

Later Heidegger and Buddhist Thinking : No-self and the Inter-play of Relatedness

*Charles J. Sabatino**

The significance placed upon the individual within Western thought contrasts sharply with the claim of Buddhist thinking that ultimately there is no self. Nevertheless, in the present essay, I would like to explore several ways in which Martin Heidegger, especially in his later writings, thinks in a similar manner. I will discuss how the Buddhist notions of *Pratitya Samutpada* (contingent co-arising) and *Sunyata* (emptiness or nothingness), signifying the essential inter-relatedness of all that exists, offer a point at which we can begin to discuss this correlation. While drawing upon several thinkers within the Buddhist tradition, I rely heavily upon the work of Masao Abe who is a contemporary within the *Madhyamika* school of Buddhism and a noted interpreter of the classic thinkers within that tradition, Dogen and Nagarjuna.

Although I discuss primarily Heidegger's later works, this correlation with Buddhist thinking can also be found in the earlier work, *Being and Time*, which raised the question of Being by discussing the equiprimordial manner in which humans exist within the world, among one another, along with things.¹ Heidegger addresses humans as being-in-the-world, and attempts to address the question of Being without positing the human subject as ground or center of world as had so often become the case in Western philosophy following Descartes. Nevertheless, although Heidegger sought to leave behind the human subject as center, J.L. Mehta, one of the foremost Eastern interpreters of Heidegger, finds that the earlier work maintains the human as entry point into the question of Being and thus retains an anthropocentric center. As such, it

* Charles J. Sabatino is a professor of philosophy and religion at Daemen College (Amherst, N.Y.).

¹ Charles J. Sabatino, "A Correlation Between Heidegger's Being-in-the-World and Masao Abe's *Pratitya Samutpada*", *Religiologiques*, 19, 1999, p. 181-94.

remains bound by the metaphysical framework of language and thinking associated with that center.²

In his later writings, Heidegger does find a way to speak from the point of view of Being in that his entry point into the question is no longer human *Dasein*, but rather the very interplay and inter-relatedness that is world. Humans are released from the remnants of subjectivity they retained in *Being and Time* as those who open world, and are understood even more primordially as appropriated within the original opening-up through inter-relatedness that is world. I do not claim that Heidegger's notion of releasement represents the complete emptying of self as we find for example in Masao Abe's discussion of the Buddhist notion of no-self. Nevertheless, it does address the human as centered not within the subjectivity of self, but within the open mutuality and interplay of relatedness that is world. In doing so, it shares a perspective with Buddhist thinking and invites awakening to the truth of relatedness, however hidden, forgotten, or clouded over it may have become by the usual dealings that occur as everyday world, especially within the modern technological societies.

No-Self

Masao Abe discusses the meaning of no-self in conjunction with the notion of *Sunyata*, which is usually translated as emptiness or nothingness.³ To Western ears, these terms strike a negative tone. Emptiness connotes what is lacking, not there, and would seem to leave us with nothing more to say. However Buddhist thinking has roots in the Taoist spirit of China, and recognizes that emptiness also carries a positive significance. In the eleventh chapter of the Tao, we read that it is the emptiness of a cup that allows it to be used. This direction of thinking helps us to appreciate emptiness in its positive light as representing openness. Drawing upon this manner of thinking, Abe presents the notions of

² J.L. Mehta, *The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger*, New York, Harper & Row, 1971. Also "Heidegger and Vedanta: Reflections on a Questionable Theme", in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Graham Parkes (ed.), Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1987, p. 15-45.

³ Masao Abe, in *Zen and Comparative Studies*, Steven Heine (ed.), Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1995, p. 18, 42-45, 103-110. Also Abe's *Zen and Western Thought*, in William LaFleur (ed.), Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1985, p. 160-162.

no-self and *Sunyata* as a clarification of the most basic principal within the *Madhyamika* school of Buddhism : *Pratitya Samutpada*. That term, usually translated as contingent co-arising, signifies that all things arise within a process that finds everything interdependently related. There are no substantially self-existing things that are self-contained or independently existing as separate and apart from one another. Everything, including persons, exist within a context of relatedness that connects and involves them in the being of one another. The emptiness or nothingness of each one correlates to the mutual and reciprocal inter-relatedness whereby each exists only through and in terms of others. Persons are understood not in terms of the subjectivity of a substantial or ego-centered self, but rather as the openness through which each exists within the mutually causal process that is world.⁴ In offering this approach, Buddhist thinking moves in a very different direction from that predominating in the Western tradition where subjectivity and the independence of individuality has played such a fundamental role.

No-self implies not a denial but the affirmation that persons, even as individuals, mutually involve, include, and influence the being of one another. Those very terms suggest the meaning at issue. We are involved (*in-volvere* : to encircle), and exist not at the center of our own individual world, but within the circle of one another. We are included (*in-cludere* : to enclose), and exist not separate or apart from, but with and through one another, sometimes most intimately. We influence (*in-fluere* : to flow within) one another mutually, and thus are empowered by one another much as the waters converge and flow together to form a powerful stream. All these images suggest that we live within a world that is ultimately shared, one we offer and receive from one another.

Abe draws upon the metaphor of a sphere whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere to portray this inter-related characteristic of the world. Another Buddhist thinker, Nishitani, suggests an even more mutually interrelating image with his term “circuminsessional interpenetration”.⁵ Individuals are not at the

⁴ Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, p. 49.

⁵ Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, transl. Jan Van Bragt, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, p.148-166, 258-265.

center of their separate lives, but are centers for and centered by one another. Even the uniqueness of individuality arises out of inter-actions with others. Inter-relatedness is not extrinsic to our being, but integral and essential to everything we are and do and represents the fundamental manner and possibility of being human to begin with.

Buddhism understands the separate ego-centered self that we tend to identify with as a fabrication projected by the superficial thinking that remains unaware of the context of inter-relatedness within which we live our lives. It represents an illusory self that acts as a wall of protection against the insecurity we so readily experience when feeling vulnerable. Buddhism sees those walls as ultimately superficial and empty, a manifestation of the resistance the ego-self puts up against its essential relatedness to others and nature. Those walls and the ego-self they are constructed to protect are shattered with the awakening of no-self, opening instead an awareness of what Abe understands as the larger or true self. The larger self is not confined to anything individually and separately one's own, but is shared within a world that connects us mutually and reciprocally to one another and nature.⁶ As no-self, we become aware that there is nothing strictly one's own without involving and including others. As no-self, we no longer identify with the independent and isolated self that pulls back, separates, and is at odds with the fundamental inter-relatedness that is world.

The Interplay of Relatedness

In looking to draw forth the correlation between Buddhist thinking and Heidegger, we must note that Heidegger clarifies in his later writings that the resoluteness he discussed in conjunction with the authentic self of *Being and Time* was not to be understood in terms of the deliberate action of a human subject. In invoking the possibility of the authentic self, Heidegger was trying to address the openness to being which he was portraying as the most fundamental characteristic of human existence.⁷ In his essay on

⁶ Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, p. 10-16, 93-101 ; also *Zen and Western Thought*, p. 5-11.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", in *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, W. Barret & Henry Aiken (ed.), New York, Harper & Row, 1962, p. 215.

Heidegger and Eastern thinking, Graham Parkes states that Macquarrie's translation of *Entschlossenheit* as "resoluteness" suggests a subjectivity or willfulness that is inconsistent with the basic focus of Heidegger's approach. He believes "openedness" would be a better translation for what Heidegger was trying to say.⁸ Heidegger's portrayal of inauthentic human existence was addressing not a moral shortcoming but the tendency to live closed off from and forgetful of Being. We become fascinated and preoccupied with things without noting the opened realm of world and the inter-relatedness within which we exist to begin with.

In developing an understanding of human existence as being-in-the-world, *Being and Time* presented the inter-relatedness of world as the original and fundamental context within which existence occurred. The human was interpreted in its openness to world, as the reaching out of care and concern toward others and things within that context of inter-relatedness that is world.⁹ By taking the openness of care as his starting point, Heidegger was trying to overcome the predominant approach within the Western metaphysical tradition that interpreted human existence in terms of its subjectivity. Heidegger sought to move beneath and overcome that base of subjectivity. In *Being and Time*, humans find themselves in the world, with others, and alongside things equiprimordially, which means that the context of world and its relatedness is more original and fundamental to human existence than individual subjectivity.¹⁰ Nevertheless, in spite of this focus, interpreters such as Mehta point out that by taking human existence, and the openness of care, as its starting point, *Being and Time* did not fully accomplish what Heidegger sought to do. Heidegger agreed later that the earlier approach maintained a metaphysical language that continued to suggest a subjective center. The Japanese philosopher, Yasuo Yuasa, claims that the task for Heidegger after *Being and Time* was to find a way to break

⁸ Graham Parkes, "Thoughts on the Way : Being and Time via Lao-Chuang", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 127.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. Joan Stambaugh, Albany, NY, SUNY Press, 1996, p. 169-195.

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 123-168.

through the anthropocentrism that remained part of the fundamental ontology of the earlier work.¹¹

In later writings, Heidegger discusses openness not as the reaching out of humans toward world, but as being appropriated (or brought into one's own most unique way of being) within the original and ever-opening interplay of relatedness that constitutes world to begin with. Human openness takes place within the larger opening that is the inter-relatedness of world ; and the reaching out of humans is understood as a receiving of world within the prior endowing of Being as relatedness. Heidegger focuses not on the openness of humans, but rather on the prior opening of world as the "regioning of that which regions" (*Gegend, Gegnet*).¹² This later approach not only addresses the world as context of inter-relatedness which *Being and Time* had already done, but goes further and takes the openness of inter-relatedness as its point of entry rather than the openness of *Dasein*. Heidegger's starting point is no longer the opening up of humans in care and concern, but the more original opening of the interplay of inter-relatedness that allows and invites care. The center is not the human subject, but the opening-up-to-one-another and things as the between of inter-relatedness within which care and subjectivity occur.¹³ Joan Stambaugh, a noted interpreter of Heidegger's work, describes this turn in the later Heidegger as shift of focus from addressing how human's approach Being, to addressing instead the way in which Being approaches humans.¹⁴

Humans are appropriated within the opening-up of the interplay that is inter-relatedness. Appropriated in this manner, existing within the offering and receiving of world as relatedness, we are centered not in self, but in the opening up toward one another and things that is world, thus in the between that is the interplay. By addressing human existence as appropriated within the region, Heidegger is asking us to see human openness as a response to the primordial opening-up and interplay that is the inter-relatedness of

11 Yasuo Yuasa, "The Encounter of Modern Japanese Philosophy with Heidegger", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 173.

12 Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking* (a Translation of *Gelassenheit*), New York, Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p. 69-84.

13 Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism", p. 203-215.

14 Joan Stambaugh, "Heidegger, Taoism, and the Question of Metaphysics", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 83.

world itself. From this perspective, even when it might be claimed that it is the human who puts into play, opens up, and gives place to all that the world can become, nevertheless, we do so not as centered in self, but as centered within the interplay of relatedness, within the give and take occurring in between one another and things. It is not from oneself, but through involvement within world, the time spent in the between of relatedness, and the opening up that gathers us toward one another and things, that we shape our world as well as ourselves. The earlier Heidegger had helped us understand that relatedness is not an extrinsic or secondary characteristic of existence, but is integral and internal to our being, as the fundamental manner in which we exist to begin with. The later Heidegger addresses the original interplay of world and its relatedness as the prior context within which human openness and care are allowed and drawn forth in response.

By addressing humans as appropriated within the interplay of the region, Heidegger is showing the openness of our human way of being as drawn forth and awakened by the prior openness occurring within the interplay of relatedness. The opening toward things in subjectivity which in turn opens up things as objectivity involve one another and belong together in a more primordial manner within the prior interplay of relatedness than is allowed for by the dichotomy established between subject and object.¹⁵ In his study of non-dualistic thinking, David Loy sees Heidegger's discussion of the appropriation of humans within the region as one of the major attempts in Western thinking to overcome the duality of subject-object thinking.¹⁶ He finds Heidegger addressing an original pre-subjective source or opening from out of which subjectivity and objectivity arise. Appropriation represents the pre-dualistic openness of Being as the domain of relatedness within which humans belong before the world has been dichotomized as subject-object.

Mehta also finds Heidegger at this point overcoming the traditional thinking of Western metaphysics that has been steeped

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, transl. William Kluback & Jean Wilde, New Haven, CT., College and University Press, 1958, p. 77 ; also *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 74 ; and " Letter on Humanism ".

¹⁶ David Loy, *NonDuality*, New Jersey, Humanities Press International, 1988, p. 161-176.

in the subject — object dichotomy, especially as it develops on the foundation of the Cartesian ego.¹⁷ By locating human existence within the openness and interplay of relatedness, Heidegger shows humans as belonging-together with one another and things within the world in a more fundamental and original manner than is allowed for by the subject — object frame of reference. The dualism of the subject — object dichotomy distances the human and puts it apart and separate from world. In doing so, it distorts the fundamental manner in which humans belong within the interplay of relatedness even before being posited as subjects in distinction from all else that then becomes object. In Heidegger's interpretation, subjectivity and objectivity are not the fundamental building blocks of reality, but derive from and arise out of the prior and more primordial inter-relatedness that is world.

The Buddhist philosopher, Tetsuaki Kotoh, sees Heidegger's discussion of the appropriation of humans within the interplay of world as having a correlation to what Buddhist thinking means by contingent co-arising (*Pratitya Samutpada*).¹⁸ In understanding human existence as appropriated within the open region of world, Heidegger is displacing the human subject from the center, acknowledging instead the inter-relatedness of world as center. In his own way, Heidegger is emptying the subjective self much as we find in Buddhism's understanding of the mutual inter-penetration of all things. Although he does not develop a notion of no-self, Heidegger's approach does have a real correlation to what Buddhist thinkers such as Abe and Nishitani mean by that term : there is no self that is separate and apart, no self except as belonging, no self to claim as strictly one's own, no self understood as self-defined, self-sustained, self-contained. As appropriated within the openness and interplay of relatedness, we become who we are through our involvement with what is not ourselves. We come forth within and through a circle that finds us including and included, in many ways mirroring and mirrored by one another. Even what is decided and

¹⁷ Martin Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics", transl. R. Hull & A. Crick, in *Existence and Being*, Werner Brock (ed.), Chicago, Gateway, 1965, p. 356-359 ; also Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, transl. William Lovitt, New York, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 127-134, 139-152.

¹⁸ Tetsuaki Kotoh, "Language and Silence : Self-inquiry in Heidegger and Zen", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 205.

chosen, thus made one's own, arises out of the emptiness and openness through which one reaches and is drawn forth within the interplay that is relatedness. The very possibility of becoming subjects arises not from anything subjective, not from a self, but from the opening up to one another and things that occurs within the interplay of relatedness before it is dichotomized as subject — object.¹⁹ In itself, subjectivity is nothing ; and it emerges in all its potentiality only from within the setting of its opening up within relatedness.

Openness implies an emptiness that welcomes and makes room, not for self, but for what one lets happen, like the empty space of the open window or door through which someone enters and is let in. We should not be surprised if Heidegger's thinking appears to have an affinity to that found in the Tao. The Japanese philosopher, Paul Shih-Yi Hsiao, with whom Heidegger collaborated to translate the Tao into German, recounts Heidegger's interest in the Tao.²⁰ Otto Poggeler, as well as Graham Parkes, note that Heidegger's discussion of a jug in his essay, "The Thing", addresses the manner in which its emptiness contributes to its usefulness, just as in the eleventh chapter of the Tao.²¹ Otto Poggeler further notes Heidegger's understanding that the Tao was doing for Eastern thought something similar to what he saw himself doing for the West : tracing thinking and speaking to their source in the forgotten origins of the primordial relationship and belonging together of humans and Being.

The Awakening of World and Emergence of True Self

Masao Abe traces the manner in which the ego-centered self, overlooking and separating itself out from the original context of inter-relatedness, obscures and displaces world by placing itself as center. Abe interprets this as the work of the discriminating mind that dichotomizes world into the subject — object duality, thus

¹⁹ Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 64-72.

²⁰ Paul Shih-yi Hsiao, "Heidegger and Our Translation of the *Tao Te Ching*", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 93-101.

²¹ Otto Poggeler, "West-East Dialogue : Heidegger and Lao-Tzu" and Graham Parkes, "Thoughts on the Way : *Being and Time* via Lao-Chuang" in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 47-48, 120. Also, Newman Glass, *Working Emptiness*, Atlanta, Ga., Scholars Press, 1995, p. 21.

divesting it of its original wholeness²². A distance is placed between the human subject and everything else that now becomes object. Everything that fundamentally belongs together is set apart, and out of this arises an endless cycle of conflict imposed upon the world, as we try to control what lies beyond control, clinging to demands and claims that pit us against the world, against one another, and ultimately against ourselves. Buddhism believes this cycle of conflict and suffering, understood as *Samsara*, is as old and as endless as the ego-self from which it stems ; and thus is as old and as endless as humanity itself.²³ This helps explain the ever-repeating history of the human world, with all its violence and fear.

However, as the intrusions and interference of the ego-self are silenced, the inter-relatedness of world is allowed to emerge from where it is hidden in the background of experience. We awaken in awareness that we live not from self, but in the between of the world we share with one another and nature. Abe, as well as Nishitani, relate this awakening to the nothingness of self to the experience understood in Buddhist thinking as the Great Death.²⁴ One basic implication of contingent co-arising and fundamental inter-relatedness is that everything and everyone arises and passes away within the one process that Buddhism understands as living — dying. Dying and passing away are not an interruption to life, but the manner in which life is offered to begin with. Buddhists understand this process of living-dying as eternal in nature. Life is offered not as something to keep, but to be let go, so that it can carry forth and be carried forth beyond the momentary self. Awareness of the great death invites us to accept the fundamentally empty nature of all things, including self, inasmuch as dying is central to the meaning and way of life.

With the awareness of the Great Death, the ego-self is silenced. The world that is otherwise steeped in the all-pervasive nature *Samsara* is freed from the conflicts and pettiness imposed by ego and allowed to shine within the panorama of its own fullness. Suddenly, released from the interruptions and interventions of the

²² Abe, *Zen and Western Thought*, p. 137-140, 5-7.

²³ Abe, *Zen and Western Thought*, p. 131 ; also *Zen and Comparative Studies*, p. 181-185.

²⁴ Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, p. 178-179 and *Zen and Western Thought*, p. 166-168 ; Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, p. 21, 230-231.

ego-centered self, world appears, if but momentarily, as the wondrous possibility it is within the mutuality and reciprocity of its own inter-relatedness. It is no longer the self that matters, nor what we have and possess ; for nothing ultimately belongs to anyone, except that we belong to one another. With the awareness of the Great Death and the awakening of no-self, we no longer seek to lay claim to a portion of world as our own, but rather to be as a mirror — holding oneself out of the way so as to reflect and give back.

The Japanese philosopher, Tetsuaki Kotoh, interprets this silencing of the ego self as the awakening of the true self in the awareness that we are separate from nothing and at one with world and all that constitutes world. Kotoh understands this as entering the state of *Samadhi*, which represents within Buddhism the pure experience of world without the interference of the subjective self. In the emptiness of no-self, the ego-centered self is no longer posited as center and in between everything, where it de-limits, defines and imposes its discriminating judgments. In its place, the primal world of relatedness is allowed to manifest itself in its own radiance, within the reciprocity of its own inter-relatedness, without interference. Kotoh also finds a correlation between this state of *Samadhi* and Heidegger's interpretation of human existence as open and appropriated within the region of relatedness.²⁵ David Loy sees the correlation between Heidegger and Buddhism in their non-dual way of thinking, as subjectivity and objectivity are both emptied of any self-subsistent nature.²⁶ Freed from that subject-object frame of reference, world and all that constitutes world, are returned to themselves, and to the original inter-relatedness that gathers and supports, sustains and holds together all that exists.

Releasing World

We can further appreciate the affinity of Heidegger and Buddhist thinking by addressing the danger Heidegger sees embroiling the world within the era of modern technology.²⁷ Heidegger uses the term *Gestell* to describe this modern danger.

²⁵ Kotoh, “ Language and Silence : Self-Inquiry in Heidegger and Zen ”, in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 206.

²⁶ Loy, *NonDuality*, p. 161-177.

²⁷ Heidegger, “ The Question Concerning Technology ”, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 24-34.

Gestell is usually translated as “enframing” and represents the manner in which the technologically developed societies displace everything from its natural setting to be set up and put at the disposal of human manipulation. The earth, and all that is of the earth becomes a mere resource, as fuel for energy or stuff for productivity. Every achievement and success becomes an opportunity to further extend human control and power. We take advantage of all that is available and establish dominance over the world, refusing to accept the limiting factors presented by the natural rhythms of things. The problem is that we proceed forgetful of the context of inter-relatedness that allows availability and accessibility to begin with. Relatedness becomes merely an opportunity to access whatever is there. Nothing has meaning except to be taken to hand, used and used up, even to the point of abuse; as the secrets of life itself are laid bare and redesigned at human will. Lost from sight is the interplay of relatedness, the opening up to one another, thus the offering and receiving of world, through which it all becomes possible. The originating interplay of relatedness becomes eclipsed and made irrelevant as we become carried away with all that has come into our hands, bent upon how much we can accomplish, enamored by the power that is ours.

Heidegger’s focus is not to criticize technology, nor condemn the privileged position that humans have within the modern world. Rather, he calls to question the assumption that the potential for technological endeavor arises from and manifests merely the power of human will and agility. That assumption overlooks and forgets that the possibilities emerging within the technological era are rooted in the original relationship humans have to the world by nature of their open manner of existing within the interplay of relatedness. The danger of the modern technological age is that we become enamored by our power to take measure and stock of all that exists, forgetting the prior realm of relatedness within and through which it all becomes possible. We take for granted the role allotted to us by nature of the open way of being that allows and invites us to stand in between, intrude and interfere, take and use, as everything becomes accessible. In our forgetfulness, we see only what we can do, making our claims upon the world as though it were nothing except as we will. The prior inter-relatedness, the open region and interplay of world that opens all possibilities and through which we are entrusted to one another and things, becomes

lost. Heidegger refers to this as a most dangerous time, the more so the more capable we become.

However, there is a strange twist to Heidegger's thinking ; for this forgetting of the inter-relatedness of world does not result merely from human thoughtlessness. Forgetfulness arises from the open manner in which the world through its interplay of relatedness extends itself and appropriates the human.²⁸ The openness of world and its inter-relatedness affords an unconditional access to everything available that allows us to take it all for granted, without having to acknowledge the gracious dimension within the interplay. This enables us to settle within the openness and interplay of relatedness with a familiarity and complacency that, in taking for granted, loses sight of the granting. The open interplay of relatedness that constitutes world is lost to sight. We become fascinated and caught up with all that becomes available, carried away by all we can do and have, without regard for the fundamental give and take, offering and receiving that makes it all possible. Although it is no longer cast in the terms of the earlier writings, Kohei Mizoguchi interprets the way of being in the world in the age of *Gestell* as a further development of the inauthenticity (*Ineigentlichkeit*) that was central to the discussion of *Being and Time*.²⁹

Inasmuch as Heidegger's discussion of *Gestell* is specific to the era of modern technology, it is not as fundamental to human experience as is the Buddhist notion of *Samsara*. Nevertheless, the Japanese philosopher, Akihiro Takeichi, finds Heidegger addressing with his notion of *Gestell* something similar to the attachment and clinging that Buddhism understands as the root cause of the endless cycle of *Samsara*.³⁰ Both interpretations represent the usual and all too human way of being in the world that is closed off from the original interplay of relatedness within which humans find themselves. Both interpretations help explain a

²⁸ Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology", p. 25-35 ; also "The Turning", in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other essays*, p. 41-43.

²⁹ Kohei Mizoguchi, "Heidegger's Bremen Lectures : Towards a Dialogue with his Later Thought", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 191. Also, Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 156-168.

³⁰ Akihiro Takeichi, "On the Origin of Nihilism — In View of the Problem of Technology and Karma", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 183-184.

world order where matters of domination, power, and control become primary, giving rise to many of the conflicts that have long plagued the earth. Each in its own way recognizes the manner and tendency of humans to become carried away with themselves, unfocussed concerning priorities, bent upon what are often superficial and petty goals.

Nevertheless, for Heidegger, as with Buddhism, though forgotten, the gracious aspect of world remains to invite the awakening of remembrance. Heidegger claims that relatedness remains all the more real, even as forgotten. We can take it all for granted precisely because our manner of being in the interplay of relatedness has given over world, without condition, and without counter claim. That humans seem destined to such a privileged position upon the earth is a sign of how much the openness of relatedness and its interplay has acted to endow and entrust the world into our hands. Everything is laid bare, and world itself is given over and put at risk, with all its possibilities, all its promise, all its danger.

Though hidden and forgotten within the background of experience, the openness and interplay of relatedness remains the fundamental context within which humans find themselves. As such, it invites an awareness that can acknowledge the context of the world's inter-relatedness within which humans belong so fundamentally. In that awareness, there arises the possibility of a reversal of thinking that displaces the self from center and thereby releases the world from the gripping demands and claims we otherwise impose upon it. This releasing of world is central to the turn of thinking in Heidegger's later writings.³¹ The human itself is turned, as though from inside out, in the awareness that the power wielded over the world does not come strictly from its own hands. The very power and privilege that has become ours has also been allotted, an endowment to humanity by nature of our position within the offering that is the interplay of relatedness.

In response to that offering, Heidegger invites a manner of thinking (*denken*) that is a thanking (*danken*), one that is attuned and receptive to the openness and opening-up of the interplay of

³¹ Martin Heidegger, "On The Essence of Truth", transl. R. Hull & A. Crick, in *Existence and Being*, p. 310-323 ; also Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 84-89, and "The Turning".

relatedness that is world. This represents a more meditative manner of thinking, one that lets be and invites the human to restrain and hold itself in check, thus releasing world to the originating interplay of its own relatedness.³² With releasement comes a way of being within the world that is not bent upon one's own will, a manner of being that frees the world from one's own claims for power and control. The human subject is no longer at the center, except as opening up and letting be, as appropriated and thereby as belonging in a fundamental way within the interplay of relatedness.

Several thinkers have commented on how much Heidegger's theme of *Gelassenheit* (releasement) resembles the manner of thinking found in the Tao and Zen Buddhism. Otto Poggeler identifies Heidegger's releasement with what Buddhist thinking means by detachment in that it relinquishes the human from control over things.³³ Joan Stambaugh interprets the meaning of releasement as similar to the Taoist notion of *Wu Wei*, representing a non-interfering manner of being in the world. It invites a manner of doing that lets be, a way of acting that is no longer centered in the self who acts. The releasement of meditative thinking opens the possibility of a serenity and harmony with world that is central to the Tao and Zen Buddhism.³⁴ Newman Glass also interprets the releasement of *Gelassenheit* as a form of detachment from the subjective self that frees the world from the objectifying and representational thinking predominating in the Western metaphysical tradition.³⁵

Heidegger's notion of releasement may not represent the complete emptying of self that we find in the Buddhist notion of no-self. Nevertheless, it does invite a manner of thinking that is similar to the Buddhist awakening that allows world in its original and fundamental inter-relatedness to manifest itself without the intrusions of the ego-self. In doing so, Heidegger offers an understanding of the human subject or self that is similar to what we find in Buddhism, one founded and centered not within self but

³² Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 72-88 ; also "Letter on Humanism", p. 219-221, and "The Essence of Truth", p. 310-323.

³³ Otto Poggeler, "West-East Dialogue : Heidegger and Lao Tzu", in Parkes (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 49.

³⁴ Joan Stambaugh, "Heidegger, Taoism and the Question of Metaphysics", in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, p. 85-89.

³⁵ Glass, *Working Emptiness*, p. 15-35.

within the inter-relatedness that is world. Therefore, although Buddhism's enlightenment and Heidegger's releasement are not the same, they do share an understanding that the center of our world lies within the open mutuality and interplay of relatedness rather than within our human subjectivity. Each in its own way invites an awareness and awakening to the truth of relatedness, however hidden, forgotten, or clouded over it may have become by the usual dealings and business that occur as everyday world, especially within the Western and modern technological societies.