ARGUMENT
BIANNUAL PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL
Vol. 7 (1/2017) pp. 5–8
e-ISSN 2084–1043 p-ISSN 2083–6635

Introduction to the issue
Buddhism: between philosophy and religion

The question of the character of Buddhism — whether it belongs to the realms of philosophy or religion — emerged in the early stages of Buddhist studies and is still valid to this day. It is often emphasised that the answer to this question depends on the definitions of the underlying key terms. Thus, some assert that Buddhism is a religion, some — a philosophy. Another opinion is that these terms are connected by a conjunction, rather than alternative denial, and therefore both can be applied to the description of Buddhism as they encompass its varied aspects. On a social and cultural level, Buddhism possesses all the characteristics of a religion, and on an individual level it comes across as a practical philosophy of life which belongs to the same philosophical model as ancient Stoicism, Epicureanism, or Neoplatonism.

However, some argue that the definition is, in fact, not problematic as "we do not need a definition of religion in order to identify and study what can reasonably pass for religions"[1]. The accuracy of this claim raises potential doubts as it is based on an assumption that social kinds have the same ontological status as natural kinds. In other words, this viewpoint presupposes that social kinds are recognized by us in the world in the same way as we recognize natural kinds. Yet, it appears that it is impossible to exclude from this process of discovery one's cultural self-consciousness — which, in part, makes the process of "kind" recognition to be a process of its construction.

Social kinds, including the language itself, which is used to describe cultural phenomena, are marked by historicity and locality, and therefore are culturally relative. An interesting example of that, which is also worth mentioning in the context of Buddhist studies, are the changes in self-understanding within

[1] Di Noia, J. A. (1997). Transcendence in a pluralistic context — a reply (p. 122–129). In: D. Z. Phillips & T. Tessin (Ed.). *Religion without transcendence*. Hampshire–London: Macmillan Press.

the Christian tradition. During the first centuries of growth, due to the cultural context in which the categories of "religion" and "philosophy" acquired their meaning, Christians perceived themselves as the followers of a distinctive philosophy, which was in competition with other philosophical stances — not a religion related to a state organization. However, during the Middle Ages, along with the change in the cultural, political and social context, the Christian identity not only started to be expressed by the medium of "religion" but also "philosophy" was given a new connotation, different from the one it had been identified with before. Therefore, when posing the question as to whether a given phenomenon is a philosophy or a religion, we are treating both of these categories as if they objectively described the cultural reality and exhausted possible meanings, and thus were not only complimentary but also universal. In this way, the cultural relativity of these terms is not taken into consideration.

Therefore, addressing the dilemma of the nature of Buddhism, we can adopt a different strategy and reject both categories as inadequate. Instead of forcing Buddhism into foreign semantic structures, we can refer to the Buddhist self-awareness and simply acknowledge that Buddhism is dharma — simultaneously aiming to grasp the intuition and motivation, which formed the meaning of this term. On the one hand, we are avoiding cultural domination, on the other we are extending the analytical nomenclature. This approach seems to be represented in some of the articles collected in this volume.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the gathered papers are focused not on the search for the original intuitions and motivations which shaped Buddhism and its distinctiveness within Indian culture — but on defining the degree to which these intuitions and motivations were expressed in different forms of later Buddhism.

The search for the original intuitions which shaped early Buddhism and the description of their character within the framework of philosophy — religion is the task undertaken by Krzysztof Kosior, the author of the opening article entitled *Dharma sprzed abhidharmy* [Dharma before the Abhidharma]. In its conclusion, the author suggests that the characterization of early Buddhism as a religion is questionable.

The aim of Grzegorz Polak, the author of the second article in the volume, *Czy Budda praktykował ascezę w okresie poprzedzającym jego przebudzenie? Krytyczna analiza sutty* Māhasīhanāda *ze zbioru* Majjhimanikāya [Did the Buddha practice asceticism prior to his awakening? A critical analysis of *Māhasīhanāda Sutta* from the *Majjhima Nikāya*] is more specific. The author asks whether there is enough ground to claim that Buddha was an ascetic at all and, having analyzed the appropriate source text in which the view on the ascetic period in life of Siddhartha Gautama is grounded, he claims it is unjustified.

In the consequent article entitled *Potyczki Kryszny z Buddą. Uwagi o polemicznej wymowie* Bhagawadgity *wobec wczesnego buddyzmu* [Krishna's skirmishes with the Buddha. Remarks on the polemical meaning of the *Bhagavadgītā* towards early Buddhism] authored by Przemysław Szczurek, we gain a deeper understanding of the position of orthodox Hinduism regarding the ethical and metaphysical convictions of early Buddhism, expressed in the crucial and popular text *Bhagawadita*.

The issue of the religious aspects of Buddhism return in the article *Widzenie pustki a doświadczenie mistyczne — przypadek madhjamaki* [The seeing of emptiness and mystical experience — the case of Madhyamaka] by Krzysztof Jakubczak. The author argues that both the study of emptiness, which characterises the school of Madhyamaka, as well as the meditative cognitive experiences, which are its basis, do not have much in common with mysticism and mystical experiences.

Some aspects of meditative experience are also discussed in the article by Kamil Nowak *Nierozróżniający wgląd w medytacji buddyzmu chan i jego wczesnobuddyjskie analogie* [Undifferentiating insight in the Chan Buddhist meditation and its early Buddhist analogies]. Nowak attempts to showcase the *topos* common for the early Buddhist tradition and the Chan Buddhism that is present within the area of Buddhist meditation.

The article entitled *Soteriologiczny paradygmat wadżrajany* [The soteriological paradigm of Vajrayāna] by Marek Szymański concludes the first part of *Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal*, 2017, 7/1. Its purpose is to define the distinctive soteriological paradigm of tantric Buddhism. The starting point for the author is a critical analysis of the idea examined by the Japanese scholar Shinichi Tsuda.

The second part of the current issue consists of two texts not related to Buddhism. The first one entitled *Obrona jedności bytu w* Brahmasiddhi *Maṇḍanamiśry. Przykład argumentacji scholastycznej* [A defense of the unity of being in the *Brahmasiddhi* of Maṇḍanamiśra. An example of scholastic argumentation] by Paweł Sajdek, although not addressing the leading theme of this issue, is in a way indirectly connected to its subject. Sajdek discusses the way of understanding the so-called great sayings from the Upaniṣads in the thought of Maṇḍanamiśra. The following paper is dedicated to the nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg (1802–1872). The author of this text, Wojciech Hanuszkiewicz, presents the academic biography of Trendelenburg and discusses the most important metaphilosophical problems raised in his main work *Logische Untersuchungen*.

This issue of *Argument* also includes two Polish translations of original texts. The first one, translated from the Japanese by Maciej Kanert, contributes to the main part of the issue as it is the seventh fascicle entitled *Shinjin inga* from the 12 fascicle version of *Shōbōgenzō* by Dōgen Kigen (1200–1253),

a Japanese Buddhist philosopher, and founder of the Sōtō school. The second one, translated from the German by Wojciech Hanuszkiewicz, entitled *Logika i metafizyka jako nauka podstawowa* [Logic and metaphysics as a fundamental science] is an excerpt from Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen*.

In the column "Polemics & debates" is included a paper by W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz who responds to two critical reviews of his book entitled *Traktat polityczno-filozoficzny. Tractatus Politico-Philosophicus* published in *Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal*, 2016, 6/1. In the following section "Philos-OFFer's lense", designed for less formal and witty philosophical reflections, we publish an essay by Piotr Bartula, *Nieautoryzowany wywiad z Makbetem* [Unauthorized interview with Macbeth]. The final column is made up of two short book reviews by Magdalena Hoły-Łuczaj and Dawn Adrienne-Saliba.

*Krzysztof JAKUBCZAK**
Editor of the issue

* Ph.D., senior lecturer at The Institute of the Middle and Far East, Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland. E-mail: x.jakubczak@gmail.com.