

# Edmund Husserl's Transcendence of Early Buddhist Theory of Consciousness

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## ABSTRACT

Edmund Husserl formulated a theory of consciousness writing *Logical Investigations* (1900). The Gautama the Buddha, as far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., also provided an analysis of the conscious phenomena. Many scholars who trace parallels between the Buddhist view of consciousness and Husserl's phenomenology deal mostly with the similarities between the two. This paper argues that Husserl's analysis of consciousness, despite its limitations, is more advanced than the Buddha's formulation. Husserl articulated his phenomenology of consciousness as a result of his encounter with Cartesian cogito, on the one hand and the positivistic foundation of empirical sciences on the other. Husserl's notion of phenomenological consciousness was situated within an industrially advanced capitalist society and nurtured by scientific epistemology, despite his criticism of its underlying positivism, which set the basis for his philosophy of internal consciousness. He lived in a controversial era, the rise of National Socialism in Germany, which has to be taken seriously when assessing his philosophy of consciousness. The Buddha, in contrast, theorized his notion of consciousness within a backward, slow-moving, agricultural and feudal setting. He developed his notion of consciousness as a normative concept as a basis for achieving the spiritual objective he envisaged. While acknowledging the fact that no other philosophy that existed during the Buddha's time had articulated such a meticulous and in depth analysis of the phenomenology of consciousness, his analysis seems to be less advanced when assessed and compared with the twentieth century phenomenology of Husserl. The present study will be carried out having used original and secondary sources of Husserlian and Buddhist phenomenologies. This study will contribute significantly to future research on similar topics.

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## 1. Overview

This is a comparative study of early Buddhist and Husserlian philosophies. The study firstly attempts to analyze how the Buddha and Edmund Husserl perceived consciousness and subjectivity, and secondly it puts forward a critical analysis of Husserl's transcendence of the Buddhist theory of consciousness.

Considerable numbers of comparative studies have already been made between continental philosophy and Buddhism under the themes like humanism, hermeneutics, alienation, emancipation, ontology and epistemology etc. Critiques of continental philosophical concepts through Buddhism and continental philosophical critique of Buddhist concepts are available during the past three decades. Wilhelm Halbfass, who has an intellectual dominancy in the field of European and Indian philosophical traditions, has paid little attention to the comparison between Husserlian and Buddhist phenomenologies. In his massive book, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* (1990), though Halbfass contends one chapter for Hegel, one chapter for Schelling and Schopenhauer, and one chapter for the developments in the interpretation of India following Hegel and Schopenhauer, he does not pay considerable attention to Husserl. He just mentions about Husserl only seven places in 604 pages book in order to distinguish European mankind from the Indian and other oriental traditions. Moreover, he considers Indian philosophy as a whole without special reference to Buddhism. In *Tradition and Reflection: Exploration and Reflection* (1991) Halbfass concentrates basically Veda, Vedānta and Yoga philosophies, but little attention is given to Buddhism. In this book he refers to the European philosophers like Foucault, Hegel, Heidegger, and Said, but no any reference to Husserl. The edited work by Eli Franco and Karin Preisendanz, *Beyond the Orientalism; The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and its Impact on Indian and Cross-*

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*Cultural Studies* (2007) contends one article written by Josephs O'Leary as 'Heidegger and Indian Philosophy'. Here also there is no considerable attention to Husserl. In addition to that, here there is a good philosophical discussion on Veda, Vedānta, Yoga, Mimāṃsā, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Hindu and neo-Hindism, but there is no discussion on Buddhism.

It is contended the autobiographical notes of David B. Zilherman, the Russian scholar who made considerable contribution to Indian-Western comparative philosophy in *Analogy in Indian and Western Philosophical Thought* (2006). Here, Zilherman mentions that,

In the strict sense I do not work within a tradition because my goal is to create new tradition by working 'inter-tradition' or between traditions. But I would like to mention (in chronological order) the philosophical influences to which I am especially open Indian Vedānta, Vijñānavāda Buddhism, Hegel's phenomenology, Heidegger's hermeneutics, Bakhtin's semiotics and certainly the modern Anglo-American philosophy of language (L. Wittgenstein). My work in systematic Indian philosophy consisting of investigation in logic, Indian Yoga (Russian = 'exegeza'), and the metaphysics of ritual exerted the most significance on my method. After setting in united study I taught anthropology at New York University (1974). Thereafter I taught Indian philosophy at the University of Chicago (1975) before coming to Brandeis University in 1976, where until the present time, I have been a professor of philosophy. At Brandeis I teach Hegel, Husserl, Indian philosophy and so on. (p.2)

But in his studies there is no considerable attention to original Buddhist doctrine and its comparative concepts with European phenomenology. Here it is included western and Indian theories of analogy of Plato, Aristotle, Bacon, Leibniz, Kant, J.S. Mill, Hegel, Wundt, Comte, Spencer, Mach, Kuhn, Brentano, Early Husserl, Older Husserl, and Heidegger. Under the eastern analogy it is discussed about Nyāya-Sūtra, Mimāṃsā, Vedānta, Sāṃkhya and Yoga. In addition to that, it is mentioned about phenomenological interpretation of analogy. But there is no place for Buddhist analogy.

J.L. Mehta, an Indian philosopher and expert in Heidegger, wrote most important two books on Heidegger. They are *Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* (1967) and *Martin Heidegger: The Way and the Vision* (1976). In addition to that, it has published a collection of Mehta's essays as *Indian and West: The Problem of Understanding* (1985). His basic concern is pointed towards Heideggerian phenomenology and Indian thought. In *J.L. Mehta on Heidegger, Hermeneutics and Indian Tradition* (1992) exposes about Mehta's vast background to phenomenology and Vedic tradition. In this work, one article is written as 'Heidegger's debts to Dilthey's hermeneutics and Husserl's phenomenology'. Here, main focus is given to Heidegger and Veda tradition. It should be mentioned some of his earlier articles are also to same focus; for instance, 'Heidegger and Vedānta' (1978), 'Heidegger and the Comparison of Indian and Western Philosophy' (1970).

*Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy* (1992) is a collection of pivotal articles on European phenomenology and Indian philosophy, which covers considerable area of the Indian interaction with phenomenology and hermeneutics. Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Cassirer and Eugen Fink are subjected to discussion in this book. I have developed some arguments in present study in accordance with the concepts of *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy*

Dan Lusthaus' *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and Ch'eng Wei-shin Iau* (2002) is a depth and acritical study of Buddhist phenomenology. First chapter of this work is devoted to Buddhism and phenomenology, and the second chapter is on Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. In the fourth chapter, there is an excellent discussion of the basic concept of Buddhism compared with Husserlian phenomenology, other European philosophical and psychological traditions. However, as a whole, Yogācāra Buddhism gets prominent in this study. For Walpola Rahula (2003) Yogācāra School is a later development of Buddhist philosophy which was already there in original Buddhism.

If we critically examine the basic concepts of early Buddhism, we can find the most developed phenomenological approaches, which can be compared and contrasted with the developments of European phenomenology. Though many local and foreign scholars have written on Buddhism, few scholars approach Buddhism with an awareness of European phenomenological and existential traditions, especially those philosophies of Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre. This study has been carried out having focused to Sri Lankan and foreign Buddhist monks and some Buddhist scholars who actively practiced Buddhism in their lives.

## 2. Buddhist Teaching and its Essential Meaning

According to Buddhism, all conditional things are impermanent (*anicca*), all conditional things are suffering (*dukkha*) and all *dharmas* (i.e.both conditional and unconditional) are without self (*anattā*) (Rahula, 1978, p. 94). The ontological condition is voidness or emptiness. It represents no self either in individual or in *dhamma*. Impermanence, suffering and not-self are the ontological existence of reality. Everything by nature is impermanent, not eternal or everlasting. Things pass away and, they have only temporary persistence; in other words, otherwiseness- in- persistence. As Rahula further insists (1978),the aim of Buddhism is to take a realistic view of life and of the world looking at things objectively.

The problem of suffering lies in the belief of self, but the Buddha's message is that all things are not-self. It means that nothing is self, and self is only a deception. It is like a mirage. All determined things (*sankhāra*) are not self, the things determined by *sankhāra* are also not-self, and they lead towards suffering. Suffering is commoner's (*puthajjana*= an ordinary man) mistaken acceptance of what appears to be self, soul, ego or subject. It is none other than permanent pleasurable self. An ordinary man deceives himself by thinking that there is a subject existing independently of the object. In other words, 'I' is something, which exists independent of experience. He thinks that things are for me. As Wettimuny says (1974):"This *being*, 'I' or this *existence* of 'I' or this *remaining* 'I', or this *persistence* of 'I' in time is being (*bhava*) in its most fundamental form. It is in fact *essentially* what in day today language we refer to as existence or being"(p.60).Subjectivity, the concept of I, is tied up structurally with the perception of permanence or immortality. It is the perception of continuation of being, and it always signifies perception of permanence and pleasurable. This being is the persistence of subjectivity. The self same subject is a deception. Ordinary man calls himself as 'my self'. Accordingly, self- identity is embedded in my subjectivity.The Individual takes the subject for granted. 'I am' arises as things present themselves as 'mine' (Ñānavira, 2001,p.55). Therefore, he supposes the separation of existing subject and the object in the real world. This delusive subject masters over the object. Buddhism considers subjectivity as phenomenal but negative. The phenomenological point is that the subjectivity or I is not other than a moment of consciousness. As every moment of consciousness is changed, the concept of 'I' also should be changed accordingly. As Wettimuny further insists (1962), there is not subjectivity by itself behind my experience.

The personal view, according to Buddhism, is *sakkāyaditthi* (being in a soul, personality-belief). *Sakkaya* means person, somebody, a self-existing being. The main determined construction is the belief of "I exist", the existence of *Cartesian subjectivity*. The existence of self or "I exist" is my being (*bhava*=becoming, existence or continuity) which is being a self, being a subject or existence of subjectivity. According to Buddhism, this is existential ideology (*bhava ditthi*). The source of this ideology is the conceit of 'I am' (*asmimāna*) or belief of self. The commoner's existence is "I exist". It is just a matter of being. If there is self there is a birth, decay and death. They are referred to being (*satta*). Birth means birth of self or birth of subjectivity, decay means decay of self, and death means death of self. All notions of self and all thoughts of my existence are suffering, and which signifies that birth decay and death are attached to self.The Buddhist critique, for Rahula(2006), is that,

There is no permanent unchanging self in the world. There is no thinker behind the thought, and thought itself is the thinker. If you remove the thought there is no thinker to be found. Here we cannot fail to notice how this Buddhist view is dramatically opposed to the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* 'I think therefore I am'. (p.26)

According to this interpretation, there is no permanent, unchanging entity or substance like self or soul. It is a false belief and mental projection. There is no I or being in reality but in ideologically determined world. Suffering arises with the knowing of ontological nature, impermanence and not self. Suffering is embedded in self-existence, and it arises when an individual finds his ontological existence as voidness. Self-existence and sense pleasure are maintained because of ignorance (*avijjā*=ignorance, illusion, delusion, nescience). It is the misunderstanding and misconception of the truth, and which is understanding of falsity as truth (Matilal, 1980). Ignorance is defined as not knowing of impermanence, self and suffering. Nescience can also be defined as not understanding as it really is. Science (*vijjā*) or wisdom (*paññā*) defined as the understanding things they really are (*yatābhutum*). Accordingly, nescience or non-knowledge is the absence of the knowledge. It is epistemological insufficiency of real existence or ontological existence. But a commoner is not distressed by his non-knowledge. He does not know about his own ignorance. He does not know that his being is just suffering. He perceives his being to be pleasurable (*sukkhā*). When he experiences his non-knowledge, suffering has arisen. The experience of the non-knowledge is a common mistaken acceptance of what appears to be self. He further perceives all things as suffering. He perceives

them as pleasure. He has no way of considering suffering as suffering. For Buddhist interpretation, ideology is to be considered as discourse or doctrine, which produces false consciousness. It is related to non-knowledge. Ideological discourse distorts the subject's awareness of the truth about the mental or social order. Ideas, beliefs, concepts and views are forms of ideological discourse. The intention of Buddhism is to uproot the belief in self. The extinction of subjectivity and removing suffering is Buddhist emancipation (*nirvana*= ultimate aim of Buddhist life, ultimate reality, blowing out of ignorance).

### 3. Buddhist Theory of Consciousness

According to the Buddha, 'I am conscious of something' means that something is present to me. 'I am aware of a certain perception' means that the perception is present to me. Accordingly, consciousness cannot be referred to the subject but to the phenomena. Consciousness means the presence of phenomena. It is neither the presence of subject nor the object. In other words, it is only the presence of that which is present (Wettimuny, 1969). As Nānavira says (2001), "Consciousness (*viññāna*) can be thought as the presence of a phenomenon, which consists of *nāma* and *rūpa*. Nāmarūpa and viññāna together constitute the phenomenon in person...The phenomenon is the support of consciousness and all consciousness is consciousness of something" (p.103). Consciousness necessarily comes before any other things, and things cannot be understood directly by themselves, but through consciousness itself. When someone describes something, it must first be present in experience, and its presence is consciousness. For Wettimuny (1962), the whole world as it comes to me is something that is based on my consciousness. The world is present to me as such on the basis of my consciousness. As I can perceive the outside world through my consciousness, there is no possibility to comprehend consciousness through the outside world, as science does. The external world can be understood through consciousness as it presents itself to consciousness. As far as I become conscious of things, they are inherently related to me. This is clearly a phenomenological conclusion. Consciousness cannot be represented or manifested through something else, but things can be revealed through consciousness. All things presented to me as such would be presented to me by my consciousness. Consciousness is nothing else but becoming-conscious.

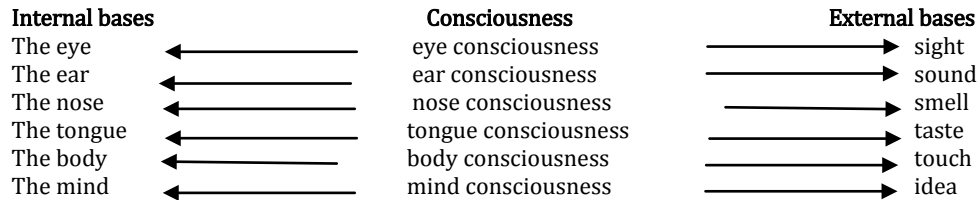
One of the main aims of the Buddhist theory of consciousness is to expose the illusion and paradox of consciousness. Nānanda, in his *Magic of the Mind* (2007), which is one of the deep Buddhist phenomenological studies of consciousness, insists that 'consciousness is a magic show, and the perception is like mirage' (p.5). Consciousness cannot be considered independently, but it should be regarded as Name-and Form-and Consciousness (*nāma-rūpa viññāna*). Samsaric vortex is made up by the consciousness and name -and -form. Bikhu Nānanda points out that (2007),

In this interplay between the two counterparts, consciousness seems to represent actuality while name-and-form stands for potentiality. 'Name-and-form' 'when it grows' up deriving vitality from consciousness, gives rise to the infrastructure of the six sense -base or spheres, which undergo bifurcation as 'internal' (*ajjhattika*) and 'external' (*bāhira*) due to the discriminative function of consciousness. The ensuing processes of contact feeling, craving, grasping and becoming portray the springing up into life of those potentialities indicated by name -and -form. (p.27)

Consciousness, as the subject, always confronts with name-and-form. The significance of name-group and the form-group depends on each other. *Nāma*, in other words, is mentality represents of sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), contact (*passa*) and attention (*manasikāra*). *Rūpa*, the mentality, belongs to matter or substance. Matter exists in the world independent of senses, and the various representations of the material world are not depending on consciousness, but they are to be present by consciousness. They have to be cognized by consciousness. They are interwoven, and there is no dichotomy between them. As Wettimuny identifies (1969), the presence of the object is a matter of consciousness. If there is no presence of the object, there is no consciousness. Accordingly, Name is how Form is present. For further elaboration of consciousness Nānanda cites Anguttara Nikaya as follows (2007),

'Name', friends, is one end, 'form' is the other end; consciousness is in the middle; and craving is the seamstress, for it is craving that stitches it into the arising of this and that (form of) existence...The six internal sense -spheres are one end, the six external sense -spheres are the other end, consciousness is in the middle; and craving is the seamstress..(p.31)

According to the Buddha, consciousness arises out of conditions. Name - and- form is the condition of consciousness. They are necessary conditions of arising consciousness. Name - and - form is consciousness and vice-versa, and it cannot go beyond. According to this interpretation, there are six classes of intentions. They are the intention of forms, the intention of smells, the intention of tastes, the intention of tangibles, and the intention of ideas. These six intentions formulate six classes of consciousness, eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, and mind consciousness. The bases and forms of consciousness can be illustrated as follows:



- Consciousness arises because of eye and sight.
- Consciousness arises because of ear and sound.
- Consciousness arises because of nose and smell.
- Consciousness arises because of tongue and taste.
- Consciousness arises because of body and touch.
- Consciousness arises because of mind and mental object.

As argues in this study, there are no classes of consciousness like eye, ear, nose, tongue and body consciousness in Husserlian phenomenology, but only mind consciousness. This fact will be elaborated in the second part of this article.

Early Buddhism not only relates consciousness to subjectivity but also connects to suffering and emancipation. The person who regards consciousness as self or self as having consciousness, or consciousness as being in self, or self as being in consciousness insists that consciousness is 'mine'. But when he sees that consciousness is changed and it becomes otherwise, suffering and despair are arisen. Buddhist argument is that consciousness, as a whole, impermanent, changing and becoming otherwise (otherwiseness in persistence). It is the paradox of consciousness, and it leads to ambiguity of existence. Where there is name-and -form, there is consciousness, and where there is ceasing of name -and-form, there is ceasing of consciousness. The path leading to ceasing of consciousness is the Noble Eightfold Path (Ñānanda, 2009). Pleasure and happiness arise because of consciousness, and therefore, misery is embedded in consciousness. Accordingly, the aim of path is to escape from grasping consciousness. When 'I am' is eradicated, consciousness too loses its support, and then no more realm of existence (*bhava*).

Early Buddhism says that all experience is intentional (*cetenā*=volition=will) and experience itself is beginning with consciousness. Accordingly, the Buddhist concept of intention has similar characteristics compared with Husserlian conception of intentionality. Here, Nānavira examines intentionality with reference to Husserl's article, Phenomenology, in *Encyclopedia Britannica* as follows (2001),

Instead of matters themselves, the values, goals, utilities, etc., we regard the subjective experiences in which these 'appear'. These 'appearance' are phenomena, whose nature is to be a 'consciousness-of' their object, real or unreal as it be. Common language catches this sense of 'relativity', saying, I was thinking of something, I was frightened of *something, etc.* Phenomenological psychology takes its name from the 'phenomena', with the psychological aspect of which is concerned: and the word 'intentional' has been borrowed from the scholastic to denote the essential 'reference' character of the phenomena. All consciousness is 'intentional'.(p.64-65)

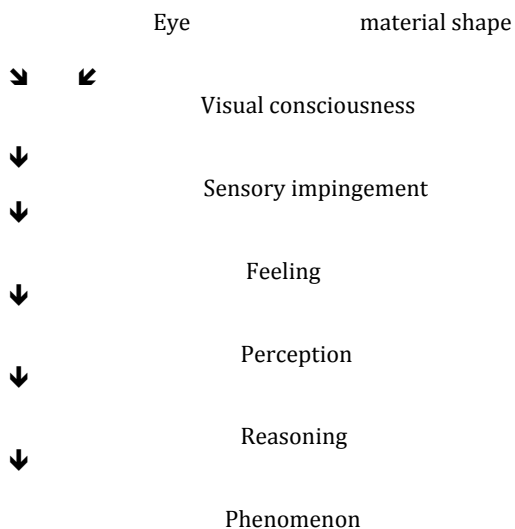
E.R.Sarachchandra who paid considerable attention towards psychological dimensions of consciousness tries to connect consciousness and phenomena (*papañca*) with the process of sense perception in his *Buddhist Psychology of Perception*(1958). For Sarachchandra (1958),

Sense perception, therefore, implies a dual relationship, the relationship, of the perceiving individual and the world as perceived. In its subjective aspect it is consciousness, and in its objective aspect it is the world of perception, and *papañca* is the general term for both aspects.(p,8)

Ñānanda in his *Concept and Reality*(1971) further elaborates Sarachchandra's interpretation, which according to him is a deep and acclaimed original contribution to the field. Ñānanda having referred to *Madhupindika Sutta* developed a most advanced phenomenological interpretation based on '*papañca-sañña-sankhā*'. As he notes (1971),

Visual consciousness, brethren, arises because of eye and material shapes; the meeting of the three is sensory impingement; because of sensory impingement arises feeling; what one feels one perceives; what one perceives, one reasons about; what one reasons about, one turns into '*papañca*' (*papañceti*); ... (p.3)

This interpretation can be illustrated as follows for further understanding.



As Ñānanda insists (1971), "*papañca* signifies the final stage in the process of sense – cognition" ( p. 3).

#### 4. Husserlian Phenomenology

Consciousness in the transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl is not only valuable philosophical achievement of European philosophical tradition, but it is also useful for comprehending Indian philosophical thought, especially, Yogāchāra Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta. In Indian philosophical tradition *Atman* or transcendental consciousness is to be considered as absolute foundation of knowledge. In Husserlian tradition, the transcendental ego is regarded as the absolute foundation of knowledge.

There were three stages of Husserl's philosophical development. They are anti-psychologism, descriptive psychology and transcendental phenomenology. Husserl's first work, *Philosophy of Arithmetic* (1891), was condemned by Gottlob Frege because of its psychologism. But Husserl, having written *Logical Investigation* (1900) defended his philosophical position, anti-psychologism, which made the foundation for phenomenological movement. The aim of pure phenomenology was to overcome psychologism. When Husserl struggled with descriptive psychology, he published *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* (1911) and *Ideas I* (1913). In the time of developing transcendental phenomenology, he completed *The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (1928), *Cartesian Meditation* (1931) and *The Crisis of European Sciences* (1936).

Husserlian phenomenology was developed having absorbed the philosophical development of Descartes, Kant and post Kantian German Idealism. In addition to that, descriptive phenomenology of Franz Brentano, which describes the psychical phenomenon of human consciousness positively, influenced Husserl's original version of phenomenology. Phenomenology is a science, which gives a description of what is given to our consciousness. What is given to our consciousness is called phenomenon (The Greek word 'phainomenon' means appearance). Accordingly, what appears to consciousness is phenomenon. Phenomenology analyzes

the consciousness and what is given to consciousness. Phenomenology is an apriori science of pure consciousness and transcendental subjectivity. Husserl regards phenomenology as a transcendental science of pure consciousness. What Husserl considered was how 'objective truth' could be constructed in and through the subjective act of consciousness. Consciousness is consciousness of something. He examined how objects appear immediately to consciousness. Objects cannot be regarded as *things-in-themselves* but they are intended by consciousness. Consciousness is not just a passive representation of the world but actively constitutes it. The process of thinking and the object of thought are internally related. The meaning and the being of things are constituted in and through the consciousness. All our experiences are shaped by the active involvement of the transcendental ego, which was developed from Kantian concept, 'transcendental unity of apperception'. Husserl never distinguished between consciousness and phenomena. The 'so-called' objectivity is also only a particular experience of consciousness. As a science of science, Husserlian phenomenology rejects all forms of naturalism, scientism, psychologism and positivism. Phenomenological description focuses on objects, which are constituted in and for the subject. Phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the subject, but it is a science of experience. It does not deal with either the object of experience, or the subject of experience but it connects the being with consciousness. It treats consciousness as consciousness and experiences as experiences.

Husserl's phenomenology is neither a form of idealism, which insists that the world is constituted by mind nor empiricism, which says that mind is an empty vessel to be filled with the outer world. His approach was middle path (Kearny and Rainwater, 1996). As phenomenology insists, there is no distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, but they are co-existent. Consciousness is always consciousness of something. It studies both activity of intending consciousness (*noesis*) and thing intended (*noema*).

Phenomenology is neither a science of objects nor a science of the subject, but it is a science of experience. It does not deal with either the object of experience, or the subject of experience but it connects the being with consciousness. It treats consciousness as consciousness and experiences as experiences. Though Early Buddhism negatively reads consciousness and subjectivity, and though they are to be considered as the source of suffering and being, in Husserlian phenomenology consciousness and subjectivity are regarded to be the center of philosophy. From the Buddhist perspective, *Dhamma* is going beyond *cogito*. Kant posits a 'pure original unchangeable consciousness' or transcendental unity of apperception', and Husserl too put forward transcendental condition of consciousness against natural feature of consciousness. According to Husserl, all meaning is given by transcendental subjectivity. For Demot Moran (2000),

Husserl made many pronouncements on the nature of the transcendental ego. At times, he spoke as if empirical consciousness may come and go, but that the transcendental ego is a necessary condition not just for the possibility of a world at all. The transcendental ego can survive the destruction of the world...Thus in *Cartesian Meditation*, Husserl says the transcendental ego is responsible, not just for meaning or sense, but for the being of the world...The transcendental ego constitute the world as a world of meanings and as a world of objects.(p.169)

The empirical ego is intentionally constituted out of transcendental ego. Husserl, while excludes existential empirical ego, he remains transcendental pure ego, and it resists all type of reductions. Though it is not a part of any mental process, it functions as the condition of the given mental process. This pure ego is essentially 'empty of content'. Intentionality is the essence of consciousness and it is always directed towards an object. For Husserl, ego is present in the intentional act. The common formula of intentionality is 'I think something' or conscious of something (*Ego-Cogito-Cogitatum*), and there is no intentional object without *cogito*. As Husserl puts, we are directed towards objects; our intention goes out towards it. In Buddhism, intentionality (*cetana*) denotes desire, and it causes for accumulation of more and more suffering (*dukkha*), but, according to Husserl, intentionality cannot be removed from individual act of perceiving. Phenomenology analyses consciousness and what is given to consciousness. The reason for analyzing consciousness is to avoid metaphysical constructions in philosophy. The idea of the phenomenological slogan, 'back to things themselves' was formulated to study intentional objects. It further implies 'back to immediate data given to me'. Husserl, as Descartes does, starts from consciousness and its content. He creates original phenomenological method, which is different from Buddhist Mindfulness (*satipattana*), to avoid authority, cultural traditions, scientific traditions, metaphysics and positive sciences as presuppositions. This methodology is called 'phenomenological reduction'. There are three stages of this method: the *epoche*, the eidetic reduction and the transcendental reduction. *Epoche* means to bracket all beliefs, existential facts and theories taken for granted. In this stage, the belief of the independently existing world of objects is also put aside, and it leads us to suspend prejudice, belief, bias which Husserl calls 'the

natural attitude'. In the stage of eidetic reduction consciousness directs from facts to essences. 'Eidos', the absolute validity of things, means the essences we grasped. The final stage, the transcendental reduction, explores the idea of intentionality, which says that consciousness is always consciousness of something. According to Husserl, natural attitude, speculative theories, and everyday assumptions should be suspended for purification of pure consciousness. But Buddhist method of purification of consciousness is ceasing of grasping consciousness.

## 5. Trancendental Buddhist Philosophy

According to the above description, no major philosophical parallels can be traced between early Buddhism and Husserlian phenomenology. But Husserl's later works like *Vienna Lectures* (1935), *Prague Lectures*, delivered six months after the *Vienna Lectures* and *Crisis of European Sciences* (1938) not only introduced original concepts such as *life-world* against transcendental idealism which was formulated both in *Ideas 1* (1913) and *Cartesian Meditation* (1931) but also it laid a foundation for Husserl to move from European culture to Asian philosophies. The Husserlian notion of '*life-world*' signifies the world of experience. Hence, it is the world of pre-theoretical experience. According to the new approach, ego is not empty of content but it is intimately connected with world of experience. *Crisis of European Sciences* made a sharp ideological separation with western thought. In *Vienna Lecture*, Husserl stated that, 'I am certain that the European crisis has its roots in a misguided rationalism'. At the time of writing *Crisis* he praised the spiritual roots of Asian philosophies. Karl Schumann, writing an article on 'Husserl and Indian thought' in *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy* (1992) provides evidence as to how Indian thought, especially Buddhism, influenced Husserl's phenomenology. As he emphasizes, German philosophers paid attention to Indian thought in the second half of the nineteenth century. The German philosopher Schopenhauer regarded Buddhism as the highest religion in the world because Buddhism was not founded on theism. As Schumann stresses, there is considerable evidence of Husserl's understanding of Indian thought including Sanskrit literature. According to some experts, Indian philosophical ideas influenced Husserl's thinking, when Husserl was in Göttingen in 1901. Husserl had close connections with German Indologist, Hermann Oldenburg (1854 - 1920) who wrote a book entitled '*The Buddha, His Life, His Teaching, His Order*', and Husserl himself wrote a short article on Buddha in a Japanese Journal *Kaizo*. In the spring of 1914, Husserl studied oriental languages including Semitic and Indo-Iranian languages. As Schumann further asserts, there are concrete evidence that Husserl had read in German the *Suttapitaka* translated by Karl Eugen Neumann. At the same period he writes a short article named as 'On the Discourse of Goutama Buddha' which was a review on reputed Viennese oriental scholar, Eugen Neumann's German translation of some parts of *Suttapitaka*. In one of Husserl's texts (*Der Piperbote fur kunst and Literaturne*) Husserl himself quotes 'On the Discourse of Goutama Buddha' (It is worthwhile to quote the full text. See endnotes). This short article implies that Husserl has observed the transcendentality of both systems. As Schumann says, Husserl has identified the difference between his own phenomenology and Buddhism, as "one is religion while the other is a philosophy" (Schumann, 1992, p.27). But according to the Husserlian phenomenological point of view, there is no clear-cut demarcation between religion and philosophy. Both doctrines turn towards the world's mode of being and inner life of subjectivity, but the ways they reach the goal are completely different. The goal of Buddhism is to deal with the crisis in the concrete existence (*bhava*) of man, and to lead people towards spiritual emancipation. European philosophy including Husserlian phenomenology pursues the pure theory, and moreover, Husserl's philosophy is a continuation of philosophy founded by Plato, Descartes, Kant and post Kantian German Idealism. The problem that arises here is that there is no reliable evidence whether Husserl read and wrote on Buddhism in his later life. Husserl himself generalized Buddhism as a whole having read only the Neumann's translation of *Suttapitaka*. In 1926 Husserl wrote an article entitled 'Socrates- Buddha' where he made a comparison between European thought and Indian philosophy. While Socrates developed a universal logical form upon knowledge, Indian thought developed spiritual form upon emancipation. Indians do not differentiate natural thought from formal logical thinking. One of the aim of Husserlian phenomenology is to free ourselves from prejudice, life- interests and natural attitudes. Greek philosophy, contrary to Indian philosophy, always runs towards positive scientific thought and knowledge by avoiding the knowledge of the daily life. The aim of European science is to produce a universal true knowledge considering world as a whole, but Indian thought tends to overcome the world as a whole.

Husserl developed the idea that the philosophies of non-European cultures including India and China represent only empirical anthropological type. Therefore, applying the term 'philosophy' to both European and non-European thinking is inconsistent. Though Husserl does not undervalue non-European thinking, if



philosophy is to be considered as a *rigorous science*, non-European philosophies become simply world-views and imperfect science. In this instance both Hegel and Husserl are walking the same line saying 'Indian thought does not belongs to *history*, but prehistory of thought'.

LAU Kwok-ying having written an article entitled 'Husserl, Buddhism and Problematic of the Crisis of European Sciences' analyses the Buddhist influences on Husserl. As he describes, Husserl reacts against the Europeanization of human civilization. Unlike Hegel who placed oriental philosophies in the lowest stage of philosophical development, Husserl places Eastern Philosophy in a higher stage oh philosophical ladder. As he emphasizes, Husserl's later tendency towards Buddhism shows a mental relaxation and spiritual stimulation from Asian thought. After having faced traumatic experience in Europe Husserl moved towards Asian spiritualism. He fantasizes and writes about Buddhism in the aftermath of the First World War and the time of spreading collective violence among nations. Then he wants to cultural mission and spiritual purification encompassing ethical, religious and philosophical spheres .In this situation Husserl sees transcendental and spiritual essence of Buddhism. At that time Husserl not only suffered from the grief of the loss of his own son but was also traumatized by the downfall of the old European civilization. Then he was compelled to see the internal coherence in Buddhist scriptures. The spiritual and intellectual activity of Buddhism motivated Husserl to see parallels between his own phenomenological philosophy and Buddhism. This attitude is purely inward direction for purification of mind. Husserl himself put forward the idea of 'a third form of universal attitude' at the time of writing *The Crisis of European Sciences*. He expected to overcome the crisis of European humanity by a far-reaching transformation of the whole praxis of human existence. He wanted to uproot the blindness and instrumental rationality of European science. According to Husserl, Buddhism also proposes a radical self-understanding.

## **6. Conclusion**

It should be careful when the comparison is made between Eastern and Western philosophies. They emerged in different time-space frameworks within different targets. While one system aims at spiritual emancipation, other focuses towards pure philosophical practice devoid of spiritual content. If someone neglects this fact, it will form misguided conclusions. The most of Buddhist scholars like to compare their own systems with those of Western philosophical traditions to get them to the same level as Western systems. On the other hand, Western scholars move to eastern traditions either to fill the gaps of their own systems or to seek spiritual solutions from Eastern thought when they individually or socially faced traumatic events. One can superficially trace similarities between Husserlian phenomenology and Buddhist thought, but in a deep level,there are considerable ontological epistemological and methodological differences between European phenomenology and Buddhist thinking.

### <sup>1</sup> Notes

I have now read the greatest part of Karl Eugen Neumann's German translation of main parts of the Holy Writings of Buddhism. Ones I had started, and in spite of other urgent tasks,I could not pull myself away. Indeed,what a marvelous treasure has here accrued to German translation literature. The publisher has performed an outstanding service by undertaking this in all respect perfect and most tastefully produced re-edition of the immortal life -work of K.E.Neumanne.What is probably the highest flower of Indian religiosity, a religiosity which looks purely inward in vision and deed- which, I should say, is not 'transcendent', but 'transcendental'- enters the horizon of our religious and ethical as well as of our philosophical consciousness only with these translations, and it is without doubt destined to contribute to that which effectively shapes this consciousness. This linguistic perfection of this re-creation of the canonical Buddhist writings offers the perfect chance to experience afresh and with true understanding a way of looking at the world which is complete opposite of our European one, of getting to know it, of taking a stand with regard to it, and of overcoming it religiously and ethically-and to experience, by thus understanding it, its, living efficacy. For us and for everyone who,in this time of collapse of our culture - a culture which has become superficial and decadent- looks around yearningly to see where there might be found spiritual purity and integrity, a peaceful overcoming of the world, this become visible of the Indian way of the overcoming the world is great experience.For to any sympathetic reader it must soon become clear that Buddhism, as it speaks to us out of its pure original sources, is concerned with a religious and ethical method of the highest dignity for spiritual purification and pacification, a method thought through and carried out with an internal Buddhism can be paralleled only with the highest formations of the philosophical and religious spirit of our European culture.From now on it will be our destiny to blend that

Indian way of thinking which is completely new for us, with the one which for us is old, but which in this confrontation becomes alive again and strengthened.

Thanks to the richness of a tradition faithfully upheld, Buddha himself and his most outstanding disciples become concrete in the present writings in an almost palpable way, as the representatives of a novel type of human 'holiness'. It is very much to be regretted that the religion which, for historical reasons, lives in us and which should be in no way sacrificed to this Buddhism, no longer has with regard to its original writings a German translation comparable to this Neumannian one of the *Suttapitakam*, as far as understanding from nearby is concerned. For the German language has fatefully departed from the language of the Lutheran translation of the Bible, its 'church language' lacks that spiritual efficacy which would flow directly from a living sense of language. It may however, be that the breakthrough of Indian religiosity into the horizon of our present will have its beneficial consequence in this respect, too. At any rate it will evoke new powers of religious intuition, and already thereby it will contribute to a new vivification and deepening of the Christian intuition, and will assist our ability to understand Christian religion genuinely and from within. These magnificent Neumannian reproductions are surely invaluable for anyone who participates in the ethical, religious, philosophical renewal of our culture.

I eagerly await the publication of the last parts of the Neumannian translations.

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