

# “Sorge” of Heidegger, Sartre’s “l’être pour-soi” and Buddhist “duḥkha”: Ontological Foundations of Negativity

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines ontological strategies of Western existential philosophy (its “atheistic” current) and the Buddhist school (darśana) of mādhyaṃaka. We can discover similar phenomenological strategies together with extreme differences in anthropology and the value purposes (personalism and deconstruction of classic European subject in the existential philosophy and radical impersonalism of Buddhism). We suppose that Heidegger, Sartre and Buddhism have comparable theories of consciousness. The mādhyaṃaka’s “śūnyata” (emptiness) is comparable with Heidegger’s and Sartre’s “Nothingness” (though they are not absolutely similar) and we can discover primacy of negativity in both cases. We also try to substantiate that the position of mādhyaṃaka was a radical nihilism and not scepticism contrary to the opinion of a number of modern buddhologists. And what is also important for us is the problem of the “unhappy consciousness” (be it the Buddhist “duḥkha” or “Sorge” of Heidegger, or Sartre’s “Nausea”) and different attitudes of thinkers towards it.

**Key Words:** negativity, deconstruction of subject, being, nothingness, care, duḥkha, phenomenism, nihilism, śūnyata, emptiness

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## Introduction

At the beginning of his famous book “*Being and Time*” (1927) the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) repeated like a conjuration: “We should raise anew the question of the *meaning of Being*. ... The concept of “Being” is rather the most obscure of all. ... We see the fundamental necessity of

repeating a question on the meaning of Being anew. ... To retrieve the question of Being means first of all to work out adequately the *formulation* of the question” (Heidegger, 1996, pp. xix, 2-3). Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), a French existentialist philosopher in the 30-th and 40-th years of the XX-th century was also engaged in the “search for Being” and even in the “pursuit of Being”. What “drove” these thinkers on the searches of Being and what “meaning” did they want to find?.. In both cases we can speak about the deconstruction of classic subject of Western European philosophy and about nihilism. These searches allow us to compare two strategies of philosophizing – Western European (existential) and the Buddhist (mainly the *Māhāyāna* Buddhism, *darśana* of *mādhyaṃaka*).

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### *“Dasein” and “Sorge” of Heidegger and their nihilistic implications*

If the question of Being is raised correctly, according to Heidegger, the theme of the "preferable" meaning is removed: in various aspects of questioning the subject horizon of the special entity which is capable to questioning reveals that Being consists in inquiring about Being, and, in the last analysis, about your own Being. Therefore, to get "access" to Being, it is necessary, according to Heidegger, to clear the existence of the questioning entity, to designate which Heidegger uses the term "Dasein". This term Heidegger uses instead of traditional "subject" and offers a non-conventional interpretation of the German philosophical concept Dasein (here-Being), used, for example, by Hegel in the sense of "presenting being" or by other thinkers as "being in general". The main idea of Heidegger's existential analytics (the fundamental ontology) of Dasein consists in considering the human being not as a consciousness, not as a subject in cognitive opposition to a cognizable object, but in beholding it phenomenologically as here-Being (Dasein) and in revealing Being structures (existentials) of Dasein. It does not mean at all again to realize it as a subject and the consciousness of subject: in fact, Dasein is a certain way of Being, and its specificity is that it somehow can *know* about itself. In his *"Being and Time"* and in the lectures which accompanied this work, Heidegger speaks not about Being as itself, but first of all about "Being comprehension" (or understanding of Being – *Seinsverständnis*). The latter circumstance allows Dasein to personalize, i.e., to specify it as a person, but does not mean its subjectivization at all. The same allows to consider a person as especially ontological, though a unique event: he as a whole and without the rest is given to Being, he himself is Being, "a Being event". A special way of existence of a person, his isolation from all other types of entities is connected with the fact that is a question of Being is raised in his Being.

The German philosopher sought to leave the "framework" of a theoretical subject of the *New* time, to "deconstruct" it. In it he followed installations of the "Life Philosophy" and the forerunner of the existential philosophy Søren Kierkegaard. Heidegger pays attention that human subjectivity "is" in an absolutely special way: essentially it is never grasped as a subject of knowledge and in this sense is not designed,

and itself is a Being condition of any designation. Heidegger understands subjectivity as a reality which "is present" in any human acts and is inseparable from them, "participates" in the creating of any products of human activity, but cannot be not reduced to them; it is always a the possibility which is not settled by any imaginable realization, and an openness to any form and way of existence, but is not set and not defined by them. Heidegger explains that his philosophy was an attempt to think that our Being is "before" its expression in various forms of activity and thinking, i.e. how our thinking was expressed, for example, in forms of logic, ethics, physics, etc., and if to continue, "before" the human being became a subject and the world appeared before him as an object. Therefore, claiming that in the existence the "essence" of Dasein reveals, Heidegger names being of Dasein "*Existenz*". However as opposed to, for example, Kierkegaard, in Heidegger's view not our perceptions, experiences, moods, alarms, fears and cares, but the aprioristic ontological structures, called the existentials, are connected with *Existenz*. Such Heidegger's approach to the analysis of Being of a person is caused by the influence of phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl. So, Heidegger believes that phenomenology which for him, as well as for Husserl, means "the primary concept of a method", has to be a method of an explicating of meaning of Being; from the point of view of Heidegger, statement of a question of Being is possible only on the basis of the phenomenological method. Heidegger emphasizes: "The ontology is possible only as phenomenology". (Heidegger, 1996, p. 31). However, following Husserl's phenomenology in choosing a method of philosophical research, Heidegger adheres neither phenomenological point of view Husserl himself, nor of any other (for example, of M. Scheler) representatives of the phenomenological branch. Unlike Husserl, Heidegger considers a phenomenon not as a product of transcendental subjectivity, but as being of an existing entity, only one of which opportunities is a transcendental institutionalization.

According to Heidegger, the concepts of sciences about a human being are inapplicable to Dasein: "the philosophical psychology, anthropology, ethics, politics, literature, biography and history" can supply us with information on the distinct aspects of Dasein

and even to be "existentially truthful", but they do not substitute the ontological analysis of structure of Dasein. His ontology considers aprioristic structures, conditions of Being itself. It's those aprioristic structures, "the existentials", are comparable to the categories of Kant. But the difference between them is that Heidegger speaks of the aprioristic conditions of Being, and not just of knowledge as it was in the transcendental idealism.

The German thinker distinguishes two levels of a questioning of Being – the ontological (aprioristic) and the ontic (concrete-empirical). He substantiates the ontology based on a phenomenological method, and it means that for the disclosure of meaning of Being it is necessary to find such entity for which Being "is disclosed". "In what being, – he asks, – is the meaning of Being to be found; from which being is the disclosure of Being to get its start?" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 7). "It is proper to this being that it be disclosed to itself with and through its Being" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 12) – Being is opened to the human being. It means that the human being is to become a subject of the phenomenological description, but not at all in the way this description went it in the European metaphysics. In his work "*The European nihilism*" Heidegger writes that the main delusion of the medieval scholastic philosophy, and also Descartes, Leibniz and the German classics consists in that this tradition replaced being of a person with his thinking and this way turned into the intellectualism reducing essence of a human being just to knowledge, losing sight of his being. According to Heidegger, a discloseness (*aletheia*) of Dasein is identical to its understanding; thanks to a discloseness of Dasein to a human being for him it not simply that there is a world, but he himself is a "being-in-the-world". If in transcendental idealism all reality was dissolved in the forms of knowledge of the world, in Heidegger's doctrine the whole world is inseparable from the human consciousness which is understood not only as cognizing reality but as worrying, acting, anxious etc. Heidegger describes the world as it is given to consciousness of the human being *before* any reflection (without mentioning the scientific experience).

The human being lives in a condition of "thrownness", "fall" (*Geworfenheit*) in the world which he did not choose; being of a person initially is "Being-in-the-World".

Heidegger writes: "Falling is existential definition of Dasein" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 164). So, the human being possesses self-understanding, i.e., a certain attitude towards himself and the world. His being is characterized by a constant need to make decisions, by "determination". He constantly "projects" himself forward, into the future. The human being is what he becomes tomorrow as a result of decisions which he will make today. He exists in the world among the opportunities the set of which does not depend on him. As the opportunity is a fundamental characteristic of *Existenz*, Heidegger allocates two initial existential opportunities: the original (*eigentlich*) existence and the non-original (*uneigentlich*). The non-original existence means for Heidegger an implementation of an opportunity to lose yourself in the world, to plunge into it and to identify yourself with it, to live "the way as all others", "the way as the people live" ("*das man*"). In the non-original existence a human being is absorbed by the aspiration to hide from the main and inevitable possibility of being – from the perspective of death. The person runs into the world to hide from death, he seeks to reach a condition in which he is not compelled to think of death. But the ontological structure of a person also contains the possibility of a different, "original" existence: if the original existence was not a structural opportunity for a human being, it would be impossible to speak and about the non-original. The person is, in principle, capable of making a decision in favor of the original existence, i.e., to conceive the inevitability of death and the negligibility and meaninglessness of his life, – to realize the limitation with "factuality" and life as "being-to-death". Then the human being has no need to deceive himself and there's nothing to hide from: he accepts the inevitable and lives with it.

Heidegger defines the structure of human being in its integrity as *care* (*Sorge*). "Heidegger had, – Alexey Rutkevich writes, – predecessors in similar understanding of the "human destiny". Let us remember the story of the German writer of the late XIXth century G. Zuderman "Frau Sorge" in which the eternal care becomes the destiny of a person. We can also remember how care is represented at the end of second part of Goethe's "Faust", Herder's poem "The Child of a Care", an image of the "gloomy care" at Horatius which sits behind the horseback rider and of which he cannot get rid

of wherever he goes" (Rutkevich, 1981, p. 53). Heidegger in "*Being and Time*" quotes Seneca: "Of the four existing natures (tree, animal, human being, God) the last two, which alone are endowed with reason, are distinguished that God is immortal, human being mortal. The good of the One, namely of God, is fulfilled by his nature; but that of the other, human being, is fulfilled by care." (Heidegger, 1996, p. 185). We can also remember Pascal's "non-calmness" and the lines from Ecclesiastes: "Because all his days his care is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest." (Eccl. 2:23). "There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil" (Eccl. 4:8).

The German thinker popularly interprets the meaning of the term "Sorge" (care) and at the same time indicates "an ontic (empirical) implantness" of the "care", illustrating it with the following fable. The Care, passing the river, molded from clay a being to whom Jupiter at his request granted soul. Who possesses this being — *homo* called by name a material of which it is made (humus — the earth)? Saturn judged as follows: when the human being will die, Jupiter will get his soul, and the body — the earth; but while he lives (temporariness) he all belongs to Cura (care) (See Heidegger, 1996, p. 184). The care is inseparably linked, thus, with the finitude of time of Dasein: the temporary structure of care is Being-in-the-World. Care as the meaning of being is not the aim or "the highest aspiration" of being: according to Heidegger, the meaning of being is equal to the "understanding" of being, i.e., self-design of Dasein, its self-transcendence, an exit out of own limits, "the running away from oneself", inequality to oneself, ontological non-self-sufficiency. But apart from the literary and philosophical sources the understanding of a "human destiny" as an never-ending care is connected with the epoch when Heidegger wrote "*Being and Time*". Futility of all efforts a person who lives vanity — such is one of keynotes of his philosophizing. There's no salvation "on the other side" of the individual existence — be it paradise of this or that religion or any public ideal (see Rutkevich, 1981, p. 59). Later this attitude was repeatedly reproduced by such writers as A. Malraux, A. Camus, J.-P. Sartre, H. Böll and many others.

The care, according to Heidegger, is the unity of three modes: "Being-in-the-World", "overlap forward" (projection) and "Being-with-

innerworld-entity". Heidegger writes: "As a primordial structural totality, care lies "before" every actual "attitude" and "position" of Dasein, that is, it is always already in them. So this phenomenon by no means expresses a priority of "practical" over theoretical behavior. ... The phenomenon of care in its totality is essentially something that cannot be slipped up; thus any attempt to derive it from special acts or drives such as willing and wishing or urge and predilection, or of constructing it out of them, will be unsuccessful. ... Care ontologically "prior" the called phenomena." (Heidegger, 1996, p.180-181). Heidegger represents a deeper and non-reductionist understanding of the same phenomena to which Sigmund Freud, for example, referred. He writes about an inclination (*Hang*) and aspiration (*Drang*), but shows that they are not the phenomena dependent on the instinct, but the unguenuine modifications of care — in other words, of the complete existence. Heidegger, as we see, seeks to distinguish the phenomenon of care from such concepts, as will, aspiration, inclination, desire which are related to it. Care, he considered, ontologically precedes both to will, and inclination: the will assumes a certain object of willing<sup>2</sup> whereas the care is the integrity considered regardless of any object. The care is a certain ontological "disequilibrium", "non-balance to itself", "being-forward-itself", "non-calmness", an ontological groundlessness. The main purpose of our research is connected with this aspect of care.

The most important aspect of being of a person in the world can be defined as *negativity*, with specificity of his being a person is obliged just to negation; and the negativity is the temporality (Gasparyan, 2013). Heidegger's description of the complete structure of care testifies that the temporary definitions are the major ones here. "The primordial ontological ground of the existentiality of Dasein, however, is temporality, — Heidegger writes. — The articulated structural totality of being of Dasein as care first becomes existentially intelligible in terms of temporality." (Heidegger, 1996, p. 235). In fact, to each of the moments of care there a certain mode of time corresponds: the past corresponds to "Being-in-the-world", the

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer would categorically disagree with it. He was the first in the European philosophy of the New time who approved the priority of a will over reason. For him the will was an internal essence of the world, the blind free aspiration which does not need any object, purpose, measure and foundation.

future – to the “overlap forward” and the present to “Being-with-innerworld-entity”. But, being the moments of a complete phenomenon of care, these three modes mutually penetrate each other. So, the past is not that remained behind and that is not present any more, but what *is* in the present and defines the future. We choose our past by the attitude towards it, we estimate it – so it defines our present and future. In this sense the human being is his past – what the past has made him. The same can also be said about two other modes. Each of three modes of time gets just the qualitative characteristic (unlike “profane”, “ordinary”, “quantitative” time): the past mode Heidegger considers as “factuality”, the present mode – as “thrownness”, “fall”, “doomness to things”, to entities; the future mode – as a “project”, “throwing out yourself forward”.

In the beginning of our article we designated our task as the research of negativity in Heidegger's fundamental ontology through the phenomenon of a care. In the philosophy negativity most often is understood as a condition of duration, the deployment of the world in time. The dialectical ontology assumes being as the unity of two measurements – identical (substantive) and temporary (negative). Heidegger's conception in this regard is extremely radical; it is directly motivated by the key intuitions of existential philosophy: the extra-findability of being as such (entity), difficulty of its detection and naming transfer entity to the category of the incomprehensible (Gasparyan, 2012). Entity, as a result, is defined by Heidegger in an apofatic way. “Hardly we want to grab a being (entity), every time occurs so as if we dip our hands into emptiness. Entity about which we are here questioning, is almost the same as Nothingness, at least we resisted every minute, preserving ourselves against need to tell that every entity as though *is not*.” (Heidegger, 2000, p.112). Is it possible to call the entity thus Nothingness? Not entirely so: the entity is temporal, events proceed in time (but, unlike the human being, things do not know about the temporariness and finitude). And if it is so, Nothingness (negativity) penetrates the entity, it is introduced into the entity. It means that Nothingness provides a temporal structure of the world; it also provides availability of the entities – physical things and the phenomena in the world. “Nothingness is the potential for a manifestness of being as some such thing for

human existence. Nothingness does not primarily provide the antithesis for being, but is originally of being's very foundation. The annihilation of Nothingness happens in the being. ... Our Dasein only relates itself to being, i. e. to exist, by being aimed in advance at Nothingness.” (Heidegger, 1976, p. 88). It turns out that Nothingness has an “agent”, or, perhaps, its substitute within being and this agent is a person. First of all because being of the human is historical/temporal (unlike being of other entities) and, certainly, measurement of the humans is constituted by temporariness and a human being knows about this temporariness and mortal destiny. This knowledge of temporariness, in turn, allows a person to exist, to transcend himself – to leave out of his limits and at the same time to find himself in the world. The existence, i.e. the opportunity to surpass the empirical self, also allows to raise a question of Being, as we said before. But it is possible to raise a question of being only from the point of view of a non-being, i. e. Nothingness. For this reason the person is co-present to Nothingness in the closest way. And as the person is only a certain way of being, then the human being is the annihilating measurement of being. The initially annihilating Nothingness also consists in that: it puts for the first time our being before the entity as such. Only on the basis of an initial manifestation of Nothingness being of a person can approach to the entity and penetrate into it. Nothingness is a possibility condition of disclosure of the entity as such for Dasein. As a result it turns out that Nothingness annihilates in being of entities (because an entity is temporary, but does not know about it), but Nothingness does it by means of the human being (owing to specificity of his Dasein). That allows Dasein (in its annihilating aspect) to question about itself, i.e. to *know* about itself. “In the structure of thrownness, as well as in that of a project, – Heidegger writes, – essentially lies a nullity. ... The care itself in its own essence thoroughly permeated with nullity. Care, the being of Dasein, thus means as thrown project: being the (null) ground of a nullity.” (Heidegger, 1996, p. 263). The main feature of the human being, certifying his participation in Nothingness, is the ability “to question about Being”, i.e. to be discharged from it. This retreat is possible only into the area of Nothingness, or, on the contrary, “promotion” to Being; it is possible only from the area of Nothingness.

And what if we can raise the question of Being, but we cannot define it in any way, and it still remains imperceptible for us – what does it mean? The entity cannot be given to a person just because he annihilates in entity and he can never either coincide with being of the entity, nor "seize" it. But just because Dasein is the experience of annihilating in entity, the entity can open to him – things and all presentness of the world, and also his Dasein. "Being as a whole first comes to itself in accordance with its very own possibility, that is, only in the Nothingness experience." (Heidegger, 1976, p. 91). This result from the fact that, getting to the area of Nothingness, or more likely always staying in it, the human being can see the world (entity) from the outside, he can see things. "In the clear night of dread's Nothingness the original openness of being as such arises for the first time in such a way that it is a kind of Being and not Nothingness. In adding "and not Nothingness" we have not, however, added a clarification, but rather the predecessive potential of the openness of Being in general. The essence of the originally nihilating Nothingness is found in this: it brings about being there, first of all, before any kind of being." (Heidegger, 1976, p. 86). Here "a gleam of Being" appears – the moment of reflection, understanding of yourself, a way to Being as itself. This "gleam" is the perceiving of your annihilation as such your being which is a condition for the understanding of any entity. It is possible *to be*, but to be a thing (things *are*, but they do not stay in being), i.e., they *not to know* being and the entity. Or it is possible not to be, to annihilate, but then there is a perspective of movement from Nothingness to the entity, opening the entity and knowledge of it. I address to myself (Dasein) and I "become" *Existenz* – an attitude towards myself, an "original" being. "Human existence can relate to Being only if it is itself beholden to Nothingness. Going above and beyond Being is of the ground of our existence." (Heidegger, 1976, p. 93). The human being, thus, is a certain emptiness, "a hole in Being" (as Jean-Paul Sartre later calls it), which can contain in itself the whole world. Thus while the fullness with entity remains, the person does not know that he is Nothingness, but in the experience of opening of Dasein opens also Nothingness.

How the achievement of the "original existence", according to Heidegger, is possible? ... The increasing activity seizes the human

being, seeking to fill his own emptiness, and that conducts to the increasing dissolution in the banality of everyday existence. The original existence begins, according to Heidegger, from the "dread". The corresponding German word (*Angst*) means, actually, "the fear", but Heidegger distinguishes it as ontological fear from fear "ontic", usual, designated by the term "*Furcht*". The concept of "dread" transfers the only difference of the first from the second: usually the person fears of something concrete, known to him, threatening to his prosperity, health, life. Otherwise it is with the ontological fear. The description of such fear the Austrian writer Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932) presents in his novel "The Golem": "This was terror giving birth to itself, the paralysing dread at an inexplicable, shapeless Nothing that eats away the boundaries of our thought. ... The same Nothing that *did not exist*, and yet filled the room with its ghastly life." (Meyrink, 1976, p. 133). In dread it is "Nothingness" that terrifies, and not the particular things or people; the whole world loses its meaning. That dread begins with melancholy. Heidegger writes: "Profound boredom, like a silent fog insinuating itself in the depth of existence, pulls things, other and oneself into altogether with remarkable indifference. Such boredom reveals Being as a whole. ... Dread is fundamentally different from fear (*Furcht*). We are afraid of this or that determinate being which threatens us in this or that regard. Fear of... is also in every case being afraid of something determinate. Since fear has about it the limitation of an "of what" and "about what", the frightening, and frightful becomes bound by that in which one finds himself. In striving to save himself from it, from this determinate "something", one becomes unsure of himself with regard to everything else, that is, "in a panic" about everything. Dread does not give rise to confusion. On the contrary, an odd calm pervades it. Dread is indeed always dread of..., but not of this or that. The indeterminacy of and about what we are in dread is not some sort of failure of determinacy, but rather the essential impossibility of determinacy. ... Dread reveals Nothingness." (Heidegger, 1976, pp. 90-91). Then, according to Heidegger, the power of "publicity" disappears, all habitual foundations are destroyed, the world is felt as alien and dangerous. But at the same time Dasein awakens to original existence, to responsibility for one's own acts; it is a turn to oneself. Then Dasein

opens in the uniqueness and incompleteness as freely projecting itself.

So, we can come to a conclusion that, according to Heidegger, a person is such a special way of Being which is *constituted by the negativity* allowing being to have a specific structure – the entity which can come to itself – Dasein. "Specificity" of being of the person consists in his ability to ecstase, i.e. to transcend his own limits that find the embodiment in the unique ability ("Being comprehension", *Seinsverständnis*) to question of the meaning of Being.

### *Jean-Paul Sartre's doctrine of consciousness*

Now we will consider another thinker of the "Western" part of our research – to Jean-Paul Sartre and mainly to his fundamental work "*Being and Nothingness*" (1943). In this text a classic (i.e., accepted in the Western philosophy) relation of being and thinking, nature and spirit, matter and consciousness, object and subject, world and human being, external and internal, signified and signifying, unreasonable and reasonable, natural and artificial, real and virtual are transferred by Sartre to a plane of two "regions" of Being: "Being-in-itself" (*l'être en-soi*) and "Being-for-itself" (*l'être pour-soi*). Thus he, among other, tried to overcome the traditional dualism of Western philosophy. Was he successful in it? Briefly... "Being-in-itself", according to Sartre, is "self-identical, non-decomposed, dense, massive and compact". It is an absolute passivity; it is what it is, no more than that and any definitions are inapplicable to it. It is indiscernible, undifferentiated, deprived of any qualitative definiteness and self-sufficient; it does not comprise any distinction between "this" and "other". It means that *only* the consciousness ("Being-for-itself") introduces everything into the world: discreteness, plurality, causality, variability, movement, quantity, quality, and also form, space, time (and, accordingly, mortal destiny), sense, meaning, good, harm, evil etc. Accordingly, *all proceeds from consciousness, the subject*. But all features of "being-for-itself" remain at the phenomenal level; the world is absolutely phenomenal. Therefore, we cannot speak about Sartre's "dualism" and "equality" of two regions of Being in his concept...

"Being-in-itself" is absolutely indifferent to consciousness, "being-for-itself". Within a person this indifference generates a

double feeling concerning the world: either a disgust (as in the novel "*Nausea*" (1938)), or a painful envy (as in the cycle of novels "*The Roads of Freedom*" (1945-1949); such painful envy Albert Camus also described in his novels), but it is always a feeling of an absolute otherness and rejectedness. Sartre's definition of consciousness as "being-for-itself" literally means "not-in-itself" e. g. non-equality to itself, an orientation on something other and external to the consciousness – a table, a chair, a tree, a rat's tail, Hegel's Absolute Idea, a lost youth, the actual infinity – everything that one can think about. The consciousness is *intentional* (in this aspect Sartre follows Husserl). The fact that consciousness is directed towards "something", toward an "other", means that it is not that "something"; the consciousness is Nothingness, it is *empty*. The analogy with the Christian apofatic theology defining God as "none of created things", as "*nothing*", is rather transparent here. On a related note, in Sartre's novel "*Nausea*" it is possible to draw analogies with the Christian ascetics: the nausea in Sartre's anthropology seems to substitute the Christian ascetics' disgust for the all carnal and material. This is however a separate theme and we do not have the space to consider it here.

What does the consciousness mean for Sartre? Consciousness, certainly, is not reduced to knowledge; it is a transphenomenal measurement of being of a subject. "Consciousness is not a mode of particular knowledge which may be called an inner meaning of self-knowledge; it is the dimension of transphenomenal being of the subject." (Sartre, 1970, p. ii). In "*The Transcendence of the Ego*" (1936) (Sartre, 1957) and in "*Being and Nothingness*" Sartre also speaks about the "overcoming of the Ego" as a mental construct of a reflection (that, as we will see later, it is very important for a comparison of his philosophy with Buddhist school of *mādhyaṃaka (śūnyavāda)*). Sartre, following Husserl, allocates two types of consciousness: the *tetic* – objectivating, "considering" the existence of the world and the subject, and *non-tetic* – non-articulating, non-objectifying, non-thematizing – putting "outside the brackets" being of the world. In a paradoxical way, according to Sartre, it turns out that the subject irreflexively learns about himself that he... is not a subject! Sartre writes: "The non-tetic consciousness is self-consciousness as a free project toward a possibility which is its own;



that is, in so far as it is the foundation of its own Nothingness." (Sartre, 1970, p. 330). As the American researcher Derek K. Heyman writes: "Sartrean phenomenology, although it takes the important step of removing the Ego from the center of consciousness, does not dig deep enough to recognize the full consequences of this step. Nevertheless, the discovery that the ground beneath the dualistic fence extends to the boundless non-duality does not preclude that it still supports the fence on its surface. In Mādhyamaka terms, this surface reality is described by the truth worldly convention." (Heyman, 1997, p. 440).

Paraphrasing Heidegger, Sartre writes: "Consciousness is a being such that in its being, it's being is in question." (Sartre, 1970, p. 172). The life of consciousness in Sartre's description appears to be a permanent negation of an external being and its own past, its previous conditions. Being a "nothing", Sartre's person "secretes this Nothing as a gland secretes hormones." (Sartre, 1970, p. 103). Sartre traces (certainly, not in an exhaustive way) the tradition of describing of consciousness as negative in the European philosophy. He quotes Spinoza's formula, "To define means to deny". Hegel admired this saying, and reformulated it into the judgment "The Spirit is a negative". Additionally earlier in the Scholastics there was a classic example of a bad artist who painted a lion, but in order it to be clear to the spectator, he signed his picture: "This is a lion, but not a dog". Asserting that it is a lion, we thereby deny this object a possibility to be a dog, a mouse, a fish, an unicorn, a comet, etc.

Sartre's version of the specification of a person's being may sound this way: in the world there is freedom thanks to existence of Nothingness in it – that is the human being. Sartre writes: "We set out upon our pursuit of being and it seemed to us that the series of our questions had lead us to the heart of being. But behold, at the moment when we thought we were arriving at the goal, a glance cast on the question itself has revealed to us suddenly that we are encompassed with Nothingness. The permanent possibility of non-being outside us and within, conditions our questions about being." (Sartre, 1970, p. 5). "The being by which Nothingness comes to the world must be its own Nothingness" (Sartre, 1970, p. 23), – another quotation. If there is no predestination, the subject of a choice is always burdened by the realization of that from a set of

potential opportunities he has chosen only one – probably, at all not the best one. Owing to this uncertainty the subject always suffers of anxiety – the implicit understanding of that he could act differently while the preferred choice is not guaranteed to be the most correct. The first denial by means of which the human reality claims that it is what it is not, is not equal to itself, is not self-sufficient, is endured as anxiety; the human reality is the "neantizing ecstasy". Anxiety in this case is the dread of a person before his own freedom, in the face of "set" of various opportunities of his being. "It is an anxiety that man gets the consciousness of his freedom, or, if you prefer, anxiety is the mode of being of freedom as consciousness of being; it is anguish that freedom is, in its being, in question for itself." (Sartre, 1970, p. 29). The person understands that no motivation can withdraw freedom because his act is essentially undetermined, it can *always* be different.<sup>3</sup> Thus, choosing one of the opportunities, the person is compelled to annihilate all other opportunities: for there to be this (my) opportunity, I assume other opportunities, for to nihilate them. The empty consciousness equal to Nothingness and opposite to it "Being-in-itself" make an aprioristic ontological "framework" in which Sartre's person deconstructs his subjectivity. A permanent creativity of consciousness means simultaneously a permanent choice and non-choice of oneself in the world. The choosing act of consciousness is a transformation into "Nothing" for every new choice neutralizes the previous experience. The consciousness appears to be a set of free acts of self-determination by the person in his being. The theme of human freedom is an axis of all Sartre's doctrine which can be traced throughout his works: it is melancholic in the novel "Nausea", it has a stoical firmness in "Being and Nothingness", it is linked with a heroic apathy in a cycle of

<sup>3</sup> One of the ways of disposal of this anxiety consists in narrowing as much as possible the circle of your opportunities. So the character of Patrick Süskind's novel "The Pigeon" Jonathan Noel behaves himself. By the way, the story is written under the strongest influence of Sartre's creativity... Perhaps, it was "the anxiety of freedom" that pursued the author of this text at the age of 7-8 years when I experienced a painful wish to transform myself into any "thing" (probably, because things cannot "die"). In that period Pieter de Hooch's picturesque cloth "The hostess and the servant in the internal court yard" (apprx. 1660) had a strange power over me: the cloth radiated such calmness and "eventlessness" that here, it seemed, *nothing more* can occur. It is possible therefore I wanted to transform... not even into the hostess or the servant on this cloth, but into the parquet polished to shine, a mortar or a pestle, a flowerpot, a gate, a town hall tower...



novels *"The Roads of Freedom"*, or it is passionate in *"The Critic of the Dialectical Reason"* (1960).

The French philosopher pays less attention to time problematic than Heidegger. And still the key definition of human freedom is the "nihilitating rupture" between the present and the past and the present and the future. "In this relation slips Nothingness: I am not that I will be. In the beginning I am not that because I am separated from it by time. Then what I am is not a basis of that what I will be. At last, because Nothingness existing now, I cannot precisely determine what I am going to be." (Sartre, 1970, p. 204). And further: "Freedom is the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own Nothingness. Let us understand indeed that this original necessity of being its own Nothingness does not belong to consciousness intermittently and on the occasion of particular negations. This does not happen just at a particular moment in psychic life when negative or interrogative attitude appears; consciousness continually experiences itself as to nihilation of past being." (Sartre, 1970, p. 28). In Sartre's concept the human being stays in a "time gap"; the present which is not following from the past and has not been prepared by the future, is the pure Nothingness – Nothingness of his freedom. In the essence, in Sartre's concept a human being is a tool of undetermining of being. And the negativity which is structurally built in being, is, certainly, the freedom on which the human being, according to Sartre, "is doomed" and "chained to it, like a prisoner to a kernel".

The phenomenological concept of Nothingness, developed by Sartre, is opposite to Heidegger's concept according to which Nothingness is "an initial abyss" from which Being is "extended". According to Sartre, metaphysical questioning can take place only in the face of present being. "Nothingness can be nihilated only on the foundation of Being; if Nothingness can be given, it is neither before, nor after, nor in general way outside of Being. Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of Being – like a worm." (Sartre, 1970, p. 21). At Sartre's the priority is given to the consciousness which function is the neantization, annihilation of Being.

Human activity, according to Sartre, is absolutely unpremiered: a person creates a new existence every time, every moment he or she "chooses himself". But then it turns out that this

instant creativity loses any binding principle and dissipates in a set of separate acts which are not at all interconnected.<sup>4</sup> But how then is the self-identification possible? Why is Jean-Paul Sartre nevertheless Sartre, instead of being Mao-Zedong (whom he honored greatly), or not a Parisian clochard? Here, strangely enough, Descartes comes, to the aid of Sartre. Yes, Sartre struggled with Cartesian tradition and denied the "thinking substance." But in the article *"Cartesian freedom"* (1957), the preface to Descartes' collected works, Sartre makes an attempt to interpret Descartes from the existentialist point of view. The starting point of Descartes' philosophy, which is the methodical doubt, was interpreted by Sartre as the ability to say "NO", as the negating activity of consciousness, as freedom (Sartre, 1980, p. 238). Descartes wrote: "The mind, using freedom inherent in it, assumes that there is none of things concerning which existence it should feel though the slightest doubt" (Descartes, 1952. p. 185). And in Sartre's *"Being and Nothingness"* we read: "Descartes following the Stoics has given a name to this possibility which human reality has to secrete a Nothingness which isolates it – it is freedom" (Sartre, 1970, p. 24-25). Therefore, the principle of permanence of negation, of freedom was the uniting activity of human consciousness, for Sartre. He paraphrases Descartes: "I deny – hence I exist". The liberation of a person was thought by Sartre as "the ability to self-isolation". If "Being-in-itself" is self-identical and self-sufficient, than, for Sartre, "the consciousness ("Being-for-itself") represents a way not to be coincidence with itself, to escape identity" (Sartre, 1970. p. 77). This non-self-identity and non-self-sufficiency, ontological groundlessness of the subject deconstructed by Sartre (as well as by Heidegger) and the negative function of consciousness represent a special importance for our comparativist research. From the point of view of Sartre and Heidegger we can define the ontological status of the person as presence of intra-world negativity.

### *The Buddhist doctrine of *duḥkha* and nihilism of *mādhyamaka-sūnyavāda**

Now we can directly pass to a comparativist part of our research. In the beginning we have to say some words about the foundations of the

<sup>4</sup> That would be extremely good for the Buddhist, but not for the European thinker: even David Hume was not satisfied with it.



Buddhist philosophy as a whole. Unlike the Brahmanist schools seeing behind the illusory world a certain hidden reality, Buddhism insists that the world is absolutely phenomenal, has no intrinsic basis and it has to be explained from itself. The doctrine of "a causal and dependent origination" (*pratītya samutpāda*) played the role of such interpreting theory.<sup>5</sup> The main sense of *pratītya samutpāda* is that all stages of existence are conditionally caused and this causality has especially immanent character which does not leave any "space" for the hidden transcendent reason (God, destiny and so forth). At the same time a living being (not only human being) appears, in essence, a slave of a relentless causality, getting so rarely in active and more often in passive (undergoing) situations. The doctrine of *pratītya samutpāda* is integrally connected with the other major Buddhist doctrine of *anātmavāda* – the doctrine of non-existence of the individual eternal substantial (extra-personal) essence within the person (*ātman* of the Brahmanic *darśanas*) and also soul (*jīva*) and the empirical personality as such (*pudgala*). Extreme nominalism and phenomenalism of the Buddhist schools (in particular *Mahāyāna* schools – *mādhyamaka* (*sūnyavāda*) and *yogācāra* (*viññānavāda*) says that the personality – *pudgala* – is only the name designating definitely ordered unity of five groups (*skandkhas*) of instant elements of experience (*dharmas*). Those elements are: form (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), karmic formation (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*viññāna*). Together, these elements and groups of elements make the totality of experience. This can be seen in a well-known Buddhist philosophical treatise "*Milinda Pañha*" ("*The Questions of Milinda*") (see *The Debate of King Milinda: An Abridgement of The Milinda Pañha*, 1998) in which the conversation of a Buddhist monk Nagasena with the Greek-Indian king Milinda (Menander, II century BC) is described. Dharmas and skandhas are absolutely non-substantial about what in the philosophical

treatise "*Abhidharmakośa*"<sup>6</sup> ("*The Doctrine about Dharmas*") it is written in detail.

So, dharmas constantly arise and disappear, being replaced by new ones, but caused by previous dharmas according to the principle of causality. These constantly arising and disappearing substanceless dharmas and their groups (*skandhas*) in the set form a stream, or a continuum (*santāna*) which is empirically perceived as a "living being". Thus, any being, including a person, is understood in Buddhism not as invariable essence (whether be it *ātman* or soul) but as a stream of constantly changing elementary psychophysical conditions. The ontology of Buddhism is the ontology of substrateless process. Thus, not only it is impossible to enter twice into the same river (as Heraclitus said), but there is *no the one* who could try to do it at least once. In essence, each new moment the new personality exists, which is connected with previous one and caused by it. It is possible here to give an example of a French philosopher Henry Bergson (1859-1941) with shots of a film which we do not see when we watch the movie, perceiving everything as a pure continuum. From the point of view of Buddhism in this case each new life is a new episode of the initialless series, and *nirvāṇa* is the series final.

Here a question arises: in what degree is the doctrine of *saṃsāra* (*sansara*) (the resettlement of souls, reincarnation) applicable to Buddhism if it is at all applicable? If there is not any soul, what then reincarnates and passes from one life form to another? The answer is rather simple and paradoxical: *nothing* reincarnates and proceeds. Contrary to a common delusion, in Buddhism in general there is no doctrine of reincarnation. Therefore concerning Buddhism it is possible to say only about cyclic existence or alternation of births and deaths. Therefore, using further (owing to tradition) the term "*saṃsāra*" and "*sansaric subject*"<sup>7</sup> in the context of the Buddhist philosophy, we will always mean its

<sup>5</sup>That, we will agree, it is strange enough for the Western consciousness: phenomenalism in a combination with strict determinism! But in Buddhism this determinism refers *only* to the sphere of an illusory (*sansaric*) being, and the soteriological purpose consists in a disposal from *saṃsāra* and, respectively, from causal dependence.



<sup>6</sup> The doctrine of *dharmas* and *skandhas* is very complicated and also demands a special detailed explanation. Unfortunately, we have no opportunity here to investigate it in more detail. We address our readers to a fundamental treatise of the Buddhist philosophy: *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu*. Transl. By Leo M. Pruden. Berkeley, Calif.: Asian Humanities Press, 1998-1990.

<sup>7</sup>For the convenience of reading we will use further the term "*sansaric*" (*subject*) without a diacritic.

conventionality.<sup>8</sup> According to Buddhism, just the energy which connects this existence with existence of his "karmic successor" (so to speak) is transferred: a similar "transmission of energy" occurs, in essence, also during every moment of the one life. Sansaric existence is a repeatability of situations and roles, painful monotony of cyclic reproducibility of the same contents. Thus mind (*manas*), leaning on the previous experience, provides the memory and feeling of identity of the personality. The law of karma (*the karma wheel*) in Buddhism is also not a requital or punishment (unlike in the theistic schools (*darśanas*) of Brahmanism and Hinduism where karmic fruits are distributed by the all-mighty *Īśvara*); the law of karma is quite objective and inevitable like the "laws of nature" in their Western scientific understanding. It is possible to say that in the "sansaric existence" the person owing to his ignorance (non-vision, *a-vidyā*) (supposing that he is the subject, the personality, he has an immortal soul/*ātman* or that there is "an objective world") is alienated from his original being.

The stream of psychophysical life of a person is determined by two major factors – egocentric affects (*kleśas*) and the activity that inevitably generates the consequences: changes of health – diseases, happiness – misfortune, youth – old age and, at last, death. The life which has not been focused on the discharging (*nirvāna*) proceeds, as it was said above, within self-replicating affects, in the alternation of births and deaths. Thus, the empirical existence of a person appears as spontaneous, non-self-sufficient, unstable, imperfect, as a dissatisfaction and a source of anxiety. "It's the scandalous lameness of the human existence, depreciating all pleasures of life, has forced Buddha to refuse the safe life in the palace and "career" of the governor and to go on searches of the "immortal" (Lyssenko, 2003, p. 117). The soteriological ideal of Buddhism, respectively, is

<sup>8</sup> In our opinion, "*the Dharma Wheel*" in Buddhism could be compared with Nietzsche's "Eternal Returning" and be described with the verses of Russian poet Alexander Blok:

"Night, a street-lamp, a pharmacy.  
A meaningless and murky light.  
A quarter of a century  
Can pass – no change. No hope flight.

Die, go back to the beginning,  
Just as before, fate will repeat:  
Night, the cold canal's waters rippling,  
The pharmacy, the lamp, the street."

a destruction of the ignorance (*a-vidyā*) and the termination of causal dependence and cyclic alternations, respectively.<sup>9</sup>

As for the term "*duḥkha*" (it is often translated both as "suffering" and "undergoing"), it is necessary to understand it as a basic dissatisfaction with any form of empirical (sansaric) existence as such. However, initially, during the Vedic period the word "duḥkha" meant "difficult", "unpleasant", "pain", "suffering", "burdens", "adversities", etc. and united all adverse aspects of the human existence – from the purely physical and psychological sufferings to the deep dissatisfaction with being in this world. First duḥkha was opposed to *sukha* (pleasure, enjoyment). But later, in Buddhism, and also during the shramans period in doctrines of the *ājīvikas*<sup>10</sup> *sukha* was not opposed any more to duḥkha (as it was in the majority of Western philosophical and ethical schools), and joins in the volume of the last concept because in the empirical (sansaric) existence everything is suffering, i.e., undergoing. *Sukha* in this context represents no more than fixing of a concrete fact of psychic life of a human being, but this life itself lies within the limits of action of duḥkha. The most consecutive and systematic doctrine of duḥkha as *samsāra* and karma synonym and antipode of discharging (*nirvāna*) belongs to Buddhism. For the Buddhist *all* existence is suffering, i. e. undergoing, both pleasant and unpleasant sensations and events are all part of existence; it is necessary to understand duḥkha as an ontological "groundlessness" of the person, "inequality" to himself, a basic dissatisfaction with any form of empirical (karmic, sansaric) existence.

The Truth about the duḥkha was stated for the first time by Buddha in his first sermon "*Dhamma-chakka-ppavattana-sutta*" (1998). But before passing to the logical and discursive analysis of the concept of duḥkha in the Buddhist philosophical texts, we should note the basic incomparability of the Buddhist concept of duḥkha with the concept of "suffering" as it is present in the Judeo-Christian religious tradition. The suffering in the Old Testament tradition was comprehended as a divine punishment for a sin, as a sign of rejectedness by God. Sufferings of the man were

<sup>9</sup> Here we can see some analogy with the concept of "a step from the reign of necessity to the reign of freedom" in the Western philosophy.

<sup>10</sup> The *ājīvikas* was an anti-Brahmanist religious trend which appeared in the middle of the I millenium BC.

connected with the intrigues of the evil embodied in the image of a Satan. Therefore the suffering was also the fight of the good with the evil in soul of a man. The New Testament tradition continues this paradigm, but thus still sees in suffering the pledge of rescue: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Mf. 24 : 13). The cult of suffering in Christianity is connected with one of the major dogmas – the atonement doctrine: with his sufferings and the Cross death Jesus atoned for human sins. Such theological interpretations could arise only within the theistic tradition of the "Abrahamic" religions and are characterized by the idea of a personal relationship of God and man. In the Buddhist tradition, essentially non-theistic, *duḥkha* as the spiritual principle is developed only in the sphere of empirical (samsaric) existence, and in the Judeo-Christian tradition it has a transcendent nature. Besides in the latter case suffering has a beginning – the Fall, and in Buddhism suffering it has no beginning. Philosophical interpretation of the concept of *duḥkha* in Buddhism is deprived of any psychologism and the estimation, inherent in the Western (Judeo-Christian) religious consciousness. I will not say anything new asserting that in the European tradition to *duḥkha* there correspond rather existential concepts of anxiety, care (*Sorge*), fear/horror (*Angst*), or psychoanalytic concept of frustration,<sup>11</sup> than Christian understanding of suffering (Lyssenko, 2011, pp. 303-306). The *duḥkha* in Buddhism is a present, but not a primordial state of affairs (the First Noble Truth of Buddha: "Everything is *duḥkha*") as it is caused not by intrigues of evil forces or weakness of human nature, but with certain "objective" factors. And in our investigation we'll try to find some (not so evident) strategies in the ontology of Buddhism (primarily *mādhyamaka* (*śūnyavāda*) *darśana*) and the existential philosophy of Heidegger and Sartre.

In the Buddhist philosophy and religion the ideologem of *duḥkha* holds the central position in the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths. *Duḥkha* is the main characteristic of the human existence mediated by the individual egocentric installation (*upadānā*). Buddha spake: "Bhikkus, what I am going to teach

presently is the Noble Truth of Suffering or the real suffering which the aryas should know. The new becoming (birth) is also suffering; getting old (ageing) is also suffering; death is also suffering; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are also suffering; association or connection with unlovable persons and objects or hateful persons and objects is also suffering; desiring to get and not getting it, that desire or craving it is also suffering. In short, the five aggregates which form the object or the group of *nāmā-rūpa* which clings to the notion of I, mine, permanence, satisfactoriness (*sukha*), self, are indeed suffering." (*Dhammachakkavattana Sutta*, 1998, p. 157)

The Second Noble Truth is about the reason of suffering – thirst (*tṛṣṇa*, *trīṣṇa*), a passionate inclination, and aspiration to experience and to experience of diverse perceptions, i.e. aspiration to stay in the samsaric world.<sup>12</sup> But it is a question not only of sensual experience: much more important is the spiritual thirst connected with ignorance (*avidyā*), which is more difficultly surmountable. It is, for example, an aspiration to continuation to exist as "myself", an empirical "Ego", or the thirst for an eternal existence (belief in the eternal *ātman* or the immortal soul) or, on the contrary, the thirst of non-existence – from the belief in *ātman*'s destruction after death of a body to the thirst of death in the form of a suicide or aspiration not to be that what you are. But, Buddha believes that there's no exit from the *samsāra* and the termination of *duḥkha* in this case: the egocentric position generates the thirst (*trīṣṇa*) to experience sensual experience, the *upādāna* (grasping, appropriation), an inclination to pleasant and aspiration to avoid the unpleasant. But the total influence of cause and effect dependences which escapes from the empirical (samsaric) consciousness causes general variability and inconstancy of the samsaric consciousness. The empirical subject does not have and cannot have any means for an opposition to this variability. The individual empirical activity directed at the achievement of happiness (*sukha*) explicates in the sphere of the karmic cause and effect dependences are inseparable from the ordinary (samsaric) consciousness. Such blind concerning the causes and effects

<sup>11</sup> However the analogy to psychoanalytic concept of frustration, in our opinion, is applicable only to the first type of *duḥkha*, *duḥkha-duḥkhatāa* – an ordinary *duḥkha*, caused by the birth, physical pain, illness, old age, death, loss of relatives, adverse conditions, etc. of what it will be said below.

<sup>12</sup> We read in "pessimistic" Ecclesiastes: "The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing" (Eccl. 1:8)



activity turns sansaric subject into the subject of undergoing.

In the different Buddhist darśanas different classifications of varieties of duḥkha are offered. Unfortunately, we have no opportunity to analyze and even to enumerate them all here. In general, the Buddhist doctrine states that this (sansaric) being is defined by the following characteristics: 1) everything is changeable (*anitya*); 2) all is suffering (undergoing) – *duḥkha*; 3) all is essenceless, or is deprived of selfness (*anātma*); 4) everything is dirty (*aśubha*). Owing to the compound, caused and not substantive character all the alive and lifeless is changeable, subject to destruction and is deprived of any invariable support in the form of soul or ātman or a material substance (*dravya*). This conditionality which is expressing in dependence of any situation of the living being from a set of causes including the factors of karmic character, makes this living being incomplete, not self-sufficient, groundless and generates in him the feeling of a deep ontological dissatisfaction. As duḥkha extends only on empirical (sansaric) being of a person, it is not immanent to being of a person as such: leaving the empirical reality, desires and false intellectual constructs, a person can cease suffering. The paradox of duḥkha for the European consciousness is that duḥkha (as well as the saṃsāra) has no beginning/initiation, but has the end (nirvāna). That it is in the power of a man to put an end to that which has no beginning!<sup>13</sup> The Third Noble Truth (*nirodha-satya*) is the mood on the termination of suffering. The neutralization of action of cause and effect factors represents a radical transformation of the present (empirical) condition of consciousness. But such transformation is possible only in case there are its preconditions in the individual (empirical) psychophysical structure. Otherwise the termination of suffering would operate as the act of transcendent character that in the Judeo-Christian tradition is called the granted Divine grace.

Buddha taught his disciples: “Bhikkhus, what I am going to teach now is the Noble Truth

of the extinction of suffering, the real truth which Noble Ones should know. It is the complete fading away and cessation of that hunger (*triśna*), that craving without remainder, its forsaking and giving up, relinquishing, letting go, release and abandoning of the same craving.” (*Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. 1998, p. 262). The Third Noble Truth of Buddha speaks about it – *nirodha-satya*. The central concept of this doctrinal situation, the termination (*nirodha*), is related to the word “nirvāna”, from Sanskrit “nir” – to die away. The termination of any sensual experience is a partial synonym of nirvāna; it is such a condition in which the expansion of the causally conditioned mental activity ceases. Buddha learned that it is possible by means of a certain practice (The Fourth Noble Truth about a way to the termination of duḥkha) of eradicating the reason (*triśna*) to destroy in the individual existence duḥkha itself.

Let us dare to provide the big quote from “*Sutta-Pitaka*” (“*A basket of manuals*”, (*Udana I, Bodkhi-sutta III*)). It is the second of *Tipitaka's* three parts, containing 17 thousand of *suttas*, attributed to Buddha and his nearest associates. This corpus is admitted (with rare exception) by all schools (darśanas) both of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism. This quote, in our opinion, illustrates very boldly, brightly and capaciously, but at the same time in a strictly philosophical way the mechanism of the emergence of suffering in the empirical subject and the discontinuation of suffering (duḥkha). The given sutta in some sense will illustrate “in an advancing mode” some of our further reasonings. So:

“From the cessation of ignorance comes the cessation of fabrications.

From the cessation of fabrications comes the cessation of consciousness.

From the cessation of consciousness comes the cessation of name-&-form.

From the cessation of name-&-form comes the cessation of the six sense media.

From the cessation of the six sense media comes the cessation of contact.

From the cessation of contact comes the cessation of feeling.

From the cessation of feeling comes the cessation of craving.

<sup>13</sup> Possibly, partly for this reason in the West since the middle of the XIXth century various neo-buddhist currents became so popular: in a paradoxical way they coincided with dreams about the “superperson” (in a broad understanding of this term): an absolute power, a power of the person over the initialless (even if at the price of loss of a personality!) imposed very much to many of Western intellectuals.  
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From the cessation of craving comes the cessation of clinging/sustenance.

From the cessation of clinging/sustenance comes the cessation of becoming.

From the cessation of becoming comes the cessation of birth.

From the cessation of birth, then aging-&-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair all cease. Such is the cessation of this entire mass of suffering & stress.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

As phenomena grow clear to the brahman-ardent, in jhāna – his doubts all vanish when he penetrates to ending of requisite conditions.” (*Udana: Exclamations*. pp. 28-29).

Now we need to consider the doctrinal and ontological foundations of the Buddhist soteriological doctrine. Each philosophical school of India (whether be it nāstika or astika darśanas, Buddhism or Brahmaism) was a peculiar project of transformation (deconstruction) of the personality for achieving of an absolute discharging from suffering and undergoing both in metaphysical, and in existential sense. Freedom, absolute and transcendent, is also the supreme value of the Buddhist culture. In what way can this freedom be achieved? The answer is simple – in *self-knowledge*.<sup>14</sup> This self-knowledge, "understanding", *veda* is exactly what the Buddhist schools offered as a "project" of the getting rid of duḥkha. What was it necessary "to understand", to learn about yourself "to be released" and cease to suffer (to undergo)? How to find the "original" (in the Buddhist sense in this case) existence?

If the main purpose of the Buddhist soteriological "project" is a transformation of consciousness, a change of its type, that could be described as the replacement of the "distinguishing" (*tetic*, in terms of Sartre and Husserl) consciousness-*viññāna* which is based on a subject-object dichotomy, by the "non-dual" (*advaya*) consciousness-“gnosis” – *jñāna* (*non-tetic*) – so, it is obvious that the problems of mind, mentality, consciousness and mechanisms of its functioning were in the

center of attention of the thinkers from the very beginning of the tradition of Buddhist philosophizing which was always substantially the “pure phenomenology” of consciousness. According to the majority of Buddhist schools, those properties and qualities which we attribute to the external world are actually the projections of our own consciousness. The world is not the world in which we live, but the world which we *endure*. The Buddhist philosophy, as it is paradoxical, belonged substantially to logic and appealed to “tetic” consciousness, instead of the area of gnozis-*jñāna* or “understanding wisdom” (*prajñāpāramitā*) as *prajñā* consists in a direct “intuitive grasping” of reality (for example, of *śūnyata*/emptiness in the doctrine of *mādhyamaka-śūnyavāda*), but this reality is inexpressible within the subject-object frame, non-semiotic, it cannot be described and it is not dual, and consequently, non-verbalized in the language with its grammatical and conceptual forms, which are adapted only to the description of the illusory mental constructs and projections (*vikalpa, kalpanā*).

It is traditionally considered that within Buddhism there were four philosophical schools: *sarvāstivāda* and *sautrāntika* within the *Hīnayāna* Buddhism and *mādhyamaka-śūnyavāda* and *yogacāra* (*viññānavāda*) within the *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Many modern buddologists (Evgeny A. Torchinov, for example) allocate still the fifth school – the *tathāgata-garbha* the process of formation of which in India was not completed (but it influenced in the strongest way the Tibetan Buddhism) and it was included in the school of *yogacāra*. In the aspect of our research we are interested mostly with the school of *mādhyamaka-śūnyavāda* and its founder – Nāgārjuna (the most probable period of his life – II century A. C.).

Though the darśana of *mādhyamaka* claimed that its position expresses “*the middle vision*” – contrary to eternalism extremes (for example, of the *sarvāstivāda* school) and nihilism, we will try to prove that just nihilism (probably, in our Western understanding) was the essence of the doctrine of this darśana. The comparative purpose of our research demands the development of a certain metaposition: we cannot look at Heidegger and Sartre, on the one hand, and the darśana of *śūnyavāda* – on the other, so to speak, “from within”. Therefore the task will consist in comparing of strategies of

<sup>14</sup> Just remind that it's knowledge about yourself/being, *genuine* knowledge was the goal of Heidegger's and Sartre's philosophizing.  
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philosophizing concerning similar concepts (the ontological bases of the categories "Sorge" of Heidegger, "Being-for-itself" of Sartre, "Nothingness" of them both and the concepts of "duḥkha" and "śūnyata" in the darśana of mādhyaṃaka).

So, the doctrine of śūnyavāda in the most general view says that *everything* ("all dharmas") is *empty* and deprived of own nature (*svabhāva*). Here it is very important to say about the category of śūnyata (emptiness or "hollowness") in the Śūnyavāda School. This term is present in Buddhist texts since "*Tipitaka*" – first for the designation of absence of the substantive "Ego" in the personality or the in the phenomenon. Starting with "*Mūlamadkhyamikakārikā*" of Nāgārjuna (See *Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadkhyamikakārikā*, 1995) "śūnyata" becomes a central category of the philosophy of the Buddhism of Mahāyāna. One of the starting points of Nāgārjuna's discourse is the principle already mentioned *pratītya samutpāda* (a causal and dependent origination), common for all philosophical schools of Buddhism. Everything exists only so far as it is causally determined, and there is nothing (not any dharma) that would not be causally determined. It means that nothing (not any dharma) does possess its self-being (*svabhāva*), that there is no such essence which could be self-sufficient, would exist by itself owing to its own nature; everything is śūnyata. So, in the world there are neither things, nor events; there is no world itself also. Nāgārjuna wrote:

"When no entities exist,  
There is no becoming or destruction.  
Without becoming and destruction,  
There are no existent entities."  
(Nagarjuna, 2000, p. 57).

The result is that *nothing* possesses its self-being; everything is *duḥkha*. Evgeny Torchinov, a well-known Russian researcher of Buddhism wrote: "If everything is mutually caused, there are no self-existing entities because a borrowed being is not original being just as the borrowed money is not original wealth: certainly, the poor one can borrow a lot of gold and behave so as if he is rich, but it will be only visibility, an illusion. The same illusion is being of everything. Thus the chain of causal conditionality is disconnected: there is not any absolute "creditor" (God, the Absolute), and the

phenomena infinitely cause each other." (Torchinov, 2007, pp. 253-254).

Thus, all dharmas are empty, essenceless and groundless. Their main and only characteristic is that they are selfless, essenceless (*nāiratmya*) and "empty". In Hīnayāna's schools (*sarvāstivāda* and *sautrāntika*) there was the principle of *pudgala nāiratmya* ("selflessness of the personality"); Nāgārjuna supplements this principle with the principle the *dharma nāiratmya* (selflessness/groundlessness of dharmas); it is a nihilistic step in comparison with *sarvāstivāda* and *sautrāntika*. As Nāgārjuna says in the "*The Prajñāparamita Heart Sutra*": "Sariputra, the characteristics of the emptiness of all dharmas are non-arising, non-ceasing, non-defiled, non-pure, non-increasing, non-decreasing" (Nagarjuna, 2000, p. 6). From the point of view of Nāgārjuna, it is meaningless to distinguish dharmas – they "are quite equal" to each other in their hollowness. The only attribute of dharmas is the lack of any attribute, the "attributelessness" and, therefore, their non-semioticity, non-tokenness and non-verbalizeness – *animitta*. And all that is semiotic, signful, described and verbalized is only visibility and illusion, a fruit of the activity of the distinguishing thought (*vikalpa*) and its construct (*kalpanā*).

Moreover, according to Nāgārjuna, the causality itself (*pratītya samutpāda*), a transcendent condition of the hollowness of all existent, in itself is empty and does not exist. Emptiness is also empty: it is not a certain metaphysical principle allocated with its own nature; it is the depriveness of a self-being (*svabhāva*). At the same time śūnyata is *tathāta* (thisness) – the emptiness of phenomena as their only property is what *there is*. On this basis Evgeny Torchinov and many other modern buddologists refuse to recognize Nāgārjuna and the school of śūnyavāda as radical nihilists (as what they did not consider themselves), but just calls them "the skeptics". We, unfortunately, cannot agree with this opinion. If after all to contrive and "seize" the so-called "slippery eel" (as the adepts of śūnyavāda called themselves and their opponents also did), the radical nihilism in ontological strategies will be discovered and we will try to justify it. We can say that śūnyata is the ontological Nothingness. And one of the illustrations of the mādhyaṃaka's nihilism may be, for example... the refutation of The Four

Noble Truths of Buddha: "There is no truth of suffering (duḥkha), or the cause of suffering, or the cessation of suffering, or of the Path." (Nāgārjuna, 2000, p. 6).

Nāgārjuna considered that any attempt to create a metaphysical system adequate to reality is doomed to failure: thinking that we describe being, we describe only our ideas of being, created by ours "distinguishing thinking" (*vikalpa*), which accepts first of all the subject-object dichotomy as a condition of empirical knowledge. In the beginning we hang "labels" on the reality, and then we begin to study them, taking them for the reality itself. Nāgārjuna applies the peculiar negative dialectics which has received the name *prāsaṅga* (negative reasoning). In "*Mūlamadkhyamikakārikā*" Nāgārjuna considers and rejects as irrelevant such categories as causality, movement, time, space, form, quantity, quality, distinction, etc. We have no opportunity to reproduce all of his argumentation. And the theory of the Two Truths (or two levels of knowledge) follows from it. The first level corresponds to daily practice and empirical reality (*sanvritti satya*). Concerning this reality we can speak about the conditional existence of space, time, causality, movement, objects, unity, multiplicity, form, quantity, quality etc. This level differs from the pure illusions – mirages, dreams, hallucinations and "empty concepts" – for example, "horns of a hare", "a heavenly flower", "fur of a turtle", "the son of the fruitless woman". But the empirical reality is so illusory concerning the level of the Highest Truth (*paramārtha satya*). This level is inaccessible to a logical discourse, but is conceivable with powers of yogic intuition (*prajñāpāramitā*).

Nāgārjuna considered impossible not only the existence of God the Creator, the divine Architect of the Universe (the treatise "*The Refutation of the Idea of Īśvara as the Creator*" ("*Īśvarakarṭṛtvanīrakṛitīrākṛtiḥ viṣṇoḥ ekakarṭṛtvanīrākaraṇa*") (See George Chemparthy. *Two early Buddhist Refutations of the Existence of Īśvara as the Creator of the Universe /Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sud-und-Ostasien. Bd XII–XIII, pp. 85-100*), but he also criticized the idea of the impersonal self-sustained and self-sufficient "Absolute" like Brahman of *advaita-vedānta*. His arguments (in short) are that as follows. There is no essence (dharma) which would possess its self-being as it is conditionally caused. The Brahman is a special essence; therefore, it also

cannot exist out of the reasons and conditions. Therefore there is, so to speak, "contradiction in itself", *contradictio in adjecto*. Here is one more interpretation: the subject (personality) cannot exist – so, there is no superpersonality (God) also. The sense of the Buddhist doctrine of *nirīśvara-vada* (literally, the knowledge of non-existence of God the creator, Īśvara) is that the world which has been created by *none* of gods is a suffering, a flour, a dissatisfaction. The believer has no reasons to hope for favor of God or for the divine justice beyond the grave. In the person (and in any living being) both the reason of suffering and possibility of the termination of its action are hidden. Speaking the "Western" language, Buddhists-mādhyamakas put their followers before an existential choice – either the continuation of circulation of sufferings in uncountable repeating of roles and situations, or the introduction of a way to get rid of them.

The purpose of Nāgārjuna and the mādhyamaka-sūnyavāda school as a whole consisted also in the substantiation of relativity and illusiveness of everything existing and mental, in the removal of any binary oppositions and hierarchies. According to relativism of mādhyamaka, nirvāṇa is nirvāṇa only in its relationship to saṃsāra, as well as saṃsāra – only in its relationship to nirvāṇa. Even nirvāṇa does not possess "self-being" (*svabhāva*) – therefore, both nirvāṇa and saṃsāra are empty and essenceless and their general *tathāta* (thisness), the original nature, is sūnyata, the emptiness (Nothingness, in Western understanding). *Mādhyamaka-prāsaṅgika* (the negative argumentation) asserts that mādhyamaka cannot have its own positions or any point of view; its position is purely negative and critical, directed at denying of any positions and doctrines. We could say that Nāgārjuna "eliminates" Kant's "Antinomies of Pure Reason", he writes:

"Everything is real and is not real,  
Both real and not real,  
Neither real nor not real."

And further:

"There is neither eternity, nor non-eternity,  
Neither self nor selflessness,  
Neither suffering nor enjoying,  
Neither purity nor non-purity,

Wherefore incorrect are those views.”  
(Nāgārjuna, 1995, p. 55).

Nāgārjuna also said that the Buddhas taught that “śūnyata” was the termination of all kinds of views; so those who had made “śūnyata” their doctrine are “incurable”. The purpose of Śūnyavāda School was to refute all possible metaphysical theories as mental constructs (*vikalpa*, *kalpanā*) and to show the basic impossibility of creation of any relevant ontology. But this deconstruction of metaphysics has nothing in common with scepticism: the matter is that “reality as it is” is conceivable with yogic intuition (*prajñāpāramitā*), but is inaccessible to any discursive thinking based on a subject-object dichotomy which in itself is a product of mental designing and being expressed in the language forms which are completely unsuitable for the description of that what actually “is”,<sup>15</sup> instead of our ideas about it.

The evolution of Nāgārjuna's views has shown, as the researchers David Burton and Thomas Wood assert (see Thomas Wood *Nāgārjunian Disputations: A Philosophical Journey Through and Indian Looking-Glass*, 1994. David Burton *Emptiness Appraised. A Critical Study of Nāgārjuna's Philosophy*, 1999) that in the last analysis the most important for him has become not to show that all phenomena arise and disappear being conditionally caused, but that they do not arise and do not disappear at all and that in itself emergence and disappearance are fictions.<sup>16</sup> In this sense nirvāṇa and saṃsāra are in the essence the same, and Buddha is also deprived of self-being (*svabhāva*), as well as the world. Burton and Wood estimate the position of mādhyaṃaka as radical nihilism. So, Nāgārjuna says:

“There is not the slightest difference,  
Between cyclic existence and nirvāṇa.  
There is not the slightest difference,  
Between nirvāṇa and cyclic existence”  
(Nāgārjuna, 1995, XXV, 19, p. 73).

If it is not the nihilism, what can be called nihilistic then?

<sup>15</sup> In this case we use the concept “is” in a very conditional way since the original meaning of this “is” consists in that there... “is” nothing!

<sup>16</sup> The legend says that somehow Nāgārjuna visited the parental house that day when his mother died. He told that nothing occurred because *on truth* in general nothing can occur, the world is eventless. His brothers (wisemen brahmins) nevertheless could not accept such “radicalism” and... beat their “heartless” brother.

## Conclusion

In their aspiration to overcoming of any binary oppositions and hierarchies the mādhyaṃakas, perhaps, may be compared with the Western postmodernists. But there is a radical difference: the Buddhists had a soteriological purpose, aspiration to release by finding of a certain (true) knowledge. Understanding of hollowness of reality and mentality was a way to discontinuing of duḥkha (undergoing) and finding of nirvāṇa (which, as we know, does not have, according to the mādhyaṃakas, its self-being). And the postmodernists do not set any purposes of the transcendent character.

Let us return to Sartre: his phenomenology, though depriving the Ego as a mental construct of the opportunity to be the “the core of consciousness” and recognizing the “conventionality” of all objects and images, does not draw from this further conclusions (which were drawn by the Buddhists of mādhyaṃaka, and also by other Buddhist darśanas). But it is not necessary for Sartre: his philosophy does not set before itself the soteriological purpose which could be “depriving” of consciousness of its intentionality (first of all), of “non-equality” to itself, of “undergoing” the excruciating perceptions, images, representations, aspirations, as in his novel “*Nausea*” (Lifintseva, 2012). Despite radical phenomenalism, “a patrimonial trauma” of the Western philosophy – the matter and consciousness dualism – after all is not completely removed. Sartre, however, tells about the theoretical aspiration to removal of this dualism – the association of two separated regions of being in the uniform of “Being-in-itself-for-itself” and to finding thus the calm and self-sufficiency in which Cartesian God and a Spinoza’s Substance stay. The American philosopher Stephen W. Laycock calls it “a shadow of God” in Sartre's philosophy (see Steven W. Laycock *Nothingness and Emptiness: Exorcising the shadow of God in Sartre / Man and World*, 24 (1991) pp. 395-407). However this project, according to Sartre, “is failed” initially because, having destroyed himself as *continuous* negativity, the person would destroy himself as freedom.

So, in the existential philosophy and in the Buddhism of śūnyavāda there is a certain deconstruction of the subject. Obviously, “subject” of Brahmanic darśanas which the Buddhists “deconstructed” and subject of the Western philosophy of the New time



deconstructed by Heidegger and Sartre have very little in common. However in all three doctrines (Heidegger, Sartre and the Buddhist darśana of mādhyamaka-śūnyavāda), with the distinction of their ontological foundations and valuable purposes, the secularity of both Europeans and sacral aspiration of the Buddhists, we can see the general strategy of philosophizing: understanding the human consciousness as unequal to itself, non-self-sufficient, groundless and in this sense suffering, "unhappy"; we can also see the aspiration to finding by a person of a certain true knowledge of himself and being. The idea of the "annihilating" function of consciousness was also common for them: consciousness introduces nothingness/śūnyata ("genuine" knowledge about nothingness/śūnyata) into the world. And the person can gain this "genuine" knowledge – for different purposes, of course, in the secular existential philosophy and the Buddhist philosophy and religion. For Heidegger "Nothingness" is "an initial abyss" from which "being is extended", for Sartre annihilation/neantization makes an essence and meaning of being of the person. So, the ontological status of a person is the presence of negativity. From our point of view, it belongs also to the Buddhist school of mādhyamaka.

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