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## **IMPLEMENTATION OF HEIDEGGER'S ANGST INTO BUDDHIST PROBLEM OF SUFFERING: ON HOW BUDDHIST DISCOURSE ENGENDERS AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEM AND HOW TO APPROACH TO IT WITH WESTERN ONTOLOGY**

IMPLEMENTACIÓN DEL CONCEPTO DE ANGST DE HEIDEGGER EN EL PROBLEMA BUDISTA SOBRE EL SUFRIMIENTO: CÓMO EL DISCURSO BUDISTA GENERA DIFICULTADES EPISTEMOLÓGICAS Y CÓMO ABORDARLO CON LA ONTOLOGÍA OCCIDENTAL

**Ege Kaan Duman** ege.duman@dukekunshan.edu.cn  
Duke Kunshan University, China

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### **Abstract**

Early Buddhist discourse recognizes the problem of *dukkha* (suffering) and argues that the cause of *dukkha* can be removed. This paper attempts to demonstrate how Buddhist claim that *dukkha* can be removed fails as it creates epistemological complications within the Buddhist discourse, and attempts to show how substituting Heidegger's concept of *Angst* for Buddhist concept of *dukkha* could solve this problem. It is argued that the solution proposed by the four noble truths of early Buddhist tradition contradicts with the ontological and epistemological properties and implications of the concept of *dukkha*, and, accordingly, these properties of *dukkha* ought to be revised. As a solution to this problem, it is proposed that *Angst* addresses the problem of suffering more efficiently by not engendering such epistemological

complications while also retaining the philosophy and worldview created by the Buddhist discourse as it accurately facilitates the Buddhist perspective.

### **Resumen**

El discurso budista de los primeros tiempos reconoce el problema del *dukkha* (sufrimiento) y sostiene que su causa se puede eliminar. Este artículo intenta demostrar cómo la afirmación budista de que se puede eliminar el *dukkha* no cierra, ya que genera complicaciones epistemológicas dentro del discurso budista e intenta demostrar que sustituir el concepto budista de *dukkha* por el concepto de *Angst* de Heidegger podría resolver este problema. Se argumenta que la solución propuesta por las cuatro verdades nobles de la tradición budista de los primeros tiempos contradice las propiedades e implicaciones ontológicas y epistemológicas del concepto de *dukkha*, y, en consecuencia, estas propiedades de *dukkha* se deberían revisar. Como solución, se propone que *Angst* aborda el problema del sufrimiento de manera más eficiente al no generar tales complicaciones epistemológicas al tiempo que conserva la filosofía y la cosmovisión del discurso budista ya que facilita con precisión la perspectiva budista.

**Keywords:** problem of suffering; four noble truths; Buddhism; early Buddhism; *dukkha*; Heidegger; *angst*; anguish

**Palabras Claves:** problema del sufrimiento; cuatro nobles verdades; budismo; el budismo temprano; *dukkha*; Heidegger; *angst*; angustia

## Introduction

While Buddhist discourse seemingly does not foster a problem concerning the existence of evil, it is imperative to show how early Buddhist tradition ontologically contradicts with its premises in its attempt to evaluate the existence of suffering to accurately examine the approach taken by this discourse. Accordingly, in this paper I will pursue to demonstrate how early Buddhist philosophy fails to maintain consistent ontological and metaphysical frameworks as it perceives beings in terms of finitude (Umehara, 1970) yet does not evidently acknowledge the continuity of spatial, temporal, and casual nature of things, which are required for us to claim that a thing is empirically real (Abelsen, 1993).

Thus, I will first dissect the Buddhist approach to existence of beings and to the four noble truths and show how these two approaches might engender a logical problem through Schopenhauer's fourfold law of sufficient reason.

Then, I will wear a Western perspective to argue that while Buddhist view on existence seems rational, its approach to evil and suffering has essential epistemological complications.

In the conclusion, I will suggest that the implementation of Heidegger's account of suffering, which ultimately originates from a similar metaphysical and epistemological understanding of world to that of Buddhist tradition, to the Buddhist discourse of existence provides the discourse with further consistency which Buddhist account of suffering fails to capture.

The four noble truths are as follows:

- (1) Suffering exists
- (2) Suffering has a cause
- (3) The cause can be removed
- (4) There are eight practices by which the cause of suffering can be removed (Umehara, 1970)

Now, *prima facie*, Buddhism acknowledges that suffering exists. Furthermore, it also acknowledges that its existence follows a cause, as (2) states. Indeed, (2) is contingent to Buddhist perception of this world that every phenomena is conditioned by causes (Kalupahana, 1977). This account creates an empirical basis for a metaphysical explanation of this world which ultimately stems from impermanency and which accordingly rejects substantial forms.

However, this does not *eo ipso* mean that since all phenomena are impermanent all phenomena therefore are or imply *dukkha* –suffering, unrest–. While all phenomena are nonsubstantial since they are casually determined, not all phenomena are dispositionally determined, and only those that are dispositionally determined are *dukkha* (Kalupahana, 1977). Thus, although world is necessarily impermanent, the suffering can be avoided as not everything is dispositionally determined (Gäb, 2015).

### **Problem with the Solution for Suffering in Early Buddhism**

The discourse of phenomena and how they are determined, I believe, can be analyzed in the context of Schopenhauer's fourfold law of sufficient reason (Schopenhauer, 2012). Indeed, I would like to argue that

we start to recognize similar traces of metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology in Schopenhauer's principle as we begin to further analyze how the existence persists in spatiotemporal universe in Buddhism.

In early Buddhist tradition, the world is devoid of substance, exists only in terms of emptiness as all phenomena is essentially finite and ephemeral (Abelsen, 1993). While the accession of (3) presupposes a conscious will, finitude extends beyond humans to all beings (Stambaugh, 1970). This argument presumes a kind of causality that fourfold law of sufficient reason asserts. It necessitates beings, consciousness, and actions in spatiotemporal dimension to ensue on a preceding being, consciousness, or an action that existed in the same spatiotemporal dimension. Accordingly, while Buddhism seems to reject ontology of beings as defined in Western tradition, it ultimately permits ontological assay of beings. Furthermore, the propositions of four noble truths do not demonstrate the intrinsic quality of truths themselves, but the sacredness they engender displays the quality Buddha has given to them (Orrù & Wang, 1992). That is, while four noble truths imply the value they are bestowed, they lack the capacity to capture the essence of the essence of themselves.

To these ends, Buddhism's four noble truths self contradict in that while the Buddhist argument originates from the claim that a being or a thought necessarily precedes a being or a thought as all beings are impermanent themselves, it also argues for the possibility of cessation of the cause of suffering. This worldview is then conflicting since while the views of impermanency and (3) are valid *per se*, they are inconsistent with each other. That is, if the ephemerality of beings prove the causality that the principle of sufficient reason argues for holds true, then the cause of suffering cannot be removed for two reasons.

First, the existence of things must follow a line if the impermanency makes up for the future existence of things. The finitude in Buddhist tradition, while it exemplifies for the end of things, also implies the beginning of other things, which ultimately are finite. Therefore, as the exact infinitude is absent in being, then the being itself is the reason for the derivations of such and such being. Accordingly, the cause of the suffering cannot be removed fully as the notion of removal must follow a notion that causes the suffering: A notion that pursues to dismiss the cause of the suffering requires the cause of the suffering, yet as this notion is impermanent, it cannot engender itself as itself would require the cause of suffering. Thus, even if the cause of the suffering can be removed, this removal can also only be ephemeral as the notion of removing the cause of suffering implies not the continuance of itself, but continuance of the cause of suffering.

Second reason is that the dispositionally determined phenomena are *dukkha*. While disposition, as argued in the first reason, follows another disposition, dispositionally determined action to remove the cause of *dukkha* itself is *dukkha*. While casual actions do not necessarily imply *dukkha*, dispositional actions, even if they are imposed to remove the *dukkha*, are essentially *dukkha*. That is, just as suffering is a result of our craving (Gäb, 2015), a will that is dispositional towards this craving would also result in suffering as it essentially is craving itself. Thus, if (3) is realized by a dispositional notion, which is fundamentally very likely, then (3) paradoxically engenders (1).

### **Using Heidegger's *Angst* to Solve the Problem**

Since the metaphysical and epistemological prescription of the world of Buddhist tradition is very similar to that of Heidegger, I would like to

propose changing Buddhist account of *dukkha* to Heidegger's account of *Angst* (Heidegger, 1962) as I believe the concept of *Angst* provides more consistency to Buddhist discourse than *dukkha* does. However, I want to respond to some possible counterarguments to my proposition before discussing why it appears as a rational idea to implement *Angst* into Buddhist philosophy how it could be accomplished.

(1) While some might argue that substituting *dukkha* with *Angst* would alter the four noble truths, as *dukkha* is essential to the Worldview Buddhism adheres to, I kindly reject this proposition. Even though the concept of *dukkha* per se and how it is perceived are essential to Buddhist philosophy, I believe that Buddhist tradition would more efficiently employ *Angst* because of the inconsistency of *dukkha*'s eschatological aspect with the general framework Buddhism I have shown above. To this end, *Angst* would not engender the epistemological problems we examine in Buddhist discourse that are caused by the conception of *dukkha*.

(2) Another point of view that attempts to undermine my proposition is that the concern of finitude extend beyond humans in Buddhism (Stambaugh, 1970) while Heidegger's ontology mainly discusses being and be-ing as a human. Stambaugh argues that Heidegger's *Angst* "is a fundamental state of mind of Dasein" and has a revealing character in that it "reveals to Dasein the world as world in all its uncanniness." (Stambaugh, 1970).

I think Stambaugh's argument is weak in that while Heidegger does indeed not pursue a holistic question of being, he does not deny that beings other than humans are essentially finite, and that while *Angst* has a revealing character, such character is not intrinsic but descriptive. Heidegger's choice of not engaging in the discourse that extends beyond humans can perhaps most aptly be explained by *Geworfenheit* – thrownness–. Unlike the Buddhist tradition which argues that *dukkha*

ceases with nirvana, Heidegger argues that suffering does not cease, but is metamorphosized into *Angst* with Dasein's confronting the finitude of his/her being and be-ing. Accordingly, the avoidance of complete eternality –*sasvata*– and nothingness –*ucheda*– Buddhism argues for demonstrates itself more efficiently in Heidegger's *Angst* as it presupposes a dispositional consciousness.

Then, *Angst* does not directly reveal the world and its uncanniness to Dasein, but when Das Man becomes Dasein, he/she becomes aware of the world *Angst* implies. *Ergo*, while Heidegger's concern for finitude does not extend beyond humans like Buddhist concern, the finitude *per se* does. The reason it is not discussed in Heidegger's ontology as clearly as in Buddhist discourse is that the *Geworfenheit* can only be a constant medium for Dasein, which, ultimately, is human.

(3) Last counterargument is that the deconstruction I apply to Buddhist philosophy and Heidegger's ontology is simply too much that recombining certain parts of each scheme would mean that the system I create would not be employed by Buddhist tradition. That is, if I subtract *dukkha* and melt *Angst* in Buddhism, it would neither be Buddhism nor Heidegger's ontology. This argument resembles (1) but is different from (1) in that it threatens the entire integrity of Buddhist tradition while (1) mainly concerns four noble truths. I would like to disagree with this supposition. The reason I believe that deconstruction of both philosophies does not *eo ipso* jeopardize the integrity of these philosophies is that they both can only function in the spatiotemporal domain. Therefore, Heidegger's ontology, which insists that be-ing is not situated in time *per se*, but that *Zeitigung* “(temporalization) of time, [...] is precisely” the “understanding of being”, (Levinas & Committee of Public, 1996) and early Buddhist discourse which constructs its ontological philosophy on the finitude of beings share a common rhizome. For this reason, I believe that

deconstruction and reassessment of these philosophies would not pose threat to their consistency and integrity.

Now that I gave my responses to some possible objections to replacing *dukkha* with *Angst*, I want to discuss why and how we can perform this replacement. I have two major motivations to do so. (1) As I have explained earlier in this paper, my first reason is the inconsistency of the impermanency with the principle of sufficient reason the concept of *dukkha* engenders. (2) My second reason is that *Angst* resolves this inconsistency.

In order to implement *Angst* into Buddhist discourse, we ought not to limit the question of suffering to *Angst*. While suffering exists in other forms, *Angst* ought to be discussed only as a transcendental consequence of *Zeitigung*. Heidegger claimed that every understanding originates from an affective disposition, and that our being is essentially understanding of being, our way of self-*Zeitigung* (Levinas & Committee of Public, 1996). Since understanding of self is manifested through disposition, then being also is manifested through disposition. With hypothetical syllogism, since understanding of self through *Zeitigung* is being, and since it is determined dispositionally, understanding of self is a cause of suffering. Therefore, according to Buddhism, this perspective necessitates a suffering that is finite, yet is unending in that it intermittently recreates itself in similar topologies. Applying *Angst* solves our problem because it permeates the understanding of self. By that, I do not mean that it rips the spatiotemporal membrane that we stand on, but it evaporates the rigidity of temporality while also being engendered by the same temporalization. *Angst* reminds Dasein that life is finite and *Geworfenheit* is real that it helps us maintain the boundaries of ontology within the boundaries of this finitude. Accordingly, if the self understands the true nature of existence, while *dukkha* pathologizes the causality of beings by

arguing that finitude can be undermined by removing the cause of *dukkha*, *Angst* diagnoses *dukkha* by, in the starkest terms, showing that suffering does not end but only change its form. As the core idea of finitude is retained and paradox is solved through the substitution of *dukkha* by *Angst*, I believe it provides an efficient account in creating a worldview which is consistent with itself while dealing with the problem of suffering by not ignoring the principle of sufficient reason Buddhism adopts.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate how the term *dukkha* might pose a contradiction to early Buddhist discourse and proposed that utilizing Heidegger's term *Angst* instead would help us sustain better hermeneutics for Buddhist perspective. I first showed that early Buddhist tradition was established on the basis of principle of sufficient reason as it presumed that beings were finite and continuity of existence necessitated a linear spatiotemporal model. Then I argued that *dukkha* unintentionally collapses this scheme as it undermines the causality of this continuity. After this, I discussed how Heidegger's *Angst* would facilitate Buddhist perspective better as it does not undermine the causality it is built upon, and responded to some possible objections on why Heidegger's ontology is not compatible with early Buddhism. In my conclusion, I found that *Angst* would not pose the same threats *dukkha* does to core Buddhist principles and would be established on a more consistent basis, and, accordingly, ought to be utilized in Buddhist discourse in place of *dukkha*.

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