

Self as Nature; Nature as Self

A Buddhist perspective on ecology

Knut Johan Øen



**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Philosophy in
Culture, Environment and Sustainability**

Centre for Development and the Environment

University of Oslo

Blindern, Norway

10.06.08

Contents

Table of Content.....	ii
Acknowledgement.....	iv
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE ON ECOLOGY; INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT MATTER.....	1
1.2 NOTES ON METHODOLOGY.....	3
1.3 NOTES ON NATURE.....	6
2. A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE ON REALITY.....	12
2.1 INTRODUCING BUDDHISM.....	12
2.2 THE TURNINGS OF THE DHARMA.....	16
2.3 THE FIRST TURNING OF THE DHARMA; NON-SELF AND DEPENDENT CO-ARISING.....	18
2.4 THE SECOND TURNING OF THE DHARMA; FROM NON-SELF TO EMPTINESS.....	29
2.5 THE THIRD TURNING OF THE DHARMA; FROM SELF-EMPTINESS TO EMPTY-OF-OTHER.....	42
2.6 ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BUDDHA-NATURE.....	53
3. THE BUDDHA-NATURE AND THE HUMAN EXISTENCE.....	63
4. THE THREE VIEWS.....	79
4.1 THE ORDINARY PERSON.....	79
4.2 THE BODHISATTVA VIEW.....	91
4.3 THE BUDDHA VIEW.....	104
4.4 ECOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE THREE VIEWS.....	109
5. CONCLUSION.....	115
Endnotes.....	118
Bibliography and Works Consulted.....	132

Acknowledgements

There are many people who deserve recognition for their aid to this project, both directly and indirectly; however, I would like to thank SUM and particularly Hal Wilhite for his patience and understanding. An equally deep gratitude goes to my thesis advisor, Kjell Madsen, whose honesty, directness, and perceptive qualities made this thesis possible. Additionally, a heartfelt thanks to Vigdis, Vivien, Isabella, Viggo, Henrik, Ingvild and Oscar, you know your worth to me. A dyslectic thanks is reserved for Erika Rood for her advice on proofreading this thesis. And last but not least, to my mother, brother and sister for their kind words and understanding throughout this project. The kindness that is given remains in the heart forever, and continues to serve through this...

*Is there anyone who knows what his birth in its beginning or end is like?
No one knows either birth's end or beginning; nevertheless everyone is
born. Similarly, no one knows the extremities of the mountains, rivers and
earth, but all see this place and walk here. Do not think with regret that
the mountains, rivers, and earth is are not born with you. Understand that
the ancient buddhas teaches that your birth is nonseparate from the
mountains, rivers, and earth.*

-Eihei Dogen

1. Introduction

1.1 *A Buddhist perspective on ecology; Introducing the subject matter.*

It has become customary to date the emergence of the modern environmental¹ movement to the 1962 publication of Rachel Carson's book, *The Silent Spring*. The initial subject matter of this book was the use of chemical pesticides and its effect on the environment; however, through her research she also came to question the direction and goal of the western society, including the human competence and "right" to manage and dominate the Earth. Realizing that there was a huge discrepancy between how nature worked and how humans worked at it, she claimed that "the 'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man." (Carson 2000: 297) The book, therefore, came to embody a range of themes that later formed the body of the emerging environmental movement. The relationship between man and nature could no longer be dismissed, a relationship that was much more intimate and direct than the view that Carson challenged had admitted.

With her book², Carson managed to help form a collective awareness regarding the human impact on the natural world through which it became apparent that humans *did* actually have an impact. A subtler philosophically point also was brought forth from this notion; humans do not exist as separate and unrelated beings. In challenging the perceived distance between man and nature, she made it clear that how man perceived nature was not only relevant to how one interacts with it, but also himself. In her opinion we could either choose to live with nature or against it. It was this latter approach of domination she understood to be a "war on nature." As she herself remarked shortly before her death from

breast cancer in 1964, appearing in a CBS documentary about *The Silent Spring*:

Man's attitude toward nature is today critically important simply because we have now acquired a fateful power to alter and destroy nature. But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself...[We are] challenged as mankind has never been challenged before to prove our maturity and our mastery, not of nature, but of ourselves. (Carson 2008)

Through the indiscriminate and careless treatment of nature humans exposed not a weakness in nature, but themselves. Thus, due to its impact on popular culture, the academic debate and environmental movement, the importance of this book and its place in history cannot be underestimated. As Al Gore succinctly formulates it in his introduction to the *Silent Spring*:

The Silent Spring came as a cry in the wilderness, a deeply felt, thoroughly researched, and brilliantly written argument that changed the course of history. Without this book, the environmental movement might have been long delayed or never have developed at all. (Gore 2008)

This dawn of awareness initiated both practical actions (e.g., the prohibition of DDT the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the United States among other things) while also inviting a more critical reflection toward man's relationship to nature. Since then, the debate has neither stiffened nor dissipated, but only increased in scope and depth.

Rachel Carson's perceptive and heartfelt realization that man's understanding of nature matters, not only to himself but also to other forms of life, shows great similarities to Buddhism. A religion that is based on a non-dual understanding of Existence³ where man and nature cannot be separated. An understanding that similar to Carson, locates the cause of the present ecological situation not in any defective moral attitude or inherently opposition between man and nature, but to mans ignorance

of this intimate relationship. In Buddhism this relationship is understood in terms of a non-dual philosophy that even challenges the concept of “relationship”; consequently, ignorance is understood as accidental and not essential to man’s nature. As man is only experiences separation because of ignorance. This means that through understanding, man can change his mode of existing and relating to nature away from self-centredness, to “nature-centeredness.” A transformation that will have a substantial ecological implication.

Based upon the ideas put forward in the previous paragraph, in this thesis, I would like to use Buddhism to present an alternate way to conceive of Reality or Existence that is not based on duality and separation.

Additionally I’ll attempt to use this understanding and particularly its analysis of the human existence, to see how this expresses itself and show that it is essential for the field of ecology to incorporate a broader understanding of the human existence and potential -- an understanding that Buddhism can help us provide, based on its analysis of Existence as a nondual whole and the human existence within this whole.

1.2 Notes On Methodology

From one point of view the study of man and his relationship to nature is a relatively new field of study, particularly if understood in relation to modern scientific studies and philosophical investigations found in the environmental debate. From another point of view, however, the discussion on man’s relationship to nature goes back to the birth of the first humans. Joseph Campbell (2001) points that the mythology of the early humans is centred on this very relationship and it also lay at the heart of early Greek pre-Socratic thought. Although the focus on this relationship has not always been as explicit as it is today, its implied aspects often go hand in hand with most of the human philosophical and religious traditions. This is also the case with Buddhism that is a religion

thoroughly invested in the understanding of the human existence. Hence in choosing to use Buddhism and its possible ecological insights, the challenge consists of bringing out these implied aspects and showing their relevance towards the environmental discourse.

In regards to the academic study of Buddhism and ecology, it is still a relatively new discussion and therefore lacks in-depth studies. The most promising sources found, are a few anthologies, such as *Buddhism and Ecology –The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, *Dharma Gaia: A Harvests Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, and *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*. In addition to these anthologies, there are collections of essays found in diverse journals and studies connected to more particular Buddhist philosophers. It is, therefore, clear that the study of Buddhism and ecology is a relative new and untrodden field of investigation. As such this study holds promises as well as challenges. Promise because it enables new discoveries and fresh points of view to emerge, and challenges because one has to clear ones own path. Because of the novelty of this interdisciplinary subject, the technical nature and subtlety of Buddhist philosophy is not always appreciated. This may be attributed to the fact that one approaches Buddhism from the point of view of ecology and not ecology from the point of view of Buddhist technical philosophy. As a result, it is easy to misrepresent what Buddhism actually argues and seeks to reveal, because one is unfamiliar with the subtle distinctions that in Buddhism has a considerable philosophical importance. Hence although the concept of non-duality (emptiness) lends itself to a favourable ecological interpretation, it is not a simplistic and straightforward doctrine. In fact the concept of non-duality is a complex and philosophically multifaceted position that continues to be debated, both within and outside of Buddhism. And because one is unaware of these philosophical different positions, it is easy to misunderstand what non-duality actually is, and how it expresses itself. Misunderstandings that

then begin to surface in the interpretation of Buddhism and ecology.

Hookham also indirectly attests this to when she writes that:

Much of the writing on Buddhism in the West makes statement both about the ordinary self-emptiness of things (rangtong) and the Emptiness that is the extraordinary True Nature of Ultimate Reality (Shentong), but rarely are these two ways of talking about emptiness clearly distinguished. Sometimes this is because the writers or translators do not recognize the difference... (Hookham 1991:16)

It is, therefore, important to pay attention to these differences so as not to continue to propagate an error of understanding. In order to explore the relationship between man and nature through Buddhism, much of this paper is devoted to clarifying the fundamental Buddhist position and the difference between rangtong and Shentong view of emptiness (non-duality). The delineation of these two notions provide the necessary platform form which to conceptualize the Buddhist understanding of both human existence and ecology. And this is important because these two approaches to the Buddhist Absolute reveal two very different understanding of Reality.

As this essay is meant as an investigation into a Buddhist *perspective* on ecology, it is by no means intended to convey a full ecological position. Rather, it is meant to be a contribution to a larger philosophical and ecological discourse that argues the essential link between these two and how it expresses itself. Additionally, while I have chosen to base my study on Mahayana Buddhism as expressed by the *Tathagatagarbha* or Buddha-nature philosophy, I have chosen to call this a *Buddhist* perspective. I do recognize that there are many inherent risks inherent to this approach and that there are different schools and interpretations within the Buddhist philosophy and religion; however, despite the technical disagreements between the varying schools, many of the ideas and discussions brought forth in this thesis will support a general Buddhist outlook on ecology,

namely the importance of man's existence and mode of being in the world. And this general conclusion Buddhism as a whole can agree upon.

1.3 Notes on Nature

As the concept of "nature" will be a central part of this essay, it is necessary to take a closer look at it. Yet, upon investigation one quickly finds that it is far from easy to define the term "nature," its field of application is broad, its uses many and varied. Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas attest to this in *Primitivism and Related Ides*: where they list 66 different meanings of this term found in the western philosophical and literary tradition. It is therefore fair to say that "nature" is not *one* thing, but consists of an amalgam of meanings that carries different meanings and is context dependent.

Despite this fact, however, much light can be shed on the term, simply by examining its etymology and meaning. According to Naddaf (2005) the term "nature" comes from the Roman rendering of the Greek noun *phusis* into the Latin *natura*. *Natura* moreover, comes from the verb *nasci*, meaning 'to be born, to originate'. Heidegger and Pierre Aubenque both posit that *natura* should be understood as "that which lets something originate from itself" (Heidegger 1976: 221). The organic implications of the term is quite apparent, interpreted anthropomorphically that nature springing forth from its own womb. That is self-producing, self-generating and self-caused. The root meaning is therefore close to its Greek origin, where *phusis* is a derivative of the verb *phuo* meaning to "grow or to produce," and the suffix *-sis*. According to the rules of ancient Greek, an action noun and its result can be derived from any kind of verb and the suffix *-sis*. Therefore, when the verb *phuo* takes the suffix *-sis* as its object, *phusis* is defined as "The (completed) realization of a becoming – that is to say, the nature (of a thing) as it is realized, with all properties." (Benveniste 1948). Hence *phusis* is a dynamic and active concept.

According to Naddaf, Heidegger, Kahn and Barnes the term *phusis* comprises three interrelated aspects:

(1) The absolute *arche* [principle], that is the element or cause that is both the primary constituent and the primary generator of all things (2) the process of growth strictly speaking; and (3) the outcome, product, or result of this process. In brief it means the whole process of the growth of a thing, from its birth or commencement, to its maturity. (Naddaf 2005:20)

The concept of *phusis*, hence, reveals immanence, a self-contained whole that is its own source and cause. According to Naddaf's analysis the Greeks had a temporal understanding of *phusis* understood as the beginning (*phusis* as *arche*), the evolution of the cosmos (*phusis* as process or growth), and the present order of nature, man and society (*phusis* as result). Naddaf goes on to say that there are two departure points for such a cosmogony, one chronological and one logical. The chronological starts at chaos and moves through towards the emerging order of the cosmos. While the logical departure point concerns the cosmos itself, as the primary constituent, from which all is derived and comes to be, and behave as it does. Thus we have *phusis* as phenomenal reality and *phusis* as principle, the manifest and manifested.

Phusis was therefore never understood as a static concept, but an internal and immanent principle generating its own existence. As Lachier puts it, "The fundamental meaning [of the word *phusis*] is the idea of an existence which is self-produced or at least self-determined, in whole or in part, without a need for an external cause." (L. Lachier 1972:667).

Consequently, the early Greek understanding of *phusis*, understood as a Total and dynamic concept, containing every aspect of existence, today has become fragmentized. Some of its original meaning, however, can still be found at work in the natural sciences, however in addition to this *phusis* probably included more than a material conception of reality or nature⁴. Hence also expressing the philosophical concept of "Existence" and

“Being.” That is, “that which is” and its becoming/ being⁵. Although “nature” still can be said to contain these meanings, for many it simply refers the environment and the non-human world. A picture that did not fit with the early Greek idea of *phusis*.

As the first principle (*arche*; principle or ‘beginning’) was understood to refer to itself *as it is*, *phusis* became the self-referential ground of Being, through which the cosmos, man, and the laws that govern came to be understood. And we can see that an understanding of nature was created in which a self-enclosed and self-unfolding system, governed by its own necessity, and through which all come into being and continues to behave as it does. Nature could therefore be understood as both a function and the manifestation of this function, these being identical. We observe nature and understand how it works through its manifestation and function; although analytically separable, they are two aspects of the same. To connote this simultaneity the Greeks used the concept of *dunamis* and *phusis*, the revealing and the revealed⁶. This total and immanent conception of existence and reality as “nature,” disclosed and defined reality in such a way that made it possible to investigate “that which is” from its own principles, with no reference to external sources. As Naddaf says:

The word *phusis*...means the origin and growth of the universe as a totality. And since humanity and the society in which they reside are also part of this totality explanations of the origin and development of humanity and society must necessarily follow an explanation of the world. (Naddaf 2005:1)

The importance and originality of the Greek concept cannot be underestimated, and it has therefore been customary to say that not only did the Greeks discover nature, but also they created it. Through this they enabled a rational investigation and understanding of Reality, making it accessible and knowable to the human mind.

However, although the Greeks made possible a rational analysis of reality, it is important to be aware that the shift in the Greek view from *theos* (in the sense of theological explanations of existence) to *phusis*, or natural causes still included divinity as inherent to *phusis*⁷. Summarizing the Greek concept of nature, Gerard Naddaf says:

...the notion of divinity is inherent in the concept of *phusis* from the very first Greek cosmogonies..., for the *phusiologoi* in general, the order that makes our world a *cosmos* is natural, that is, immanent in nature (*phusis*). It could thus be interpreted that pre-Socratics in general, the destiny of the universe and the destiny of humanity (and even the destiny of society) can only be determined by *phusis*: *phusis* understood as blind necessity (*ananke*), without any recourse to intentional causes. (Naddaf 2005:163)

In this fashion “nature” became the domain of religious sentiments where it was understood in terms of immanence rather than transcendence. Thus to understand nature was to understand ones self and ones own nature, as they where not different⁸. Hence it was only the explanations and understanding of Reality that shifted, which also was reflected in the idea of *phusis*: nature was dynamic and not simply inert mass.

The above outline is basically only a structural presentation, how the individual pre-Socratic thinkers thought about *phusis* varied. It is, however, helpful to return to the origin of this concept because through it one can arrive at a fundamental meaning that serves as a platform to derive other terms. Additionally, it aids in understanding the relationship to other meanings of “nature” that continues to work and influence cultures, consciousnesses, and hence ourselves. I will therefore throughout this paper use this framework that the Greek concept of nature yields. Yet, I need to continue clarifying this concept, so that the framework becomes more visible.

From the general framework derived from the Greek concept of *phusis*, the idea of nature becomes straightforward. If we follow the logic that there is

nothing outside nature, everything becomes an aspect of it and moves and transforms according to its inherent function. From this perspective humans are not viewed as outside to this natural process but part of, and an expression of it. Consequently human's function and work according to the same principle as the rest of nature. From this it follows that there are no external moving force, nothing transcendent (theology), but all is the same immanent principle effecting its own transformation, from seed to bloom. Nature can therefore be understood as self-manifest, because there is nothing in addition, Self-contained because it constantly renews itself according to its own principles, and Self-generating, because there are no external moving force. From this formal structure of "nature" we can deduce certain implied aspects that will become important in what follows.

The first point is that "nature" is understood as a Totality referring to "that which is," as such all that exists can ultimately be understood as parts or more properly aspects of "nature." Secondly, as there are no transcendent principles and "nature" is self-causing the concept of function becomes important. The point is with this is that nature functions from its own basis, where a certain result *naturally* follow given what precedes it or function. Thus when we say, "it is inherent to its nature," we are in fact saying that it is necessary, given the principle that informs it. This understanding is also reflected in the process of seed and bloom, where given a certain basis or seeds a certain fruit or flower will arise. Hence everything, a whole life, is actually contained within the seed. . Thus nature signifies, function, immanence, necessity, and lawfulness and is often accorded the status of that which *is*. That nature is understood as both principle and a manifestation of this principle will be important For the following reason that one can both operate with what is, as in conventional nature understood to be trees, mountains, rivers, animals etc. while simultaneously operate with the logic of nature, which is the immanent principle. The manifest and the manifested.

Related to the concept of nature is the concept of ecology, which is another important term that will be important to this paper. It is also, however, an equally difficult term to define and make clear on account of its varied and often scientific usage. According to the Sahotar Sarkar:

The term “ecology” was coined by the German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel, in 1866 to describe the “economies” of living forms. The theoretical practice of ecology consists, by and large, of the construction of models of the interaction of living systems with their environment (including other living systems). (Sarkar 2005)

To a certain extent “ecology” deals with how “nature relates to itself,” or as Sarkar says: how living forms interact, both between species and their environment. As such ecology proper, must be understood as a science that Arne Næss understands as “the interdisciplinary scientific study of the living conditions of organisms in interaction with each other and with their surroundings, organic as well as inorganic.” (Næss 1989:36) Although this is a fairly general and imprecise definition, it includes what is relevant and important to this project, namely *relationship*. It therefore captures and includes the popular mainstream use and understanding of ecology that operates in the public and philosophical discourse, i.e. how humans relate and act toward nature and other organisms. As such if we use the pre-Socratic understanding of nature as the totality, ecology can be understood as the study of how nature interacts with itself. In this paper “ecology” will therefore be understood in the sense of human-nature interaction.

2. A Buddhist Perspective on Reality

2.1 *Introducing Buddhism*

To understand the more complex aspects of the Buddhist approach to reality, I believe that a general understanding on the Buddhist context is in order. As a religion Buddhism does not always lend itself to easy interpretations, its perhaps unfamiliar approach to reality, the human existence, its subsequent mode of investigation, can be a challenging encounter. Additionally its internal diversities and different interpretations over subtle philosophical points can make its investigation a bewildering experience⁹. However it can also be seen as a virtue that provides the reader with an interesting map of philosophical and religious views, arguments, concepts, and understandings of the human mind and existence. Thus despite the many internal differences I believe that a certain foundation can be established that serves as a foundation for the religion as a totality. This fundamental characteristic pertains to what Jikido Takasaki writes in his *Introduction to Buddhism*, where he says:

The basis of Buddhism lies in the belief and understanding as truth that Sakyamuni realized the Dharma (truth) and taught this Dharma which he had realized to his disciples, or to put it in another way that the Dharma as represented by the teaching is the verbal expression of Sakyamuni's experience of enlightenment. (Takasaki 1987: 70)

What Takasaki brings to our attention in this passage are the two notions of Truth and Realization, which also can be understood as that which is hidden and that which can be discovered. "Truth" is therefore a concept intimately woven together with disclosure and revealment and can more precisely be conceptualized as (1) the *dharmata*, or the truth revealed, and (2) the realization (enlightenment or *bodhi*) of this truth. The former pertains to the nature of Reality (*dharmata*), while the second pertains to the human realization of this nature and is referred to as awakening

(*bodhi*). And since Truth or *dharma* is held to be non-dual, to realize Truth (*dharma*) is to become and manifest Truth (*dharma*). The Buddhist concept of Truth is therefore not understood as an abstract or intellectual quality, but the concrete realization of the nature of Reality, i.e. “as it is.” Realization is therefore always understood in relation to transformation, which is to become transformed in light of what is realized (*dharmadhatu*). The aspect of concealment and revealment, qua ignorance and enlightenment, are therefore in Buddhism understood as different cognitive or epistemic perceptions of reality. And with “epistemic perception” Buddhism means perception based on degree of insight into the nature of Reality (*dharmata*).

The term “*dharma*,” which up until now has been quite frequently referred to but not clarified, is a well-used Sanskrit cultural, philosophical, and religious term. And although appearing as a fundamental Buddhist category used to denote Truth or Reality, it is not confined to the Buddhist tradition alone. Rather it figures prominently within all the different Indian religious and philosophical traditions, hence, containing a wide range of meanings. On a general level “*dharma*” refers to universal truth, or religious norms (i.e. religion), social norms (laws, customs, institutions), norms of action (morality, ethics, duty) and so forth (Takasaki 1987:70-71). And on an even more general level it can be said to refer to what is regarded as good and right. All of these senses reveal an understanding of *dharma* that denotes a Universal law/Truth or order of Existence, i.e. how “things are”. As such it can in some ways be tied to the same position that the term *phusis* had in early Greek thought.

To proceed to the more specific Buddhist context and use of this term, one finds that it incorporates the above meanings, but it does so through its own logic and system of reference. According to Takasaki this can in a modern idiom be rephrased as: (1) teaching (doctrine, religion), (2) truth (the content of enlightenment), (3) quality, especially good quality

(virtue), and (4) no-self-ness of/ and phenomena (material and immaterial, physical and mental, and concepts, i.e. objects of consciousness in general). In addition to these, “*dharma*” can also mean “elements of existence¹⁰.” However it is the second and third sense of “dharma” that is the most essential meanings ascribed to the Buddhist use of the term and it can as such be equated with Reality or the truth or way of Reality.¹¹ The logic behind these senses of “*dharma*” can therefore be rephrased as: (1) The Truth/reality realized, which is, (2) the no-self-ness or non-separation of phenomena, which (3) is the source of the teachings and what is expressed by them, (4) giving a clear picture or path to what is considered good and right. And lastly, since *dharma* is the fundamental nature of Reality, what manifests or “expresses” this Reality is referred to as *dharmas*. In this latter meaning *dharmas* can perhaps be understood as phenomena, but this is an imprecise rendering that conceal many of the technical nuances found in its original meaning.

Because Buddhism operates with the dual epistemic insights of ignorance and enlightenment, the concept of “Reality” can easily become a bit unclear. The concept of “Reality” can namely in Buddhist philosophy both refer to: “the way things actually are” i.e. the *dharmadhatu*, or it can refer to “what is perceived,” *dependent* on epistemic perception (i.e. real in terms of itself or real to a perceiver). The Buddhist technical vocabulary is designed to deal with these subtle nuances and differences, but the western language is not¹². Therefore to avoid possible misunderstandings and unclarity it would be preferable to use the Buddhist technical language to explain Buddhist philosophy. But this results in a vicious circle whereby one needs to know that which is being explained. The reason I mention this is to make the reader aware that what in a western language might seem unclear, is in terms of a Buddhist vocabulary quite precise. Hence it is important to explain the context. However I believe that at the level of generality that this investigation is founded it is enough to simply be aware of this fact. It can therefore at this stage be said that the concept of a

Buddhist Reality, understood as the ways things are, is expressed through the concept of *dharmadhatu*, the realm of Truth as the phenomenal universe, and *dharmata* refer to its nature. And it therefore seems to have *structural* similarities to the Greek concept of nature.

In light of the above considerations we can clearly see that any understanding of a Buddhist world-view needs to go through or incorporate the concept of *dharma*. A fact that is even more forcefully expressed by D.T. Suzuki, when he in “The Doctrine of Enlightenment” writes that:

The life and spirit of Buddhism is nothing else than the inner life and spirit of the Buddha himself; Buddhism is the structure erected around the inmost consciousness of its founder. The style and material of the outer structure may vary as history moves forward, but the inner meaning of Buddhahood which supports the whole edifice remains the same and ever living. (D. T. Suzuki 1949:53)

There might be room for disagreement of the above direct and perhaps bold statement. And although it might sound simplistic, Suzuki essentially repeats the former thoughts of Takasaki. The only difference is Suzuki’s explicit focus on the importance of enlightenment as the act of realization. Thus although there are many perspectives that are available for an investigation of Buddhism as a religion, it is according to Suzuki, enlightenment that reigns supreme. That is, *bodhi* as the actualization and manifestation of *dharma* through and as the persons existence. On account of this focus on *realization* and *Truth*, Buddhism becomes firmly established as a soteriological religion concerned with liberation and transformation through the realization of mans actual nature. The importance of this transformation according to Buddhism alters a person’s actions from being “self-serving” to becoming “other-serving,” the reasons for which shall become apparent as we proceed. At present it suffices to say that for Buddhism the human existence necessarily becomes defined

and understood in terms of this dynamic interplay between realization as awakening (*bodhi*) and ignorance (*avidya*) as unknowing. A dynamic that also is reflected in the concept of *samsara* and *nirvana* where *samsara* reflects the “world” or perspective of ignorance, and *nirvana* reflects enlightenment. Life can therefore from a soteriological point of view be understood as a “field” through which man can become self-known and in turn help others to become self-known. And the basis for this transformation lays in the realization of the dharma, the non-dual nature of reality (*dharmadhatu*).

It is from this basic principle that Buddhism branches out and as such forms the general framework from which Buddhism can be seen to operate and approaches the human existence. As such it is also from where a possible ecological understanding can be derived. However to come to a clear understanding of this insight, we need to move away from the formal structure and proceed to investigate the concrete content. That is, how Buddhism understands Reality, Truth, or Existence. And in taking a Buddhist ascent, I believe the most favourable approach is not through what it understands to actually exist but through what it argues do *not* exist. As a path of inquiry this is both historically and logically consistent with Buddhism, providing a simple pedagogical path to understand a complex Buddhist conception of Reality¹³.

2.2 *The Turnings of the Dharma*

The development and conception of the Buddhist understanding of reality is often explained to have been revealed through what is known as the great turnings of the Dharma-wheel (*dharmacakra*) of which there is customary to count three. Originally this term referred to the first sermon held by the historical Buddha, in which he spoke of the Four Noble Truths (*Aryasatyas*) and the middle-way. The importance of these teachings cannot be understated as they serve as foundation for Buddhism as a

whole, despite the fact that they later have come to be re-interpreted and elaborated on in light of the subsequent dharma-turnings. The new turnings are therefore not seen as “new” teachings as much as clarifications and deepening of the preceding ones. Consequently the different turnings are often understood in relation to different schools or interpretations of the Buddhist system of thought. The most fundamental here is the distinction between the Hinayana and Mahayana. The former is identified with the early and canonical teachings of the Buddha found in the *tripitaka*¹⁴. The latter emerged around the first century CE and is connected with the rise of what is known as the *prajnaparamita* literature, or the perfection of wisdom sutras. Through which it is argued for a more universal understanding and perhaps religious interpretation of the Buddha's teachings (Takasaki 1966, 1987). Within the Mahayana Buddhism there are numerous different schools and sub-schools, but the one that has most relevance in this thesis is the *Tathagatagarbha* or Buddha-nature tradition¹⁵. This latter interpretation represents the third turning of the dharma and introduces the concept of an inherent Buddha-nature or Mind, existing as all things. It is this interpretation that will serve as a point of view and reference for the ensuing investigation.

The three turnings of the dharma can be understood in two different ways, either historically through the internal evolution and development of Buddhism, or logically and pedagogically, as teachings of the nature of Reality. It is in this latter sense that the Tibetan commentary tradition uses them, whereby it illuminates the different aspects of realization of the nature of Reality. Hence, these two perspectives do not always coincide, but as the aim of this paper is to reveal the philosophical basis for the Buddhist conception of Reality I believe that the latter approach is the most helpful presentation for the aim that I have set forth.

In regards to these dharma-turnings, Khenpo Tsultrim says that:

...the first Dharmacakra taught how things appear (*snag tshul*), that is, impermanent, suffering, non-self, and impure; the second taught how they truly are (*gnas tshul*), that is, empty of independently existing dharmas and persons (*rangtong*). The third taught how they truly are ultimately (*gnas tshul mthar thug pa*), that is, the essence of all these empty dharmas is the great Emptiness, having the inseparable, spontaneous Buddha Qualities, complete and pure from the very beginning. (S. K. Hookham 1991: 114)

2.3 The First Turning of the Dharma; Non-self and Dependent Co-Arising

In the first turning of the dharma the *apparent* reality becomes investigated, this is in Buddhism understood as the separate and material universe extended in time and space. In Buddhism this is often referred to as the dualistic (perception) of reality¹⁶, where there is a “difference in substance between the outer perceived object-of-consciousness and that which perceives it, the inner perceiving consciousness.” (Hookham 1991:19). In other words, there is a substantial difference between the observer and observed, self and others. This would be the reality that most people feel at home with and recognize as real and could therefore also be referred to as the conventional and ordinary reality. According to Buddhist philosophy the dualistic reality can be categorised through the four properties of permanence, happiness, self-ness, and purity, each of which are linked together through a logical relationship that forms a total-view. The concept of “permanence” refers to the fact that phenomena appear *substantially* and as a *material* totality filled with infinite separate and substantial entities. Additionally and because of the above, it is permanent in the sense that it appears as what is real and true about phenomena, hence serving as the basis for the understanding of Existence, as “that which is”. To exist therefore means to exist as some-*one* or some-*thing*, where the property of “existence” becomes attached to phenomena qua things. And it is this substantial quality that Buddhism understands with the concept of “self,” i.e. to exist as a personal and independent self.

Through this dualistic outlook that the natural world becomes the “place” for the experience of life, and where joys and sorrows come to be experienced and can be attained, hence the “realm of happiness¹⁷.” Lastly this reality is understood as “pure,” which means that it is a pure and true account of how things actually are. The birds sing, the mountains are huge, and one knows that one is born, lives, and dies here. There is nothing to dispute about this.

In Buddhism, however, all the four properties ascribed to the dualistic reality are denied and referred to as the “four wayward objects” (Brown 1991:32)¹⁸. As such they misrepresent nature of the *dharmadhatu* or “Reality” and what is perceived is not the actual nature of phenomena, but what is imputed by the dualistic mind (*vijnana*). According to Khenpo Tsultrim (Hookham 1991:114) it are this dualistic reality and the four properties that the first Dharma-turning seeks to mitigate. But how is this denied?

The Buddhist move is to deny the basis of all four properties, and to argue that Reality does not *truly* exist as dualistically perceived. Hence what is seen as permanent is in fact impermanent, what is seen as self is non-self, what is seen as happiness is suffering, and what is seen as pure is impure. This is a radical contention, but one that follows a certain logic formulated in the four Dharma-seals. These seals are said to contain the concrete expression of Truth and is therefore the essential articulation of the realization or content of *bodhi*. These four dharma-seals are:

- (1) All formative forces¹⁹ are impermanent (*sarva-samskara anityah*)
- (2) All constituted elements are without self (*sarva-dharma-anatmanah*)
- (3) All formative forces are suffering (*sarva-samskara dukkhah*)
- (4) Nirvana is tranquillity (*santam nirvanam*)²⁰. (Takasak 1987:89)

The concepts of “all formative forces” and “constituted elements” are simply Buddhist technical terms for phenomenal reality and denote how the dharmadhatu is constituted. The first two propositions can therefore be understood to express the nature of phenomenal reality (*dharmata*), while the latter two can be understood to represent the epistemic perception of it. It is therefore important for an adequate understanding of Buddhism to distinguish clearly between these two aspects, *nature* or Reality and *perception*. To mix these together would be to impute certain characteristics onto the nature of Reality that properly belongs to, and is caused by, a certain mode of perceiving. The latter two propositions therefore relate to the epistemic perception of ignorance (*avidya*) creating suffering, and enlightenment (*bodhi*) that is equanimity. It is as such clear that the first dharma-turning does not contest Reality or Existence as such, but questions a particular *view* of Existence. Consequently it denies that the dualistic view is a true representation of how things ultimately are, and it does so on basis that all is impermanent and without self. It is in this context that the Buddhist notion of non-self should be understood, and as Takasaki says:

...as the “self” was defined as an eternally perduring entity, so is the condition of no-self equivalent to impermanence. Since impermanence entails becoming and decaying, the phenomena of birth, Old age, sickness and death are all proof of no-self. (Takasaki 1987: 93)

The Buddhist conception of “self” therefore designates a substantial entity that is understood as “perduring,” and *independently* existing²¹. Which in other words mean that if there are to exist any “self” it cannot be dependently constituted and must be permanent, as change implies transformation and the lack of self-identity from one moment to the next²². This concept of “self” therefore depicts a separate entity that is constituted by itself, existing independently from all other factors, which is *experience* of the dualistic and substantial person. It therefore seems to have a kind of “essence” that makes it possible to distinguish it from other “selves” or

“entities/essences.” But as impermanence or change was understood to be the observable and true nature of all phenomena, this could not go hand in hand with any unchangeable and unalterable self-existing entity, understood as the necessary property to be had for anything to exist independently. Accordingly there cannot be any self-existing entities. But if this is the case how is Reality constituted, if it is not based on entities that exist separately and independently?

The answer to this question is that although they do not exist independently they exist *dependently*. And according to Buddhism can be further illuminated through the concept of *pratitya-samutpada*, or the law of dependent co-arising, which states that:

When there is this, there is that; this arising, that arises.

When there is not this, there is not that; this dissolving, that dissolving.”

(Asmin satidam bhavaty asyoypadad idam utpadyate

Asmin satidam na bhavaty asya nirhodad idam nirudhyate)

(Takasaki 1987:101)

This law articulates the essential and universal movement, *flux*, or impermanence common to all phenomena, explaining how: “phenomena come into existence when conditions upon which they depend obtain, and they cease to exist when the conditions for their continued existence no longer obtain.” (Garfield 1995:101). If we therefore take the example of a particular human being, it is commonly understood that the individual “come into being” through the merging of a sperm and an egg. Similarly a particular being dies or “goes out of being” when the conditions for that life ceases. Thus a human being cannot be understood outside of these conditions and they are as such necessary for the emergence and existence of that particular entity. Hence a human being is a dependently constituted phenomenon or being and therefore not independent. And according to the

law of dependent co-arising all phenomenal expressions are constituted in the same way. Hence that which is perceived as separate entities, be it mountains, chairs, boats, and persons, are only complex or compound phenomena temporarily appearing unified through a collection of causes and conditions. As such these are only *perceived* as an individual entities, but they do not exist independently from that which constitutes it. As such the concept of a car is just that, a concept. It does not refer to any actual and metaphysical existing entity called “car.” It is only a relative and dependent designation that humans impute on the phenomenal flux. Complex phenomena therefore only conventionally exist, dependent on language and ideas among other things, but not self-existing or independently existing from these. This is also true in the case of the human person, which in Buddhism refers to as a “*pudgla*” or empirical personality and means that he is a dependent being and not an ultimate and separate existing entity.

At this stage it is important to keep in mind that the present approach is based on analysis, i.e. it seeks to undermine a perception or an understanding through rational and analytical argumentation, claiming that it does not accord with how things are. Hence it can only be a particular understanding or perception that is being deconstructed, since the analysis is based on what *actually* is the case. Existence or Reality is as such sought revealed and not reduced. To say that all is impermanent is to deny that there are any self-existing entities, because entities cannot both be independent and dependent simultaneously. Consequently phenomena are explained to exist as “complexes” that appear as an individual entities, as a temporary collection of causes and conditions. Phenomena do therefore not exist from their own side, but are only dependently constituted and expressions of this universal flux, hence dependent on that *flux*. There can therefore ultimately be no true and absolute defining criteria that can be applied to any phenomena, because there is nothing to which these refers. And therefore no-thing that ultimately is separate from the totality because

there are no truly existing “essence” that can be distinguished or pointed out. Thus according to Garfield, “the criteria for identity we posit will end up, being purely conventional.” (Garfield 1995:101), i.e. existing in dependency on our categories and mental definition. However they of course conventionally exist.

The law of depending co-arising can according to Masao Abe (Abe 1994: 43) be understood from different points of view. Firstly it can be understood as an articulation of the universal flux, which from a cosmological perspective simply manifests itself as eternal transformations. There is only the same *dharmadhatu* continually transforming its phenomenal expressions, be it planets, mountains or humans. This he refers to as the realm of “appearance - disappearance” common to all of Existence. This same movement or transformation can however also be understood from the perspective of sentient beings, where it appears as “generation and extinction.” Here the different living organisms are generated, temporarily exist and then become extinct or go “out of being.” Lastly for human beings, either collectively or individually it manifests as birth and death: we are born, live, and die as this movement. According to Abe’s outline it is the exact same law and movement that functions through all realms of Existence, experienced and interpreted differently relative to perceiver or interpreter. What therefore from the cosmological point of view ultimately only is change and transformation is to a human being experienced as *his* birth, *his* coming of age, and *his* death. And this experience is based on the fact that there is an “entity” or point of reference that can experience this movement in such a particular way. A point of reference that is not present from the cosmological point of view. Thus according to Buddhism the reality of the situation is that it is all the same movement that changes seasons, turns the tide and the earth around the sun. Humans are an expression of this movement as much as mountain and rivers are, only seen, interpreted, and experienced from an individual point of view. The law of dependent co-

arising can therefore be rephrased as “the eternal movement”, change, or impermanence. Thus, “On the subject of the law of dependent co-arising,” says Takasaki, “it is also stated that ...[it]... is the “rule for all phenomena” (*dharmanam dharmata*).” (Takasaki 1987: 102) The term that is translated here by “rule” (*dharmata*, P. *dhammata*) means by itself “Dharma-nature” or the essential nature of *dharma*. Meaning that it is the essential nature of phenomena. Later Takasaki adds that, “in the context of Buddhist doctrinal theory, “impermanence” (*anityata*) and selflessness (*nairatmya* = *niratman* = *anatman*) are also equally “Dharma-nature”” (Takasaki 1987: 102). The inclusion of these latter two are not without reason, because they are implicit. As such:

The term “Dharma-realm” (*dharma-dhatu*) is explained as the “ground of phenomena” (*dharmanam dhatu*) or the true nature of phenomena (*dharmanam dharmata*). The phrase “ground of phenomena” implies that the truth realized by Sakyamuni was the principle of dependent co-arising and that this constitutes the basis of his dharma. (Takasaki 1987:113)

The use of the word *dhatu* in this context is meant to elucidate the fundamental unity²³, nonduality or non-separateness of phenomena. The original meaning of *dhatu* is “a place where something is laid” in the sense of “foundation,” denoting a common ground or source sharing the same quality, essence, type, or nature. Takasaki translates this with “realm”, to make clear that all that exists does so through the same substrata. This term can alternately also be referred to as “*Tathata*” qua “Thusness,” “limit of existence,” “*dharmakaya*”, “truth,” “*Buddhadhatu*,” “*buddhata*” “*Buddhatatva*,” “*prajnaparamita*,” “*buddhajnana*,” “*nirvana*,” “*thathatagarbha*,” “*cittaprakrti*.”²⁴ Although different concepts, these terms essentially refer to the same fundamental Reality and although they essentially refer to the same, they highlight different aspects of it.

As the *dharmadhatu* is understood to be the fundamental or absolute realm or ground of reality, by nature selfless, it is clear that we are now treading the path of non-duality. Phenomena are not seen as essentially different from one another, but simply the expressions of the same dharma or truth. To see them otherwise is an ignorant view that according to Buddhism has no real foundation in reality. As such it only belongs to a view or perception²⁵ that misrepresent the actual state of affairs. According to Buddhism there is nothing that exists outside this matrix of the *dharmadhatu*, not even humans. What humans therefore experience as their own and separate self is ultimately only a collection of what Buddhism explains as “constituent elements of existence,” seen as having own-being. Since everything is an expression of the *dharmadhatu* it means that the ‘self’ that humans experience themselves as, do not refer to any actual and truly existing entity. The experience of the substantial self is only true from the point of view of ignorance (own-being), whereby the person of Knut Johan for example is a true *experience* of a *seemingly* existing entity, but not a *truly* existing entity. Rather Knut Johan is a complex phenomenon as the idea of a separate entity. This point can be a bit elusive, because Buddhism would say that it is true that there is an experience of an “I” that experiences itself as an existing substantial person. Yet upon analysis the entity to which Knut Johan is said to refer is not found at all. Thus Knut Johan can be said to both exist and not to exist, depending on how we the term “exist” is define, which will be dealt with more fully later. However what can be said is that from the point of view of substance, essence, or self-nature the substantial and separate “self” is unreal. However this only implies two things: firstly that the separate “I” have no basis in reality and secondly that true “Existence” according to Buddhism cannot be spoken of in terms of entities as these do not inherently exist. And what o not exists cannot be said to be real. Hence the Buddhist conception of Existence can only be meaningful in terms of Unity.

If the above is used to understand both Existence in general and the human existence in particular, we find that what a human experiences of his *essential* being is in fact a *conditioned* being. And if a persons existence is so conditioned, it means that a person do not exist as a part, or an entity, because that very “entity” to which his idea of self is said to refer cannot be found, hence, only being a mental concept, as a perception. However if this entity does not exist, then that which makes it possible or constitutes its existence must? Thus what is removed is only a perception or view of Reality. Thus the conception of reality is transformed through insight, and not what always was fundamentally real. Hence the perception of Existence has simply been transformed from the experience of being an entity to a selfless totality. Because there are no substantial agent behind the particular phenomenal expressions, Buddhism explains the “human form²⁶” to be constituted by what is referred to as the five aggregates or *skandhas*²⁷. And it is the perception of these skandhas as having own-being as a unified and substantial entity that lies at the root of our self-identity. Thus according to Francis H. Cook the term:

...”self” is merely the minds own self-image. That is, the mind in its bifurcated form comes to think of itself as “self,” a self being defined as having the characteristics of unity, discreteness, endurance through time as self-identical and, perhaps, even permanence.” (LaFleur 1985:135).

This is a rather interesting quote revealing that what is taken as a self or ones person actually only is a “self image” that *seems* to have permanence, unity, etc. And on account of it being the object of consciousness it appears as an entity uncritically assumed to exist independently. This image is again dependently arisen and the product of historical, cultural, and personal factors that has constituted and made it. And its appearance is dependent on ignorance, i.e. that it is perceived as substantial. Consequently the belief and experience of this substantial entity is what Buddhism argues constitute ignorance (*avidya*), the basis for suffering. The reason for this is that when there exist a separate self it naturally

becomes self-centred, naturally being the centre of its existence. This creates separation, competition, self-protection, fear, and loneliness and to exist like this means to discriminate in terms of preferences, i.e. what is wanted and not wanted, hence, creating a life that is lived at the mercy of these desires. As it is written in *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*;

this ... is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering. (Bodhi 2000:1843-47)

What the Buddha explains in this passage is that to exist as an entity means that one experience all of these this in relation to ones self, not understanding that it is the mark of all phenomena. Everything is interpreted personally and ones focus is therefore devoted to attaining what is considered good and avoiding what is considered bad. This activity can be understood as *samsara*, the realm of birth and death, or “repetition and unrest,” because it always functions according to the movement of desire and needs (qua the Second Noble Truth of the cause). *Nirvana* is understood as the extinction of this ignorant idea of a substantial self through realizing its non-substantiality and non-existence, hence revealing equanimity, because there are no longer any separate and individual self that is thirsty and that function according to the above principles.

Although the first dharma-turning was focused on the apparent reality and that it did not truly exist, its implications went far deeper. As such it held the seeds of the second turning, which revealed how things or phenomena actually exist. Thus while the first turning deconstructed that which appears it left the non-dual metaphysics to a large extent undeveloped. As such Buddhism can be said to owe an explanation as to what it understood with Existence?

The answer to this question has in Buddhism taken two main paths of interpretation, that of the Hinayana, represented by the Sarvastivada school²⁸ or the Abhidarmists and the Mahayana movement. And although presenting the topic in this way considerably flattens a varied and interesting landscape it is a well-recognized important historical and philosophical distinction.

As the self was found to be non-existent, early Buddhism represented by the Abhidarmas (of which the *Sarvastivada* is one school) understood it in a particular way. According to them the field and application of the notion of non-self (*anatman*) and emptiness of own-being (*svabhava-sunyata*) was restricted “to complex beings such as persons (*pudgala-nairAtmya*). [But] They objected to applying these notions to simple individual phenomena.” (Wetlesen 2006:16). Accordingly complex phenomena such as persons, tables, buildings, etc. only had existence as conventional entities. However what made up these complex phenomena, called the “constituent elements of existence” (*dharmas*), was seen to have own-nature (*svabhava*) or self-being. The Abhidarmists counted seventy-eight of these elements, but only two of these are relevant for our present study, *nirvana* and *samsara*.

According the Abhidarmists, *samsara*, the dependently arisen world of transmigration and suffering, was such a constituent element of existence²⁹. Nirvana however, was seen as the unconditional element, because it was free from dependently arisen elements, having realized their non-existence. This created the understanding that *life* was suffering, because it was identified with what was conditioned and dependently constituted, bringing with it two consequences. Firstly a separation between *samsara* and *nirvana*, which showed that it was not free from dualism. And therefore begging the question of how a dualism could be accepted given that there where no truly separate entities to separate? Secondly, and born out of the first, is that it caused an unwholesome

understanding of the human existence. Implying that liberation and freedom was facilitated through an escape or removal from *samsara*, making *samsara* something that should be transcended and never returned to, because of the realization that the personal self did not exist. This resulted in a rather uncompassionate relationship toward the “world” and the sentient beings “left” in *samsara*³⁰.

2.4 *The Second Turning of The Dharma; From Non-self to Emptiness*

The Mahayana interpretation, representing the second and third dharma-turning, took the Buddhas teachings in a different direction³¹. It was felt that the position of the Abhidharma theory concerning the nature of the elements deviated considerably from what the Buddha actually taught. Thus although the Mahayana agreed with the Abhidarmists that the “self” only was a causally conditioned congeries of the elements, of which the “self” only was “a provisional label” (Takasaki 298:127)³². It rebelled against the positing of own-nature (*svabhava*) to the elements. A view that conflicted with the thesis of dependent co-arising, as well as the proposition that *all* formative forces are without self. As a consequence of this the Mahayana argued that even the elements was without own-nature. As Nagarjuna, one of the most essential Mahayana philosophers and founder of the Madyhamaka school argued:

Essence arising from

Causes and conditions make no sense.

If essence came from causes and conditions,

Then it would be fabricated.

How could it be appropriate

For fabricated essence to come to be?

Essence itself is not artificial

And does not depend on another. (Garfield 1995: 39)

It is important to have in mind that for something to have an “essence,” or one of its different synonyms like, “own-nature,” “self-nature,” or “inherent existence,” is for it to be what it is, in and of itself, independently of all other things. As can be surmised this corresponds to the earlier doctrine of non-self but now explicitly applied universally to all phenomena. Such a “thing” argues Nagarjuna, cannot arise from causes and conditions because if it did, it would be dependent on these and de facto be conditioned. To argue the other way around, that there is such a thing as a “fabricated inherent existence” is equally nonsensical because it would render the concept meaningless. There is therefore no room for both “essence” in the sense of inherent existence, and dependent arising, since the definition of “essence” is to not be artificially produced or dependently constituted. On account of this, the principle ontological message of the Mahayana became, “...an extension of the Buddhist teaching of no-self to equal no essence, and therefore no inherent existence, as applied to all things without exception.” (Williams 1989: 46). This negation of inherent existence is often conceptualized as “the dual emptiness of persons and things,” but more commonly it is simply rendered “emptiness” (*sunyata*). The dharmadhatu or form as Buddhism generally refers to it is empty of own- and separate elements. And this position is in Tibet termed the “self-emptiness” or *rangtong* view of emptiness and is what the second dharma-turning claims to be the true nature of phenomena. The doctrine of emptiness can therefore be understood as a recapitulation and clarification of the earlier Dharma-seals, where any misconceptions that might arise from the term “non-self” are avoided. Thus Nagarjuna says that:

Whatever is dependently co-arisen,

That is explained to be emptiness.

That, being a dependent designation

Is itself the middle way.

Something that is not dependently arisen,

Such a thing do not exist.

Therefore a nonempty thing

Does not exist.

(Garfield 1995:69)

Recapping the doctrine of dependent co-arising (*pratitya-samutpada*), Nagarjuna explicitly express Existence in terms of a radical nondual nature. The phenomenal universe is neither constituted by different entities or elements and as such the possibility for any dualistic interpretation becomes removed. According to this outline Reality becomes understood in a totally different way and since it cannot be conceived of in terms of separation, it needs to be understood in terms of non-separation as a totality. But the question is how this totality further can be understood?

While the first turning focused on dependent arising in relationship to complex phenomena such as the substantial and separate “self”. The second turning extends this lack of self or inherent existence to all phenomena. According to Dolpopa this is not a new teaching or deviation from the preceding dharma-turning, but a deepening and clarification of the original teachings (Hookham 1991:14). The pedagogical twist is therefore not to explain how phenomena do not exist, but how they in fact do (Hookham 1991:114). Thus dependent co-arising does not only reveal how phenomena are conditioned in their nature, it also reveal a partless, undivided and non-separate Existence. Hence, separation, limitations and singular points of reference are only artificially constructions created by the dualistic mind (*vijnana*) perceived as having own being. Duality is therefore the separation from Reality proper, but not the removal of its Absolute nature. Thus ecologically speaking, whatever is done to nature or other beings is actually done to the whole, including ones self, because

there are no differences between anything. Consequently ignorance causes a person to act contrary to unity and ones actual nature, treating nature as something other.

At this stage it should be mentioned that when Buddhism speaks of a totality it is easy for the dualistic mind to conceive of this in terms of a collection of entities that are identical or the same as the entity. This is however not a Buddhist understanding and some of the reason why Buddhism speaks of this nature as being “unconceivable.” As the dualistic perception interprets reality through dualistic categories of understanding, it is impossible for it to conceive of a non-dual existence in terms of the same categories. Thus a more appropriate image of this “Totality” is a kind of selfless flow, with no barriers and limits anywhere. In light of this Mahayana twist the entire universe is seen, not as a field of separate and discrete entities, but a field of non-separation where what affect one affects the totality. There is therefore just one movement or more precisely *movement*, impermanence, transformation or the law of dependent co-arising and its emptiness. Given that the universe is a non-dual whole, where parts are an illusion and the totality is not a collection of parts, but their absence, how are we further to conceive of it?

If we return to Nagarjuna’s earlier verses (*karika*), he makes clear that dependent arising qua the phenomenal universe is emptiness and outside of this nothing exists. Thus according to Nagarjuna these are the same. However it is important to note the manner in which Nagarjuna expresses this relationship because he does not reduce one to the other. If he did, and phenomenal life was reduced to emptiness, it would simply become non-existent. And if phenomenal life existed independently from emptiness, it would make dualism true. Thus neither understanding is correct; rather both are simultaneously true. Emptiness and phenomenal life describe the same Reality, which means that what appear divided, actually is not.

Emptiness and phenomena are not two different or distinct things, but two characterizations of the same reality (Garfield 1995:305).

This relationship between emptiness and phenomena has in the Mahayana Buddhism been conceptualized through the logic of the two truths or realities, which are conventional truth (*samvritisatya*) and ultimate truth (*paramarthasatya*). This distinction has its origin in the early Buddhist distinction between the *dharma* understood “to be personally realized” (*pratyatama-vedanyia*), and its articulation or expression through language and ideas, i.e. *dharma* as teaching. The point of this distinction was to distinguish between the conceptual and “explained” truth and the personally realized truth (*pratyatma-vedaniya*). As realization itself was held to transcend all dualities and consequently being impossible to express, any attempt to do so would only be of a provisional and secondary nature. Thus the *dharma* verbally articulated was explained as *vyavahara-satya* or verbal truth, while the *dharma* as realized truth became *paramarthasatya*, or the ultimate/highest truth. This distinction is important, firstly because it makes clear that ultimate truth always is beyond the conceptualization of the intellect and therefore only available to another part of the human system of cognition. Secondly, it needs to be established that they are both “true,” but in terms of what constitute them, i.e. in two different senses. It later became understood that verbal truth rested on language as a conventional mean of communication and meaning, which meant that it was indirect, conceptual and dependently constituted. This truth was therefore only true in terms of that which constituted it, namely conventions and *vyavahara-satya* became selfsame with *samvriti satya*, or conventional truth (Takasaki 1987:105-106). Through this conceptual change, the philosophical application of the term became broader and more precise and enabled the Mahayana to fully express and articulate its metaphysics of non-duality. The two truths therefore came to be understood in terms of the two aspects of reality, the conventional and the ultimate.

In regards to conventional reality and the term “*samvrti*” both Takasaki (1987) and Garfield (1995, 2002) understand “*samvrti*” to mean ‘*conventional*’, including its more familiar uses, like: everyday, ordinary, or by agreement. According to Garfield conventional truth can also mean “a truth dependent upon tacit agreement, an everyday truth, a truth about things as they appear to accurate ordinary investigation, as judged by appropriate human standards.” (Garfield 1995: 297). Hence the term refers to the ordinary and dualistic reality that people commonly agree upon. And this latter insertion by Garfield is important as it reveals that conventional truth is dependently constituted by the human faculty of understanding, hence, identical to dependent co-arising. *Samvrtisatya* therefore implies a truth or reality that is constructed and not self-constituted, and therefore dependent on the dualistic perception of entities, language, and conceptual formations. It can therefore be understood as the human disclosure or interpretation of phenomenal reality (dependent co-arising). Johan Searle also comments upon this intimate relationship between concepts and reality, where:

I am not saying that language creates reality. Far from it. Rather, I am saying that *what counts* as reality... is a matter of categories that we impose on the world; and those categories are for the most part linguistic. And furthermore: when we experience the world we experience it *through* linguistic categories that help us to shape the experiences themselves. The world doesn't come to us already sliced up into objects and experiences: what counts as objects is already a function of our system of representation, and how we perceive the world in our experiences influenced by that system of representation. The mistake is to suppose that the application of language to the world consists of attaching labels to objects that are, so to speak, self-identifying. On my view, the world divides the way we divide it, and our main way of dividing things up is in the language. Our concepts of reality is a matter of our linguistic categories. (Loy 1988:46-47).

Searle's reflections are interesting and relevant to Buddhism, because it confirms the view that what is experienced as real is in fact an interpretation dependent on a conceptual matrix. However Buddhism

would question Searle's premise that there is such a *thing* as an "objective" world that we can impose our categories upon. From the Buddhist point of view concepts do not actually refer to any truly existing objective reality³³ but is that which constitutes that very experience. It is those very mental constructs that are assumed to exist as real and separate entities on account of the perception own-being, including the idea of self. A fact that is further confirmed by an interesting interpretation of the doctrine of dependent co-arising, which states that origination also needs to be understood in dependency upon the designating mind, i.e.:

when we say that all entities without exception are empty of inherent existence, because they are dependently originating, one meaning of this particularly stresses by the Prasangika³⁴ is that all entities are simply mental constructs.
(Williams 1989:61)

Conventional truth is therefore constituted by and dependent on the mental formations created by the dualistic mind (*vijnana*). But do not ultimately exist outside of this constructed mental matrix, i.e. there are no entities to which they refer. Conventional truth can therefore be said to be identical to dependent co-arising qua the phenomenal universe as it appears to the dualistic mind. It is important to be aware that the substantial self is part of this phenomenal universe, and that it is not a particular mind that projects this kind of universe. Both world and mind are a projection of the same substantial interpretation. Hence this understanding of conventional reality invites a second meaning of *samvrti*, namely concealed, occluded, disguised. That is, *samvrti* hides or conceals its actual empty nature through own-being. It therefore appears as a substantial reality in which one becomes separate from others, man is separate from nature, nature from man, man from man. However neither category truly exist, because both "man" and "nature" are merely conceptual designations interpreted as substantially real. Thus through the perception of own—being *samvrtisatya* is assumed to be the absolute truth about phenomena, but the mental formations are empty of own-being. Hence *Samvrtisatya*, as the

conventional and dependently constituted reality needs to be contrasted with *paramarthasatya*, which:

...denotes the way things are independent of conventions, or to put it another way, the way things turn out to be when we subject them to analysis with the intention of discovering the nature they have from their own side, as opposed to the characteristic we impute to them.” (Garfield 1995: 298)

Hence *paramarthasatya* is identical to self-emptiness and the non-conceptual Absolute Reality and although *samvrtisatya* and *paramarthasatya* are described as two different truths, they are not understood as metaphysical different entities. *Paramartha* is not the denial of the conventional, i.e. that which appears, but the expression of its actually empty and non-divided nature. It is this simultaneous and nondual relationship between these two truths that on the one hand eliminates separation and on the other hand eliminates reduction to emptiness or non-existence. Thus as Garfield says in his translation of the *Mulamadhyamakakarika*:

We must always pay careful attention to the sense of the word “exist” that is at work. We might mean *exist inherently*, that is, in virtue of being a substance independent of its attributes, in virtue of having an essence, and so forth, or we might mean *exist conventionally*, that is to exist dependently, to be the conventional referent of a term, but not to have any independent existence. No phenomenon, Nagarjuna will argue, exist in the first sense. But that does not entail that all phenomena are nonexistent tout court. Rather to the degree that anything exists, it exists in the latter sense, that is nominally, or conventionally.” (Garfield 1995: 91)

The unity of these two truths or realities are also reflected in a quote by Atisa (982-1054), one of the most important transmitters of Buddhism to Tibet, when he says that, “If one examines with reasoning the conventional [dualistic world] as it appears, nothing is found. That nonfindingness is the ultimate. It is the primeval ways of things.”

(*dharmata*; 21, Lindtner's edn: Atisa 1981:192). Hence, that phenomena are empty only means that they do not exist in a particular way:

...but this does not mean that phenomena are completely non-existent, that they are imaginary. Rather, argues Nagarjuna and his followers, real phenomena are conventionally existent. To be conventionally existent is to exist dependently [and not independently], to possess ones identity nominally, to be essenceless and impermanent...Emptiness is, in short, nothing more than the fact that conventional dependent phenomena are conventional and dependent. (Garfield 2002:51)

It is one the basis of these two truths that the non-dual nature of Reality, as revealed by the second turning, and its structure can properly be understood. Consequently through this Buddhism are able to philosophically explain how diversity and unity exist simultaneously. Phenomena appear and have a conventional existence, but they are not divided, existing as the same non-divided body (*dharmakaya*). Hence unity is the essential and true nature and not separation. The concept of the two truths manages to bring fort this inherently nondual relationship, while simultaneously avoiding reduction. *Samsara* and *nirvana* can therefore also be understood to co-exist or be two aspects of the same Reality (*dharmadhatu*), because *samsara* does not denote a different realm or place, only a different perception. Since our mental constructs are seen to have own and separate existence, conventional truth is mistaken for the ultimate truth and humans live their existence through and as a conventionally constructed entity that is separate. Consequently all is understood in terms of distance, where phenomena appear as unknown and foreign to one being. And a person relates to his fellow beings as they are separate entities rather than his own "true body" (Dogen 1985:163). As Garfield succinctly puts it,

...it is the treatment of merely conventional, nominal existent phenomena as inherently existing entities that generates samsara. That is because from the

standpoint of Buddhist soteriological theory, the foundation of suffering—the basic condition of samsara—is craving and the foundation of craving is the root delusion of taking to be inherently existing—and so worthy of being craved—that which is merely conventional or nominally existent. We are hence trapped in samsara exactly to the extent that we mistake the conventionally existent as inherently existent. (Garfield 1995:326)

Separation, own-being, and samsara are therefore not an inherently existing reality, but a conditioned interpretation of it. And this view is removed through the understanding that all actually only was conceptual ideas empty of inherent and true existence. This removes the separate “I” and the separate “other,” which simply is to remove an imaginary and constructed reality, revealing what is non-conditioned. Since *samsara* is constituted by our conceptual formations, *nirvana* is understood as that which is non- conceptual, direct, unmediated and non-created. It is “that which remains” after all conceptual constructions are removed, and can therefore not be spoken of. *Nirvana* can therefore be understood as:

...the cessation of the realm of the verbal utterance and the (dualistic) mind (*MK 18:7*). It is the result of seeing things the ways they really are, a seeing which occurs through going beyond conceptual activity of our everyday minds and language, which conditions us to think in terms of inherent existence. ‘The characteristic of reality [*tattva*],’ Nagarjuna says, ‘is to be not dependent on another, calm, not differentiated by verbal differentiations, beyond discursive thoughts, without diversity’ (*MK 18:9*). (Williams 1989:68)

When Nagarjuna says that “it” (the realm of *nirvana*) is “not dependent on another, calm, beyond discursive thought” he reveal that reality (*tattva*) or *Existence* is not a product of thought and mental construction. It is that which becomes revealed when the fabricated ceases. It is therefore not dependent, because ultimately there exists no-*thing* that can be dependent. All is empty of inherent existence and it is the *very* reality of entities that is the fabricated. The implication and understanding of the nature of this

nondual reality is further expressed by Nagarjuna where he in his Dedicatory Verse writes that:

I prostrate to the perfect Buddha,
The best of teachers, who taught that
Whatever is dependently arisen is
Unceasing, unborn
Unannihilated, not permanent,
Not coming, not going,
Without distinction, without identity,
And free from conceptual constructions (Garfield 1995:2)

Whatever is dependently arisen must be unceasing, unborn, neither coming into being or going out of being, because there are no “things” or “essence” that actually are born, that come into being, or go out of it. This is only an untrue perception. Because of this fact true *Being* or *Existence* cannot have anything to do with “entities” because they do not exist. As such there are no-thing that is permanent (or impermanent), that can be distinguished or identified, because there are no-things that can be separated from other things and therefore can go through these processes of life. However there is not a lack of *Existence*. Consequently existence is spoken of in terms of formlessness, it has nothing to do with a corporal understanding. The nonduality of the Mahayana is therefore not a non-duality of entities that is “identical” or “alike,” but the total *absence* of substantial entities, that *can* be alike or unlike. This again has ramification for the concept of unity, because if there are no things, then there cannot be inherently existing time and space. Both time and space are dependent on each other and can therefore not exist without the other. Time and space like all “entities” are therefore not real in the substantial sense, consequently unity is the total absence of distance, things and separation through which there only is a simultaneous non-separate existing totality, where all is in one and one is in all.

This is the understanding and argument for non-duality that the second turning provides and is therefore a non-duality with no parts to unite. The apparent dual reality can therefore be understood in the following way: as there are conceptual interpretations, there is separation between the observer and the observed, subject and object. These concepts are categories of thought disclosing Reality as separate entities that through own-being are understood as factual entities. Consequently there appears to be a substantial split between self and others, and distance between the two through a substantial view of space and time arises. When entities appear they do so in an extended universe through which Reality appears in the guise of infinite separate and different entities. However if investigated the appearance of these infinite “objects” is ultimately based on the simple split of self and others. The dualistic world is ultimately only this simple split from which a whole universe of separation arises. And this view of reality is in Buddhism referred to as *samvritisatya*.

Because reality is disclosed substantially it appears dualistically and it becomes interpreted indirectly on the basis of *samvritisatya*. However when emptiness is realized it does so because all conceptual interpretations are perceived as unreal. Hence direct perception emerges and phenomena are perceived, as they truly are, the non-divided body of reality. Therefore according to the Madhyamaka, “To see entities as empty is to see them as mental constructs, not existing from their own side and therefore *in that respect* like illusions and hallucinatory objects” (Williams 1989:62).

Therefore upon the realization of emptiness, the conventional or phenomenal reality is still present, but is not divided. It is only the perception that has been transformed, this is why the nature of *nirvana* is explained to be calm and equanimity, because there are no *entities* that are moving, active, suffering, that are born, that age, that are real in a substantial sense. There is no centre anywhere, but there are phenomena. Thus there is only total presence and silence and the foundation for suffering is removed. Thus,

Whatever comes about conditioned by something else is quiescent from the point of view of inherent existence. Therefore both the process of origination and the act of production itself is quiescent. Like an illusion, a dream, or a castle in the air are production, duration and cessation declared to be (Nagarjuna quoted in Williams 1989:67-68)

Since *nirvana* and *samsara* was understood as the same Reality, but different perceptions, *nirvana* came to occupy a different role in Mahayana. While it to the sarvastivada school it meant the extinguishing of the illusory idea of self, or the state attained by that extinguishing. The Mahayana saw it as an expression of the absolute and undivided nature of Reality. It was true that *nirvana* was the death of the self-centred ‘I,’ or the dualistic mind, but when this was extinguished, what remained was the Absolute undivided nature of Reality. From the Madhyamaka school this could only be expressed negatively, as the denial of any conceptual view whatsoever. But the crux of the matter lay in the denial of all *conceptual views* and not Existence, which one only could be silent about. The difference between the *conceptual* view and *direct* view is reflected in the Madhyamaka distinction between *sunyata-drsti* and *sunyata-darsansa*. Here *drsti* refers to “to see” in the sense of holding conceptual views, while *darsana* refers to the “direct awareness” or “coming face to face with.” In the former sense it means that all conceptual views are erroneous, even the *concept* of “emptiness” itself, because it is based on a conventional mode of presentation. This in opposition to *sunyata-darsansa* that is the direct non-conceptual perception of Reality (Garfield 2005:58). And it is this “seeing” that reveals the universe as a non-divided totality, where the whole of existence is one undivided body (*dharmakaya*) and not infinite entities being one “body.”

2.5 *The Third Turning of The Dharma; From Self-Emptiness to Empty-of-Other*

When we move toward the third turning of the dharma, we move away from how things or phenomena actually exist (i.e. without inherent existence) toward how they *ultimately* exist (Hookham 1991:114). This might initially seem like a minor difference or a quarrel over words, but the distinction is important for a complete understanding for the Buddhist ecological position that I seek to outline.

The philosophical position of the second dharma-turning is often referred to as *rangtong* or the “self-emptiness” view, denoting the complete absence of inherent existence of phenomena. In regards to this position, Ramana writes in his *Introduction to Nagarjuna’s Philosophy* that:

Negation is not an end in itself; its end is the revelation of *tathata*³⁵ [emptiness/Absolute]. With the rejection of the falsely imagined nature, the true nature of things come to light. As the true nature of things, *sunyata* is *tathata* which is comprehended at different levels, mundane and ultimate. The way that Madhyamika employs to reveal the true nature of things is negative [through the negation of all views]; but the truth that is thus revealed is the nature of things as they are. At the level of mundane truth the error lies in imagining the substantiality of the non-substantial, the self-containedness of the relative and the truth that is revealed by rejecting this false imagination is that all things are essentially relative; the basic elements of existence are not substance, but kinds of conditioned becoming. (Ramana 1975:317)

In this passage Ramana adequately summarizes the second dharma-turning, illuminating the cognitive error that lies in misinterpreting the dualistic perception of phenomena (*samvrti*) to be the ultimate (*paramartha*). However, Ramana then proceeds to say that there is yet an additional error that can be made concerning ultimate truth (*paramarthasatya*). And this “... consists of imagining conditionedness,

relativity, as itself the *ultimate* [my italics] nature of things...” (Ramana 1975:317).

In this interesting remark, Ramana questions whether the second dharma-turning understanding of “self-emptiness” reveal how “things” or phenomena ultimately are? Because according to Ramana there is yet an additional truth that can be revealed by the:

...rejection of this error is that the conditionedness of the conditioned is not ultimate, that in their ultimate nature, the conditioned and the contingent are themselves the unconditioned reality, the nirvana” (Ramana 1975:317)

In this passage we are introduced to the subtle philosophical difference that challenges the second dharma-turning’s claim to ultimacy regarding its understanding of phenomena and their emptiness. Hence it is claimed that that there still is something that can be revealed. We are therefore finding ourselves at a philosophical crossroads regarding the various interpretation of emptiness³⁶. On account of this it has been the source of huge philosophical controversies within Buddhism itself and particularly in Tibet where this debate has taken the form of the two rivalling positions of rangtong (*rang stong*) as “self-emptiness” and Shentong (*gZhan stong*), “emptiness-of-other.³⁷” Thus although the difference between the two is subtle, their implications are also very great. I therefore agree with Hookham, when she says in *The Buddha Within* that there has not been paid enough attention to this philosophical difference in the western academia (Hookham 1991:16). A neglect that have resulted in a confusion of arguments, points of view, and misrepresentations of what actually is said by the particular Buddhist school or philosopher. Consequently misrepresenting the various Buddhist traditions and philosophical position.

To approach the philosophical distinction between self-emptiness and emptiness-of-other, we can do so through their respective view on emptiness its relationship to concealment and disclosure. In his appendix

to the *Chao Lun*, Walter Libenthal makes an important observation regarding the concept of “emptiness,” namely that “the term sunyata [emptiness]... has two meanings, “appreciating” if applied to Truth, and “depreciating” if applied to illusion. This is difficult to grasp” (Libenthal 1968:138). The point that Libenthal can be seen to make here is twofold. The first concerns emptiness as a soteriological device, the second concerns emptiness as an ontological statement. In its soteriological aspect one can say that through the negation of something (inherent existence), emptiness also reveals (non-dual Reality). As such the “apparent reality” is “depreciated,” but what is revealed is “appreciated,” (i.e. through negating the necessary property for separation, non-separation is revealed). In its ontological aspect Libenthal’s quote can be said to point to the fact that that emptiness is appreciatory in the sense of saying something positive about Reality and Existence. Truth is not only a negation of something else (inherent existence/rangtong), but something that is Real and true in and of itself; a nondual and truly existing Reality (Shentong). And it is over this second point that the rangtong and Shentong views part ways.

The rangtong answer to the second proposition is that what is real about phenomena (*dharmadhatu*) is “the self-emptiness of phenomenal existence”. There is nothing beyond or in addition to this. Through investigating that which appears (phenomenal existence, the universe), it is found to lack own-being, or inherent existence. The universe is as such non-dual and undivided where Existence is understood in relation to conventional truth or reality (phenomena) and its emptiness as the absolute Reality or Truth. The rangtong standpoint is therefore that “ultimate truth consists of ...[seeing] conditionedness, relativity, as itself the ultimate nature of things.” (Ramana 1975:317). On the Shentong account however, the “essence” of phenomena is not self-emptiness, but *Buddhajnana*, the nondual-buddha-wisdom-mind, or the Buddha-nature (*buddhata*)³⁸. *Existence* is not simply the phenomenal reality empty of own-being, but

the undivided Mind existing as all “things” simultaneously. This nondual Mind is according to the Shentong view empty of that which defiles its inherent non-dual nature, but is not empty of its own existence. This is why it is referred to as “empty-of-other;” meaning that it is empty of duality and separation. This seems to be a rather reversed position from the preceding rangtong understanding and has as such often been charged with the reintroduction of the notion of an absolute substantial entity or self. However as we shall later come to see, this rests on a misunderstanding regarding the Shentong understanding of the Absolute.

If we turn toward the Shentong understanding of the rangtong position they would claim that it is not wrong, but that it simply is incomplete, because it does not reveal non-dual Buddhajñana. Accordingly it acknowledges the rangtong position of “self-emptiness” as both valid and illuminating, but argues that that it does not disclose a complete understanding of emptiness, hence Reality. There are many, complex, technical, and subtle philosophical arguments provided to argue this point, but at present only one need to be mentioned. And this is that the rangtong view seems to be subtly attached to the concept of phenomenal reality. A claim they themselves would negate, but one that implies that there still are conceptual defilements left.

To understand this point more fully we need to take a closer look at the rangtong approach and mode of apprehending Reality. The rangtong realization and method of analysis starts from the premise of phenomenal reality that is rigorously analysed and deconstructed. Through this analysis it is revealed that it lacks inherent existence, both persons and things, which in other words mean that what is investigated is the form that is found to lack own and separate being. But what is never truly questioned is the very point of departure, namely the dependently arisen phenomenal universe (form). It is in a sense taken for granted as “being there,” and while its nature is rigorously investigated resulting in its disclosure as self-empty,

the rangtong position cannot move beyond its original point of analysis. Hence due to its approach and mode of analysis, the rangtong position is in a sense confined to its starting point. And although analysing all conceptual constructions away to their essential emptiness, even to the degree where the Tibetan Shentongpa Kenpo Tsultrim agrees that there should be no conceptual residues left (even of phenomenal reality), it is seldom the case in practice (Hookham 1991:21). Thus the Shentong view is sympathetic to the rangtong position, firstly because what is revealed *seems* to be the non-conceptual and absolute nature of phenomenal existence. Secondly through its deconstruction to emptiness, it seems that there is nothing more left to deconstruct. Thirdly to move beyond this realization is dependent not on analysis, but revelation and faith³⁹, as the self-revelment of the Buddhajñana or Buddha-nature. Thus according to the Shentong understanding, the rangtong view only *seems* to have deconstructed all conceptual positions, but there are still some subtle conceptual defilements left. As Hookham says, “The relative coarse concept of their existence [phenomena] is given up by the very subtle concept of emptiness [lack of own-being], which in turn, can only be abandoned by giving up all concepts, coarse and subtle.” (Hookham 1991:73). There is therefore still a sense in which “something” is negated, thus a subtle conceptual residue of “something” is still present and active⁴⁰. And if there is a subtle conceptual idea left, there is also a subtle conceptual idea of self present⁴¹ because they imply and are depend on each other⁴². Additionally it seems that on the rangtong account Reality both exist and do not exist. If emptiness is identical to non-existence, how then, can the form be said to both exist and not exist simultaneously⁴³? Hence Mikyo Dorje a Tibetan shentongpa (Hookham 1991:79) fails to understand how this view can reveal any reality at all, because ultimately speaking there is nothing that truly exists⁴⁴. The only way the rangtong position can secure existence is through a subtle conceptual residue of phenomenal life that both is empty and nonempty (i.e. samvrti and

paramartha). Because of this rangtong understanding of emptiness, it seems that the *dharmadhatu* also is empty of existence, i.e. being self-empty which would mean that Reality is not existing at all⁴⁵? This is according to the Shentong understanding clearly absurd and must mean that the *dharmadhatu* must exist in some other way than phenomenal expressions.

One therefore has to be careful not to confuse levels of discourse, and according to Dolpopa (1292-1361)⁴⁶ have to distinguish between: 1) The doctrine that every apparent phenomena have two aspects: the way it falsely appears and its emptiness⁴⁷, and 2) the doctrine that Ultimate Reality is manifestation and emptiness⁴⁸ (Hookham 1991:85), these being non-dual. The former view has as the phenomenal universe as point of departure, the latter has the nondual Buddhajnana (the nondual-buddha-wisdom-mind). To the former “Reality” is based on appearance (phenomenal life) and its emptiness, to the latter that which appear is a manifestation or an expression of the absolute and truly existing Buddhajnana. Thus although the rangtong view successfully have established that all phenomena are empty of own-being and therefore that there do not exist any *conceptually* graspable absolute. They have not realized that there is the *ungraspable* and truly *Existing* Absolute, as the Buddha-wisdom Mind, or Buddhajnana.

Through establishing the difference between these two approaches and understanding of emptiness, we can now look more fully into what is meant by the “nondual-buddha-wisdom-mind,” which according to the *Ratnagotravibhaga* is:

...incapable of being explained and it is to be realized by oneself and understood “as like a thunderbolt”; that is invisible, unutterable, and immutable; that is it has neither beginning, middle nor end by nature, being “a quite marvellous and unthinkable sphere”; that is free from all dualistic views (*prapanca*) and false discriminations (*vikalpa*); that is unimaginable, indiscriminative, not being seen,

heard, smelt, tasted, or touched, and possessing no characteristic mark. (Brown 1991:75)

What is being expressed here is that Buddhajnana can only be realized by itself, and is completely beyond any kind of dualistic mode of apprehension (i.e. understanding, cognition, perception, and experiencing). For as have been seen, these conventional modes of apprehension are conceptual, relational, and indirect, hence dualistic and relational. It is only through the removal of all conceptual constructions, even the most subtle senses of a perceiver, that the Buddha-Mind can reveal itself to itself, which means that in that moment there are no perceiver, perceived, or perception. Consequently the realization of this nondual nature can only be understood as like a “thunderbolt” whereby the Mind recognizes itself as itself and becomes non-conceptually “Self-revealed.” This is in Buddhism understood through the concept of *nisprapanca*, or “without elaboration,” “non-conceptual,” “naked awareness,” “freedom from both artifice as well as freedom from subjection to an artificially created world.” (Hookham 1991:66). In that moment of realization there are no concealments veils that hinder its Absolute nature to be revealed as that which is the true nature of all phenomena. The Absolute, non-constructed, and truly existing Buddha-nature (*buddhata*)⁴⁹. In that moment of realization the person realizes all is an expression of the same Mind, because there is nothing other. Hence mountains, trees, rivers, are all seen as the manifestation of the Buddha-nature. As the poet Joso writes:

The voices of the river-valley are the [Buddha’s] Wide and Long Tongue,

The form of the mountains is nothing other than his Pure Body.

Through the night, eighty-four thousand verses.

On another day, how can I tell them to others? (Dogen 1994: 86)

Because it is the truly existing Reality it is naturally non-constructed naturally present and complete. There is no reason to generate, create, or attain an understanding, which is the essential characteristic of the

conceptual and dualistic mind (*vijnana*). Rather one needs to remove that which obscures and conceals this inherent and clear nature. And as we have seen, these defilements are by Buddhism considered to be mental formations that create a constructed and dependently conditioned reality that seems substantial and dualistic. When these obscurations or cognitive errors are removed, however, the mind immediately recognises itself as that which always was, is, and will be. And because it cannot be conceptualized, it cannot be divided into “beginning, middle nor end,” or “past, present and future.” It exists as a simultaneous totality, equally present in a blade of grass, a whisk of wind, and a mountain brook. The Buddha-nature is therefore ultimately just another name for Life, the Universe, or what the thirteenth century Zen Master Eihei Dogen⁵⁰, refers to as *Total-Existence*, where, “*All living beings totally exist as the Buddha-nature*⁵¹.” (Dogen 1996:2). Or reversely, “The Buddha-nature exist Totally as all living beings.” Here according to Dogen:

Those called “*living beings*,” or called “*the sentient*,” or called “*all forms of life*,” or called “*all creatures*,” are living beings and are all forms of Existence. In short, *Total Existence* is the *Buddha-nature*, and the perfect totality of *Total Existence* is called “*living beings*”. At just this moment, the inside and outside of living beings are the *Total Existence* of the *Buddha-nature*. Remember, the *Existence* [described] now, which is *totally possessed by the Buddha-nature*, is beyond the “existence” of existence and non-existence. *Total Existence* is the Buddha’s words, the Buddha’s tongue, the Buddhist patriarchs’ eyes, and the nostrils of a patch-robed monk.... The Buddha-nature is always Total-Existence, for Total-Existence is the Buddha-nature. Total-Existence is not smashed into hundreds of bits and peaces, and Total-Existence is not a single rail of iron. Because it is the holding up of a fist, it is beyond large and small. (Dogen 1996:2)

Here Dogen clearly articulates how this nature is beyond any kind of conceptual understanding, and beyond any kind of “partial” idea of existence that the dualistic mind can conceive of. Hence, when Dogen uses the concept of “living beings,” he does so with a particular emphasis in mind. In Buddhist philosophy this term generally refers to what is

understood as the “sentient” or what conventionally is understood as “living,” (i.e. animals, humans, insects, and perhaps plants). On a more technical note it refers to the concept of *sattvadhatu* or “the realm of living beings” that understand themselves as entities rather than the totality. And is as such it is identical to the *tathagatagarbha*, which are those who have the potential to attain buddhahood (Takasaki 1966:22). However, as Dogen seeks to express, these forms of life are not *primarily* “living beings,” which is but a conventional designation and category of thought. Ultimately they are the Buddha-nature, a “form of existence,” and as all exist as the Buddha-nature, *all* is equally living and truly existing. As Dogen later says in the same fascicle: “The whole Universe is utterly without objective molecules: here and now there is no second person at all.” (Dogen 1996:2). As the Buddha-nature is Total-Existence there is not one molecule that is separate from the totality, and therefore not one molecule that is not living. Life manifests as the Buddha-nature and the Buddha-nature is the totality of Life, or as Dolpopa says: the manifestation and the manifest. There is therefore no *actual* multitudes, diversity, separation, or duality, because all that exist does so as the same nondual mind:

Here there is nothing to be removed

And Absolutely nothing to be added;

The truth should be perceived as it is,

And he who sees the Truth becomes liberated. (Takasaki 1966:301)

Here there is nothing to remove, because when mental constructs are seen for what they are, they are seen as empty of existence, referring to nothing, hence being unreal. There is therefore nothing to add because the Buddha-nature is always total and complete, there never was any lack. Hence The Buddhajnana is not simply the absence of own-being, but the nondual and absolute nature of Mind (*cittaprakṛti*⁵²), where:

The Essence (of the Buddha) is by (nature) devoid [empty]

Of accidental (pollutions) which differ from it;

But it is by no means devoid of the highest properties

Which are essentially, indivisible from it.

(Takasaki 1966:301)

This way of formulating and expressing the Buddha-mind might give the impression that *it* is some kind of Absolute entity that exists, but the Buddha-nature is itself only a concept. Here the rangtong and Shentong agrees. And as the Madhyamaka proved concepts are only dependently constituted and therefore unreal. Thus although the rangtong position would say that nothing can be said of the absolute, because all is empty. The Shentong position would say that exactly because they have proven all conceptual ideas to be empty, one can express the Buddhist position regarding the Absolute more freely, because this is not disputed. The Buddha-nature is Life, non-conceptual, impermanent, change, and transformation. The only thing that is permanent is the fact that all is impermanent.

In regards to the Buddha-nature it is in the *Ratnagotravibhaga* and the *Srimala-Sutra* described to have four transcendental virtues (*guna paramitas*). These are eternity/permanence (*nitya*), bliss (*sukha*), unity/self (*atma*), and purity (*subha*), but although expressed as belonging to the Buddha-nature they should not be understood as substantial virtues or descriptions. Rather these are how the realization expresses and manifests itself in the human form⁵³. The logic behind these virtues can therefore be understood as follows: because impermanence means that there are no entities, the Buddha-nature cannot be an entity. An as the there are no entities there is “permanence⁵⁴,” i.e. there is no-things that moves, is born, that comes and goes etc. On account of this there is “bliss” or peace because there is no craving “I” or self-centred activity present. And as there are no separate selves, there is only Unity, True Existence, or the formless self. Lastly it is pure, because there are no concealing or

obscuring defilements present, only Reality as it truly is where all is selfsame with this Reality. Commenting on an old Zen story Dogen writes that:

“The true human body” means your own true body. Know that the entire universe is your own true body, which is not a temporary body... What is called “the entire universe” is undivided from the moment, the ages, mind, and words. This limitless and boundless experience is the “entire universe. (Dogen 1986:163-164)

As perhaps can be surmised through the shentong view a very different conception of Reality and Truth becomes established. And what to the rangtongpas appears (the phenomenal universe) and is seen to be self-empty, the Shentong position understands as the manifestation and expressions of the Buddha-nature. Thus although both the rangtongpas and shentongpas understand the phenomenal universe to be like an apparition or illusion, it can according to Dolpopa be used in different ways:

It can be used as an example of how illusory phenomena are self-empty and yet still appear, dependent on causes and conditions. It can also be used as an example of how the [buddha/total] mind can, like a mirror, enable manifold images to appear in it, without itself being changed or affected by them. (Hookham 1991:86)

It is not affected or changed because phenomena are empty of inherent existence, hence their illusory nature. They are unreal and can never truly affect the undivided and empty Mind. Reality can therefore be conceived as the simultaneous presence (emptiness) and movement (form/phenomena). As such the Shentong position agree with the rangtong view that the dualistic reality is unreal and not a substantial and separate universe. But they disagree that it simply is self-empty. Thus when Dolpopa in the above says that: “Ultimate Reality is manifest and empty” he uses it in the sense that “...it is the vivid, countless, nondual, spontaneous, inseparable Qualities, and Emptiness in the sense that it is empty of all conceptual graspable phenomena, that is apparent reality.”

(Hookham 1991:85). What is sought expressed here is that the Buddha-nature is Life arising spontaneously from itself freely and is not the product of the previous moment. To exist in terms of the previous moment is to exist in terms of cause and effect and a dependency that is samsara. This is a product of a conceptual understanding that sees reality in terms of temporality and linearity. Thus although we as humans understand ourselves as separate and particular entities born in space and time, living in opposite and in relation to other entities, there are no such separating and separate categories of existence. It is only the truly existing, spontaneous manifestation, and vivid expressions of the natural Mind, existing equally as mountains, trees, planets, the stars, and the moon. Or as Dogen formulates it:

The meaning of “*all living beings*,” [The Buddha-nature] as described now in Buddhism, is that all those that have mind are *living beings*, for minds are just *living beings*. Those without mind may also be *living beings*, for *living beings* are just mind. So minds all are *living beings*, and *living beings* all have the Buddha-nature. Grass, trees, and national lands are mind itself; because they are mind, they are *living beings*, and living beings all have the *Buddha-nature*. The sun, the moon, and the stars are mind, itself; because they are mind they are *living beings*, and because they are *living beings* they have the *Buddha-nature*.

(Dogen 1996:22)

This is the fundamental nature of Reality and it is in terms of this that a Buddhist ecology needs to be found and understood.

2.6 Ecological Implications of the Buddha-Nature

For the investigation into the ecological implications of the Buddha-nature, the above quote from Dogen can serve as a fruitful point of departure. In this passage Dogen poetically articulate how the principle of the Buddha-nature expresses itself as life; there is nothing that is not living beings there is nothing that is not Buddha-nature. And as the Buddha-nature becomes established as Total-Existence, it simultaneously becomes

the basic foundation for the Buddhist understanding of ecology. From this it follows that the Buddhist ecology is an ecology of non-duality generating a very different conception from one founded on duality and separation. On account of this fundamental difference in foundation, the understanding of ecological relevant questions, approaches, values, ideas, and solutions changes. And it is in this difference that the Buddhist philosophy can make a contribution to the environmental discourse.

It was mentioned in the introduction to this thesis that the concept of ecology was being understood in terms of the man-nature *relationship*. And as we proceed with the ecological position of Buddhism, this perspective and understanding will only increase in importance. Thus when Rachel Carson traced much of our present ecological crisis to the lack of understanding of nature, Buddhism would wholeheartedly agree. However, they would rephrase this as the lack of self-knowledge, which in Buddhism would mean the same thing. Consequently Buddhism places a particular emphasis on the human existence which is understood to include the potential to realize and manifest this nondual wisdom-nature.

If we start by looking into how a non-dual reality more concretely can be understood, we can from earlier quote by Dogen see that the Buddha-nature is not only a metaphysical principle, but also the concrete reality of Existence. The term “Buddha-nature” is itself only a concept, but it Reality is Life expressing itself as the sun, the trees, the moon, and this earth. So when Dogen writes of the grass, trees, and the moon that they are all living beings, he is not only expressing a poetic sentiment. He is also expressing a fundamental truth that phenomena are more than simply inert matter or objects of consciousness, they are “living beings,” no less alive than humans. The dualistic conception of life as sentience is according to Buddhism only a particular interpretation of Existence from a substantial and separate point of view. A view that discriminates between kinds of entities. But as there is no duality it is ultimately impossible to categorize

“life” as a quality that is had by some and not by others, as this would admit to a factual distinction between the two. And as we already have seen, life and death are according to Buddhism only the human characterization of the universal impermanence. Life itself is “beyond” these categories of thought, because thought are only ideas about the totality. As there only is Total-Existence there are no separate entities, only the undivided Buddha-mind existing as mountains, rivers, tiles, pebbles, a cherry tree, or a human being. A point that is further elaborated upon by Dogen in the fascicle “All Functions” (*Zenki*) of the *Shobogenzo*. Here he writes that, “There is nothing, not a single moment nor a single dharma, that is not part of life. There is nothing, not a single matter nor a single state of mind, that is not part of life.” (Dogen 1996:286). Hence quoting an old Zen story Dogen writes in the “Body-and-mind study of the way” (*Shinjin Gakudo*) that, “a monk once asked National Teacher Dazheng, “What is the mind of the ancient buddhas?” The master replied, “Walls, tiles, pebbles.” (Dogen 1985:90). The reason that I stress this point is that as the dualistic minds tends to interpret and understand the concept of non-duality from a self-centred point of view, it also becomes this individual “I” that understand or identifies *itself* as nature or that nature is equal to *him*. But the Buddhist point understanding is that *all* is equally alive and living, in a total and non-centred way. And it is this that is meant by the fact that, “All living beings totally exist as the Buddha-nature” (Dogen 1996:2), that there is only “one” life common to all, living as all. And it is this reality that forms the heart of a Buddhist ecology whereby all forms of life becomes equally important and valuable.

The above realization expresses itself according to Buddhism as compassion, which is the total absence of any self-centredness and the disclosure of the dharmakaya. In this realization all diversity “drop off” (Dogen 1985:69) because there is only the total body (*dharmakaya*) living itself as all “things.” As there is no distance, separation, and all is the same realized Existence, compassion is understood in absolute terms, which

means that it is has no centre and no direction. It is the absence of any form of distance between anything, and there can be no “point to point” compassion, which means that it is not a sentiment that arises *between* different beings. Compassion arises out of the realization of the total absence of substantial and separate “beings” altogether, revealing the dharmakaya and the aspect of what can be called absolute value or holiness. Life do no longer appear through the lens of infinite beings working for their own self-interest and being separate and foreign, it is all one body working together. This unconditional nature is the topic of a well-known Buddhist story where it is said that once:

The Buddha stood beside a lake on Mount Grdhakuta and prepared to give a sermon to his disciples who were gathering there to hear him speak.

As the Holy One waited for his students to settle down, he noticed a golden lotus blooming in the muddy water nearby. He pulled the plant out of the water- flower, long stem, and root. Then he held it up high for all his students to see. For a long time he stood there, saying nothing, just holding up the lotus and looking into the blank faces of his audience.

Suddenly his disciple, Mahakashyapa, smiled. He understood! (Yun 2004)

What was it that Mahakashyapa actually understood? No words were uttered and no doctrine formulated. According to the *Gateless Gate*, a canonical text within Zen Buddhism, the Buddha was reported to say afterwards:

I have the eye of the true teaching, the heart of Nirvana, the true aspect of non-form, and the ineffable stride of Dharma. It is not expressed by words, but especially transmitted beyond teaching. This teaching I have given to Mahakashyapa. (Yamada 2004:35)

In an interview between Bill Moyers and Joseph Campbell, Campbell was asked what the meaning of life was, in his reply he told this story, whereupon he asked rhetorically: “What is the meaning of a flower? There is no meaning, it exists, it simply is.” (Campbell 2001). This simple

answer is important because it points to the fact that in the realization of non-substantiality and the disappearance of separation, reality appears as an unconditional whole. There are no relationships because all is the same nature, where the flower exists as a flower, *and* as an absolute expression of the Buddha-nature. There is nothing outside or in addition to this, and this is to realize holiness. As the Chinese poet Ch'i-Chi writes:

Poking up from the ground barely above my knees,
already there's holiness in their coiled roots.

Tough harsh frost has whitened the hundred grasses,
deep in the courtyard, one grove of green!
in the late night ling-legged spiders stir;
crickets are calling from the empty stairs.

A thousand years from now who will stroll

Among those trees,
fashioning poems on their ancient dragon shapes?

(Pine and O'Connor 1998:49)

To denote this experience or quality, Buddhism usually refer to the concept of “compassion, ” but it is clear that it cannot simply be understood in the conventional sense of a “concern” and the “suffering with” of others, although these elements naturally are present. Compassion also needs to be furnished with a more active and positive formulation that expresses this sense of holiness. Here the concept of “love” becomes useful because it conveys this quality, but it must be understood in a selfless and absolute manner, whereby all of Existence is loved equally and without conditions, be it a tree, a mountain or a human being. The Greek concept of *agape*, meaning “wide open,” might be a more precise formulation as it contains the different meanings of divine, unconditional, self-sacrificing, active and thoughtful love. However, the technical meaning of the words are not important, but the fact that the Buddhist understanding of compassion is the absence of self-centredness expressing

itself as selfless love, is. This is therefore a love that is of the totality, for the totality, where all of nature's forms are loved equally and treated with the same care. And therefore is of a very different nature than what a self-centred understanding conceives of it. This latter point is very important, because the conventional understanding of compassion is often limited to an inter-human relationship. But the compassion revealed by Buddhism is one that emerges through the realization that all is the same "body" (*dharmakaya*). And since there only is the same body of Reality existing as itself, compassion or *agape* is the simultaneous non-centred love for all of nature. It is therefore it is wide open, because there no longer are any self-centredness. And to love all in the same way means that nothing is treated simply as "means," because the concept cannot arise in a mind that perceives unity. The concept of "means" implies that the object, goal, and the person are separate, however as all is revealed as the same, this whole mode of experiencing and understanding reality is absent. Hence the dualistic understanding of nature becomes reversed, and a person is "touched" by the life of a blade of grass, or as Dogen expresses this sentiment:

Crimson leaves

Whitened by season's first snow—

Is there anyone

Who would not be moved

To celebrate this in song?

(Heine 1989:90)

As compassion is the result of non-duality it is clear that it also is inherent to realization, i.e. to realize selflessness or non-duality is to see all as the same life, to exist as the same life and therefore to naturally manifest compassion. This means that to realize "sameness" is to spontaneously to act ecologically, because the person no longer acts from the sense of a separate self that treats others as means. Ecology, or love for existence, is as such not the product of deliberation and or thought, but is understood as

a natural attitude that springs out of one's being. The naturalness and unsentimental quality of compassion lays at the heart of a well-known Zen story where Dog-zan was asked what the nature and function of compassion is⁵⁵. To this Dog-zan responds, "...[It] is like a person in the night reaching back with a hand to grope for a pillow." (Dogen 1996:212). What is sought expressed here is that compassion is as natural and simple as caring for ones self in sleep. There are no thoughts of helping, of being the helper and "others" that are helped, because it is the natural expression of a view that perceives unity. It means to be of service. As such it is not intentional, but only a natural expression of selflessness. Hence when one's "body" no longer is seen as an isolated and separate "thing," but as the expression of the totality, and the totality is perceived and experienced as ones personal and own self, ecology naturally and spontaneously becomes present and active. This nature is only concealed by self-centredness or ignorance. Because compassion is unsentimental it does not obscure the function of life, i.e. it is not a matter of saving cute seals, it is simply the understanding of the function of life and its unconditional value and importance. One can therefore say that if non-duality is the source of Buddhist ecology, its expression and manifestation is compassion. A compassion that do not discriminate between "living beings," because all is equally "living beings."

As ecology is understood to be the same as unity with its natural expression of compassion, it is clear that Buddhism places great emphasis on the human existence. Firstly because man is an equal expression of the Buddha-nature and secondly because ecology essentially is a question of how man relates toward nature or the Buddha-nature. As the Buddha-nature is selfless, it is in man the conception of duality and separation arises and also where it can cease. *Samara* and *nirvana* are only modes of perceiving. If we therefore start by looking into the first point, that man is an expression of the Buddha-nature, it means that the human being is not

outside the field of ecological consideration. To care for nature does not mean that one should leave man out nor does taking care of man need to happen at the expense of nature. As both are the same Buddha-nature, “ecology” means to take care of both man and nature equally and simultaneously, a feat that is possible because of their fundamental unity. However this conception of ecology implies a broader understanding of the human potential than what the dualistic understanding allows. Because it means to take care of the *same* nature and not man’s infinite needs. It is therefore important to have a clear conception of what the human existence truly is or contains, and one can therefore ask legitimately whether man only is the sum of his needs, as the famous character of Henrik Ibsen’s Peer Gynt gives voice to:

The Gyntish Self-it is the host
of wishes, appetites, desires,-
the Gyntish Self, it is the sea□
of fancies, exigencies, claims,□
all that, in short, makes my breast heave,□
and whereby I, as I, exist.

But as our Lord requires the clay
to constitute him God o' the world,
so I, too, stand in need of gold,

if I as Emperor would figure.

(Ibsen 2004: Act 4)

Or is man something beyond these desires and the reality produced by them? As should be clear by now, the human existence according to Buddhism include more than what these desires and needs reveal, it also includes that which they conceal. Actually, Buddhism would hold that man *is* that which is concealed, although not denying that the dualistic view is part of the human existence. Hence ecology also means to take

care of the “Inner Man” or “True-being” (*Bodhisattva*), which we shall see means to bring to consciousness the view of the *dharmakaya* (body of truth, unity, reality). Hence to take care of the “outer” nature is simultaneously to take care of the “inner” nature and to take care of the “inner” nature is to take care of the “outer,” as these are not separate.

An additional comment can be added to this, namely that what humans do they do to themselves, because all “forms of existence” is the same non-dual Buddha-nature. According to this understanding humans can through their lives either serve unity or separation, influencing their own as well as others experience of life. It is therefore not inconsequential what humans do, and from a Buddhist perspective life is understood as deeply existential in each moment of living. This is because one always affects one’s own and others life with one’s actions, both through what is chosen to do and what is chosen not to do. Hence to live according to truth is to act from the principle that all is the same, generating a feeling of unity, lack of distance, closeness to others and a sense of joy. To act according to separation means to act according to self-interest and in opposition to the rest of nature. This creates a sense of separation from ones self (i.e. the rest of life), creating a greater sense of distance, unfamiliarity, isolation, coldness, fear, and competition. One starts to look after one’s own interests and secure them, rather than enabling others to also be truthful and joyful. And the more separated one feels, the more foreign and lifeless “life” or the Buddha-nature becomes, because one does not recognize life or one’s self in anything.

Because life as nature is inherently selfless it is only the human view that determines how humans relates to nature and it is only humans that can transform this relationship. This again informs the natural conclusion that ecological problems do not arise from causes and conditions externally and separate from humans, but from the causes and conditions resulting from perceiving the world in a particular way, i.e. dualistically. To

perceive nature as different from one's self is to treat nature as different from one's self and the consequences of this shall be dealt with later. However, the essence of the Buddhist ecology lies not in the world but in the perception of the world, where to relate ecologically means to perceive ecologically, i.e. unity. Hence a Buddhist ecology necessarily starts and ends with the human being, providing an understanding of this mode of existing, how it functions and what its potential is.

This analysis and understanding can be provided by Buddhism, where it not only reveals how the human being functions differently according to perception or view, but also that man has in his potential to naturally act ecologically out of love. Hence providing an inherent ecological foundation through non-duality and simultaneously outlining a human potential that accord with it. However for us to get a fuller understanding of this relationship and what this actually means, we need to look into how Buddhism conceives of the connection between the human existence and the Buddha-nature.

3. The Buddha-nature and The Human Existence

To come to grips with the connection of non-duality and the human existence, the Shentong understanding of emptiness becomes important. As such its relevance is not limited to the metaphysical debate regarding emptiness and what ultimately is real, but through its disclosure of the Buddha-nature it also introduces a different conception of the human existence. And this understanding is again important for the further understanding of the Buddhist perspective on ecology.

To approach this connection, the concept of *samvritisatya* and *paramarthasatya* again becomes relevant. However this time these two truths need to be understood in relation to the logic of the Buddha-nature that also alters their internal relationship. The rangtong explained these two truths in terms of phenomena and their emptiness (i.e. dependent co-arising). However, when we move toward the Shentong perspective, these two seizes to be explained in terms of two *aspects* of the same Reality, and becomes understood in terms of Reality (Buddha-nature) and *view* of Reality, hence:

...Ultimate reality (Paramarthasatya) is the essence or true nature of all dharmas apparent reality (*samvritisatya*) is merely a distorted vision of that. Thus, when one realizes Paramarthasatya, one realizes that the former apparent reality does not exist, never did exist, and never will exist. (Hookham 1991:81)

Through this interpretation of the two truths another essential difference between rangtong and shentong becomes apparent. In the rangtong position “existence” is tied together with a subtle conception of phenomena (form) and emptiness. But the Shentong position is not committed to such an understanding, because it freely admits to the Total-Existence of the Buddha-nature. Consequently phenomena are by Shentong not understood as conventionally real and inherently empty,

rather they are understood as the manifestation of the Buddha-nature. And it is through this that the relationship between the two truths becomes re-interpreted and altered. Samvritisatya understood as the dualistic reality, is therefore denied *any* status as real at all (although still *appearing* as real to the perceiver). This understanding is based on the same argument that was introduced by the first dharma-turning to negate self-existing entities.

There simply is no reality to which the dualistic reality can be said to refer, it is only a conceptual construction. Hence there are no dualities, there is no separation, there is only the nondual Buddha-mind expressing itself as Life. And because the Buddha-nature is said to be empty-of-other, samvritisatya becomes that which it is empty of, and that which conceals the inherent purity (non-duality). However if samvritisatya is denied any reality by the Shentong account, how is its appearance explained?

The Shentong reply to this question is that while paramarthasatya is the only truly existing non-dual Buddha-nature, samvritisatya simply must be the erroneous perception of the former. One cannot add or change that which is Real and actual, one can only misinterpret it. Hence, as the above quote says, samvritisatya is simply understood as a vision. On account of this interpretation of the two truths, the Shentong approach introduces a new way of conceiving Existence whereby the Buddha-nature becomes both the perceiver and perceived, the revealing and revealed. There is nothing other than the Buddha-nature, hence all must be explained in terms of it. However how does this nondual and Total-Existence express itself as the human existence?

This question is also a central topic for Dogen when he in the “Buddha-nature” (Bussho) fascicle writes:

Hearing the word “Buddha-nature,” many students have misunderstood it to be like the “Self” described by the non-Buddhist Senika. This is because they do not meet people, they do not meet themselves, they do not meet teachers⁵⁶. They vacantly consider mind, will, or consciousness—which is the movement of wind

and fire—to be the Buddha-nature’s enlightened knowing and enlightened understanding. Who has ever said that enlightened knowing and understanding is present in the Buddha Nature? Those who realize enlightenment, those who know, are buddhas, but the Buddha-nature is beyond enlightened knowing and enlightened understanding. (Dogen 1996:3)

Opening with a reference to the Senika hearsay known for its substantial interpretation of Mind, Dogen attempts to clearly distinguish the concept of the Buddha-nature from such a conceptual interpretation. The Senika interpretation is based on an indirect and conceptual understanding of Existence and not what is non-conceptual and direct. Hence when the Buddha-nature is spoken of in terms of self, permanency, etc., it simply means that unity and permanence are natural consequence of the absence of essence. Hence there is no-thing that can be said, spoken of, that moves, etc., because Reality empty and beyond any conceptual formations. But if there are no entities how do Dogen and Buddhism then explain the fact that there are experiences and perceptions of life? And how does this again express itself in the relationship between diversity and unity?

The answer to this question can be found in the last part of Dogen’s quote where he introduces two important conceptual distinctions. The first concerns the distinction between two kinds of “knowledge,” and the second concerns the distinction between “knowledge” and the “Buddha-nature.” With regards to the first distinction Dogen essentially repeats the classical Buddhist difference between the ignorant and enlightened kinds. Here according to Dogen, “ignorant knowledge” is like the movement of wind and fire, i.e. dependent, conceptual, and impermanent, while “enlightened knowledge” is direct, non-conceptual (*nisprapanca*⁵⁷), and unmediated. However what is of true interest in the above is that also this latter kind of “buddha knowledge,” is “beyond” the Buddha-nature. Hence although a buddha is defined as one “who knows” or one that have “realized,” the “Buddha-nature” itself is beyond *any* kind of “knowledge.” Here we have to be aware of Dogen’s use of the concept “knowledge,”

which is understood in relation to the perception of the Buddha-nature, i.e. epistemic insight or disclosure. Consequently what Dogen seeks to clarify is that we need to distinguish between the “*Buddha-nature*” as Total-Existence and *a view* of the Buddha-nature, as a particular interpretation of this Totality⁵⁸.

The rationale behind this distinction is based on the fact that the Buddha-nature is no-thing, no-self, no-entity, it simply is Total-Existence. And because the Buddha-nature is Total it includes and exists as every-thing simultaneously. One therefore have to distinguish between a particular view of the totality that exist and disclose the totality in a particular way, and the Totality existing as the infinite different views or “forms of existence” simultaneously. And this particular point of view that always is an interpretation of the totality is in Buddhism referred to as a manifestation, expression or view, which are what Dogen refer to as “forms of *Existence*,” or the Buddha-natures infinite phenomenal expressions.

This relationship between “forms of existence” and “Total-Existence” is further investigated by Dogen in the chapter “Only Buddha and Buddha” (*Yuibutsu Yobutsu*) where he quotes an ancient Buddha saying, “The mountains, rivers, and earth are born at the same moment with each person. All buddhas of the three worlds⁵⁹ are practicing together.” (Dogen 1995: 165) Although being a poetic formulation, these few lines contain two very important and precise philosophical points. The first is introduced when Dogen says that the “person and the mountains and rivers are born together,” by which he means that the perceiver and the perceived or the “I” and its “world” arise together. Although these might be experienced as two separate entities, they are according to Buddhism co-dependent and cannot be separated from one another. They are therefore said to arise together as a particular *view* of Existence. This confirms the argument that the “I” is not a self-existing is born together with its reality,

hence, a view define both the experience of a self and its “world” simultaneously. Thus what it means to be is defined by the view, which is what constitute the particular experience and form for existence. Consequently “*Existence*” cannot in Buddhism be understood in terms of entities or phenomenal expressions because these are only dependent (i.e. empty of inherent existence) *views* of the Totality. Existence, which is what truly exist is formless and “permanent/present” because it is not connected with coming and going. Hence phenomenal appearances are an interpretation of the totality that comes into being through a view and is a particular interpretation of the Totality, by the Totality. The Buddha-nature can therefore be understood as a clearing that allows and makes possible its own infinite interpretation of itself.

The nature of views as particular perceptions of the Totality leads to the second point regarding the views, namely that they are completely non-dual. This means that they are never outside or different from Total-Existence, but a mode of the Buddha-nature’s self-apprehension. If we therefore add these two points together, we find that the Buddha-nature views itself through the eyes of an “I” or perceiver, in infinite different variations. However Dogen is quick to mitigate the idea that easily can spring to mind, that the “physical” mountains and rivers are born together with the ‘I’, and he therefore goes on to say that:

If we look at the mountains, rivers, and earth when a person is born, his birth does not seem to bring forth additional mountains, rivers, and earth on top of the existing ones. Yet the ancient buddhas word’s cannot be mistaken. How should we understand this? ...Is there anyone who knows what his birth in its beginning or end is like? No one knows either birth’s end or beginning; nevertheless everyone is born. Similarly, no one knows the extremities of the mountains, rivers and earth, but all see this place and walk here. Do not think with regret that mountains, rivers, and earth is not born with you. Understand that the ancient buddha teaches that your birth is nonseparate from the mountains, rivers, and earth. (Dogen 1995:165)

When Dogen says that our “birth” does not bring forth *additional* mountains and rivers, he means that our birth does not bring anything in *addition* to Total-Existence. Total-Existence is always total and complete and there is nothing that can be added to this totality. Hence a view is therefore not the product of an individual mind, but the individual mind is the product of a particular view. Therefore when the physical “world” arises together with the substantial sense of “I,” it does not mean that the “physical world” arises, only that this kind of “world” appears through a particular *view* of the totality. Birth does not add and death does not subtract, because it is all the same Total-Existence, movement, or transformation viewed in different ways by different forms of existence. Thus what is “born” is not a substantial entity, but a view of Existence by Existence that is never separate or different from the Total-Existence. The universal implication of this can be further illustrated with a quote from the “Mountains and Water Sutra” (*Sansui-kyo*) where Dogen writes:

In general, ways of seeing mountains and waters differs according to the type of being [that sees them]. There are beings which see what we call water as a string of pearls, but this does not mean that they see a string of pearls as water. They probably see as their water a form that we see as something else. We see their string of pearls as water. There are [beings] which see water as wonderful flowers; but this does not mean that they use flowers as water. Demons see water as raging flames, and see it as pus and blood. Dragons and fish see it as a palace, and see it as a tower. Some see [water] as the seven treasures or the mani gem; some see it as trees and forests and fences and walls; some see it as the pure and liberated Dharma nature; some see it as the real human body; and some see it as [the oneness of] the physical form and mental nature. Humans beings see it as water, the causes and conditions of life. Thus what is seen does indeed differ according to the kinds of being [that sees]. Now let us be wary of this. Is it that there are various ways of seeing one object? Or is it that we have mistakenly assumed various images to be one object? (Dogen 1994: 173)

Here the concept of *view* is revealed and used to its fullest extent, whereby diversity is explained not in terms of substantial differences, but in terms

of different views and expressions of the same totality. The different views are what generates and define a particular “form of existence” and unity is explained through the fact that it is the same Total-Existence expressing itself as infinite “forms of existence.” Through this Dogen both deepens and elaborates on the intimate relationship between the ‘I’ and its “world.” The “world” is not understood as a static and objective entity, but the product of a relationship between perceiver and perceived that come into being simultaneously through a view. And this relationship can range from separation and duality to non-duality and unity. What is understood and experienced as real is therefore always embedded in a particular form of life where different kinds of beings *see* different kinds of “worlds.” As such one does not “live” in the same “world,” although all are the expressions of the same Total-Existence. The way or reality of an ant or a tiger is vastly different from the way and “world” of humans, a fact that also Wittgenstein pointed out, as Duncan J. Richter comments:

Depending on one's environment, one's physical needs and desires, one's emotions, one's sensory capacities, and so on, different concepts will be more natural or useful to one. This is why "forms of life" are so important to Wittgenstein. What matters to you depends on how you live (and vice versa), and this shapes your experience. So if a lion could speak, Wittgenstein says, we would not be able to understand it. We might realize that "roar" meant zebra, or that "roar, roar" meant lame zebra, but we would not understand lion ethics, politics, aesthetic taste, religion, humour and such like, if lions have these things. We could not honestly say "I know what you mean" to a lion. Understanding another involves empathy, which requires the kind of similarity that we just do not have with lions, and that many people do not have with other human beings. (Duncan J. Richter 2006)

Although this quote is not intended as a fundamental metaphysical critique its insight is still relevant to the Buddhist context, because it reveals *how* a view is embedded in particular form of life. Additionally what Richter points to at the end also proves illuminating to our endeavor, because humans seem to lack empathy or “connection” to the degree that they lack familiarity. To experience one’s self as different is to see one’s self as

unlike others, and though this separation empathy also seizes to operate. Empathy between humans is simply easier because they share likeness. And to the degree that something is unlike, it either becomes a *thing* or something that is humanized to generate a sense of connection. Hence, as likeness points toward sameness it implies that to realize unity is to be same, which implies a natural empathy toward all living beings. Accordingly “difference” to Buddhism is not a metaphysical barriers but conceptual discriminations. Thus we view ourselves different to the degree that we understand ourselves as our mental ideas.

However if we return to Dogen’s observation about the perception of reality, it seems that it would be incorrect to say that there are different ways to perceive one object. Dogen’s point is that there are no objects at all, there is only the dynamics of views, where both the world and “I” arise together. Dogen’s perceptive question therefore reveals that we actually mistake various images to be one object, that is we mistake a *particular* view of Existence to be the one and true reality for all “forms of existence.” And in the case of the human being this is ordinarily referred to as the substantial “world” of duality and separation. But although it is what counts as real to the observer it ultimately only is *one* of infinite different views of the same Reality. i.e. simply a vision. Hence, there are infinite “worlds,” but only “one” Existence and Dogen therefore asks:

“The sun, moon, and stars as seen by humans and devas are not the same, and the view of various beings differ widely. Views about one mind differ as well. Yet these views are nothing but mind. Is it inside or outside? Does it come or go? Is it more at birth or not? Is it less a death or not? All this is merely a moment or two of mind. And a moment or two of mind is a moment of mountains, rivers, and earth, or two moments of mountains, rivers and earth. Because mountains, rivers, earth, and so forth neither exist nor do not exist, they are not large or small, not attainable or unattainable, not knowable or unknowable, not penetrable or impenetrable. They neither change with realization, nor change without realization. Just wholeheartedly accept and trust that the study of the way with the

mind is this mountains-and-rivers-and-earth mind itself thoroughly engaged in studying the way” (Dogen 1996:)

Because of Dogen’s conceptual distinction between “forms of existence” and Total-Existence, we are now in a position to understand the more particular human expression of this nature, qua the relationship between the Buddha-nature and the human existence. On the general level one can say that it follows the same principle as that which explains unity and diversity. There is diversity because there are different “forms of existence” and there is unity because these are Buddha-nature. Here one of the “forms of existence” is the “human existence” a particular expression of the Buddha-nature. But if we are to delve deeper into how this particular human existence is constituted, the chapter “Manifestation” (*vr̥tti*) in the *Ratnagoṭravibhaga* can serve as a source of illumination and clarification. Through indirectly confirming the above analysis of Dogen, the chapter explains the human existence in terms of a *manifestation* of the basis (of Reality/Buddha-nature) where the Buddha-nature or *Tathata* manifests itself as the human form:

In connection with the introductory teaching of the Non-discriminative Wisdom, it has been taught, in the *Prajnaparamita*, etc., ... that the Essence of the Tathagata⁶⁰ has the general characteristics of being Reality, the perfect purity, i.e. suchness of all the elements. On the basis of this general characteristic, it should be known in brief, there are threefold different manifestations (*pravṛtti*) of three kinds of people: (Takasaki 1966:230)

In this passage we can see that the *Ratnagoṭravibhaga*, like Dogen, first establishes the foundation of Reality, namely Suchness, as the true nature of *all* phenomena, the “Reality, the perfect purity, i.e. suchness in all the elements.” And this basic substratum, the passage proceeds to say, expresses itself as a “threefold manifestation,” which are those:

... of the Ordinary people who do not perceive Truth, of the Saints who perceive the Truth and of the Tathagata who has attained the ultimate purity. (Takasaki 1966:230)

The first thing to take note of in this passage is the fact that each “class of being” is defined in terms of the perception of Reality or Truth. This means that the distinction between them is not arbitrary, but reflects three essential different perceptions that fundamentally transform and define the human perception of themselves and the Buddha-nature. Hence all other particular and individual variations are based on these three fundamental views, revealing three kinds of “realities.” It is important to remember that these three “realities,” are all dependent on the Buddha-nature and a disclosure of it, hence they are not totally fictitious.

However when the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* in the above speaks of “people” it is clear that it does not talk about substantial and different entities, but of views. The *Ratnagoṭravibhāga*’s choice of the term “people” might therefore seem a bit misleading as it fails to reveal and make clear what actually is implied by the concept of “*manifestation*.” To the dualistic and conceptual mind the concept of “kinds of people” might generate the impression that what is spoken of are three different kinds or levels of beings. But this cannot be correct, because there are no other “existences” than the Buddha-nature. Hence this understanding would neither accord with the metaphysics of the Buddha-nature nor what actually is sought revealed. A point that also is confirmed by the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* itself where it according to Brian Brown is,

...strikingly evident that the status of the three major classes of beings- ordinary persons, Saints, and Buddhas –is idealistically defined as the threefold self perception of Absolute Suchness (Tathata) [Buddha-nature]. The latter is not reified as the objective possession of the former; rather through them, it arrives at varying degrees of self witnessing self-possession. (Brown 1991:104)

Here it becomes quite apparent that the “three major classes of beings” are nothing but the “self-perception” of the Buddha-nature, where “epistemic self perception” is that which constitutes or defines the particular view. As such the three views do not belong to any individual per se, but are the

same Buddha-mind (*Buddhajnana*) manifesting, viewing, and revealing itself to itself. The particular character of the human existence can therefore firstly be understood as a *manifestation* of the Buddha-nature, through which the Buddha-nature reveals itself to itself. And secondly that it includes three different and fundamentally different views of the Buddha-nature. These views are again defined and differentiated between in terms of purity that reveals the Buddha-nature to different degrees. It is therefore said of the three views, that they are:

Impure, [partly] pure and [partly] impure,
And perfectly pure – these are said of
The Ordinary beings, the Bodhisattvas
And the Tathagata, respectively (Takasaki 1966:230-231)

As the degree of purity is the same as epistemic perception or revelation of the non-dual nature of Reality, the Ordinary person, the Bodhisattva, and the Buddha are understood as those:

... ‘of erroneous conception’ (*viparyasta*), ‘the right conception’ (*aviparyasta*), and ‘the perfectly right conception and of no dualistic view’, respectively. Here ‘of the erroneous conception’ is because Ordinary People have delusion on account of their conception, mind and perception⁶¹. ‘Of the right conception’ is because the Saints, being opposed to them⁶² have destroyed the delusion. [And lastly], ‘Of the perfectly right conception and of no dualistic view’ is because the Perfectly Enlightened Ones have dispelled the Obstructions of moral defilements and knowable things along with their impressions. (Takasaki 1966:230)

As the particular distinction of these views into three is neither random nor indiscriminate they articulate and express three definitive realizations that belong to the human existence and that denote three identifiable and different ways that man can relate to existence and hence himself. And these three ways of relating also reveal ecological insights. But before we can proceed with the particular views and their expression and functions, we need to come to a clearer understanding of how the structure of a

“view” more generally can be understood alongside with their different relationship to the Buddha-nature.

If we start with the latter point first, we need to be clear on the fact that all three views are nothing but the manifestation of the Buddha-nature. Hence the different views are defined and understood in terms of degrees of self-witnessing by the Buddha-nature. They therefore reveal how the Buddha-nature perceives its own “essence” through the phenomenal human consciousness. Since both “world” and “I” arise together it is clear that it is not the same individual that comes to experience the different views of reality, because there are no individual outside the views. The experience and understanding of the “I” is the product of that particular view. Rather it is the Buddha-nature that comes to know its own nature through the removal of the veils that obscure its pure nature. And these concealing factors (*klesas*) are the conceptual ideas that are assumed to be real. However these *klesas* that from one point of view are defilements, is from another point of view a persons sense of reality and self. Hence as a person removes that which obscures the inherent purity he simultaneously removes the mental ideas that are felt to constitute his self. And as these gradually are understood to be non-self (i.e. conditioned ideas), they become unreal and the true nature gradually shines forth. The process of removing conceptual formations is therefore simultaneously the process of revealing what truly exist, where the complete removal of all conceptual fabrications in turn is the total disclosure of the Buddha-nature. And as one removes the veils one also removes that particular sense of “I” or self that is being constituted by that particular view. Thus what actually happens is that the Buddha-nature removes its own defilements through the process of life, and comes to know itself as all life. It is this process of becoming self-known that Buddhism defines in terms of the three essential and different views, where the first has no sense of truth and Reality and therefore only exists in terms of dependent structures. The second is defined by realization of the emptiness of the substantial self, which is the

self-revelment of the *dharmakaya*. This is in Buddhism referred to as *Bodhicitta* and is understood as the awakening of the heart to Truth. Lastly the complete removal of all conceptual fabrications reveals the complete totality of the Buddha-nature and is the definition of a buddha, the perfectly pure and self-known person. Because these three views are the simultaneous self-perceptions of the Buddha-nature they function and exist together in the same Reality and there are no ultimate hierarchy between them. Hence, to place them in such a hierarchy belongs to the habit of the dualistic mind, but is from the point of view of the Buddha-nature only the same life living itself in different ways. And from this perspective all of life has the same and absolute value, no matter its particular expressions. These three views therefore reveal how man's potential functions and expresses itself in dependency of insight into the same nature. And this aspect of the simultaneous existence of the views and how they reveal the same Reality differently is also reflect in this short Zen dialogue where a monk asked Zhaozhou:

“What is the living meaning of Chan?” Zhaozhou answered, “The cypress tree in the yard.” The monk continued, “Teacher, don't use an object to guide people.” ... Zhaozhou said, “I'm not using an object to guide you.” The monk proceeded, “Very well, then, what's the meaning of Chan?” Zhaozhou said, “The cypress tree in the yard.” It was the monk who was using an object [and not Zhaozhou] (Arnold 2002)

Having clarified the relationship between the three views, we need to look into how concretely a view generally can be said to expresses itself or function. We have already seen that a view is constituted by an epistemic perception that defines both the perceiver and the perceived, or the “I” and its “world”. This means that what a view discloses is nothing other than a complete sense of reality that does not admit to anything beyond itself. This point is very important, because although one might intellectually concede certain philosophical points, a view cannot transcend its own perception or experience of the world. This is after all what constitutes it.

In the case of the ordinary dualistic view it is clear that reality appears as a separate and materially extended universe in time and space, where the substantial and an actual living person exists. It would be absurd to deny this, because one would deny ones immediate experience. A view is therefore not an intellectual or abstract idea, but the flesh and blood reality of the human experience. It constitutes a total experience that must be lived totally and where one to deny it would simultaneously deny ones own existence, sense of self and reality. The experience of a view is therefore a personal and intimate experience of who one is, what life is, and who others are. It is the view that generates the sense of self and the experience of reality.

Additionally, since both “I” and “world” arise together, it means that the whole existence is conditioned by that particular view. This implies that there are no fundamental existing agent that is the cause and source of the actions, rather this particular experience is born out from the perception of own-being and is from where the sense of a substantial self arises. Hence all actions arise from a particular view of the Buddha-nature and not a particular person or individual. And the fact that a view conditions perceiver and perceived is true of all views, as Dogen made clear, even a buddha is conditioned by a view. However a buddha is still defined as “one that knows” and exists as a pure manifestation of the Buddha-nature. that is not to say not indirectly from a conceptual understanding, but an immediate and direct non-conceptual expression.

Since view is what constitutes the sense of self it is also from where the spontaneous actions and thoughts arise, i.e. one acts in a certain way because one is constituted to do so. This mans that from a certain view of existence, a particular mode of existing, experiencing, reacting, feeling, thinking, behaving, etc. naturally follows. There is no freedom of choice in this regard, to experience reality in a particular way means to relate and exist in that particular way. Therefore to experience the world in terms of

things, is to relate to a world of things, and to experience the world as self, means to relate as all is self. A view can therefore not transform its own mode of existing, because it is what constitutes it. However man is more than his particular view, according to Buddhism he is Total-Existence in a particular expression. Hence he can transform his perception or view through insight into the nature of Reality, which happens through the process of living where a person lives his own life and begins to understand the nature of that particular life. Hence to understand ones own constitution is to understand how all is constitutes, because all is the same life. This is why Buddhism places so much emphasis on meditation and rational analysis, because through this one can see through the particular view and transform ones existence through the revealment of the *dharmakaya*.

Lastly, since all is Nature the concept of views can also be understood in terms of Nature generating three natural and spontaneous ways of functioning and existing, where it is both the particular self and the totality simultaneously. Hence, “Self is Nature and Nature is Self.” And this relationship between the Buddha-nature, views and the particular life existing and living as a view is poetically expressed by Dogen in the fascicle “All Functions” (*Zenki*) where he writes that:

Life can be likened to a time when a person is sailing a boat. On this boat, I am operating the sail, I have taken the rudder, I am pushing the pole; at the same time, the boat is carrying me, and there is nothing beyond the boat. Through my sailing of the boat, this boat is being caused to be the boat—let us consider, and learn in practice, just this moment of the present. At this very moment, there is nothing other than the world of the boat: the sky, the water, the shore, have all become the moment of the boat, which is utterly different from moments not on the boat. So life is what I making it, and I am what life is making me. While I am sailing in the boat, my body and mind and circumstances and self are all essential parts of the boat; ant the whole earth and the whole of space are all essential parts of the boat. What has been described like this is that life is the self and the self is life. (Dogen 1996:286)

And as we have seen, there are according to Buddhism three such boats that generate three different understandings of Reality based on closeness to Truth. And these views determine how one relates to nature, others and one's self. This is why it to Buddhism becomes so extremely important with the understanding of views, because to change "the world" in which one lives one needs to change view. And to change the view have enormous practical implications to ecology because it transforms the persons spontaneous impulses from being self-serving to the serving of "others." And this is the only way humans can transform their mode of relating to nature, and naturally come to care for all. And how so is the topic for the next chapter.

4. The Three Views

The ordinary People are of erroneous conception,

Being opposite to them, [the Saints are] the perceivers of truth,

And being of perfectly right conception,

The buddhas are apart from the dualistic view. (Takasaki 1966:230-231)

4.1 The Ordinary Person

The first view that Buddhism defines as part of the human existence is that of the Ordinary Person and as the name indicates is the most common perception of Reality. When the *Ratnagotravibhaga* says of the view that it is of an impure and erroneous conception, it means that it turns the Buddha-nature “into the separating subject and transform it into the separated object.” (Dogen 1996:14). From this transformation arises the experience of a phenomenal universe that seems to have own and independent existence that usurps the role of Truth, Existence, and Reality. As the view creates the *sense* of separation it also causes a person’s sense of self to be divorced from Truth, which in Buddhism means unity and the Buddha-nature. Consequently the person does not exist in terms unity or selflessness, but in terms of separation, difference, whereby he relates indirectly to what is perceived as “other.” Since this appears to be real it also is what according to Buddhism structures the person’s existence, hence, expressing itself as a world “...created according to desire” (Takasaki 1966:248). This definition of the ordinary person view is the essential characteristic, reveals how a person experiences and relates to Existence. But to understand why this is, we need to understand the reasons that Buddhism provides in putting forth this claim.

The initial argument that Buddhism can provide, regarding the definition would be that since reality appears as things, it also becomes the “reality

of things” that confers existence (i.e. existence is understood in terms of substantial entities). And when this happens, the substantial “I” together with the substantial world of things conceal selflessness. This makes the person disconnected from the sense of fullness and inherent value that is inherent to Existence, creating the need to be fulfilled. Additionally as there are things, be it persons or objects, it means that the idea of “having” and “wanting” arises. This spawns the idea of lack and consequently needs and desires. On account of this, the existence of the ordinary person becomes constituted by a sense of lack, simply because of being separate and not being in contact with truth and unity. In addition to this general reflection I believe there are two essential characteristics that can be brought forth to reveal the nature of this particular view. The first concerns the nature of the substantial “I,” and can be termed the aspect of desire. The second concerns what I choose to refer to as the “relationship between self and reality” and can be termed the aspect of need. These two facets are naturally parts of the same view but can be intellectually separated so as to bring forth more clarity. To this it is important to add that to exist through or as needs, is also to be a person *in* need. That is, one is in need of confirmation, love, understanding, attention, etc. The person is not self-fulfilled and therefore become dependent on the world for this sense of fulfilment. As a result, the world of desire has a quality of innocence attached to it that it is important to bear in mind.

If we start by approaching the aspect of desire qua the nature of the substantial “I,” Brian Edward Brown says in his study of the Buddha-nature that the universe disclosed as substantial, causes persons to:

...persistently define themselves in terms of substantial egohood (*ahamkara*); [whereby] their relation to other persons and things is largely a function of their craving and possessive self-reference, i.e. their sense of “mine” (*mamakara*)” (Brown 1991:135)

When Brown says of the ordinary person that, they “persistently define themselves...” we must be careful. Because one might get the impression that there is an *actual* entity that *actually* defines themselves in a particular way. This is however neither the case nor what is meant, being the very understanding that Buddhism seeks to contest. Thus according to Buddhism there is only a particular view that give rise to an “I” thought, which again a serve as foundation for the sense of permanence and own-being. And it is this “I” thought that Buddhism claims to be only of a dependent and therefore not truly existing nature. But as unrecognized it serves as the foundation for a view of duality that splits unity into subject and object, self and others. The concept of the ordinary person therefore only depicts a spontaneous function that is based on a particular and substantial view. And it is *this* very function that is defined and that take the form of possessive “self-reference” or self-centredness.

If we return to the quote, we see that the substantial “I” is characterised by what Brown refers to as the experience of a “substantial egohood (*ahamkara*).” This means that when the sense of self is coupled with the experience of being a substantial entity it generates a sense of being “mine” (*mamakara*). Consequently there is a sense of a personal ownership regarding one’s own self, i.e. it is *mine* in opposition to what is not mine, hence “other.” From this experience self-centredness naturally emerges that interprets and relates to everything indirectly through the eyes of an individual. On account of this indirect relationship, the world appears *to* the individual that makes it something *for* the individual. And an unbalanced relationship emerges where the world becomes dependent on the individual’s perception and evaluation of it, because it is the individual that *actually* relates and is the active part. And in the case of the ordinary person this relationship becomes defined through desire and needs. The person therefore comes to live and relate to the world through the function of craving, possessive self-reference, where that which is “other” can become “mine.”

To understand the logic behind this string of thoughts one need to start with the fact that to exist as a substantial entity means to exist as a point of reference, as the centre of experience and attention. This means that one experiences one's self as an *actual* existing substantial person. And to exist in such a way means that the person has interests that becomes self-interest, translated as desires, needs, or simply preferences. To have preferences, according to Buddhism, simply means to want something and not to want other things. Hence one relate to the world in terms of what one wants and avoid what one does not want, lastly one is indifferent to that which does not affect one's self either way. Accordingly preferences express themselves through the qualities of "like," "dislike," and "indifference," which the ordinary person uses to approaches and orient himself within Existence. This mode of existing is a matter of *function* and cannot be ascribed to intention in the conventional sense of the word. It is not a conscious attitude, but that from which the conscious attitude spring. Hence it is a spontaneous mode of relating to the world, where the spontaneous impulses are directed toward how to benefit the self (i.e. guided by preferences) and not how the self can benefit the world.

There is additionally a second implication that results from the world of preferences. Namely that the ordinary person has conditions as to what life or existence should be. Because there are desires one also wants the world or life to be in a particular way, which means that it should suit the particular persons preferences. If life accords with these it is good, if it do not, life is not. Hence even "Life" becomes something *to* the individual that is sought altered and made in a particular way. It does not appear as something in itself, and because of this the ordinary person seeks to transform the world according to his image (needs) rather than adopting to how nature truly is. Time and space therefore spontaneously becomes structured according to the view of preferences, which is sought realized and used to that end. And as the world becomes structured or disclosed

through the lens of need it simply appears as a potential or field that can be used, where “used” means used by desires.

However it is important to note that since the *dharmakaya* is not perceived by the ordinary person neither is Existence, understood as life in “others,” be it: mountains, rivers, or animals. They are entities defined by the perception and evaluation of them and therefore receive a treatment accordingly. But it is also impossible for the ordinary person to truly take these forms of existence into consideration, because they only exist as objects or things, not as the same nondual Buddha-nature.

The fact that desires determine this existence to such an absolute degree means that all becomes disclosed through that very perspective. And this is therefore what comes to form the basic rationale of life; defining what is meaningful and “self-evident.” Hence what is experienced as meaningful is not only the needs and desires, but the activity of satisfying or attaining them. Hence life becomes thought of and experienced in stretches of time that are orientated and centred around goals that define the process; creating anticipation, dreams and wishes through which life is lived and understood. And it is in this constant activity of experiencing and attaining that a sense of meaning is found and generated. Hence, not to be in this constant activity is experienced as an absence, whereby the sense and meaning or “life” also seems to be lacking. As the ordinary person places meaning, value, identity on the activity performed, defined by the goals, the sense of self also becomes reflected by that activity. Thus to be an environmentalist, means to be a “concerned human being,” to be working for corporations probably means that one is not, but then again it has lots of other valuable and socially desirable aspects connected to it. And from a functional point of view, all of these are equally self-serving because they arise from the persons need to be *somebody*, for self-worth, recognition, identity, and safety. And because of this attitude “nature” or “others” are used to the individuals end, to generate a sense of meaning,

life, and identity. And it is the disclosure of Reality as separate entities that make the whole relationship of use possible, because the world is not loved. And although there are honourable attempts to create diverse ethical systems to mitigate this “defect” in the dualistic psyche, they are ultimately futile. Because this activity is not *actions* in the sense of choice, but a spontaneous attitude that arises from a view of separation. Ethics might serve as a barrier and hindrance to this attitude, but as such it either creates the sense of guilt and shame or in the other extreme pride and self-conceit. Either which are equally self-centred and self-serving. Thus for ecology to truly function one need to understand ecology and the human existence from a broader point of view, where one includes and incorporates man’s potential for compassion. The important point being, that there is a radical difference between acting out of self-interest and acting out of Love, where the first results from self-interest and the latter from unity.

From the experience of being an dependent entity that is born, that can die and get hurt, there also follows an inherent sense of fear and uncertainty. There is an awareness that all can change, be taken away, lost, and leave, which instils a need to protect and secure what the person cares for, be it; possessions, persons, health identity, self-worth, and particularly a person’s life. However on account of the transience inherent to Existence, these attempts to secure are ultimately futile, therefore becoming a source for restlessness, fear and frustration. As such it is a vulnerable existence where the need to protect and hide this vulnerability appears, lest one can become hurt. And through this fear of being hurt comes the need to control and arrange circumstances so that this does not occur. The person therefore seeks to manipulate and control circumstances so as to secure the sense of self. Through this life gradually becomes rigid and habitual as habits induces security through familiarity.

From the above reflections we are now in a position to understand what Buddhism means by “a world *created* according to desire.” It is a natural impulse and implication of a substantial and self-concerned “I.” However it is important to be aware that this outline is only a formal structure that is caused by a perception. How this formal structure manifests itself in the particular expressions varies according to each individual life. And each individual life holds the highest importance because it is all the same existence, although it is concealed. Thus the fundamental point is that with the substantial “I.” desires are born and a relationship to the world is instantaneously established through the “function of use.”

As a consequence of this indirect relationship, the person also has difficulties to understand the relationship between cause and effect. Because from the self-centred point of view consequences seem to “leave” as they are produced through which they “disappear” from care. However according to Buddhist philosophy consequences never leave, because there is nowhere to leave, no place they can go to or from. Since there are no entities there is only the totality affecting the totality. Hence they can only be understood to leave a particular point of view, which makes it difficult for the ordinary person to understand his relationship and impact on the world. He is not in direct contact with the consequences or the totality because they appear to happen to “others,” if they are perceived at all. As such the person does not understand that all is an non-separate whole where all influences all continuously. The only way a substantial self can begin to understand this inherently direct relationship is either to become aware of the causal relationships through his own particular mode of existence. Or he can become aware of it through intellectual chains of thought that gradually reveal the inherent interconnected nature of existence. In this latter sense science and theory building are helpful tools because they explain and reveal the particular causal nexus involved. But this mode of apprehending and relating to Reality is according to Buddhism an indirect and slow way of understanding the natural and

direct relationship that a person has, together with the person has to importance to the totality.

We are now in a position to approach the second characteristic of the view of the ordinary person, namely that of need. Although one exists as a substantial and separate individual it does not mean that one exists in isolation. On the contrary, one's existence is always as the Buddha-nature and the only question according to Buddhism is therefore how one relates to the totality. In the case of the ordinary person this means to relate to a separate and conventional (*samvritisatya*) reality that is perceived as real and true. And to exist in such a relationship means that one is dependent on that relationship. Hence the substantial person does not exist in isolation from others, but in a dependency to others. And to exist in as such a dependency is the same as to exist in terms of need, because the way one experiences one's experience is dependent on others. This point can be further understood if we keep in mind that as the Buddha-nature is concealed by the dualistic reality, it also mean that the person is concealed from his actual nature. As this concealing takes the form of separation the only reality and truth the ordinary person has access to and comes to know is the one defined by the external world. Hence the person's sense of existence and self becomes dependent on that very world. Additionally to exist as a substantial self means to exist as some-*one* or some-*thing*, which means that one experiences one's self as having characteristics or qualities. By this I mean that the person experiences himself as being, a person that is either good or bad, beautiful or ugly, etc. Hence, to have qualities implies evaluation and comparison. And the standard for this evaluation is the external world and other people. Through this the substantial world becomes that through which the ordinary person "mirrors" his sense of self, i.e. understands, evaluates, and generates his identity and self-worth. And since this sense of self is not founded on anything absolute (i.e. is not self- confirming), but on what the world thinks at any given moment, its experience can be characterises as an

existence marked by “possessive self-reference.” One continuously evaluates, judges and protects one’s self according to the various circumstances that a person finds himself.

This point can be further understood in terms of the arguments provided by the first Dharma-turning, where the dualistic self was understood as a conditioned entity. Now we can understand the more direct implications of this fact because what the ordinary person experiences as his self is only a collection of historical, personal, cultural, biological, and psychological factors that are seen as together as one substantial entity. And to exist as these is to exist in terms of what “the world” has generated and defined. Thus the identity of Knut Johan is for example, constituted by biological or genetic structure, forming itself to a male gender. This again is born into, and becomes the product of a family history, nationality, having its own cultural nexus, language, and conceptual matrix. All of these factors come to form and determine the sense and identity of Knut Johan, and who and what Knut Johan is. In addition to this, these formative forces (*samsakra*) as Buddhism refers to them, mutually influence the experience and the content of “my” reality, which means that I interpret and perceive a reality that is coloured by and therefore consist of these patters of interpretation. Thus the person and life of Knut Johan is nothing but all of these conditions viewed as one⁶³. However all of these conditions are only mental constructs through which the “I” comes to exist inauthentically as a mere collection of impulses, patterns, and shifting mental states. And what create a sense of stability is not Truth, but habits and the thought that is a repetition and consequence of the previous moment.

It seems to me that there is an awareness of this dependency inherent to this mode of existing or view, but that the consequence or implication of this nature is never fully investigated. By this I mean that as one’s identity is constructed by certain conditions or ideas, then theoretically one can alter these conditions and change one’s identity. Hence one can change the

experience and appearance of the sense of self exactly because one's sense of self is not absolute. Therefore even the dualistic self becomes a means for needs and desires. One therefore perceives one's existence as something that can be transformed and improved, either internally or externally. However it is far easier to transform the "outer" than the "inner" as the inner only can be changed through insight. Therefore the world becomes used to construct and transform one's identity and sense of self. One can change one's body and mind, one can move up and down the social ladder or hierarchy, or one can feel valuable through consuming "value." This latter activity can include everything from buying a nice pair of sunglasses to occupying a position of great importance, prestige, or attention. One can also consume identities whereby one consumes and uses what a person of value uses. And through this one feels identical and close to them. All of the above confer an experience of value to the individual which is what actually is sought, the feeling of being valuable, worthy and meaningful. Yet from a Buddhist perspective this is a fallacious way of approaching and transforming one's self, although superficially correct. The reason for this is that there are no actual or absolute "self" in this mode of existing. There is only the same dependency repeating and confirming itself and one only propagates the same self-misunderstanding. The true self can never be changed or transformed, because it is not based on conditions, it is *no-thing*. Thus the "remodelling" of identity is ultimately based on the ordinary person's ground attitude, which is need. The need to be different, the need to be approved, the need to be loved, the need for security, etc, all of which confirm the fact that the person is not self-confirmed, self-filled, and self-loved. Hence the world is used to satisfy these needs and to attain the goals that satisfy them, be it material goods, experiences, or other people. However no real transformation has actually occurred, because the same outlook on life is still present, one has only remodelled one's identity within the same "box."

On account of this relationship where “the world” serves as a mirror to the individual’s needs, the world also becomes used to that end. Nature, persons, things are all used in such a way as to become mirror favourably, because this bestows self worth, the feeling of being somebody instead of no-body. But ultimately one is no-body because one only exists in terms of a conditioned idea, not as something truly real and truly self-existing.. And from this perspective life is not truly lived, but used to continuously confirm, create, repeat ones sense of self and what this self wants. Hence the way in which the ordinary person exists and the relationship through which the person exists is one of need and use.

According to Buddhism this way of existing cannot be undone by any means internal to that mode of existing, it is what defines it. To change a relationship of use, means that one needs to change view, as both self and world are born together. And this can only be done through insight, which is to realize the emptiness of that which obscures and revealing the *dharmakaya*. This point can perhaps be understood in a more metaphorical way through the image of opposite forces. Here a force or movement⁶⁴, either can be stopped by another force or movement, or redirected. In the former case the force of desire or need can be stopped or hampered with to the extent that it becomes more painful or troublesome to proceed with it, i.e. a more powerful and stronger anti-force comes into play. Thus ethics, morality, economic sanctions, policies, etc. all functions to this end, and they always need to be of such a kind that it exceeds what it seeks to stop. These kinds of measures can be seen to play on the first characteristic of the self, namely desire. There are also other alternatives that are more directed toward the second characteristic of relationship and evaluation. These methods can be: social stigma, social-laudability, honour, identity, the creation of a sense of value and importance, etc. However they essentially amount to same principle, which is that they both play on the function of self-interest. Therefore only operating within the self-serving nexus and fortifying the same perception of existence. Hence it is only a

restructuring of the same view, but no transformation, and love has not arisen, neither to self nor others.

Secondly and more importantly they do not take into consideration the fact that man is actually also a part of the ecology and an expression of the Buddha-nature. The person is therefore only used as an end for a better environment and not considered in itself. And a true ecology according to Buddhism includes both man and nature. Thus the second option of redirecting the force becomes important, because through this, man can transform his view of the world and himself. Rather than only experiencing and living life through a sense of lack and the needs that ensues, a human being can use his existence to understand Existence. Since the view of the ordinary person only is an erroneous conception of the nondual buddha-mind (*Buddhajnana*) it also is the place of coming to understanding and an realization of it. The conventional reality therefore becomes the place where a human being can come to discover and know his self, others, and dare to live a life that is not conventional, but his own. In a sense this can be understood as a “re-direction” of force or movement through which it becomes utilized for self-understanding and not self-aggrandizement, consequently liberation. Here “liberation” means liberation from a view of reality and not liberation from *Reality*⁶⁵. And to awake from a view is to be born to another, which implies a radical different understanding of self and others. This is by Buddhism explained through the concept of the *Tathagatagaebha*⁶⁶, or the seed of the Buddha, which is the technical name for the Buddha-nature in its concealed aspect, i.e. existence as the ordinary person. However, although concealed it is still present and through self-understanding this seed becomes more present and active, eventually becoming so manifest in daily consciousness that the person’s view is transformed. This is in Shentong terms understood as *Bodhicitta*, which defines the conversion of a view of impurity to partly pure-partly pure, the view of the bodhisattva.

Life is therefore never “only” a material reality, it is the Buddha-nature concealed and is therefore the place where humans can transform their mode of existing to become other-serving. And this is why Buddhism often refers to the human life as “this precious human existence” or “this precious human life.” On account of this perspective, “needs” does not necessarily only need to be understood negatively, but also as a possibility. Since it is a place of needs it also is a place in which humans need each other, where we can serve and help each other by being there for one another. From a Buddhist point of view it therefore becomes a place where one can learn what compassion actually is, where we can learn that others truly exist and that they are important⁶⁷.

4.2 *The Bodhisattva view*⁶⁸

The difference between the view of the ordinary person and the bodhisattva is according to the *Ratnagotravibhaga*, one of purity. In the preceding chapter it was seen that the ordinary person had an impure perception resulting in a relationship of use. When we move toward the Bodhisattva-view this relationship dramatically alters because the view alters. A view that according to the *Ratnagotravibhaga* is defined *both* in terms of purity and impurity, which implies that the dharmakaya for the first time is perceived. This realization or perception is also reflected in the term “Bodhisattva” that according to Har Dayal (1932) is a compound of the two terms “*bodhi*” and “*sattva*.” Here the notion of “*bodhi*” denotes the aspect of “enlightenment,” “wisdom,” or “knowledge,” which as we have seen refers to Truth. And this term is again tied together with the term “*sattva*” which can be understood as “wesen,” “being,” “essence,” or “nature” (Dayal 1932). The term “Bodhisattva” therefore denotes “one whose essence/nature is Truth,” “One that has become Truth,” or “Truth (enlightenment) in becoming.” The term therefore refers to the view that discloses Truth and fits well with the philosophical meaning of

“Bodhisattva” found in the *Ratnagotravibhaga*, where it was stated that the Bodhisattva is “the perceivers of truth,” (Takasaki 1966:230). From this general foundation and frame of reference, we can now proceed further into the view that Buddhism understands to be a “perceiver of truth.”

We have already seen that the Buddhist concept of Truth is not an abstract and intellectual notion set apart from reality, it is Reality itself.

Consequently when Buddhism speaks of Truth it does so in a particular manner, referring to the non-dual nature of Reality, as the Body of Truth (*Dharmakaya*), Buddha-mind (*Buddhajñana*), Buddha-nature (*Buddhata*), Suchness (*Tathatata*), the foundation, nature, and Total-Existence. Thus when the above lines say that the bodhisattva is the perceiver of Truth, it means that the *Dharmakaya*⁶⁹, or the body of truth qua Unity is perceived. However although the dharmakaya has been perceived, the view according to the verse is also explained as partly impure. Hence the perception of the dharmakaya is not completely clear. And as impurity refers to conceptual fabrications, the Bodhisattva-view is still tainted by subtle conceptual defilements and the perception of own-being. The dharmakaya is therefore not perceived in a non-dual manner, whereby it becomes disclosed in through a *subtle* dualism⁷⁰ that reveals the dharmakaya as a *one* total entity. The bodhisattva therefore has a sense of self that exists in a *relationship* to the dharmakaya as Truth, but one in which all that exist is a part. Hence, although the bodhisattva exists in a relationship, it is very different from that of the ordinary person, because the bodhisattva does not perceive a substantial difference between any-one or any-thing.

In regards to the nature and the essential trait of the Bodhisattvas-view, Brian Edward Brown, writes that:

Rejecting the ultimacy of all particular nature, the Bodhisattva, through *Sunyata* comprehends all things as absolutely unproduced and not different from the unconditional reality itself. (Brown 1991:121)

Here Brown confirms the fact that the bodhisattva perceives unity through the rejection of “all *particular* natures,” which means that a substantial difference ceases to appear. and happens through the realization of *sunyata*. This reveals the dharmakaya, and the understanding that all is, “unproduced and not different from the unconditional reality itself.” Thus mountains, trees, humans, and animals are all parts of the same whole and the same nature and one can from a soteriological perspective say of the bodhisattva that it is in him:

... that the tathagata-embryo attains some definite awareness of itself as the unoriginate, unborn (and thus eternal), essence of the existent world...in the body of mind it actualizes, though still imperfectly, its constancy, quiescence, and everlasting character, since it is no longer impelled by the compulsive defiling forces, the suffering that they entail, and the death which they occasion. (Brown 1991:)

By this technical formulation Edward Brown essentially says that the Buddha-mind (*Buddhajnana*) has come to perceive and re-cognize itself as itself, although still under a degree of concealment (hence the term *tathagatagarbha*). And in this mode of existing it is referred to as a bodhisattva. However, in a more familiar jargon this can be expressed as self-realization, where the human being comes to realize his undivided nature and his communion with all that exists. Hence while the ordinary person related and mirrors himself in terms of a perceived external world, there is to the bodhisattva no such separate entity or different “others” which he can use to be mirrored. The bodhisattva does therefore not exist in a relationship to conventional values, opinions, or morality, because that conventional reality (*samvrtisatya*) does no longer appear as real. His sense of self is therefore not dependent upon this external relationship and he therefore has no need for this kind confirmation as he always is confirmed by Existence or truth. It is for this reason that the bodhisattva according to above quote, realizes a degree of constancy, quiescence, and eternity (timelessness). It is simply the result of becoming free from the

conceptual matrix that divide Existence into separate entities that are born and that die. As separation is removed “presence” naturally becomes manifest, because separation is a move away from what is Real. And this *presence* is what is realized as the constant, quiescent and eternal nature of reality. It is only the same existence expressing the same life, hence it is impossible for the bodhisattva to be self-centred. A fact that also is reflected by the earlier quote when it was said that the bodhisattva no longer is “impelled by the compulsive defiling forces” because they no longer appear as real to him. The bodhisattva therefore relates to what is real and actual, not the constructed matrix that define the perception of the ordinary person. Hence to relate to the self (dharmakaya) is to live according to unity, togetherness, sameness and non-separation with all of life.

The view that perceive nothing as “different from the unconditional,” can according to the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* be separated into two aspects, firstly, ‘as it is’ (*yathavad-bhāvika*) and secondly ‘as far as’ (*yavadbhāvika*). These two terms have according to Hookham (1991:87) been the subject of much philosophical controversy throughout the years, hence being a debated that deserve mentioning but that cannot be entered into. However, according to my understanding of the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* they seem to relate to Truth as “essence” and the extension or manifestation of this truth or insight. As such the first can be understood as insight into the nature of Reality and the second refer to the extension of this truth, understood as phenomenal reality. These can therefore be understood to denote the aspects of wisdom (*prajna*) and compassion (*karuna*) respectively. This dual aspect of the Bodhisattva-view is important because it reveals the connection between perception and function through the human form. It is therefore said that:

Their manner [of perception] is ‘as it is.’,

Because they have understood the quiescent nature of the world,

And this [understanding] is caused by
The purity [of that innate mind] and
Their perception of the defilements as being destroyed from the outset.

(Takasaki 1966:174)

The “quiescent nature of the world” as we have seen refers to the aspect of wisdom and to the fact that phenomenal existence is empty of own—being. A perception that again is explained to be both caused by Mind and the perception of Mind, because all is Mind (*cittaprakrti/ Buddhajnana*). Realizing this nature, the bodhisattva also comprehends that the defilements qua separation never *truly* existed and therefore never contained any “true” existence. Separation was never truly real because the same nature cannot truly be separate from itself and the perception of separation was only of an imaginary nature (*parikalpita*⁷¹). Therefore the perception is; “as it is,” where the bodhisattva: “understands fully in the light of *prajna*, that the very conditioned existence is, in its ultimate nature the unconditioned *Tathata*, the *Nirvana*. (Brown 1991:94-95)⁷². To perceive this is to see through the illusion of the separate and substantial “I,” ending this form of existence the sense of self and reality is both placed on the body of unity (*dharmakaya*) where all is disclosed as parts of the same whole. There is therefore no possibility for self-interest or self-centred activity to occur, because there are no longer any experience of a substantial and separate self left. Hence while the first part of “as it is” refers to the insight into non-substantiality, the second ‘as far as’, points to its extension, the manifest universe. And the function of this insight becomes compassion or love, where:

...being ‘as far as (*yavadbhavikata*)’ should be understood thus: because [with respect to extent], they perceive the existence of the Matrix [seed, embryo] of the *Tathagata* in all living beings...the Absolute Essence is realized in the sense of all-pervading (*sarvatraga*). (Takasaki 1966:175)

The point of this latter formulation is to clearly express that nothing except separation disappears through this insight, and that to see the *essence* is to see all as “the essence.” To therefore see the dharmakaya is to see that all exist as the dharmakaya. This is the essential meaning of “perceive the existence of the Matrix [seed].” Accordingly there is nothing that appears be it the trees, mountains, rivers, or a person, that is not Truth itself and life itself. Even the ordinary person is understood as nothing other than the dharmakaya concealed, imagining itself separate from itself. Because the bodhisattva no longer perceive and experience the view of the ordinary person as real and true, the bodhisattva no longer stays “in samsara, because for him, it has completely lost its samsaric character.” (Brown 1991:94). This is necessarily true, because as we have already seen, samsara is the result of perceiving entities as substantially and separately real, and the reality that follows from this view. However what happens when the world loses its samsaric character?

According to Buddhism compassion and love arises, the consequence of perceiving unity and the natural expression of emptiness. This is also reflected in the following quote from the *Sagaramatipariprccha* where it is said of the bodhisattva that they:

... perceive that separate elements are of no real essence, of no creator, of no substance, non-existence, lifeless, of no personality and no owner! Indeed these elements are illusory created according to desire.... Believing in the fact that separate elements are created illusory, O Sagramati, the bodhisattva never produce the feeling of disgust for any phenomena. He will be possessed of pure and immaculate perception based upon the wisdom that there is nothing that causes benefit or harm, Thus he knows correctly the essential nature of separate elements. And thus he never cast of the armour of the Great Compassion.
(Takasaki 1966:248)

Because of the concept of “emptiness” there has been a tendency to accuse Buddhism to harbour a kind of escapism or nihilism, and I have repeatedly throughout this paper sought to mitigate this possible interpretation. In this

passage it is clear that wisdom into the nondual nature of Reality is no escapism nor nihilism, but compassion. Thus to perceive the emptiness of phenomenal existence does not mean that it is looked down upon as a lesser kind of existence or escaped from. It means that all is seen as the same dharmakaya or self and that Life's expressions are loved equally. Since there is no substantial own--being, there are no qualities that can be judged or understood as essentially real. It is therefore impossible for the bodhisattva to evaluate or judge other beings because the different qualities do not appear as real and essential to him, rather they are accidental. It is only the dharmakaya that is real, hence, it follows that the bodhisattva "never produce the feeling of disgust for any phenomena." (Takasaki 1966:248) Compassion can according to Buddhism therefore be understood as the natural expression of wisdom when that which conceals, (the self-centred "I") is seen through as empty and removed. This is also confirmed by Brian Edward Brown when he writes that:

The inseparable coherence of *prajna* [wisdom] and *karuna* [compassion] is but an alternate expression for the present determination of *sarvakaravaropetasunyata*. For *prajna* is the very wisdom that perceives the universal non-substantiality, while *karuna* is the integral expression, the active translation in (the six paramitas⁷³.) of that sublime intuition. As *karuna* is the emotive correlate to *prajna*, so too are the excellent modalities, the indissoluble complement to the profound knowledge of no-substantiality. And according to the text, these perfections are implicit to *Sunyata*. (Brown 1991:92)

Compassion is not only a "sublime intuition," but the product of a total view that perceives the same self and existence in all. Wisdom and compassion are implicit to *sunyata* because *sunyata* is the lack of separation and difference, which is the same as absence of self-centredness. What Brown reveals in this passage is that Wisdom and compassion are born, revealed, and become present together, through the same view of the dharmakaya. Thus while the ordinary person exists in terms of desires and need, because of the view of a substantial sense of

self and a separate world. The bodhisattva on the same grounds functions according to compassion and love, exactly because there are *no* substantial and separate selves to be found. Compassion or Love is therefore according to Buddhism the same as non-difference. It has as such nothing to do with the worldly understanding of love that the ordinary person might harbour, because it is not based on separation and can therefore never be understood through the view of separation. It is not something that arises between beings, but a natural and unconditional attitude toward all beings. Compassion is therefore not an intentional activity, but a natural outcome or outflow of realization. Having realized a degree of *sunyata* the bodhisattva no longer has any sense of a separate self to be centred on, there are no others to measure himself against, and nothing separate to desire. Hence the “armour of the Great Compassion” can never truly be cast off, because it is simply the expression of perceiving all is one.

The way in which the bodhisattva relates to the world is therefore marked by the perception of Truth, which is to see all as same and expressing compassion, the natural impulse to aid and take care of equal beings. Again it is important to keep in mind that this is not the product of intention or will, but the product of a view that generates a spontaneous way of relating and existing. As the bodhisattva has no sense of a substantial self, self-serving actions cannot arise. There are no spontaneous impulses that can go in a self-centred direction and it becomes an existence devoted to “others,” ironically because there are no others. Secondly since the substantial “I” has disappeared there is no desirous “I” left that has preferences and therefore wants the world to be in a particular way. Taking, owning, or “mine” do therefore not arise in this view, because there is no-thing to take, no one to take from, no desire to satisfy and lastly no substantial self that can be “mine” opposed to others.

This difference of perception is important because it confirms that samsara and nirvana are only the different views of the same nature or Existence.

“The world” as such is not a place, so much as the same nature viewed under different conditions of concealments and disclosure. One view perceives it as separate and uses it to satisfy needs, while the other sees all as a totally living whole and is filled with compassion toward “others.” And as views determine one’s function or mode of existing, it is not a question of being essentially different, but of perceiving the essence differently.

Although wisdom and compassion are the two essential aspects of the Bodhisattva-nature, there is yet another aspect that belongs to this kind of existence. Since the perception of the dharmakaya is not pure the Bodhisattva also continuously purifies that which conceals through insight. Thus:

The son of Buddha, though having understood that,

This Absolute Essence is unchangeable,

... he is, for the friends of the world,

The highest Means and Compassion...

And His compassion is such that,

He acts in the world for the sake of the world.

...His intelligence is always burning like fire

For bringing about the welfare [to the world].

At the same time, he is always practicing,

Meditation and concentration on the Quiescence. (Takasaki 1966:253-254)

Through the process of life, the bodhisattva uses Life to clarify Life which is the same as “purifying the basis,” or removing conceptual defilements. This is done through using “the quiescent nature” of Truth as a mirror that enables the bodhisattva to discriminate between what is conceptually

fabricated, vs. what is natural and non-fabricated. It is therefore a very interesting observation made by Har Dayal when he writes of the bodhisattva that they also needs to be understood in terms of the old Vedic word *sattvan*, which means “a strong or valiant man, hero, warrior,” (Dayal 1932:9). But it is not the valiant or noble aspect that Dayal seeks to bring forth, rather it is the nature and the kind of existence that belongs to a *warrior*. Thus the word suggests according to Dayal, “the two ideas of existence and struggle, and not merely the notion of simple existence” (Dayal 1975:9). The reason why the bodhisattva is depicted as a “higher” being, is not due to his excellent qualities, but because of his compassion for the world and his power not to be detracted by fear or pain. There is no concern for the individual self in the conventional sense, because the bodhisattva does not have a self-centred “I.” But he still has a self which means that these emotions are felt and experienced as part of the human condition. However they do not stop him in his compassionate and self-purifying activity. Because the bodhisattva has no substantial self, he has no preferences and thus no actual choice as the ordinary person experiences himself as having. He cannot choose to avoid or to not to act, He lives, exists and has no conditions to life other than to serve and one can therefore say that “.... because of being free from discriminations, he does not use any exertion at all, For bringing the living beings to their maturity.” (Takasaki 1966:254) He does not use any exertions because it is the nature or his view. It is a way of existing that is as natural as the ordinary person’s experience of needs and desires. Compassion is not thought of or intended, it cannot be held or chosen to go in any one direction, it is simply the function of a view that perceives unity.

On account of this it becomes clear that the bodhisattva view has great implications for ecology, because it transforms man way of relating to everything, including nature. To the bodhisattva there is nothing that is not seen as holy, and the world is not perceived as foreign and different to his being. And can therefore not be divided into living and non-living or

sentient and non-sentient. This do not mean however that the bodhisattva do not live as others, there are still physical needs, natural joys etc. but the bodhisattva reveals another way of existing and relating to others that is not self-centred. He does not use the “world” for himself, but uses himself for the world, i.e. in the service of truth qua other forms of life. Because he has no needs to mirror himself in others, he has no need to consume; value, identity, self-worth, etc., because value is experienced as unconditional. Nor is his actions motivated by a desirous “I” because that “I” does not exist. This therefore reveal a view that is naturally ecological, because all is intimately experienced to be ones self. And because nothing is separate the bodhisattva also feels directly what is done to the dharmakaya or reality, be it to other people or nature. Hence to pollute nature feels as if he is being polluted and to misuse nature is to misuse his self. Because he has a direct connection to the dharmakaya it becomes impossible for the bodhisattva to be non-ecological. This view therefore expresses a natural ecological attitude arising spontaneously out of the perception of the dharmakaya. And according to Buddhism this is the only truly ecological expression of man, because it does not use life, but lives naturally in harmony with it.

This natural ecological and compassionate attitude is poetically expressed by Dogen in the fascicle, “Bodhisattva’s Four Methods of Guidance” (*Bodaisatta Shisho-ho*). Here he lists four different aspects that describe this bodhisattva nature and that also serves to indicate the difference between this view and the view of the ordinary person. According to Dogen these four aspects are, “Giving,” “Kind speech,” “Beneficial action,” and “identity-action” and although listed as four, they are ultimately the expression of the same nature. The first aspect of “giving” can according to Dogen be understood as balance, selflessness, and the lack of separation. As such it simply denotes the absence of self-centred impulses, where:

“Giving” means nongreed. Nongreed means not to covet. Not to covet means not to curry favour... it is to give away unneeded belongings to someone you don't know, to offer flowers blooming on a distant mountain to the Tathagata... Whether it is of teaching or of material, each gift has its value and is worth giving... If you study giving closely, you see that to accept a body and to give up the body are both giving. Making a living and producing a thing can be nothing other than giving. To leave flowers to the wind, to leave the birds to the seasons, are also acts of giving. (Dogen 1986:45)

“Giving” according to Dogen, is the absence of the desirous and coveting mode of existence, which naturally is replaced by a nature that is spontaneous giving. It is to give life back to life and be life, to let things be. This again means to not have terms and conditions to life, to wish for something more, or to seek something different. It is a natural attitude of gratefulness and thankfulness for life and therefore to live as it is. Hence one gives one's life over to life, which is the absence of unbalance, partiality and self-centredness. As Dogen says, “When you leave the way to the way, you attain the way. At the time of attaining the way, the way is always left to the way.” (Dogen 1985:44) It therefore denotes a very different kind of existence than what the self-centred attitude expresses. A difference that also is reflected in the second aspect of “Kind speech,” where:

“Kind speech” means that when you see sentient beings you arouse the mind of compassion and offer words of loving care. It is contrary to cruel or violent speech... You should know that kind speech arises from kind mind, and that kind mind from the seed of compassionate mind. You should ponder the fact kind speech is not just praising the merits of others; it has the power to turn the destiny of nations. (Dogen 1986:46)

The essence of “Kind speech” is to spontaneously meet people with the thought of love and kindness. Dogen also describes this attitude in another passage where he characterizes it as being “unstained.” Here, “Being unstained is like meeting a person and not considering what he looks like. Also it is like not wishing for more colour or brightness when viewing

flowers or the moon” (Dogen 1985:162). It is a mind and attitude that do not judge or evaluate life because there is nothing to judge. Thus all the natural impulses come from a mind that perceive all as the same and not from a sense of wanting or lack. An attitude that also expresses itself through, “Beneficial action,” where:

”Beneficial action” is skilfully to benefit all classes of sentient Beings, that is, to care about their distant and near future, and to help them by using skilful means. In ancient times, someone helped a caged tortoise; another took care of an injured sparrow. They did not expect reward; they were moved to do so only for the sake of beneficial action. Foolish people think that if they help others first, their own benefit will be lost; but this is not so. Beneficial action is an act of oneness, benefiting self and others together. (Dogen 1986:47)

To act from “Beneficial action” means that the motive to act comes from unity and that there are no ulterior motives. It is simply a natural expression of unity. And all beings benefit equally because one's nature is founded on benefiting. But it should be added that what is served here are not desires, but truth. Truth in self and truth in others, hence compassion from a self-centred point of view can seem brutal, because it seeks to liberate and not indulge. Hence all actions come from the same source namely unity or “Identity action,” where:

“Identity-action” means nondifference. It is nondifference from self, nondifference from others... When we know identity-action, others and self are one. Lute, song, and wine are one with human beings, deva, and spirit being....The *Guanzi* says, “The ocean does not exclude water; that is why it is large. Mountains does not exclude earth; that is why it is high. A wise lord does not exclude people; that is why he has many subjects.” (Dogen 1986:46-47)

Summarizing the nature of the Bodhisattva, the *Ratnagotravibhaga* says in the latter part of the verse that compares the state of the Bodhisattva to the Buddha that:

Having obtained this position,

The Bodhisattva becomes equal to the Tathagata

On account of his conveying the living being

...

There is however a great difference

Between a Bodhisattva and Buddha,

Such difference as lies between the atom and the earth,

Or in [the water] in a foot-print of a bull and in all the oceans.

(Takasaki 1966:253-354)

When the Bodhisattva and the Buddha is compared they are according to the above found equal in compassion, here there is no difference, their love is equal. However there is a difference in understanding as that which “lies between the atom and the earth.” As the opening verse said, both the ordinary person and the bodhisattva have a dualistic view. It is only the buddha that exist totally apart from all dualities, because here the Buddha-nature has realized its perfect unity.

4.3 *The Buddha View*

According to the *Ratnagotravibhaga* the Buddha-view represents the *garbha* in its final stage of self-transformation, which means that the Buddha-nature has come to perceive its own essence perfectly, hence:

...it is in the person of Buddha that suchness, overcoming all duality, “has come” (*tathagata*) to possess itself in total self self-awareness; if it “has been perfected” (*tathagama*), it is through the self-maturation in consciousness of what it always was. (Brown 1991:119)

The buddha view therefore represents the absolute unity and pure expression of the Buddha-nature or *Tathata*, hence the name *Tathagata*, one that has become thus. This realization is beyond any kind of dual categories of thought and should therefore not be understood in terms of two poles merging, but that all defilements or separation has been

removed. This is to see them as non-existent, revealing the Absolute nature of mind (*Buddhajnana*), which is non-self, clarity, and emptiness. Perceiving thus a buddha understands that:

...all dharmas are like that by nature; all dharmas are Perfect Enlightenment. Also seeing that in beings, impure, not free from stain or faulted, there is the Dharmadhatu, He has love for beings and this is known as “engaging in the Tathagata’s Great Compassion. (the *Ratnagotravibhaga-vyakhya* quoted in Hookham 1991:52)

In other words there are no longer anything *other*, all that exist does so as the Buddha-nature, and the Buddha-nature exist as all. As all conceptual defilements have been removed, the buddha exists as all things equally and simultaneously, a blade of grass, a mountain, each and every form of life. Hence even to use the word “every” is problematic, because it gives the sense of there being many different things, which is not the case. There is only the Buddha-nature in infinite expressions simultaneously. As such the *Ratnagotravibhaga* explains of the buddhas true body that:

Verily, the Absolute Body of the Tathagata is pure
Because of his innate purity and removal of impressions;
He is the highest Unity because he is quiescent,
Having destroyed the dualistic view of ego and non-ego.
He is blissful because the Mind-made Aggregate
And its causes have been removed [completely];
He is eternal because he has realized
The equality of Phenomenal Life and Nirvana. (Takasaki 1966:218)

There is no longer any difference between the Absolute Body (dharmakaya) and the buddha, they are two names for the same. Thus properly speaking a buddha is not a person at all, he has no individual sense of self, although he has an individual expression. Thus while both the ordinary person and the bodhisattva had conceptual residues left, the

buddha has dispelled all conceptual formations and there are no self left to unite, to have an relationship, etc. And it therefore said in the *Tathagatagunajnana-cintya-visaya-avatara-nirdesa* that:

Manjusri, the Tathagata does not conceptualize or think, but engages spontaneously and conceptionlessly in natural deeds in each place as appropriate. (Hookham 1991:51)

There is in this passage two things worth pointing out, that of spontaneity and natural deeds. As perhaps is understood, thinking or thought in Buddhism means conditioned and predetermined. Therefore to act from thoughts means to act out of what is conditioned and predetermined. Secondly, it is to act from a sense of separation because all conceptual formations deal with dualities. The use of the term “spontaneous” in this context therefore indicates actions that do not arise from premeditation and conceptual formations (and hence are not arising from conditions). This means that they are not the product of the previous moment, but arises selflessly from the non-dual nature, manifesting as wisdom and compassion. These non-conceptual actions are therefore “... defined [RGV 5.14] as action in which the subtle “knowledge veils are” absent” (Hookham 1991:51). These knowledge veils are again understood to be the concepts (*vikalpa*) of the three circles (*trimandala*), meaning: the actor, action, and acted upon. As there are no conceptual constructs left, there can neither be a sense self or others, because these are both dependent on own-being. Hence in the buddha’s wisdom there are no actor, no action, and no acted upon. There are only the natural spontaneous actions that arise from the Absolute Body itself, expressing themselves as compassion and wisdom, which is referred to as Buddha-activity. However it is impossible for the ordinary person, and even a bodhisattva to fathom this, because through them existence is interpreted dualistically. To speak of no actor, no action, and no acted upon seems meaningless and it is like trying to imagine the Eiffel Tower in a two dimensional universe. As such a

buddha appearing to the dualistic person, seems to be identical to that persons way of existing, that is to act, think, be in the exact same manner. But this is only because the view cannot think outside its own” box,” but it is still only an appearance.

This leads to the second point, namely that a buddha “engages in natural deeds in each place as appropriate.” (Hookham 1991:51) Since there no longer is any sense of a personal “I,” a buddha only acts out of compassion in the most appropriate manner to the situation or individual at hand. As such a buddha can be understood to be identical to a bodhisattva in terms of compassion, but a more effective means for liberation. And as a buddha no longer has any separate self and only spontaneously act from wisdom and compassion he is said to have diverse qualities that reflect this directness of perception. These are known as the ten qualities of a buddha and are found expressed in the *Sri-Mala Sutra* as:

The discernment of the possible; knowledge of every direction of the path; knowledge of the various realms of the world; knowledge of the diversity of faiths; knowledge of others; recognition of the auspicious and inauspicious force of karma; knowledge of defilements and purification, of meditation and equipoises; knowledge of many modes of his former lives; the attainment of perfectly clear divine eye; and the attainment of the destruction of all defilements (Brown 1991:294)

Although these powers might seem mystic, in essence they are the result of Enlightenment, which is a complete understanding of Reality in all its manifestation. And because a buddha has no self, nothing goes through an interpreter⁷⁴. He therefore has direct access to the above information, and everything is seen clearly without conceptual blindness. And the ten powers therefore reflect the argument that a buddha is a better mean for compassion.

Therefore while the ordinary person perceived difference and evaluates his self in terms of the relevant hierarchy, and the bodhisattva is completely

devoted to compassion and understanding, the buddha sees no essential difference, and understands that there is no separation and divisions in the Buddha-nature. Thus:

“If the Buddha exercises a position of superiority, it is as the one has fully a awakened to the innate radiance of the Mind (*Cittaprakrti*) which he knows to be the essential nature (*dharmadhatu*) of all beings. (Brown 1991:156)

To this one additional point needs to be addressed, as buddha is a pure manifestation acting spontaneously out of compassion and wisdom it means that the Buddha-nature is not an inert nature, but an active force that functions to bring about its own liberation. However one needs to be careful to predicate anything to the Absolute nature itself, as it only is available through a particular view. Hookham describes the Shentong understanding of the Absolute reality as “ being a knowing, feeling, dynamic force that is the very essence of our very being and our universe...” (Hookham 1991:53). And although this quote brings forth the compassionate activity that expresses itself in its human expression, it is quite clear that this Absolute is beyond any predicates. Thus to ascribe these qualities to the Absolute should be avoided. Life simply exists and lives. However according to the human existence this force appears as a self revealing totality that effects its own transformation⁷⁵. One can therefore say that the wisdom and compassion that start to emerge on the Path is not the result of virtues and qualities attained, but the emerging qualities naturally present when the defilements are removed. These are the manifestations of the dharmakaya or the garbha as it naturally emerges through the phenomenal human consciousness. And it is because of this inner awareness that humans are able to become liberated, to transform themselves, to have a sense of truth, longing for freedom, and the power to act in opposition to their desires, to not be determined to live only according to desires and their compelling forces. “Thus, in shentong terms, our own Buddha-nature, the haunting awareness that impels us towards

Enlightenment and the spontaneous activity of the buddhas which is intent on waking us, are not three things, but one and the same Buddhajnana” (Hookham 1991:55).

And as the buddha and bodhisattva is equal in compassion and unconditional love, their relation to the world is exactly equal, which mean naturally ecological.

4.4 Ecological reflections on the three views

In the opening of this thesis I used the understanding of “ecology” in the sense of how species interacts and relates to their environment. This understanding was extended to human beings, whereby ecology became understood as the *human -- nature* relationship. This simple framework was later developed by the Buddhist understanding of non-duality as where all of nature was seen as “living being(s),” where the realization of this truth expressed itself as compassion and love. A realization that also was reflected in the function and manifestation of two of the three views (i.e. the bodhisattva and buddha) that belongs to the human existence. However, because the ordinary person perceives himself as separated from this totality he also relates differently to it, which was seen to express itself through a relationship of use. Hence, we have according to Buddhism two very different ecological expressions and ways of relating to the same Reality (Buddha-nature). And having seen how differently these express themselves it could be tempting to argue that the ordinary person’s mode of relating should be abandoned in preferences to the mode of the bodhisattva and buddha. This is after all an inherently ecological mode of existing that does not create ecological problems and reveal a more wholesome way of existing? I do believe that from one point of view this perspective holds a degree of truth, and that this understanding of the human existence is important, in fact essential to the future of our planet and ourselves. However although tempting to say yes, this approach would

be a too simplistic interpretation of the Buddhist position and agenda. From the philosophical point of view, Buddhism does not seek to establish a religion or a moral code, but to reveal and analyse the function of life and how it expresses itself in terms of the human existence. Through this analysis a map over the human existence is established that can enable realization and realization. Hence the three views do not only reveal that the human existence includes different natural expressions or views, but also that *all* of these *belong* to the human existence. The description of the human existence as the three views is therefore meant as a factual analysis and not necessarily an evaluative statement. To therefore move from a descriptive analysis and clarification to argue that all should follow this or that path is ultimately to moralize over life and its infinite expressions. But Life does not moralize over its own existence as the earlier example of the flower showed, it simply exists. And because there is no ultimate point of reference in the Buddha-nature, all evaluations regarding Life can ultimately only be done from a point of view and from a particular understanding. And this is a fact worthy of attention, because there is a difference from an *interpretation* of Existence and Existence itself. A point of view always reveals an intention, i.e. from where it arises, does it arise from compassion or need? And as Dogen earlier made clear, compassion means to “let things be,” i.e. to let life live itself, yet always be ready to serve and aid. It is therefore not a question of better or worse forms of existence, but that all is the same Life expressing and living itself differently. The fact that man has a potential to act out of love and compassion does not mean that all humans should, neither is it particularly realistic. It simply means that it is in the human potential to do so. To force life into a particular form of existence is actually not an expression of love or compassion, on the contrary, because it is forced it necessarily arises from a need, no matter how noble the intention.

Consequently what Buddhism makes clear is that there are two very different kinds of ecologies or ecological expressions, one that is need-

based and one that is natural. Thus while the ordinary person relates to the world through a relationship of use, the bodhisattva and buddha both relate to the world through compassion and love. However both ecological expressions belong to and are a part of the human existence.

If we start by approaching the former, it is clear that an ecological mode of existing does not come naturally to a view grounded on separation and use. In fact it is impossible. Hence as the ordinary person relates to external “structures⁷⁶” that has the power to influence his actions in various directions, these need to be used constructively. Ecological aids can therefore be: laws, social values, morality, ideals, economic sanctions, motivation, praise, recognition, etc. all of which can be used to pacify or utilize the desires and needs in a conscientious way. Through this desires and needs can be stopped or redirected in a way that serve both the individual and totality. Hence, although being a self-centred existence, it can be highly inspiring, meaningful and “moving” to the particular individual that needs to feel valuable and meaningful. This approach is therefore both motivational and deterring in its nature, seeking to attain a certain ecological equilibrium through influencing the individual or group in a particular way. These measures should from a Buddhist point of view always be based on the principle of unity and compassion, as the concern for the welfare of all forms of life, including mountains, forests, biotic communities and more.

In addition to this form of influence, a need based ecology can be assisted through an ecological mythology or “story” that contextualizes a person’s life and actions within a totality⁷⁷. It is far easier for a person to act ecologically when a story of life is weaved that articulates a unity that the person does not experience directly on account of the view. Through this “story” a certain mode of living becomes both meaningful and true to the individual, generating a wholesome sense of identity and self-worth. An identity or self-understanding and story that also is based on what actually

is true according to Buddhism and any kind of religion can serve as such a basis, even science. Additionally this mythology might help to create a religious sentiment toward nature that instils a sense of reverence, wonder, and a sentimental kind of love that can serve as the basis for a relationship that lacks unconditional love. on account of such an story, the individual can live in a more wholesome relationship to nature and “others.”

However although these measures are helpful to both the individual and the totality, it is clear from a Buddhist point of view that it always will be a “need” based ecology. It will always be self-centred and exist in a use relationship to the world. It will therefore always work within these parameters and one needs to be aware of this self-centred foundation and not be naïve as to how it can express itself. As such it will never express itself as a natural ecology, because it has not realized unity and does not experience all as same. Hence the important difference between a need based ecology and a natural one.

Through the second form of ecological relationship Buddhism reveals an ecology that springs out of the realization of the dharmakaya or unity. On account of this realization, love spontaneously arises and expresses itself. There are no longer any substantial and separate selves present and because of this needs and desires do not arise and a person naturally functions spontaneously to benefit others. Here others are all of natures forms, a bird, a tree, a human being in need. There is therefore no need to further pursue this kind of ecology, because its expression has been adequately covered in the preceding pages. One could however add that although there are no *needs*, there are natural needs, i.e. the need for food, to enjoy a good cup of coffee, etc.. However these do not become controlling and define to the mode of existing in the world. Hence there is a clear difference between natural needs and self-centred needs. The former belongs to the human constitution, the latter to a self-centred experience. In the former case there is no self-centredness, hence there is

only what naturally arises from itself. Thus there is nothing wrong with enjoying life and what is offered, but the enjoyment does not happen at the expense of other forms of life. In the case of the ordinary person there is a self-centredness that goes beyond what is naturally required, because there is a self that needs to be satisfied in a particular way.

It therefore needs to be added that since Buddhism equates ecology with non-duality and compassion, it is only a buddha and bodhisattva that truly can act ecologically, because they both naturally and actively act out of love. Because these two different ecological modes of relating to the world are so fundamentally different, I believe that Buddhism would hold that for any true ecology to take place, this transformation also would need to take place. A transformation that in their eyes is quite natural and ordinary, because there is no less natural for a human being to function out of love than it is to exist out of needs, it is only that one view is known one better. But they both expressions equally belong to the human existence. Hence, it is therefore necessary to point out that although the human existence includes these different expressions, the fact still remains that there is no separation, cause and effect still holds true, and how a human being acts is how that person and other forms of life will experience their lives. Other living beings do in fact exist and have their own needs, feelings, interest, and wish not to suffer. Humans therefore create their own world, and much of what they create is the product of ignorance and separation that must be lived by some form of life. A fact that according to Buddhism is neither necessary nor unalterable. Hence to say that the human existence includes both kinds of ecological expressions does not mean that one should not inspire to the transformation of views. It is not a matter of letting everything go and let things be as they may, in fact it is highly important to change views because of these consequences. The whole Buddhist religion is based on this understanding and devoted to the transformation of the human mind. However this transformation needs to be founded on where that particular person is in his life and in his

understanding, and not where they should be. This way people can exist in a natural relationship according to their maturity, while still being able to benefit others in their particular own ways.

The Buddhist approach to ecology is therefore very simple, but essential. It means to include and incorporate a broader understanding of the human existence in the environmental discourse and the public awareness. To introduce the knowledge that the human existence includes the potential to spontaneously and naturally act ecologically from love. And that such a mode of living should be fostered and made available to the human consciousness. This simple recognition is itself a transformation of the human understanding that will help humans to contextualize their own lives and to accept that Life lives itself in different ways. Hence, it is important to have two simultaneous ideas present, namely that things are allowed to live as they are and that one also can change and transform. Hence if we are aware of how the human existence function and express itself alongside the recognition that all is living beings, one can articulate an ecology that is based on compassion for all living beings, even though it is need based.

5. Conclusion

To conclude this Thesis I would like to return to the beginning where I set out to present an alternative way to understand Existence that was not based on duality and separation. As Carson pointed out, it is today the human understanding of nature and themselves that is being challenged and through this, our relationship to the Nature. Through a non-dual understanding of Reality I hoped to show that there are other ways for humans to understand both themselves and nature, which can provide both human and ecological insight, inspiration and serve as a basis for transformation.

To this end I chose to investigate Buddhism, which is a religion and philosophy devoted to both of my above concerns, i.e. non-duality and the human existence, and through this see how a Buddhist perspective on ecology would express itself. To clear the path for this investigation I started out with a presentation of the Greek concept of *phusis*, the root source for the concept for “nature.” This investigation revealed an immanent and whole conception of nature that also was understood as a dynamic and self-generating existence. Through this dynamic existence all came to function and behave as it did, according with nature’s necessities. Thus all aspects of reality were subsumed under the same kind of existence, where all was nature. This clarification of “nature” contributed to clear the path for the Buddhist understanding of Reality that showed *structurally* similarities to *phusis*, i.e. a self-existing whole generating and serving as its own existence.

However the Buddhist basis for Reality is non-duality, a Reality that was revealed through the gradual deconstruction of the dualistic and substantial phenomenal reality, eventually revealing the non-dual Buddha-nature. This nature was considered nothing less than Total-Existence expressing itself in infinite different “forms of life,” where one is the human being.

Hence, according to Buddhism all of life is only the same nature in infinite expressions, be it mountains, rivers, tiles, pebbles, or a human being. However, as Buddhism denies the concept of a separate self it needed to explain the human existence through different terms. This was enabled through the concept of *views*, whereby the Buddha-nature was understood to perceive itself under different degrees of concealment, revealing itself in different ways. Hence, a view is understood as an interpretation of the Buddha-nature through which both the sense of self and world arise together. As such it is the *views* that generate the understanding and experience of reality (qua the world) and that determine how humans relate toward Existence, i.e. how the spontaneous actions manifest themselves. According to Buddhism there are no separate agent, there is only (Buddha-) Nature expressing itself through the different views that spontaneously relate and express itself in a particular way dependent on perception. Thus, as man's way of relating to Nature is thoroughly conditioned by the particular view, it means that if man is to change, views need to change. And to change view means to perceive and experience both self and others in a completely different way. According to Buddhism there are three such essential views, constituting and defining the human existence that generate three different senses of self and world. These are the view of the Ordinary Person, the Bodhisattva, and the Buddha, which again are conditioned and defined in terms of different epistemic insight or the "purity" of perception of the Buddha-nature.

However although there are *three* different views, there is according to Buddhism only two essential different modes of relating to the same nature or the world. That is, either through needs and desires that arise from a self-centred point of view, or through compassion and love arising from a selfless view. The first mode belongs to the ordinary person and the second mode belongs to the bodhisattva and buddha, who only differs in wisdom. From this foundation Buddhism derives two essentially different ecologies, one that is based on self-centredness and manifesting as a need-

ecology and one that naturally expresses an ecological attitude where all is loved equally, manifesting itself as a natural ecology.

Consequently through the Buddhist conception of non-duality and views, Buddhism manages to clearly articulate an existence and human potential beyond the confines of duality. And it is because the views generate these different spontaneous modes of existing that the human existence becomes so fundamentally important to the Buddhist conception of ecology. To Buddhism ecology becomes a matter of perception, where to perceive in a particular way means to relate in a particular way. Hence, if one is to change the world, one needs to change the perception of it. And to change the perception means to see everything as the same life and relate through compassion and love. It is to see what is actual and true in all that is and therefore spontaneously take care of all living beings, because all living beings is one's own life.

Herein lays the Buddhist contribution to the ecological debate and Buddhism's perspective on ecology. An understanding that according to Buddhism it is of vital importance, not only to humans, but all forms of life. It is therefore important that the environmental discourse begins to incorporate a broader perspective of the human existence, because this is the only lasting and permanent and truly ecological mode of living that benefit both humans and nature alike. A mode of existing that is available to all humans and that takes care of all of life simultaneously, because it is that which is all of life simultaneously.

This is also where Buddhism can contribute the most to the environmental discourse, not through ethical rules, not through practical policies, but through its understanding and analysis of the human existence and reality. Because it has a long tradition of investigating and understanding the human existence, the human path, pitfalls, techniques, psychology, and precise analysis of the philosophy of non-duality it has a wide range of

information to provide. All of these are available to be used, discussed, investigated and brought to bear on ourselves as well as others. Through this humans can come to understand an existence that can be more than need and fear, but also love and compassion, for all of nature. Hence man has the potential to live in a world according to love or a world *created* according to desire. And for a different ecology to appear a different view have to appear, and for this man is the alpha and omega.

1 I say modern, because the relationship between man and nature is as old as man himself. question of man and nature and what we do to nature has been with us since the beginning. The only difference is that at present this relationship has taken up a more critical role, in the sense that we are facing more immediate “dangers.” The question of nature and all its beings are often discussed in most of the world’s religions and also in the western philosophical tradition. Yet our present mode of discourse is often dated to the late 1960’s and seventies.

2 Her repeated attempt to publish papers on the subject was denied and she also had difficulties finding a publicist for the book.

3 I will use capital “E” and capital “R” when I talk about Reality and Existence in the Absolute sense, i.e. that which Buddhism understand as Reality.

4 Present scientific study probably is closest to the understanding of phusis found in Democritus (460-370). However there were many alternate understanding present at that time.

5 For more information see Naddaf (2005), Heidegger (1976), Zimmerman (1986).

6 In the book *Ancient Medicine* J. Souilhe says that: “The term *dunamis* comprises two ideas which are mutually complementary. The substance manifest themselves by their qualities. Things are rendered sensible by these properties, such as the cold, the hot, the bitter, the salt... which enable them to enter into relation with other bodies. These are the *dunameis*, distinct entities which constitute the exteriorization of the substance... the term *dunamis* designate the characteristic property of bodies, their exterior and sensible appearance. Which permits their determination and specification. Thanks to *dunamis*, the mysterious *phusis*, the substantial *eidos* or primordial element, makes itself known by its action. This explains why it was later possible to pass from the known to the unknown, from appearance to reality...” (Souilhe 1919: 36) Here Souilhe clearly expresses the relationship between *dunamis* and *phusis*, and that *phusis* is both the known and unknown, the manifest and its principle.

7 Actually the first occurrence of the term *phusis* is found in Book 10 of *The Odyssey*, which is a well-known religious work. Thales, often presented as the first philosopher, understood the capacity for motion to be identical to the soul and this was not limited to humans alone. Anaximander saw existence as coming from the one *apeiron* (unlimited, eternal), Heraclitus talked about the eternal *Logos* and Parmenides about Being and oneness. All of these thinkers understood *phusis* divinely, but not according to a transcendent. And according to Naddaf was where Plato saw a danger in their philosophy. See Naddaf (2005: 165)

8 This seems to be true of all the physiologists or pre-Socratic, although they had a different understanding of what this actually meant. Both Heraclites, and Parmenides show interesting similarities to Buddhist and Taoist thinkers, while Democritus, the perhaps most materialistic of them, did not go against a religious conception of *phusis*. See Naddaf (2005), Patric and Bywater (1888).

9 Any introductory book on Buddhism will probably refer to the same complexities. From one point of view the Buddhist tradition can be understood as a continuous reinterpretation and critical engagement of central ideas and practices. Hence to present some uniform principles and their interpretation that all agree on is difficult. There are no central creed as such, rather there are different schools that exist on the basis of different interpretation of what it is believed that the Buddha taught. Thus to present Buddhism in such a general manner as I have chosen to do

should be accompanied by a huge amount of footnotes. However this would only detract from the essential meaning of the paper.

10 “Elements of Existence” can according to The Sarvastivada classification be categorized into five different categories (five dharmas), which again can be divided into seventy-five elements. These categories are; Material elements, Mind, Mental attributes, Factors not associated with the mind, and Unconditioned elements. The point is that these are the elements that constitute and establish “existence.” these elements are often understood as that which cannot be further analytical divided. In the west these “elements of existence” could perhaps be interpreted as atoms or quarks, as the basic building blocks, but in Buddhism there is a broader understanding of what cannot be further analytically divided. For more information see for example Takasaki 1987 that gives a clear account of this theory.

11 In light of this we can understand Buddhism on a general level as the teachings of Buddha. Hence being the Buddha’s law (buddha-dharma). These teachings form a clarification of the human existence and lays out a spiritual path that is to be cultivated and practiced, as such Buddhism can be understood as “the Buddhist Path” or “Path to Buddhahood” (Takasaki 1987).

12 Because the Indian and Western philosophical tradition are different, the evolution of language and its uses can also be seen to have taken different paths. Thus I am not saying that the western language is less technical, which clearly is not the case, but what I do say is that in this subtle and technical field it simply is not adequate. Although there are similar wisdom traditions in the western hemisphere, these are again so embedded in their own conceptual matrix that to use these terms would be to misrepresent essential ideas. In addition to this it could be confusing to the reader to use a western philosophical language, because they are so culturally determined. And one would end up talking of two different things because words contain a particular meaning in our own tradition that it do not have in the Buddhist context. Heidegger is a good example at hand, as he developed he developed a language to differentiate between essential and subtle categories of “Existence” and “Being.” At the same time however these categories are so embedded in his own system of thought that they make it difficult to use in Buddhism. Hence although he has made interesting differentiations that Buddhism could utilize, they are embedded in his philosophical project. Hence the point is simply that there are technical difficulties in comparing and that a study on this general level simply have to rely on simple common sense meaning of the words, clarifying as we proceed.

13 The term “Existence” and reality can in many ways be understood interchangeably in Buddhism, especially of this essays level of discourse. “Reality” as we shall come to see is not the same “material” entity as it often is conceived of through the commonsense understanding of the word. However, what more it exactly is, is what the following chapters are about.

14 The Tripitaka or “three baskets” is the collective term for the early Buddhist canon of scriptures. Many different versions of the canon have existed throughout the Buddhist world, containing an enormous variety of texts. The oldest and most widely-known version is the Pali Canon of the Theravada school. The Tripitaka writings of early schools of Buddhism, which were originally memorized and recited orally by disciples, fall into three general categories and are traditionally classified in three baskets (tripitaka). The following is the most common order. The first category, the Vinaya Pitaka, was the code of ethics to be obeyed by the early Sangha monks and nuns. According to the scriptural account, these were invented on a day-to-day basis as the Buddha

encountered various behaviour problems with the monks. The second category, the Sutra Pitaka (basket of threads) consists primarily of accounts of the Buddha's teachings. The Sutra Pitaka has numerous subdivisions: it contains more than 10,000 sutras. The third category is Abhidharma Pitaka. This is applied to very different collections in different versions of the Tripitaka. In the Pali Canon of the Theravada there is an Abhidharma Pitaka consisting of seven books. An Abhidharma Pitaka of the Sarvastivada school survives, also in seven books, six in Chinese and one in Tibetan. ¹⁵ There are different outlines and presentations of these dharma-turnings, but all Mahayana schools agree that the first and second turning. The third turning is often said to be the rise of the vijnavadin or Mind only school, of Buddhism. According to this distinction the Tathagatagarbha tradition or philosophy is used by both tradition, but interpreted differently according to the relevant school. As such it does not stand on its own, see Takasaki 1966 and Williams 1989. According to the Chinese philosopher Fa-tsang the Tathagatagarbha refers to a fourth turning (Hakeda 1967). These distinctions are not truly important, but I feel it is important to inform the reader of the variation of existing interpretation and understandings.

¹⁶ The phenomenal or dualistic universe could also be translated as the material universe, form, the world of form, or the world of desire. Essentially it refers to what humans ordinarily understand as Reality or the Universe. However the Buddhist conception of form includes much more than the externally perceived aspect. It also includes: states, feelings, thoughts, emotions, desires, etc. These are according to Buddhism only different energetic expressions. In addition to form there is formlessness, or emptiness, and these are not-two, hence the same. As it says in the Heart Sutra: "form is emptiness and emptiness is form." For more information see Lopez (1996).

¹⁷ The concept of happiness might be understood differently, however the content of this concept is not important at present. What is important is that the dualistic life and reality becomes the realm defined in terms of being the "place" where one can attain happiness. Through this understanding the dualistic reality becomes a disclosed through needs and their satisfaction, i.e. to attain happiness. Hence becoming a realm of desire.

¹⁸ Strictly speaking, the four wayward objects are: "to regard that which is impermanent as impermanent, what is suffering to be happiness, what is non-self as self, and what is impure as pure." (Brown 1991: 32) The only difference is that in this outline the point of focus is on the individual perception, rather than what this perception reveals. This as we shall see, is ultimately the same thing. For a closer and more detailed elaboration see Brown (1991).

¹⁹ "Formative forces" (*samskara*) in its most simple formulation identical to conditioned phenomena (servedharma) or more generally the phenomenal world. The difference between "formative forces" and "constituted elements" are only one of classification. Constituted elements are that which constitutes the human existence. i.e. The five skandhas, the twelve sense-fields and the eighteen realms. For a more detailed discussion concerning the term "*samskara*" see Takasaki (1987: 96-100). There is no need to go deeper into this technical philosophy, because it is strictly speaking not relevant and I therefore choose to understand both of these generally and collectively as phenomena. ²⁰ Through this outline one can see that there is a difference between the first three points and the fourth and last. Here the first three points concerns the phenomenal world and its impermanence while the last is a statement of what remains after the first three are realized. Consequently the fourth point is sometimes left out, because it can be argued that it does not belong to the conditioned as it is non-conditioned. ²¹ The term for self in Sanskrit is *atman*, with its opposite is 'anatman' and as in the case with dharma, this term have different levels of meanings. Sometimes it can refer to what we in the west understand as the 'I' or 'ego', or

more generally 'self'. However it can also refer to the more religious terms as 'soul'. Denoting a more universal and eternal quality. "Self" therefore generally refers to the subjective agency, the autonomous individual that is the locus of experience, being the initiator of actions, having a will, etc. It is in other words the subject that stands over and against something, and therefore is separate and "different from..." It is these last sentences that is the most fundamental. That is the sense of separation, difference, and constituted by itself. Thus the more philosophical concept of self is understood to occupy the same position as substance, essence, and own-being. And to have own-being is according to Buddhism to exist independently from causes and conditions, from ones own side. To exist thusly Buddhism argues that it needs to fulfil two criteria, (1) it must be something over which one has complete control, and (2) something that neither can change or become sick. This accords well the definition of "self" that one for example finds in the Chinese Buddhist tradition, where it is defined as 'eternal, one, and lord' (Takasaki 1987: 93). It seems that the idea behind these necessary properties is that if there was a self, it necessarily need to be absolute and self-determined. If this is not the case then it means that ones actions, ideas, feelings, etc. are a result of something other and is therefore having a different source. This makes ones actions etc, "other" and not "own" and therefore not self. A second point is that if the 'self' were amendable to change it would be different from the one moment to the next, and therefore not retain its identity.

22 To uphold that these two properties exist, seems to indicate an existence that cannot exist in the world, because the world is transformation or alteration. Secondly movement would also be impossible, because this implies change. One would therefore have an entity that do not relate to the world and is not born of it.

23 The term "unity" is difficult to use when it comes to express what actually is meant by *dhatu*. The term "unite" implies that there are parts that can be united, but when the parts don't exist, unity actually becomes superfluous and brings forth the wrong connotations. The same holds true with the concept of one, because "one" is an entity itself and additionally is dependent and seen in relation to "two," hence also bringing forth the wrong connotations. Probably the best word to use is "not-two," which is the denial of any duality what so ever. But then there is the aspect of feeling or association, where the terms like: unity, oneness, totality etc, have associative meanings that evoke a feeling and sense of the explained. So the words can be useful in this regard, while still being philosophically imprecise and inadequate. However the point is simply that the reader should be aware of this inherent difficulty with precision and associative meaning. And it is therefore not without reason that Buddhism has so many different terms to designate these technical and associative differences. 24 Although these terms refer to the same, what they refer to is not always understood as the same, that is different technical nuances. This will become clearer as we proceed.

25 I would like to make a short comment in regards to this way of presenting the topic. If ignorance is simply explained to not correspond to reality we are in the danger of creating a new duality. That between ignorance and enlightenment, and perception and the ground of nature (*dharmadhatu*). This is not really the case, but certain freedoms needs to be taken in presenting a topic. Perception is an expression of the *dharmadhatu*, but is also dependently arisen and hence selfless. Ignorance and enlightenment are perceptions and hence dependently arisen. This will be dealt with more fully later. 26 The "human form" can perhaps be separated from the "human existence" in the sense that the human form represents the bodily expression or foundation for the human existence in toto. As such the human form refers to the five skandhas. The human existence refers to the totality of what it belongs to the human being's existence. This includes ignorance, enlightenment, the process of coming to self-knowledge, the potential for self-realization, and all the infinite different perceptions of reality. Since man

from a Buddhist point of view is not a substantial entity, a human being is a particular expression of the more general category of the human existence, having a shared and equal nature.

27 The five skandhas are as follows; 1. "Form" or "matter" (*rupa*): external and internal matter. Externally, *rupa* is the physical world. Internally, *rupa* includes the material body and the physical sense organs. 2. "Sensation" or "feeling" (*vedana*): sensing an object as either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral. 3. "Perception", "conception", "apperception" or "cognition" (*samjna*): registers whether an object is recognized or not (for instance, the sound of a bell or the shape of a tree). 4. "Mental formations" or "volition" (*samskāra*) all types of mental habits, thoughts, ideas, opinions, compulsions, and decisions triggered by an object. 5. "Consciousness" (*vijñāna*): (a) In the Nikayas: cognizance. (b) In the Abhidharma: a series of rapidly changing interconnected discrete acts of cognizance. (c) In Mahayana sources: the base that supports all experience. For more information see Hamilton (1996)

28 The Hinayana is often understood as a derogatory designation initiated by the Mahayana emerging movement to distance themselves and define their own position. Hinayana means "lesser vehicle" while Mahayana means "greater vehicle," and point to the interpretation that the Hinayana practitioners was still understood as a selfish and solitary path to awakening, because it focused on liberation from samsara and was not as open to lay practice. The Mahayana however focused on compassion and therefore included all. The Hinayana "movement" was said to include 18 to 20 different schools, of which only the Theravada, the "school of the elders" is still alive.

29 The idea behind this logic, seems to be that it was only the "self" that was understood to be non-existent, but what made up or served as the basis of this self's existence had own-being. Hence in fairness to the Abhidarmists it could be argued that what they sought to bring forth in positing own-being and real existence to the elements was a sense of "Being" or "Existence." Since the self was denied, they were in need of explaining how this did not end in nihilism, there being a short distance between non-self to non-existence. The way out of this tricky slope was to argue that although there was no separate and individual self, the elements that constituted existence had a self-nature. Thus although the self was denied, the foundation for the experience was not. Not everything was an illusion and non-existent. As such "reality" was still intact, but not disclosed through the perception of things or entities. This meant that "reality" seized to be associated with separate and individual selves or things, but was founded on the totality as the dharma, or the truth-realm (*dharmadhatu*) qua the truth-nature (*dharmata*). The consequence of this twist however was two-fold. Firstly it became the foundation of an elaborate and complex philosophical system, where the Abhidharma scholars became more concerned with theoretical consistency rather than clarification of truth (Takasaki 1987). Hence it only served to propagate metaphysical dogmatism and rigidity, and became non-conducive to realization. What was meant to express and point to a undivided nature was taken to be real and substantialized. Second they created an elaborate metaphysical platform that the Buddha had sought to avoid. Thirdly and more importantly it contradicted the Buddhas teachings. 30 This is also a controversial debate. It would be difficult to accuse the Sarvastivada of being uncompassionate, since their spiritual ideal clearly worked to benefit people, as the life of Buddha showed. However one could say that from the Mahayana point of view, compassion was not pure, that there still was still subtle residues of self interests left, producing what is known as "fear" or dislike of samsara (Brown 1991) that propelled one to escape samsara and other beings in need. 31 There are many passages in the early Buddhist canon in which Gautama Buddha speaks of emptiness in the Mahayana way. For more information see Williams (1989:16)

32 When engaging in Buddhist philosophy it is important to keep in mind that it is the apparent reality that is investigated, to see if our perception is true. Hence to say that the “self” only is a provisional label is to say that it is functional and a true experience, but not an ultimate truth.

33 By objective reality I mean the dualistic perception of a material and separate entity, not existence.

34 Prasangika-Madhyamaka is the most influential sub-school of the Madhyamaka.

35 In regards to the term “suchness” The Awakening of Faith states that: “All explanations by words are provisional and without validity, for they are merely used in accordance with illusion [samvritisatya] and are incapable of [denoting Suchness]. The term Suchness likewise has no attributes [which can be verbally specified]. The term Suchness is, so to speak, the limit of verbalization wherein a word is used to put an end to words. But the essence of Suchness itself cannot be put an end to, for all things [in their Absolute aspect] are real; nor is there anything which needs to be pointed out as real, for all things are equally in the state of Suchness. It should be understood that all things are incapable of being verbally explained or thought of; hence, the name Suchness.” (Hakeda 1967:33). Hence the rationale and meaning of the term ‘suchness’ is the nondual and nonconceptual articulation and expression the Absolute as Total-Existence. It points to reality “as-it-is” –and since it is nondual, there are no entities that can be pick out, its essential meaning can therefore not be conveyed to or through the conceptual mind, but only to the mind that sees itself. As such it points to the “basic substratum; a reality common to all beings; an innate brightness: a universal Absolute to be correctly perceived and exactly understood by a non-discriminative wisdom” (Brown 1991:52). Identical to buddhajñana, buddhadhatu, dharmadhatu, dharmakaya, tathagatagarbha.

36 Unfortunately I do not have the space to go into the relationship between realization and emptiness. It is often easy to conceive of realization as a straightforward matter, but it is a minefield of possible errors. Mahayana Buddhism usually distinguishes between the different realizations of a: Sravaka, Pratyekabuddha, bodhisattva, and Buddha, but even these distinctions only reveal the tip of the iceberg. As “emptiness” both can be said to refer to the ultimate nature of reality and the human perception of it, “emptiness” becomes a very dynamic concept that remove misunderstandings and reveals something new. But that which is revealed will always seem to be the true reality, if not for this a human being could not cope. Thus emptiness can be understood to have “stages” and misinterpretations, because how does one truly know what is real? What is the final truth? It is this that is being debated.

37 The distinction between rangtong and shentong concerns the understanding of emptiness and does not therefore belong to a particular school, although a certain school usually holds a particular view on emptiness. I would for example hold that the understanding of Shentong is essential for an adequate understanding of Zen Buddhism, where this debate is not known through the rangtong- Shentong distinction. For more information on this see Hookham (1991), and Hopkins (2006). For future reference it is usual to refer to the adherents of a rangtong-view as rangtongpas, and the adherents to a shentong-view as shentongpas.

38 Buddhajñana and Buddha-nature are the same, only expressed differently.

39 Faith here is not the dualistic kind of faith, but no-conceptual and devotional, more connected to the heart. Thus through meditation and analysis one removes all conceptual barriers that make “room” for the Buddhajñana

to emerge. Hence there is a devotion to that which always is present and true, and therefore not faith to an external entity. For more information see Hookham (1991) and Takasaki (1966).

40 To this it needs to be added that the rangtong view would not agree that there are any conceptual residues left. In fact that is their very definition of nirvana and realization. Hence they would say that it is the shentongpas that introduce own-being, self, etc. I cannot enter this debate at present, but will hold that the Shentong position does not have any such implications.

41 According to the Shentong position, when one enters this level of analysis, the conceptual patterns are so subtle that they are next to impossible to reveal. And according to the shentong position they cannot be analysed any further, hence the last step is dependent on the self-revelment of the Buddhajnana, which is the actual self-realization, where all becomes known as self, buddhajnana, Buddha-nature.

42 This view is actually also conceded by the rangtong position, however they would hold that both the perceived and the perceiver exist dependently. And since they are dependent on each other, they are empty of inherent existence. See Hookham (1991)

43 As we already have seen, the rangtong position would refute this outline on their position on all accounts, but it seems to be the implication. And it therefore important to add that the rangtong position contains different schools that interpret this differently. The one closest to the present outline is the dGe lugs tradition. However I would still hold that also the Prasangika-Madhyamaka would fall for the same critique. Thus I agree with Mikyo Dorje (Hookham 1991:81) who say that although Chandrakirti (the greatest exponent of the Prasangika) claims not to assert anything, because all assertions are conceptual and empty, he is in fact asserting things through implication. However staying clear of any in-depth presentation of this debate, I will simply agree with the shentong interpretation, as it seems the most adequate. For further information see Hookham 1991: 57-87. It could in addition to this be mentioned that according to the Sri-Mala: "It is not enough to gain insight into the non-existent nature of impurity; there must be a simultaneous intuitive penetration of the fundamental ground, "the one, real essence as it is." (Brown 1991: 49). Lastly, although the rangtongpas claim that they do not posit any view of existence, thus not falling into the four categories of existence, non-existence, neither existence and non-existence, both existence and non-existence, they do indeed seem to say that things both exist and do not exist simultaneously, except the Prasangika-Madhyamaka, who claim nothing.

44 Again we are treading a difficult path, and it is important not to be caught in these subtleties. The rangtong position has argued clearly for its position and would disagree with the shentong interpretation. They would therefore say that there is existence, and non-dually so. The form both exist and is empty, these are two aspects of the same.

45 According to Paul Williams "When the mind has become pure...so emptiness is then referred to in the sGe Lugs tradition as the Buddhas Essence Body (svabhavikakaya). The Buddhas pure mind in that state is his Gnosis or Wisdom Body (jnanakaya), while the two taken together, the Buddhas mind as a flow empty of inherent existence, is what this tradition calls the dharmakaya." (William 1989:107) As can be seen in the rangtong interpretation the dharmakaya is the form empty of inherent existence, which strengthens my above argument.

46 Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen (1292-1361) is was a Tibetan Buddhist Master, and often seen as the founder of the Jonangpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. It is Dolpopa who termed and developed the Shentong teachings, however their traces is arguably also found in the Indian system, although not as clearly pronounced.

47 Equal to the arguments put forward in the first and second dharma-turnings.

48 In the *Ratnagotravibhaga* “manifestation” that is talked about here are the three kayas, or bodies, of the buddha. These are the dharmakaya, sambogahakaya, and nirmanakaya and are variously understood in the different Buddhist schools. For more information see Williams (1989: 167-185) or Takasaki (1966: 314).

49 Buddhajnana is according to the Shentongpas understood to be “the nondual, uncompounded, Clear Light Nature-of-Mind, which is not dualistic consciousness (vijñana), but awareness without perceiving and perceived aspects.” (Hookham 1991:58). It is therefore just an alternate term for the Buddha-nature (*Buddhata*), which is the most known and used term in the West that designating the nature of the Buddha or Reality. I will use these two terms interchangeably and the reason for this is only that I believe that they bring out different meanings of the same concept. Hence sometimes buddhajñana fits better than Buddha-nature and visa versa.⁵⁰ Eihei Dogen (1200-1253) is often regarded as one of the greatest Japanese philosopher and religious thinker. He is perhaps best known for the establishment of the Zen Buddhist Soto lineage in Japan, but philosophically he is known for his religious and philosophical writings found in the *Shobogenzo* and *Eihei Koroku*. Through these writings Dogen outlines his own interpretation of the Buddha-dharma, ranging from practical monastic rules to metaphysical elaborations on the Buddha-nature.

51 In the footnote to this passage it says “”Totally have” is SHITSU-U. (SHITSU, kotogoto [ku]) means “totally.” (U, a [ku]) as a verb, means “have” or “possess” and also “exist”; and as a noun it means “being” or “existence.” (Dogen 1996:1) In his commentary Master Dogen interprets (SHITSU-U) in his own way, as an adjective and noun suggesting reality itself: “Total Existence.”

52 There are as we have seen many different terms for the same fundamental reality. The concept of *cittaprakrti* is one of these terms that according to Brown (1991) denotes the noetic structure of the dharmakaya and through this signifies its cognitive aspect. However these terms are all referring to the same, hence there is only a difference in semantics. Buddhism has a rather different conception of existence, one that is not based on the western and dualistic or materialistic philosophy. Hence according to Buddhism everything is Mind, and as such everything is “conscious” or aware, although at different levels in its phenomenal expression. For more information see Hookham (1991), Brown (1991), Takasaki (1987).

53 According to Edward Brown’s presentation of the *Ratnagotravibhaga* these *guna paramitas* are presented as correctives to the four wayward objects, they are therefore dependently defined as the absence of erroneous conceptions, not as something substantial and self existing qualities. For more information see Brown (1991:72-99).

54 I am aware that the concept of permanence / eternity can be understood in different ways, I choose however to centre on what is most relevant to this thesis. For more information see Brown (1991).

55 I have interpreted the original question, which in the Shobogenzo reads as follows: “

What does the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion do by using his limitless hands and eyes?” (Dogen 1996:211)

The Bodhisattva of Great Compassion is Avalokiteshvara and is usually understood as the pure expression or archetype of compassion. The hands and eyes denotes seeing and responding, limitless means that he sees and responds to everything, understood as total-function. Later this story adds that his whole body is hands and eyes, which means that his whole nature is nothing but compassionate activity, he has no other function or other ways of relating to the world. Hence as the topic is Avalokiteshvara, it is simultaneously the nature of compassion.

56 In other words they do not meet or perceive Truth.

57 For more information regarding this concept see Hookham (1991: 57-77)

58 These arguments or descriptions are also found in the Ratnagotravibhaga articulated in a more cryptic form, as the wisdom that is born “subsequently” (Takasaki 1966:266, 312, 334-335). According to *Karika* 7 it is written “Being inconceivable, eternal, everlasting, // Being quiescent, constant, and perfectly pacified, // Being all-pervading and apart from discrimination, // The pure and immaculate Buddhahood is like space, // It has neither attachment nor hindrances anywhere, // And being devoid of rough sensation, // It can be neither perceived nor cognized. (Takasaki 1966:322).

59 The “three worlds”, refer to the worlds of desire, the world of form and the world of formlessness. It also refers to the three times of past, present, and future. These three “times” are a product of a view and do not exist inherently, thus time and space are categories of the dualistic mind. Reality or Life proper exists in the self-arising-ceasing “moment.” Dogen writes that: “Life in the present exists in this pivot-state, and this pivot-state exists in the present. Life is not [a process of] appearance; life is not [a process of] disappearance; life is not a manifestation in the present; and life is not a realization. Rather life is the manifestation of all functions...” (Dogen 1996:285-286) The point of this is to explain that “true life” is not constituted by time and space. It is the complete free and liberated moment beyond time and space functioning within the appearance of time and space. It is the moment beyond any indirect conceptual discrimination of it, hence a total simultaneous existence, where the Total-Existence arises and ceases simultaneously.

60 In the footnote to this passage it is said that “Tathagata“ means the Tathagata-dhatu, regarded as the dharmadhatu. And this means that “Tathagata” in this passage should be understood both as the Absolute nature of the totality, which simultaneously is the absolute nature of a buddha, its pure expression.

61 Perception here refers to the third *skandha*, referring to the faculty of discrimination. This the above three, refer to the conceptual and discriminatory perception of reality as having own-and separate being. 62 “Opposed to them,” here means in terms of view.

63 This is of course not strictly true, because all of these aspects do not exist simultaneously, rather I am what appear, and that which appears depends on causes and conditions. Yet there is simultaneously a repetition involved that creates a sense of familiarity, and this familiarity creates the sense of reality. It is this that we feel as real and true about who we are, but it only feels like this because it is familiar. And to the degree that we do not change our habits and these habits are never challenged they become strengthened and fortify the sense of reality.

64 This mode of explaining is inspired by Spinoza’s outline in *The Ethics*.

65 This point also reflects the dispute between the Sarvastivada school and the Mahayana movement.

66 This is intended as a technical note and is therefore not essentially a part of the text, but I chose to incorporate it in case the reader should be interested. The relationship between potential and nature lies at the heart of the Tathagatagarbha or Buddha-nature tradition of Buddhism. And is a difficult subject that lays inherently in its mode of presenting the Buddha-natures as already present and concealed. If we look at the term Tathagatagarbha it generally refers to the seed or embryo (*garbha*) of the buddha (*tathagata*) and a more comprehensive analysis of the term reveals a dual meaning. Tathagatagarbha is a Sanskrit word and a compound of the two terms tathagata and garbha, the former can be subdivided into tatha + agata, “thus come”; or tatha +gata, “thus gone”. This is a usual epithet of the Buddha, the Awakened One, and is tied up to the Buddhist metaphysics of enlightenment. One that has “gone” is one that has left the realm of ignorance and samsara through realizing emptiness and attaining nirvana. “Thus come” marks the aspect of returning from the Truth or Absolute out of compassion to aid all sentient beings. Through this compound we therefore get the simultaneous going-coming aspect, where to realize truth is simultaneously to return out of compassion, which is the seal of a Buddha. The second aspect, garbha usually has two meanings, referring to either “embryo” or “womb”. Here again we are faced with some of the dilemma of the previous quote, that is something that lends itself to different interpretations. The philosophical implications of which term is chosen brings bearing on how the Tathagatagarbha theory is interpreted, or rather the interpretation brings bearing on which of the terms that are used. Brian Edward Brown chooses to translate the Tathagatagarbha as the tathagata-embryo, as he says in *The Buddha Nature*, referring to Takasaki’s translation of the word into matrix (or womb) that “this would seem to miss entirely the dynamic, self transformative nature of the Tathagatagarbha.” (Brown 1991:44). Later on he adds that this accords well with Ruegg, who in his excellent study of the concept notes that the Tibetan equivalent of Tathagatagarbha could never be translated as “womb”, but more properly rendered, “embryonic essence” “kernel” or “heart”. Brown’s reflection are true, that the tathagatagarbha is not a static term, but nature is in Buddhism not understood as a static term. Whether one chooses nature or seed, is more tied up with emphasis rather than dynamic’s. However in choosing this interpretation the emphasis has been placed on the dynamic self realizing process of this seed, a process in time and space, but the drawback of this interpretation, invites an understanding of life and practice that speaks to the dual consciousness in a psychologically unwholesome way, and is also disclosing a nature which matures and grows, something which becomes attained, a nature becoming manifest and not disclosed. From this understanding the Tathagatagarbha signifies something which is contained, hidden and inherent potential. But although this is the case he mentions that the majority of the Chinese translations render Tathagatagarbha as *jo lai tsang*, in which *tsang* refers to “storehouse,” suggesting either that which enfolds or contains something, or that which is itself enfolded or contained. According to Sally B. King (King 19:) although the Tibetan and Mongolian preferred the latter that is, the seed or embryo understanding, the Chinese preferred the interpretation of womb. Although the choice of interpretation not necessarily excludes the other point of view, we can see how this informs two very different understandings of what the Buddha Nature is. In the East Asian form of Buddhism, this took on a more ontological interpretation, where according to Williams *The Awakening of Faith* sees the Buddha-essence [mind/nature] doctrine as a cosmological theory, an explanation of the true nature of the cosmos, and this feature characterizes Chinese discussion of the Tathagatagarbha [buddha seed/nature]. Generally in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism it was the soteriological dimension of the Buddha-essence theory which was stressed – the Buddha essence is that within sentient beings which enables sentient beings to become enlightened. For the *Awakening of Faith*, however: “The Principle is “the mind of sentient being.” This mind includes in itself all states of being of the phenomenal and the transcendental world” (Williams 1989:) It was understood as the ultimate reality and

ground of existence, as the above shentong view. It therefore came to be analysed in terms of this totality rather than a potentiality, and therefore came to employ the term Buddha-nature from the Sanskrit *buddhata*. Accordingly Dogen writes that, “There is one group of people who thinks as follows: The Buddha-nature is like the seed of a plant or tree. As the rain of Dharma waters it again and again, its buds and sprouts begin to grow. Then twigs, leaves, flowers, and fruit abound, and the fruit ones more bears seeds. Views like this are the sentimental thinking of the common man. If we do hold such views, we should investigate that seeds, and flowers and fruits, are all separate instances of the naked mind. In fruits there are seeds. The seeds, though unseen, produce roots, stalks and so on. Though they do not gather anything to themselves, they grow into a profusion of twigs, branches, and trunks. They are beyond discussion of inside and outside; and in Time, past and present, they are not void. Thus even if we rely on the view of the common man, roots, stalks, branches, and leaves may all be the Buddha-nature which is born with them, which dies with them, and which is just the same as their Total Existence.” (Dogen 1996:.) What Dogen expresses in this statement is that the Buddha-nature is both a potential and the manifest reality. Each moment of “development” or “becoming” a buddha is the buddha-nature itself becoming a buddha, being a buddha. Because buddha or enlightenment is not a state, but ultimate reality itself. Thus Through the logic of the Buddha-nature the problem ultimately dissolves.⁶⁷ I find that the understanding of this “nature of need” invites a particular difficulty of interpretation. And I am therefore uncertain as how Buddhism as a religion conceives of this view versus what can be deduced from the philosophical implications. It seems from a general Buddhist point of view that the “nature of needs” is understood negatively. As such they are something that should be transcended, left behind, as they neither serve the person, the surroundings and therefore are suffering. However this point of view needs to be understood in relation to the Buddhist conception of existence as a totality, where freedom is the highest good. Both on account of the internal benefits and because through liberation one is in a position to serve others more fully through compassion and wisdom. On this account the different views are not understood in terms of themselves, but in relation to liberation and function. To a certain degree this relational understanding seems to lack compassion for the particular individual that exists as that expression of the Buddha-nature. Although it is philosophically correct. This again might create a sense of judgement about one of Life’s expressions, which might propagate the need to escape rather than understand and realize completely. Hence I believe it is important to distinguish between the Buddhist analytical approach, which simply seeks to reveal the function and nature of the human existence, and how humans choose to evaluate these expressions. There is therefore no problem to both have a clear analysis together with a deep appreciation for all of life’s expressions. Hence although from the point of view of the Ordinary Person, life or reality becomes a place or space of use, from the perspective of the Buddha-nature it becomes the place and space for self-liberation, self-understanding, and in turn liberating others.

⁶⁸ In Buddhism, the Bodhisattva path is understood to be constituted by ten different stages or bhumis, that are defined according to wisdom and insight gained. At the end of the path it is understood that the Bodhisattva path culminates in Buddhahood and is said to take three eons. They therefore reveal a gradual deepening and understanding of the initial realization that transformed the view from that of an Ordinary Person to a Bodhisattva. However the initial stage is according to the *Ratnagotravibhaga* defined as the perception of this absolute body, which means the non-separation of phenomenal existence and is what I will have as my point of departure in this passage. For the interested reader the Avatamsaka Sutra refers the following ten Bhumi [1]: The First Bhumi, the Very Joyous. (*Paramudita*), in which one rejoices at realizing a partial aspect of the truth; The Second Bhumi, the Stainless. (*Vimala*), in which one is free from all defilement; The Third Bhumi, the Luminous. (*Prabhakari*), in which one radiates the light of wisdom; The Fourth Bhumi, the Radiant. (*Archishmati*), in which the radiant flame

of wisdom burns away earthly desires; The Fifth Bhumi, the Difficult to Cultivate. (*Sud urjaya*), in which one surmounts the illusions of darkness, or ignorance as the Middle Way; The Sixth Bhumi, the Manifest. (*Abhimukhi*) in which supreme wisdom begins to manifest; The Seventh Level, the Gone Afar. (*Duramgama*), in which one rises above the states of the Two vehicles; The Eighth Level, the Immovable. (*Achala*), in which one dwells firmly in the truth of the Middle Way and cannot be perturbed by anything; The Ninth Level, the Good Intelligence. (*Sadhumati*), in which one preaches the Law freely and without restriction; The Tenth Level, the Cloud of Doctrain. (*Dharmamegha*), in which one benefits all sentient beings with the Law (*Dharma*), just as a cloud sends down rain impartially on all things. 69 Although both the Buddha-nature and the Dharmakaya are the same nondual nature, there is a technical difference between the two terms. The Buddha-nature have been seen to refer to Total-Existence and as Dogen wrote, there are no “perceivers” present in the Buddha-nature. Because at the moment of realization there are no particular “point of view.” Hence neither the knower nor the known are present, as these come into being through a view. The concept of the dharmakaya reflects this fact of view and therefore designates the perceived aspect of the Buddha-nature as unity. Consequently the bodhisattva has realized the Dharmakaya, but not the Buddha-nature. This is what separates his realization from that of a buddha because the Buddha-nature can only be revealed through the removal of all conceptual defilements. Hence both a buddha and a bodhisattva perceive the dharmakaya, but only buddha perceive it non-dually. I believe that this interpretation can be backed up by the *Ratnagotravibhaga*, where Tathata is presented as the Absolute having two modalities: *samla* and *nirmala* tathata. Here the first refer do the Buddha-nature as *garbha*, i.e. in its concealed aspect and the latter is referred to as the dharmakaya. Hence dharmakaya designates the perceived aspect of the Buddha-nature where a view has come into place. For more information on this possible interpretation, see Brown (1991). From this it follows that the kind of understanding that a bodhisattva has is a Shentong realization of emptiness. It is the nondual Buddhajnana that has been recognized as the dharmakaya, and not simply the self-emptiness of phenomenal existence.

70 As the verse says, the bodhisattvas are perceivers of Truth, but “The buddhas are apart from the dualistic view.”

71 According to Asanga one of the founders of the Yogacara school of Buddhism, there are three natures of consciousness, the imagined nature, the dependent nature and the perfected nature. Because of “store consciousness” the mind recognizes objects. As the mind perceives an object it becomes dependent on the memory recognition of that object. Therefore the perception becomes dependently originating. The individual then places imaginary nature on that object, by defining it and perceiving it as having any source of inherent existence. When the individual can clear the mind of imagined nature and the illusory perceived constructs created because of dependently originating dependent nature, the individual realizes perfected nature. Free from the finite restraints of dependent and imagined forms of consciousness.

72 As it says in the *Ratnagotravibhaga*: “Here, ‘being as it is (*yathavad-bhavikata*)’ should be understood thus:...They (i.e. Bodhisattvas) have understood the extremity of non-substantiality (*nairatmyakoti*) of the whole world called individualities and Separate Elements (*pudgala-dharma-akhya*) as it is. And this understanding...is produced, in short, by two causes. Namely, because of their perception of the innate brightness (*praktiprabhasvarata*) of the mind, and because of their perception of ‘being destroyed from the outset’ (*adiksaya*).” (Takasaki 1966:174)

73 The Six Paramitas or virtues can be understood as different virtues that the Bodhisattvas perfects and through which he attains enlightenment. What is interesting with this comment is that they are said to be integral to sunyata itself. Thus these perfection are not so much generated as they are revealed. However they are only revealed due to the bodhisattvas constant clarification of Truth, i.e. bringing out of concealment. Mahayana Buddhism lists these Six Perfections: Dana paramita: generosity, giving of oneself, Sila paramita: virtue, morality, discipline, proper conduct, Kshanti paramita: patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance, endurance, Virya paramita: energy, diligence, vigour, effort, Dhyana paramita: one-pointed concentration, contemplation, Prajna paramita: wisdom, insight. Hence one interpretation of these is that the more one clarifies the inherent nature, the more present these will become and strengthen the path to Buddhahood.

74 There is a difference between an interpretation of the Buddha-nature and having an indirect relationship through conceptual and substantial ideas. A buddha has a view of existence, but there are no self here, no substantial and separate entity, only clarity and emptiness.

75 Buddhism as a religion would hold that this is the truth of existence, and that all forms of life are simply the same life that eventually will become enlightenment. Hence the human existence is not a box that only "humans" can attain. Rather one can move through these different "boxes" of existence determined by Karma. Philosophically speaking one can say that we can only understand Existence from our own point of view, hence we impute on account of that particular existence.

76 "Structures" here might mean anything external, social groups, law, societies, etc. these are things that affect the individual in different ways.

77 When I use the concept of "mythology" I do so according to the outline that Joseph Campbell has provided, where: "...a mythology is a control system, on the one hand framing its community to accord with an intuited order of nature and, on the other hand, by means of its symbolic pedagogic rites, conducting individuals through the ineluctable psychophysiological stages of transformation of a human lifetime - birth, childhood and adolescence, age, old age, and the release of death - in unbroken accord simultaneously with the requirements of this world and the rapture of participation in a manner of being beyond time." (Campbell 2008)

Bibliography and Sources Consulted.

- Abe, M. (1992): *A Study of Dogen: His Philosophy and Religion*. Steven Heine (ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Abe, M. (1958): *Zen and Western Thought*. William R. LaFleur (ed.): Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Arnold, G. S. (2002): <http://www.mro.org/zmm/teachings/shugen/shugen16.php>
- Atisa (1981): "Atisa's Introduction to the Two Truths, and its Sources," (*Satyadvayavatara*. Tibetan text and translation in C. Lindtner), *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 9:161-214
- Badiner, A. H. (1990): *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*. Berkeley: Parallax Press.
- Barnes, J. (1982): *The Presocratic Philosophers*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Barnhil, D. L. and Gottlieb R.S. (eds.) (2001): *Deep Ecology and World Religions: Essays on Sacred Ground*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Batchler, M. and Brown, K. (eds.) (1992): *Buddhism and Ecology*. London: Chassell.
- Benveniste, E. (1948): *Noms d'agents et noms d'action en indo-europeens*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Bodhi, B. (2000): *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*. Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications.
- Brown, B.E. (1991): *The Buddha Nature: A study of the Tathagatagarbha and Alayavijnana*: Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.
- Burnet, J. (1930/1945): *Early Greek Philosophy*. 4th ed. London: Adam and Charles Black.
- Callicott, B. and Ames, R. (1989) *Nature In Asian Tradition and Thoughts: Essays in Environmental Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Campbell, J. (2001): *The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers*. Mystic Fire Video
- Campbell, J. (1986): *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*. California: New World Library.

- Campbell, J. (2008): <http://mythosandlogos.com/Campbell.html>
- Carson, R. (1962): *The Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Carson, R. (2008): <http://www.rachelcarson.org/RachelCarson.ASPX>
- Chang, G. C. C. (1972): *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Cleary, T. (1986): *The Flower Ornament Scripture: a Translation of the Avatamsaka Sutra*. Boston: Shambala Publications.
- Cleary, T. (1995): *Rational Zen: The Mind of Dogen Zenji*. Boston: Shambala Publications.
- Cook, F. H. (1985): "Dogen's View of Authentic Selfhood and Socio-ethical Implications." In *Dogen Studies*. LaFleur, W. (ed.) Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Dayal, H. (1975): *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.
- Franck, F. (2004): *The Buddha Eye: An anthology of The Kyoto School and Its Contemporaries*. New York: World Wisdom Inc.
- Garfield, J. L. (1995): *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Garfield J. L. (2002): *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Glacken C. J. (1967): *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*. Berkeley: University of California Press, Ltd.
- Gore, A. (2008): <http://clinton2.nara.gov/WH/EOP/OVP/24hours/carson.html>
- Hakeda, Y. S. (1967): *The Awakening of Faith: Attributed to Asvaghosa*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hamill, S. and Seaton, J. P. (2007): *The Poetry of Zen*. Boston: Shambala Publications.
- Hamilton, S. (1996): *Identity and Experience: The Constitution of the Human Being According to Early Buddhism*. London: Luzac Oriental.
- Hadot, P. (2002): *What is Ancient Philosophy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Harvey, P. (1990): *An Introduction To Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Heidegger, M. (1978): *Basic Writings; Revised and Expanded Edition*. Krell, D.F. (ed.) New York: Routledge.
- Heidegger, M. (1976): "On Being and Conception of *phusis* in Aristotle's Physics B1." In *Man and the World*. Trans. J. Sheehan. New York: Harper and Row.
- Heine, S. (1985): *Existential and Ontological Dimensions in Heidegger and Dogen*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Heine, S. (1989): *A Blade of Grass: Japanese Poetry and Aesthetics in Dogen Zen*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Hookham, S. K. (1991): *The Buddha Within: Tathagatagarbha Doctrine According to the Shentong Interpretation of the Ratnagotravibhaga*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Hopkins, P. (1983): *Meditations on Emptiness*. Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications.
- Hopkins, J. (2006): *Mountain Doctrine: Tibet's Fundamental Treatise on Other-Emptiness and the Buddha Matrix*. New York: Snow Lion Publications.
- Hopkins, J. (2007): *The Essence of Other-Emptiness, by Taranatha*. New York: Snow Lion Publications.
- Ibsen, H. (2004): *Peer Gynt*. Trans. Archer, W. and Archer, C. <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/i/ibsen/henrik/i1p/>
- Kalupahana, D. J. (1975): *Causality: The central Philosophy of Buddhism*. Honolulu: University Pres of Hawaii.
- Katz, E., Light, A. & Rothenberg, D. (eds.) (2000): *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- Kaza, S. and Kraft, K. (eds.) (2000) *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*. Boston: Shambala Publications.
- Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche (2000): *Buddha Nature: The Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra* by Arya Maitreya, written down by Arya Asanga, commentary by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye "The Unassailable Lion's Roar", explanations by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, translated by Roamarie Fuchs. New York: Snow Lion Publications.
- Kim, H. (2004): *Eihei Dogen: Mystical Realist*. Boston: Wisdom Publications

- Kim, H. (2007): *Dogen on Meditation and Thinking: A reflection on his view of Zen* Albany: State University of New York Press.
- King, S. B. (1991): *Buddha Nature*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Lachier, L. (1972): "Nature." In *Vocabulaire Technique et Critique de la Philosophie*. 11th ed. A. Lalande. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- LaFleur, W. (ed.) (1985): *Dogen Studies*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Leighton, D. T. and Okumura, S. (2004): *Dogen's Extensive Records: A Translation of the Eihei Koroku*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Leighton, D.T. (2000): *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing.
- Libenthal, W. (1968): *Chao lun, by Seng Chao*. Trans. W. Libenthal. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Lloyd, G. (1994): *Self-Knowledge in Spinoza's Ethics: Part of Nature*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Long, A.A. (1999): *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lopez, D. S. (1996): *Elaborations on Emptiness*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Lovejoy, A. O. and Boas, G. (1997): *Primitivism and related ideas in Antiquity*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Loy, D. (1988): *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*. New York: Humanity Books, an Imprint of Prometheus Books.
- Luetchford, M. E. (2002): *Between Heaven and Earth: From Nagarjuna to Dogen. A Translation and Interpretation of the Mulamadhyamakakarika. With Commentary and Gramatical Analysis*. Bristol: Windbell Publications.
- Naddaf, G. (2005): *The Greek Concept of Nature*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Nishijima, G. and Cross, C. (1994): *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 1*. Surrey: Windbell Publications.
- Nishijima, G. and Cross, C. (1996): *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 2*. Surrey: Windbell Publications.

- Nishijima, G. and Cross, C. (1997): *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 3*. Surrey: Windbell Publications.
- Nishijima, G. and Cross, C. (1999): *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 4*. Surrey: Windbell Publications.
- Næss, A. (1989): *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*. Trans. D. Rothenberg. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Oelschlaeger, M. (1991) *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology*. New York: Yale University Press.
- Patrick, G.T.W. and Bywater, I. (1888): *Heraclitus of Ephesus: The Fragments of the Work of Heraclitus of Ephesus: On Nature and Heracliti Ephesii Reliquiae*. Chicago: Argonaut, Inc., Publishers.
- Ramanan, K. V. (1975): *Nagarjuna's Philosophy*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.
- Pine, R. (2000): *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain*. Washington: Copper Canyon Press.
- Pine, R. and O'Connor, M. (1990): *The Clouds Should Know Me By Now: Buddhist Poet monks of China*. Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications.
- Richter, D. J. (2006): *Ludwig Wittgenstein*. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/w/wittgens.htm>
- Rosen, S. (1988): *The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry*. New York: Routledge.
- Santideva (1997): *The Way of the Bodhisattva: a translation of the Bodhicharyavatara*. Trans. Padmakara Translation Group. Boston: Shambala Publications.
- Sarkar S. (2005): <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ecology/>
- Shibayama, Z. (1970): *A Flower Does Not Talk*. Tokyo: Tuttle Company Inc.
- Shirley, S. (1992): *Baruch Spinoza: Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect and Selected Letters*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
- Souilhé, F. (1919): *Etude sur le term "dunamis" dans les dialogues de Platon*. Paris: F. Alcan.
- Suzuki, D. T. (1961): *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press.

- Suzuki, D. T. (1963): *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Taylor, C. C. W. (1997): *Routledge History of Philosophy. Vol. 1 From the Beginnings to Plato*. London: Routledge.
- Tanahashi, K. (1985): *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*. New York: North Point Press
- Takasaki, J. (1966): *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhaga (Uttaratantra): Being a Treatise on the Tathagatagarbha Theory of Mahayana Buddhism*. Roma: Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente.
- Takasaki, J. (1987): *An Introduction to Buddhism*. Trans. R. W. Giebel. Tokyo: Toho Gakkai.
- Tsultrim, G. K. (1986): *Progressive Stages on Emptiness*. Oxford: Longchen Foundation
- Tucker, M. E. and Williams, D. R. (eds.) (1997): *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Waterfield, R. (1996): *Aristotle: Physics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wayman, A. and Wayman, H. (1974): *The Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala: A Buddhist Scripture on the Tathagatagarbha Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wetlesen, J. (2000): *Selverkjennelse og Frigjøring – Et Buddhistisk Perspektiv*. Oslo: Buddhistforbundets Forlag.
- Wetlesen, J. (2006): *Searching for the Self in Buddhist Traditions*. (Unpublished)
- Williams, P. (1989): *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundation*. New York: Routledge.
- Yamada, K. (2004): *Gateless Gate: The Classic Book of Zen Koans*. Massachusetts: Wisdom Publications.
- Yampolsky, P. B. (1967): *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Yun, H. (2004): *empty Cloud: The Teaching of Hsu Yun*.
<http://zbohy.zatma.org/Dharma/zbohy/Literature/xybook/flower1.html>
- Zimmerman, M. E. (1986): *Eclipses of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*. Ohio: Ohio University Press.

