



## Western Buddha And Eastern Superman

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### Article Info:

#### Article type:

Research Article

#### Article history:

##### Received:

21 January 2025

##### Received in revised form:

16 March 2025

##### Accepted:

23 April 2025

##### Published online:

15 July 2025

### Keywords:

Zarathustra, Buddha, Nietzsche, Superman, Nihilism

**A**bstract: The profundity of an idea, philosophy, or doctrine is often revealed by how it is accepted or rejected by others. Buddhist philosophy demonstrates this dynamic in its reception in the West. There are several illuminating perspectives on how Nietzsche interpreted Buddha, and on how these interpretations were received in both the West and the East. The claim that Nietzsche misinterpreted Buddha—similar to the way Schopenhauer and others interpreted Indian philosophical traditions—often overshadows Nietzsche's more sympathetic engagement with Buddhism. However, the questions that concerned both thinkers cannot be fully addressed or resolved within a single generation, nor can we easily simplify their shared concerns. This paper focuses on critics' portrayals of Nietzsche as having misinterpreted Buddha. Amidst various philosophical and existential issues, the paper seeks to foster a degree of sympathy for Nietzsche, and thus for Buddha as well, by exploring their concepts of 'impermanence' in relation to suffering and the relief from suffering. The shared element is the imperative 'to overcome': for Nietzsche, this concerns humanity; for Buddha, it concerns the self. The underlying hypothesis is that Gautama Buddha may be seen as Nietzsche's Overman (Übermensch).

**Cite this article:** Upendra, C (2025). Western Buddha And Eastern Superman, *Philosophical Meditations*, 15(Special issue: 34),127-149. <https://doi.org/10.30470/phm.2025.726793>

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**Publisher:** University of Zanzibar.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.30470/phm.2025.726793>

**Homepage:** [phm.znu.ac.ir](http://phm.znu.ac.ir)



## **T**he Lure to Buddhism

Amidst a plethora of criticisms that the West is subject to, we can say that there is an attempt on their part to reconcile and embrace 'the other' in the true phenomenological sense. Several reasons explain the West's attraction to Eastern philosophies, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Much has been written and said about Schopenhauer's casting his shadow on Nietzsche, especially, on the idea of Buddhism - eventually, the shadow is left behind. What made the West look up to Buddha's philosophy and Buddhism at large? Why did it catch the attention of German philosophers, P. Bilimoria writes, had been greatly affected by one way or another *via* the

Romantics reaching out to the Orient (P. Bilimoria, 2008). Bilimoria makes a fantastic beginning remark by saying that "Nietzsche reached the East on the eve of his mental collapse." Having bothered about will and representation, finding utter dissatisfaction in the philosophical principle of metaphysical absolutism in the western philosophy - unhappy also with the principle of *metaphysics of transcendence* (Panaïoti, 2012, p. 20), the realm of being and truth that transcends the immanent world of becoming and appearance. By placing a great emphasis on the *ideal* or *beyond*, Western philosophy had undermined the truths of the immanent world (*negation of the actual world*).<sup>1</sup> This is seen as decadence by Nietzsche - because of the extraordinary influence Schopenhauer<sup>2</sup> had on him and

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1 This point is elaborated by Giles Deleuze in his book on Nietzsche's philosophy. "Values to superior to life cannot be separated from their effect."

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2 Marc Sautet argued that Schopenhauer had radicalized Kant's epistemological pessimism ... all human

the vanishing of 'Dionysian tragic element' (with the advent of *incorrigible optimists*) in the modern period. The disillusionment occurred after a catastrophic psychological collapse when he realized that Richard Wagner too had gone far away from the tragic element in his musical forms. There are two reasons for his turn to Buddhism (even though by way of stark criticism) - one, Nietzsche's irritability with Schopenhauer's 'obsession with pessimistic nihilism', which he sees as an escape route of the West. Secondly, his dissatisfaction with the ways of Christianity - its obsession with sin (*seen in suffering*, also posited as *guilt*) and the glorification of the goal of 'reaching heaven'- emphasis on the holy of the future, and the present being treated as unholy (like that of St. Augustine's *City of God*). Nietzsche saw the immoral side

of Christianity (*especially the Pauline version*- seen in the form of historical decay of Christianity) that calls for redemption from the *original sin* by exploiting the death of Jesus. Karl Löwith mentions a very interesting Nietzsche's interpretation of the death of Jesus - "...it signifies that man was crucified and broken in his true nature (Löwith, 1997, p. 39)." Nietzsche sees nihilist mentality (*like that of sunyata or nothingness in Indian Philosophy*) gaining its strong hold in Europe - denigrating the world of becoming - lured by the seduction of the Truth of a Real World. Christianity is destroyed by its own morality. Meaning much of Christian morality is constructed around false moralizing tendencies - for example. Suffering is the result of sin and finds its ethics on a guilt complex (A. Panaïoti, 2012, p. 48).

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beings are on the wrong side ... of appearances ... which accounts for our sufferings ...

Nietzsche was critical of Christianity's—and by extension, most of Western philosophy's (with the exception of certain favored Greek thinkers)—presupposition that “the world does have the value we thought it had,” which reflects an undue emphasis on a transcendent reality (Reginster, 2006, p. 52). For Nietzsche, Christianity is fundamentally a religion of decadence and pity. The surrender of the self through the pursuit of redemption, in his view, is a pathological sign of feebleness of man’.

The crisis Nietzsche identified traces back to the destruction of the harmonious unity between Apollo and Dionysus—a theme to which he was deeply attached. The idea is as follows: suffering becomes an existential imperative, and through Dionysus, “man found that his existence was not limited to his individual experiences

alone, and then a way was found to escape all men, which is death.” In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche explicitly objects to Christianity's emphasis on human abnegation through excessive focus on prayer, sin, punishment, and grace (Mistry, 1981, p. 42). He suggests instead that “one must immerse oneself in the life of the now.” Nietzsche believed that Dionysian art forges bonds both among human beings and between humans and nature. His disillusionment with Christianity reflects the powerful influence of Greek tragedy upon him. Apollo symbolizes individuation and the sensible structure of the world, whereas Dionysus—the god of festivals—represents extravagant licentiousness and the unleashing of primal instincts. The most important aspect of Dionysian art, which is rooted in intoxication

(Nietzsche, 1999, p. 159), is the ecstatic feeling that accompanies the dissolution of the 'individual self.' In this state, "man is no longer an artist; he himself becomes, with the same ecstasy and sublimity, as when once he saw the gods walk." The unity of Apollo and Dionysus is necessary because individuation separates the person from the world (interpreted as modern rationality), while the ecstatic, sublimated mode restores a sense of commonality. Nietzsche's intuition was that the Dionysian way dissolves social classes and heralds a gospel of universal harmony. He lamented the disappearance of this spirit, which he believed had detrimental effects on humanity and on Greek tragedy itself, as it faded

through medieval Christianity and into modern disenchantment. The central question thus becomes: how can humanity be re-encharmed with the world? Alexander Gatherer nicely summarizes saying that the combination of chorus and tragedy helps to bring forth matters such as death and mortality more bearable phenomena.<sup>1</sup> The point of objection lies here, to mention Nietzsche, This co-existence marks the high point of Hellenic culture; originally only Apollo is a Hellenic god of art, and it was his power which so moderated dionysos when he came storming in from Asia that hte most beautiful brotherly bond would come about ... a cult of nature which amond the proples of Asia had meant the crudest unleashing of lower drives (unter- mensch, a

I see his web entry on "The Dionysian and the Apollonian in Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy" <https://theoxfordphilosophers.com/201>

4/08/25/the-dionysian-and-the-apollonian-in-nietzsche-the-bith-of-tragedy/

panhetaeric animality ...  
(Nietzsche, 1999, p. 121).

What do redemption and transfiguration mean in the context of Greek Tragedy, according to Nietzsche? For Nietzsche, they represent a profound transformation to a more beautiful or spiritual state, as the artist separates from the chorus in Dionysiac self-abandonment and imagines unity with the world through a “symbolic dream-image.”

Nietzsche’s questionable assumption here is that Greek Dionysus inevitably aligns with Apollo, transforming violent orgies into “festivals of universal release and redemption, and days of transfiguration” (Attic Tragedy). From this point onward, Nietzsche remained preoccupied with two questions: Can life be redeemed? Is it worth living? Buddha’s teachings offer potential answers to these questions. Nietzsche raises these issues in response to what he sees as the Socratic

obsession with knowledge and its consequences in Western philosophy, especially the Socratic and Platonic quest for knowledge. Plato’s Socrates maintains that no harm can befall a good person—someone with the right kind of knowledge. The unity between Dionysus and Apollo symbolizes for Nietzsche the primordial unity of all life. He perceives the loss of this unity as coinciding with the decline of Tragedy, replaced by theoretical optimism. The suffering of destroyed individuals is seen as necessary, given the exuberant excess of life’s forms striving to exist. In Dionysian ecstasy, we are joyfully alive, “not as individuals, but as the one living being, with whose procreative lust we have become one.” The decline is also attributed to the overemphasis on language—echoing Shakespeare’s Hamlet, whose tragic



characters speak more superficially than they act.

Returning to Nietzsche's critique of Christianity, he identifies in it a similar form of "false optimism"—the belief that the world was created by an omnipotent, benevolent God who will ensure a just cosmic order (Nietzsche, 1999, p. xvii). This critique also reveals Nietzsche's perspective on Western morality. The doctrine of the redeemer, or conventional non-Greek morality, undermines the human will to power and renders people submissive nihilists. Nietzsche regarded the fusion of the Apollonian and Dionysian as the path to human greatness—a quality he found lacking in Christian morality. As previously noted, Christian belief encourages the illusion that this life is of little value in comparison to a superior, transcendent (Platonic) world. For Nietzsche, there is no

transcendent world; rather, we must learn to endure existence as it is. He sees the risk of humanity falling into an ethical void. While bearable living conditions matter, Nietzsche aspired to something exceptional for humankind, a theme central to his concept of the eternal return or recurrence.

At this point we can say that Nietzsche looked toward Buddhism that was swaying the European winds - in some sense, we can say along with other Asian philosophies, making the European invasion. Another reason is the way the 'figure of the Jesus' as put forth by Renan - attacking the notion of 'psychology of the redeemer'. In the *Anti-Christ*, he draws some detailed parallels between Buddha and Jesus - in terms of they being symbolic of free spirit and non-

combative.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to quote Nietzsche here from *Anti-Christ* here:

Buddhism proposes a very mild climate, extremely gentle and liberal customs, the complete absence of militarism, and the existence of higher, scholarly classes to give focus to the movement. The highest goals are cheerfulness, quiet, and an absence of desire, and these goals are achieved. Buddhism is not a religion where people only aspire to perfection: perfection is the norm.

On a general note, most of the critics and philosophers talk about the visible opposition that he had staged against Buddhism - overlapping in some instances with Christianity (calling both of them as *religions of pity* or *ascetic religions*) and contrasting

them in many ways. Things that he rejects of Buddhism are: [1] Compassion and life-negation - A common (mis)understanding of Buddha's philosophy is that, Nietzsche says, gets into the mode of 'passive nihilism', and ultimately to nothingness. This may be a misinterpretation of Buddha. Critics are not happy with this equivocation of Buddha's *nibbana* to nihilism and nothingness. In *Genealogy of Morals*, he qualifies Buddha's philosophy as having the great nausea of the will to nothingness (Reginster & Reginster, 2009, p. 43). [2] Buddha too suffered from the illness of decadence - Nietzsche treats Buddha as having ignited in humans the desire of the withdrawal from life. [3] Schopenhauer endorses the Buddhist doctrine of cessation of

1 See web blog <http://wawalker.com/2011/05/13/nietzsche-antichrist-jesus-and-buddhism>. Bill

Walker, "Nietzsche's Anti-Christ: Jesus and Buddhism"



desire, or to him, the negation of the will (Which Nietzsche hangs on to). As already mentioned, Nietzsche identifies a peculiar trend in Europe - of finding an escape route from all inherent traditions. The basic tenets of Buddhism amazed Schopenhauer to a large extent. Schopenhauer took Buddhism as offering a pessimistic view on earthly existence. He sees Buddhist philosophy having an overlap in four major aspects of his: [1] Time, space and causality are not true in the real absolute sense. [2] A non-theistic assumption of a transcendental reality, the un reality of a divine subject. [3] Incomprehensibility of ultimate reality to the intellect, yet supposed to be sensible in our experience of life (transcending but immanent) [4] Life is inescapably ruled by passion, need, pain, and

fear. The task is altogether difficult, different, and monumental in identifying whether nineteenth-century Europe had a right understanding of Buddha's philosophy. However, Schopenhauer paraphrases it as 'all life involves suffering but that at a deep level there is no such thing as 'the self' - a recognition of this takes us to enlightenment (Warburton, 2011). Antoine Panaiti mentions a point that may affect our argument - despite his outspoken opposition to Buddhism, some of his thoughts comply with the *Hinayana* or *Theravada* Buddhism. [4.] For Nietzsche, both Buddhism and Christianity answer the question of suffering from the perspective of guilt. It can be seen as another misunderstanding. This, for him, contributes to the negation of the will. Eventually, Buddhism has

exaggerated absorption with pain, while Christianity is accused for obsession with sin. Defenders of Christianity do not see it as an obsession, but an understanding of the doctrines of redemption and salvation. Nietzsche felt that this preoccupation with suffering and pain affects the creative human aspiration negatively. [5.] Buddhism is too weak - to truly welcome suffering that life entails. He interprets *nirvana* as the road to nihilism, and then to nothingness - where he alleges Buddhism for the negation of the will. For Nietzsche, Buddhism is passively and distinctively pessimistic, nihilistic and decadent. It also advocates pity that leads humans to nothingness ... more suitable for those who reach the end of life (Bilimoria, 2008, p. 366). [6.] Nietzsche does not find in Buddhism the freedom to act and realize one-self. Because of these

objections he has with Buddhism, he classifies his version as an antipode to him - while also claiming himself as the *buddha of Europe*. Besides these negatives, there are certain positives too [1] Nietzsche saw some sense of honesty in Buddhist philosophy - no deception of moral concepts, and it is beyond good and evil. While warning against harmful acts, Buddha also emphasizes the avoidance of bodily sickness - which led Nietzsche to credit Buddha for replacing morality with physiology. [2.] Buddha's knowledge is not at all through any kind of divine revelation, nor does it have supernatural origins, but comes from an insight into the natural order of things. [3.] Nietzsche comes close to Buddhism as the latter is not in line with the principles of linearity and permanence of life. [4.] Neither Aristotelian causes

nor efficient causes, Buddhism explains the significance of dependent causation. [5.] The belief in the mind-body complex conceived as continuity and union attracted Nietzsche's attention, who was otherwise not at ease with the Cartesian dualism. [6.] Similar to his declaration of the death of all gods, he finds Buddhist philosophy not centered around the notion of god. [7.] An attractive idea is *samsara* (the world in perpetual flux) coupled with *autonomous* notion of *karma* that takes rebirth without a benevolent providing the salvation, or, in the Christian sense, the journey to heaven.

The disillusionment with Christianity and probably finding some similarities of it in Buddhist philosophy, and perhaps looking for what is missing in the western nihilist traditions in Buddhism (*His criticisms of*

*Buddhism are not be treated as nullifying the latter*), we can say that Nietzsche declares the death of god and the birth of Zarathustra. "Where has God gone?" he cried." I will tell you. We have killed him-you and I! All of us are his murderers! But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continuously? Backward, sideways, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the

morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? - Gods, too, decompose! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! . . . What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives... With what water can we cleanse ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us-for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto! With the death of God arrives and confiscates us into deep nihilism. With this everything has ended till

further awakening, in this regard, the advent of Zoroaster or Zarathustra. Though Buddhism calls for a change in our approach to the world (in the form of *non-transcendence*), the obsession with the metaphysics of knowledge is given up. To quote Nietzsche - "All gods are dead: now we want the superman to live: let this be, one day at the great noon, our last will." The need of a superman (may be the superman prevails over all godly ways to control the humans) is to get rid of the humanity (western culture) from the abyss of nihilism. Nietzsche seems to have been serious on the combination Apollonian and Dionysian ways.

### **The Buddha as Nietzsche's Zarathustra**

That, we humans, cannot do anything about the inescapable terrible things of existential reality, has posed a

great herculean challenge. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian man shares with Shakespeare's Hamlet the terrible things that anyhow cannot change the essence of things. Nietzsche talks of reviving of the spirit in a few interesting yet arguable ways - one such way is the overcoming of the 'last man' (*untermensch*) and installing of 'the overman' (*ubermensch*) - the arrival of Zarathustra. The necessity of a Zarathustra is strongly felt after he became disenchanted with the Wagnerian musical drama (Bernard Reginster, 2006, p. 52). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche opines that humanity is better off with 'I will' rather 'Thou Shalt'. Issues that bothered him are impermanence, substance ontology, self-assertion, will to life, resentment of reality etc. Though Nietzsche's argument with Buddhism is mostly to Hinayanism, the

grand appeal is to overcome man and finding a Zarathustra, a human being with a distinct character, experiencing deep crises and challenges, and most importantly, comes to a resolution that represents a meaningful possibility of human existence.<sup>1</sup> What is the mission of Zarathustra? The purpose of it seems to be overcoming or freeing Western philosophy and religion from nihilism, and keeping afloat the confidence in Superman. Nietzsche's superman is only understood in conjunction with ideas of the Order of Rank, the Will to Power, and the transvaluation of all values - further, possessing the magnificent qualities of overflowing with life, hope and will. Besides, Zarathustra, being an embodiment of metaphysics beyond good and evil - yet represents good and bad, Nietzsche imagines the human of the future (G. Kopf,

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1 <http://faculty.frostberg.edu/phil/forum/zarathustra.html>

2010), who has creative power (*being out of nothing*), takes *body* as the fundamental principle, who overcomes the self by itself (*no mediating force*), tackling the issue of eternal recurrence and ultimately, he replaces God himself. The future human is no longer the intermediary between divinity and animality (Löwith, 1997, p. 42-44).

Freny Mistry presents an intriguing argument: Nietzsche suggests that his Zarathustra repudiates Buddha, but in fact, he also affirms certain aspects of him. Zarathustra's will to suffering and the subsequent transfiguration of suffering, on the one hand, and Buddha's life of *dukkha*, both offer paths toward redemption. What distinguishes Zarathustra is his essential 'tragic import,' treating existence itself as sacred in order to justify the reality of suffering. The

symbolic dimensions of both Buddha and Zarathustra are crucial in this context. This is significant because Nietzsche is less concerned with the transformation of the individual self and more with the transformation of the human category as such. This should not, however, be taken as Nietzsche's neglect of the individual. Bilimoria highlights Nietzsche's point that the symbolic act of living and dying for self-redemption is significant as a 'way of life.' He argues that the Christian way of life is primarily a private form of existence, and is extremely apolitical (Bilimoria, 2008, p. 369). Does Zarathustra possess all those qualities that Nietzsche imagines? Besides the allegations against Christianity, he wants his Zarathustra to have mighty power to 'resist the evil', primarily absent in Christianity - identifying the same in Buddhist philosophy, thus, qualifying



them as *religions of pity*. The symbolic elements remain important because Nietzsche does approve of the symbolism of Jesus and the cross, so long as these are understood in terms of private existence. However, once institutionalized as religion and projected as a 'temple of redemption,' this symbolism leads to what Nietzsche calls the 'dimming of the twilight of the gods' and the rise of active nihilism.

Nevertheless, many issues remain for Nietzsche to clarify. First, in the great transformation where humanity is meant to overcome mediocrity and bankruptcy, an enigma persists: Is Zarathustra above humanity, or is he part of it? In the case of Buddhism, we see how Buddha provides an example—relieving us from worldly desires (*tanha*) while still belonging to the world and avoiding any fixation on the self. The principle of love

may apply to every one of the human kind - the condition where everyone can be a Buddha or attain buddhahood (*bodhisatva*). This is not sure in the case of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. The erasure of the last man takes place (meaning thereby, humanity gets rid of all those detestable qualities that Nietzsche lists) paving way to the overman - who the rest of the human kind looks upto. It seems like the combination of a few supermen (*with unusual radiance*) and the average humans who look toward that radiance. Nietzsche's writings talk of the human condition and its decadence, but do not see Superhumanhood in every person, meaning thereby, everyone cannot be the liberator. A similar aspect can be attributed to Buddhism. Though Buddha, through his teachings, lays down the path to liberation of a different kind in every person, tackling *dukkha* or

*samsara*, human beings can liberate themselves as part of private existence only. This apprehension lies at the fundamental idea where Nietzsche's superman is distinguished from the 'average man' (Löwith, 1997, p. 45). Second, the confusion continues because the superman is bestowed with that qualities - deeply desperate, self-despising not despicable though. Humaneness is not being human (*the latter sounding like succumbing to something deceptive*). The defining element of Zarathustra is this overcoming of this fallenness to something imposed - this being the essence of creative will to power (which sounds like *true human agency*). This is life-affirming and expresses a vision. Third, the human (or the philosopher) still is an enigma in Nietzsche. What is the shape of this new humanity? Is it only a bundle of overmen who chose to overcome their resignation

into faith? If yes, such can be the greatness of a godless Zarathustra. Another question that would sporadically erupt is whether or not this new condition overcomes the master-slave perspective that Nietzsche develops. For Bilimoria, they exercise the will to power, to wash away the past - "To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate it all it was into a 'thus I willed it' - that alone should I call redemption" (Bilimoria, 2008, p. 372). Fourth, can his Zarathustra, with a new sense of morality bring back 'belief' into the world (even when a godless universe is the sustaining feature with the advent of Zarathustra)? Can Zarathustra resolve the cultural barrenness due to the nihilism getting strongly rooted? Fifth, the new world neither Real nor apparent has the will to power. This remains abstract to a larger extent. This will to power goes beyond nihilism.

It should explain itself as 'freedom from' If Zarathustra gathers in itself the power to take us beyond nihilism - does he possess the qualities of Apollo and Dionysus (*as the death of god leads to rebirth of the Dionysian view of the world*), or any other 'Greek genius' - who shone in the radiance of a higher humanity. Seventh, the idea of 'eternal recurrence' without the principle of 'transmigration of soul'

Morrison draws an interesting parallel: both Buddha and Nietzsche reject the notion of an unchanging subject (for Buddha, there is no static self), which necessitates a different kind of hierarchy among individuals. The aim is, for Buddha, to overcome *tanha* (craving), and for Nietzsche, to overcome nihilism through the will to power (David R. Loy, 1998). The purpose is to overcome the *tanha* for one, and nihilism

through the *will to power* for another (David R. Loy, 1998). Here, Nietzsche might have reconciled his views with Buddhist perspectives on suffering. Mistry rightly points out that Nietzsche mischaracterizes Buddhism as a 'negation of phenomenal reality' (Mistry, 1981). The condition of suffering as an ontological fact, and the longing for nirvana, are deeply intertwined with Nietzsche's concept of self-redemption. If nirvana is understood as freeing oneself or overcoming the self, one risks becoming entangled with the desires of existence. This Buddhist principle plunges us into an eternal paradox: we are of this world, but not at its mercy. Does Nietzsche's argument imply that existence without any goal is the ultimate aim (Löwith, 1997, p. 56)? Two common misconceptions about nirvana are that it is 'the ultimate flight from life' and

that ‘nirvana disempowers human beings’ (Bilimoria, 2008, p. 372). What, then, becomes of Nietzsche’s idea of suffering as an existential imperative when the Dionysian tragic spirit is reborn? Both Nietzschean and Buddhist notions of redemption likely possess far deeper meanings than is commonly assumed. Nietzsche’s belief in a future Superman, however, leaves certain issues unresolved. A notable difference is that the redeemer—Buddha—has already arrived, shown the path, and departed, whereas in Nietzsche’s case, humanity still awaits the coming of the Superhuman or Superman. One must also consider the messianic element present in both Zarathustra and Buddha. Some connecting interpretation can be made here: To quote Nietzsche,

This man of the future,  
who will redeem us not  
only from the hitherto  
reigning ideal but also

from what was bound to  
grow out of it, from the  
great nausea, from the  
will to the nothing, from  
nihilism; this bell stroke  
of noon and of the great  
decision that liberates the  
will again and restores  
its goal to the earth and  
his hope to man; this  
Antichrist and  
antinihilist, this  
conqueror of God and  
the nothing—he must  
come one day (Löwith,  
1997, p. 57).

Should the redeemer ‘come one day,’ the way in which they relate to ordinary individuals will be unprecedented. Supermen or superhumans may appear in the world and then recede, leaving behind an enduring principle of hope—the will to power to overcome. This hope is continually challenged by the ever-changing nature of both the subject and the world. Nonetheless, there is reason for optimism. Zarathustra ultimately recognizes the necessity of internalizing both flexibility and necessity. Karl

Löwith insightfully observes that, for Nietzsche, “peak and abyss become one,” since the highest mountains rise from the deepest seas (Löwith, 1997, p. 58). In the similar manner, *dhamma* and *vinaya*, and also in Nietzsche’s works, permanence may be a profound but a contestable principle. The redemption process is shifted back by coming to terms with the given empirical world. There is some confusion about the idea of eternal recurrence - which has the danger of recurrence of desired and undesirable things. When the Dionysian spirit takes rebirth, then it has to follow the principle of negation of all previous hindrances to human life, i.e., the lure to nihilism and nothingness. Yet, there is a promise here. The urge for self-eternalization (obsession for eternity, transcendence etc) meets its opposite, the immanent human life. This can be the overlapping point. The opposites are the cosmic and the anthropological (*which have a*

*causal relationship in Hindu Vedantic philosophical traditions*).

Thomas Henry Huxley, the bulldog of Darwin, in his work, *Evolution and Ethics*, finds this separation in a fantastic manner. He deserves a mention for many reasons. Huxley makes a very deep observation of what a person deserves when s/he is born and with what kind of *karmic* entailments. The principal concern is the unfathomable injustice into the nature of things (*that involves the destruction of the blameless*), which looks beyond or *contra* to cosmic fragrance. It is interesting how this observation can be tied to both Buddhist and Nietzschean perspectives. Huxley talks about *karma*, the passing from life to life not only through parentage, but also through acts. Huxley expresses his dissent with that aspect of Indian philosophy (*Hindu*) that supposed the existence of a permanent substance and reality

‘beneath the shifting series of phenomenal reality. He refers to the Buddhist exposure of annihilation involved in merging the individual existence into the unconditioned - the *atman* in *Brahma*. Inclining to the latter, he talks about the *phantasmagorias of life*, which Buddhism and Nietzsche call the *now* aspect of human life. It certainly affects our moral point of view on existence. In doing so, Huxley sounds like a Buddhist<sup>1</sup> - rather than treating apparent reality as illusory, or inscribing that there is nothing good or bad, it is better to destroy the fountain of desire. Though Nietzsche treats the latter as succumbing to the abyss of nihilism (*equating it with nothingness*), his Zarathustra dismantles the obsession with reality itself. In the whole universe nothing is permanent, neither substance, mind nor matter. Huxley makes a striking

remark here - because of this, the self does not exist, which he states as ‘personality is just a metaphysical fancy’. To Huxley, Buddha had a better argument for the transmigration - when *atman* or *brahma* are abandoned, to put an end to all dreaming. Huxley would come to the defense of Buddha against the Nietzschean allegation of ascetism in Buddhism along with other Indian Philosophical traditions. Stephen Batchelor glorifies the *now* aspect of Buddhist thought. He writes,

The Buddha woke up to the nature of the human dilemma and a way to its resolution. The first two truths (anguish and its origins) describe the dilemma, the second two (cessation and the path) its resolution. He awoke to a set of interrelated truths rooted in the immediacy of experience here and now (Batchelor, 1997, p. 6).

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<sup>1</sup> we have to keep in mind that Huxley lived in a period of Europe that Nietzsche looks with lot contempt and disregard



The four ennobling truths are not propositions to believe but challenges to act - these challenges may be ground-shaking for Nietzsche's superman either.

### **T**he Meeting Point

Non-transcendence, non-physicality and godlessness are the conditions that the new redeemer is faced with. It is like the superhuman is within the human - depending upon who resents against all that is decadent and prone to unwarranted suffering. The *arrived* impacts the *yet-to-arrive* - to change the human condition under the determinate principle of 'overcome.' It is pertinent for us to understand the depth of 'change' sought through 'redemption', yet maintain the human life. Keeping Buddha and Nietzsche in light, we can ask a question - 'where lies the redemptory source? Individual?

Society? an epoch? The enigmatic element is whether it is a 'private-principle' or 'doctrinal' in nature. Buddha and Nietzsche can be treated as ones deeply perturbed by the ills that cloud our ways of life. To overcome them, we have two ways - [1] here we stand against all odds (*weakness of the will*), raise above, with shining radiance, taking an oath not to subject us to all those loathsome qualities that once again bring us back to the condition of *Last man* (*untermensch*). [2] Under the reconciliation that we, the humans, are prone to bothprecedented and unprecedented life, search for the relief from (by being a *non-escapist*) that empowers us to tackle the vagaries of *samsara* - that reels under the ever principle of *changeability*. What Nietzsche misses or overlooks and lies in abundance is Buddhist

philosophy is the way of 'life for the ordinary' - to be interpreted as even in the ordinary (can) lie(s) the sacred. This makes Buddha Nietzschean Overman.

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