *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part One, which helped him to recover and revive. On February 13, his great friend Wagner died. One happy note was that Nietzsche became reconciled with his sister Elizabeth. He finished *Zarathustra*, Part Two. In the following year, he wrote Part Three and began the preparation of *The Will to Power* and so on. In the depth of his suffering, Nietzsche produced many of his major works. Right in the middle of *samsâra*, Nietzsche was trying to find the way out. He knew that he was not able to escape from reality no matter how painful it was. What then could be done? Nietzsche had to live. He had to live in the middle of suffering and pain. Right in the middle of *duhkha*, Nietzsche might have been inspired or revealed, consciously or unconsciously, though the universal “Primal Vow” to get recovered or revived.

( V )

Nietzsche was not a Buddhist in terms of being a person who takes refuge in the “Three Treasures”--Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The way he sought the path, however, was not totally different from the very basics of the Buddhist way. One should accept reality or, at least, one should not escape from it, reality of life as *duhkha*. *Dukkha* is painful and full of suffering. In Shin Buddhism, if one accepts things as they are and entrusts oneself to the working of Amida Buddha in *samsâra*, then one becomes liberated. One lets go of one’s self-power or self-endeavor and further becomes aware that one’s attainment of that realization of Amida Buddha’s Wisdom and Compassion has been brought about by the working of Amida Buddha, the realization being referred to as shinjin in Shin Buddhism. Nietzsche was not a Buddhist. Yet his analysis of existence is very close to that of Buddhism and is severe and strict. Some may call it pessimistic, but it is realistic and honest. Only through understanding this reality of *duhkha* will one be able to find the final goal of liberation or emancipation. Only through total self-negation in an ultimate sense will one be able to encounter “something unbound” such as Amida Buddha encompassing one’s whole existence, including one’s “suffering and joy,” “delusion and enlightenment,” and “birth and death.”

Shan-tao (613-681), a Chinese Pure Land master who greatly influenced Shinran analyzes the awakened heart/mind or profound realization, which is called religious experience. This experience of awareness is simultaneously made up of two qualities. One is the awareness of oneself or the “profound realization of oneself as a limited sentient being” (*ki no jin shin* in Japanese), and the other is the awareness of Amida Buddha or the “profound realization of the Dharma” (*hô no jin shin*). The profound realization of oneself

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as a sentient being is to “deeply recognize that we are ignorant sentient beings filled with evils in the realm of birth and death, and that we have been constantly submerged and transmigrating from time immemorial with no hope of liberating ourselves.” The profound realization of the Dharma is to “deeply recognize that the Forty-eight Vows of Amida Buddha will take in and save sentient beings, and that we will assuredly gain birth in the Pure Land through the power of Amida Buddha’s Vow without doubt or anxiety.” In short, one’s self-negation comes through encountering “something unbound” or encountering “something unbound” comes about through one's self-negation. These two qualities cannot be separated.

Nietzsche does not refer to Amida Buddha as such. He was born and raised in Europe with a strong Christian background some one hundred and fifty years ago. Yet his introspection into “existence” is Buddhistic, especially in terms of Mahâyâna Buddhism. Nietzsche had to live in the middle of samsâra. He had to continue to live in this world. He underwent duhkha, and in seeing reality he sought the overman or superman (Übermensch). He tried to go along with the way things were living the will to power. Walter Kaufmann says:

Nietzsche’s philosophy of power culminates in the dual vision of the overman and the eternal recurrence. The two conceptions have seemed contradictory to many readers, and most interpreters of Nietzsche’s thought have simply disregarded the recurrence. In view of Nietzsche’s own conviction that the two ideas belonged closely together and that the doctrine of recurrence was the climax of his whole philosophy, the usual approach must be considered perilous. The present exposition of Nietzsche's philosophy, on the other hand, allows for an understanding of both conceptions in their intimate relation, and it obviates any lengthy argument: for the two ideas will be seen to fit quite naturally into the setting we have provided.

Nietzsche says in Thus Spoke Zarathustra:

Just now my world became perfect; midnight too is noon; pain too is joy; curses too are a blessing; night too is a sun--go away or you will learn: a sage too is a fool.

Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes too to all woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, “You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!” then you wanted all back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored--oh then you loved the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! For all joy wants--eternity.

Nietzsche came to thoroughly accept reality or things as they were. Yet he not only

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33 Shinshû shôgyô zensho I (Kyoto: Ôyagikôbundô, 1941), complied, Shinshû shôgyô zensho hensansho, p. 534.
accepted what was given or destined to him, but also came to love both reality and destiny. He lived both, and living was its own reward, in which Nietzsche tried to find out who he was. He loved the world—the eternal recurrence—though it is filled with suffering and pain. The term or idea of Nietzsche’s love of fate (amor fati) was first introduced in *The Gay Science.* Nietzsche later says in *Ecce Homo,* “My formula for greatness in a human being is amor fati: that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it— all idealism is untruthfulness in the face of necessity— but to love it...” Nietzsche is here saying that one wants nothing to be different in the past, present, and future. One just needs to accept things in the past, present, and future as they are. Leslie Paul Thiele then says in *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul: A Study of Heroic Individualism,* “Here acceptance is not enough. It cannot be mixed with hope to yield a higher grade of satisfaction. One must indeed love one’s fate to desire that it be as it was without the slightest modification. True love of fate demands that one no longer need hope in order to live joyfully.” Nietzsche in *The Will to Power* expounds “a Dionysian affirmation of the world as it is” and asserts that “it wants the eternal circulation.” He then adds, “The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence—my formula for this is amor fati.”

**Concluding Perspectives**

Bodhisattvas in Buddhism are all aware of duhkha of sentient beings, so that they have established Vows to save them all. This bodhisattva ideal does not mean just saving others in a common sense. Saving is an act of sharing. By saving others, one is able to save oneself. Everything is interrelated and nothing stands by itself without exception in the theory of pratītya-samutpāda (“interdependent co-arising”). The bodhisattva ideal is a very natural and spontaneous act or working of compassion of existence itself in samsāra, for bodhisattvas themselves are in samsāra. There is no other place but this samsāra where bodhisattvas are able to exist or abide, for they are with those who are suffering from duhkha. There is nothing special superimposedly out there. What one can do in this world here and now is all one has. Some may say that this is only what they can have, while others may say they can have this much with deep appreciation.

Nietzsche lived in samsāra. He suffered greatly. He accepted things as they were, being filled with suffering and pain, knowing that it was all he had. There was no way out from reality as duhkha except for accepting it. Through encountering and experiencing the Dionysian affirmation of the world, Nietzsche recovered and revived with joy of fate in the middle of the eternal recurrence, trying to live the will to power as the overman. This eternal recurrence itself is the source of not only suffering/pain but also amor fati. “Suffering” and “joy” are not able to be separated. They are “reality”—true and real—and worth living indeed. Nietzsche lived samsāra.

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36 Nietzsche says, “I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. Amor fati: let that be my love henceforth!” in *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 223.

