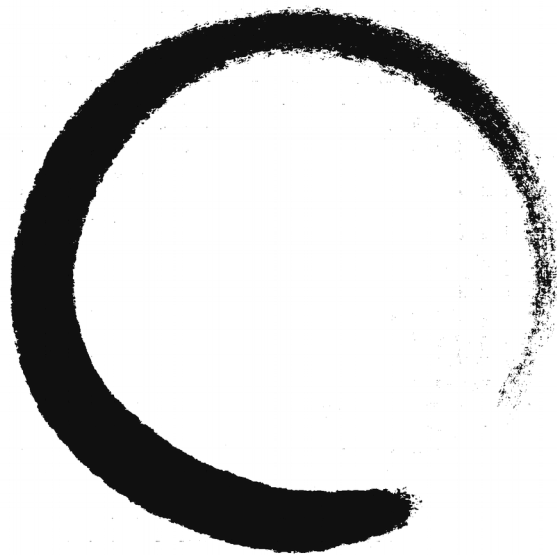




Empty Steps—Ethical Movements:  
Engaging Chinul's Sŏn, Husserl, Derrida and Lévinas in Syncretic Dialogue  
—a comparative study.



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## **Abstract**

This dissertation enacts a syncretic dialogue between Buddhist and Western Phenomenology. The principle interlocutors being the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Korean Zen (Sŏn) Master Chinul, Edmund Husserl, Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas. Taking a big picture view, I have attempted to demonstrate, in the first instance, a relation between the Husserl's phenomenological praxis—in the act of *epoché*—and that of Chinul's in *samādhi* and *prajñā*. I argue that, in fact, they can be seen to form a triad, unifying the phenomenological aims, to a form a liberating / clarifying insight. Both of the phenomenological traditions within this rubric are also seen to share inherent limitations, where a turn to Kanhwa practice and deconstruction offer a more self-conscious relation to the inherent aporias that are made evident. It is then, through the exploration of these aporic relations, that a paradoxical axis between Levinas and Derrida is articulated, and where comparison is made to the *samsara–nibbāna* axis and that of the *Two Truths*. By bringing these aporic relations into dialogue through syncretic dialogue, this study supports the case for a postmodern / Buddhist ethic.

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**Introduction:**  
**The Sound of One Hand Clapping**  
**—a methodological introduction.**

*Framing the Study.*

The motivation for this comparative study originally comes from an ethical question: *what is my responsibility?* It is a question framed in the context of our collective environmental emergency. However, the steps leading from this crisis to the comparison / dialogue between Western and Buddhist phenomenology must wait for a larger study. The work here represents, in outline, the decisive moment of that larger movement as it arcs between problematic and response.

Chapter one sets the stage, developing a genealogy of the two principle notions that catalyse the dialogue of chapter two: *epoché* and the *samādhi-prajñā* dyad. Chapter two then brings Chinul's syncretic development of Korean Sōn (Zen) into dialogue with Edmund Husserl's praxis of phenomenological reduction, via these two notions. Chapter three sees phenomenology turn towards Jacques Derrida and Chinul's engagement with Kanhwa practice; here the aporias at the heart of these traditions become fully exposed. Chapter four acts, not so much as a resolution, but more as an opening; the philosophy of Emanuel Levinas is introduced, offering a '*hopeful*' modulation to the Derridian dessert.<sup>1</sup> It is a shift which echoes the inspiration of the Buddhist *path*, as evoked through an example taken from contemporary Sōn practice. The discussion will follow this inspiration, pointing towards the opening that is engagement in *enaction*.

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<sup>1</sup> Dessert adjective from, Takao Hagiwara, 'Derrida and Zen: Desert and Swamp', *Philosophy East and West* 64, no. 1 (2014): 123–150.

### *A Syncretic Approach.*

To describe is a multi-faceted activity—a form of expression whose orientation is towards being read. The process of reading in this regard is constitutive of the meta-function of the description, in that it seeks to reveal, to an awareness—that of the reader—some facet of that which pertains to its subject. In the relation between the description and its being read there is the assumption of a common subject: the assumed referent of the description. In a cross cultural study, such as this one—which engages two or more descriptions in creative dialogue—even though a description ‘*a*’ may seem to have no apparent commonality with a description ‘*b*’, if the referent in both is *experience of awareness* qua phenomenological, I take it to be the case, that I, as the reader, have an equal potential of access to this same referent. In effect it can be said that, together—the authors and reader—we experience the same fundamental process, in that we share the general commonality of *human experience*—i.e., a *horizon of potentials*. Granted, at the level of both form and content of experience, taken as particular, the opposite is rather the case; and this due to relative situational factors, modalities implicit within the nature of a description itself, and of course the uniqueness of each human story. Differences in the particularities of each description should therefore be explainable in terms of the aspects implicit within this *horizon of potentials* itself. Currently this common region is vague, being itself not directly apprehended by any description, yet the generation of descriptions is must be an aspect of its potential. With this assumption in place, I can develop some further positions and potentialities with regards to this study.

(1) I take the honesty of descriptions as implied; I take the claims and descriptions of all my interlocutors seriously, trusting their integrity. This means that differences in descriptions need to be accounted for via a wider, context forming, syncretic reading that can account for these differences, respecting the respective local contexts.

(2) My own position as, in the first instance, reader means that there are, in effect, three particular interacting perspectives. My own perspective represents the dynamic aspect that can shift, so enabling some apperception of the syncretic region. In effect my own description of this field, of *experience of awareness*, needs to imply a cogent reading qua hermeneutic, of those other descriptions and one which can offer reason for any apparent discrepancies of form and content exhibited.

This study can only hope to reveal a possible way of engagement, between the practice and theory of Western and Buddhist phenomenology. If I am successful I will have demonstrated a dialogic praxis and articulated pointers towards possible further research and deepening of engagements. I can only hope to sketch a tentative topology of that which I apperceive, self-conscious of the choice for breadth over depth—a broad brush cannot pick out details at this stage. If the method engaged here has validity, a more profound treatment should also be valid across differing levels of granularity. Taking a step back and defocusing a little can offer a big picture view which, I believe, has at least as much value as fine grained workings—both being necessary.

Relation arises when two or more things come into a field of mutual influence; so what is the sound of one hand clapping?<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the dogmatic adherence to one view, one description qua a fiction with little relation to reality, or the self sufficiency and independence of an *essence* or *ideal*. In response, I take in both hands several perspectives—Buddhist and Western phenomenology, and my own position. Yet there is another dyad—that of withdrawal and of engagement, or the relation in its interior and its outward alterity. Neglecting one in favour of the other could also be seen to be attempting to clap with one hand.

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<sup>2</sup>“**sekishu kōan**. (隻手公案). In Japanese, “the case of one hand [clapping]”; a famous kōan (C. GONG’AN) attributed to the Japanese RINZAI ZEN master HAKUIN EKAKU (1685–1768)” *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, [Enhanced Credo edition]. (Boston, Massachusetts: Credo Reference, 2014), 792.

*A metaphoric thread.*

The metaphor the mountain is threaded throughout this text. Mountains are often evoked in Ch'an and Zen teachings, they offer the aspect of solidity but also the aspect of the journey, they are places of meditation and of teaching. The image of a retreat from the world, into the mountains, offers, in tandem, the image of what one retreats from: the town sitting in the valley. Standing for the everyday world, with our everyday attitude, the town is the place where our actions, in engagement with others, unfold, and where morality is—literally—a burning question.<sup>3</sup> Then there is the mountain, symbolising the reification of withdrawal from all that is below, but perhaps due to the altitude, also the gaining of a different perspective—this movement symbolises too the reification and reduction *towards* the essential. I stress the preposition '*towards*' here because, right now, and metaphorically, I speak from the town, the peak is only an appearance on the horizon. I do not have the position that the peak offers and I have no way of knowing, how the appearance of its snowy peak is itself affected by my current position. Indeed, it seems reasonable to think that, in some ways, it must be affected. What I can do is to move *towards* the mountain, find a path, and become a traveller. Subsequently, I can return, travelling back into relation with others, in the town sitting in the valley. So two directions of regard open up as soon as we make our move *towards*, and it is this dyadic relation, that, I hope, will emerge as we progress on this journey of syncretic dialogue. The first step then is to gain some altitude and travel with Husserl and Chinul towards this apparent summit before us.

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<sup>3</sup>I refer here to a book title: Mike Berners-Lee, *The Burning Question We Can't Burn Half the World's Oil, Coal and Gas. So How Do We Quit?* (London: Profile Books, 2013).



**Chapter One:**  
**Two Very Brief Genealogies**  
**— the Samādhi and Prajñā dyad & Epoché.**

*1.1. Introduction.*

To commence the encounter between Western and Buddhist phenomenology, what I take to be cardinal methodological concepts from each tradition will be here analysed—Husserl’s *epoché* and Chinul’s *Samādhi and Prajñā*.<sup>4</sup> Since each were not originated by either of my two initial interlocutors—Chinul and Husserl—a genealogical study is appropriate in order to better reveal the horizon of meaning for each concept. Furthermore, the hermeneutic nature of this study requires that the historicity of these key concepts be taken into account. Ideas do not arise in a social and cultural vacuum, and context influences meanings, therefore it is via a genealogy that these two conceptions are introduced.

*1.2. A Genealogy of Chinul’s Samādhi and Prajñā dyad.*

*Samādhi* (Pāli: *samādhi*) and *prajñā* (Pāli: *paññā*) are Sanskrit words meaning in general, *concentration (meditation)* and *wisdom*. These two notions have held a relation to the practice of meditation from before the time of the historical Buddha (*circa. 500-400 BCE*)<sup>5</sup>. Siddhārtha Gautama (Pāli: *Siddhattha Gotama*) often re-appropriated existent Vedic

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<sup>4</sup>Although clearly two separate words, so ostensibly two concepts, Chinul regards them as a pair, as inseparable facets of a whole. “Because [prajñā] is the functioning of the essence, prajñā is not separate from samādhi. Because [samādhi] is the essence of the function, samādhi is not separate from prajñā.” Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, trans. R.E. Buswell, vol. 2, *Collected Works of Korean Buddhism* (Compilation Committee of Korean Buddhist Thought, 2012), 230.

<sup>5</sup>See Johannes Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha [Electronic Resource] : Studies in the Culture of Early India*, *Handbuch Der Orientalistik. Zweite Abteilung, Indien* ; 19. Bd (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2007), 176.

terminologies to further his teaching, as can be seen in his redefinition of the absorptions (Sanskrit: *dhyāna*, Pali: *jhāna*) that detail the steps toward his awaking<sup>6</sup>—*samādhi* being seen as the active meditative attitude for access into the dhyānas.<sup>7</sup> Wisdom (*Prajñā*) is generally associated with the facilitating function for understanding to act as an appropriate view. Considering the oldest Pāli sources, within the *Suttanipāta*, one can see the early association between wisdom and concentration. In the *Muni Sutta*<sup>8</sup> the verses oscillate between the ethical fruit of wisdom, the associations of views arising from wisdom, and the qualities of concentration arising in tandem.

214. One who remains steadfast like a pillar at a ford  
when others speak provocative words about some matter;  
who is devoid of lust, with well-concentrated faculties:  
he, too, is one the wise know as a muni.

215. One who is inwardly firm, straight as a shuttle,  
disgusted with actions that are evil,  
who investigates the uneven and the even:  
he, too, is one the wise know as a muni.<sup>9</sup>

Remaining with the *Suttanipāta*, in The Chapter of the Octads (Pāli: *Atthakavagga*)—which is seen as one of the oldest Pāli sources in the cannon—many of the verses refer to a particular aspect of wisdom qua the relationship to views.

799. Nor should one construct any view in the world  
by means of knowledge or good behavior and  
observances.  
One should not take oneself as “equal”  
or think of oneself as “inferior” or “superior.”

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<sup>6</sup>See Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*; Translated from the Pāli; Original Translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi. (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), AN 8.11, 1127–1128

<sup>7</sup>Bhikkhu Bodhi translates *samādhi* as ‘concentration’ in his translations.

<sup>8</sup>The Muni Sutta is considered to have been referenced by Asoka in the Calcutta-Bairāt rock inscription. ‘Bibliotheca Polyglotta’, accessed 14 May 2019, <https://www2.hf.uio.no/polyglotta/index.php?page=library&bid=14>.

<sup>9</sup>Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Suttanipata: An Ancient Collection of the Buddha’s Discourses Together with Its Commentaries*, The Teachings of the Buddha (Wisdom Publications, 2017), Snp 214–215, 190.

800. Having abandoned what is taken up, not clinging,  
one does not create a dependency even on knowledge.  
Not taking sides among those who are divided,  
one does not fall back on any view at all.

801. For one who has no wish here for either end,  
for various states of existence here or beyond,  
there are no places of residence at all  
grasped after deciding among the teachings.<sup>10</sup>

Concentration (*samādhi*) is a rarer appearance, but in the *Sāriputta Sutta* a clear instruction is rendered:

972. “His eyes should be downcast;  
he should not have restless feet;  
intent of jhāna, he should be wakeful.  
Inwardly concentrated, based on equanimity,  
he should cut off regret and inclination to thought.”<sup>11</sup>

Within the Nikāyas the association between wisdom and concentration is more clearly established—principally due to the cardinal teaching of the *Four Noble Truths* where references to this teaching are widely spread throughout the four Nikāyas.<sup>12</sup> It is with the fourth truth: the *Noble Eightfold Path* (Sanskrit: *āryāstāṅgamārga*, Pāli: *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) where the categories of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā* become defined. This three fold system—known as the three trainings or three wheels—is one of the core practice models, both within the Theravāda and Mahāyāna. The three trainings traditionally have a particular relation to each of the eight aspects of the *Path*—see fig. 1 below.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid, Snp 799–801, 296.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, Snp 972, 320.

<sup>12</sup>Most of the references to the Four Noble Truths in the text are in very terse mnemonic the fuller expositions can be found in BD 4:15–17(Vinaya Pitaka); MN 9.68–71; MN 141; DN 22.17–21; SN 56.11.

Division into the Three Trainings	Eightfold Path
Wisdom (Sanskrit: <i>prajñā</i> , Pāli: <i>paññā</i> )	1. appropriate view
	2. appropriate intention
Ethics (Sanskrit: <i>śīla</i> , Pāli: <i>sīla</i> )	3. appropriate speech
	4. appropriate action
	5. appropriate livelihood
Meditative Concentration (Sanskrit and Pāli: <i>samādhi</i> )	6. appropriate effort
	7. appropriate mindfulness
	8. appropriate concentration

Figure 1: Relation of the Three Trainings and the Eightfold Path.

Notably, although appropriate view and intention are grouped as *prajñā*, it is the understanding of the whole of the Buddha’s dharma, especially as encoded by the *Four Noble Truths*, which is seen as wisdom. In the *Maggasamyutta* (Connected Discourses on the Path), part one—*Ignorance*, section eight—*Analysis*, we learn:

"And what, bhikkhus, is right view? Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, [9] knowledge of the cessation of suffering, knowledge of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: this is called right view.<sup>13</sup>

Later in the same section, the appropriate mindfulness (Sanskrit: *smṛti*, Pāli: *sati*) and appropriate *samādhi* are detailed and where *samādhi* and the *dhyānas* are explicitly linked. Still within the Samyutta Nikāya, in the *Connected Discourse on the Conditioned*,<sup>14</sup> another related dyad is expounded which appears to function in similar ways to that of *samādhi–prajñā*, that being *śamatha–vipaśyanā* (calm abiding and insight)—this dyad is listed as a “the path leading to the unconditioned”<sup>15</sup> and later in the same chapter, included as a *path*, is also the praxis of mindfulness. In the second subchapter,<sup>16</sup> the *path* leading to the unconditioned is

<sup>13</sup>Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, SN 45.8, 1528.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, SN 43.2, 1373.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, SN 43.12, 1374.

listed, starting with calm abiding, insight, concentration, mindfulness,<sup>17</sup> and ending with the *Eightfold Path*. This relatively early attempt to systematise the teachings appears to result in numerous overlapping categories that would have to wait for the Abhidharma compilers to attempt to create some internal coherence.

The development of the *śīla–samādhi–prajñā* triad in the form of the *Three Trainings* clearly takes a conceptual turn with the development of thought that is the Mahāyāna. A fuller study would seek here to track this turn, but it may be sufficient to mark the result of this transformation. Dan Lusthaus’s exposition of the triad<sup>18</sup> retains the notion of their original orientation within the praxis of the *Eightfold Path*, also their function towards the realisation of *nirvāṇa* (Pāli: *nibbāna*) is emphasised. Lusthaus also identifies four types of *prajñā*, where the fourth appears as *vipaśyanā* as ‘clear and penetrating insight’.<sup>19</sup> A change occurs with the arrival of the *pāramitā* system where the *Eightfold Path* is reformulated into the six *pāramitās*;<sup>20</sup> as Lusthaus contends, it was perhaps the Mahāyāna development of the *pāramitā* system, that lead to the privileging of the *prajñā* aspect of the *Three Teachings* above the other two. A shift of view takes place, where the path aspects of *prajñā*, as praxis towards enlightenment, became a functional aspect of awakening itself. As the tradition became integrated with Chinese thought, this process of conceptual framing was accentuated, with the *samādhi–prajñā* dyad being established as the fundamental aspect of the awakening mind—*śīla* becoming a latent function within the teleological structure, a silent partner establishing the conditions for *samādhi* and *prajñā*.<sup>21</sup> However this picture is by no means uniform, in the

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<sup>17</sup>The list continues: The four right strivings, the four bases for spiritual power, The five spiritual faculties, The five powers, The seven factors of enlightenment, The Noble Eightfold Path.

<sup>18</sup>Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-Shih Lun.*, 1st ed., Routledge Critical Studies in Buddhism Ser (London: Routledge, 2003), 110–122.

<sup>19</sup>The four identified are: ‘right view’, analytic scrutiny, ‘valid means of knowledge’ and ‘clear and penetrating insight’. Ibid, 116–117.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, 246.— *pāramitā* (Sanskrit) translated as ‘perfection’ (English).

<sup>21</sup>See point 5: Ibid, 254.

*Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment*,<sup>22</sup> a root text of the Ch'an tradition, *śīla*, *samādhi*, *prajñā* are still referenced as aspects to be cultivated in the precepts.<sup>23</sup>

Zongmi (780–841), who was an early systematiser, develops a unique model of mind where the dual aspect conception of *essence* and *function* is elaborated, influencing in turn Chinul's Korean syncretic project. It is however from another source: the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*,<sup>24</sup> where the dyad of *samādhi* and *prajñā* is shown in a form recognisable in Chinul.

If you know your original mind, this then is deliverance. Once you have attained deliverance this then is the *prajñā samādhi*. If you have awakened to the *prajñā samādhi*, this then is no-thought.<sup>25</sup>

With Chinul we arrive at a view of *samādhi* and *prajñā* which holds both practice and resultant orientations—being the functioning of an awakened mind as well as a practice guide towards awakening. With the radicalisation of *samādhi* and *prajñā* into the essence of both the *path* and the result, the *śamatha-vipaśyanā* dyad is now cast into the operative relative praxis, leaving *samādhi* and *prajñā* established as the essential praxis and resultant.

Nevertheless, through awakening to the fact that their own ignorance is originally sacred and true and that it is the eternal dharma in which great functioning occurs effortlessly, [students are able] to cultivate for themselves such expedients as *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* throughout the ten levels of faiths, until their practice is naturally perfected and *samādhi* and *prajñā* become consummately bright.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>J. C. Cleary and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, eds., *Apocryphal Scriptures*, BDK English Tripiṭaka 25–I, 25–V, 25–VI, 29–I, 104–VI (Berkeley, Calif: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2005), 57–112.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 81.

<sup>24</sup>The sutra is putatively attributed to Hui-neng (638–713), Robert Buswell offers several references to the scholarship on the authorship of the sutra. See note 7: R.E. Buswell and Chinul, *Tracing Back the Radiance: Chinul's Korean Way of Zen*, A Kuroda Institute Book (University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 143.

<sup>25</sup>Hui-Neng, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the Tun-Huang Manuscript*, trans. Philip Yampolsky, Records of Civilisation: Sources and Studies; 076 (Columbia U.P., 1967), 153.

<sup>26</sup>Chinul, 'Treatise on the Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood' in Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 298–299.

### 1.3. *A Genealogy of Epoché.*

#### 1.3.1. *Classical Scepticism.*

The origin of the of *epoché* in ancient Greek thought is unclear, and even within the Sceptical tradition, the roots of the notion are obscured. Jacques Brunschwig acknowledges this lack of clarity in outlining two modes of scepticism.

There are many reasons why it was difficult, both historically and conceptually, to classify and categorize scepticism. First, if scepticism made its official entry in the Hellenistic period, it did so in two different intellectual contexts and in two different forms: the scepticism of Pyrrho and the scepticism of Arcesilaus. And since these two thinkers made a great stir and yet left nothing in writing, their views were all the more liable to be adapted and distorted by later thinkers.<sup>27</sup>

And even if Sextus Empiricus ascribed his sceptic way to that of Pyrrho associating *epoché* with *ataraxia* (serene calmness) as a resultant,<sup>28</sup> scholars such as Pierre Couissin have doubted such a simple genesis of the idea.<sup>29</sup> As Couissin notes,<sup>30</sup> the principle sources to such straight forward chronologies, being Diogenes Laërtius and Sextus Empiricus, are very late witnesses, and likely to be pursuing their own agendas. Oddly Couissin opts for the first appearance of the word *epoché* (Greek: ἑποχή) with Zeno of Citium, one of the founders of the Stoic movement. Couissin's reasoning is that within the context of the debates between the sceptical academicians—notably between Arcesilaus, and the stoics (as principle opponents)—the debate centred around the claim made by the stoics that the wise do not ascent to false truths, and, because there are false assents, the wise when faced with the incomprehensible must

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<sup>27</sup>Jacques Brunschwig, 'Introduction: The Beginnings of Hellenistic Epistemology', in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 232–233.

<sup>28</sup>Sextus, *The Sceptic Way: Sextus Empiricus's Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. Benson Mates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), PH 1.31, 93.

<sup>29</sup>Pierre Couissin, 'L'ORIGINE ET L'ÉVOLUTION DE L'ΕΠΟΧΗ', *Revue des Études Grecques* 42, no. 198 (1929): 373–397.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 388.

apply a suspension of everything (universal *epoché*).<sup>31</sup> There is however something unsatisfactory in this explanation; the notion of *epoché* as suspending assent to some appearance, or perhaps some pre-existing dogma about an appearance, is just one appropriation of the notion of *epoché*: that as expressed in the Academy of Arcesilaus—it is the notion of *epoché* as a dialectical, or epistemic, tool. This is quite a different notion from that held by Sextus; his *epoché* is a vehicle for the attainment of *ataraxia*. Sextus himself acknowledges the distinction, distancing his position from that of Arcesilaus by distinguishing the ends of his form of scepticism from that of the Academy.<sup>32</sup> He does however acknowledge a commonality in the forms of argumentation between his neo-pyrrhic scepticism and academic scepticism; in *Outlines of Pyrronism*, Sextus details the different modes of *epoché*, where “[r]oughly speaking, one may say that it comes about through the opposition of things.”<sup>33</sup>—and he goes on to outline the forms of arguments that can be set up which will reveal these oppositions.<sup>34</sup> It is worth noting that the source of Pyrrho’s philosophical way<sup>35</sup> is shrouded in mystery, several contentious claims have been put forward apropos the possible cultural exchange with Buddhist ideas that may have occurred during his reported voyage alongside Alexander’s expedition to the northern region of India.<sup>36</sup> Others, such as Jacques Brunschwig, by contrast, casts doubt upon the necessity for an oriental provenance for Pyrrho’s thought.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 391.

<sup>32</sup>Sextus, *The Skeptic Way: Sextus Empiricus’s Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, PH 1.232, 122.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, PH 1.31, 93.

<sup>34</sup>Sextus details the structure in three distinct models: a 10 mode system, a 5 mode system and a 2 mode system.

<sup>35</sup>As Benson Mates notes, the Phrrhonism of Sextus “is not a doctrine, [...] but rather a way of life (*agōgē*)”, Ibid, 5.

<sup>36</sup>See Everard Flintoff, ‘Pyrrho and India’, *Phronesis* 25, no. 1 (1980), 88–108; M. Jason Reddoch, ‘Pyrrhonism: How the Ancient Greeks Reinvented Buddhism (Review)’, *Philosophy East and West* 60, no. 3 (2010): 424–427; ‘REVIEWS: Greek Buddha: Pyrrho’s Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies. University of London* 79, no. 1 (2016): 208–210.

<sup>37</sup>Brunschwig, ‘Introduction: The Beginnings of Hellenistic Epistemology’, 227–259.



### 1.3.2. *Scepticism in the medieval period.*

Pyrrhic scepticism, via Sextus, did not figure as an interlocutor for the medieval thinkers, principally because the texts had not by that time re-emerged into circulation.<sup>38</sup> The academic variant however was known and became a challenge to the Christian philosophers, requiring them to find successful anti-sceptical arguments. However Charles Bolyard concludes, in his review, that “[w]hile some impetus for later discussion was gained from classical skeptical source, for the most part medieval skepticism took its own path.”<sup>39</sup> Bolyard’s assessment is in relation to the philosophers of the medieval period, but as regards the vibrant mystical tradition, there are some points of correspondence with the Pyrrhic sceptics. In Cheryl Taylor’s study of the language of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and other devotional prayer / meditational texts, it can be seen that the authors’ use of paradoxes lead the reader towards a sort of *aphasia*: “paradoxes and oxymorons in the *Cloud* group are used to achieve the contemplative goal of 'þe schortyng of wordes' ”,<sup>40</sup> perhaps also into the *ataraxia* (serene calmness) of holy communion. So even without any direct textual transmission from the classical period, a form of Pyrrhic scepticism may have nevertheless arisen within medieval mysticism.

### 1.3.3. *Descartes Doubt.*

By the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, knowledge of the ancient sceptical traditions had surfaced fully, and Descartes could develop his method with relation to classical sceptical ideas. Descartes explicitly claims not to be imitating the sceptics because his aim was to find “rock or clay”

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<sup>38</sup>Charles Bolyard, ‘Medieval Skepticism’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), 4.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, 29.

<sup>40</sup>Cheryl Taylor, ‘Paradox upon Paradox: Using and Abusing Language in The Cloud of Unknowing and Related Texts’, *Parergon* 22, no. 2 (2005): 43.

rather than shifting sand as a ground for his philosophy.<sup>41</sup> The manner in which Descartes describes finding a room with a stove where he could retire into his own reflection and so free himself little by little “from many errors that can darken our natural light and render us less able to listen to reason”,<sup>42</sup> appears to hover in proximity to the suspension of *epoché*—although the four logical precepts<sup>43</sup> he gives himself would inevitably constrain his examinations, by their predefined conceptual field. His process of doubt, however, must have been profound enough that he felt the need to lay down three maxims<sup>44</sup> in order to be able to re-engage with the world, armed now with his four fold method of investigation.

#### 1.3.4. Husserl's *epoché*.

Husserl appears to consider the application of Descartes universal doubt as a possible methodological procedure, and he examines its necessities; however he finally decides that the notion was inadequate to his needs.<sup>45</sup> In effect Descartes method goes in too hard, so Husserl adopts the notion of suspension (*epoché*) of judgement, or better suspension of belief,<sup>46</sup> which can allow for the apodictic truths he is hoping to define—this is an aim he shares with Descartes.

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<sup>41</sup>R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. D.A. Cress (Hackett Pub. Co., 1980), 16.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid*, 6.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid*, 10.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid*, 12–15.

<sup>45</sup>Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. - Book I: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology.*, Collected Works of Edmund Husserl ; 2 (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1982), §31, 58.

<sup>46</sup>According to a marginal note. *Ibid*, §31, 59.

## **Chapter Two:**

### **Samādhi and Prajñā in Chinul**

### **and The Phenomenological Epoché in Husserl.**

#### *2.1. Introduction*

The aim of this chapter is to reveal parallels between Chinul's view of *samādhi* and *prajñā*—both in the context of practice (*the path*) and the resultant (*nature-of-mind*)—and Husserlian *phenomenological epoché*.<sup>47</sup> Further to this comparison, the possibility that, through a syncretic lens, the three concepts can be seen as a triad, will also be explored. The chapter develops in three sections: expositions of the dyad of *samādhi* and *prajñā* and that of *epoché* unfold in sections one & two, where section three engages a comparative discussion. I make reference to Eugen Fink alongside Husserl here; Leonard Lawlor argues that Fink's interpretation of Husserlian phenomenology “finally expanded the French understanding of Husserl's phenomenology”<sup>48</sup> and that “only an examination of Fink's 1933 essay shows that Derrida's philosophy—his deconstruction—is continuous with Husserl's phenomenology.”<sup>49</sup>

#### *2.2. Chinul: Samādhi and Prajñā as the Total Movement of Sōn.*

Chinul's syncretic approach to Sōn is derived ostensibly from his reading of Zongmi, but also from his own need to bring the Kyo and Sōn traditions into harmonious relation. If taken separately—Sōn as representing *sudden awakening*, Kyo as *gradual cultivation*—one

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<sup>47</sup>To be referred to here simply as epoché.

<sup>48</sup>L. Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl: The Basic Problem of Phenomenology*, Derrida and Husserl (Indiana University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

can become caught in the wrong views generated by holding solely to the limiting perspective of just one side of the relation. For example, from the Sōn perspective: limiting to just *sudden awakening*, as sufficient, implies the view that subsequent practice is unnecessary—Chinul saw this as a corruption.<sup>50</sup> Conversely, in limiting praxis only to the Kyo perspective, attachments to the elaborate conceptual systems, detailed in these textual sources, maybe reinforced—the *idea* of awakening then acts to block the actualisation of awakening.<sup>51</sup> In Chinul's vision, the union of Sōn and Kyo within the *sudden awakening / gradual cultivation* schema can become mutually self corrective when the holistic horizon of the awakening mind, or mind-ground is admitted. Furthermore, this overarching holism frames, in a teleological manner, the soteriology of the *path*.<sup>52</sup>

*Samādhi* and *prajñā* is the rubric which binds the two dimensions of Chinul's practice. From the *sudden awakening* dimension, the realisation reveals the *nature-of-mind* to be *samādhi* as *essence* and *prajñā* as *function* (of mind) in an ultimate or enlightening sense. For Chinul, such an awakening needs to arise first—at least as an initial momentary taste—in order that, subsequently, one can correctly engage with gradual cultivation. In the gradual aspect, the praxis of *samādhi* and *prajñā* exhibits a horizon of graded modalities, from the initial corrective, or beginners, modes—as *śamatha* and *vipassanā* practice<sup>53</sup>—through to the more profound levels of the practice of just-being-with all conditions. Textual support for the gradual dimension come largely from, what Chinul refers to as, “the provisional vehicle”;<sup>54</sup> he therefore needs to highlight that, within his text, “provisional and real are displayed together”<sup>55</sup>—the ‘real’ (actual) position being the awakened / awakening perspective and the

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<sup>50</sup>cf. Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 133.

<sup>51</sup>cf. Ibid, 134-135.

<sup>52</sup>There is a point of resonance to be noted here with the syncretic nature of the dissertation which seeks a dialogue between Chinul's perspective and Western Phenomenology.

<sup>53</sup>*śamatha* and *vipassanā* — calm abiding and insight meditation practised as a pair.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 138.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

‘provisional’ being the normal, pre-awakened / awakening perspective. Both awakening and the *path*—that is *samādhi* and *prajñā* as resultant and as *path*—appear differently depending on the experience, or no, of an awakening insight, as ones hermeneutic relation to Kyo texts are, in consequence, modulated. The potential for interpretive confusion is why Chinul's praxis requires some level of sudden awakening insight as prerequisite for entering into the correct gradual cultivation of the *path*.

### 2.2.1. *Authentic Awareness—Authentic Cultivation*

In *Excerpts*,<sup>56</sup> through a rigorous exegesis of Zongmi, the theoretical stance towards *samādhi* and *prajñā* is developed, building from Zongmi's Heze school approach of *sudden awakening / gradual cultivation*, Chinul states, “Although authentic awareness is quiescent, it constantly exists amid the myriads of conditions.”<sup>57</sup> This ‘authentic’ awareness is the condition for all consciousness—as a kind of transcendental revelation out of our ordinary experience—that at once changes the perspective upon that very experience, in that it opens up, as a horizon, a *path* of practice. Chinul quotes Zongmi, “That which is clear and capable of awareness right now is your buddha-mind.”<sup>58</sup> In an initial vision, all the weight of the old habit based ordinary awareness does not suddenly evaporate—the *path* that opens up requires the cultivation of gradual practice, which transforms those habit conditions into the wisdom function of the enlightening mind. It is this practice, subsequent to initial awakening, which is difficult and full of potential pit-falls—even after a clear awakening experience. This is where

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<sup>56</sup>In what Buswell calls Chinul's magnum opus, Chinul's *Excerpts from the “Dharma Collection and Special Practice Record” with Inserted Personal Notes (Excerpts)*.

<sup>57</sup>Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark: The Korean Buddhist Master Chinul's Excerpts on Zen Practice*, trans. R.E. Buswell, Korean Classics Library. Philosophy and Religion (Honolulu, [Hawaii]: University of Hawaii Press, 2016), 160.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid, 161.

all of the relative, scriptural, teachings find their place within Chinul's system. Quoting from a source:<sup>59</sup>

The sūtras say, “To meditate in the mountains is not difficult. Not to be affected when in contact with sensory objects—that is difficult.”<sup>60</sup>

In this difficult engagement, in action with others, there remains the constant danger that the wisdom of the empty *nature-of-mind* and essential signlessness, is lost. In attempting to clear up what is ultimately non-existent, there is the threat of unwittingly solidifying the very relations which need to be made fluid. Therefore practices of ethics acting to control inappropriate actions,

[p]ractices leading to enlightenment, which perform this controlling, are performed without performing anything. When both subject and object are left far behind and one adapts to external conditions without creating anything, that will then be authentic cultivation.<sup>61</sup>

### 2.2.2. *Tensions in the Dual Aspect of the Dyad.*

Chinul, following Zongmi, takes a dual aspect regard to the *samādhi* and *prajñā* dyad: *samādhi* and *prajñā* are both the *path* on the cultivation side—after an initial awakening—and both the resultant as aspects of the enlightening mind. Framed in other terms, such as *essence* and *function* (of mind) and as immutability and adaptability, these two aspects are to some extent based upon an artificial division between them. Whereas the whole, as *nature-of-mind*, *bodhi*, or the enlightening mind, being ineffable and ungraspable, since it remains prior to any discrimination and grasping, is already a paradoxical notion. This is, of course, why Sōn resolves to be a direct transmission system, in an attempt to avoid the catch that is

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<sup>59</sup>Buswell cannot identify this source, except to suggest a similarity of the second phrase with: “*Scripture in Forty-Two Sections* (Sishi'er zhang jing, T 784:17.722 n. 36)”. Note 229 in *Ibid*, 263.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid*, 164.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid*, 165.

apprehended in the scripture based Kyo system—namely, that of conceptually grasping at reality, and in so doing, missing reality completely. By suggesting that a combined approach can lead to the establishment of mutually correcting pointers, Chinul's syncrisis can be seen as an attempt to resolve this difficulty. Our engagement in the world of things, thoughts, and impulses, calls for the constant practice of attention towards phenomena, which—from the awakened stance—opens the possibility to manifest expedient means, or—from the intermediate or provisional stance—requires the attempt to practice those means. The Kyo teachings are appropriate in the context of the provisional even whilst fundamentally limited by its own implicit use of language. Even the inspirational and hallucinogenic language of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, leads to possible self contradictions when one considers that finger pointing qua language, can never touch the referent. The direct transmission, of Sōn, reveals problems from its side—the use of physical means such as shouts and hits, and the absolute dependence on the master's affirmation can be a path to abuse and violence. This problematic has been taken up by Jin Park and developed as a lens in her comparative study of Zen and postmodern thought.<sup>62</sup>

### 2.2.3. *The Implicit Aporic Tension in the Heart of the Path.*

The corrective path that Chinul initiated was oriented around a hermeneutic that could bring Kyo and Sōn into alignment. That alignment however is not an exercise in one dimensional categorisations or context frames, rather it rests on a paradoxical tension central to Buddhism—at least since the time of Chandrakirti—and this is the relationship between the *Two Truths* of the eponymous doctrine.<sup>63</sup> This same aporic relation reappears within Zongmi's concept of mind as *essence–function* and immutability–adaptability, and with the *samādhi* and

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<sup>62</sup>Jin Y. Park, *Buddhism and Postmodernity: Zen, Huayan, and the Possibility of Buddhist Postmodern Ethics* (Lanham, MD, UNITED STATES: Lexington Books, 2010), 62–126.

<sup>63</sup>cf. Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology*, 219–228.

*prajñā* relation—Jin Park appears also to echo this possibility, via the rubric of tension.<sup>64</sup> But with the *samādhi* and *prajñā* dyad, how is their relation aporic? Firstly, taking the more descriptive simile used by Chinul, that of *calm* and *bright*;<sup>65</sup> an obvious form of calmness, that of sleep (torpor) or even death, appears the opposite of bright; a calmness which is bright, alive, vibrant, seems already—simply through the use of English synonyms—to have revealed tension between the two poles of the dyad. Progressing to that of immutability and adaptability, again, something that is immutable does not change: it is still, unaffected, imperturbable; something that is adaptable has to be the nature of change: it is, fluid, open to finding infinite positions in response to conditions.

For the *essence-function* relation, Chinul cites Zongmi's metaphor of water in an ocean in order to illustrate the relation.<sup>66</sup> In the metaphor, water remains water immutability, whilst the wave is forever in motion adapting in response to the conditions of the wind. Here the metaphor appears to solve the aporia by placing the terms at different levels—*function* being nested within *essence*—but the aporia may have simply shifted to the nature of the nesting relation itself. The word *essence* is problematic here, since it refers to the *essence* of *nature-of-mind*—which is empty / void, in effect, an essence which has no characteristics, therefore is sign-less and essence-less. Yet, it is only this void—*essence*—which can enable the full potential horizon of *function* to be realisable. This follows Nāgārjuna's understanding of causality: if the absolute *essence* was a 'something' how could it ever adapt in response to conditions?<sup>67</sup> Looping back to *samādhi* and *prajñā*, as aspects of the awakening *path*—entered after an initial awakening insight—*samādhi* is the practice of *no-thought* and stillness in the face of conditions, *prajñā* is the wisdom that adapts in enlightening response to those

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<sup>64</sup>Park, *Buddhism and Postmodernity*, 176-177.

<sup>65</sup>Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 162.

<sup>66</sup>Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark*, 119-120.

<sup>67</sup>For an analysis of Nāgārjuna's position see: Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology*, 200-206



conditions, freely, in the realisation of their void nature. The paradox then remains the idea of responding to conditions which are essentially void: if the essence is void how can there be conditions in the first place?—and so we find ourselves back again with Nāgārjuna.

Taking the relative (provisional) frame, where *prajñā* is also seen as *vipassanā* (insight) and *samādhi* seen as *śamatha* (calm abiding)—again, there is evident tension between the effort of seeking for insight within the stillness of calm abiding. One can, perhaps, be quiescent in a moment of non-differentiation, but in seeking to notice some aspect of experience, we necessarily invite the disturbance of difference. From the ultimate aspect the paradoxical relation is crystalline: *samādhi* is intimately undifferentiated, unendingly calm, sign-less, yet, *prajñā* is manifesting (the possibility of) all things. If this aporia was resolvable outside of the enlightening mind, it would collapse into ordinary knowledge and be meaningless. Its aporic nature, then, appears as a marker signifying our present ‘ordinary’ level or mode of awareness—the one which is still bound up in apprehending these words. The aporia points outside the very system that has set it up, and this is, perhaps, its soteriological function—to act as guide to the way outside this concept-bound modality, ‘tracing back the radiance’, to ‘take the backward step’.<sup>68</sup>

### 2.3. Husserl: *Epoché* as the Cardinal Act in *Transcendental Phenomenology*.

In *Ideas I* Husserl leads the reader towards his praxis of *epoché* via a first person description of what he terms “*the natural attitude*”.<sup>69</sup> In the subsequent intentional analysis of

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<sup>68</sup>Again, Jin Park develops the notion of this aporia, as an “ethics of tension” which she relates to David Wood’s “proposition of openness”. Park, *Buddhism and Postmodernity*, 176.

<sup>69</sup>Husserl, *Ideas I*, §27, 51.

a phenomenological first person description, Husserl identifies a principle characteristic of this *natural attitude*.

As what confronts me, I continually find the one spatiotemporal actuality to which I belong [...] I find the “actuality”, the word already says it [...] No doubt about or rejection of data belonging to the natural world alters in any respect the *general positing which characterizes the natural attitude*.<sup>70</sup>

This ‘general positing’ is clarified by Fink as a “complex of acceptances”.<sup>71</sup>

The world which we know and within which we know ourselves is given to us as a universe of acceptances, is given to us in terms of a universal belief in the world in which all particular positings of being in experience come together as the “general thesis of the natural attitude”.<sup>72</sup>

Husserl’s proposition is to ‘alter radically’ this *natural attitude*, but the positing implied by it is pervasive, being “something that lasts continuously throughout the whole duration of the attitude, i.e., throughout natural waking life.”<sup>73</sup> This positing is prior to any subsequent and explicit judgement that is formulated to accord with the pre-thought, ready-to-hand, quality of appearance. For Husserl, Cartesian doubt framed as a limited case holds promise for the radical shift required, but rather than Cartesian universal doubt, Husserl follows solely the suspension aspect of doubt to arrive at “this peculiar ἐποχή,<sup>74</sup> *a certain refraining from judgement*”.<sup>75</sup>

We could now let the universal ἐποχή, in our sharply determinate and novel sense of the term, take the place of the Cartesian attempt to doubt universally.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid, §30, 56–57.

<sup>71</sup>Eugen Fink, ‘The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism’, in *The Phenomenology of Husserl*, ed. R. O. Elveton (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 108.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid, 107–108.

<sup>73</sup>Husserl, *Ideas I*, §31, 57.

<sup>74</sup>ἐποχή (*epoché*)

<sup>75</sup>Ibid, §31, 59. Footnote here reads: “*Marginal note in Copy D*: better, refraining from belief.”

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, §32, 60.

For Husserl the universality of the *epoché* needs further restriction—which will be limited to the *natural attitude* acceptance complex—in order to arrive at “a new scientific domain”.<sup>77</sup> It is not a question of “*negating* this “world” as though I were a sophist; I am *not doubting its factual being* as though I were a skeptic”, rather,

[w]e put out of action the general positing which belongs to the essence of the *natural attitude*; we parenthesize everything which that positing encompasses with respect to being: *thus the whole natural world* which is continually “there for us”, “on hand,” and which will always remain there according to consciousness as an “actuality” even if we choose to parenthesize it.<sup>78</sup>

The suspension of *epoché* can be seen to effect a subtle phase shift, altering or modulating the acceptance relation. As a form of bracketing or suspension, *epoché* is an act of consciousness within consciousness—variously described as a “turning toward absolute, pure consciousness”, finding “absolute mental processes”<sup>79</sup> or a “turning of heeding regard to the formerly unheeded.”<sup>80</sup> Focusing on the act of valuing—Husserl notices a dual aspect to the intentional object, “a *dual intentio*, a two-fold advertedness.”<sup>81</sup> Exploiting this distinction within the *natural attitude*, Husserl arrives at a bold assertion, where “there emerges a fundamentally essential difference between *being as mental process and being as a physical thing*.”<sup>82</sup> The physical thing, “unqualifiedly transcendent”<sup>83</sup> is fundamentally contingent, therefore relative, and this is sharply contrasted to the mental process itself, as immanent and absolute.

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid, §32, 61.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid, §53, 126.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, §36, 74.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid, §37, 77.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid, §42, 89.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid, §42, 90.

*Over against the positing of the world, which is a “contingent” positing, there stands then the positing of my pure Ego and Ego-life which is a “necessary,” absolutely indubitable positing.*<sup>84</sup>

In other words, there is an apodictic, absolute, immanence—the being of consciousness itself, as revealed through and within the act of *epoché*—where all contents are found necessarily relative to this ground.

### *2.3.1. A Paradox Revealed through the Epoché.*

Husserl detects a paradox, where a “veritable abyss yawns between consciousness and reality”.<sup>85</sup> Whilst the being of a thing-in-the-world is forever relative to the outline of the intentional relations that establish it, the absolute being of the ground—which facilitates such relative adumbration—remains essentially outside the possibility of any outline of apprehension.

Here [then], an adumbrated being, not capable of ever becoming given absolutely, merely accidental and relative; there, a necessary and absolute being, essentially incapable of becoming given by virtue of adumbration and appearance—in a presumptive manner, which perpetually leaves open the possibility that is itself perceived is non-existent.<sup>86</sup>

Despite difficulties for constitution implied by this paradoxical relation, the *phenomenological attitude*, effected by the act of *epoché*, reveals this absolute in the residuum of the reduction, which in turn opens up the field of phenomenological enquiry.

Strictly speaking, we have not lost anything but rather have gained the whole of absolute being which, rightly understood, contains within itself, “constitutes” within itself, all worldly transcendencies.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid, §46, 102.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid, §49, 111.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid. Footnote 27 added to the end of the quote.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid, §50, 113.

It is the horizon of those ‘worldly transcendencies’, opening themselves to investigation which constitutes Husserl’s aim: to establish a new science from the realisation motivated through the act of the phenomenological *epoché*.

#### 2.4. *Comparative Discussion: Epoché, Samādhi and Prajñā as a Triad.*

A significant distinction between the framing motive of the act of *epoché*, on the one hand, and the praxis of *samādhi* and *prajñā*, on the other, needs first to be clarified. Husserl’s *epoché*, in its most basic orientation, is a methodological tool to arrive at a ‘truer’ perspective *vis* experience in general. Instrumentally, it effects access to a novel mode of consciousness—the *phenomenological attitude*—from which a modified science, including a material science, may then be constituted. Consequentially, the acceptance complex—implicit in the constitution of the *natural attitude*—is thereby revealed as deceitful in its out-there-ness. Within Chinul’s mahāyāna perspective, the deceptive nature of the apparent world from the unenlightened position, is a dogma which Buddhism had integrated into its world view—arguably from the Indian Vedic perspectives. Not only deceptive, the world is also fundamentally unpleasant and suffering—although within the human desire realm, according to tradition, pain and pleasure are present in equal amounts. In this context, the Buddhist path is soteriological: moving towards a liberation, not just from the deceptive traps of the world and that of the human condition, but also as a definitive escape. The Mahāyāna offers a modulation to the earlier framing: personal liberation is devalued, in that it is seen as inconsistent with the principle of interdependence, even to the extent of its impossibility—and this implies that the only route to escape is now a collective one. In this revision, the ideal of the bodhisattva now becomes cardinal, as the enlightening being who vows to remain embedded in the deceitful and painful world until they have liberated all beings. This vow

implies that the bodhisattva must realise an enlightening mind that is both able to function in the mundane (relative) and the absolute—in order to serve the needs of others in the world, as well as deepening the enlightening realisation towards a final consummation in Buddhahood.

So it is particularly with the Mahāyāna and phenomenology where some common features appear: both seek a stance that clarifies the default deceptive view of a *natural attitude* in order to liberate, from error, subsequent actions in that world—this being scientific enquiry in Husserl’s frame, and studying / transmitting the dharma in Chinul’s mahāyāna. This novel stance is at once toward the world and removed from it—both Husserl and Chinul identify an alteration of a mind–object-of-mind relation to establish, or reveal, an apodictic insight into the foundation of the mental process itself. Chinul’s exposition of the practice of direct pointing can serve as an example here.

Now, there are many points at which to access the principle. I will point out one approach that will allow you to return to the source.

Chinul: Do you hear the sounds of that crow cawing and that magpie calling?

Student: Yes.

Chinul: Trace them back and listen to your hearing-nature. Are there many sounds there?

Student: At that place, all sounds and discriminations are unascertainable.

Chinul: Marvelous! Marvelous! [...] You said, “At that place, all sounds and discriminations are unascertainable.” But since they are unascertainable, at such a time isn’t the hearing-nature just empty?

Student: Originally it is not empty. It is always bright and never benighted.

Chinul: What is this essence that is not empty?

Student: As it has no form or shape, it is ineffable.

Chinul: This is the life force of all the buddhas and patriarchs—have no further doubts. Since it has no form or shape, how can it be either large or small? [...] As there is no past or present, there is no delusion or awakening. As there is no delusion or awakening, there is no ordinary person or sage. [...]. Since there is no right or wrong, names and words do not apply to it. Since none of these concepts apply, all sense-bases and sense-objects, all deluded thoughts, even forms and shapes, names and words are all inapplicable. Hence how can it be anything but originally void and calm and originally no-thing?<sup>88</sup>

In the following examples both Fink and Husserl can be seen to be intimating a similar turning of regard, to Chinul's action of 'tracing back'.

This inquiry is not preoccupied with the being of the world itself, but investigates this being by recognizing that the being of the world is “transcendental acceptance and by tracing it back to the “transcendental subjectivity” in whose life the world is accepted and “held to be valid.”<sup>89</sup>

Reality is not in itself something absolute which becomes tied secondarily to something else; rather, in the absolute sense, it is nothing at all; it has no “absolute essence” whatever; it has the essentiality of something which, of necessity, is *only* intentional, *only* an object of consciousness, something presented [*Vorstelliges*] in the manner peculiar to consciousness, something apparent <as apparent>.<sup>90</sup>

Chinul's direct pointing relates to Husserl's 'turning of regard',<sup>91</sup> both identifying a form of ground—initially at least. For Chinul *nature-of-mind* is revealed, having the dual aspect of *essence* and *function*—for Husserl the region of pure consciousness is revealed, in distinction to that of relative phenomena. Both apodictic regions are foundational, revealing in turn, how the normal / deluded mind or *natural attitude* arises, thus entailing, in turn, the

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<sup>88</sup>Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 221–222.

<sup>89</sup>Fink, 'The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl', 113.

<sup>90</sup>Husserl, *Ideas I*, §50, 113.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid, §38, 78. & Ibid, §56, 131.

horizon of a new relation. For Chinul, the revealed horizon is the *function-of-mind* aspect of *nature-of-mind*, in the action of wisdom (*prajñā*), from the limited horizon—conditioned by *ignorance*—arises an unlimited horizon enabling / manifesting *prajñā* (wisdom). A similar description can apply in the access to the *phenomenological attitude*: here “the establishment of a reflecting-self” is realised, “which does not from the start stand with the human self-apperception, but which is rather “*outside*” of it”,<sup>92</sup> an absolute domain is revealed where “[t]he world remains *immanent* to the absolute and is discovered as lying within it.”<sup>93</sup> Again the revealed new ground “does not purely transcend the world, but only transcends the *limitedness* of the “natural attitude”,<sup>94</sup> allowing a new perspective, or in other words, a new wisdom, to engage in the world.

The phenomenological *epoché* is described as an act where the acceptance complex of the *natural attitude* is suspended. Quite how this is achieved is left rather unclear, in both Husserl and Fink, other than to suggest that it is a possibility of the mind.

[A] discussion of the reduction not only signifies an appeal to its actual performance, but also imperatively requires the performance of an act which places us beyond the horizon of our own possibilities, which “transcends” our *human* possibilities. [...] Because it is the suspension of the “natural attitude” it cannot appear within this attitude and it therefore must be unfamiliar. The reduction becomes knowable in its “*transcendental* motivation” only with the transcending of the world.<sup>95</sup>

According to Fred Hanna, this “transcendental reduction is a difficult phase of his method and has remained a mystery”.<sup>96</sup> With the praxis of *samādhi* and *prajñā* there is a whole tradition to follow, along with, of course, their attendant traps. What is clear is that *samādhi* and its more

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<sup>92</sup>Fink, ‘The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl’, 115.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid, 99.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid, 105.

<sup>96</sup>Fred J. Hanna, ‘Husserl on the Teachings of the Buddha’, *The Humanistic Psychologist* 23, no. 3 (1995), 366.



relative counterpart, *śamatha*, act as a guides towards, as well as an image of, the ultimate destination—that being an absolute, imperturbable and quiescent ultimate ground. *Prajñā*—with *vipassanā* as its relative counterpart—stands as the *function*, or intention, manifesting skilful acts and thoughts, with the relative aspect representing the quest for insight.

The act of suspension (*epoché*) can be seen to be in a dyadic relation with *prajñā* as an aspect of its operation—since the application of *epoché* leads to a wider, and arguably a wiser, horizon. Equally *epoché* can be seen as correlate to *samādhi*—where something suspended is ‘taken out of action’, and is therefore made quiescent. This schema reveals that *samādhi* can be seen to be the destination (resultant) of the act of *epoché* which is in turn the result of the action of *prajñā*. Consequentially, within the phenomenological frame, the *phenomenological attitude* would then be a correlate of *samādhi*, and phenomenological enquiry into the world—as the “true theme of phenomenology”,<sup>97</sup>—a correlate of *prajñā*. *Epoché* as resultant of the action of *prajñā*, is a guide for that enquiry and, in its acting towards *samādhi* (*essence*), it is an aspect of *path*. As the motive force of the phenomenological reduction, *epoché* establishes the conditions of the *phenomenological attitude* which, in turn, are the basis for an enquiry into the experience of the world—*samādhi* and *prajñā* are then an implicit aspect of the phenomenological praxis. For Chinul, since the focus is the soteriological project, aimed at liberation, it is *epoché* that becomes implicit within the *samādhi* and *prajñā* praxis. Together, Husserl’s phenomenology and Chinul’s Sōn praxis of *samādhi* and *prajñā* can be seen to engage constructively to bring the question of understanding into a relation with a notion of liberation—where the triad of *epoché*–*samādhi*–*prajñā* effects that movement.

However there is a note of dissonance in this dialogue: whilst similar aporic tensions seem to be evoked in the relation between the absolute and relative stances within the two

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<sup>97</sup>Fink, ‘The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl’, 130.

traditions, the position of the absolute appears more liminal in Chinul's depictions. Husserl consciously limits the scope of his *epoché*—in not making it universal<sup>98</sup>—which allows the establishment of the *pure ego* as an ideal *witness consciousness* that contains within its horizon, according to Fink, two more relative egos.<sup>99</sup> However, there seems as well to be an admission of interpenetration—so just “as the world is what it is only in terms of its “origin,” so is this origin itself what it is only with reference to the world.”<sup>100</sup>

[I]t is not, as with dogmatic-speculative metaphysics, a transcendence to some other-worldly “absolute.” Phenomenology explicitly and knowingly wins back the world from within the depths of the absolute in which—before the phenomenological reduction—the world itself lies concealed.<sup>101</sup>

The phenomenological ground established by Husserl may prove to be just as contingent as that of the *natural attitude*, and it will be through Derrida's critique, that the validity of this ground is challenged—perhaps even radicalised. From the Sōn perspective, we are also caught, it seems, “bound by intellectual understanding”,<sup>102</sup>—an understanding that Derrida will critic as the *metaphysics of presence*.

Having travelled with Chinul and Husserl out of the valley town of the *natural attitude* and up into the hills of the *phenomenological attitude* and insight meditation via the *prajñā path* of enacting *epoché*. The town below is revealed in a fresh perspective, but there remains illusion: the mountain peak—standing for our original destination—seems just as distant as before, and we are now disengaged, abstracted in internal reflection. *Samādhi* has not been truly realised here—there is only an ersatz calm—as we vacillate in our constant effort of suspension. An aporia is blocking the calm resolution promised by the summit, and language

<sup>98</sup>Husserl, *Ideas I*, §32, 60.

<sup>99</sup>Fink, ‘The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl’, 115–116.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid, 99–100.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid, 100.

<sup>102</sup>Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark*, 186.

seems to be implicated. Both Fink and Chinul have underlined the problematic of language in their respective positions. Yet whereas Fink sees just the current language as tricky—coming as it does from the *natural attitude*<sup>103</sup>—Chinul sees the difficulty in the structure of language itself. So it is with Derrida then that we must continue our climb.

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<sup>103</sup>Fink, ‘The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl’, 143–144.

**Chapter Three:**  
**Derrida and the Kanhwa Investigation**  
**—dukkha and deconstruction and great doubt.**

3.1. *Introduction*

If the last chapter pointed to a relation between the phenomenological reduction (*epoché*) and the Sōn praxis of *samādhī* and *prajñā*, this chapter attempts to reveal something of the depth of that liminal relation. Beginning, in section two, with a brief introduction to the concepts of *différance*,<sup>104</sup> *trace* and *supplement* as developed by Jacques Derrida<sup>105</sup> in *La Voix et le Phénomène*.<sup>106</sup> Section three, then, explicates Chinul's engagement with the Kanhwa investigation. Finally, section four will seek to highlight the parallels between Kanhwa Sōn and Deconstruction and also further test Derrida's position from the Buddhist perspective.

3.2. *Deconstructing Husserl in Three Steps.*

The last two chapters of *Voice and Phenomenon* see Derrida deconstruct three Phenomenological reductions performed within Husserl's analysis in *Logical Investigations*.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Although Allison uses and anglicisation: *différance*—see note 8, Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 82. I will stay with the French form, echoing the similar respect for certain key words in Sanskrit or Pāli within the Sōn Buddhist treatment here.

<sup>105</sup> Jacques Derrida, *La Voix et le phénomène: introduction au problème du signe dans la phénoménologie de Husserl*. (Paris: Quadrige, 1993).  
Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs.*, trans. David B. Allison, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

<sup>106</sup> Referencing will here use the short note form: Derrida, *Voice & Phenomenon*, [page# French version / page# English version].—reflecting Leonard Lawlor's retranslation of the title. Except where reference is to specific version.

<sup>107</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations.*, International Library of Philosophy and Scientific Method (London, New York: Routledge and K. Paul; Humanities Press, 1970), 181-233.

### 3.2.1. Deconstructing the First Reduction—Separation of Expression and Indication.

For Derrida, the Phonetic signs of a vocal expression—not the empiric sound—have a phenomenological ideality, revealing an absolute presence between the speaker and the listener—“[w]hen I speak, it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that *I hear myself* [je m’entende] *at the same time* that I speak.”<sup>108</sup> Unlike writing, the voice’s materiality recedes, or fades, as soon as it is spoken—there is no material extension of the phoneme—“[i]t phenomenologically reduces itself, [...] *for consciousness* [it is] the very form of the immediate presence of the signified.”<sup>109</sup> The signifier in the vocal expression acts as a sign ideally, without the need of a spacial presence in the world. Derrida has turned Husserl on his head; whereas Husserl saw no communication in the case of the interior monologue, *Zeigen*<sup>110</sup> now has an ideal form within the voice, *through* its being internalised.

The concept of *auto-affection*—already prefigured as hearing oneself speak—is understood as an immediate feedback structure, a kind of looping movement. Not only does one hear oneself, “without passing through an external detour, the world,”<sup>111</sup> there is the direct affect of meaning transmitted by the vocal signifier. In the *auto-affection* of the voice, the space dimension appears reduced absolutely, leading towards Derrida’s consideration of the ultimate time-based nature of the *phōnē*. This “absolute reduction of space in general” is the condition of its nature—that of the idea of a “signifying substance”.<sup>112</sup> This “unity of sound and voice, [...] is the sole case to escape the distinction between what is worldly and what is transcendental; by the same token, it makes that distinction possible.”<sup>113</sup> The voice is seen

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<sup>108</sup>Derrida, *Voice & Phenomenon*, 87/77.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>*Zeigen* – to point, to show, to appear.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid, 88/78.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

now as fundamental, “no consciousness is possible without the voice”, even to the extent that “the voice *is* consciousness.”<sup>114</sup>

### 3.2.2. *Deconstructing the Second Reduction—Separation Between Sense and Language.*

Sense is primary to language for Husserl, where Derrida takes the contrasense. He therefore moves to deconstruct Husserl’s attempt “to reduce the totality of Language, be it indicative or expressive, in order to recover sense in its primordially.”<sup>115</sup> Consigning language “to a secondary stratum of experience”, according to Derrida, only “confirms the traditional phonologism of metaphysics.”<sup>116</sup> With the ideality of sense—originally in thought as intuition, then expressed in speech and writing—arises the ideal of pure a transmission of meaning. Husserl is, in effect, repressing difference; the ‘perfect’ transmission of the idea into a system of signs involves ideally no difference. The ultimate threat, then, is in the existential total loss of sense—the possibility of non-presence. Contary to this assertion, Derrida claims that difference is not only possible but, as central to *auto-affection*, necessary to consciousness—thought—speech and writing. The up-ending of Husserl’s second reduction has allowed Derrida to begin to localise this difference, but the revealed region escapes the metaphysics of identity, purity or origin—“We come closest to it in the movement of *différance*.”<sup>117</sup>—the neologism is a melange of two moments of meaning: to differ, as in difference, and to defer as in delay.<sup>118</sup> What is being revealed is an experience—a movement of *différance*—which “is not something that happens to a transcendental subject; it produces a subject”;<sup>119</sup> it produces “sameness as self-relation within self-difference”.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid, 89/79–80.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid, 90/80.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid, 92/82.

<sup>118</sup>Its elucidation will constitute an ongoing project for Derrida.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

Time is determinate within the experience of the movement *différance*, as is the concept of self-presence engendered by this movement; presence is a *now*. The *now* replaced by a new *now* whose past *now* is differentiated in a pure *auto-affection* is already falling into metaphor, and for Derrida, “every language fails to describe this pure movement other than by metaphor”.<sup>121</sup>

All the concepts of metaphysics—in particular those of activity and passivity, will and nonwill, and therefore those of affection or auto-affection, purity and impurity, etc.—*cover up* the strange “movement” of this difference.<sup>122</sup>

This strange motion receives the metaphor of the *trace*. As a form of “protowriting”, *trace* is the fundamental movement which grounds all sense and consciousness; it is “the intimate relation of the living present with its outside”,<sup>123</sup> it marks a spacing from the ever emergent *now*—receding in the *différance* implicated in the distinction of the *trace*—formatting space and the world, in its movement. With expression, indication and sense now considered as primordially intertwined, the ordering of the hierarchy, originally evoked by Husserl, is now transformed into a movement that is a recuperative attempt in the face of “the “presence” of sense and speech [that] had already from the start fallen short of itself.”<sup>124</sup> This recuperative attempt entails the *supplement*.

[W]hat is supplementary is in reality *différance*, the operation of differing which at one and the same time both fissures and retards presence, submitting it simultaneously to primordial division and delay.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>Ibid, 93/84.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid, 95/85.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid, 95–96/85–86.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid, 97/87.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid, 98/88.

Derrida signals that the structure of supplementation is strange, not only does it imply the “nonplenitude of presence”, it designates the “in the place of” as substitution in general.<sup>126</sup> The signifier “is substituted for another signifier, for another type of signifier that maintains another relation with the deficient presence, one more highly valued by virtue of the play of difference.”<sup>127</sup> Since “the play of difference is the movement of idealization” the greater the idealisation, the greater the facility to “repeat presence” the better it “capitalizes on its sense.”<sup>128</sup> In the movement from expression to indication, from presence to sense, the most valued form of *supplement* is that which idealises to the highest degree.<sup>129</sup>

### 3.2.3. *Deconstructing the Third Reduction—Pure Abstraction from the Concrete.*

Husserl’s third reduction allows the logical construal of sense without a real referent. Logical grammar thus defined, allows for the non-existence of the object but where “nonsense in the sense of *Unsinn* (“Abracadabra,” “Green is where”)<sup>130</sup> is disallowed. For Derrida, however,

[t]he absence of intuition—and therefore of the subject of the intuition—is not only *tolerated* by speech; it is *required* by the general structure of signification, when considered *in itself*. It is radically requisite[.]<sup>131</sup>

In considering the personal pronoun, death is taken as “structurally necessary” for the ‘I’ to function. Relationship to death—the absolute non-presence as a theme, inescapably frames meaning in Derrida’s deconstruction of Husserl’s third reduction—uprooting phenomenology’s claim to an origin of meaning in intuition.

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<sup>126</sup>Ibid.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid, 99/89.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid.

<sup>129</sup>Perhaps the idol could be seen as an ultimate form here?

<sup>130</sup>Ibid, 102/92.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid, 104/93.



### 3.2.4. *Evocation and experiencing (éprouver)—Derrida's conclusion.*

Derrida's conclusion begins; "Nous avons éprouvé", which Allison translates as; "WE HAVE EXPERIENCED",<sup>132</sup> but the verb, *éprouver*, is also, to go through a test—an ordeal of sorts. So this experience should perhaps be read like the act of the transcendental reduction, which, as Fink says, needs to be performed, warning that a simple intellectual reading will lead to confusion.<sup>133</sup> This warning is doubly true for understanding Derrida; he has followed Husserl into reduction but resolved another relation to the ideal—the strange triad of *différance*, *trace* and *supplement*. Derrida's conclusion is a further reflection, upon the implications of the region he has opened up, via his own act of reduction—his deconstruction. The metaphysical foundation to phenomenology (at least in the Husserlian variant) has been established as "the absolute proximity of self-identity" in presence before the object, as the transcendental pure ego, that allows the "*idealiter* of infinite repetition."<sup>134</sup> But with this ideal conception of pure thought, the subsequent idea field is "*in fact*, really, effectively, etc., deferred *ad infinitum*"<sup>135</sup>—the movement of *différance* being the process of deferral "between the ideal and the nonideal."<sup>136</sup> The Husserlian view, that any subjective expression can, in theory, be substituted by an ideal objective expression and not lose any information regarding its object, forms a teleological structure determining all of Husserl's distinctions. And in this structure, Derrida reveals an aporia, where the distinctions can only "live" from the difference which the telos traverses towards its impossible horizon—in between is "the difference between fact and right, reality and ideality. Their possibility is their impossibility."<sup>137</sup> So Derrida sees phenomenology endlessly attempting to derive difference

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<sup>132</sup>Ibid, 111/99.

<sup>133</sup>cf. Fink, 'The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl', 110–112.

<sup>134</sup>Derrida, *Voice & Phenomenon*, 111/99.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid, 112/99.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid, 113/101.

from metaphysics rather than the other way around; deconstruction then, is a shift, which, in a certain fashion, flips phenomenology over—so revealing its end.

Framed now through deconstruction, Derrida turns to questioning this aporia: “What does the life of the living present mean as *difference ad infinitum*?”<sup>138</sup> Death is considered as the only relation that “could make the infinite differing of presence appear”,<sup>139</sup> and so the “appearing of the infinite *difference* is itself finite”<sup>140</sup>—furthermore “*difference* [...] becomes the finitude of life as an essential relation with oneself and one’s death.”<sup>141</sup> Derrida has twisted out of the metaphysical opposites here, arriving at the slogan, “[*t*]he infinite difference is finite”.<sup>142</sup> Looking back towards metaphysics as a finality, it is a history which has an end—perhaps a dead-end.

This history is closed when this infinite absolute appears to itself as its own death. *A voice without difference, a voice without writing, is at once absolutely alive and absolutely dead.*<sup>143</sup>

Derrida then poses the question: “what “begins” then—“beyond” absolute knowledge”?<sup>144</sup> The attempt to articulate, *l’épreuve* (the test)—the question—pushes Derrida into the “*unheard-of* thoughts [that] are required” and the “old signs”—perhaps those of the now dead metaphysics—which, nevertheless, are still “enjoining us to continue indefinitely to question presence within the closure of knowledge.”<sup>145</sup> Bending to the necessity of a response, towards a framing with the “old signs”, but also to a necessity that it must be “also understood differently”<sup>146</sup>—is a double imperative, a dual regard. The question needs also to be “heard in

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid, 114/101.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid, 114/102.

<sup>140</sup>Ibid.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid, 115/102.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid, 115/102–103.

the openness of an unheard-of question that opens neither upon knowledge nor upon some nonknowledge which is a knowledge to come.”<sup>147</sup> In a question of provenance, of sequencing, Derrida then asks,

whether what was always presented as derived and modified re-presentation of simple presentation, a “supplement,” “sign,” “writing,” or “trace,” “is” not, in a necessarily, but newly, ahistorical sense, “older” than presence and the system of truth, older than “history”<sup>148</sup>

As he looks down further, even older than, or prior to, the earliest distinctions “staged throughout the history of philosophy”, now, “We no longer know” becomes the rhetorical response in the face of the question that still presents itself. “New names indeed will have to be used” claims Derrida, “in order to “speak” about” and to “conceive of this age”—strangely echoing the difficulty Fink admitted to.<sup>149</sup> But Derrida is appealing to names which can turn Husserl around and make “preprimordial what Husserl believed he could isolate as a particular and accidental experience [...] the indefinite drift of signs, as errance and change of scene.”<sup>150</sup> It is the incessant movement of *différance* as a fundamental drift in presence, ever receding from its unfulfillable emergence.

There never was any “perception”; and “presentation” is a representation of the representation that yearns for itself therein as for its own birth or its death.<sup>151</sup>

Derrida elaborates a metaphor, springing from an allusion by Husserl in *Ideas I*, §100. The image is of a gallery (in Dresden), with paintings hanging on the wall, one of which is by Teniers, depicting a gallery of paintings, each with readable inscriptions...—and so we plunge into a refractive, self-reflective labyrinth. The “gallery is the labyrinth that includes in itself

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid, 115/103.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid, 116/103.

<sup>149</sup>cf. Fink, ‘The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl’, 143–144.

<sup>150</sup>Derrida, *Voice & Phenomenon*, 116/103.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid.

its own exits”.<sup>152</sup> There has never been a before-the-gallery to make this an experience of a certain kind, it is, one assumes, a condition. All we can do, says Derrida, is to speak and “make our voices *resonate* throughout the corridors”.<sup>153</sup> And we *experience* this movement of sound, in its vain attempt to “*suppléer l’éclat de la présence*”, to “fill the rupture in presence.”<sup>154</sup>

### 3.3. *The Shortcut Approach of Kanhwa Investigation.*

The kanhwa practice was seen as a special liberating practice by Chinul, and Buswell recounts that Chinul's reading of Sōn master Dahui—during his three year retreat, before the re-establishment of the Samādhi and Prajñā Society—was a major influence in his third and final awakening. As Buswell notes, the section on kanhwa practice seems ‘tacked’ on at the end of the discussion of Zongmi’s *Record*,<sup>155</sup> the bulk of his teaching being focused on the *sudden awakening / gradual cultivation* system in combination with the direct-pointing approach. In the short addendum, Chinul admits that the elaboration of the dharma expounded “so far has been designed for students who can generate the access to the understanding-awakening while relying on words”,<sup>156</sup> but words and intellectual understanding have fundamental limitations—students can “end up being bound by intellectual understanding and will never have a moment to stop and rest.”<sup>157</sup> So Chinul introduces an existing strand of Sōn practice—Kanhwa—for those,

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid, 117/104.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.—my translation.

<sup>155</sup>Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark*, 62.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid, 186.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid.

who might be able to access [the path] by leaving words behind and might suddenly be able to bring an end to their intellectual understanding of these matters, I will briefly quote some of the words of the patriarchs and spiritual mentors, even though these were not esteemed by Master Mi.<sup>158</sup>

Perhaps the separation of the kanhwa section from the main body is in order to respect the sense of what his main interlocutor had ‘esteemed’. The separate treatment of this section also respects a distinction in relation to the use of language: kanhwa practice consciously engages language to generate paradox, which in turn is designed to break the bonds of the language through the process of investigation. And although paradoxical positions are structurally manifested in Chinul's main approach—of *sudden awakening* / *gradual cultivation*—they are not self-consciously produced.

Chinul, quoting from Dahui, highlights the departure from Zongmi's way which is seen as a path using ‘dead’ words rather than the ‘live word of the hwadu’. The notions of ‘live’ and ‘dead’ words relate to two types of investigation: hwadu examined through a search for meaning—‘dead’, and as against a non-conceptual engagement—‘live’.<sup>159</sup>

Guifeng called it “numinous awareness.” Heze said in regard to it, “The one word ‘awareness’ is the gateway to all wonders.” Huanglong Sixin Sou said that “the one word ‘awareness’ is the gateway to all calamities.” It is easy to get what Guifeng and Heze meant, but hard to get Sixin's intent. Right here, you must be endowed with eyes that transcend this world. You cannot explain it to anyone; you cannot transmit it to anyone.<sup>160</sup>

Naming the absolute creates logical inconsistencies since it posits ‘thing-ness’ via the construction of language. The *via negativa* is adopted to avoid this trap—but the Heze school

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<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>See Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 80–83.

<sup>160</sup>Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark*, 187.

of Zongmi has adopted a kataphatic approach, so is vulnerable to being caught in concepts such as *nature-of-mind*, *essence* and *function*. Chinul quotes from the Sixth Patriarch:

The patriarch said, “Even when I call it ‘one thing,’ that still isn’t correct. How dare you call it ‘original fount’ or ‘buddha-nature’? From here on, even though you cover your head with thatch, you’ll only be a lackey of intellectual understanding.”<sup>161</sup>

In Kanhwa, the path of transmission is within the context of a particular exchange between student and master, wrapped in a story format that describes the event. The presumed realisation attained, in the mind of the student, becomes a question in the readers mind, where the meaning horizon remains open, since the pointer—being the full context of the exchange—is necessarily unfulfilled by the words of the story. This creative ambiguity steps back from philosophically definitive statements and into hermeneutics. The kanhwa text invites an imaginative identification with the student’s doubt, inviting the reader towards the student’s position outside or behind the words of the story. Chinul, quotes Dahui.

When you are reading the teachings of the sūtras or the stories surrounding the access to the path of ancient venerables and you do not understand them clearly, your mind will become puzzled, frustrated, and insipid (*molchami/moziwei* 沒滋味), just as if you were gnawing on an iron rod. When this occurs you should put forth all your energy.<sup>162</sup>

It is precisely this puzzlement—this doubt—which powers the process. Dahui is scathing of the “shaven-pate heretic whose own eyes are dull. They just teach people to stop and rest like a hedgehog playing dead”.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>Ibid.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid, 189.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid.

I want only to tell you that the point where thinking occurs right now is the path; and once thinking comes to an end, your mind will have no direction or position.<sup>164</sup>

Dahui has taken the position that all instruction, in the positive sense, leads to a certain effort and a certain state, which is, in some ways, dead—missing the realisation required. Whether, following an instruction to be still, or an instruction to be discerning, or one to accept all phenomena, each has its own trap, and Dahui condemns the “erroneous instructions of [these] blind masters.”<sup>165</sup> In this short cut approach, Dahui says,

you must take up this one thought [of the hwadu] and suddenly smash it to smithereens; then and only then will you comprehend birth and death. This is called the access to awakening. But you absolutely must not retain any thought that waits for that breakthrough to occur.<sup>166</sup>

All views need to be “laid down”, from “the mind of logical discrimination” to “the mind that rejoices in serenity and withdraws from disturbance”;<sup>167</sup> only with such a beginners mind should one approach the hwadu.

A monk asked Zhaozhou, “Does a dog have the buddha-nature, or doesn’t it?”

Zhaozhou replied, “Mu 無” [lit., “doesn’t have it,” viz., “no”].<sup>168</sup>

### 3.4. *Comparative Discussion—Towards the Samādhi of the Unheard-of Question.*

With Derrida’s up-ending of Husserl’s Phenomenology, have the comparative efforts of chapter two’s discussion also been undermined? Through Derrida’s critic, the double position

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<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid, 191.

<sup>166</sup>Ibid.

<sup>167</sup>Ibid.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

of Husserl—the two Husserl's<sup>169</sup>—are shown to be in an impossible relation: the earlier apodictic certainty, found within pure experience, being in an impossible tension with the latter Husserl, who seeks a genetic constitution of that certainty from a relation with the world, which, in turn, is itself constituted by it. The metaphysics of presence appears to be the sticking plaster of a unity, offering a teleology towards an absolute ideal—in the Kantian sense—and it is this structuring ideal that Derrida rejects, as being inconsistent with Husserl's intention to frame *the ideal* phenomenologically. This teleological movement, perhaps, resembles the Buddhist teleology—being a movement toward enlightenment / awakening—again as an ideal in the Kantian sense, but this characterisation of the Buddhist goal is questionable. Indeed, as noted in the discussion of the previous chapter, Fink resists the neo-Kantian ideal as basis for a teleology of the phenomenological reduction,<sup>170</sup> yet Derrida upends the conceit, that somehow, such a process could be grounded in its own resultant—via some 'true' genetic constitution of meaning.

Changing the regard: on the one hand there is a groundless teleological constitution of *sense* in Husserl's phenomenological reduction, and on the other hand, there is a groundless, repeating, creation of meaning within the movement of *différance* as *trace* with *supplement* within deconstruction. Whereas Husserl may have vaguely acknowledged common cause with the Indian Buddhist insight tradition,<sup>171</sup>—and the comparison of chapter two does suggest a tentative fit—Derrida's critic, at first sight, devastates any liaison. Yet Derrida's critic of Husserl would also shared by Chinul. This pure point of reference—the Kantian idea—structuring the process of reduction, is this not the 'dead-end' view of a substantial self, or of a substantial causality, that Nāgārjuna argued against? Derrida has approached a similar

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<sup>169</sup>Borrowing from Lawlor whose "two Husserl's give us the double necessity of the impossible system". Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 164.

<sup>170</sup>Fink, 'The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl', 115.

<sup>171</sup>cf. Hanna, 'Husserl on the Teachings of the Buddha', 365–372.



critical stance against substantial-ism—framed as his challenge to the metaphysics of presence. However, Buddhism also takes a critical stance to the flip-side—that of nihilism—and it is here where Derrida is in danger of finding himself. Simon Critchley however claims “that deconstruction can and should be understood as an ethical demand”<sup>172</sup>—with ethics taken in the Lévinassian sense—so perhaps this danger is fictive?

For Derrida, the groundless nature of experience arises in the flowing separation from the *now* by a *différance* that demands a fulfilment from thought, that can never re-produce sufficiently to fill the infinite lack that lays behind even the very idea of presence. It is the desperate, even demonic, trap evoked by the metaphor of the Dresden art gallery. We are cursed to fill the corridors with the cries of our voices, it is a condition of our consciousness and its cause—an eternal unsatisfactoriness. Here something of the nature of *dukkha* begins to resonate. The condition of the *First Noble Truth*, which Buddha’s praxis directs the student to fully know—“This noble truth of suffering [*dukkha*] is to be fully understood”<sup>173</sup>—*dukkha* is a condition of profound unsatisfactoriness, a gap, a lack that demands its impossible fulfilment. But is it reasonable to overlay *différance* and *dukkha* this way? This of course depends on ones conception of *dukkha*; David Loy has explored the notion of structural *dukkha*, but his development holds to the main interpretation—being that of ‘suffering’: structural *dukkha* as institutional suffering.<sup>174</sup> Is it not more fruitful to consider the structural aspect as that which is implicit, all pervasive, to its function: unsatisfactoriness? This reading could indeed relate to *différance*. Perhaps *trace* and the *supplement* could also relate to *grasping* and *mental formation* within the *Twelve Links of Dependent Origination* model? Pursuing this further, Derrida’s *experience* could also stand as the *samsaric* mode of dependent origination—it too

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<sup>172</sup>S. Critchley, *Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 251.

<sup>173</sup>Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, SN 56.11, 1844. cf. SN 56.29.

<sup>174</sup>Loy David, ‘Why Buddhism and the Modern World Need Each Other: A Buddhist Perspective’, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 34 (2014), 39–50.

is cyclic and interminable, where consciousness is inextricably interwoven, contaminated, into the structure of that which it is conscious of. For Derrida, however, there is no possible exit; Husserl's hopeful inspiration of resolution to a primordial sense, is replaced by the 'black hole' of meaninglessness, with the unsettling implications for ethics that this seems to entail. Buddhism, however, has framed the predicament of human existence within a soteriological context—even if the exits in the Dresden gallery do fold back into more corridors of paintings without end, one can still awaken out of that context, out of the dream of the self, out of language and consciousness, and in to the awareness of *no-mind*, into *bodhi*.

But how is this awakening possible? How is such an 'experience' even to be conceived? In the context of *kanhwa* investigation, the metaphysical framing of intellectual understanding is the primary negative teaching, and here one can imagine Derrida's consent. As with the metaphysics of presence, intellectual understanding is a trap that leads to relentless agitation. Gong'an exchanges offer, to the student of Sōn, a route to an experience of its question, which leads underneath, or before, the root of the words in which the exchange is framed. The object for the *kanhwa* investigation, is that the gong'an provokes a *great doubt* in the meditator, and it is in the experience of this *great doubt* where the stillness of *samādhi* arises—we are literally stopped in its midst. The resonance to Derrida's unheard-of question appears striking here, but how close are the parallels? Derrida's great doubt arises in his regard of the groundless arising of thought / consciousness, within its differential movement—*différance*—as he holds attention towards a question of genesis: "what "begins" then—"beyond" absolute knowledge"?<sup>175</sup> He seems to be held in the fugue of his question, which reaches beyond the grasping of the "old word" and into the *experience* of the edge, where the generation of thoughts / words / ideas arise, in their incessant attempt at supplementation. But rather than a sinking into this doubt where "[i]n the openness of this question *we no longer*

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<sup>175</sup>Derrida, *Voice & Phenomenon*, 115/102.

*know*”,<sup>176</sup> Derrida still assumes the response has to be formatted a certain way: in words, in writing, by a mark or perhaps an utterance. Furthermore, he has rejected a more intimate layer than that of the *phōnē*: the breath. For Derrida, this is not a component of language, the breath only offers an empirical relation. Yet the breath’s modulation is the foundation of the voice, and its dynamics are affected both by intention and the non-intentional. The breath is a uniquely liminal phenomena—there is, latent in its experience, meaning and no-meaning. A sigh can signify; one catches one’s breath; in meditation it is the doorway to the somatic. In the frame of meditation, one can have an awareness of breath, outside of thought, yet clearly awake, and as an experience that subsequently integrates with memory. This suggests that Derrida’s rejection of meaning in the primordial breath is questionable. This is Derrida’s version of purity—the separation between the effulgence of life on one side and thought on the other appears absolute—there is no relation; it is a pure other. Derrida seems not to acknowledge the possibility of contamination in this distinction. Just as the voice, for Derrida, effected the contamination in Husserl’s distinction between indication and expression, the breath effects the contamination between life and thought, non-self and the self.

In this context, Nāgārjuna’s middle way could be seen as the ultimate contamination—Zongmi’s *essence* and *function* relation vis *nature-of-mind* is also the intertwined relation of dependent origination. It seems that Derrida is on the edge of awakening here, but is something missing? Robert Magliola establishes a close liaison between *différance* and Nāgārjuna’s emptiness, which he terms “devoidness”,<sup>177</sup> and he also sees that “Nagarjuna’s Middle Path [...] goes “beyond Derrida” in that it frequents the “unheard-of thought,””<sup>178</sup> but despite Magliola’s evident scholarship, he is caught by a unilateral reading of the Buddhist praxis: the wisdom axis which orbits around emptiness (S. *Śūnyatā*). This prevailing bias

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid, 115/103.

<sup>177</sup>R.R. Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend* (Purdue University Press, 1984), 89.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid, 87.

tends to devalue the relative dimension of the *Two Truths* doctrine, flattening the aporia that lies between into one dimension. Derrida sees the emptiness of words, of concepts, of thoughts; he experiences the *dukkha* of self in its impossible attempt to establish identity in the face of a no-self-presence, yet he too is holding the aporia in a unilateral way—the possibility in the impossibility taken as a hope, or a faith, has not yet emerged. The later Derrida does undertake this journey—thanks in part to the further engagement with Levinas’s thought, where “Derrida combines Levinas’s thought with that of Nietzsche”;<sup>179</sup> this development of faith in Derrida’s thought is also explored by Masumi Nagasaka.<sup>180</sup> From the Buddhist perspective it is the faith, that emptiness is a fullness, that the deluded mind is *bodhi*, that the empty self is the other, which opens up the possibility, of exchange, of dialogue, of a *path*, that can live through, and by, the unheard-of question, embracing *great doubt*. It is a faith, that transitions the *dukkha* of the incessant *trace* of *différance*, into the responsibility within the *samādhi* of a transcendental relation.

Where Husserl’s *epoché* fails to align with *samādhi* and *prajñā*, is in its framing as suspension of belief / acceptance *within* thought. Derrida’s deconstruction suggests another way to frame *epoché*<sup>181</sup>—as a suspension of the energy engaged in the movement of *différance*, *trace* and the *supplement*. This move would align *epoché* to the meditative praxis of *letting-go*, which is, in brief, the injunction towards the *Third Noble Truth*—*tanhā* (craving). This leads to *samādhi*, as the stilling and slowing of that movement, through the suspension (*epoché*) of the need for a recouperation—the compulsive reiteration of self-image in the demand for similitude and control. And, *letting-go* requires the faith, that there is a beyond the two dead-ends of annihilation and the absolute. This opens to the question, does

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<sup>179</sup>Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 212.

<sup>180</sup>See Masumi Nagasaka, ‘Faith in Mistrust: Derrida’s “possibility of the Impossibility” in His Reading of Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas’ (Theses, Université Toulouse le Mirail - Toulouse II, 2013), 294–295.

<sup>181</sup>It is notable that in *Voice and Phenomenon* Derrida only refers to *epoché* in the introduction, his preference is to refer to *reduction* or *exclusion*. Derrida, *Voice & Phenomenon*, 11/11.

the dyad of *dukkha–tanhā* map onto the deconstructive triad of *différance–trace–supplement* here? There does seem potential for further dialogue.

In terms of the mountain metaphor—the view of the summit has been upset by Derrida, who denies us, even the relative heights we had attained, in following Husserl. On the one hand, we have been cast down into town, unable to escape the necessity of language and thought, yet the situation—the *experience*—now seems rather phantasmagoric, orienting around a new—negative—peak of absence and death. So perhaps there is some progression towards a summit after all? This new summit would be one of no-self, or no-mind, for Chinul, and the absolute absence, as other, for Derrida. The further we go in this direction, the more transparent we become—we can never reach this summit. Dragging our selves up the slope seems, frighteningly, like the compulsive movement of *différance*, *trace* and *supplement*, forever condemned to miss the still resolution of the ideal pinnacle, and to be eternally cast down to recommence the climb, Sisyphus like—caught on the incessant wheel of the *dukkha–tanhā* relation. What transformation is possible, if we *let-go* of this insane compulsion, and recognise the radical otherness of the summit? Seen as wholly *Other*, or perhaps the *wholly-other-that-I-am*, the summit perhaps represents just one face of the *Other*—and in the town there is the other face, with everyone we meet there. These two faces—two aspects—ask for a simultaneous relation. Perhaps in the company of Levinas we can find a way to a summit, which is simultaneously in the heart of the town—ethically engaged, and in the same direction that Chinul's *sudden awakening / gradual cultivation* model has already been pointing us.

**Chapter Four:**  
**Lévinas and the Return**  
**—from ethics to enactment.**

4.1. *Introduction—I know I will fail to say it, but I must try.*

This chapter will need to break the established format in my attempt to complete the arc of this dissertation—an arc which is both an attempt at awakening and an engagement, perhaps a re-engagement. It is an arc which bifurcates, finally reaching the unreachable summit, paradoxically through the simultaneous return into the town—that thicket of relation—so sundering the metaphor. It is a paradoxical and aporic simultaneity, because *this* Relation is the un-say-able actuality, yet it still *can* be performed—*must* be performed—in the ever imperfect action of our *response* within—and through it—in the *in-finite* possibility of our *response-ability*. In tracing the figure of an open circle, we mark the returning move.

Emanuel Lévinas will be the guide here, along with Buswell’s evocation of his Sŏn teacher, Master Kusan, in a contemporary account of a kanhwa practice which engages the keyword (K. hwadu) of “*What is this?*”—this explication will form section one. Section two will offer a very brief discussion of Derrida’s critical view of the early Lévinas, setting up the discussion for section three, which explores what I take to be the awakening turn in Lévinas’s thought. It is a turn, which in my view, echoes Sŏn, and more generally, Buddhist awakening. Section four completes the enquiry, opening to the relation of engagement, by briefly pointing towards directions of thought that consider the concept of *enactment* as praxis.

#### 4.2. *A modern description of a Kanhwa Investigation.*

Buswell studied Sōn under Master Kusan Sunim at Songgwangsa—the monastery established by Chinul—and he has recounted how Kusan introduced the hwadu practice to his students.<sup>182</sup> Commencing with a question Kusan would ask, what was the most precious thing in the world? After receiving the responses, Kusan would lead the students, via direct-pointing, to reveal, that it was that which could make such a determination in the first place—the mind.

But what was that mind which was the most precious thin in the world,  
that decided what was supreme?<sup>183</sup>

Kusan leads the students to see the *nature-of-mind* as a

universal “ecology” of mind, in which “this world, mankind and all the animals are no different from oneself. This is precisely the ‘Great Self.’[...] But such terms as “mind,” “great self,” “master,” or even “buddha,” were all just labels, Kusan explained.<sup>184</sup>

And so the question “is generated ..., ‘What is it?’, that is neither mind, buddha, a material thing, or empty space.”<sup>185</sup> Buswell traces the Chinese roots of this question to a version of the *Platform Sūtra*.

Huai-jang had been studying with national master Hui-an on Mount Sung before he came to pay his respects to Hui-neng. When he arrived at the Sixth Patriarch’s residence, master Hui-neng asked him, “Whence have you come?” Huai-jang answered, “From Mount Sung.” Hui-neng then asked, “What thing is it (*shen-ma wu*) that has come in this manner?” Huai-jang replied, “Whatever thing you might say it is would not hit the mark.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>R.E. Buswell, *The Zen Monastic Experience: Buddhist Practice in Contemporary Korea*, ACLS Humanities E-Book (Princeton University Press, 1993), 153–160.

<sup>183</sup>*Ibid*, 154.

<sup>184</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>185</sup>*Ibid*, 155.

<sup>186</sup>*Ibid*.

The contemplation of the question is a vehicle for the raising of *great doubt*, and it is this existential doubt that can arise, with any of the particular hwadu questions, passed down within the tradition.

Because all hwadus are therefore considered to be simply an expedient means of producing the doubt, Korean Sŏn meditators keep the same hwadu throughout their entire careers, trying continually to deepen their sensation of doubt.<sup>187</sup>

#### 4.3. *Approaching Lévinas through the Derridian Lens.*

Despite an acknowledgement that “the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas can make us tremble”,<sup>188</sup> Derrida’s long essay (*Metaphysics and Violence*) attempts to show that, his project is already set up to fail;

[b]y making the origin of language, meaning, and difference the relation to the infinitely other, Levinas is resigned to betraying his own intentions in his philosophical discourse.<sup>189</sup>

But his criticism is also constructive, since, for Lawlor, Derrida’s engagement with Lévinas’s thought, in *Violence and Metaphysics*, marks a defining moment in the development of *deconstruction*.<sup>190</sup> Lévinas’s own critic of Husserl and Heidegger, which, according to Derrida, acts as a critic on the whole of the ‘Greek’ *metaphysics of being*, folds into paradox, as Lévinas attempts a ‘non-Greek’ metaphysics of the infinite.

The idea of the Greek relationship to the Same, in the notion of *being* or the ego, is an essentially violent relation, and, according to Derrida, in Lévinas it is contrasted with “a

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<sup>187</sup>Ibid, 158.

<sup>188</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 82.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid, 151.

<sup>190</sup>Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 146.



nonviolent relationship to the infinite as infinitely other, to the Other”.<sup>191</sup> For Derrida, the notion of the *Other*, as infinitely other, infinitely separate, is itself a “metaphysics that Lévinas seeks to raise up from its subordinate position and whose concept he seeks to restore in opposition to the entire tradition derived from Aristotle.”<sup>192</sup> Inspired in part, according to Derrida, by “messianic eschatology”, Lévinas’s thought eludes a simple positioning—“neither as a theology, nor as a Jewish mysticism (it can even be understood as the trial of theology and mysticism); neither as a dogmatics, nor as a religion, nor as a morality.”<sup>193</sup> Rather “[i]t seeks to be understood from within a *recourse to experience itself*.”<sup>194</sup> It is this thought of experience, that echoes the experience of *deconstruction*, that Derrida himself will begin to articulate later in *Voice and Phenomenon*. The reading developed here, is that both Derrida and Lévinas are radicalising the phenomenological reduction in two distinct ways, and, in some ways, Derrida’s radicalising move is partly inspired through the critic he makes of Lévinas’s earlier radicalisation. Lawlor acknowledges the positive influence from Levinas on Derrida’s thought, “at the same time as there is a critique in “Violence and Metaphysics,” there is an appropriation of Levinas’s thought: here Derrida begins to conceive difference as alterity”,<sup>195</sup> and Simon Critchley takes Derrida’s engagement with Levinas to be a deconstructive one, not a simple critic, but rather a double motion.<sup>196</sup> Both are already in a dialogue of sorts—perhaps comparable with that earlier dialogue between Husserl and Heidegger, and from whom, both had developed their respective and original positions<sup>197</sup>—indeed Derrida admits to having “already come close to Lévinas’s own problematic.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>191</sup>Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 83.

<sup>192</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup>Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 228–229.

<sup>196</sup>Critchley, *Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*, 13–14.

<sup>197</sup>To be noted here is that the arc of this dissertation follows a reverse chronology in terms of the history of ideas. Derrida’s radicalising move is subsequent to the one from Lévinas, in historical terms, yet paradoxically it needs to be taken first as it gives reason to Lévinas.

<sup>198</sup>Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 84.

#### 4.3.1. *Critique of Violence as an Axis of Comparison.*

What are these two radical turns of the phenomenological praxis? In brief, both Derrida and Lévinas agree, that the root of violence arises from the metaphysics of the Same—the Greek metaphysics—and Derrida elsewhere uses the term *logocentrism*<sup>199</sup> to designate this field. It leads to “a soliloquy of reason and solitude of light. Incapable of respecting the Being and meaning of the other, phenomenology and ontology would be philosophies of violence.”<sup>200</sup> Both agree on the need for a departure, yet Derrida’s critic does not dare to depart from language and so from (the Greek) philosophy. Rather he seeks the limit through *deconstruction*, and at this edge, enters the unheard-of question. Between violence, and the possibility of non-violence then, there lies an axis of their distinctive positions. In Lévinas, the infinitely otherness of infinity is a non-concept—a notion perhaps?—whose experience reveals a asymmetrical relation to the Same as finitude, and so, conception, philosophy, and language in general. The violence of language, thought, and therefore phenomenology—and wider still, philosophy—resides in its implicit covering over the infinite-other, through its attributions, or orientations, towards the Same, and to the notions of identity thereby implied. Therefore, non-violence arises in the move towards the respect of, the *Other*, or rather the infinite otherness of the *Other*, and, for Lévinas, this opens the way to ethical non-violence. Non-violence remains a possibility for Lévinas, as a recuperation of a respect for the infinite otherness of the *Other*, arising out of a transcendence of—or going beyond—the thought of the same, as exhibited in the ego. Derrida, by contrast, has no faith in the possibility of a going beyond the idea of the same, in Lévinas’s sense; the contradictions, he sees, in the thought of Lévinas, leads Derrida to reject the possibility of non-violence as a horizon,

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<sup>199</sup>The term appears in *Of Grammatology* (1967)—Lawlor, *Derrida and Husserl*, 151.

<sup>200</sup>Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 91.

acknowledging only the possibility for an “*Economy* of violence.”<sup>201</sup> Violence is an inescapable aspect of our condition which can only be ameliorated.

Peace is made only in a certain silence, which is determined and protected by the violence of speech. Since speech says nothing other than the horizon of this silent peace by which it has itself summoned and that it is its mission to protect and to prepare, speech indefinitely remains silent. One never escapes the economy of war.<sup>202</sup>

Taking the stand for philosophy against Lévinas, Derrida states, “[n]o philosophy responsible for its language can renounce ipseity in general” and philosophy holds a space “[b]etween original tragedy and messianic triumph” where “violence is returned against violence within knowledge, in which original finitude appears, and in which the other is respected within, and by, the same.”<sup>203</sup>

Derrida does not follow Lévinas into an experience of transcendence due to his own particular engagement with the *phenomenological epoché*, or reduction, in that Derrida does not leave the logos of language. Even in his move towards deconstruction and into the liminal zone of the unheard-of question—where he reaches the limit—there can be no beyond. This then is Derrida’s absolute, it is the inescapable nature of the labyrinth of paintings in the Dresden gallery—that isolated and desperate image of dreadful symmetry—an *an-archy*<sup>204</sup> of groundlessness.

That I am also essentially the other's other, and that I know I am, is the evidence of a strange symmetry whose trace appears nowhere in Levinas's descriptions.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>201</sup>Ibid, 117.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid, 148.

<sup>203</sup>Ibid, 131.

<sup>204</sup>Taking the Greek *arche* for origin Lévinas prefixes to give *an-archie*—in the French—for a condition which offers no originating ground. In her doctoral thesis, Masumi Nagasaka takes up this lexicon of origin to frame Husserl and Heidegger within the geometry of origin, giving *intra-archie*, and *auto-archie* respectively. I make use of the anglicised *archy* here.

<sup>205</sup>Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 128.

Derrida does not see Lévinas's *Other*—only the other of the *Same*, the ego's other. In part, his critic of Lévinas is founded upon the impossibility, from within the finitude of the *Same*, of meaningfully arriving at Lévinas's infinitely-other—an *Other* which is beyond the relation of *same* and *other*. But as chapter three demonstrated, with the experience of *différance* and its movement in the *trace*, Derrida arrives in a region which is very close. Notably, the relation to *dukkha* and *tanhā*<sup>206</sup> that has been intimated, gives reason to Derrida's vision within the broader field being outlined here. So it is through Lévinas, that Derrida's desperation can turn to enthusiasm—offering the possibility, that fully entering into *dukkha* can be an awakening into the process of cessation (*nibbāna*), and that, not only an ethical horizon can open, but the praxis towards this opening can be understood in terms of a gradual cultivation.

#### 4.4. *Lévinas and the cultivation of awakening.*

How is infinity and the *Other* then to be understood in Lévinas? In her doctoral thesis, Masumi Nagasaka<sup>207</sup> tracks Lévinas's inspiration of the *Other* to a metaphor of the nesting of dreams, imagined by Lev Shestov<sup>208</sup> in his sceptical criticism of Husserl's claim, to an apodictic evidential foundation in the *cogito*. Taking the case of the dreamer who arrives at a doubt that their dream is real, and so, via that doubt, tries to awaken, “nothing assures that negating the truths of dreams will lead us to the waking state, nothing can guarantee that that which we think to be a waking state is effectively the definitive awakening.”<sup>209</sup> In a mostly critical response to Shestov's ideas<sup>210</sup>, according to Nagasaka, Jean Hering, nevertheless,

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<sup>206</sup>For consistency the ‘headings’ of the Four Noble Truths will take the Pāli form: *dukkha, tanhā, nibbāna, magga*.

<sup>207</sup>Nagasaka, ‘Faith in Mistrust’.

<sup>208</sup>The French translation of Shestov's name is Léon Chestov.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid, 132.—(my translation)

<sup>210</sup>Jean Hering, ‘Sub specie aeterni: Réponse à une critique de la philosophie de Husserl’. *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 7 (1927), 351–364.

highly appreciates Shestov's dream within a dream argument.<sup>211</sup> Despite an early engagement with Husserl, through the criticisms of Hering and Shestov, Lévinas "does not follow the same path".<sup>212</sup> For Nagasaka, in Levinas's analysis of Husserl's adoption of *epoché*, in preference to Cartesian doubt, the notion of the change of levels—that occurs in the application of sceptical doubt—shows the influence, of Shestov's notion of the nesting of dreams. Because the positive basis for each stage of the doubt, functions at a different level to that where the negation operates, Lévinas states, that "he does not see any circularity of self contradiction in Cartesian doubt."<sup>213</sup>

Indeed, this argument of the difference in levels of the negations applies to scepticism in general and, it is this way that we glimpse the shestovian argument of the nesting of dream within dream, present with Levinas.<sup>214</sup>

Lévinas himself states this quite clearly.

In the *cogito* the thinking subject which denies its evidences ends up at the evidence of this work of negation, although in fact at a different level from that at which it had denied. But it ends up at the affirmation of an evidence that is not a final or initial affirmation, for it can be cast into doubt in its turn.<sup>215</sup>

In this process of doubt—the Cartesian doubt whose utility Husserl had challenged—Lévinas detects a rather surprising implication: "it is a movement of descent towards an ever more profound abyss which we elsewhere have called *there is*, beyond affirmation and negation."<sup>216</sup> This "work of infinite negation", that Lévinas sees Descartes enter into, operates a

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<sup>211</sup>Nagasaka, 'Faith in Mistrust', 133.

<sup>212</sup>Ibid, 137.

<sup>213</sup>Ibid, 141.—(my translation)

<sup>214</sup>Ibid.—(my translation)

<sup>215</sup>Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Martinus Nijhoff Philosophy Texts; v. 1 (The Hague; Boston: Hingham, MA: M. Nijhoff Publishers; distribution for the U.S. and Canada, Kluwer Boston, 1979), 93.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid.

“vertiginous descent into the abyss”, so is neither a form of intuition nor reason “in the ordinary sense”.<sup>217</sup> In that which Husserl rejects, as contradicting his intention of positive enquiry, since “[t]he same material of being cannot be simultaneously doubted and held to be certain”,<sup>218</sup> Lévinas sees an alternative, positive, basis for enquiry. It is an enquiry which goes against the intellectual move of bracketing, but may yet preserve a modification of the notion of *epoché* developed here,<sup>219</sup> since Lévinas's steps into this abyss do not eradicate the world—which appears to persist as if on the other side of the mirror. The cascade into the abyss is a ‘beyond’ an ‘*au-delà*’—it has an orthogonal relation to thought and the intellect—or as Nagasaka frames this, a beyond the possible “which is neither inside neither outside the field of the possible but perpendicular to this field.”<sup>220</sup>

It is in this “beyond affirmation and negation”, in the heart of this descent that Lévinas claims there is an ‘*Il y a*’. The English translation—‘*there is*’—is problematic here due to the usage of the verb ‘to be’, and the inevitable relation to the concept of being, and, by extension, the Same—which is a concept that Lévinas is attempting to step out of. The French has greater resonance, since ‘*Il*’ is the third person pronoun; ‘*y*’ is an adverbial indication for place, as in here or there; ‘*a*’ is the third person present indicative for the verb *avoir*; (to have) —‘s/he there has’ offers the secondary layer to the meaning of ‘*Il y a*’—an ambiguity suggesting the transpersonal opening that the vertiginous descent into Lévinas's *epoché* engenders. Thus the ‘I’ has been dispossessed, *denuclearised*, and *doubt* has opened up the ground—on which the ‘I’ stood—in the infinite iteration of its action, thus undercutting any self-power to act from a position. However, in Lévinas's vision—or experience—of this

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<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Husserl, *Ideas I*, §31,58.

<sup>219</sup>Perhaps this modification recovers something of the deeper notion of *epoché* that Pyrrho, arguably, may have engaged with.

<sup>220</sup>Nagasaka, ‘Faith in Mistrust’, 127.—(my translation)

descent, he is witness to another source that is radically other than the self, a source which can, and does, assert its affirmative, its ‘yes’.

The I in the negativity manifested by doubt breaks with participation, but does not find in the *cogito* itself a stopping place. It is not I, it is the other that can say *yes*. From him comes affirmation; he is at the commencement of experience.<sup>221</sup>

And when the infinitely-otherness of this *Other* is understood in the context of this orthogonal relation to the ‘I’ of the *Same*—of identity and the iteration of language—the meaning of Lévinas's *Other* begins to be glimpsed.

Outlined in section two, is a modern variant of the *keyword* of a Sōn gong’an—the question ‘*what is this?*’ This question already shows a similar opening towards the infinite—perhaps one could say, towards emptiness or *nature-of-mind*—as ‘*there is*’ (*Il y a*), especially when one embraces the phrase in French—‘*Qu’est-ce qu’il y a ?*’ It is true that ‘*what is it?*’ can also be translated as ‘*Qu’est-ce qu’il y a ?*’, but this already presupposes that the object in question is an object of knowledge and not an opening to a relation, or communication—‘*est*’ being the third person present indicative for the verb *être*—to be. The availability, in the French, of the two forms, allows a distinction, or rather a choice—in using ‘*Il y a*’, or in the interrogative, ‘*Qu’est-ce qu’il y a ?*’, we invite the response from the *Other*, thus we have let go of self-power; all we can do is wait, listen, and in this we are lead into another suspension which appears also to engender the arising of *samādhi*.

Returning to the Buddhist model of the *Four Noble Truths* with a question. If the experience of *dukkha–taṇhā* relation can be seen as comparable to the Derridian experience of *différance*, the *trace* and *supplement*—the movement of that interminable, and ultimately

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<sup>221</sup>Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 93.

futile, compulsion to arrive at presence, through an idea, a mark, a symbol, in the face of its irrevocable non-presence—then, could this not also represent the infinite cascade into the abyss, desperately being unable to arrest the fall within the process of Lévinassian doubt? Is not Derrida’s radicalisation, in the experience of *deconstruction*, and that of Lévinas’s, towards a radical phenomenological reduction, reaching some sort of intersection? To suggest a meeting point: is not absence and death, for Derrida, also a wholly *other* of some kind? And when Lévinas evokes ‘*Il y a*’, does this not also reveal an ultimate hollowness of the ego, that, as well, whispers *death*? If the orthogonal transformation, ‘*beyond*’, that Lévinas proposes, has a junction with the world of thought, intellect, and language, that junction appears to be one with the unheard-of question in Derrida’s *deconstruction*. The transformation between Derrida and Lévinas, then, is to be situated in the *attitude* towards this absence—there appears to be a choice. If ‘*Il y a*’, or even ‘*Qu’est-ce qu’il y a ?*’, arises then a sublime relation presents itself which is offered by the *Other* entirely—it is a ‘yes’—and we are held vigilant, dumbfounded and awakening—in gratitude. This then would be cessation (known also as *nibbāna*) the third of the *Four Noble Truths*, and for Lévinas, it calls for a response, offering a response-ability that orients towards the fourth of *Four Noble Truths*—the *path (magga)*.

For Lévinas, this awakening is not a static state, nor a finality; there “is the ever-recommencing awakening in wakefulness itself; the *Same* infinitely brought back in its most intimate identity to the *Other*.”<sup>222</sup> It is a dynamic relation which, in encapsulating the orthogonal relation, defies even that geometric determination—this is the paradoxical relation between *dukkha* and *bodhi*—as the enlightening mind—between *samsara* and *nibbāna*.

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<sup>222</sup>Emmanuel Lévinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 161.



In the awakening, between the Same and the Other, a relation irreducible to adversity and conciliation, alienation and assimilation appears. Here, the Other, instead of alienating the uniqueness of the Same which it disturbs and holds, only calls it up from the depths of itself to what is deeper than itself, whither nothing and no one can replace it.<sup>223</sup>

'Il y a' evokes this relation; perhaps one can also imagine an apodictic relation *R*, which is foundational, yet evades any determination of terms that would specify a particular relation—between two certain things for instance. Manifestation into a particular relation collapses the foundation via its transition into the particular. This could imply a relational ontology along the lines that Andrew Benjamin has suggested<sup>224</sup> but Levinas's privileging of ethics as primary and his departure from ontology suggests difficulties in taking this route—difficulties that may also prove fruitful.<sup>225</sup> The attempt to find a topology of this relation have lead some to explore paradoxical figures, such as the Kline bottle or the Möbius strip<sup>226</sup>—these attempts, appealing though they may be, may just amount to another attempt at conceptual recuperation.

For Levinas, awakening is a “vigilance of the Ego”, a “denucleation”, it is an ego that is a “waking without intentionality, but only awakened unceasingly from its very state of waking, sobering out of its identity into what is deeper than itself.”<sup>227</sup> The relation moves two ways here: towards the dream of the *Same*, in knowledge, which, in turn, covers over the relation itself, or towards awakening through the power of the phenomenological reduction—through *epoché* in the Lévinassian sense. For Levinas the “[r]eduction is above all the

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<sup>223</sup>Ibid.

<sup>224</sup>See Andrew E. Benjamin, *Towards a Relational Ontology: Philosophy's Other Possibility*, SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015).

<sup>225</sup>The metaphysical challenge to the liminal evocation of Lévinas and Derrida deserves a future response—the primacy of *Relation* appears fundamental, but how it is to be properly understood is a question beyond the present scope of this work.

<sup>226</sup>See Hagiwara, ‘Derrida and Zen: Desert and Swamp’, 123–150.

<sup>227</sup>Lévinas, *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, 162.

procedure that shows and reawakens, beneath the repose in itself'.<sup>228</sup> Whether the reduction is taken as '*tracing back the radiance*', or as *deconstruction*, or as the radical doubt / *epoché* in Lévinas, it needs to get beneath the dream of the *Same* and reveal the '*Il y a*' as a fundament. It is this *Relation* that is cardinal and which defines a primordial responsibility—and which offers in turn *response-ability*—in the face of which, all mentation, egoic or not, must make account. The *Other* then is concrete—yet infinitely indefinable—but whose relation is inescapable since it gifts our foundation, and our potential for action. David Wood is critical of Levinas's claim to an Ethics, as primordial, in the asymmetrical relation to the *Other*—Wood detects ontological assumptions dangerously hidden within within the stances that Levinas takes, particularly in his anthropocentrism.<sup>229</sup> The reading of Levinas taken here, oriented in relation to the Buddhist praxis, serves to act as a corrective to an overtly androcentric bias that Levinas may well be guilty of—in some ways, the question of the validity of a hermeneutic, which overlooks the theologically Jewish context of Levinas's thought, should ideally be addressed. However, Wood's concern over the asymmetrical nature of the relation to the *Other* is, perhaps, founded on a misconception, since it appears to overlook the nature of the change of levels effected across the relation. It is within the suspension of the thought of the Same, in the hollowing out of the self, in the *great doubt*, that the relation to the *Other* is revealed. There is an asymmetry here, within a kind of orthogonal relation, but it is also a paradoxical relation, which defies the linear ontological distinctions, such as between symmetry and asymmetry. It is this dimensional shift that challenges Wood's criticism.

Returning to the breath—my breath—as example; as I breath—lost in my thoughts I sleep in the constant reclamation of identity in my attempt at being present. As in the Dresden

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<sup>228</sup>Ibid, 164.

<sup>229</sup>cf. Chapter 3: Where Levinas Went Wrong in D. Wood, *Step Back, The: Ethics and Politics after Deconstruction*, Filosofia (E-Libro) (State University of New York Press, 2012), 53–69.

gallery, I am locked in an endless labyrinth of unfulfillable reflections of identity, which only reveal the eternal drift of *différance*. But at the same time, this breath continues outside and *beyond* my attempt. In releasing my grasping for the *supplement*, the movement of *différance* slows—the tension eases, a space opens—and in a regard towards the breath, now ‘*Il y a*’. All of *this* is fundamentally *Other*, and the self is now—along with its intentional horizon, and the world of identity, and the *Same*—only the dream in thought, that awareness is awakening out of. The concrete *actuality* is *hic et nunc* in simultaneity, extending out beyond this breath, and full of potentiality, in the face of the *Other*. This awakening movement is the hope of Lévinas within the despair of Derrida.

Vigilance—awakening rising up within awakening—awakening that awakens the state into which wakefulness itself falls and congeals—is vocation—and concretely responsibility for the Other.<sup>230</sup>

In the essay I have been referencing here, Lévinas concludes, enquiring whether wakefulness is attainable, asking, “[i]s not wakefulness an inspiration?”<sup>231</sup> Perhaps then, in this inspiration, there is a teleology of sorts? There is an ethical direction in the awakening relation to the *Other*—and by extension to the other in general—in Buddhism this is encoded into the *path* (*magga*). It is a *path* that leads back to the deepening, or unfolding, of awakening, and this is an aspect of *gradual cultivation* within Chinul's model, but it can also be seen as a *path* towards a deepening relation with the *Other*. It is not a question of ‘either–or’, but rather of ‘both–and’, here; the *Two Truths* doctrine already implies the need to hold open the seeming paradox of an impossible relation, and engage a *middle way* that brings the two into a (dis?)harmonic resonance<sup>232</sup>—and so it is with the *path*. The engaged aspect—a self (or non-self?), engaged in the world, displaying the *prajñā* of enlightening activity as *path*—is

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<sup>230</sup>Ibid, 165.

<sup>231</sup>Ibid, 166.

<sup>232</sup>Admittedly even the notions of harmony and resonance seem to offer too much closure here.

more covered over than the *path* of the solitary disciple who seeks for an awakening insight deep in a forest or mountain cave. Yet as Stephen Batchelor has highlighted, scriptural support can be found.<sup>233</sup>

"Suppose, bhikkhus, a man wandering through a forest would see an ancient path, an ancient road travelled upon by people in the past. He would follow it and would see an ancient city, [...] with parks, groves, ponds, and ramparts, a delightful place. Then the man would inform the king or a royal minister: 'Sire, know that while wandering through the forest I saw an ancient path, an ancient road travelled upon by people in the past. I followed it and saw an ancient city, an ancient capital [...] a delightful place. Renovate that city, sire!' Then the king or the royal minister would renovate the city, and some time later that city would become successful and prosperous, well populated, filled with people, attained to growth and expansion.

"So too, bhikkhus, I saw the ancient path, [...] And what is that ancient path, that ancient road? It is just this Noble Eightfold Path;<sup>234</sup>

A city is the archetypal place for the encounter with the other, and for action within society, and this action in the face of, and alongside, others has always been, not just a manifestation, but also a test, '*une épreuve*', of the quality of one's level of realisation—the two, after all, are interlaced, intimately contaminated. In this dynamic there is a communication and a communion. To recall the mountain metaphor: here the summit and the town are superimposed—what is inside is outside, and what is outside is in. The intimate *Other*, at the other side of *my* breath is the *Other* who regards me, and I regard in return, in the street, face to face—and extending beyond this encounter, in the face of all sentient beings. The injunction to respect—the duty (*devoir*) of responsibility and the power (*pouvoir*) of *response-ability*<sup>235</sup>—consequent to this relation, is the ethical foundation both with Lévinas and Buddhist dharma.

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<sup>233</sup>S. Batchelor, *After Buddhism: Rethinking the Dharma for a Secular Age* (Yale University Press, 2015), 87–89.

<sup>234</sup>Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, SN 12.65, 603.

<sup>235</sup>My use of the French here is to acknowledge the exploration of the word verb *pouvoir*, made by Lévinas in his conception of "*au-delà du possible*" (beyond the possible), as explicated by Nakasaka. Nagasaka, 'Faith in Mistrust', 138.

#### 4.5. *The Return—Casting an Eye Towards Enaction.*

In the seminal work—*The Embodied Mind*<sup>236</sup>—Varela, Thompson and Rosch do not reference Lévinas in their development of *enaction*, as a modification of intentionality within the phenomenological model. The omission is both understandable and a loss; rather the phenomenological perspective of Maurice Merleau-Ponty is the inspiration here. The choice is understandable, since Merleau-Ponty’s work already closely engaged with the developing fields of the psychological and cognitive science of his day. Certainly, the cross cultural engagement between Western and Buddhist phenomenology, by the enactivist cognitive scientists and philosophers, has offered vital insights, but without the ethical imperative from the perspective of Lévinas’s relation to the *Other*, and from the Buddhist praxis, they seem rather denuded. This can be seen from a recent article by Voros and Bitbol on enaction.<sup>237</sup> The article argues for the recovery of, what the authors see as, Varela’s radical vision of *enactment*. But even with a notion of Buddhist non-duality, as guiding conception alongside a critic of traditional cognitivism, the evocation of an ethics, as a partner to the practice of science, seems to lack weight. All that is evoked, within this framing, is the inter-relation of attitudinal stances with experimentation and theory development, within the scientific method. Here, the insight that, “[s]cience, then, is not, and cannot be value-free: cognizing” is legitimately raised, and the recommendation that, “a community of mindful researchers who suffuse their scientific work with mindfulness, instead of leading two separate lives, one on the cushion, the other in the laboratory”, can be made.<sup>238</sup> Yet here, meditating scientists—or meditation in general—like mindfulness, remains ethically neutral. Certainly, efficiency and effectiveness can be enhanced—perhaps also, a sensitivity to this form of *enaction*, can bring

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<sup>236</sup>F.J. Varela et al., *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, The MIT Press (MIT Press, 2016).

<sup>237</sup>S Voros and M Bitbol, ‘Enacting Enaction: A Dialectic Between Knowing and Being’, *Constructivist Foundations* 13, no. 1 (2017), 31–40.

<sup>238</sup>*Ibid*, 38.

more insight and knowledge to the field of action—but the meaning of the ends, or a reason to engage, eludes the potential of this line of enquiry. It is as if the philosophy cannot break out of a limit, that was set earlier in its own historical development, leaving this limit as an obscured, yet still operative, assumption. This is regrettable; the practical import of *enaction* may have the potential to achieve a radically new level, if a dialogue with the thoughts of Lévinas and Derrida could also be fully engaged.

An engagement, with science or poetry, is an act in response to the *Other*, but that, which the *Other* demands first, is the call for respect. Language, and the choice of which language, and which thought, is a responsibility and a *response-ability*. But it is our actions which do the talking in *actuality*; this is the medium of the ultimate dialogue with the *Other*—whether it is through scientific experimentation, the digging of a mine, the burning of fossil fuels, the planting of a seed in cultivation, or the helping hand outreached with a smile and a regard, face to face.

**Conclusion:**  
**—No Conclusion.**

*A fruitful journey?*

I hope this study has at least suggested some points of liaison between Western and Buddhist phenomenological traditions. In taking the comparative as a dialogue, allowing the modulation of original positions to tentatively open a syncretic horizon, I believe an initial conversation has been achieved. My engagement with Husserl has focused almost exclusively upon the mode of the reduction itself—in the form of *epoché*—leaving the tentative relation made with Chinul’s view of *samādhi* and *prajñā* perhaps a little too speculative. However, I read the encounter to be suggestive, and deserving of further exploration. Certainly there is a dialogue to be had between Derrida and Levinas, and chapter three and four has demonstrated, that bringing the Buddhist tradition into the conversation can be fruitful here. That these three strands, can form a mutually supporting frame for an ethical praxis, is certainly a tantalising possibility, and deserving of more research. Chapter four ends with reference to the contemporary phenomenological enactivist perspective. It is in the return to engagement where things get complex; that return, though the engagement of *enaction*, has only been touched upon here, and again, deserves a full treatment. Nevertheless, its inclusion here has helped complete the arc of thought, that is this dissertation. Tracing an open circle—we return to set out again.

*A brief auto-critic.*

The pervading challenge of this dissertation has been its breadth, and due to the limitation of space, the choice of breadth encroaches upon the possibility of depth. Also the

sheer volume of works, from my three main Western interlocutors, has led to the need to be highly selective in my choice of reading; a narrowing of the bibliography in this way, weakens my arguments. I face the same difficulties in my engagements with contemporary authors working in the field. However, I have consciously taken up a broad brush, as I consider the defocused, big picture, view also deserves its place within thought. Is this not, what in some ways, taking a backward step entails? I acknowledge the relative poverty of my treatment of Husserl here too—a fuller study requires a comprehensive reading, and one that recognises the developments in Husserl’s position, and his own understanding of both the Indian and Greek traditions. Another significant omission here has been Heidegger; it is clear that Husserl’s thought develops in relation to Heidegger’s critic, and the later developments by the French school (Levinas, Derrida, et al.) all take the dialectic between Husserl and Heidegger seriously. Also, the symmetry of the arc of this study—as based upon a notion of dialogical exchange—is unbalanced through this omission. I see the Husserl–Heidegger dialogue somewhat echoed in Derrida and Levinas, which again has echoes in the sudden–gradual debate that Chinul engaged with. Although a focus on Chinul, as a limiting strategy, has had relevance—since his syncretic approach resonates with my comparative methodology—my argument has also engaged with Pāli cannon sources, notably in reference to the *Four Noble Truths* model and with the Mādhyamika through Nāgārjuna and Chandrakīrti. If I am to be consistent, I would need to thread a comparative line within the Buddhist tradition, to fully support the breadth of my reading here. Similar criticisms can be made here for my treatment of Levinas and Derrida, both deserve a comprehensive reading to properly effect their dialogue. Derrida’s thought developed over three main periods, and my focus has been at a point on the cusp of his second period—in his establishment of deconstruction. My limited reading of Levinas has mostly come from two relatively late period essays, although I have compensated by making reference to the secondary source of Nagasaka’s doctoral thesis.



Again, I envisage a fuller study, based on the comprehensive scholarship of the three philosophers, but also engaging a treatment of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and that of more contemporary voices such as Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard and Edgar Morin.

*Conclusion—No Conclusion.*

Taken as a whole this dissertation could be seen as yet another attempt to articulate the *Middle Way*—that cardinal but most elusive discovery of the Buddha. And, has often been stated, this middle is not a probabilistic mean or median; neither is it an equitable balance of opposing forces, nor a procedure or a teleology. I do imagine a *path* however, as process and as a journey—like the process of the walk and the climb on the mountain towards its summit—it is a journey towards the interior, the essential, the heart, and, in an impossible simultaneous superposition, the steps also lead us outward into the myriad conditions of the fully imperfect perfect complexity of the messy relations in this world, this biosphere, this life. In short, a dimorphous *journey-path* towards the summit in the town and the town in the summit. But again, this metaphor is a failing attempt and it eternally falls short in the *différance* that opens up between the real and the ideal.<sup>239</sup> That aporia, which is the failing attempt of language to realise its promise, is the apophatic vision of Derrida resonating with the all pervasive nature of *dukkha*. If we rested with *this* ‘truth’ then the dead-end of nihilism may await us—the non-consummation of meaning leading into the *an-archy* of madness and immorality. But this nothingness is also a fullness—the apophatic and kataphatic can arise in an impossible dialogue. The relation of *dukkha* to a world of craving (*tanhā*) is also the relation of cessation (*nibbāna*) to the *path* (*magga*), this impossible superposition is the possibility of a *middle way*, a superposition of two dyads marking a condition and a response: *dukkha-tanhā* and *nibbāna-magga*—they are the *Two Truths* from a different aspect. Where

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<sup>239</sup>cf. Derrida, *Voice & Phenomenon*, 97/87 & 111/99.

Derrida orbits around *dukkha*, Levinas theorises the hope and the responsibility of cessation's (*nibbāna*) relation to the *path* (*magga*)—because it is here where the *Other* calls forth our action towards respect and the subsequent ethic of action—offering a *path* to cultivate, that leads, in turn, back to the *Other*. I must admit my abject failure here, to describe the articulations of this relationship, in a way that can fully honour—be truthful—to each without violence to the other. But the possibility of such an endeavour has the taste of an enthusiasm, and the promise of realising this *middle way* gives hope to the necessary change that we all need to awaken to. Maybe it is in enquiry itself—which is the *way*?

## **Appendix One:**

### **A Very Brief Biography of Chinul**

*First and Second awakenings—1158-1188.*

Having been already introduced to Korea for the best part of a millennium,<sup>240</sup> from China, it was only during the Koryŏ dynasty (937-1392) that an uniquely Korean tradition began to be established—thanks to the syncretic exegesis of Chinul (1158-1210)<sup>241</sup>, arguably one of the most significant figures of Korean Sŏn (Zen) Buddhism. Sent to be ordained at the age of eight, by his father, he seems not to have connected with his preceptor, Sin'gwang Chonghwi.<sup>242</sup> Perhaps to compensate for the “dearth of personal instruction”,<sup>243</sup> it appears that Chinul retreated into studies of scripture for inspiration in his practice. His three awakening experiences came, not from the archetypal direct transmission of Sŏn, but from reading texts. In 1182 Chinul travelled to Kaesŏng, the Koryŏ capital, to attain state recognition through a Sŏn examination process called the Samgha selection. Although passing the exams, Buswell recounts that Chinul “became disgusted with the worldly climate surrounding them. His interest in joining the ecclesiastical hierarchy dampened”.<sup>244</sup> However Chinul encountered a few like minded monks in Kaesŏng, and they formed a pact to create a retreat society dedicated to the development of *samādhi* and *prajñā*—it was, however, to be eight years before the opportunity would arise. It was to be Chinul's spiritual journey during those intervening years that lead to his first and second awakening experiences.

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<sup>240</sup>According to Buswell tradition dates the first introduction of Buddhism to Korea in 372.

Buswell and Chinul, *Tracing Back the Radiance*, 5.

<sup>241</sup>“Chinul 知訥 (1158–1210), or Knowing Reticence, is the preeminent Zen (K. Sŏn/Ch. Chan 禪) figure of premodern Korean Buddhism. (He is more commonly known in Korea by his posthumous title, State Preceptor Puril Pojo 佛日普照國師, the Sun of Buddhahood That Shines Everywhere.)”.

Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark*, 3.

This was his Dharma name given at ordination, he also referred to himself as Moguja (The Oxherder), see note 5, Ibid. 223.

<sup>242</sup>Sin'gwang Chonghwi according to Buswell was “a tenth-generation successor of Pŏmil 梵日 (810-889), the Silla Sŏn monk who travelled to China and received transmission from Yan'guan Qi'an 鹽官齊安 (750?-842) of the Hongzhou 洪州 school.” Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 12. Of the Four Schools that Chinul discusses from a reading of Zongmi's *Special Practice Record*, see: Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark*, 107-115. The Hongzhou school was the only one that survived until Chinul's day. The school adopted a sudden awakening / sudden cultivation approach to the practice, with non-verbal shouts, slaps and other gestures as modalities of dharma transmission.

<sup>243</sup>Ibid. 12-13.

<sup>244</sup>Ibid. 13.

Chinul travelled down the western coast stopping in Ch'öngwön sa in Ch'angp'yöng<sup>245</sup> at the south-western end of the Korean peninsular. Buswell suggests that Chinul was seeking to connect to the cultural flow from the Chinese Sung (Song) dynasty, which had been disrupted by the the Koryö dynasty's political accommodation with the Chin to the north. Although official trade ties with the Song dynasty had been cut, unofficial trade was still being conducted across the South China sea, and so Chinul's stay in Ch'öngwön sa would have been “the best possible location for getting first hand information about Sung Buddhism.”<sup>246</sup> It was through the study the *Platform Sūtra*,<sup>247</sup> that his first awakening experience arose, which, according to Buswell, was “Chinul's true initiation into Buddhism”—nourishing the growing insight that an initial awakening experience is a pre-requisite for “consistent development of the practice.”<sup>248</sup>

Chinul, in “1185, [...] again took up his staff and set off in search of a new environment in which to further his practice.”<sup>249</sup> Staying at Pomun sa, a monastery on “Haga Mountain in southeastern Korea”<sup>250</sup> it seems he concerned himself with developing a syncretic approach, “convinced that the discrepancies between the two streams of thought [namely Sön (direct transmission) and Kyo (scripture based revelation)] could be reconciled.”<sup>251</sup>

I began living in retreat on Haga Mountain 下柯山, I reflected constantly on the Sön adage “Mind is Buddha. [...] Even so, up to this point, I had had doubts about the approach to the access of awakening in the Hwaö̃m teachings; what, finally, did it entail?”<sup>252</sup>

To find an answer Chinul asks a ‘lecturer’, who tells him that he needs to consider the “unimpeded [interpenetration between] phenomenon and phenomena”<sup>253</sup> and that just

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<sup>245</sup>Both the name of the monastery and geographical location remains open to question. Buswell suggests at the locale of present-day Naju near Mokp'o.

see note 110, *Buswell and Chinul, Tracing Back the Radiance*, 85.

<sup>246</sup>*Ibid*, 23.

<sup>247</sup>According to Buswell, “[T]he *Platform Sūtra* remained one of his [Chinul] favorite works; indeed, his esteem for the text was so high, it is said, whenever he was asked to lecture, it was always his first preference.” *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>248</sup>*Ibid*, 23.

<sup>249</sup>*Ibid*, 24.

<sup>250</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>251</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>252</sup>Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 355-356. The Hwaö̃m was the Korean variant of Chinese Huayan School, based on scriptural study, especially the Flower Garland (S. *Avatamsaka*) Sūtra.

<sup>253</sup>*Ibid*, 356.

contemplating the mind entails “neglecting the consummate qualities of the fruition of buddhahood.”<sup>254</sup> Chinul remains silent in response:

I did not answer, but silently thought to myself: “If you contemplate phenomena with the mind, those phenomena will become impediments and needlessly disturb your own mind; when then would there be any resolution?”<sup>255</sup>

The tension between his *nature-of-mind* directed training—originating in the Sōn tradition—and the message of the Kyo texts he had been drawn to was evident. It seems reasonable also to assume, following Buswell’s account,<sup>256</sup> that Chinul’s disillusionment with the worldly fixations of the scholastics within Sōn hierarchy, had pushed him to seek a resolution in a syncretic exegesis. He therefore undertakes a three year search into the scriptures. Quoting from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*<sup>257</sup> Chinul highlights the passage which provokes the breakthrough to his second awakening experience.

[T]he summation said, “The wisdom of the tathāgatas is also just like this:... it is fully present in the bodies of all sentient beings. It is merely all these ordinary, foolish people ... who are not aware of it and do not recognize it.”<sup>258</sup> I put the roll of scripture on my head in reverence and, unwittingly, began to weep.<sup>259</sup>

In a moment of clarity, Chinul sees the syncretic path before him; a path that can include both Sōn and Kyo in non-contradiction.<sup>260</sup> Buswell recounts<sup>261</sup> that by 1188 Chinul

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<sup>254</sup>Ibid.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid.

<sup>256</sup>Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 6-39 & Buswell and Chinul, *Tracing Back the Radiance*, 17-35.

<sup>257</sup>Also known as the *Flower Garland Sutra* or *Flower Ornament Scripture*.

<sup>258</sup>From another translation: “Similarly, the knowledge of Buddha, infinite and unobstructed, universally able to benefit all, is fully inherent in the bodies of sentient beings; but the ignorant, because of clinging to deluded notions, do not know of it, are not aware of it, and so do not benefit from it.”

T. Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avatamsaka Sūtra* (Shambhala, 1993), 1003.

<sup>259</sup>Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 356-7.

<sup>260</sup>Thus leading to “his subsequent incorporation of Hwaōm theory and Sōn practice in two later treatises published posthumously: *The Complete and Sudden Attainment of Buddhahood* and *Resolving Doubts About Observing the Hwadu*.”, Buswell and Chinul, *Tracing Back the Radiance*, 25.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid, 26.

finally has the opportunity to establish his retreat, and he gathers together as many of the signatories to the original compact as possible at Kōjo sa.<sup>262</sup>

*Third and Final awakening—1197–1210.*

The success of Chinul's first work, *Encouragement to Practice*<sup>263</sup> lead to the community membership growing, such that by 1197<sup>264</sup> a new centre of practice was needed. A small neglected monastery on Songgwang Mountain with expansion potential was located and work to adapt the site commenced.<sup>265</sup> Later in 1197 Chinul engaged on a three year practice retreat at Sangmujuam<sup>266</sup>—high up in the Mount Chiri massif—before completing the definitive move to the new monastery. It was during this retreat that his third and final awakening occurred<sup>267</sup>—and again it was prompted by a textual source. This time illumination came through reading the “Records of Sōn Master Dahui Pujue”<sup>268</sup> a proponent of the ‘shortcut approach’ of Kanhwa Sōn.<sup>269</sup> Kanhwa practice involves the study of short, seemingly paradoxical, textual exchanges between master and disciple, which defies a straight forward ‘common’ understanding, and so challenges the reader to go deeper. It is through the struggle to resolve the aporic tensions within the meanings of the text, where the central focus of the practice is placed. Practice centres around keeping in mind the *keyword* of the exchange, which acts as the locus of the aporia evoked. Significantly however, even after his third awakening Chinul does not radically revise his pedagogic line. Even in his last major work, *Excerpts*, written shortly before his death in 1210, Kanhwa practice is integrated only as a particular and special practice for “patched-robed monks”<sup>270</sup> who are capable.

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<sup>262</sup>At the end of *Encouragement to Practice* Chinul recounts: “We invited those who had previously made the same vow to gather there with us, but some had died, others were sick, and still others were pursuing fame and profit, and were not able to join us. Finally, with the remaining group of three or four monks, we established this dharma assembly in fulfillment of our vow.”, Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 191.

<sup>263</sup>Chinul, *Encouragement to Practice: The Compact of the Samādhi and Prajñā Society* in Chinul, *Chinul: Selected Works*, 115-194.—was composed to serve as a manual to establish the spirit along with the theological and philosophical framing of their collective retreat.

<sup>264</sup>Ibid, 22.

<sup>265</sup>The original name of the monastery was “Kilsangsa 吉祥寺” and eventually became, after Chinul's time, Songgwangsa 松廣寺 “that, down to the present day, has been one of the most important in all of Korea.” Ibid, 23.

<sup>266</sup>Ibid, 24.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid, 25.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid.

<sup>269</sup>“Kanhwa Sōn 看話禪 (C. kanhua Chan, Chan of Observing the Keyword)” Ibid.

<sup>270</sup>Chinul, *Numinous Awareness Is Never Dark*, 186.

## **Appendix Two:**

### **Reference Key for Buddhist Sources**

<b>refs</b>	<b>Sutta Pitaka</b>				<b>Basket of teachings</b>	
<b>DN</b>		Dīgha Nikāya			group of long texts	long discourse of the Buddha
<b>MN</b>		Majjhima Nikāya			group of middle length texts	middle length discourses of the Buddha
<b>SN</b>		Samyutta Nikāya			group of connected texts	connected discourse of the Buddha
<b>AN</b>		Anguttara Nikāya			group of texts (containing) an increasing (no of) items	numerical discourses of the Buddha
		Khuddaka Nikāya			group of small texts	15 volumes – including (below)
<b>Dhp</b>			Dhammapada			collection of sayings in verse
<b>Ud</b>			Udana			collection of inspired utterances
<b>Snp</b>			Suttanipata			collection in 5 volumes
				Uragavagga	The Chapter on the Serpent	
				Cūlavagga	The Minor Chapter	
				Mahāvagga	The Great Chapter	
				Atthakavagga	The Chapter of Octads	
				Pārāyanavagga	The Chapter on the Way to the Beyond	
<b>Nd</b>			Niddessa			a commentary on the Suttanipāta
<b>BD</b>	Vinaya Pitaka				Basket of Discipline	
		Vibhaṅga			Commentary on the rules	
		Khandhaka			Divisions	comprising of 22 divisions
			Mahavagga		Great Division	
			Cullavagga		Minor Division	
		Parivara			Accessory	
<b>Ab</b>	Abhidhamma Pitaka				Basket of Things Related to the Teaching	7 volumes systematising the teachings

Note: I use SuttaCentral<sup>271</sup> references – indexing as per translated source texts in bibliography. This a system based, for the most part, upon the Pali Text Society (PTS) references.

<sup>271</sup>‘SuttaCentral—Home’, SuttaCentral, accessed 10 August 2019, <https://suttacentral.net/>.

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