

The Buddhist Tradition: In India, China and Japan by William Theodore de Bary

And this is the Noble Truth of Sorrow. Birth is sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is sorrow, death is sorrow; contact with the unpleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, every wish unfulfilled is sorrow—in short all the five components of individuality⁵ are sorrow.

And this is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Sorrow. It arises from craving, which leads to rebirth, which brings delight and passion, and seeks pleasure now here, now there—the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for continued life, the craving for power.

And this is the Noble Truth of the Stopping of Sorrow. It is the complete stopping of that craving, so that no passion

remains, leaving it, being emancipated from it, being released from it, giving no place to it.

And this is the Noble Truth of the Way which Leads to the Stopping of Sorrow. It is the Noble Eightfold Path—Right Views, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

[From *Samyutta Nikāya*, 5.421 ff.⁶]

The Buddha is not God as distinct from man, nor does Buddhism, strictly speaking, have any “theology.” It bases itself on neither a revelation from God nor a revelation of God. Its initial orientation is to the human reality rather than a divine reality. Thus there is no possibility of its proceeding from divinely revealed truths and deducing from these authoritative precepts and principles for man through scriptural exegesis or theological reasoning. Buddhism starts rather from an experience of the human condition, an intuition concerning its essential character, and an aspiration to transcend it. Likewise its culmination in the experience of Nirvāna or the realization of Buddhahood, though suggestive of an absolute or transcendent state akin to the divine in other religions, is qualified always, if it can be

We must, however, be equally as guarded in characterizing Buddhism as “humanistic.” True, the value of human life is affirmed in that it affords a rare and precious opportunity to attain Nirvāna and Buddhahood. Human virtues such as wisdom, compassion, courage, equanimity, selflessness, etc., are exemplified by the Buddha and his followers, and Buddhist art, especially in painting and sculpture, has inspired peoples of different cultures in the common human ideal of lofty aspiration, contemplative detachment, and compassionate action. Also, according to the Mahāyāna, among all possible existences the human state has a unique potentiality: in man’s self-realization the Buddhahood in all things is realized. Man’s consciousness is the creative center of the universe.

On the other hand, man’s emancipation is achieved at the expense of self, by initially renouncing the claims of his purely human nature. His mortality, his finite being, his incompleteness and therefore his dependence—which he shares with all things—and his liability to suffering and illusion—which he shares with all sentient creatures—are the crucial facts of his existence and the immediate focus of self-reflection. Man’s condition is, indeed, hopeless unless he is prepared to accept thorough-going negation of his distinctively

מוצאי שבת קודש פרשת נח, תשע"ד

לכבוד מר...

(א', א"ב): "בימי אנוש טעו בני האדם טעות גדול ונבערה עצת חכמי אותו הדור, ואנוש עצמו מן הטועים היה, וזו היתה טעותם: אמרו, הואיל והאלהים ברא כוכבים אלו וגלגלים להנהיג את העולם ונתנם במרום וחלק להם כבוד והם שמשים המשמשים לפניו ראויין הם לשבחם ולפארם ולחלוק להם כבוד, וזהו רצון האל ברוך הוא לגדל ולכבד מי שגדלו וכבדו, כמו שהמלך רוצה לכבד העומדים לפניו וזהו כבודו של מלך. כיון שעלה דבר זה על לבם התחילו לבנות לכוכבים היכולות ולהקריב להן קרבנות ולשבחם ולפארם בדברים ולהשתחוות למולם כדי להשיג רצון הבורא בדעתם הרעה, וזה היה עיקר עבודת כוכבים, וכך היו אומרים עובדיה היודעים עיקרה, לא שהן אומרים שאין שם אלוה אלא כוכב זה... ואחר שארכו הימים עמדו בבני האדם נביאי שקר ואמרו שהאל צוה ואמר להם עבדו כוכב פלוני או כל הכוכבים והקריבו לו ונסכו לו כך וכך ובנו לו היכל ועשו צורתו כדי להשתחוות לו כל העם הנשים והקטנים ושאר עמי הארץ, ומודיע להם צורה שבדה מלבו ואומר זו היא צורת הכוכב

במה ששאלת אם במשך טיולך במזרח מותר לך להכנס למקדשים בודהיסטים, ואם פסלי בודהה נחשבים לעבודה זרה; הנה יסוד השאלה הוא בהבדל שהכל מודים בו בין הבודהיזם עצמו לבין המאמינים בו. ביסוד העניין נראה אמנם כי הבודהיזם איננו עבודה זרה, שהרי הכל מודים שבבודהה עצמו אדם היה ולא אל, ועניינם הוא ללמוד את תורתו ואת דבריו ולא לעבדו; ולכאורה אין בעבודתו כאל שום תועלת לפי משנתו, ומה שיש להם פסלים שלו הם כדי להתרכז במשנתו, ותו לא.

אמנם, מאידך, נראה שהבודהיסטים עצמם עושים מעשים שיש בהם משום עבודה זרה, כהקטרת קטורת והשתחויה לפסלים, ויש שאף מתפללים לבודהה עצמו ומתייחסים אליו כעבודה זרה, ואם כן אף שבעיקר העניין אין בכך צורך מכל מקום אין אנו יכולים להתעלם ממה שקורה בפועל אצל אלו המאמינים בעניין זה.

וכך כתב הרמב"ם בהלכות עבודה זרה

עבודה זרה ממש, וכך נראה שקרה עם הבודהיזם, שבמקורו באמת איננו עבודה זרה, ויודעיו האמיתיים יודעים האמת, אך העם אינו יודע להבדיל תמיד בדברים אלו, ונראה שרבים רבים מהם עושים מעשים שיש בהם עבודה זרה ממש.

על כן, הלכה למעשה נראה ברור שאסור להיכנס במקדשיהם, ואסור לקנות פסליהם, ויש להיזהר מאוד בכל מה שקשור בבודהיזם שלא להימשך חס ושלום אחר מנהגיהם הרעים שיש בהם משום עבודה זרה ממש.

שבוע טוב,

יונתן רוזנצוויג,

החופ"ק נצח מנשה, בית שמש.

סיכום הלכה למעשה: אסור להכנס למקדשי הבודהיסטים, ואסור לקנות פסליהם, ויש להיזהר מלהימשך אחריהם.

פלוני שהודיעוהו בנבואתו, והתחילו על דרך זו לעשות צורות בהיכלות ותחת האילנות ובראשי ההרים ועל הגבעות ומתקבצין ומשתחוים להם ואומרים לכל העם שזו הצורה מטיבה ומריעה וראוי לעבודה וליראה ממנה, וכהנייהם אומרים להם שבעבודה זו תרבו ותצליחו ועשו כך כך ואל תעשו כך וכך. והתחילו כוזבים אחרים לעמוד ולומר שהכוכב עצמו או הגלגל או המלאך דבר עמהם ואמר להם עבדוני בכך וכך והודיע להם דרך עבודתו ועשו כך ואל תעשו כך, ופשט דבר זה בכל העולם לעבוד את הצורות בעבודות משונות זו מזו ולהקריב להם ולהשתחוות...".

זו"ר דרכה של עבודה זרה, שאיננה מתחילה כעבודה זרה אלא דווקא מתחילה מתוך התבוננות ברורה וידיעה נאמנה של בורא עולם, אלא שלאחר מכן ההמון אינו יודע להבדיל בין אחד לשני, והדבר מביא בסופו של דבר לידי

Rav Adin Steinsaltz, Peace without Conciliation, The Irrelevance of Tolerance

What about Indic religions and various kinds of Buddhism? Again, I do not believe that a definitive solution is possible, but a partial solution may be considered. It is important to introduce a distinction between theology and religious practice. In the ancient religions grouped under the name of Hinduism, there are many gods and local shrines, but the theological principles that guide belief and provide a uniformity of moral standards assume that all the deities revered in India or elsewhere are forms of, expressions of, or names for, one ultimate reality or God. Saivites propose Siva as the best name (among many names) for this ultimacy; Vaisnavites prefer Visnu or Krishna; *atman* is an Upanisadic word for the same principle—and *brahman* is perhaps the most common way among non-Muslim, non-Christian Indians of naming ultimacy...³⁷

By the standards of Jewish law as applied to Jews, Hinduism (and Buddhism) do not count as monotheistic traditions. However, the essential point of the Noahide laws is that the standards of Jewish law do not apply to non-Jews. Radically pure monotheism is expected by Judaism only from Jews. The Noahide laws do not preclude gentile religions from developing softer, more complex, and compromised forms of monotheism. Under the Noahide laws, it is possible to assume that Hinduism and Buddhism are sufficiently monotheistic in principle for moral Hindus

and Buddhists to enter the gentile's gate into heaven. Jewish law regards the compromises made or tolerated by the world's major religions as ways of rendering essentially monotheistic theologies easier in practice for large populations of adherents. The fierceness of Islamic opposition to such compromises has no counterpart in Judaism. In Islam, it is seriously blasphemous for anyone of whatever faith to combine belief in the one God with popular ideas about other heavenly powers or with subtle theological doctrines such as the Trinity. Islam cannot tolerate such compromises because the truth that they violate is applicable universally and not simply to Muslims. The problem is that Islam is radically monotheistic (like Judaism), yet is also (unlike Judaism, which is the religion of one people) universalistic as well.³⁸

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The attitude driving Buddhist ontologizing is the desire to be released from the egocentric predicament which we humans are in. Release from that predicament brings release from the anguish and bitterness of clinging, demanding, grabbing, and all of the other consequences of egocentrism. The Buddha is said to have discovered that the egocentric predicament was the source of one's sorrows and to have discovered how to extricate oneself from it. Buddhism provides meditative practices to progress on the path of becoming free from the egocentric predicament. While these practices share with some Western methods their 'meditative' character, the central Buddhist meditative practices are unique and foreign to Western religions.

The attitudinal basis of the Buddha's insight into the way out of anguish was reported to be his coming to see the fragility and ephemeral nature of life. He saw that there was birth, sickness, old age, and death. The Buddha saw that our anguish came from not accepting, calmly and graciously, the facts of human existence and therefore running up against the bars of our cage over and over again only to fall back in pain and frustration. The source of the

Belief in God can feed one's ego, for God easily becomes a source of egocentric satisfaction, granting well-being for good deeds and answering fervent prayers for help. God can turn into nothing more than a protector who looks after us if we heed his word. For good reason, Jewish authorities have had to consistently warn against turning God into a source of egocentric satisfaction. The kabbalistic work *Tikunei zohar* (ch. 6) rebukes those who on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, pray to God for their own needs, calling them, 'Dogs who scream, "Give! Give!" They should be praying for God's sake, not their own welfare.' As Buddha would have put it, belief in God has turned about and bitten them.

If we are in the business of seeking freedom from self-centred craving, we must be very cautious about believing in God.

The later Buddhist material answered the drive to ontology and advanced metaphysical grounds for the sense of the contingency and fragility of life. For this purpose they declared that there was no self, only the ever-changing kaleidoscope of mental and physical goings-on, possessing no substantive duration or permanence. And they declared that there were no substantive existents at all. All was 'empty'. Since that was so, there was no sense in becoming attached to anything, because nothing possessed substantive and enduring reality. Nor was there a substantive God, for if there could be a permanent, substantive God, there might be a permanent, substantive self as well.

Buddhist atheism is thus profoundly different from Western atheism. Western atheism is grounded in the belief that humanity, through human 'reason', replaces God and takes its destiny into its own hands. Worship of God was to vanish in favour of firm dedication to human flourishing, and only human flourishing. Human beings were to exercise autonomy and accept responsibility for their fate. In the words of the American Humanist Association manifesto, 'Humanism considers the complete realization of human personality

God with appreciation of a religion that, like Emerson, knows not God? Does not the essential disparity between a theistic religion and Buddhism far outweigh the partial commonality of purpose between us?

On the surface, the problem is insoluble. But there is no reason to remain on the surface. One way to move below lies in the following declaration by one of the greatest rabbinical figures of the twentieth century, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935):

There is denial that is like an affirmation of faith, and an affirmation of faith akin to denial. A person can affirm the doctrine of the Torah coming from 'heaven', but with the meaning of 'heaven' so strange that nothing of true faith remains... And a person can deny Torah coming from 'heaven' where the denial is based on what the person has absorbed of the meaning of 'heaven' from people full of ludicrous thoughts. Such a person believes that the Torah comes from a source higher than that!... Although that person may not have reached the point of truth, nonetheless this denial is to be considered akin to an affirmation of faith... 'Torah from Heaven' is but an example for all affirmations of faith, regarding the relationship between their expression in language and their inner essence, the latter being the main desideratum of faith.²⁹

According to Rabbi Kook, we must make a distinction between the inner essence of faith and its linguistic expression. A person can embrace a linguistic expression of faith while missing its inner essence, and a person might be living the inner essence of faith while not only not employing its linguistic expression, but also rejecting it as false. An affirmation of faith can take the content of that affirmation so crudely that it misses the truth of the inner essence as much as heresy would. On the other hand, a denial of faith might come from an inner point of great spiritual sensitivity, when what it is denying is the crude formulations it has known, and it rejects those because of a justified shrinking back from the crudeness. Such spiritual sensitivity is akin to true faith.

to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfilment in the here and now'.¹⁷ Hubris stands at the source of Western atheism. Once again in the words of the American Humanist Association, 'Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values.'¹⁸ The outspoken Jewish humanist Saul Tchernichovsky (1875–1943) put the Western humanist credo quite succinctly when he wrote: 'For yet I shall believe in Man / And in his spirit, a bold spirit.'¹⁹

Buddhist non-theists and atheists alike stand in stark contrast to all of this. They never depended on scientific success and tended not to make scientific proclamations, preferring to build 'the palace of Buddhism' above the scientific fray. In contemporary times, science has generated interest in Buddhism, and some Buddhists find congeniality in scientific advances.²⁰ Yet this congeniality serves only to reinforce the Buddhist recognition of the ephemeral and dedication to release from our egocentric predicament.

Buddhist atheism differs profoundly from Western atheism in endeavouring to provide a rationale for decentering the self while not placing anything else in the centre—and certainly not humanity. Nothing should be invested with ultimate value, and nothing is to become an object of craving for the sake of the self. In the most consistent forms of Buddhism this applies as well to the Buddha himself. There the Buddha is not an object of worship. So we have the saying, attributed to Lin-Chi (*Rinzai*), founder of a school of Zen, 'If you meet the Buddha, kill him', indicating that one is not to be fixated on the Buddha. The Buddhist aim is to get release from egocentrism and obsessive concern over the self by acknowledging and flowing with the utter insecurity of life.

Given this partial commonality, a traditional Jew such as myself can discover in Buddhism practices for self-decentering that do not exist in Judaism. But more than that is at issue. I have noted already the danger that belief in the God of theism could easily descend into an egocentric exercise, in which God serves our needs and protects us. When that happens, devotion to God is a screen for craving our own well-being. Engaging in Buddhist spiritual practices for self-nullification, which for the moment leaves God out of the picture, can be an effective, welcome corrective for a traditional Jew to the dangers inherent in theistic religions, and can reinforce the worship of God from love, all by weakening an egocentric pull to God.

Indeed, for many people 'Judaism' is little more than the self-identification as a Jew with a desire for concomitant imagined prerogatives that go with being the 'Chosen People'. Placed within an overwhelming reality of being a Jew and co-opted willy-nilly into what might be a spiritually (and otherwise) dangerous nation-centrism, Buddhist practices for personal self-decentering can be a breath of fresh air and an important mending of the broken vessels. By turning

דברים פרק ה'

(ה) אָנְכִי עֹמֵד בֵּין יְקֹוֹק וּבִינֵיכֶם בְּעֵת הַהוּא לְהַגִּיד לָכֶם אֶת דְּבַר יְקֹוֹק כִּי יֵרָאֶתֶם מִפְּנֵי הָאֵשׁ וְלֹא עֲלִיתֶם בָּהֶר לֵאמֹר: כ

נתיבות שלום, ביטול הישות

תכלית עבודת ה' היא שיהודי יגיע לביטול הישות. מדת הישות היא השורש פורה ראש ולענה של כל המידות הרעות והתאוות, ואיתא מהבעש"ט בפירוש "אנוכי עומד בין ה' וביניכם" האנוכיות היא העומדת כמחיצה מבדלת בין הקב"ה ויהודי, ושורש האנוכיות היא הישות כידוע. ולכן עיקר העבודה היא עקירת הישות עד ביטולה בתכלית. וכמאמר הכתוב "ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך", שענינו עקירת הישות לגמרי, אפילו נוטל את נפשך, היינו שאת הכל הוא מוסר לאהבתו יתברך, וכן בכל מדה ומדה שהוא מודד לך. שזהו ביטול הישות הגמור. ומהי טעמא אמרו חז"ל (סוטה ה.) שהקב"ה אומר על המתגאה אין אני והוא יכולים לדור, ואף שעל העבירות החמורות ביותר כתיב השוכן אתם בתוך טומאותם, ואילו המתגאה גם אם מקיים כל התורה אין אני והוא יכולים לדור, והיינו לפי שהגאות ענינה ישות. וזהו שאמרו חז"ל (שם ד:) כל המתגאה כאילו עבד ע"ז, משום שהוא ישות נפרדת, שהרי הקב"ה אין עוד מלבדו והכל בטל אליו יתברך, וכל ישות נפרדת היא בבחי' ע"ז. לכן הפגם החמור ביותר הוא הישות, זה שמעיניו של אדם נתונים כולם סביב ישותו.

By Tzvi Freeman

Hey Rabbi:

The Daily Dose often mentions “becoming a nothingness.” That sounds very Buddhist. Is there a distinction? How does Buddhist nothingness differ from Jewish nothingness?

Hey Reader:

Buddhism comes in many shapes and flavors, each with its own teachers who have their own ways of expressing things. And the Jewish smorgasbord of ideologies isn’t any less varied. So rather than chasing a thousand wild geese and catching none of them, let me present you with one idea that I think will be of use to you in your own life.

In Chabad thought, we often discuss *bittul bim’tziut*. I can’t translate that, but I’m foolish enough to try: It means an entity of nothingness.

This paradoxical state of somethingness/nothingness is presented as an ultimate goal. And not just for your own ego, but for the entire world in which you live. Somehow, the very earth we touch must become acutely aware of its absolute nothingness while remaining a complete something. And you and I are given the responsibility to accomplish that.

To explain that, I need to tell you a core teaching of the master of Kabbalah, Rabbi Isaac Luria. He described the World of Tohu, a realm that preceded our world, and was really much higher. But it was incapable of fulfilling its purpose, and shattered from its own intensity.

The problem with Tohu was that everything was absolute. Everything felt itself and its meaning in an absolute sense, exclusive of anything else. The fragments of Tohu fell to our world, and our egos are one of its most exquisite artifacts. But then, the very physicality of this world is also an artifact of Tohu: the phenomenon that no two things can occupy the same space.

Our souls are here to reassemble those Tohu fragments into a world of Tikkun. *Tikkun* means “repair.” The World of Tikkun is one in which opposites coincide and balance one another in perfect harmony.

Rabbi Shalom Dovber was the fifth rebbe of Lubavitch. He had an amazing way of relating Kabbalistic teachings to common psychological issues. Here is how he did that with Tohu and *bittul bim’tziut*:

A Tohu person, he wrote, is one who has yet to repair his ego. As such, he either feels he absolutely exists, or he feels he does not exist at all. He’s either all there is, or totally absent and meaningless. And there can’t be any compromise between the two extremes.

A Tikkun person, on the other hand, is one who has repaired and harmonized everything in his life. And that includes the very opposites of being and not-being.

After all, a person is here to get something done—to learn, to pray, to change the world. Which means being a something. How much can you change the world if you feel you’re not really here?

That itself is the key to blending these opposites—that idea of purpose: When a person feels “I am not here just because I am here. I emerge out of my Creator’s desire for my purpose”—then he has harmonized both being and not-being into a single melody.

When he taxes every power of his mind to understand an idea in Torah, he says, “I am granted a mind, because my Creator desires understanding.”

When he prays to G-d for his needs with all his heart, he says, “I exist out of my Creator’s desire to give love and be loved”—for that is the meaning of prayer. When he goes out of his way to help another, or exerts every fiber of his body to do a mitzvah, he says, “I exist because my Creator desires kindness and beauty.” And then he feels, “I haven’t attained even an iota of what I could have achieved in any of the above, but my Creator still has the love to sustain my existence!” So that the nothingness fuels his passion to become a something even more. In each thing, he both *is* and *is not* at once. After all, the ultimate paradox is G-d, the Creator. He doesn’t just create stuff out of other stuff. He generates the very concept of being—and of not-being. If so, He contains the capacity for both, yet is neither. **It comes out that by us fulfilling this harmonization of opposites, we fulfill our purpose: to be an exquisite expression of that ultimate paradox of the Creator, who stands beyond being and not-being, for He creates both.**

Wikipedia

Ayin (Hebrew: אֵינ, meaning “nothingness”, related to *Ein*-“not”) is an important concept in Kabbalah and Hasidic philosophy. It is contrasted with the term **Yesh** (“something/exist/being/is”). According to kabbalistic teachings, before the universe was created there was only Ayin, and the first manifest Sephirah (Divine emanation), Chochmah (Wisdom), “comes into being out of Ayin.”^[1] In this context, the sephirah Keter, the Divine will, is the intermediary between the Divine Infinity (Ein Sof) and Chochmah. Because Keter is a supreme revelation of the Ohr Ein Sof (Infinite Light), transcending the manifest sephirot, it is sometimes excluded from them.

Ayin is closely associated with the **Ein Sof** (Hebrew **אין סוף**, meaning "no end", "without an end"), which is understood as the Deity prior to His self-manifestation in the creation of the spiritual and physical realms, single Infinite unity beyond any description or limitation. From the perspective of the emanated created realms, Creation takes place "*Yesh me-Ayin*" ("Something from Nothing"). From the Divine perspective, Creation takes place "*Ayin me-Yesh*" ("Nothing from Something"), as only God has absolute existence; Creation is dependent on the continuous flow of Divine life force, without which it would revert to nothingness. Since the 13th century, Ayin has been one of the most important words used in kabbalistic texts. The symbolism associated with the word Ayin was greatly emphasized by **Moses de León** (c. 1250 – 1305), a Spanish rabbi and kabbalist, through the *Zohar*, the foundational work of Kabbalah.^[2] In Hasidism Ayin relates to the internal psychological experience of Deveikut ("cleaving" to God amidst physicality), and the contemplative perception of paradoxical Yesh-Ayin Divine Panentheism, "There is no place empty of Him".^[3]

Rav Kook and Nietzsche: A Preliminary Comparison of their Ideas on Religions,
Christianity, Buddhism and Atheism
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annihilation."⁹⁵ Rav Kook's theological characterization of the elevation of evil which Buddhism achieves is complex,⁹⁶ but the important point for our comparison is that he discerns within Buddhism intrinsic worth. Christianity is not seen by Rav Kook as having any intrinsic worth. In this sense, although Rav Kook's account of Buddhism is, as mentioned above, much briefer than Nietzsche's, Nietzsche and Rav Kook seem to hold Buddhism vis-à-vis Christianity in a similar position; namely that while neither are perfect, Buddhism, on its own terms, has some value, while Christianity has value only as a catalyst for other movements or a preservative of values or ideas taken from another source.

Notwithstanding Buddhism's merits, a fundamental flaw remains. In his four-fold representation of religions,⁹⁷ Rav Kook characterizes Buddhism as a religion of "total despair" in which the spiritual and physical worlds are both negated and in which the total despair of all of existence is proclaimed along with the desire for refuge in total annihilation and the cultivation of life for that purpose. In this schema and in contradistinction to Buddhism, Rav Kook discerns three other spiritual tendencies: Idolatry on the one hand, affirms evil's dominion over all values in life and the world. Christianity, on the other hand, despairs of influencing or controlling evil itself, namely within the temporal realm, and purports to save from this despair the internality of life which is the good elements within it (life). In opposition to these three spiritual tendencies, Rav Kook posits Judaism as "the fourth aspiration" which will salvage "the body together with the soul, the externality of existence along with the internality, evil itself as the good, and moreover to transform evil into total good, and the elevation of the world and all therein with all its aspects and features, the world of the individual with all its physical manifestations and society with all its institutions, and establish everything on the foundations of good." The realization of this goal for Rav Kook, will come through an actualization of "the depths of Torah . . . God alone will be exalted on that day . . . and the nations will say, 'God is king.'"⁹⁸ According to this schema, Buddhism is important for its elevation of base and cosmic evil. Ultimately though—and here Buddhism shares a fundamental identity with Christianity—by acknowledging evil, evil is thereby augmented.⁹⁹ It is true that, according to Rav Kook—and as outlined in the fourth spiritual tendency above, (the Jewish spiritual proclivity)—evil will disappear altogether, in step with the Divine design of the cosmos, once it has outlived its usefulness. Similarly evil cannot actually, in any metaphysical sense, be augmented. Nevertheless, Buddhism shows its inability to grasp the true nature of

cosmic reality by falsely ascribing to evil, along with Christianity, an ontological existence of its own, seen as a permanent and unchangeable element of the cosmos. The result of this false perception is that both Buddhism and Christianity do nothing to bring closer the era in which cosmic evil will disappear, whereas such is a central element, for Rav Kook, of any religion purporting to be authentic. As such, Buddhism stands opposed to the positive development of the cosmos, while simultaneously, somewhat paradoxically, serving a purpose in achieving the ultimate goal of world redemption in its elaboration of "a comprehensive path comprising a particular culture which guides the lowly side of evil to its supernal side."¹⁰⁰

We can see, as was the case with Christianity, that both Nietzsche and Rav Kook see Buddhism as being of some value. For Nietzsche, the value lies in its correct appraisal of some of humanity's ailments and its relative lack of theological encumbrance, while being free also from Christianity's reactive jealousy; for Rav Kook the value lies in its elevation of the goodness within evil through its spiritual practices. Buddhism fails to affirm life sufficiently for either Nietzsche or for Rav Kook. Furthermore, Buddhism contains some degree of illusion due to its thoroughgoing pessimism which, for both Nietzsche and Rav Kook, obliterates any hope for a future in any way better or even different from the present.