

Nietzsche's Philosophy and Buddhism: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This study aims to explain the Buddha's teachings and philosophy Nietzsche in interpreting and contemplating the world and human suffering. Nietzsche and Buddhism, in particular aspects, have several similarities and differences that were fruitful to compare. Nietzsche was quite unaffected by Schopenhauer, who introduced Indian wisdom to the west. This paper has revealed that Buddha taught is to live with moral guidance. On the other hand, Nietzsche delivered value transvaluation to overcome suffering and nihilism conditions. Buddhism and Nietzsche had different views about desire and will. They started from quite similar initial assumptions about reality and certain ontological aspects; nevertheless, they had taken different solutions for human problems and axiological aspects.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Buddhism, Nihilism

INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche alive at the end of the twentieth century, while the teachings of the Buddha appeared about 2,500 years ago, nevertheless, both of them have the same perspective about deity, world, and human beings. Although it has a similar perspective, they have different solutions to the problems (dukkha and nihilism), which are faced by a human being.

The Buddhism doctrine is interesting because unlike the other world religion in general, which is always concerned with the teaching and transcendent world (akherat), Buddha taught to accept and face the world. Buddha's rejection of speculation is an option that is rarely be found in religion and belief system at that time, which commonly dominated by metaphysics and mystical thinking. Furthermore, it is true that the analogy which says that 'Buddhism is like a doctor,' Buddha used common sense and empirical observation that can be accepted by anyone to prove his teachings. Buddha is different from most other world religions that use metaphysics theological foundation that frequently creates typical conflict with the views of other metaphysics.

Nothing is formerly new in this world. Approximately 2400 years after Buddha's teachings have emerged, in Europe, precisely in Germany, there was a philosopher who has the

same essential thinking as the Buddha. He is known as "the assassin god" or "the madman," but Muhammad Iqbal (Islamic thinkers) called him as "the wise man from the west." He is Wilhelm Frederick Nietzsche, he grew up in an obedient Protestant family, but he had chosen to leave his faith when he was adults. Then he was developing a 'philosophy system,' which is different from western philosophy, which began by Plato and Socrates (Hardiman, 2004). Robbeth G Marrison judged that between Nietzsche and Buddhism have many similarities. That may be because Nietzsche was quite unaffected by Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer was the first German philosopher who brought eastern ideas into western philosophy, notably Buddhism and Hinduism. Marrison showed that they have many common traits that are similar: both emphasize the centrality of man in nature without God. Furthermore, he did not regard an Ultimate Being, which is a solution to the problem of life. Both of them believe that everything is continuously changing, and there is no one thing which stands alone or no change ('ego' or 'soul') (Morrison, 1998).

However, the two courses are almost the same but in different practical problems. Buddha is considered as an inspiration for high morals and goodness, while Nietzsche is an inspiration to chauvinism and conflict (Hardiman, 2004). Because of this, it will be interesting to conduct comparative studies

between Nietzsche and Buddhism thought. Therefore, the authors would like to do a comparative study between the Buddha and Nietzsche, the concept which will be compared is their view of the world and human suffering. Moreover, the paper will analyze how they can differ in resolving world problems, namely *dhukka* and nihilism. With a comparative study, it will be able to conclude the differences and similarities of both.

The problems of study

- a. How does Buddhism view the world, and human suffering?
- b. How Nietzsche's philosophical view of the world, and human suffering?
- c. How can they differ in resolving world problems, namely *dhukka* and nihilism?

Aim of the Study

In this paper, the author wishes to explain the Buddha's teachings and philosophy Nietzsche in view of the world, and human suffering. When the Buddha and Nietzsche chose a different path in the face of the absurdity of the world, it will be reviewed as well as how they can be different, and what underlies their choice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Nietzsche' philosophy

In this section, I will present some key concepts in the philosophy of Nietzsche, so it can be summed up how his view of the world, and human suffering. And then it will be compared with the teachings of Buddha.

Nietzsche's philosophical concepts

In western thought and scholar, Nietzsche is a very important figure. Various thoughts have influenced the course of western philosophy. Nietzsche considered the father of post modernism, in which his thought has become the 'embryo' of a new age of philosophy that is the time of post modernism. Post modernism is a stage in western philosophy that begins by Nietzsche, Foucault, Boudrillard, Lyotard etc. The post-modern philosophical bring a thought that truth, authorities, and the grand narrative are need to be contested and questioned. Here are the fundamental concepts of Nietzsche philosophical thought; the eternal return, nihilism, willing to power and *Übermensch*.

The eternal return

Nietzsche believed that life, everything in it flows like a spinning wheel. So, everything will change. The new will become old, who appeared will to be destroyed, and who is life will die. However, the incident will continue over and over. The world will always change and come back again. In this concept, Nietzsche also rejected the transcendent world and the gods as actors behind the scene. The world that there is an imminent world, this world is always changing. Human should have the courage to deal with it and not have wishful thinking of the transcendent world.

Transvaluation of value

Nietzsche is the philosopher who rejected absolutism and "doing philosophy by a hammer." That is, he always hit everything, which is called the truth. Any concept of morality he criticized radically; he even criticized Christian morality, as slave morality. Nietzsche said that the western philosophical, which has a desire to seek the truth, is a poison that will kill himself. Nietzsche argued that everything that is said to be an absolute truth would only bring disaster. For example, the god who is considered as the absolute truth, it will always demand a martyr. It is obvious that many wars and conflicts occur in the name of god. By doing transvaluation of value, it will show how the moral values and the concept was merely a disguise for the will to power of the human.

Nihilism

When a human do the transvaluation of values, where the values considered as absolute truth was questioned and removed, then he entered the stage of nihilism. Nihilism is a condition in which man is in his solitude. He realized that he was only in the universe because God, who is guiding by the values had been removed (Wibowo, 2009).

Nihilism is not only atheism, but even Nietzsche also criticized the atheism. He said that atheism is a religion without religion, where "God is dead" is the credo (Wibowo, 2009). So, nihilism is a condition where people realize that no moral values and the truth

Moreover, in this nihilism absurdity of human experience, human beings are weak and unsteady. The human being requires a grasp or guidance to face the world with all its ferocity and cruelty. Humans need something outside themselves to strengthen them. This grip or guidance can be a god, gods, role model, ideology, etc. The guidance is regarded as something ultimate, something beyond her fragility that could strengthen. Something that called idols and deity is needed to affirm his actions. The idol is actually just a reflection of humanity. When the man had removed the guidance (rejecting the concept of god and god / idol), he will be sluggish and weak. With the ultimate loss, he has lost his humanity.

Willing to power

With this concept of man can confront nihilism. So nihilism is not received passively, but actively. Nihilism was greeted with the will to power. The will to power is human nature. The concept of the will to power (the will to power) is one of the most exciting concepts of attention from Nietzsche's thought. With this concept, it can be characterized as a naturalistic thinker, namely that humans do not see more than just his natural instincts. The will to power encourages people to become active subjects in life, as well as interpreters of the world that gives meaning (Hardiman, 2004). With the will to power, people can create and organize the world. In this sense, the world is a non-human (Inhuman). The world becomes meaningful as a human, with subjectivity and its ability to interpret, give meaning, and make it be the real human being (Wibowo, 2009).

Übermensch (superman/ over man)

Übermensch is the human way of delivering value to itself without turning away from the world and looks across the other world (wishing the heaven), so that Nietzsche no longer believe in the shape of the human in the supernatural world, and giving meaning to the world can only be achieved through the Übermensch. Übermensch is a human form which regards itself as a source of value. Humans who have achieved this Übermensch is a man who always says "yes" to everything and ready to face challenges, which have always affirmed her life attitude and without the Übermensch might not be created (Wibowo, 2009). So Übermensch never denied nor

flinched in the face of a powerful impulse of his life.

Übermensch is a human concept of Nietzsche, which is an ideal human being. Human figures are not dependent on anything outside himself who always affirm life, brave, strong, and intelligent — the human who has made himself a source of value.

Almost the same as Buddha, Nietzsche rejected the idea of western metaphysical philosophy that starts from the age of Plato. With the metaphysical rejection, he began waging his criticism to the gods. However, the fact that the center of Nietzsche's criticism is "everything that regards as a truth". He criticized all forms of absolutism and certainty, including God, dogmatic thinking, metaphysics, ideology and so forth. Because of the certainty, man becomes lean on it, when people always lean on the absolute; man becomes a weak creature and does not appreciate its potential. With an absolute refusal on God and the metaphysical, ideology and dogma, Nietzsche focuses on the human cosmos. With his book "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" Nietzsche taught the concept of winning or Übermensch. So, he is a philosopher who rejected metaphysical, absolute truth, God, and focuses on the human and cosmological world.

Nietzsche views of the world, suffering, and human

Some key concepts in the philosophy of Nietzsche can be concluded that he regards the world as something that continues and changing; everything will appear and damaged and will appear again. Moreover, this is where the absurdity of the world is located. Eternal return is also seen as a life that is empty because it is monotonous and only become slaves of human values and morality. With this concept of eternal return, Nietzsche rejected the existence of something outside the process it (god) and the transcendent world. Nietzsche assessed that if humans just follow the process of eternal return, they will lose and suffer. The process of eternal return is a pain that must be broken. The process that makes people become weak. Nietzsche considered that human beings are weak. There are weak because they only follow the rules and always lean on God and values. There are that makes human beings continue to be on the circle that always turn back. To be a strong human / human

Übermensch must free himself of all values and god (transvaluation of value) and affirm per his will to power. And with that man can free from all the shackles and become Übermensch, people who can make himself as the source of value.

Buddha's taught

In this section, the authors will present some of the teachings of Buddha briefly. Of explanation is expected to be able to conclude how the Buddhist view of the living world and human suffering.

Supreme Being in Buddhism

Buddhism rejects the speculation, and it is not a theistic religion that emphasizes the transcendental world. Buddhism more focuses on the thing which is useful and emphasis the life in the world; because the perfect happiness can be reached in the world, not in the mysterious world (Hansen, 2008). Buddhism rejects the authority such as authority from deity, leader and sacred book. Buddhism says that every person can free from *adukka* by himself and it must not obey the authority because Buddhism holds the principle of *ehipassiko* (do and proven by yourself) (rahula, 1957). By this understanding Buddhism more tends to be anthropocentrism which emphasis the ability of human being

Dukka

Buddhism belief in dukkha and the eternal return, namely born, grow, getting old, and die. This eternal return can be stopped when someone trains himself to be free from greedy, delusion, and hatred. The person who can free from them called has been attained *nibana* and the eternal return of *dukka* is stopped (Hansen, 2008).

Dukkha in Pali (the language of ancient India) have a very deep meaning, but in general the word dukkha is translated as 'suffering' or 'dissatisfaction' (even though some people disagree with the above understanding; some who think that suffering is grief). It must be recognized that everything that happens in human life is dukkha. Understanding dukkha also include a more in-depth, such as imperfection, pain, impermanence, discomfort, and dissatisfaction (Hansen, 2008). Thus no one can deny that this is indeed a life of suffering.

Always there is dissatisfaction, discomfort, and mortality.

The cause of dukkha

The source of *dukkha* is *tanha* (craving endless) and *avijja* (ignorance). Due to this ignorance, someone will go on and continue to cultivate (lust) an enjoyable experience or not, the lust for material things, lust for eternal life (continuous existence), nor the lust for eternal death (self-annihilation). (Hansen, 2008) Ignorance will cause a person to be unable to understand the essence of life. Ignorance will cover the cracks for a person to be able to see the reality of life. Therefore, excessive desire/greed (*tanha*) and ignorance both will cause a person to continue to operate in the suffering of life (Hansen, 2008).

Free from dhukka

As a solution to human suffering, Gautama Buddha offers a universal way that can be used as a guide for human life. This road is called the *Hasta Magha* or the Eightfold Noble Path.

Buddha does not only avoids the discussion of the transcendent world but also does not talk about metaphysics and theistic aspect. So, the Buddha is considered as an atheistic religion. With the dismissal of transcendency, where metaphysical being is the center of the cosmos and the source of salvation and happiness, the Buddha turned the center of the cosmos to human being. Here man is considered to achieve perfection and happiness without the interference of a god or gods. So, Buddhism is a religion that refuses metaphysics speculation, not based on theology or divinity and dogmatism.

Buddha views about the world, suffering and human being

Buddha regards the world is a circle of suffering or dukkha, where humans will live a life that is the same, which are born, grow, sickness, and death. Dukkha also includes a more in-depth, such as imperfection, pain, impermanence, discomfort, and dissatisfaction. Thus no one can deny that this is indeed a life of suffering. Always there is dissatisfaction, discomfort, and mortality. All the passion and desire in the world is the source of suffering. Thus, Buddhism teaches to control the passions and desires and fantasies with the mental or trained mind. To escape from suffering, humans

do not need the help of god or gods. Buddhism puts human being as a center of the cosmos. The human being is a determinant for himself, regardless of the god or gods. By controlling the passions and desires, man can come loose from *dhukka* and achieve enlightenment or Nibbana.

Similarities and Differences

Buddha and Nietzsche have the same form of consideration to the world that it is an unbroken circle of suffering. In addition, they also both reject the metaphysical and transcendent world. The further thing is that they are putting humans at the center of the cosmos and deciding for himself.

However, the difference is, about how humans behave on the world, or how to cope or escape from *dhukka* and nihilism. Nietzsche had chosen to use the willing to power to affirm every human action because when the god is dead and no morals and values as a guide, people have to replace God as the source of morals and values. This action can only be done by affirming their will to power.

On the other hand, Buddha chose to control all the passion and desire. To be free from human suffering must be free from all desires and passions.

They chose a different path because of their differences in view of passion or desire. Buddha's stutter that desires are a significant source of suffering, while Nietzsche's opinion is opposite. Passion and desire are human nature. Without the passion and desire of the man is not a person. Moral goodness is merely a disguise and of the will to power, then according to Nietzsche, do not be shy to show your desire or willing to power.

CONCLUSION

Marrison is correct that there are similarities between the Buddha and Nietzsche in view of transcendence and the human. However, Marrison explained that they are out of line in the face of nihilism. Buddha chose to control the passions, while Nietzsche encouraged asserting human desires. Buddha chose to live that is guided by morality, but Nietzsche suggested to overcome suffering and nihilism by value transvaluation and *Übermensch*. Their difference is because of their contrasting views about the desire and will. They started from the same initial

assumptions; nevertheless, they had chosen a different solution for human being problems.

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