Introduction

These studies and essays are representative of the work of modern Buddhist scholarship. The collection is designed not only for the Buddhologist, but also for the more or less specialist reader in world religion and philosophy for whom, it is hoped, the volume may be of assistance in understanding some of the ramifications of later Buddhist thought. Consequently, the writings here deal primarily with the Mahāyāna, and are developed from Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese sources composed in the third century A.D. and after. The principal method or approach to be found in most of these studies, regardless of the differences in the Buddhological viewpoint of their respective authors, is simply the exposition of classical source material.

Here, as has been the case among Buddhist scholars in general, the viewpoints of the authors are more or less evenly divided between those who tend to view Buddhism as a predominantly rational system and those who view it as pure existentialism. The former will view the core of Buddhist teaching as the outcome and derivative of the process of reasoning, whereas the latter will regard it as a verbal-conceptual formalization of an essentially transrational and yogic-type experience to be judged solely by its being known

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experientially or existentially. For the former, the core of the formalizations of Buddhism are propositions whose truth or falsity are ascertainable by means of a purely philosophical critique; for the latter, they are merely the signposts pointing the way to a stronger manner of "being here" or *Dasein*.

As serviceable as these approaches may be as emphases or priorities in talking about Buddhism, an actual cleavage between scientific and existentialist thought is, of course, a peculiarly European development and has its genesis in Europe's own intellectual past. Consequently, a hard and fast distinction between the two, at least in the same manner. may not also be altogether applicable to other cultures such as India, for example, where religion, philosophy, and science have developed in other ways. For instance, nothing prevents a philosophy, once taken outside of the European framework, from being existentialism in the prime sense of holding that an individual's potentiality for a given mode of existence cannot be derived from any metaphysics of being, and from being at the same time a philosophy derivable from the process of reasoning, provided that the reasoning process be a critique of thinking, rather than a construction of another system of rationalist dogma or ideology. Buddhism, in fact, appears to be just such a case in point, as long as one considers the primary systems of the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna as set forth in the Buddhist sūtras, together with their systematization by the main Buddhist ācāryas, Nāgārjuna, Asanga, and others. Subsequently, when Buddhism began to spread over the major portion of Asia, it always did so in association with its philosophies, since Buddhism never presented itself as a new revelation or gnosis, its founder having cautioned his followers about accepting his dharma on the basis of his personal authority rather than scrutinizing it by means of reason. The subsequent developments of Buddhism throughout numerous Asian countries are too multifarious to be generalized.

In this volume devoted to Buddhist meditation, the reader will soon discover that many of the studies and essays deal

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with the theories of the Mahāyāna, which is as it should be. In both the Mahāyāna systems, the Mādhyamika and the Yogācāra, as well as in the Hīnayāna, the actual nature of the object to be meditated upon is at first purely noetic, and results from a correct analysis of the phenomenal thing. Subsequently, this noetic object is brought into the limits of direct perception through the power of repeated meditative practice; to become an object of meditation at all, a thing must first be established as an object noetically. Consequently, the ācāryas of all the Buddhist schools, both Hīnayānist and Mahāyānist, seem to have been unanimous in holding that study and investigation need to precede the practice of meditation, simply in order to establish the number, nature, and so forth of the objects upon which to meditate. In Buddhism, this has always entailed some correct understanding and acceptance of anātma, which is the principal object of meditation, for the core of Buddhist teaching is simply the demonstration of anātma, and of the paths and final results which arise from meditating upon that view.