CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Political Science

Bachelor's Thesis

2024   **Neha Dahal**

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Buddhism in Nietzsche's Critique: A Reassessment of Nihilism

Bachelor's Thesis

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Study Programme: Politics, Philosophy and Economics

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30/04/2024   Neha Dahal

References

DAHAL, Neha. Buddhism in Nietzsche's Critique: A Reassessment of Nihilism. Praha, 2024.63s. Bachelor's thesis (Bc). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies, Department of Political Science. Supervisor prof. Janusz Salamon, Ph.D.

Length of the Thesis: 126,236 characters with spaces

Abstract

Frederich Nietzche's criticism of Buddhism as fundamentally nihilistic has resulted in an extensive scholarly debate. This thesis examines and evaluates the validity and reliability of Nietzsche's critique through three central hypotheses in three chapters. The first hypothesis investigates the reliability of Nietzsche's understanding of Buddhism, primarily based on testimonial knowledge rather than directly engaging with Buddhist scriptures. This sole reliance on second-hand sources raises questions about the accuracy of his interpretations due to the ongoing debate on epistemology regarding whether testimonial knowledge can be used as the only source of knowledge. Second, the analysis addresses Nietzsche's limited exposure to only the Theravada (Hinayana) doctrine of Buddhism, overlooking the doctrinal richness and diversity represented by other significant schools such as Mahayana and Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism. This oversight raises concerns about the generalisability of his conclusions across the broader spectrum of Buddhist thought, which features varying approaches to suffering, emptiness, and enlightenment. Lastly, the thesis explores the similarities between Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies and the principles of Zen Buddhism. Despite their diverse backgrounds, both philosophies commit to transcending traditional values and realising a deeper, more authentic form of existence. The convergences suggest a shared commitment to confronting and transforming the existential condition of nihilism, thus undermining the basis of Nietzsche's critique. By evaluating these hypotheses, this thesis claims that Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism is invalid.

Abstrakt

Kritika buddhismu Fredericha Nietzche jako zásadně nihilistického vyústila v rozsáhlou odbornou debatu. Tato práce zkoumá a hodnotí validitu a reliabilitu Nietzscheho kritiky prostřednictvím tří ústředních hypotéz ve třech kapitolách. První hypotéza zkoumá spolehlivost Nietzscheho chápání buddhismu, primárně založeného na znalostech svědectví spíše než na přímém zapojení do buddhistických písem. Toto jediné spoléhání se na zdroje z druhé ruky vyvolává otázky o přesnosti jeho interpretací kvůli pokračující debatě o epistemologii ohledně toho, zda lze výpovědní znalosti použít jako jediný zdroj znalostí. Za druhé, analýza se zabývá tím, že Nietzsche je omezeně vystaven pouze theravádové (hinajánové) doktríně buddhismu, přičemž přehlíží doktrinální bohatství a rozmanitost reprezentované jinými významnými školami, jako je mahájána a vadžrajána (tibetský) buddhismus. Toto přehlédnutí vyvolává obavy ohledně zobecnitelnosti jeho závěrů napříč širším spektrem buddhistického myšlení, které se vyznačuje různými přístupy k utrpení, prázdnotě a osvícení. Nakonec práce zkoumá podobnosti mezi Nietzscheho anti-nihilistickými filozofiemi a principy zenového buddhismu. Navzdory svému různorodému zázemí se obě filozofie zavazují k překonání tradičních hodnot a realizaci hlubší, autentičtější formy existence. Konvergence naznačují společný závazek čelit a transformovat existenciální podmínky nihilismu, čímž podkopávají základy Nietzscheho kritiky. Vyhodnocením těchto hypotéz tato teze tvrdí, že Nietzscheho kritika buddhismu je neplatná.

Keywords: Nihilism, Buddhism, Enlightenment, Nirvana, Diversity, Knowledge

Klíčová slova: Nihilismus, Buddhismus, Osvícení, Nirvána, Rozmanitost, Znalost

Buddhismus v Nietzscheho kritice: Přehodnocení nihilismu

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the university for giving me the opportunity to write this thesis, through which I learned a lot. I would also like to thank my friend Anna Aghajanyan for being my support system and proofreading my work. I want to extend my biggest thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Janusz Salamon, for his patience and continued guidance throughout the process.

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INTRODUCTION

Research Questions:

1. Is Nietzsche's claim that Buddhism is nihilistic true, or does it require a thorough re-examination within a broader philosophical discourse?
2. When considering the diversity of Buddhism, can Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism as nihilistic withstand scrutiny?

Why Nihilism?

In the modern period, we are witnessing a rise in nihilism. According to the Striving for Balance, Advocating for Change (2022) survey conducted by Deloitte Global Gen Z and Millennial survey, Gen Z and millennials are worried about the state of the world. Having had to manage one crisis after another, they are facing burnout and have expressed concerns regarding nihilism. This upsurge comes from the current generation facing problems such as climate change, political instability, growing living costs, higher unemployment rates, wealth disparity, wars and the COVID-19 pandemic, among others. Due to its relevance in today's day and age, the need to address the topic of nihilism today is paramount.

While the origins of nihilism can be traced back to the foundations of Western metaphysics and the Judeo-Christian moral tradition (Li, 2016), it only gained prominence in 19th-century Russian anarchism and revolutionary opposition (Hatab,1987). German philosopher Frederich Nietzsche, a towering figure in philosophy, is renowned for his work on the nature of human existence, truth, and nihilism. He radically challenged the foundations of traditional values and beliefs, exploring and critiquing nihilism. According to Carr (1990), Nietzsche referred to nihilism as the "danger of dangers" (p.86), emphasising its profound impact on human life and society. He claimed that nihilism creates a void in people's lives and has the potential to lead to existential crises, where people struggle to find meaning in anything they do and see no point in living. This leads to changes in behaviour and how people interact in society as the lines between right and wrong become blurred. Nietzsche also links nihilism to physiological decadence, viewing it as a cultural and moral decay. Furthermore, he argues that nihilism threatens survival, as a loss of meaning could lead one to consider ending one's life or not fighting to survive.

Additionally, Nietzsche's conceptualisation of nihilism is the erosion of values. The fundamental values a society embraces are devalued, especially those stemming from religious and metaphysical traditions. His announcement of the 'death of God' is a symbol of the deterioration of absolute, transcendent ideals. As a result of this subsidence, the hitherto assumed pillars of truth, morality and purpose have been compromised, leading to a moral and existential void. He was worried that Europe was on its way to becoming a nihilistic society. Therefore, many of his philosophies revolved around ways to avoid nihilism (Li, 2016).

Nietzsche distinguishes between two types of nihilism, namely active and passive nihilism. He refers to active nihilism as a positive outlook, as when faced with an existential crisis, active nihilism seeks to develop new meanings and values. In contrast, passive nihilism succumbs and surrenders to this emptiness. Furthermore, he believes that nihilism is both a disease and a cure. He understood it as a sickness to be overcome to accomplish more excellent philosophical health and implies that this healing process may be relevant to every human being. This allows advancement in our lives (Carr, 1990).

Nietzsche recognised several reasons for nihilism. He identified the collapse of traditional belief systems, especially those rooted in Christianity and metaphysics, as the primary cause. These belief systems gave human beings values, human existence, and universal truths with a sense of logical legitimacy and justification. The destruction of these structures left a vacuum that gave rise to the notion that life is meaningless and worthless (Hatab, 1987). Western philosophy's search for the absolute truth is another reason Nietzsche mentioned. He criticised Western philosophy for its search for a single, static truth. He believed the search for such truth was a fictitious attempt to exert a rigid framework onto a dynamic and ever-evolving reality. He argued that this search led to a loss of faith in conventional philosophical ideas, which contributed to the emergence of nihilism as these ideas became less realistic (Hatab, 1987).

Additionally, he believed that nihilism is an outcome of how philosophical and scientific developments have questioned and shrunk old values. He claims it is an extreme outcome of Western society's self-criticism, in which the most significant values denigrate themselves and create a constant sense of hopelessness and meaninglessness (Hatab, 1987). Another important reason, according to Nietzsche, is the death of God, which he wrote about in The Gay Science and Thus Spoke Zarathustra. This is a metaphor for the demise of a transcendent source of

meaning and value. He claimed that the collapse of faith in divine order left the world in existential chaos, leading people to believe that life has no intrinsic significance (Hatab, 1987).

Why Buddhism?

According to the Pew Research Center (2015), there are 488 million Buddhists today, comprising 7% of the world's population. This number is estimated to rise to 511 million by the year 2030. Buddhism underpins the worldviews of millions worldwide, including mine; therefore, Nietzsche's characterisation of Buddhism as nihilist strikes at the core of many people's worldviews, so it is worth addressing here.

Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment at 35 years old and became a Buddha (the enlightened one) under a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya. Thus, Buddhism was born. The philosophy talks about the four Nobel truths that mention that life is filled with suffering, suffering has a cause, and the cause is desire, so to be liberated from this suffering, one must follow the eight-fold path: right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration to be free from samsara (cycle of birth, death, rebirth, without beginning or end) to attain nirvana (Gadjin & Blum, 1987).

Today, Buddhism is practised in many Asian countries. Buddhism is a diverse philosophy with three primary vehicles/schools: Hinayana or Theravada (Lower Vehicle), Mahayana (Higher Vehicle), and Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism (Diamond Vehicle). Each school has unique practices and perspectives on the Buddha's teachings and the path to enlightenment (Gadjin & Blum, 1987).

The Critical Nexus: Nietzsche's Critique of Buddhist Nihilism

At the crux of this investigation lies Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism as a form of passive nihilism. This claim prompts significant scholarly intrigue, especially when the diversity of Buddhist doctrine is considered. Nietzsche was introduced to Buddhism by Arthur Schopenhauer. While Nietzsche considered Schopenhauer a great teacher and influence, when he started immersing in life-affirming philosophies, he found Schopenhauer's philosophy, along with Buddhism, to be pessimistic and life-denying. He viewed Buddhism as a form of passive nihilism, a philosophy where one succumbs to the emptiness. This thought of

Buddhism as nihilistic arises from his conviction that Buddhism embraces nothingness and discredits all human aspirations. He has also accused Buddhism of the denial of life (Elman, 1983).

In addition, he criticised Buddhism for having a pessimistic worldview and its stance that life is filled with suffering (dukkha). Nietzsche, therefore, argued that Buddhism encourages a withdrawal from life, which he viewed as the denial of the world and a refusal to engage with the reality of existence (Shakiba, 2020). Another criticism of Nietzsche was regarding the sunyata (emptiness) concept in Buddhism. He interpreted this concept of sunyata as accepting and consenting to non-existence and rejecting the world, associating it with nothingness. Furthermore, he also condemned Buddhism for denying the idea of self (anatta). He argued that this led to the dissolution of individuality and diminished the significance of one's identity (Elman, 1983)

Additionally, he believed Buddhism fosters morality based on self-abnegation, self-sacrifice, and pity, all of which he perceived to be harmful to the flourishing of humankind. He also had a narrow view of the ultimate goal of Buddhism, which is Nirvana. He saw this, too, as a state of nothingness or annihilation analogous to Schopenhauer's denial of the will to live (Elman 1983).

Moreover, he saw Buddhism's emphasis on detachment and compassion as repudiating the individual's power and vitality. He argued that by advocating for the cessation of desire, Buddhism discouraged the expression of the will to power, which he believed to be essential for overcoming human limitations and achieving greatness (Shakiba, 2020). He also criticised Buddhism for its perception of desire as the root of suffering. He viewed this as rejecting the passions and instincts that drive ambition and human creativity, which he thought was prominent in his philosophy of the Übermensch or Superman, who goes through life by embracing and overcoming obstacles (Shakiba, 2020).

Nietzsche's critique of Buddhist Philosophy as nihilistic has sparked many responses from philosophers and scholars. While researching this thesis, I only came across journal articles and books that criticise Nietzsche for his criticisms of Buddhism, and none agree with him. Nietzsche's interpretations have been pointed out as misconceptions and offer alternative perspectives.

One of the most critical criticisms is that Nietzsche did not have first-hand knowledge of Buddhism. He relied on secondary sources such as Arthur Schopenhauer, Oldenberg's "Buddha," and Müller's "Selected Essays," which are known as testimonial knowledge in the philosophical vocabulary. He also associated Buddhism mainly with Schopenhauer, so he considered it an extension of his philosophies; therefore, his criticisms were mainly on Schopenhauer and not Buddhism (Morrison, 1999; Wirth, 2019).

His sources provided him with knowledge wholly based on Theravada Buddhism only. Therefore, his understanding was incomplete and biased towards a specific interpretation. Furthermore, his philosophical bias also significantly influenced his misunderstanding of Buddhism, especially his concept of nihilism. He viewed Buddhism as a kind of passive nihilism as it fits the definition in his perspective (Morrison, 1999). Moreover, his misunderstanding can be attributed to his lack of cultural context, which led him to interpret Buddhism by his own cultural and philosophical bias, preventing him from fully grasping the nuances and complexities of Buddhist philosophy (Morrison, 1999).

The paper "Nietzsche and Buddhism" by Benjamin Elman (1983) also criticises Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism as nihilistic, particularly the doctrine of emptiness (sunyata), which, in his view, Nietzsche misunderstood as being nihilistic. Elman argues sunyata is not about denying existence but recognising phenomena' transient nature and the non-existence of a permanent self. The paper also suggests that Nietzsche's critique stems from a European perspective, and in fact, both Buddhism and Nietzschean philosophies deal with overcoming nihilism in different ways. Nietzsche does so by advocating for life affirmation through the will to power and Buddhism through enlightenment and understanding of sunyata (Elman, 1983). Furthermore, Wirth and Panaioti's books revolve around the similarities between Buddhist and Nietzsche's philosophies. They claim that the two have similarities that Nietzsche was unaware of, which could be due to a lack of knowledge on other sectors of Buddhism other than Theravada. These similarities imply that he came up with philosophies similar to Mahayana Buddhism, so his critique of Buddhism cannot be justified (Wirth, 2019; Panaioti, 2013).

These criticisms prove that there are doubts about Nietzsche's criticisms of Buddhism. It paves the path for my thesis as it justifies my interest in writing on this topic. Most philosophers and scholars have not accepted Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism, thus paving the way for a thorough re-examination within a broader philosophical discourse.

Purpose of Thesis

As discussed above, nihilism threatens survival, as a loss of meaning could lead them to consider ending their own lives or not fighting to survive. Due to these reasons, it would be wise to refrain from taking a path that could lead to nihilism. However, most academics have not accepted Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism. Therefore, it is necessary to dive into this topic and evaluate it because if Nietzsche is correct in his claim of Buddhism as nihilistic, it could have significant implications for people turning to Buddhism and its practices in hopes of finding meaning and peace. As a result, the similarity or difference between Nietzsche's critique and the facts of Buddhist practices becomes crucial as the world struggles with existential challenges and seeks remedies for problems like anxiety, meaninglessness, and moral dilemmas. The answer to the research question aims to help people considering converting to Buddhism decide if it is a reliable choice by reading into the sources and coming up with their conclusions on the topic.

Being a Buddhist and being raised in a Buddhist nation motivated me to write this thesis. I grew up learning the teachings and practices of Vajrayana Buddhism. I was taught that Buddhism was the ideal philosophy or religion for having an abundant and fulfilling life. However, this changed after reading Nietzsche's criticism, which inspired me to learn more about the topic.

My distinctive contribution to this research is to investigate the likelihood that Nietzsche's assessment of Buddhism as totally nihilistic might have changed had he better understood the different types of Buddhism. His knowledge of Buddhism was only based on Theravada, also known as Hinayana Buddhism. This thesis will explore Mahayana Buddhism and its two subdivisions: Zen and Vajrayana Buddhism. This might result in a more accurate and nuanced evaluation of Nietzsche's ideas in light of a more profound comprehension of Buddhism. This aspect aims to fill the current gap in research on Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism.

Working Hypotheses

This thesis is structured around three core hypotheses:

- Nietzsche's perception of Buddhism relies heavily on the ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer, which suggests that Nietzsche never personally studied any Eastern philosophies, including Buddhism. Therefore, Nietzsche lacked first-hand knowledge of the subject. Given that his

knowledge was acquired through testimonials alone, it can be argued that his assessment has a critical reliability issue, which leads to an inaccurate characterisation of Buddhism as nihilistic. As such, the hypothesis undermines the validity of Nietzsche's critique by emphasising his sole reliance on second-hand sources. The theory, therefore, suggests that his interpretation may not accurately reflect the teachings of the Buddhist doctrine and ethical frameworks since testimonial knowledge cannot be used as the sole source of knowledge.

- There are three primary subtypes of Buddhism, each with different manifestations. Nietzsche only knew of and reached conclusions about Theravada Buddhism. This limited exposure neglects the rich diversity within the Buddhist tradition, such as Mahayana and Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism, the other two primary schools. Each school consists of distinct philosophical outlooks, practices, and rituals. The hypothesis contends that Nietzsche's conclusion of Buddhism as nihilistic and life-denying is fundamentally flawed, given his failure to account for the diversity within the Buddhist doctrine, specifically Tibetan Buddhism and its differing approaches to concepts such as suffering, emptiness, and enlightenment compared to Theravada Buddhism.

- The ideas of Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's philosophy to combat nihilism resemble. Therefore, his claim that Buddhism is nihilistic is consequently untrue because he developed ideas that are consistent with one of the main types of Buddhism. This hypothesis claims that Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism being nihilistic is contradicted by the similarities between his remedies for nihilism and those found within Zen Buddhism. The convergences suggest a shared commitment to confronting and transforming the existential condition of nihilism, thus undermining the basis of Nietzsche's critique. Therefore, his claim that Buddhism is nihilistic is untrue because he would not have developed ideas consistent with one of the schools of Buddhism if he believed his philosophies to be nihilistic and life-denying as well.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis will proceed as follows: First, the methodology used to evaluate the three hypotheses is explained. Then, it is structured into three chapters, each evaluating one of the three hypotheses. The first chapter will delve into the validity of Nietzsche's criticisms of Buddhism by assessing the use of testimonial knowledge as the sole source of knowledge. The second chapter is divided into two parts. The first part explores Tibetan Buddhism and compares it to Theravada Buddhism to portray the vast differences between the two doctrines. The second part explores key Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist philosophers and the question of nihilism to prove that Mahayana and Vajrayana, as an extension, are not nihilistic Buddhist doctrines. The third and final chapter compares Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies to analyse the parallels between the two philosophies to imply that Nietzsche was wrong about Buddhism as he came up with philosophies similar to one of the main schools of Buddhism. Lastly, a summary, outlook, and references are given.

Methodology

The thesis employed a comprehensive methodological approach in an attempt to examine Nietzsche's understanding and critique of Buddhism, namely the description of Buddhism as nihilistic. Therefore, I attempted to assess the accuracy and depth of Nietzsche's perspectives on Buddhism by considering the sources of his knowledge, his awareness of the diversity within the Buddhist tradition (specifically Tibetan Buddhism), and the parallels between his anti-nihilistic philosophies and the philosophy of Zen Buddhism.

The methodology involved a historical and textual analysis of Nietzsche's references to nihilism, Buddhism, and its critique, utilising various scholarly articles, books, and journals. This step attempted to recognise the specific sources of Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism, including the works of other philosophers that might have influenced Nietzsche's perceptions. Moreover, a literature review was used to determine the validity of testimonial knowledge as the sole source of knowledge and whether Nietzsche's sources of knowledge are reliable.

The thesis also conducted a comparative analysis of Theravada Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism to determine whether Nietzsche's critique will withstand scrutiny when the diversity within Buddhism is explored. Following this chapter, a study assessed whether Mahayana and

Vajrayana Buddhism can be considered nihilistic doctrines for the same purpose. The third chapter conducts a comparative analysis of Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies and Zen Buddhism. The section investigated the practices and teachings of Zen Buddhism in order to identify philosophical themes and solutions that potentially converge with Nietzsche's strategies for overcoming nihilism.

Lastly, this study revisited the initial hypotheses in light of the research findings in an attempt to answer the following research questions: To what extent is Nietzsche's judgement that Buddhism is ultimately nihilistic true? Given the diversity within Buddhism, can Nietzsche's judgement of Buddhism as nihilistic withstand scrutiny? This methodological approach, therefore, combines historical scholarship, textual analysis, comparative philosophy, and critical evaluation to examine Nietzsche's understanding and critique of Buddhism.

CHAPTER 1 – TESTIMONIAL KNOWLEDGE: EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHALLENGE TO NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF BUDDHISM

Fredrich Nietzsche's primary source of knowledge of Buddhism was through testimonials of other philosophers and scholars. Within academic circles, there is controversy regarding the epistemological legitimacy of testimony knowledge. To verify Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism as a form of passive nihilism, this chapter will investigate the validity of testimonials as the only source of knowledge. The chapter will explore the constraints of Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism, claiming that his conclusions lack justification due to his sole reliance on testimonial knowledge. Considering the intrinsic uncertainties regarding testimonial knowledge as a reliable source, Nietzsche's critique is exclusively built on the footing that is itself subject to scrutiny. This examination sheds light on the epistemological challenges of using testimonials to understand complicated philosophies like Buddhism comprehensively.

Buddhism in Nietzsche's Intellectual Framework

The question of how Nietzsche was introduced to Buddhism is the primary focus of the paper 'Nietzsche and Buddhism' by Benjamin A. Elman (1983). According to it, Nietzsche considered Arthur Schopenhauer to be a great teacher. Schopenhauer was a German philosopher deeply influenced by Eastern philosophies, especially Hinduism and Buddhism.

He thought of himself as the original European Buddhist. Nietzsche followed his works closely and was introduced to Buddhism through him.

A pessimistic view of the human condition characterised Schopenhauer's philosophy. It proposed that the root cause of the world is an irrational blind 'will' and advocated that this will be the fundamental source of human desire and misery. Like some schools of Buddhism, Schopenhauer advocated austere living, moral behaviour, and aesthetic contemplation to conquer this will (Elman, 1983).

Introducing the Philosophical Problem of Testimonial Knowledge

Testimonial knowledge is defined as a form of knowledge acquisition that relies on the claims or declarations of others. It entails accepting facts or opinions based on the trustworthiness and reliability of the testifying subject (Coady, 1992). Based on this definition, Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism is testimonial knowledge as he relied on Schopenhauer. Testimonial knowledge as an only source of knowledge has been debated for years as some claim that knowledge that comes from something outside our personal senses cannot be trusted, while others claim that the transfer of knowledge is essential; therefore, testimonial knowledge is true justified knowledge as long as it comes from a trustworthy source. I will use these arguments to explore the credibility of Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism and whether his criticisms are dependable.

Schopenhauer as the Main Source of Nietzsche's Knowledge of Buddhism

Arthur Schopenhauer was the primary source of Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism, so it is impossible to understand his views on Buddhism without considering Schopenhauer's knowledge. Additionally, it is crucial to understand the source on which Nietzsche based his critique of Buddhism being nihilistic to analyse if it can be justified.

Schopenhauer took pride in his philosophies, which were similar to Buddhist philosophy. He claimed that when his 'The World as Will and Representation' book came out in 1818, he had no knowledge of Buddhism and came up with his philosophy without its influence. He came to learn about Buddhism when the first translations of Buddhist and Hindu texts were available

in the nineteenth century. He was fond of Buddhism and called it the best of all religions. Toward the end of his life, he claimed to be a Buddhist himself (Abelsen, 1993).

Schopenhauer viewed Buddhism as a pessimistic philosophy much like his own. The first similarity he noticed was in the first noble truth of Buddhism, which claims that life is filled with Dukkha (suffering). This coincides with his claim that a constant 'Will' dominates existence, leading to pain (Abelsen, 1993). Another one parallels the second noble truth: desire is the cause of suffering; Schopenhauer also affirmed that 'Will' is driven by desire and causes misery. He also believed that the individual 'I' is an illusion, which aligns with the non-self doctrine of Anatta, which denies the existence of a permanent, static self. Buddhism preaches the five skandhas (five aggregates): form (rūpa), feeling (vedanā), perception (saññā), mental formations (saṅkhārā), and consciousness (viññāṇa) that make up the human experience and these give the illusion of self which in reality is empty and does not exist (Abelsen, 1993).

Similarly, Schopenhauer also believed the world to be a 'Representation' shaped by our subjectivity, which coincides with the Buddhist concept of Maya (illusion), which regards the material world as illusionary (Abelsen, 1993). Furthermore, both believe in liberation from the pains and illusions of the material world. Schopenhauer advocated for overcoming the 'Will' through the denial or minimisation of it. He proposed that the ways to still the constant striving and wants of the 'Will' were asceticism, ethical living, and aesthetic contemplation. Through these activities, people could achieve a calm state of being and escape beyond the cycle of pain and desire, achieving a nearly meditative state. Likewise, Gautama Buddha preached the Nobel eightfold path to liberation to achieve nirvana, a form in which one is free. Lastly, both philosophies advocate and emphasise compassion and empathy towards others. (Abelsen, 1993).

Schopenhauer, too, learned about Buddhism through translated documents only. Therefore, a lot could have been lost through translation. Furthermore, in his time, only the texts of Theravada Buddhism were available, and he based his entire understanding of the religion on one type. Moreover, he is said to have read and learned about Buddhism along with Hinduism; therefore, there is a lot of controversy surrounding his understanding of Buddhism, as he is said to have confused the two often (Moorjani, 2021).

For Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism and later his criticism of it being nihilistic to be reliable, knowledge gained only through testimonials should be concluded as a legitimate source. To do so, I will explore the arguments for and against testimonial knowledge as a reliable source of knowledge when used on its own. If it can be proven that testimonials are reliable sources of knowledge, then it could be concluded that Nietzsche's knowledge and later his criticism of the Buddhist doctrine as nihilistic are accurate and dependable.

Conditions of Reliability of Testimonial Knowledge

In her paper, Elizabeth Fricker (2006) emphasises the importance of secondhand knowledge as a source of knowledge, as everything we know and have learned has come from what others have taught us; therefore, secondhand knowledge plays an inevitable and vital role in how we perceive the world. However, there are specific rules for this to happen. She highlights the importance of trusting the teller's credibility. We cannot have blind trust in the teller, but if we have valid reasons to believe that the teller has good reasons for their beliefs, then the acquired knowledge is valid. Furthermore, we need good reasons to think the teller has epistemic reliability for the acquired knowledge to be true.

Additionally, the testimony must have an original non-testimonial source to transfer knowledge. Fricker claims that since all knowledge can be traced back to an original non-testimonial source, knowledge transmitted in this way is actual knowledge. She also stresses the critical evaluation of the knowledge gained through this source. Acquiring knowledge through testimony is not passive but requires an active engagement with the content of the testimony, which further stresses and reinforces its validity as fundamental knowledge (Fricker, 2006).

Nietzsche thought highly of Schopenhauer and respected him as a teacher. He followed all his works closely and was highly influenced by them. This implies that Nietzsche trusted Schopenhauer and was justified in believing in the knowledge he gained about Buddhism. However, according to this paper, Schopenhauer should be considered a legitimate source for Nietzsche's understanding of Buddhism. This implies that Schopenhauer's knowledge of Buddhism should have a non-testimonial source. Unfortunately, Schopenhauer himself learned about Buddhism through translated works and not directly through the Buddhist scriptures. This means that his sources were also testimonials. Therefore, he cannot be deemed a credible source of knowledge.

Robert Audi also claims in his paper (2013) that it is almost impossible to gain knowledge without testimony. He believes that knowledge gained through testimony is non-inferential. He explains this by giving the example of how children acquire knowledge through their parents even before being old enough to use their senses and experiences to justify the credibility of their parents, making it a distinct and direct source of knowledge. Testimony is essential to gain vast knowledge about language, science, culture, and history without direct experience. Audi claims testimonial knowledge can be as trustworthy as observation and reasoning when the attestor is legitimate and there is a lack of defeaters (such as inconsistencies or contradictions). According to this paper, Schopenhauer could be considered a credible source as he was a respected philosopher and, at that time, had no defeaters. Therefore, Nietzsche had no reason not to trust him.

In the traditional viewpoint, it is typically said that for testimonial knowledge to be true justified knowledge, the teller must know about the topic. Lackey challenges this perspective in her paper, claiming that the teller must know the information they convey for the listener to receive knowledge. Regarding defeaters or variables that could cast doubt on the validity of a belief, Lackey distinguishes between three types of defeaters: normative, factual, and doxastic (based on beliefs). She demonstrates how these defeaters aid in knowledge transfer and makes the case that even when a speaker has defeaters, knowledge can still be acquired without one from the hearer's point of view. She uses examples of individuals sharing knowledge despite having grounds to distrust their own epistemic trustworthiness and teachers communicating information they do not personally believe in. Her work implies that we do not have to trust or find a credible source to gain knowledge. (Lackey, 1999). This also credits Schopenhauer as a credible source for Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism.

Another paper that supports testimonial knowledge as proper knowledge is Joey Pollock's critique of the 'Content Preservation Model.' This model claims that for knowledge to be successfully transferred from the speaker to the receiver, the exact content of the knowledge must be preserved. The critique of the paper revolves around the shortcomings of the Content Preservation Model in encapsulating the intricacies of testimonial knowledge, namely the obstacles it encounters in striking a balance between content shareability and informativeness. Pollok argues that the exact content cannot be preserved, given the complexities of communication in the real world. According to the author, these difficulties call for reconsidering the principles underlying testimonial knowledge and considering developments

beyond rigid content preservation. This paper implies that testimonial knowledge is true even if the hearer does not preserve the original content (Pollock, 2023). This paper suggests that Schopenhauer's source of knowledge of Buddhism could be legitimate because although it was through translated documents, in a real-world scenario, preserving the original content is not possible.

Therefore, Nietzsche's source is credible. However, as highlighted in Moorjani's paper (2021), Schopenhauer simultaneously learned about Hinduism and Buddhism. As Gautama Buddha was a Hindu by birth, his Buddhist philosophy often overlaps with Hinduism. Therefore, one can frequently confuse the two. This is what happened in Schopenhauer's case. While there are numerous similarities, Hinduism and Buddhism are two distinct philosophies. If Schopenhauer had confused the two, then his knowledge of Buddhism could not have been trusted. He, too, gained his knowledge through testimonials, so his knowledge could have errors. While the critique of the Content Preservation Model by Pollock (2023) claims that the exact content of the knowledge does not need to be preserved for testimonial knowledge to be true, how can one trust a rocky source? This would imply that Schopenhauer is not a trustworthy and credible source. Therefore, Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism is also unreliable, portraying that his criticisms also cannot be valid as they might have been based on knowledge that is not true.

In his paper, Alvin Goldman (2001) presents strategies for picking an expert to trust to transfer knowledge. He claims these steps are not foolproof but help us make informed judgements about who to trust. His first strategy is to evaluate the arguments made by each expert and the evidence they provide, along with the critique of their rivals, to assess the quality of their reasoning. Secondly, look for consensus from other experts in the field while considering the potential for group prejudices or bias. Third, seek the advice of meta-experts and fourth, be mindful of any possible affiliations, funding sources, and conflicts of interest that could skew an expert's conclusions. Lastly, the experts' past performances and historical dependability and accuracy in their field could illuminate their current credibility (Goldman, 2001). This work implies that if Schopenhauer was considered a Buddhist expert, then Nietzsche's knowledge is considered trustworthy. While Nietzsche had good reasons to trust Schopenhauer, there is no evidence that Nietzsche followed the above strategies to test the credibility of Schopenhauer's knowledge of Buddhism, thus implying that Nietzsche should not have trusted Schopenhauer and is unjustified in his critique of the Buddhist doctrine.

Furthermore, a paper by Abelsen (1993) mentions that Arthur Schopenhauer took pride in the similarities between his and Buddhist philosophies. As mentioned above, he claimed that when his book 'The World as Will and Representation' came out in 1818, he had no knowledge of Buddhism and came up with his philosophy without its influence. It is clear that he was fond of Buddhism as he claimed to be a Buddhist towards the end of his life. Therefore, there is a chance that he manipulated his understanding of Buddhist philosophy to make it more similar to his own. While there is no proof of this, this could be grounds for bias, as per Goldman (2001), which would deem Schopenhauer an unreliable source. This also implies that Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism is illegitimate, and his criticism of it being a nihilistic philosophy is not credible.

In her paper, Rosanna Picascia (2023) compares the debate between the Nyāya and Buddhists on the nature and acquisition of testimonial knowledge. Nyāya is among the six traditional schools of Indian philosophy renowned for its methodical examination of logic, epistemology and metaphysics. Nyāya philosophers contend that testimony is a separate and autonomous source of knowledge. They claim that an epistemic agent can obtain testimonial knowledge without the necessity for corroborating knowledge from other epistemic instruments, such as perception or inference, if the speaker is deemed reliable. This implies that a recipient can acquire knowledge independently from the claims of a reliable source. This viewpoint emphasises the significance of the speaker's reliability and the possibility for testimonies to produce knowledge independently (Picascia, 2023). This paper suggests that Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism gained through Schopenhauer justifies his knowledge. Therefore, his criticism of Buddhism as nihilistic is also justified.

Arguments Against Reliability of Testimonial Knowledge

The possibility of an error in transmission is one of the main objections against testimonial knowledge. Since testimonial knowledge depends on the source's veracity and accuracy, incorrect beliefs could always be acquired if the source is unreliable or dishonest. Furthermore, critics argue that receiving testimonial information entails the recipient's justifiable confidence in the attestor. This trust is contingent on several things, such as the recipient's critical evaluation of the testimony and the attestor's perceived credibility. The reliability of testimonial insights may be compromised by the extra layers of complexity and fallibility introduced by the pre-requisite for such justification.

Moreover, validating the veracity and correctness of testimonial information can be challenging, notably when the recipient lacks experience or direct access to the facts. This hurdle calls into question the epistemic standing of testimonial knowledge and whether it can be equated with information derived from empirical research or firsthand experience (Audi, 2013). This suggests that Nietzsche's source of Buddhist knowledge cannot be justified. Therefore, his criticisms are also invalid.

Furthermore, there is evidence that Schopenhauer's knowledge was based only on Theravada Buddhism. Buddhism has other sectors, and learning all of them might take a lifetime, so it is not surprising that Schopenhauer only chose one sect. However, criticising a whole doctrine based only on one sect is not credible. For testimonial knowledge to be considered true, the receiver must have a sound judgement based on all the facts and critically evaluate them (Audi, 2013). In Nietzsche's case, he lacks all the facts as he only knew about Theravada Buddhism; therefore, his criticism is once again not credible.

According to the viewpoint of Buddhist epistemologists, testimonial knowledge is a type of inferential knowledge rather than an autonomous source, in opposition to the Nyāya viewpoint. This means that an epistemic agent needs non-testimonial evidence through different epistemic tools like perception or inference to prove the veracity of the statement in question before they may learn anything from the speaker. This point of view emphasises the need for more proof to validate the plausibility of testimonial sources, highlighting a stricter standard for testimonial knowledge and portraying that knowledge gained only through testimony cannot be deemed proper justified knowledge (Picascia, 2023). While Schopenhauer is not the only source of knowledge of Buddhism for Nietzsche, he was the biggest and the primary source. According to Buddhist epistemologists, he did not use sources other than testimonials, which is unreliable as it cannot be used as an autonomous source of knowledge (Picascia, 2023). This again proves that Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism is not reliable or credible.

A reductionist epistemology of testimony is a philosophical perspective that claims that knowledge gained through testimonials must be supported by methods other than the testimony itself. David Hume was a reductionist who expressed his stand by scrutinising the validity of miracles through testimonial knowledge in his book An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. He defines miracles as an infringement on the law of nature created by a deity or an unseen force. He expresses that miracles are such rare occurrences that a mere testimony

cannot be enough to prove the occurrence of it. For a miracle to be accepted as truth, the evidence should be so strong that it should seem as though the non-occurrence is more absurd than the occurrence. However, he claims this is unlikely to happen using a few arguments (Hume, 1748).

His first argument is that contradicting witness statements encourage scepticism regarding the alleged incident as it raises questions about the veracity of the information. Secondly, he claims that the credibility of testimony is questioned if there are only a few witnesses or if there is even a slight doubt about the trustworthiness of a witness. He further claims that witness statements could be biased. Therefore, not all can be trusted. Moreover, he states that the delivery of the statements can affect the persuasiveness of the testimony. Lastly, he argues that testimony becomes weaker if the claim is rare, like a miracle (Hume, 1748). While Hume is literally talking about miracles in his book and not using it as a metaphor, his work implies that testimony cannot be solely used as a source of knowledge. Otherwise, we will face several reasons why we cannot rely only on testimony. As discussed above, there are doubts about Schopenhauer being a reliable source as he could have been biased or confused with Hinduism. Therefore, this implies that Nietzsche's knowledge about Buddhism is not based on legitimate sources. Thus, his criticism of it being nihilistic is not dependable.

From the arguments on testimonial knowledge discussed above, it is clear that only a few argue against testimonial knowledge as a reliable source of knowledge. While Nyāya philosophers claim that testimonial knowledge is a reliable source of knowledge, most of the arguments work against Nietzsche as they are based on the trustworthiness and credibility of the source, which for him is Arthur Schopenhauer. Thus, for Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism to be reliable, Schopenhauer should be considered a legitimate source. Nietzsche admired Schopenhauer and respected him as a teacher, which makes for an excellent reason to trust someone and the knowledge they preach. Still, Schopenhauer lacked a complete picture of Buddhist philosophy, as his sources were testimonials based only on one sector (Theravada Buddhism). He could have also been biased. Therefore, Schopenhauer cannot be deemed a legitimate and credible source for Buddhism. Thus, Nietzsche's knowledge and later criticism of Buddhist philosophy as ultimately nihilistic are unreliable.

The conclusion derived from this chapter supports my first hypothesis: Nietzsche's perception of Buddhism relies heavily on the ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer, which suggests that Nietzsche never personally studied any Eastern philosophies, including Buddhism. Therefore, Nietzsche

lacked first-hand knowledge of the subject. Given that his knowledge was acquired through testimonials alone, it can be argued that his assessment has a critical reliability issue, which leads to an inaccurate characterisation of Buddhism as nihilistic. As such, the hypothesis undermines the validity of Nietzsche's critique by emphasising his sole reliance on second-hand sources. The theory, therefore, suggests that his interpretation may not accurately reflect the teachings of the Buddhist doctrine and ethical frameworks since testimonial knowledge cannot be used as the sole source of knowledge.

CHAPTER 2 – BEYOND THERAVADA: UNVEILING THE DIVERSITY OF BUDDHIST TRADITIONS TO CHALLENGE NIETZSCHE'S NIHILISTIC INTERPRETATION OF BUDDHISM

Tibetan Buddhism is a sector of Buddhism (texts and practices) from Tibet. It is now practised globally but is most prevalent in China, Mongolia, Northeast India, Nepal, and Bhutan (Schaik, 2016). Due to its esoteric practices, it is also known as Vajrayana or Tantric Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism is very different from Theravada Buddhism (the only sector Nietzsche was familiar with). In the first part of this chapter, I intend to showcase the uniqueness of Vajrayana and implicate its vast difference from Theravada through a comparative analysis between the two. In the second part, I plan to show that Mahayana and Vajrayana, as an extension, are both non-nihilistic Buddhist doctrines. Doing so would imply partial understanding on the part of Nietzsche as it provides a framework for arguing that Nietzsche's claim that Buddhism is nihilistic may be founded upon a misunderstanding or, worst of all, a misrepresentation of Buddhism rather than something indicative of Buddhism as it stands. This approach challenges the validity of Nietzsche's critique by suggesting it does not reflect a complete, fair, and balanced account of the Buddhist philosophy. This chapter intends to prove the second hypothesis correct.

The first part of this chapter is my unique contribution to the subject because, according to my research, this approach has not been used before. Tibetan Buddhism is gaining more followers globally, and it is crucial to understand what makes it different from the other schools of Buddhism. My experience with Vajrayana Buddhism sparked my interest in this approach, as I was born and raised in an environment where Tibetan Buddhism was the state religion.

The following sections paint a complete picture of Tibetan Buddhism, starting with its evolution in Tibet, its distinct schools, and its core practices and ways of attaining nirvana. The purpose of this is not to educate the readers on Vajrayana Buddhism but to highlight the complexity of Tibetan Buddhism and its variance from Theravada Buddhism. Doing so would allow the readers to realise the uniqueness of Tibetan Buddhism and its differences from Theravada. Such an exploration is essential for readers to appreciate the multifaceted nature of Buddhism, especially when engaging in critiques that may generalise across its diverse schools and practices, like in the case of Nietzsche. Understanding this complexity is essential for a comprehensive critique of Buddhism. The following sections are not intended to portray Theravada Buddhism as a non-nihilistic doctrine. Doing so would require extensive research beyond the scope permitted by the constraints of a bachelor's thesis. Therefore, this study will not include a detailed exploration of this aspect.

Exploring Tibetan Buddhism

Historical Context and Evolution

Buddhism was unknown to Tibet until the 7th century CE. At that time, Tibet had a new king, King Songtsen Gampo, who, like his father, the former king, was known for his ruthless wars and political and military achievements. His two foreign wives, Nepali Princess Bhrikuti and Chinese Princess Wencheng, were devout Buddhists. Queen Bhrikuti brought an image of Buddha Aksobhya as a part of her dowry, and Queen Wencheng brought fine images of Buddha Sakyamuni and Maitreya along with a few Buddhist texts. The king built the Jokhang Temple, where the queens enshrined their pictures of Buddhas and texts. His queens persuaded the king to convert to Buddhism, and thus Buddhism was introduced to Tibet. The king soon made efforts to spread Buddhism across Tibet and sent several Tibetans to India to study it. The texts were then unavailable in Tibetan, so they were memorised and transferred orally. It was also under his reign that the Tibetan script was born, and therefore, the Buddhist texts from India and Nepal were translated into Tibetan. (Banerjee, 1981).

Although the genesis of Buddhism in Tibet can be traced back to the 7th century CE, the arrival of Guru Padmasambhava (second Buddha) is seen as the turning point, as he used his miraculous powers to subdue demons and evil spirits and integrated tantric practices into Tibetan Buddhism, which would soon become the bedrock of Tibetan Buddhism. This led to the establishment of the first sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingma. Tibetan Buddhism was

then the state religion of Tibet (Schaik, 2016). Tibetan Buddhism was established much later than Theravada, and it was tailored to meet the needs of Tibetans.

Sectarian Developments and Diversity

Tibetan Buddhism is divided into four primary schools: Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu and Gelug.

Nyingma

Nyingma is the oldest school, and it was the first spread of Buddhism in Tibet during the epoch of the monarchy. This marked the starting point of the translation into the Tibetan language of the Buddhist Tripitaka. All the schools accepted these works. However, Nyingma School has some distinct features. The tantric traditions of the Nyingma school have texts and practices called kama (Buddha's word) that date back to the time of the empire. It has a unique practice known as Dzogchen (The Great Perfection). This is a complex practice where the master directly introduces the student to the enlightened state of awareness (rig pa) (Schaik, 2016).

Furthermore, the philosophy of Nyingma school emphasises that the mind is intrinsically pure and that the nature of our minds is enlightened. This view has been reinforced by significant Dzogchen figures like Longchenpa (1308-63) and Jigme Lingpa (1730-98), who suggested that the nature of reality is fundamentally enlightened and that this reality informs all spiritual practice within the tradition (Schaik, 2016).

Moreover, an essential feature of the Nyingma school is the role of the Tertons and Terma Tertons (Treasure Finders). It is believed that Guru Padmasambhava and other adepts hid termas (treasures) in physical hiding places or sometimes visionary experiences in the form of Buddhist teachings and relics, which were to be discovered later by tertons. He also prophesied which of his disciples would be responsible for the discovery. These treasures were to be found to further the teachings of Buddhism and in times that were important for such miracles. While this is a Nyingma tradition, some termas were also found and accepted by other schools (Schaik, 2016).

Sakya

Khon Konchog Gyalpo (1034-1120) founded a temple in the Sakya region, which led to the establishment of the Sakya school. Its foundation was highly influenced by the new tantric

lineages taught in Tibet then, especially the teachings from the Hevajra Tantra. This school is renowned for its specialisation in the lamdre (the path that includes the result), an advanced system of meditation based on the Hevajra Tantra. This method emphasises the realisation of the final goal in every aspect of the practice. The Sakya school commits to a holistic approach that blends tantric practices with scholasticism and demands a strong emphasis on both the experimental and intellectual dimensions of Buddhist practice. The lineage of the Sakya school is unique, as the head is not a monk. The Khon family has held it from its founding to the present day. The Khon family had a good relationship with Kubilai Khan and experienced a period of political prominence in their favour. The school expanded during the fifteenth century with the emergence of two new branches: the Ngor school and the Tshar school (Schaik, 2016).

Kagyu

The Kagyu school is a collective of lineages that primarily trace their origins back to Marpa Lotsawa (1012-97), who travelled to India three times to study under the great Indian masters Naropa and Maitripa. Although Marpa intended to pass his lineage through his sons, it was Milarepa, his renowned disciple known for his transformation from a life of misdemeanour to one of profound spiritual achievement, who furthered his teachings. Milarepa transmitted his teachings to Gampopa, a Kadampa monk, who merged the Kagyu tradition with monastic discipline and Kadam scholasticism while maintaining its focus on meditation (Schaik, 2016).

The school's distinct feature is its emphasis on the "six yogas of Naropa", which are advanced tantric practices received by Marpa from Naropa, and the teachings of mahāmudrā (the great seal), which involves resting in the natural state of mind to foster realisation to arise spontaneously. This is similar to the Dzogchen practices of the Nyingma school. The six yogas of Naropa and mahāmudrā revolve around the idea of bringing profound understanding and realisation of the true nature of the mind, which makes the Kagyu tradition deeply oriented in meditation with a strong emphasis on personal spiritual experience. This school branched out into several schools, Karma Kagyu being the most widespread school and Drukpa Kagyu becoming the state school of Bhutan (Schaik, 2016).

Gelug

The Gelug school, also known as Ganden, was founded by Tsongkhapa Lozang Dragpa (1376-1419). It is the last major school to be established in Tibet. Unlike other schools based on lineages brought directly from India, the Gelug school adopted its tantric practices from the

Sakya school. Dragpa integrated the Kadampa tradition's mind-training practices with the Sakya school's tantric practices, all within the framework of his philosophical insights. This combination was seen as a distinct version of the graduated enlightenment path, emphasising intellectual rigour and practical meditation practices. Dragpa and his followers were all monks, and the Gelug school has been known for its exclusive monastic focus. In the 17th century, the fifth Dalai Lama, with the backing of the Mongols and later the Manchus, established Gelug rule over most of Tibet, and since then, the Dalai Lama has served as the supreme leader of Tibet, at least in theory (Schaik, 2016).

These various schools of Tibetan Buddhism portray the diversity within just one sector of Buddhism. This implies that understanding Buddhism is impossible by just learning about one school out of the many. To be able to criticise the doctrine, Nietzsche should have had a complete picture of Buddhism and learned about all the primary schools and their manifestations. This suggests that since Nietzsche had incomplete knowledge of the philosophy, his criticism of it as nihilistic may be founded upon a misunderstanding, and therefore, it is invalid.

Philosophical Foundations

Vajrayana Buddhism is known as the Diamond Vehicle. It is not a separate religion but an extension of Mahayana Buddhism, known as the Greater Vehicle. It also follows the basics of Buddha's teachings founded in Hinayana Buddhism, known as the Lesser Vehicle or Theravada. These vehicle names do not denote the philosophy's superiority or inferiority but instead reflect the scope and methods of teachings and practices each consists of (The Dalai Lama, 2012).

Tibetan Buddhism follows the basics of Hinayana Buddhism, like the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path and the importance of enlightenment through meditation and ethical conduct. However, it is more firmly based on the Madhyamaka school, a Mahayana Philosophy started by Nagarjuna. This philosophy expands on the Hinayana and emphasises the Bodhisattva path, where the goal is to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, not just for oneself. This is done by following the ten virtues, developing bodhicitta (the mind of enlightenment) and engaging in the six perfections (paramitas) (Schaik, 2016).

The ten virtues are categorised into three groups: physical actions, which include avoiding killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; verbal actions, which involve avoiding lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and idle chatter; and mental actions, which include avoiding covetousness, harmful intent, and wrong views. These ethical guidelines set the foundation for focusing on actions that benefit everyone and reduce suffering. This is essential to developing a compassionate and awakened heart (Schaik, 2016).

Tibetan Buddhism has mind-training (lojong) practices to develop a bodhicitta mind. These practices include contemplations and meditations that help one realise and establish unconditional compassion and wisdom. The first is training in equanimity, which allows one to overcome attachment to friends and aversion to enemies. The second is seeing everything as a dream, which helps one recognise the illusory nature of phenomena to reduce attachment and aversion. The third one is transforming adversities into a path that uses difficult situations as opportunities to practice patience, compassion, and understanding of emptiness. Lastly, there is the tonglen practice that aids in cultivating the aspiration to take on the suffering of others and give them happiness and virtue in return. An example of lojong is when one contemplates the kindness of one's mother in this lifetime and realises that all other beings must have shown us the same kindness in a previous lifetime, as they could have been our mother. This realisation makes one feel compassion towards all other beings, the same way one feels for one's mother. Furthermore, Tibetan Buddhism claims that one can attain nirvana in a single lifetime (Schaik, 2016).

These exercises are also essential in realising the sunyata (emptiness) doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism, which is crucial in attaining enlightenment; without it, one cannot attain nirvana. The concept of emptiness is not to denote nothingness, as Nietzsche understood it, but to realise the absence of inherent, independent existence in all phenomena, including the self. The distinction between conventional truth, which is the everyday world where things seem independently real, and the ultimate truth, where the reality that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, is pivotal to escape samsara (cycle of suffering). This challenges our perception of reality as solid and unchanging. This interdependence is encapsulated in pratītyasamutpāda, which is the principle of dependent origination which posits that all phenomena arise in dependence upon other phenomena. (Schaik, 2016).

Core Practices and Rituals

After one is mentally trained and has undergone the abovementioned steps, they are ready to embrace the Vajrayana wheel (Diamond Vehicle). The first and most critical stage in Tibetan Buddhism is finding a guru. A guru should embody the qualities of an enlightened being, such as compassion and wisdom. This is not a simple process or a decision made without consideration. A partitioner needs to observe and evaluate over an extended period to ensure they have the qualities and a genuine connection with the guru. A connection is vital as it is the foundation of a teacher-student relationship. A guru will assess their student's spiritual needs, capacities, and tendencies and provide them with the teachings, practices, and instructions to prepare them for the next step, the initiation. The partitioner needs to be mentally, emotionally, and spiritually ready to receive the empowerment to engage in the rest of the practices effectively. The guru one chooses must be from one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and whichever school the guru is from, the student will also receive the teachings of that school. One cannot skip this part of finding a guru, as without them, it will not be possible to attain enlightenment within the Vajrayana wheel (Schaik, 2016; The Dalai Lama, 2012).

After finding a guru and the guru gets their student ready, the next step is the wangkur (initiation), which is called empowerment. This marks the formal entrance of a practitioner into the Vajrayana vehicle. Without this step, one cannot be on the path to enlightenment as well. Once the mind is purified with the above steps, empowerment rituals occur. The first part of the ritual involves participants symbolically asking for permission to enter the sacred place or mandala (divine residence of the deity) of empowerment. Then, the participants take certain vows and make commitments, which include the Bodhisattva Vows and the Tantric Vows. The guru then guides their student through a visualisation process involving the deity associated with the empowerment, the mandala of the deity, or sometimes the guru manifesting as the deity. This is a crucial stage for fostering a connection with the deity and the transmission of lineage (The Dalai Lama, 2012).

Then, the ritual involves consecrating offerings to the deity and reciting mantras. The offerings are symbolic, representing the various aspects of the cosmos and the practitioner's offerings of their body, mind, and speech to the path of enlightenment. Then, the guru performs ritual actions, such as using objects like vajras (dorjes), bells, and damarus (hand drums). These

portray aspects of enlightenment and the union of wisdom and compassion. The pinnacle of empowerment is the direct transmission from the guru to the students in the form of a touch of a vajra on the crown of the head, the giving of sacred substances like holy water or pills or a lung (whispered transmission). This is the actual empowerment conferral, allowing the student to engage in further practices. The ceremony ends with the dissolution of the visualisation, signifying the impermanence of all phenomena. Prayers then follow it to dedicate the merit of empowerment to benefit all sentient beings. Following the empowerment, the guru may give their student specific instructions related to the practice, daily commitments, meditation techniques and how to integrate them into one's life (Schaik, 2016; The Dalai Lama, 2012).

Tantric Practices

No matter what stage one is at, they should never forget their vows and engage in sadhana (daily practice). These help to stabilise and deepen the realisations attained during empowerment. Tantric practices are performed in Vajrayana Buddhism to speed up the enlightenment process. The exact information of the tantric practices of Tibetan Buddhism is kept secret. This is done as the rest of the practices cannot be done without the proper guidance of a guru, as they can be dangerous when done without expert supervision. As a result, the precise details of these teachings remain inaccessible to us. However, I will provide a summary of the known aspects below.

Once the practitioner is formally initiated, the guru guides them through Deity Yoga and Guru Yoga, which are considered the developmental stage.

Deity Yoga

Deity yoga is a meditative practice that visualises oneself as a Yidam (deity) who embodies specific qualities of an enlightened being. This practice has several purposes. The first is the transformation of identity because while visualising this, the practitioner seeks to transcend their ordinary identity and limitations and strives to embody the enlightened qualities of the Yidam. This helps one to overcome the character of an egoistic being and aids in developing qualities necessary for enlightenment. In Tibetan Buddhism, deities are essential as each represents specific aspects of enlightenment. Deity yoga includes an explicit visualisation where one sees the form of the deity, ornaments, implements and the mandala. All these carry rich meaning and are designed to transform the practitioner's perception and experience of

reality. Along with the visualisation, practitioners recite mantras of their specific deity, which are a series of syllables encompassing the essence of the deity's enlightened activity. Mantra recitation aids in invoking the blessing of the deity, purifies negativities, and helps accumulate merit and wisdom. And lastly, this practice allows the practitioner to realise the phenomena of emptiness. By engaging in this practice, one understands that the deity, the self and all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, which is crucial in Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism to attain enlightenment (Schaik, 2016).

Guru Yoga

Guru Yoga is a particular practice that is different for everyone, as everyone has a different guru. The practice is meant to develop devotion to one's guru and recognise them as embodying all Buddhas and enlightened qualities. It involves visualising the guru above the crown of one's head or heart and cultivating a heartfelt devotion by offering prayers, prostrations, and mental offerings. The visualisation can also include seeing the guru in union with a deity, emphasising the non-duality of the guru and deity. This is a way of connecting with the lineage of teachings and the stream of wisdom from the guru to the student, and this practice opens up the student to receiving teachings, empowerment and guidance from the guru. The practice ends with the student visualising their guru dissolving into light and merging with them. Integrating the guru's enlightened qualities with the discipline symbolises the non-separation between the two (Schaik, 2016).

Completion Stage Practices

The completion stage follows the development stage. It is not the final stage of enlightenment. The completion stage practices are advanced methods to be practised by advanced students under the strict supervision of their guru. This stage focuses on the body's energy systems, which include nadis (channels), pranas (winds), and bindus (drops). It aims to realise the ultimate nature of reality by working directly with subtle energies. Tummo (inner heat), illusory body, clear light, dream yoga (astral projection), bardo yoga and phowa are the practices of this stage. Tummo is a practice that generates inner heat, which supports the realisation of emptiness that can lead to the experience of blissful warmth spreading throughout the body. In the illusory body practice, practitioners see the physical body and the material world as illusory to recognise their ultimate emptiness. The clear light is a meditation aimed at identifying the essential luminous nature of the mind, free from conceptual elaboration. Dream yoga involves becoming conscious of dreams and using them as a path of practice. This practice is astral

projection, where one's soul leaves the body and is meant to prepare the practitioner for their death. Bardo yoga is a practice that prepares the intermediate state between death and rebirth so that people can recognise and utilise this state for enlightenment. The Phowa is a practice of transferring consciousness at the time of death to a pure land or a better rebirth (Schaik, 2016).

Yab-Yum Practice

The Yab-Yum practice is also a completion stage practice, but all practitioners do not perform it. This iconography is a profound and symbolic aspect of tantric practice in Tibetan Buddhism, and it represents the union of wisdom and compassion, male and female principles or emptiness and skilful means. Yab-Yum translates to father-mother in Tibetan, and the imagery portrays a male deity in sexual union with his female consort. This rich symbolism is integral to understanding the non-dual nature of reality taught in Vajrayana Buddhism (Ch'en, 1958).

Yab (male) embodies compassion or upaya (skilful means), and the Yum (female) represents prajna (wisdom) or the realisation of emptiness. The union of the two illustrates the integration of these two aspects, which is essential for achieving enlightenment. Furthermore, this also shows the tantric view that enlightenment does not spring from the rejection of the world but through fully engaging with it wisely and compassionately. Moreover, on a more esoteric level, Yab-Yum can also portray the practitioner's internal process of unifying the masculine and feminine energies within their own body, which involves advanced practices that work with the subtle energy system of the body (winds, channels, and drop) to result in transformative experiences leading to enlightenment. This practice is not a physical or sexual act, which is often misunderstood. Instead, it is done through meditation, where one visualises oneself through Yab-Yum deities to embody and realise the union of wisdom and compassion. It is aimed at dissolving ordinary perceptions and dualistic thinking. It is a sacred practice reserved for students who have received specific empowerment and instructions from a qualified guru. Sexual imagery is used with the intention of showing the potential of achieving enlightenment within the context of ordinary human experiences (Ch'en, 1958).

These practices show that Vajrayana Buddhism's teachings and practices go beyond those of Theravada. Below, I will briefly summarise the teachings and ways of Theravada Buddhism. Doing so would show how different the two doctrines are and how much knowledge Nietzsche missed out on while learning and criticising Buddhism as a nihilistic philosophy.

Exploring Theravada Buddhism

Theravada Buddhism, often called the Doctrine of the Elders, is the oldest form of Buddhism and is now practised in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. Its teachings are based on the Pali Canon, considered the most authentic record of the words of Gautama Buddha (Berkwitz & Thompson, 2022).

Theravada doctrine emphasises the pursuit of enlightenment through the development and refinement of sila (ethics), samadhi (concentration), and panna (wisdom). The Pali Canon elaborates on these core teachings, including the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the concept of anatta (not-self). Meditation is central to the spiritual path preached by the Hinayana vehicle, and it involves techniques such as vipassana that focus on insight into the true nature of reality. This insight leads to the realisation of the three marks of existence: anicca (impermanence), dukkha (suffering) and anatta (not-self), which will ultimately lead to enlightenment and liberation from the samsara. The development of concentration through meditation supports cultivating a calm and focused mind, which is crucial for the practice of vipassana.

Furthermore, along with meditation, ethics and wisdom play vital roles in guiding the practitioner towards moral conduct and understanding the Dhamma's deeper aspects. This prepares the mind for the profound realisation of wisdom, which leads to the cessation of suffering and attaining nirvana. Unlike the Mahayana and Vajrayana doctrines, the Theravada emphasises individual enlightenment as the ultimate goal. In this vehicle, enlightenment and attaining nirvana can take more than one lifetime (Berkwitz & Thompson, 2022).

The Sangha (the monastic community) and the interaction between monastics and lay followers are integral aspects of Theravada Buddhism. The Sangha adheres to specific rules by following the Pali Vinaya, which contains 227 rules for monks and 311 for nuns that guide their conduct and shape their monastic life. Along with establishing a framework for ethical and disciplined living, the Vinaya also sheds light on the complex lives of Buddhist monastics beyond their spiritual endeavours. The monastic education that used to be centred in monasteries has evolved with the establishment of formal monastic schools that blended religious instruction with secular education. The new system emphasises intellectual understandings of Buddhist teachings and the physical embodiment of monastic virtues through daily practices and rituals. The training also helps cultivate proper monastic behaviours and attitudes, such as respect and

humility, taught through direct action and participation in monastic chores. (Berkwitz & Thompson, 2022).

Theravada Buddhism also offers laymen opportunities to support the monastic community through spiritual practices like meditation, festival participation and merit-making activities. This fosters the relationship between laypeople and the Sangha. In exchange for spiritual instruction and the opportunity to accumulate merit, laymen support monastics materially. This transaction reflects a larger ceremonial economy in which devotion and charity are portrayed as building blocks towards merit. This merit is expected to lead to favourable rebirths and enlightenment. The role of the Sangha goes beyond spiritual leadership; it also includes participation in community life and the perpetuation of Buddhist teachings and practices. All these show the interconnectedness between the monastic community and lay practices, playing crucial roles in the sustenance and propagation of the tradition.

Tibetan Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism Contrasted

Despite sharing the foundational principles of Buddhism, Theravada and Tibetan Buddhism diverge in their practices, doctrinal emphasis, and monastic traditions. The differences between the two schools can be highlighted in several key areas.

The first difference lies in their doctrinal foundations and critical teachings. Theravada relies on the Buddha's earliest teachings, preserved in the Pali Canon. It focuses on the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the concept of anatta (not-self), and it holds the Tipitaka as its primary scriptural authority. In contrast, Tibetan Buddhism incorporates many Buddhist texts along with the Pali Canon, such as the Mahayana and the Tantric texts of the Vajrayana Vehicle. Furthermore, it integrates the Bodhisattva ideal, bodhicitta (mind of enlightenment) development, and a comprehensive set of tantric practices.

The second difference is in the meditation practices of the two schools. Theravada meditation consists of Vipassana (insight) and Samatha (tranquillity), focusing on attaining enlightenment and nirvana. The Sila (ethical conduct), Bhavana (meditation), and Panna (wisdom) form the threefold training in his vehicle. Tibetan Buddhism, on the other hand, consists of a broader spectrum of meditative practices like deity yoga and advanced tantric rituals. Practices aim to

attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings and not just for personal gain. It emphasises rituals, visualisations, and mantras.

Another contrast can be seen in the monastic community and lay practices. The Theravada Sangha (monastic community) follows the Vinaya code, distinguishing between the monastic community and lay followers. Laymen support the Sangha, practice meditation and Dhamma study, and engage in merit-making activities. Meanwhile, in Tibetan Buddhism, monastics also follow a strict code of discipline, but the relationship between the monastics and laypeople is more integrated. Lay followers also engage in complex practices, like the ngondro, and participate in tantric rituals under the guidance of lamas. In Tibetan Buddhism, one does not need to become a monk to follow the practices. Laymen have altars and do regular prayers and chant mantras for a purified mind, and they receive good karma in doing so. This shows that Tibetan Buddhism is also less strict than Theravada Buddhism and more accessible for laymen. This makes attaining enlightenment not impossible, even for laymen. This is emphasised by the Yab-Yum meditation, which shows how ordinary people can also attain nirvana. In addition, Theravada Buddhism does not have any tantric practices. These are unique to Tibetan Buddhism, emphasising its uniqueness and vast difference from Theravada.

A distinct feature of Tibetan Buddhism is the role of the guru. In Theravada Buddhism, one does not need a guru to attain enlightenment, but it is a crucial feature in Tibetan Buddhism. Without finding a guru, one cannot move forward in achieving enlightenment. This student-teacher relationship emphasises the importance of transmitting esoteric teachings and initiations into tantric practices. Doing so without proper guidance from an expert can be dangerous, and it is advised not to. This is the main reason why the exact details of the tantric practices of Tibetan Buddhism are kept a secret. The relationship shows the importance of relying on each other and makes it easier for the ego to dissolve.

One criticism of Nietzsche was that Buddhism is life-denying. This could have been due to the strict monastic modes that Theravada monks had to follow and the Hinayana belief that one attains nirvana only in a few lifetimes. However, Tibetan Buddhism believes that one can attain nirvana in a single lifetime, and one does not necessarily have to follow the strict codes of monks. The tantric practices are meant to shorten the process so that everyone does not need to go through all the stages of yoga. Additionally, Vajrayana emphasises attaining enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, in contrast to Theravada's emphasis on achieving it for personal gain. This makes the Vajrayana doctrine selfless. An act of kindness

is not usually viewed as life-denying; therefore, if Nietzsche had known about Tibetan Buddhism, he might have had a different view of Buddhism.

Lastly, an important distinction lies in how the two schools describe and explain emptiness or the sunyata doctrine. In Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, without understanding sunyata, one cannot move forward in their practice. The concept also exists in Theravada, but Theravada does not thoroughly express the depth of its actual meaning and implications. This is why many scholars, including Nietzsche, misunderstood the concept as nihilistic. Mahayana and Vajrayana describe the idea in more detail and have practices to follow to comprehend the concept entirely. One of Nietzsche's main criticisms of Buddhism was that its notion of emptiness (sunyata) is nihilistic, as he believed it would lead to nothingness. This can be deemed a misconception, as Nagarjuna, the founder of the Madyamaka school, was aware of scholars misunderstanding it the same way. He clarified that the doctrine of sunyata does not aim to realise nothingness and lead to nihilism; instead, it indicates a lack of independent existence. Nagarjuna's philosophy will be explored later in this chapter (Schaik, 2016). Furthermore, The Dalai Lama (2012) mentions in his book that the Hinayana vehicle of Buddhism did not explain its concepts in great detail. This could be the reason Nietzsche misunderstood the idea and the rest of its philosophies. Only the Mahayana and Vajrayana vehicles went into detail, as they wanted to make it easier for more people to follow. Had Nietzsche done his research, he would have found the actual textual explanation of the doctrine of Sunyata.

The comparative analysis shows that Theravada and Tibetan Buddhism are different in every aspect, except for the basic teachings of Gautama Buddha that both follow. Their diverging history, developments, practices and rituals prove that it is not enough to know about Buddhism by picking just one sector. Every sector of Buddhism has several schools, and their practices also vary. Therefore, for one to truly understand and especially criticise Buddhism, it is vital for one to know the entire doctrine. Consequently, it was not enough for Nietzsche to criticise Buddhism as nihilistic and life-denying by only having knowledge of Theravada Buddhism. He might not have criticised the doctrine if he had learned about all Buddhist schools. This, therefore, emphasises my second hypothesis.

Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist Philosophers and the Question of Nihilism

As mentioned, Vajrayana Buddhism is a development within the broader Mahayana tradition. Consequently, it shares foundational beliefs and philosophical tenets with Mahayana Buddhism. This section explores some prominent Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist philosophers' interpretations of Mahayana and Vajrayana's take on nihilism. This section aims to prove that Mahayana Buddhism and Vajrayana, as an extension, are not nihilistic philosophies. Therefore, had Nietzsche been aware of these two sectors of Buddhism besides Theravada, he might have had a different view on the Buddhist doctrine and not have labelled it as a nihilistic philosophy.

Nāgārjuna

Nagarjuna is a Mahayana Buddhist philosopher who founded the Madyamaka school upon which the Vajrayana school was founded. One of Nietzsche's main criticisms of Buddhism was that its concept of emptiness is nihilistic, as he believed it would lead to nothingness. This can be deemed a misconception, as Nagarjuna was aware of scholars misunderstanding it the same way; therefore, he clarified the concept. Nietzsche claimed that the sunyata doctrine was based on the idea that nothing exists; hence, the thought of nothingness would eventually lead to nihilism. However, Nagarjuna clarified that sunyata does not mean nothing exists. He argued that the everyday things we perceive as real, such as a jar or plant, are not inherently real in our thinking. We assume these things exist independently, with their unique, unchanging essence, what he refers to as "svabhāva" or intrinsic nature. However, he claims that all causally conditioned things arise from a combination of causes and conditions and thus do not possess an inherent, independent existence. Therefore, the doctrine of sunyata does not mean that nothing exists; rather, it indicates that things exist but have an intrinsic, interdependent nature, which he calls the middle way. He explains this with an example of a jar, where the jar's existence depends upon several factors such as clay, potter, shape, etc. If these conditions are not met, the jar ceases to exist. This implies that existence is not an intrinsic property of the jar but is contingent on external factors (Bhattacharyya, 1979; Westerhoff, 2016).

Nagarjuna argues that everything depends on various conditions, which are constantly changing. Critiques say that since Nagarjuna talks about constant change in the nature of things (anyathābhāva, or alteration), it assumes that there is something like a "nature" to begin with,

so an underlying nature is changing. Thus, the critique posits that acknowledging any change or transformation contradicts the idea that no intrinsic nature exists. Nagarjuna responds to these critiques using three arguments. The first one uses an example of a cloth. He claims that people might think that fabric remains the same even as it ages, so this change supports his view that the cloth's 'nature' or essence is not fixed but is made up of temporary and changing characteristics. For the second one, he uses an example of the warmth of fire, which seems like an inherent nature of fire, but he argues that the warmth depends on the conditions that create the fire. Therefore, as it depends on those conditions, it is not an inherent part of fire. The third one is a clarification for the misunderstanding of the warmth of fire. Critiques argue that the warmth of fire and water are both inherent in the nature of fire. Still, Nagarjuna argues that warmth cannot exist without the conditions that create the fire, which proves that even something as basic as warmth is not independent. Nagarjuna encourages us to see the world not as independent but as a network where everything is interdependent. This view does not deny the existence of things but helps us understand them in terms of their relationships and dependencies instead of standalone entities (Bhattacharyya, 1979; Westerhoff, 2016).

Nagarjuna's in-depth explanation of the sunyata doctrine clarifies many scholars' misunderstandings. It claims that sunyata does not lead to nihilism as Nietzsche thought it would, thus proving that Mahayana and Vajrayana, as an extension, are both non-nihilistic philosophies. Had Nietzsche known about the diversity of Buddhism, he might not have misunderstood the philosophy and would not have criticised Buddhism as a nihilistic doctrine.

Keiji Nishitani

Nishitani, also a Mahayana Buddhist philosopher, provides a Buddhist solution to the problem of nihilism. This implies that Buddhism is not a nihilistic philosophy and can be used to overcome nihilism. He, too, like Nietzsche, found nihilism to be a serious concern. His first solution is the Buddhist concept of sunyata. He also clarifies the misunderstanding of this concept and claims that sunyata does not signify nothingness in a nihilistic sense, as Nietzsche had understood, but rather indicates that things are interdependent and lack intrinsic, independent essence. Nishitani argues that this understanding recognises the interconnectedness of all existence and offers a profound and meaningful way to view the world. This argument also proves that if Nietzsche had known about the diversity of Buddhism, he might not have labelled Buddhism as a nihilistic philosophy (Phillips, 1987).

Nishitani's second solution to nihilism is the practice of meditation and the realisation of emptiness, which could help individuals overcome the existential despair associated with nihilism and help everyone lead a life filled with meaning that arises not from isolated, individual existence based on the interconnectedness of all beings. He claims this leads to actions and attitudes characterised by compassion and a lack of ego that aligns closely with Buddhist ethical teachings and the pursuit of enlightenment. Therefore, Nishitani's use of Buddhism to answer nihilism suggests that a deep understanding and practice of Buddhist teachings can provide a robust foundation for finding meaning and value in life. This portrays Buddhism as a solution to the problem of nihilism and not a part of the problem, as Nietzsche suggested (Phillips, 1987).

Tsongkhapa

Tsongkhapa is a renowned Tibetan Buddhist philosopher belonging to the Gelug school. He, too, was concerned with nihilism and proposed the concept of sunyata as a solution. He claimed that the realisation that things only exist interdependently would help us see how things really are, which is crucial for Buddhist practices leading to enlightenment. To help us understand and live in a world where things seem solid and authentic while also accepting that they are "empty," he introduced the idea of two truths: conventional and ultimate truth. The conventional truth is the world we physically perceive using our five senses, while the ultimate truth is the deeper reality that everything is empty of inherent existence. Understanding these two truths helps us live in a physical world where we go about our daily lives, using conventional truths to function socially and practically and on a deeper level, understanding the ultimate truth helps in spiritual practices. We learn to reduce attachment, aversion and suffering when we see and realise that things are not solid and permanent (Shelton, 2012; Jinpa, 1999).

Furthermore, to help better understand the interconnected nature of things, Tsongkhapa used tetralemma, a logical tool. He uses four points to negate intrinsic existence: A thing cannot inherently exist, nor can it inherently not exist, nor can it be both inherently existent and non-existent, nor can it be neither inherently existent nor non-existent. This aids in realising the Middle Way preached by the Madhyamika school (Shelton, 2012; Jinpa, 1999).

By suggesting the practice of Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism to overcome nihilism, Tsongkhapa also implies that these two sectors of Buddhism are not nihilistic. This further strengthens my claim that Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism as nihilistic is invalid; it does not reflect a complete, fair, and balanced account of Buddhist philosophy.

Shantideva

Shantideva is also a Mahayana Buddhist philosopher. While he does not explicitly mention nihilism in his book A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (2011), his work is profoundly relevant in countering nihilistic tendencies through its teachings. Shantideva preaches that the purpose of life is to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. This altruistic intention (bodhicitta) fills one's life with profound meaning and purpose, countering nihilistic thoughts. In addition, the book advocates for leading an ethical life, emphasising virtues such as patience, humility, and compassion. Shantideva's teachings provide a counter-narrative to nihilism by promoting moral conduct and responsibility towards others, which often dismisses moral values as baseless.

Furthermore, Shantideva discusses the concept of sunyata as a solution rather than a problem to nihilism. He claimed that understanding and realising that all things and beings are interconnected encourages compassionate actions, as one realises that others' suffering is intricately connected to our own. Moreover, he provides practical advice on how to transform personal suffering into the path towards enlightenment. This transformation also provides life with meaning (Shantideva, 2011).

Shantideva also proves that Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism are not nihilistic doctrines but can be used to remedy nihilism. This emphasises my claim that Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism as nihilistic is invalid; it does not reflect a complete, fair, balanced account of Buddhist philosophy.
In exploring the meaning of the sunyata doctrine preached heavily by Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, it is clear that Nietzsche misunderstood this concept. He claimed that the realisation of sunyata led to nothingness, which would eventually lead to nihilism. However, Nagarjuna's explanation states that sunyata does not mean nothingness; it instead means that nothing in this world is independent. Our existence depends on other factors that make us intertwined with the world. This suggests that if Nietzsche had known about Mahayana and Tibetan Buddhism, he

would have better understood the concept of sunyata and may not have criticised Buddhism as nihilistic.

Furthermore, Nishitani, Tsongkhapa and Shantideva provide Buddhism and its practices as a remedy for nihilism rather than being a part of the problem. This further emphasises my claim that it is not enough for one to know about Buddhism by only learning about one school. Buddhism is a diverse philosophy; therefore, in order to understand and criticise it, one should delve into all the schools and their manifestations, which Nietzsche did not do. Therefore, his claim of Buddhism being nihilistic and life-denying is invalid.

In conclusion, it is evident through the comparative analysis that there are numerous differences between Buddhism's Theravada and Vajrayana doctrines. Although Tibetan Buddhism existed long before Nietzsche's time, he based his criticism on only one school. In the second part of the chapter, it is also clear that Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhist philosophers were aware of criticisms similar to those of Nietzsche, so they clarified by providing deeper explanations and remedies to the problem of nihilism. These results emphasise my second hypothesis: that there are three primary subtypes of Buddhism, each of which has different manifestations. Nietzsche only had knowledge of and reached conclusions about Theravada Buddhism. This limited exposure neglects the rich diversity within the Buddhist tradition, such as Mahayana and Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism), the other two primary schools. Each school consists of distinct philosophical outlooks, practices, and rituals. The hypothesis contends that Nietzsche's conclusion of Buddhism as life-denying and nihilistic is fundamentally flawed, given his failure to account for the diversity within the Buddhist doctrine, specifically Tibetan Buddhism and its differing approaches to concepts such as suffering, emptiness, and enlightenment compared to Theravada Buddhism.

CHAPTER 3 – CONVERGING PATHS: THE PARADOX OF AFFINITY BETWEEN NIETZSCHE AND ZEN BUDDHISM

This chapter compares Zen Buddhism and Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, explicitly addressing the third hypothesis posited in this paper. It aims to elucidate the parallels between the foundational teachings of Zen Buddhism and Nietzschean philosophy designed to counteract nihilism. If significant similarities are identified, it prompts a critical inquiry into how Nietzsche could conceive philosophies similar to Zen while simultaneously categorising

Buddhism as nihilistic. Exploring the unity between Zen and Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies would challenge the basis of his critique of Buddhism as inherently nihilistic. This alignment raises critical questions regarding the validity of his critique, suggesting a fundamental misapprehension of Buddhism's philosophical stance. If the hypothesis is correct, it would necessitate a thorough reassessment of Nietzsche's criticisms, emphasising that one is unlikely to develop philosophies akin to those they fundamentally misconstrue or oppose. Thus, this chapter explores the philosophical resonances between Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's philosophies and interrogates the grounds of Nietzsche's critique, potentially redefining the discourse surrounding his interpretation of Buddhism.

Exploring Zen Buddhism

In his book, Alan Watts (1989) describes Zen Buddhism as a way of liberation rather than a religion, philosophy, psychology, or science. He mentioned that it is similar to Eastern traditions like Taoism, Vedanta, and Yoga, emphasising that it cannot be fully defined or captured through conventional means. He further suggests that understanding Zen requires an experiential engagement transcending intellectual analysis.

The origins of Zen Buddhism can be traced back to its Indian Buddhism roots and its significant development in China, where Taoism highly influenced it. Bodhidharma is the founder of Zen in China, and his teachings emphasise seeing one's true nature directly. Hui-Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, is another significant figure in Zen who articulated the core Zen principle that enlightenment is immediate and intrinsic to one's nature, contrasting with practices aimed at gradual attainment. This synthesis resulted in a philosophy that is more Chinese than Indian, which is what took a firm hold in the Japanese culture since the 12 [th] century. Zen appealed strongly to the samurai class and influenced its arts, poetry, and martial practices. Dogen and Hakuin are crucial figures in Japan who played a role in adapting and disseminating Zen teachings in the country (Watts, 1989).

The Taoist concept of the Tao is pivotal in understanding Zen. The Tao is an undefinable, dynamic process that underlines and unites all aspects of existence. This differs from the Western ideologies of the Absolute or God, highlighting the Tao's emphasis on spontaneity, growth, and the inherent intelligence of the natural world. Furthermore, the concept of wu-wei

(effortless action) and the cultivation of te (virtue or power arising from living in harmony with the Tao) are crucial to Zen tradition (Watts, 1989).

A fundamental principle adopted by Zen derived from Taoism is wu-wei (effortless action). This concept is not about inaction but rather about the action in perfect harmony with the flow of life, which is natural, spontaneous, and unforced. It requires one to understand the world's natural order so profoundly that one's actions align with the unfolding process of Tao. It is about taking the necessary action at any moment without overreaching or exerting undue effort. In Zen Buddhism, wu-wei can be viewed as the art of meditation that allows the mind to settle into its natural state of calm without striving or grasping (Watts, 1989).

Te is another important concept in Taoism that plays a vital role in Zen. It can be translated as virtue, power, or integrity. In Taoism and Zen, te is not a moral or ethical virtue imposed from outside. Still, it is an intrinsic quality of being that arises from living in accordance with the Tao. Power flows naturally from acting in harmony with the fundamental nature of reality. Te is present in effortlessly practical actions and genuine and uncontrived ways (Watts, 1989).

Zen Practices
Zen Buddhism integrates these Taoist foundations into its practice and understanding of the path to enlightenment. It is a unique school of Buddhism. It is the only one that emphasises direct experience and the cultivation of insight through meditation. Zen encourages practitioners to see beyond dualistic thinking and realise their inherent Buddha nature. Zen values simplicity, authenticity, and being fully present in the moment. Zen and Taoism offer a path that encourages a direct and intimate engagement with life rather than relying on rigid dogmas or doctrines. It invites practitioners to awaken to the profound simplicity of existence, where enlightenment is not a distant goal or separate from daily life. Instead, it is realised in the very heart of it, moment by moment, in accordance with the flowing Tao. The Zen tradition believes in transmitting knowledge through a master rather than from the sutras or doctrines. Zen also values direct pointing to the truth through non-symbolic actions or words that seem ordinary or nonsensical but are filled with deeper layers of meaning.
Furthermore, Zen believes in learning by doing rather than listening and reading scriptures. This way of learning can be understood as an example of quenching one's thirst. When one feels thirsty, the thirst cannot be quenched by another person describing what it feels like to

drink water and feel refreshed; the thirst can only be quenched by the thirsty person drinking water. Such is the way of the Zen (Watts, 1989; Suzuki, 1938).

Zazen is a sitting meditation preached by Zen's Soto and Rinzai schools. This practice may seem counterintuitive to Westerners as it seems as though one is dedicating substantial time to doing nothing. However, Zazen facilitates a profound awareness and direct experience of reality, undistracted by thought or abstraction. Zen challenges attaining enlightenment through Zazen or any other disciplined meditation alone, as such efforts could lead to attachment. It encourages one to realise the inherent Buddha nature in everyday activities (Watts, 1989).

Koan System

The Koan system developed as a means of teaching and testing students' insight when Zen Buddhism became more institutionalised. It uses paradoxical questions or statements to provoke enlightenment or demonstrate understanding, and it became a hallmark of the Rinzai school. The Koan system is delineated into two primary categories: initial awakening Koans and subsequent Koans (Watts, 1989).

The journey begins with the initial awakening of Koans, designed to disrupt conventional thinking patterns and catalyse a direct and profound encounter with the fundamental nature of reality. This initial insight, satori in Zen, is the genesis of a deeper, more substantive engagement with Zen practice. These Koans challenge practitioners to see beyond the veil of ordinary perception and to confront the true essence of their being and the universe (Watts, 1989).

After the initial awakening, practitioners engage with different Koans that explore various aspects of Zen teachings and the practice itself. These Koans are not only intellectual exercises but experimental guides that guide practitioners through the complexities of Zen philosophy and its application in daily life. They aid the practitioners in deepening their insight, integrating understanding into everyday actions, and refining their ability to express enlightenment through words and deeds. This phase of Koan training offers the exploration of the Zen path, where each Koan opens new avenues of understanding and being (Watts, 1989).

Core Principles

The core principles of Zen Buddhism guide one towards experiencing life directly, without the filters of conditioned judgements or conceptual distinctions. The key points are as follows:

Zen challenges the dichotomy of good/bad and beautiful/ugly, claiming that such distinctions create an illusion of separation when, in reality, they are inherently a unified existence. It borrows this concept from Taoism, which hypothesises that labelling beauty as such simultaneously creates the idea of ugliness, which illustrates the interdependence of all things (Watts, 1989; Nagatomo & Shigenori, 2006) . Zen criticises the relentless human pursuit of improvement and progress, claiming it is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of life's transient nature. It argues that reaching for perpetual betterment only perpetuates dissatisfaction because each achievement or resolution brings awareness to another, which one previously would not have noticed, leading to discomfort or desire (Watts, 1989).

Zen claims that free choice is an illusion because choices stem from the web of existence and are not truly independent. This realisation does not result in fatalism but rather in an understanding that actions and decisions emerge spontaneously from the interplay of all elements of existence. The notion that the self or ego is merely a mental construct distances us from our true nature. Recognition helps dissolve the illusion of separation, allowing a more profound connection with the world (Watts, 1989).

Zen Buddhism uses 'direct pointing' to bypass intellectualisation and foster the direct experience of reality. This method avoids abstract discussions by presenting Zen teachings through concrete demonstrations and interaction by highlighting the immediacy and suchness of life. This is a Zen view where conventional distinctions between subject and object, or self and other, dissolve by revealing an interconnected existence. This view perceives the world as 'suchness,' where apparent opposites are seen as manifestations of the underlying reality (Watts, 1989).

Zen Buddhism encourages finding depth and meaning in ordinary activities, asserting that drawing water and hewing wood are expressions of enlightenment. This perspective sees no distinction between the mundane and the spiritual, revealing the sacred in everyday life. It also highly values spontaneity and naturalness, where actions are genuine and not deliberate. Forced actions stem from a split mind or ego, so spontaneity is valued (Watts, 1989). Zen has

influenced art inspired by its emphasis on spontaneity, naturalness, and the essence of the present moment. This led to the creation of direct, non-symbolic forms deeply connected to nature and secular themes. Unlike the other schools of Buddhism, Zen's art focuses on ordinary subjects, presenting them in a down-to-earth manner that stresses the art of artlessness or controlled accident (Watts, 1989).

The philosophy of Zen has also extended to garden designs. The designs emphasise simplicity, asymmetry, and the suggestion of natural landscapes rather than detailed imitation. They embody minimalism and integrate form with emptiness. The tea ceremony in Japanese culture is an example of Zen in practice. It emphasises presence, simplicity, and appreciation of each moment. The setting, rituals, and tools reflect the Zen principle of fully experiencing the present without a rush. Zen has also seeped its teachings into the world of poetry. Haiku, a form of Japanese poetry, embodies the Zen teachings of concise expression and focusing on capturing the present moment. Additionally, haiku's simplicity and depth reflect the Zen pursuit of seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary (Watts, 1989).

Psychological Perspective on Meditation

In the modern day, meditation, specifically Zen meditation, has been recognised for its potential in promoting mental health. Psychologists and clinicians have started integrating Zen meditation techniques into therapeutic practices to help their patients address psychological and mental illnesses. This shows the relevance of ancient spiritual Zen practices in addressing contemporary psychological needs (Du, 2022).

The essence of Zen Buddhism is simple, and everyone can experience it. The zazen meditation is not complicated; if one desires to practice, one can do so without fully committing to being a monk. Zen can also be followed in everyday activities such as doing dishes or a tea ceremony. Furthermore, it can be observed in the form of art or poetry. It is not a complicated philosophy to follow; it is so simple that psychologists use it to help their patients in the modern day. The teachings of Zen are said to aid in overcoming nihilism through controlling feelings and emotions (Parkes, 1990).

Nietzsche's Philosophical Struggle with Nihilism

Nietzsche feared that Europe was descending into nihilism, so he established a few concepts to help people overcome nihilism. In the labyrinth of Frederich Nietzsche's philosophical discourse, his book Thus Spoke Zarathustra is a monumental book that encapsulates the essence of his thought on overcoming nihilism. He challenges the foundation of traditional morality and the nihilistic void it leaves in its wake by introducing a radical reconception of human existence and value creation. The main concepts are Übermensch (Overman), the will to power, eternal recurrence, and amor fati (love of one's fate), which forge a path through the nihilistic desire towards a new horizon of meaning (Nietzsche, 2006).

Nietzsche presents his profound ideas through the character of Zarathustra in his book Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Zarathustra embarks on a journey to enlighten humanity with the concept of Übermensch and the value of life on earth. The exploration begins with the protagonist's declaration of God's death. This metaphor signifies the end of absolute values and the onset of nihilism, a state where traditional values become meaningless (Nietzsche, 2006).

The Übermensch as a Beacon Beyond Nihilism

The Übermensch is not a new type of human but rather a figure that represents the transcendence of humanity itself. This individual surpasses the conventional moralities and societal norms, which Nietzsche believes to be life-denying, in favour of life-affirming values, power and creativity. Unlike a nihilist, the Übermensch responds to the death of God with the will to power, embracing the void as an opportunity for self-overcoming and creating a new ethical framework rooted in life affirmation. The idea of self-creation is crucial to the concept of Übermensch. This consists of radically re-evaluating all values and actively creating one's purpose and meaning in life (Nietzsche, 2006).

Furthermore, Nietzsche presents the Übermensch as an ongoing process of becoming, not an end goal. The protagonist, Zarathustra, teaches that humanity is meant to overcome by suggesting a perpetual striving towards more significant forms of existence. This challenges individuals to reassess their personal values, beliefs, and assumptions by engaging in an unending journey of self-overcoming and renewal (Nietzsche, 2006).

Will to Power: The Dynamic Force of Life

In Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche presents the idea of will to power, which illustrates the dynamic force underpinning all aspects of life. While this book does not systematically explain the will to power, it weaves the concept through the protagonist's teachings, presenting it as a critical lens through which to view existence, morality, and the potential for human transformation. In Nietzsche's philosophy, the will to power denotes an intrinsic drive, not only for survival or dominance but also for expanding one's force and exerting creative influence on the world. It is presented as the fundamental driving force behind all actions and phenomena, transcending simplistic interpretations centred on biological or psychological needs. The will to power is a never-ending quest for development, mastery, and self-overcoming. Furthermore, Nietzsche argues that traditional frameworks prioritising values like altruism and self-denial negate life's inherent will to power. He refutes the idea that good and evil are absolutes through the protagonist in the book by arguing that morality should promote flourishing and extending life (Nietzsche, 2006; Nietzsche, 1968).

Moreover, Zarathustra's teachings consist not only of asserting dominance or personal gain but also of the creative aspect of the will to power. This creative force challenges individuals to transcend existing limitations and to reimagine the possibilities of human existence. The Übermensch embodies this creative manifestation of the will to power, which represents the potential to shape one's life and the world in accordance with one's vision. The will to power offers a pathway beyond nihilism, not by providing new dogmas but by empowering individuals to engage in the creation of their values actively. This process requires a radical acceptance of life's challenges and a commitment to continual self-transformation, driven by the desire to exert one's will and achieve mastery over one's circumstances (Nietzsche, 2006; Nietzsche, 1968).

Additionally, the will to power is implied as a force that not only operates in the human realm but also manifests in nature and society. The protagonist speaks of power as a principle controlling all forms of life and societal structures, suggesting that power, conflict, and transformation are universal. This view emphasises the interconnectedness of life, where the struggle for power and the drive towards creating change are fundamental aspects of existence (Nietzsche, 2006; Nietzsche, 1968).

Eternal Recurrence: The Ultimate Affirmation of Life

In Thus Spoke Zarathustra and a posthumously published collection of notes called The Will to Power, Nietzsche presented the concept of eternal recurrence as a thought experiment designed to challenge individuals to evaluate their lives under the weight of an infinite, cyclical repetition of all events. It is an essential test for affirming life, weaved with Nietzsche's ideas on overcoming nihilism and creating values. Eternal recurrence posits that every action, choice, and moment in the universe will recur infinitely, in precisely the same way, across an infinite timeline. The thought experiment requires one to ponder the question: if one were to live the same life in all its details over and over for eternity, how would this affect one's approach to life? This thought challenges individuals to live as though every decision, regardless of size, carries the weight of eternity. It forces a radical re-evaluation of one's values, actions, and the meaning one ascribes to life. To affirm life, the goal is to embrace and love one's life, including suffering, joys, and banalities (Nietzsche, 2006; Nietzsche, 1968).

The thought of living the same life eternally forces one to confront the meaninglessness of this life. It sparks particular fear that if one lives with a void, they might have to live the same way for the rest of their lifetimes. This is meant to inspire individuals to embody a life-affirming attitude, where one finds intrinsic value in existence, independent of external validations or metaphysical comforts. The Übermensch, Nietzsche's ideal human, embodies the affirmative spirit required to embrace eternal recurrence. This figure represents the crest of self-overcoming, where one creates and lives life through life-affirming values. Thus, the Übermensch approaches life with a willingness to relive it infinitely, viewing the eternal recurrence not as a curse but as a celebration of existence's perpetual renewal (Nietzsche, 2006; Nietzsche, 1968).

Amor Fati: An Embrace of Life

Amor fati (love of one's fate) is closely related to eternal recurrence. This concept is Nietzsche's invitation to experience life fully and intensely without regret or resentment for what might have been. It urges one to embrace life joyfully, with all its unpredictability and challenges. This stems from the understanding that the ups and downs of life are not randomly assigned events but are deeply intertwined with the fabric of one's existence. In the context of overcoming nihilism, the concept of amor fati affirms life's intrinsic value. It posits that every

experience has a reason, regardless of the external value or meaning assigned to those experiences (Nietzsche, 1968).

Convergence of Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's Anti-Nihilistic Philosophies

Despite their differences in cultural background and methodologies, when examined closely, Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's philosophies converge in more than one way. Both offer pathways to overcome nihilism by transforming one's perspective on life and existence.

Übermensch and Zen Enlightenment

For Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's Übermensch, the goal of enlightenment involves transcending conventional notions of the self. In Zen Buddhism, enlightenment consists of realising anatta (non-self) and seeing beyond the ego to understand the interconnected nature of all things. The Übermensch overcomes ordinary human concerns and moralities to create new values. Both doctrines encourage one to move beyond a limited, selfish view of existence.

Amor Fati and the Acceptance in Zen

The concept of amor fati and Zen's teachings acceptance share a profound affirmation of life by encouraging one to embrace life with all the ups and downs and imperfections, as these experiences are essential to the fabric of existence. This acceptance leads to a wholesome engagement with life, free from the despair of nihilism.

Eternal Recurrence and Impermanence

While Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence and Zen's concept of impermanence are opposite ideas, their aim is the same. Eternal recurrence encourages one to live in a way that one does not regret if one has to relive the same life repeatedly. This allows individuals to embrace life to the fullest. Similarly, the realisation of impermanence makes one realise the importance of a moment and will enable individuals to make the most of a moment. Furthermore, the concept of eternal recurrence is very similar to the concept of reincarnation, which is prominent in all schools of Buddhism.

Will to Power and Non-Duality in Zen

While Nietzsche's will to power emphasises the drive to affirm one's existence and values, it also challenges conventional moral and metaphysical dualities such as good/evil and true/false). Similarly, Zen Buddhism emphasises non-duality and seeks to transcend binary oppositions, encouraging a direct experience of reality as it is, unmediated by conceptual frameworks.

Creative Engagement with Reality

Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche both promote a creative and direct engagement with reality. Nietzsche's philosophies encourage individuals to be creators of their values and meanings in response to the void left by the death of God. Likewise, Zen Buddhism encourages direct, personal experience and understanding of the world through practices like koans and zazen that foster a fresh, immediate encounter with reality beyond fixed intellectual concepts.

The comparative analysis conducted in this chapter proves that there are parallels between Zen Buddhism and Nietzche's anti-nihilistic philosophies. It is clear that Nietzsche did not know about Zen Buddhism yet came up with similar philosophies to counteract nihilism. This suggests that had he known about Zen Buddhism, he might not have criticised Buddhism as nihilistic or life-denying as he came up with philosophies similar to Zen's. This argument implies that Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism as nihilistic is invalid as he came up with philosophies identical to a doctrine he criticised.

The similarities between Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies and Zen Buddhism discussed above are not novel interpretations exclusive to this discussion. Instead, they reflect a growing scholarly consensus that acknowledges and explores the profound similarities between the two doctrines. Academics have contributed to this subject by drawing parallels highlighting a shared emphasis on transcending the self, affirming life amidst its inherent impermanence, overcoming dualistic thinking, and fostering a creative engagement with reality. I will discuss three works of literature on this subject below, reinforcing my hypothesis.

In his book Nietzsche and Buddhist Philosophy, Antoine Panaïoti (2013) explores the similarities and differences between Nietzsche's philosophies and Buddhism. While his work does not explicitly mention Zen Buddhism, it touches on the foundations of all Buddhist

schools. Although Nietzsche was sceptical about Buddhism, Panaïoti shows various similarities between the two philosophies. One similarity is seen in how both doctrines challenge the philosophical difference between an actual world and the empirical reality that undermines the idea that a fixed essence is hidden behind the flux of existence. According to the author, although Nietzsche misunderstood Buddhism as a nihilistic devaluation of the empirical reality, Panaïoti claims that both philosophies really criticise this devaluation, albeit for different reasons.

Another critical comparison Panaïoti makes is between Nietzsche's concept of amor fati and the Buddhist embrace of life's suffering. Both doctrines advocate for accepting life as it is, with its inherent suffering. He recognises the differences in the way the two philosophies deal with it. Nietzsche's amor fati is an active affirmation of life's challenges, aiming to transfigure suffering as a source of power and creation. Meanwhile, Buddhist doctrine emphasises detachment and the cessation of the desire to overcome suffering. Panaïoti argues that while the two use different ways to manage it, at their core, both offer a way to reconcile with the inevitability of suffering (Panaïoti, 2013).

Furthermore, another similarity discussed in the book is the complex role of compassion in both philosophies. Nietzsche critiqued compassion for potentially reinforcing weakness and passivity and advocated for compassion that empowers and affirms life. Buddhism, particularly in its Mahayana form, emphasises Karuna (compassion) to alleviate suffering for all beings. Panaïoti explores how Nietzsche's critique might be reconciled with the Buddhist perspective, concluding that a deeper understanding of compassion in both doctrines reveals a shared commitment to overcoming nihilism through affirming life (Panaïoti, 2013).

Additionally, both philosophies attempt to transcend nihilism and reflect a shared concern for meaning in conventional certainties. Buddhism does so with its argument on enlightenment and detachment, and Nietzsche supports reevaluating values. In the book, Panaïoti skillfully compares their shared psychological discoveries, highlighting the need to comprehend human motivation and cognition as fundamental to philosophical investigation in both traditions. The comparative analysis done in the book bridges the gap between Buddhist and Nietzsche's philosophies and reveals a common critical position on existential and metaphysical issues.

The analysis goes beyond Nietzsche's original criticism and acknowledges the deep conversations between these two influential philosophical traditions (Panaïoti, 2013).

Nietzsche and Other Buddhas by Jason M. Wirth (2019) is another book that delves into the similarities between Nietzsche's philosophies and Buddhism, notably Zen Buddhism. Wirth begins by suggesting that both philosophies challenge the traditional Western metaphysical notions of truth and reality. A key concept explored in the book is whether Nietzsche's will to power can be reconciled with the Buddhist emphasis on anātman (egolessness) and the cessation of desire. Wirth critically assesses whether Nietzsche's philosophy, focusing on the individual's creative power, can be seen in dialogue with the Zen practice of self-negation and enlightenment beyond the self. Furthermore, Wirth also explores other shared themes, such as the critique of essentialism, the transcendence of dualistic thinking, and a profound emphasis on experiential practice over abstract theorisation.

This comparative analysis challenges and expands our understanding of what engaging philosophical conditions of existence mean. Wirth's analysis highlights Nietzsche's resonance with Zen Buddhism. It proves that both doctrines pave a path toward a deeper, more authentic engagement with life's never-ending questions. He claims that the two philosophies belong to two different backgrounds and have a shared orientation towards existential authenticity and the transformative power of confronting life's inherent complexity (Wirth, 2019).

Another comparative study of Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche explores the parallels in their approach to emotion. The paper states that both philosophies challenge conventional attitudes, suggesting that emotions are not obstacles to overcome but vital forces that can be transformed or harnessed for spiritual or existential advancement. Parkes claims that both doctrines advocate for transmuting emotions into forces that affirm life in its entirety, embracing its imperfections and complexities. In Nietzsche's philosophy, this can be seen in his concept of amor fati and Zen Buddhism and the realisation of one's inherent Buddha nature, portraying a shared idea of overcoming nihilism (Parkes, 1990).

This chapter shows the similarities between Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies. From the previous chapters, it is clear that Nietzsche was only aware of Theravada Buddhism and based his criticism entirely on that school. However, he devised anti-nihilistic philosophies that parallel the Zen school of Buddhism. The similarities I have

mentioned above show that each of Nietzsche's remedies for nihilism has some similarities with Buddhism, especially Zen. My claim is also supported by other scholars who have drawn parallels with different schools of Buddhism. This chapter supports my third hypothesis: The ideas of Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's philosophy to combat nihilism resemble. Therefore, his claim that Buddhism is nihilistic is consequently untrue because he developed ideas that are consistent with one of the main types of Buddhism. This hypothesis claims that Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism being nihilistic is contradicted by the similarities between his remedies for nihilism and those found within Zen Buddhism. The convergences suggest a shared commitment to confronting and transforming the existential condition of nihilism, thus undermining the basis of Nietzsche's critique. Therefore, his claim that Buddhism is nihilistic is untrue because he would not have developed ideas consistent with one of the schools of Buddhism if he believed his philosophies to be nihilistic and life-denying as well.

CONCLUSION

Summary

This thesis critically examined Frederich Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism as nihilistic and life-denying. As Nietzsche's knowledge of Buddhism was derived from Schopenhauer and other second-hand sources, I evaluated the validity of testimonial knowledge as the sole source of knowledge in the first chapter. It was found that testimonials are an essential source of knowledge. However, it was revealed that Arthur Schopenhauer was not a reliable source for Buddhism as he, too, learned about it through testimonials. Therefore, it was concluded that since Nietzsche's source of knowledge on Buddhism is unreliable, his knowledge and later criticism of it as nihilistic is also invalid, proving my first hypothesis correct. In the second chapter, I did a comparative analysis between Vajrayana (Tibetan) Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism, which revealed that while the two doctrines share the foundations of Buddha's teachings, everything else is different, implying the diversity in the Buddhist doctrine. This suggests that it was not enough for Nietzsche to know about one school of Buddhism to criticise the whole doctrine. Therefore, his criticism is unreliable. The second part of the chapter explored prominent Mahayana and Vajrayana figures and their take on nihilism. Through this, it was concluded that Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, as an extension, are not nihilistic doctrines, thus proving that Nietzsche's criticism is invalid. The second chapter proved my second hypothesis correct. The third chapter explored the parallels between Zen Buddhism and Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophy through a comparative analysis. The results revealed that

there are significant similarities between the two. Therefore, it was concluded that since Nietzsche came up with philosophies that paralleled one of the schools of Buddhism, his criticism of the doctrine as nihilistic is invalid. Thus proving my third hypothesis correct.

In light of these findings, this research concludes that Nietzsche's critique of Buddhism as nihilistic and life-denying is based on a partial and biased understanding of the doctrine, and it also contradicts elements within his philosophy that align with the Buddhist philosophy. In conclusion, the answers to my two research questions are as follows: Nietzsche's claim of Buddhism as nihilistic is untrue, suggesting a need to reexamine it thoroughly within a broader philosophical discourse. When considering the diversity of Buddhism, Nietzsche's criticism of Buddhism as nihilistic cannot withstand scrutiny.

Limitations of the Thesis

This thesis has several limitations. One inherent limitation is the reliance on the interpretations and translations of Buddhist scriptures and Nietzsche's works. While Nietzsche also relied on testimonials, this research is also limited to secondary sources, which could introduce bias or inaccuracies stemming from the perspectives of translators and interpreters. Furthermore, the thesis does not fully account for the historical and cultural context in which Nietzsche's criticisms were developed. The 19th-century Western scholarly context shaped his understanding of Buddhism, which often misinterpreted Eastern philosophies through a colonial lens. Any analysis based on his writings may inherently carry these contextual limitations. Moreover, the comparative study in Chapter 3 between Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies and Zen Buddhism risks oversimplification or misinterpretation due to cultural and contextual diversity.

Outlooks

Future research could extend the comparative analysis between Nietzsche's anti-nihilistic philosophies and other schools of Buddhism not covered in this thesis, such as Mahayana or Tibetan Buddhism. Such studies could offer deeper insights into similarities and differences between Nietzsche's philosophies and these Buddhist doctrines.

A detailed textual analysis of the sources from which Nietzsche understood Buddhism could further clarify how his interpretations were shaped. This could include a study of the translators

or philosophers who influenced his views and how their biases might have affected Nietzsche's conclusions.

Additionally, research could explore how Eastern philosophies can be more accurately integrated into the frameworks of Western philosophies. This could help close the gap of philosophical divides and promote a more global philosophical dialogue.

Souhrn

Tato práce kriticky zkoumala kritiku buddhismu Fredericha Nietzscheho jako nihilistického a život popírajícího. Vzhledem k tomu, že Nietzscheho znalosti o buddhismu byly odvozeny ze Schopenhauera a dalších zdrojů z druhé ruky, vyhodnotil jsem v první kapitole platnost svědeckých znalostí jako jediný zdroj znalostí. Bylo zjištěno, že základním zdrojem znalostí jsou posudky. Ukázalo se však, že Arthur Schopenhauer nebyl spolehlivým zdrojem buddhismu, protože se o něm také dozvěděl prostřednictvím svědectví. Proto došlo k závěru, že protože Nietzscheho zdroj znalostí o buddhismu je nespolehlivý, jeho znalost a pozdější kritika buddhismu je také neplatné, což potvrzuje, že moje první hypotéza je správná. Ve druhé kapitole jsem provedl srovnávací analýzu mezi vadžrajanským (tibetským) buddhismem a théravádovým buddhismem, která odhalila, že zatímco tyto dvě doktríny sdílejí základy Buddhova učení, vše ostatní je jiné, což naznačuje rozmanitost buddhistické doktríny. To naznačuje, že pro Nietzscheho nestačilo vědět o jedné škole buddhismu ke kritice celé doktríny. Jeho kritika je proto nespolehlivá. Druhá část kapitoly prozkoumala prominentní postavy mahájány a vadžrajány a jejich pohled na nihilismus. Díky tomu se dospělo k závěru, že mahájána a vadžrajánový buddhismus jako rozšíření nejsou nihilistické doktríny, což dokazuje, že Nietzscheho kritika je neplatná. Druhá kapitola potvrdila správnost mé druhé hypotézy. Třetí kapitola zkoumala paralely mezi zenovým buddhismem a Nietzscheho anti-nihilistickou filozofií prostřednictvím komparativní analýzy. Výsledky ukázaly, že mezi nimi existují významné podobnosti. Proto došlo k závěru, že od doby, kdy Nietzsche přišel s filozofiemi,

které se vyrovnaly jedné ze škol buddhismu, je jeho kritika doktríny jako nihilistické neplatná. Tím se potvrzuje správnost mé třetí hypotézy.

Ve světle těchto zjištění dochází tento výzkum k závěru, že Nietzscheho kritika buddhismu jako nihilistického a život popírajícího je založena na částečném a zaujatém chápání doktríny a také je v rozporu s prvky jeho filozofie, které jsou v souladu s buddhistickou filozofií. Na závěr, odpovědi na mé dvě výzkumné otázky zní, že Nietzscheho tvrzení o buddhismu jako nihilistickém je nepravdivé, což naznačuje, že je třeba jej důkladně přezkoumat v rámci širšího filozofického diskurzu, a když vezmeme v úvahu rozmanitost buddhismu, Nietzscheho kritika buddhismu jako nihilistického nemůže obstát. zkoumání.

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