

SUMMARY

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY OF EMPTINESS

The book presents the core of Buddhist teachings, which concern the philosophy of emptiness. The basis of the presentation is a classical text by Chandrakirti *Introduction into Middle Way* (with Tibetan commentaries by the 8th Karmapa Mikyo Dorje and Jamgon Mipham) and Nagarjuna's texts (with commentaries by Chandrakirti and Jamgon Mipham).

Chandrakirti-following sutras-lists 16 types of emptiness which are grouped into four classes giving together twenty different ways of understanding emptiness. The book is then divided into four parts corresponding to the four main classes of emptiness. The first part deals with the Buddhist critique of atomism, elements, and the concept of subject, object and time. The second part deals with a critique of the concept of essence and with the most general understanding of emptiness as the emptiness of essence. Introducing the notion of phenomena as empty of essence is achieved via a critique of causality leading to the central conception of Mahayana philosophy, which is that of dependent arising. The third part deals with a critique of the concept of non-thing (for example, space). The fourth presents the famous idea of "emptiness of emptiness" showing that Buddhist philosophy-contrary to common misconceptions-is not fixated on emptiness, which in the end does not play the role of absolute in this thought. In this part also the question of skepticism of Buddhist philosophy is addressed, showing its points of convergence and divergence with European skepticism.

In its outer form similar to skepticism, Buddhist philosophy is shown as an extremely consequent procedure aiming at liberating the mind from redundant philosophical bias that instead of showing reality only covers it, presenting its false picture. Emptiness turns out to be a tool which is used in the name of an inexpressible experience of reality in its richness that cannot be captured by any philosophical description. That is why the book ends with the chapter on-let us say-the 21st type of emptiness, which on the level of Buddhist tantra is described as joy.

The book aims at showing the richness of the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness, also known as the 'philosophy of middle way', thereby highlighting its position between ontology on the one extreme and nihilism (which is often mistakenly taken to be) on the other, both extremes being criticized by it. Buddhist philosophy is presented in the context of European philosophical tradition, since it is the most natural and in fact necessary way of approaching this topic. References to European tradition occur in two ways. On the one hand, examples of familiar philosophical solutions (Sextus Empiricus, Hume, Kant) are chosen to show that Buddhist thought is not any strange thought construction, alien to the European mind. However, on the other hand, Aristotle, for example, is chosen as a representative of philosophy which is not far from standpoints criticized by Buddhist philosophy.

In this way Buddhist philosophy is-hopefully-shown as completely relevant to European thinking and at the same time aiming beyond the area of interest of European thought, at the experience of ultimate truth as richness and joy, which is pointed out by the middle way philosophy of emptiness.