

The insights about humanness contained in Buddhism are meant to be totally grounded in experience. It is the firm intent of Buddhism to be entirely experiential. All it articulates about life, in principle, is or can be known by any and all men. The aim is to bracket the metaphysical issues. This means that it has a phenomenological approach to understanding existence. Hence, for instance, both the concept of God and the concept of the self are denied. Loyalty to the method of experience only is not always maintained. An anti-metaphysics position that becomes a ground for argument is still metaphysical. Direct metaphysical assumptions are made also - such as the transmigration of souls, but these can be restated in experiential terms which is a part of the transparentization. However, the fundamental intent is to report experience that is open to anyman. This is called rational as over against the reflective or metaphysical. The rational here points to potential universal awareness about humanness.

1. Buddhism is based on experience. They call it rational as over against reflective. All men know or can know. Its method is then not metaphysical but phenomenological.
2. Buddhism is a practical middle way between licentiousness and asceticism. It means to be the way between final detachment and complete engagement in this world. It is a form of chastity - purity of heart - an expression of "in but not of the world."
3. The illumination comes as a revelation; it is not a "reasoning through." And it is a revelation of the reality of this world and of profound humanness in this only world we have.
4. The experiential revelation's content are the four noble truths. These have to do with the reality of the given or the overagainstness and of the person's relation to this overagainstness. The four are profound awarenesses.
5. The first noble truth or profound awareness has to do with human contingency. This is a world of change. All things pass away. This is the given. And, herein is the ground, not the cause, of man's suffering. Fate and death, decay and disease - to these all are subject. Indeed, there is finally only nothingness - the eternal void. Here is the ground of man's contempt of life and unhappiness. To think it is otherwise is illusion.
6. The second profound awareness has to do with grasping this illusion. The cause of man's misery, contempt of life and his suffering, is that he wants the world to be other than it is. This is a desire, a craving for life to be on one's own terms. This propensity is powerful and knows no bounds. None escape its force. It propels man to latch onto a fleeting sense of satisfaction and pretend such is reality. Here is the illusion, and it is precisely this that is the cause of man's unhappiness and hatred of life.
7. The third noble awareness is that such suffering is unnecessary or can be overcome. It is the first noble truth that enables awareness of the second - that the cause of suffering is a refusal to face the reality of the world. Indeed, suffering is overcome by the eradication of the craving and desiring that things be other than they are. Happiness is realized when one surrenders the demand that he be happy. The realization of this cessation is the state of fulfillment.
8. The fourth profound awareness has to do with the method of realizing this fulfillment. This is the noble eightfold path. It is the "straight" way (or Tao) to fulfillment. This method is not a religious or spiritual or consciousness exercise but a moral exercise. It is a way of living - a life style. Through this alone can the craving, the illusions be overcome within and human fulfillment be realized. It is the style that makes real the revelation and, hence, is the final illumination.

9. The profound eightfold path, like the four noble truths (of which they comprise one) are illuminations or revelations. They are acknowledged because they come with undoubtable clarity. They are grasped as the profound indicatives of life. The eightfold life style is authenticity and includes:
- I. Authentic or right understanding: this is an understanding of the world as it is, such as described above.
 - II. Thoughts: the above leads to right thoughts or images or aspirations of freedom and good will.
 - III. Speech: this relative to lying, gossip, slander.
 - IV. Action: this is peaceful works relative to harm, stealing, lust, liquor.
 - V. Livelihood: this means being employed in vocations that serve humanity.
 - VI. Effort: this is cultivation of good and self-discipline.
 - VII. Mindfulness or awareness having to do with self-mastery over one's actions.
 - VIII. Onepointedness or concentration. Singlemindedness.
10. The eightfold path can be viewed as a series of steps each necessarily leading to the next. The first and the last are set aside as the beginning and the consummation of the journey. The six in between form three couplets. The second and third steps have to do more with knowing; the fourth and fifth, with doing; and sixth and seventh, with being. It is like right knowing, right doing, and right being. The word "right" here might very well be replaced with the term "authentic." The first step is authentic illumination or understanding and is the beginning of the way to authentic living. Step eight is the fulfillment of humanness - the state of consummation - nirvana. In each of the three sets of two steps, one of them is more internal or subjective, and the other is more external and objective. In the first of the couplets, step two is authentic thinking or being a man of noble thoughts and step three is authentic speaking or being a man of noble words. The criteria or content of both of these come from the first step of authentic understanding of reality. The second couplet has more to do with doing. The two steps have to do with relation to neighbor. The first, which is step four on the whole journey, has to do with the attitude of love for the world; and step five, like unto it, involves authentically serving the world through an authentic vocation. The last couplet, steps six and seven, is the intensification of knowing and doing, which is authentic being. Both have to do with discipline

of the interior self. Number six has to do with intentionality, the content of which comes from the five previous steps. Step number seven, the penultimate one, is the continuation and actualization of six. It is self-mastery relative to all that has gone before. It is a state of being that is an "objective" manifestation of the journey. I am the journey. The last rung on the ladder is radical transparency. It is the realization of complete singlemindedness - a purity of being which is the complete fulfillment of humanness.

11. What would a man on such a journey look like? How would one describe his qualities? The above description of a style of life has been shortened into four qualities: deep friendliness, compassion, a joy of life, and equanimity or profound poise. The first is an humble outgoingness toward all of life. The second is disposition to creatively participate in and serve the world, especially those in need. The third is a sense of detached or dispassionate joy. It is a joy over and beyond satisfaction. This joy is beyond such. It is a state that is grounded in quality one and two. The fourth quality is tranquillity or peace. It is an inner poise beyond praise and blame; success or failure; gain or loss. It is problemlessness. Later, we will return to this. But, to sum up: such a man is a man of freedom (deciding his own life); a man of benevolence (serving his fellows); and a man of tranquillity (he has assurance, joy, peace, and nirvana).
12. In drawing together, it is clear that the last profound awareness (the eightfold style) is the acting out of the first three. It is their actualization, practicalization, concretization. It is their enfleshment. The fourth truth deals with what we would term sanctification or the holy life. It is the "way" to live authentically and the way of human fulfillment.
13. This would indicate that the first three deal with the arena of justification or awakenment. The first is concerned with the finally real - with life as it is. The second describes man's alienation from the real world and the illusory world that he builds as a result of his craving. Herein is the source of his misery and hostility.
14. The third noble truth is the profound awareness that one must die to these cravings that bathe us in the illusions of hope - die to this false image of self. It is dying to our self-projected image of reality and dying to all anticipation of some messianic deliverance. This is the profound awareness that one must come to terms with things as they really are, with the contemptible void.
15. There are the three primal indicatives of life. Whosoever acts these out is humanly authentic, is fulfilled. And, acting them out means a life of self-decision and benevolence. Such a one is humbly in charge of his own life and belongs to the service of humanity beyond family, friends, and country. Here is the freedom that is fulfillment. His discipline is the discipline of being this man,

this authenticity, this dead one to self, this fulfillment.

16. Such a one moves into the world to live among men, serving them in thought, word, and deed; in engaging in a useful vocation; intentionally controlling his own life; and spreading the "way" of enlightenment, freedom and love, himself being a sign of what it means to be an authentic and fulfilled human being. It is as if his desires have experienced radical metamorphosis. He is a new creation; like he had been raised from the death of illusion.
17. Such is the story of the radical happening in which a man becomes a human being and of what the style of such a one from hence forward would look like. It is the story of the great awakening to the way life really is and to the fact that, and the means whereby, man escapes from it. This revelatory awareness (this illumination of the indicative of life) issues in critical transformation of one's whole being. This happening is like the entrance into another world in the very midst of this world.
18. Conclusion: Toward furthering the dialogue perhaps comments should be made on the wholly other; the contentless happening and the unconditioned spirit which constitute the basic conscious screen of the writer. First, the wholly other, the finally mystery, the enigmatic power appears to be implicitly present through the above described awarenesses. A rightful rejection of metaphysics perhaps accounts for the indirection here. The human relation to the void beyond attachment to passing realities is clear. Comments already have been made about the contentless event that unveils humanness. It is obviously latently present in the first three noble truths - especially in number three. One deals with final upagainstness; two, with escape into illusion; and three, with death to hope in any relation to the powers of this world. An important emphasis is that this happening is an illumination of such force that it requires our acknowledgment, which consent propels one into the spirit realm of a life of awakening, benevolence, and integrity, which is freedom. This last is the universal, the holy spirit, the spirit of profound consciousness, which is human fulfillment.