

THE SEVEN KEYS OF ANY WORLD VIEW

INTRODUCTION

A study of world views forces the researcher into the role of a traveler who discovers that his city map does not give him any clue as to the real life of the city—its subterranean layers, its power structure and so on. The subject *World View* calls up images of the Generic City by the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas: The Generic City is seriously multiracial, on average 8 % black, 12 % white, 27 % Hispanic, 37 % Chinese/Asian, 6 % indeterminate, 10 % other. Not only multiracial, also multicultural. That is why it comes as no surprise to see temples between the slabs, dragons on the main boulevards, Buddhas in the CBD (central business district). The Generic City is always founded by people on the move, posed to move on. This explains the insubstantiality of their foundations.

Koolhaas' plastic description destroys the notion of the city as a center of traditional culture, with stable, democratic institutions. The Generic city is an urban nomadic event, a melting pot of innumerable movements, dreams and conflicts. "Each period in history that witnesses a struggle of paradigms in which the borders between fiction and non-fiction lose their transparency, needs the dialogue. Only the dialogue form has the communicative freedom to confront and sometimes embrace the divergent philosophical and psychological positions, or the novelty as dialogue in Bakhtin's studies." [1]

DIALOGUE VERSUS APRIORI KNOWLEDGE

The powerful dynamics of permanent change cuts deep in the life-force of the vital-psychic order, the *longue durée* of Henri Bergson or Fernand Braudel. This urban crossing point of the old and the new confronts the various world views with the question of mutual negation, leading to fundamentalist tendencies, or with the choice of mutual investigation and open dialogue. The readiness for dialogue implies the recognition that we consider the various world views first of all as a human manifestation, regardless of their philosophical or spiritual background. Moses, Buddha, Sappho, Socrates, Jesus, Mohammed, Russell and Gandhi, as symbols of various world views, are confronted with each other in the Generic City. If their followers and admirers are willing to discuss their

views with each other, then we will see a splendid manifestation of human insights and life strategies. The public will be inspired by their wisdom, their love for truth and the common good. If, however, the followers and admirers already know the answers before the questions are raised, we are in trouble. If they present their belief system as divine, absolute knowledge, then the communities of believers will start to distrust each other, followed by possible mutual exclusion. The Generic City will develop ghettos and nightmare-like dreams.

If we try to imagine how various world views enter into a dialogue about the question of good and evil, or about the expectations of some kind of life after death, we will witness a manifestation of "alterities." Such a manifestation will raise the question how much alterity a person, a community, and finally, a city can absorb before it enters the phase of becoming a generic city, in which the explosion of alterities destroys the roots of the past or drives them literally underground.

THE HUMAN DIMENSION IN DIFFERENT LIFESTYLES

New York City is a good example of a fragile balance between the past and the future. The Big Apple has an ongoing love affair with the apple in the garden of Eden. It cultivates the moment as a lifestyle, and with this lifestyle, its continuity among all the changes.

I believe that the capacity of human beings to absorb cultural differences is rather limitless, although there is ample evidence pointing to the opposite thesis. I remember a visit to New York that took place shortly after a stay of more than a month with the Dogon people in Mali. The difference in lifestyle between the Dogon and the New Yorkers was profound—so profound that I wondered in those days whether I could still apply the category of humankind to both New Yorkers and the Dogon. By humankind I do not mean an abstraction but rather a concrete, living notion. Can the gap between lifestyles become so deep that we are unable to recognize the human dimension in those different lifestyles?

My answer is both no and yes. No, if we are unable to recognize the human dimension, by seeing only the surface level of a different lifestyle. In such a case, our world view and psychology exclude *a priori* any serious attempt to understand an ontology and anthropology that differ from our own. Yes, if we are able to recognize the human dimension in a different lifestyle, by experiencing positively its aesthetics, because the aesthetic manifestation of a different lifestyle is the way *par excellence* to reveal its qualities. The great variety of lifestyles in a cosmopolitan city explains, at least partly, its attraction upon millions of people. It is

especially in such an urbanized environment that each generation faces new challenges and will invent some answers, different from those of the former generation. I am convinced that the world views which contain the notion of transformation in the center of their ontology and anthropology, will be more capable of providing some orientation in an age of rapid changes than the world views with a static foundation. If this is true, Buddhism must be better equipped to deal with the actual transformations than Christianity. Some Buddhists experience the exile from Tibet since the Chinese occupation of 1959 as positive, because the exile challenges them to reflect upon the meaning and truth of the 'dharma', the Buddhist teaching, within the parameters of Western values.

NOMADIC AND SEDENTARY STATE OF MIND

In order not to overestimate the hermeneutical possibilities of *The Seven Keys of Any World View* I mention a dream I had in Turkey after traveling with my family for half a year in Europe, Africa and Asia. In this dream I realized that within a few weeks I would cross the borders of the Dutch state. It felt as if I were entering a prison: a clean, well-organized system but nevertheless a system. After that strong feeling of borders, I suddenly saw the origin, the hidden deep structure of my book *Analyze Decondition, an introduction to systematic philosophy*, written and presented for Dutch Educational TV (Teleac), two years earlier [2]. I had been writing this book on systematic philosophy, while sitting on a chair. It belonged to the sedentary culture, as was the case with all the philosophy books I had been studying. The dream didn't disappear, after I woke up. It was crystal clear to me that traveling through the Sahara, crossing many borders and living at the feet of the Himalaya in Kashmir, had changed my perception. Suddenly I realized the limits of the sedentary culture and the fundamental difference between a sedentary mind and a nomadic mind. I understood the fear of the dwellers for the nomads, the worldwide struggle of the states against the people who travel without documents, the ugly treatment of the gypsies by peasants, citizens and authorities. The nomadic state of mind differs from the sedentary state of mind as the hunter from the peasant, a traveler from a citizen, a river from a canal. This text *The Seven Keys of Any World View* springs from a sedentary state of mind, as all written reflections on methodology do.

DEEP STRUCTURE AND SURFACE STRUCTURE OF A WORLD VIEW

To grasp the deeper meanings of a world view, we have to cross some borders in our own consciousness, as if we are visiting the invisible cities

of Italo Calvino. In order to understand the assumptions and aims of a world view, I need to introduce a theoretical distinction between the surface structure and the deep structure of a world view. In doing so, I use the terminology of Noam Chomsky's transformational grammar. The surface structure refers to the grammar, i.e., to the sensible manifestation of a world view, while the deep structure refers to the meaning of this manifestation. "Grammatical" expression and its implicate meanings are never identical. There is always the necessity of interpretation and, therefore, of the possibility of misinterpretation from the point of view of the supposed or assumed "original" intention and meaning. But any search for an "original" intention, can never escape the status of an interpretation, because of this creative tension between surface structure and deep structure. By studying the surface structures, the "forms", of world views, we will be able to study both their differences and similarities. I use the word "similarity" and not the words "unity," "one-ness" or similar terms, because of the sheer logical, semantic and artistic impossibility of 'expressing' or 'designing' the notion of oneness, a key-term in all kinds of philosophical and religious monism. Such an intuitive notion of oneness can only be expressed in paradoxical, metaphorical polarities, never as such in itself.

A METHODOLOGY OF WORLD VIEWS

A methodology of world views has to start with a number of questions. The choice of these questions will determine whether the questions do relate to fundamental, unavoidable "fields of experience" of a world view, or do not relate. The questions must be both congenial in order to reveal the basic pattern of a world view, and relevant to as many as possible world views.

At the same time, the questions we are posing may not guide the content of the answers, although I realize that this methodological approach is not value-free. The foundation of this methodology belongs to the analytic-rational tradition in Western philosophy. I hope, however, that the proposed method is open-minded enough to be attractive to students of comparative studies of world views. I distinguish seven questions of which the first six can be interpreted as three different coins, each having two sides. Questions one and two deal with the epistemological coin, viz. language and truth; questions three and four deal with the ontological coin, viz. man and cosmos; questions five and six deal with the normative coin, viz. ethical and aesthetical values. The seventh and last question deals with the *methodos* of a world view, i.e., the introduction and education of newcomers into a world view. Stated succinctly: the

epistemological, ontological and normative "fields of experience" merge into the methodos as in a nutshell.

I believe that the answers to these questions can shed some light on the assumptions, the internal consistency and the reach of application of a world view. The (hidden) assumptions, the coherence and the reach of application are three different perspectives which we can use as meaningful and even normative criteria to estimate the quality of a world view. For example, if an assumption of a world view coincides with the conviction of the a-priori privileged position of the 'own' people, tribe or race, the coherence and the reach of application of such a world view in terms of humanity as the category or class of all humans, will lack consistency and universality.

We have some experience with this method at the University for Humanist Studies in Utrecht in a program called "Buddhism, Christianity and Humanism." The method seems helpful for understanding the mutual differences as well as the differences within the "same" tradition by clarifying the evolution and transformation of certain assumptions.

THE STATUS OF LANGUAGE

The first question deals with the function and the position of language. What is the status of language within Christianity? This status is clearly different from the one in Buddhism or Humanism. The language of the holy Scriptures carries, for an orthodox Christian, an 'absolute' or in any case an existential truth. The language contains revelations of God and the God-man Jesus. The deep differences among Christians can be understood, at least partly, by their different interpretation of the status of the language of the Bible, varying from strictly metaphorical, human language to a literal, time-and-spaceless language. The "anthropological" interpretation of language considers religious language primarily as a world of meanings; the "theological" interpretation of language sees its *own* religious language as a world of true statements due to its divine origin. "This book will not be a history of the ineffable reality of God itself, which is beyond time and change, but a history of the way men and women have perceived him from Abraham to the present day." [3]

Buddhists appreciate language as a liberation in so far it provides the possibility to communicate and to share a domain of meanings, including knowledge about the hidden structures of the laws which govern our existence. But at the same time, Buddhists will say that language is a prison. The reason for this critical approach is the insight that language has its own self-defining, limiting logic, based upon categories and generalizations. Language categories stand in the way of an all-embracing

experience. Therefore, language has to give way to silence in the practice of meditation. "Language is on the one hand, an excellent tool and without it we would not be able to do anything and yet, on the other hand, language is also the great barrier to an understanding." [4]

Humanists have a special relation to language because books as the symbol and content of critical examination belong to the heart of the humanist tradition. There is, however, not one book that can be singled out as the principal source of knowledge. In the humanist tradition every text can be criticized. Humanists will stress the "anthropological" dimension of language, not the "theological" one. This is why *The Seven Keys of Any World View* belongs to the humanist tradition, and why the proposed methodology is not value-free.

THE VARIOUS SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

Analogous to the role of language within the Buddhist, Christian and Humanist traditions, one can distinguish similar differences in relation to the sources of privileged knowledge in each of the three traditions. The Buddhists stress the importance of study of their ancient texts, including the commentaries of the texts until today. In that sense there is no striking difference between the Christian and the Buddhist approach. The difference is in the status of the textbooks. Even if, tomorrow, someone could prove that the Buddha is a legendary figure who didn't exist at all but whose historical existence has been the result of a collective pious fraud, it would not diminish the truth of the Buddhist teachings. The insights of the Buddhist way of life do not depend on an "external"-Messianic cause but are the result of an internal process of insight into the roots of our existence and into the grids through which we perceive human existence. This explains that silent meditation and the practice of the teachings are more important for 'real' knowledge, i.e., insight than the study of the texts. Insight and concrete experience are inseparable.

Many Christians, especially in the monastic tradition, will sympathize with these Buddhist insights with one important exception. The non-existence of Jesus or the negation of his godlike nature with its special relation to the divine Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, would not destroy the value of his teachings in their general wisdom, but it would destroy the existential source of the message. Jesus is a Messiah; Buddha is not. This also explains the different status of these messages for Christians and Buddhists.

If we ask ourselves where and how humanists hope to find some truth, we face a whole array of questions because of the philosophical complexity of the humanist tradition. Perhaps the main distinction we have

to introduce with regard to the question of truth within Humanism, is whether truth is a discovery or an invention. The Greek word for truth, *alètheia*, refers to discovery, the unveiling of what is already there, e.g., the radical correspondence between the (human) microcosm and the macrocosm. The (post)modern interpretation, however, regards truth mainly as a human invention. It implies a strong personal approach ending in the construction of truth statements and ethical values. This process runs parallel with the refusal in (post)modern humanism to allow for the existence of a spiritual reality, in contrast to Renaissance humanists, Rosecrucians or Freemasons, which stress the importance of the intimate relationship, within the human reality, of an immanent and transcendent reality. Because of the important distinction between a philosophical-materialistic, and philosophical-spiritual orientation, the notion of truth in the humanist tradition resembles a Janus face. "It makes sense to make a distinction between pagan humanism, and a Christian humanism. Within the pagan humanism one can distinguish between a philosophical-materialistic tradition and a spiritual tradition. To the philosophical-materialistic tradition belong the philosophies of Protagoras, Stoa, Averroes, Pomponazzi, Voltaire and many philosophes, B. Russell, but also Marxist-inspired forms of humanism; existentialism and postmodernism. To the spiritual tradition belong hermetic Gnosis, kabbalah, neoplatonism, freemasonry, various trends in feminism and deep ecology philosophy." [5].

Although the above-mentioned distinction is an important one, it does not destroy the inner coherence of the humanist tradition, as long as humanists agree upon some basic values, such as: the human search for knowledge and insight; the art of conscious not-knowing, also called the Socratic attitude; human dignity as a life project; a never-ending responsibility for personal actions and "beliefs." I use the word "belief" in a broad sense because of the unavoidable necessity for humans to make certain assumptions about themselves and reality in general. As Wittgenstein said: One can have doubts about everything but not about everything at the same time.

MAN AND COSMOS

In order to show the usefulness of the proposed methodology of the seven questions, I want to sketch briefly some ontological and anthropological characteristics of Buddhism, Christianity and Humanism.

Christianity

With more than 2,000 Christian denominations existing today, it is not easy to describe some basic characteristics of the Christian religion. But if the task were completely impossible, any reference to Christian tradition would lose its meaning. Orthodox Christian belief is rooted in the idea of a transcendent Creator outside time-and-space, for Itself fully independent of His creation; and in the Messiah Jesus, the Savior who is both god and man, the second person in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This special knowledge is due to the revelation of both the old and new Testament. Important within the context of this discourse, is the idea of a divine revelation, also characteristic of Judaism and Islam. The acceptance of a revealed "truth" places the believer in a special position toward the non-believer: there is, in principle, an unsurpassable gap. The non-believer can belong to the category of atheists or, for example, animists, but also to the category of the believers of the "wrong" belief. The rejection by Christians of the other monotheistic beliefs, and vice versa, is proof of that. But one could also argue in favor of the idea that a religious believer who accepts the responsibility for his or her belief, enters the community of all those human beings who realize that their world view is based upon one or more hypothetical assumptions. This could create a common feeling that human beings are all believers, one way or the other. However, some important differences remain. One is the formal feature of the Christian belief in a revelation of one kind or another with all its consequences for ethics, human identity, including notions as soul, an eternal life after death or at least a *Jenseits* orientation, and so on. Changing such a belief-system must always be a painful process because of the original time-and-spaceless orientation. Even starting to doubt certain aspects can easily become suspect, although not necessarily.

In the Christian tradition, man is never alone, just as the cosmos is never alone, because there is always the eternal God, a loving Father for some Christians, an unapproachable Greatness for others. Nature has been placed subjacent to humans, not on an equal footing with humans. The ecological crisis of today cannot be separated from this traditional inequality between nature and humans. Nature is of a lower status than the divine order. Man is located between God and nature. His primary goal is individual salvation, according to Jacques Maritain. His mortality is relative because of his immortal soul, created by the Creator. The created soul makes each man unique and an image of his Creator. It is this thought that has become an inspiration for a more immanent, mystic tradition in Christianity, but always at the edge of

the institutionalized orthodoxy, both Catholic and Reformed.

Buddhism

Buddhism chooses its point of departure in a specific experience, viz. that all sentient beings suffer. Everything that exists falls under the law of dependent origination. In Western philosophy we would call it the all-embracing law of cause and effect. Buddhist tradition is imbued with the notion of impermanence. Dependent origination is the source of *karma*. Insight into our *karma* is the beginning of a process of liberation. There are different interpretations about the relationship between *karma* and *samsara* at one hand, and *nirvana* or enlightenment at the other hand. Nagarjuna, the founder of Mahayana Buddhism, considers *samsara*, the circle of innumerable determinations, and *nirvana* as the liberating insight into this process, to be identical. *Nirvana* is, for him, the perfect way of perceiving human reality: a deep grasp of our reality is the first condition for enlightenment. Our liberated actions will subsequently influence reality to a certain degree.

In Buddhist anthropology and ontology, there are at least two striking characteristics. One is the notion of impermanence with regard to all reality, including the human. This explains why Buddhism focuses on reducing the human inclination to develop an "ego" as a fixed frame for individual identity. Buddhism considers the need for an ego as the basic problem, the source of confusion, passion and aggression, including warfare. Hajime Nakamura speaks of the theory of the non-self. The second characteristic is the process of self-liberation through the realization that desire is the root of our pain. The paradoxical result of such a process of self-liberation is a deep joy that emanates total peace, whether a Buddha is alone or together with *prayna*, known as *shakti* in Hinduism, *yap-yum* in Tibetan language. There is fundamental equality between man and woman, not as x is x, but as x and y, a unity in polarity. Every human being, female or male, is potentially Buddha. Nature, e.g., a flower or an animal, is also Buddhahood in many Japanese haikus. The reason for this universal Buddhahood is that Buddhism does not know the notion of original sin as Christianity does, neither with regard to nature nor to humans. In the so-called beginning, there is no disobedience to God, only lack of insight into the human condition. As I mentioned before, there is no external authority, no revelation in Buddhism and, therefore, a different conception about the role of language and about the road to insight. The four questions show their internal link when we try to answer them, the same as in Christianity.

Humanism

Humanist tradition, as I previously stated, holds knowledge and, therefore, books in high esteem, but not one book. In Roman times, knowing just one book was considered more dangerous than not knowing a book at all. So we may have a problem in determining the ontological and anthropological characteristics of the humanist tradition, especially since the Enlightenment humanism has interpreted time and subsequently history as an irreversible process with a surplus value toward the future, while Renaissance humanism kept the ancient past in high esteem.

If we trace the humanist tradition to the Arabic and Italian Renaissance, and with the Renaissance humanists again to the pre-Christian Greek and Roman antiquity, it is fair to say that the history of philosophy and the history of the humanist tradition coincide to a great extent. However, if they coincide fully, humanism and philosophy would submerge into each other. That is one step too far, or a step not far enough. It would deny the right to philosophy of defending a theoretical and practical nihilism, and to humanism to accept certain basic values and guiding ideas. Skepticism may be in high esteem among many humanists, but they do not want to push it too far. Arne Naess, the Norwegian philosopher and humanist, may have written a beautiful book in the defense of Pyrrhonian skepticism, but his skepticism does not prevent him from arguing for a total view and from inventing "deep ecology," without being inconsistent. An analogous distinction is valid for the classic polarity between the adherents of empiricism and rationalism, both movements understood and interpreted in many different ways. The empiricist Alfred Ayer and the rationalist Noam Chomsky can defend different philosophical positions while both are humanists. Just because of the intimate historical connection between various philosophical movements and the humanist tradition, Humanism may rather be defined as a hierarchy of values or a set of normative ideas than as a specific epistemology or cosmology. One can defend the thesis that the so-called humanist anthropology and cosmology can trace their origin equally well to the triple goddess as to the Greek myth of Narcissus who fell in love with his own image, as an act of self-reflection in the double meaning of the word 'reflection.' There is neither a revelation nor a clear beginning of the human endeavour, symbolized in Diana and Dionysus, Apollo and Athena. Pico della Mirandola will define human nature in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486) as open-ended, not defined by bounds or fixed limits. According to Pico, human nature can mold itself in every possible direction, because its final form depends on the own decisions, for better or for worse. So, the chances are equal. Humanists do usually

agree about this indeterminist point of view with regard to the human nature. With Cicero, humanists adhere to the notion of human nature as a statement of fact and as a statement of value. Cicero developed his notion of *humanitas* from a double perspective: all human beings belong to "humanity" as a matter of fact, and have therefore—and this is the second perspective—to promote the consequences of that fact, viz. humanhood. The French philosopher Foucault, denying the universality of human nature, is a philosopher, even a good one in the classic sense of the word, but does not want to be called a humanist. Foucault is right in his refusal. The reason is his 'reduction' of the 'irreducible' human nature to the bourgeois or proletarian class-nature. It is the denial of "the infinite value of every human being", a statement of Arne Naess in Amsterdam's Paradiso during the Rushdie symposium in 1990.

Many contemporary humanists consider the Enlightenment, not the Renaissance, to be the true beginning of a humanist world view, because of the supposed irreversible development of a scientific world view and the liberation of man from every religious or transcendent orientation. Secularism and humanism were becoming Siamese twins. Immanuel Kant, with *What is Enlightenment*, made a strong appeal to break the chains of an imprisoned judgment. He tried to define the borders of human knowledge with regard to the old metaphysics. Kant believed so much in Newton's physics and in its underlying physical determinism that his entire philosophy became one great effort to prove human freedom within a world which is inanimate and determined solely by the universal law of cause and effect. Although Kant was a humanist and Christian, it was a relatively small step to accept his notions of theoretical knowledge, freedom and ethics without any Christian connotation.

The forthcoming dichotomy between nature and man since the Enlightenment, nature being deterministic and man being free, and the replacement of book Genesis by Darwin's evolution theory, seemed to open the road for an identification of humanism with an all-embracing belief in scientific-technological and ethical progress. Sir Julian Huxley is a good example of this conviction and aspiration: "We have only recently emerged from the biological to the psychosocial area of evolution, from the earthly biosphere into the freedom of the noösphere. Do not let us forget how recently: we have been truly men for perhaps a tenth of a million of years—one tick of evolution's clock . . . Our feet still drag in the biological mud, even when we lift our heads into the conscious air. But unlike those remote ancestors of ours, we can truly see something of the promised land beyond. We can do so with the aid of our new instrument of vision our rational, knowledge-based imagination" [20]. I can only hope that Julian Huxley is right, but the fact that he wrote his

text in 1961 makes me wonder why he believed in progress amidst of the ordeals of the 20th century, both politically and ecologically.

In its mainstream, (post)modern humanism has embraced two ontological assumptions. The first one is the above-mentioned dichotomy between nature and man. This dichotomy is the continuation of the Christian subordination of nature to man. There is no bridge between nature and man: nature and mind seem to be condemned to live forever a separate life. Our freedom rests upon controlling nature, not upon understanding and experiencing nature as our "alter ego." The second assumption is the denial of a transcendent or spiritual reality, as if the rejection of the Christian belief in transcendence has to coincide with the rejection of any spiritual reality. From a philosophical perspective, one can defend transcendence just as well as immanence. There is not any logical or empirical necessity to identify a transcendent reality with a monotheistic belief. Humanism and secularism do coexist quite well, but so do humanism and spirituality à la Ficino in the 15th century or à la David Bohm today. The belief in progress is a historical misunderstanding of the linear notion of time, formulated for the first time by Isaac Barrow, the master of Isaac Newton, in his *Geometrical Lectures*. Linear time has become an ontological and historical idea, instead of the mathematical concept it used to be for Barrow. My conclusion is that the unilinear notion of time is a mystification of a mathematical idea into an ontological category determining our vision of past, present and future as an absolute irreversible process.

These two ontological assumptions: the dichotomy between nature and man, and the denial of any transcendent or spiritual reality, seem to condemn the humanist tradition to coincide to a too great extent with the (post)modern world of science, technology and secularism, so that we are in danger of forgetting that humanism is primarily an open attitude to life, with some elementary, universal values as guiding ideas. These elementary values are, in my judgment, not so different from the values that Socrates practiced 2500 years ago.

ETHICAL AND AESTHETICAL VALUES

My last remark about values is an illustration of how value judgments subterraneously enter the domain of anthropology and ontology.

Humanism

Humanism defends the idea that values stem from an autonomous source, i.e., human reality itself. The old riddle whether the origin of values,

ethical or aesthetical, is only the result of education and a specific environment, or stems also from an innate value-consciousness, is not a topic for this article on the methodology of world views. As said above, the humanist tradition does not coincide with the empiricist or the rationalist answers in this domain. The conviction that the choice and practice of values are the sole responsibility of the human person, is of vital importance in the humanist world view. But equally important is the insight that so-called facts and so-called values do not exist in separate domains as might be clear from my discourse on humanist anthropology and ontology. The preference of the humanist ethos for care and ethical questions, more than for the aesthetic realm, is probably a consequence of the need to demonstrate that secularism is not devoid of an ethical conscience and ethical responsibility. The ethical tradition in humanism can refer to the Ciceronian notion of *humanitas* as the center of their ethical commitment. The notion of humanity has to balance between at one hand a purely relativistic approach of ethical codes, and at the other hand a static, universalistic one. A helpful and essential criterion in determining the right balance between the two poles is attention for the means with which people try to realize their ethical aims. The means in ethical behavior correspond to their aims as the forms and designs in the field of aesthetics correspond to their meanings. The means in ethical behavior may never be subordinated to the so-called aims, because the means are the surface structure and visible realization of the aims, not different of the aesthetic forms which determine the possible meanings in the domain of the arts and design.

Parallel to the above mentioned dichotomy between humans and nature, another dichotomy has evolved during the last three centuries, viz. the separation of sciences and arts. Within a closed-off domain, i.e., the realm of the aesthetic experience, the arts in modern societies have reached an outstanding position. Museums, concert halls and theater houses flourish as never before. The price the arts are paying for this high-standing position, is their exclusion from daily life. One can describe this dilemma of humanist aesthetics as a dilemma of autonomy and isolation. This dilemma can only be solved if aesthetic freedom breaks through the walls of the museum. Artists such as Joseph Beuys or Richard Hefti were fully committed to integrate their art into daily life as an expression of their personal and social world view. Humanists can be at the forefront of this movement on the sole condition that they are willing and able to integrate the world of arts into their private and public life.

Christianity

Christian ethics derives its inspiration from the ten commandments and the moral codes of the various churches. The source is not autonomous, as in humanism, but heteronomous: the revelation by God and by God's intermediaries. Again, many Christians wrestle with the so-called timeless origin of their ethical values. The tension between an ethical rule from "outside" and the personal conscience, is often stressful. Clarification about the inner sense of ethical behavior seems to me to be the only answer to this problem. Christian aesthetics arises from a twofold experience, viz. the redemptive suffering of Jesus with his double nature: divine and human, and the presence of a transcendent, divine majesty. Among many Christians in (post)modern societies, there is a lack of concrete experience of the sacred. The result is that one can hardly find contemporary versions of Christian art, while much of the ancient liturgical traditions has been lost. Christian art is in crisis. The collective experience, needed for the creation of spiritual art, is absent, with the exception of those religious communities where a musical tradition, such as the gospel songs, is still alive.

Buddhism

Buddhism seems to have less problems than Christianity with regard to ethics and aesthetics. Buddhism does not suffer as radically from the dichotomy between man and nature as does humanism, and does not have to wrestle as tragically with the question of origin of ethical codes as does Christianity. In Buddhist tradition, ethical behavior is closely connected with the spiritual path. The spiritual path of self-liberation in the double meaning of this word, liberation by itself and from itself, is the point of departure for ethical behavior. The ethical prescriptions do not differ greatly from the Christian ones in their content, but the justification of those prescriptions is derived primarily from the intention with which they are practiced. There is no external, objective authorization.

A similar analysis is valid for Buddhist aesthetics. Nature is good and beautiful within its own order. The capacity of seeing and experiencing this beauty is linked to the notion of transcendence, not as an independent substance of nature or man but as the inherent, hidden dimension in everything that exists. Buddhists call it the spiritual dimension. The Buddhist transcendence is known as *drala* in our reality, as revealed in this haiku of Buson:

In the spring
relighting a candle flame
with a candle flame

The word *drala* is a Tibetan term for the poetic luster that glows over reality. Analogous to the Christian communities, we can wonder to which degree the Buddhist communities will be able to continue a rich aesthetic tradition. The answer will depend on their capacity to continue a sacred, aesthetic tradition among often very different cultural conditions, trying to find a new balance between the traditional icons and the metamorphosis of those icons into an contemporary idiom. Because of the assumption of the impermanence of all sensible reality and of the introspective strategy, i.e., do not project internal images upon outward reality, the Buddhist tradition has a strong point of departure for a renewal of its aesthetic tradition.

METHODOS

My last question regards the *methodos* of a world view. With the word *methodos* I pose the question of how a specific world view introduces children and outsiders into its tradition. Such a question only seems to be interesting from a pedagogical point of view. But this is misleading. I would like to defend the thesis that the *methodos* of a world view reveals more about its real intentions than any of the doctrinal and moral teachings. Education is the guidance of a child on the basis of values and normative ideas. Normative ideas of this kind could be: respect for authority, the eye of God, respect for parents, the value of money, the struggle for life, the nation-state but also respect for truth, to know what you don't know, respect for all life-forms, an open eye for the inherent beauty of nature, and so on.

Humanism

Humanist education will stress the importance of a personal judgment to strengthen the sense of moral autonomy, to let the child feel and understand the beauty of life but also its harshness. There is no *a priori* truth to teach except the respect for truth as the ultimate criterion for all humans to be able to live together without fooling themselves and each other.

Buddhism

Buddhist educational practice differs from the humanist one, but not essentially. Buddhists will use specific exercises, some rituals and songs according to their tradition, as is the case with Christianity. A student of Buddhism will accept a master as soon as the student decides to become a Buddhist. But the master has the explicit task of guiding the student so that he can bid the master farewell when time has come. The humanist idea and ideal of personal insight and autonomy is also the aim of the Buddhist education. The roads are different but not the aim.

Christianity

The Christian education will follow the path of the teachings of the Bible in order to introduce the child or outsider into the mysteries of the belief. The notion of salvation by Jesus and finally by the Father and the Holy Spirit has to become an existential experience. Salvation may take place by purification of (mortal) sin and by the surrender to God and Jesus, or also to the Holy Mary as the superb mediator in the Catholic belief. The road of the Christian ends in the identification with the death and the resurrection of Christ. There is no self-liberation in Christianity as in Humanism, or liberation of the self as in Buddhism, but rather salvation by surrender to God as the Creator of all there is.

CONCLUSION

The seven questions are various ways of looking and interrogation. The questions themselves are perhaps not even the most profound questions one could ask. At the heart of every world view, there are two fundamental ones: space and time. Space- and time-categories belong to the deep structure of the human mind and perception, and probably of all reality. The concrete answers to space- and time-questions reveal the essence of a culture and of a person. For that reason, they are difficult to deal with. I have chosen a more elaborate method via the seven questions. But everybody who studies the ontological and anthropological dimension of a world view, will discover that the space-time conceptions determine the final "identity" of a world view, even if that world view tries to escape every conceptualisation.

The attempt to uncover some aspects of the deep structure of a world view—assuming that it is possible to do so—leaves the researcher, in this case myself, with the feeling that any description of the deep structure through the concrete surface structure, is empty-handed. Life cannot be

grasped in words; it can only be grasped by life itself. Every Buddhist, every Christian and every humanist can reject what I have been trying to elucidate. They are right. Personal experiences can never be reduced to the categories of my seven questions. Nevertheless, if one is not afraid to look into the mirror, everybody will discover, sooner or later, that the identity of humans cannot be divorced from nature and culture. Nature and culture are the two sides of one and the same coin, viz. the human being. Each world view is a specific expression of that consciousness, one way or another.

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