

Glenn Wallis

HEURISTIC OF NON-BUDDHISM

IN AUGURY OF ONENESS RESTORED

SNB Magazin 1

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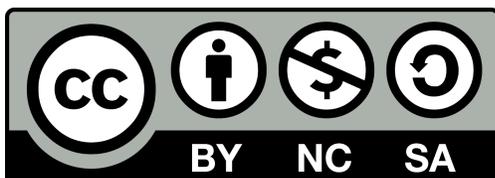
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Heuristic of Non-Buddhism

Introduction

Speculative non-buddhism aims to stall the swirl of x-buddhist decision so that, dust settled, we may gain a fresh perspective on x-buddhist thought and practice. In light of the machinations of buddhistic decision, this perspective must necessarily be neither from within nor from outside of x-buddhism itself. The investigator must remain un beholden to x-buddhism's structural schemes, rhetorical tropes, and decisional strategies. To these ends, speculative non-buddhism offers specific methodological operations, or a heuristic. The terms of the heuristic may be viewed as exploratory postulates. As such, the investigator may choose to perform a critical-constructive dialogue with a given form of Buddhism on the basis of discoveries made via the heuristic—articulating, for instance, what a “Secular Buddhism” or an “Ordinary Mind Zen Buddhism” might look like given the operation of speculative non-buddhism heuristics. As stated at the outset, however, speculative non-buddhism itself is wholly disinterested in any reformulation of Buddhism. Indeed, from a speculative non-buddhist perspective, reformulation is an empty exercise because Buddhists of each and every variety play with “loaded dice” (Laruelle's term): Buddhism, and by extension its acolyte, always and already knows. (This is what is meant by “specularity.”) “Being Buddhist” means: refusing to silence the Siren-like *vibrato* of buddhistic decision. Thus, another function of

performance is to enable the investigator to navigate away from Buddhism's representational Scylla.

This is not to suggest that speculative non-buddhism is merely a destructive project. To view its constructive, or really vivifying, contribution, we can briefly review the function of the *non* in "non-buddhism." Laruelle says that the *non* in "non-philosophy" is akin to that in "non-Euclidean geometry." The difference between Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry lies, of course, in the behavior of a line. Euclid's fifth postulate assumes parallelism. In upholding this postulate, along with the other four, Euclideans radically limit the field of possible forms. Rejecting this postulate (though preserving the other four), non-Euclidean geometry envisions, so to speak, radical new possibilities; namely, it permits elliptical and hyperbolic curvature.

This image is instructive. "Non-buddhism" makes no decision about (1) what structures or postulates *properly* constitute "Buddhism," or (2) the value, truth, or relevance of any of the claims made in the name of "Buddhism." Such non-decision enables a speculative, and perhaps even applied, curving toward or away from, as the case may be, that which is indexed by "the teachings of Buddhism." Crucially, though, the criteria for any given move lie wholly outside of "Buddhism's" value system. From within the fold, such a move is unpalatable, even heretical; for, the integrity of the system—its premises, authorities, and institutions—must, axiomatically, remain inviolate, for they are precisely what constitute "Buddhism." Non-buddhism stands outside of the fold, but not as a violent revolutionary storming the gates of venerable tradition. Enabling the x-buddhist postulate of requisite "disenchantment" (a term in the heuristic) non-buddhism is too

disinterested in “Buddhism” for such a destructive stand. This disinterest, however, does not manifest in rejection. Non-buddhism is acutely interested in the potentialities of x-buddhist teachings, but in a way that, again, remains un beholden to—and hence, unbound by and unaccountable to—the (dharmic) norms that govern those teachings. As Laruelle claims for non-philosophy, I claim for non-buddhism: only once we have suspended the structures that constitute x-buddhism, only once we have muted x-buddhism’s cosmic *vibrato*, are we free to hear fresh, lived, *terrestrial*, resonances. We can now turn to the heuristic that enables speculative non-buddhism to do its work.

Ancoric loss

An affective condition. The irreversible termination of hope that some permutations of x-buddhism, including crypto-buddhist formulations such as “mindfulness,” index the thaumaturgical refuge adduced in its rhetorics of self-display. Speculative non-buddhist investigation presupposes an attitude of *having no hope* in the ultimate efficacy of the x-buddhist dispensation. Interestingly, ancoric loss resembles x-buddhism’s own perquisite dispensation of “disenchantment” and echoes its trope of “leaving home.”

Aporetic dissonance

An affective condition. The believer’s *discovery* within himself or herself of a dissonant ring of perplexity, puzzlement, confusion, and loss concerning the *integrity* of x-buddhism’s self-presentation. It involves an apprehension that x-buddhistic rhetorics of self-display

are but instances of acataleptic impassibility. This ring is the signal for aporetic inquiry.

Aporetic inquiry

A cognitive, investigatory feature of speculative non-buddhism ensuing from an affective condition, namely aporetic dissonance. The act of vitiation augured by such dissonance effectively suspends x-buddhism's network of postulation, thereby devitalizing x-buddhism's *charism*. Such vitiation alerts the practitioner to (i) fissures, gaps, *aporia*, in the x-buddhist dispensation and (ii) the possibility that x-buddhist rhetorics of self-display constitute precisely an attempt to stock *aporia* with x-buddhistic phantasmagoria or evade the *aporia* altogether.

Buddhemes

The iterative vocabulary, phrases, and sentences that comprise virtually one hundred percent of x-buddhistic discourse. Buddhemes are abundantly displayed in all x-buddhist journals, blogs, magazines, dharma talks, canonical literature, commentaries, secondary books, dialogue, and Facebook pages. In reflexively speaking and writing in buddhemes, x-buddhists effectively reduce reality to the descriptive terms provided by x-buddhist discourse. Significantly though, buddhemic usage evades its own ostensible indexing of empty reality by simultaneously repopulating reality with, and on, its own terms. In light of the speculative non-buddhism heuristic, such reflexive usage appears as symptomatic not only of decision, but of blind ideological subscription. Buddhemic speech usurps and over-determines the

practitioner's potential expression of his or her own lived experience. Speculative non-buddhism suspects that buddhemic utterance, like the employment of all borrowed language, is a sign of evasion, of taking comfort in the warm embrace of the thaumaturgic *sangha*. But, again, such utterance functions at the expense of the very purpose that that community is (ostensibly) meant to serve, namely, the combustion of representational delusion *vis-à-vis* empty reality.

Buddhism

An explicit representation or thought-world founded on a universally accepted syntax, or decisional structure. As the history of Buddhism exemplifies, this structure permits perpetual mutation, wherein decision is re-inscribed in ever-developing expressions of “x-buddhism.” Doctrinally, “Buddhism” names a specular, covertly ideological system founded on teachings given canonically to a literary protagonist named “the Buddha.” Aesthetically, “Buddhism” names a consistently recognizable rhetoric of self-display (texts, costumes, naming customs, statuary and iconography, hair styles, painting, ritual artifacts, architecture, etc.). Institutionally, “Buddhism” names the manufacturer and conservatory of a particular variety of spiritualized charism. In the terms of its own rhetorics of self-display, “Buddhism” names the principal and superior representer of exigent human knowledge. Yet, as mentioned earlier, given the inexhaustible inventory of reality engendered by buddhistic decision—indeed, given the very syntax of decision itself—“Buddhism” can be formulated and arranged in innumerable guises. The word “Buddhism” thus indexes a consistent multiplicity: consistent, given its omnipresent decisional syntax; multiple, given its protean adaptability. The history of Buddhism shows it to be, to cite Laruelle again in this context, “the

articulation of a universal market where the concepts are exchanged according to rules specific to each system, and from an authority with two sides: one of the [buddhistic] division of work, the other of the appropriation of part of what the market of the concepts produces” (*Dictionary* 57-58)—for instance, morphological innovations, such as Dzogchen, Soto Zen, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, Secular Buddhism or even Post-traditional Buddhism.

Buddhist

A person who is reflexively beholden to the structural syntax of buddhistic decision. The embodiment of (“the shape of”), hence the central agent in, the buddhistic thought-world. A person whose speech concerning exigent matters is constructed from buddhemes. Given the radically protean nature of decisional adaptation, the possible modifications (x-) of the abstract noun “Buddhist” are illimitable, hence “x-buddhist.”

Cancellation of warrant

A major consequence of applying speculative non-buddhist heuristics: the comprehensive withdrawal of buddhistic verity. Indeed, given the coercive function of decision, the work of speculative non-buddhism cannot proceed until cancellation of warrant occurs. Cancellation is not an intentional act. It is the sudden dissipation—affective and cognitive—of a *fata morgana* (warrant).

Curvature

Analogous to non-Euclidean geometry, whereby decommissioning of a single postulate—thus severing Euclidean geometry’s integrity—permits elliptical and hyperbolic curvature. Speculative non-buddhist heuristics yield a distorted image of Buddhism. Lines of connection, juxtaposition, and intersection intended by Buddhist rhetorics of self-display appear as in a hall of mirrors. Yet, in distortion and contortion, new patterns may become visible.

Decision

An affective and cognitive operation. Affectively, “decision” is used in its colloquial sense. It involves a psychological and emotional (and, in many cases, economic) determination to accept a particular condition or state of affairs over and against other options. In this case, the decision involves (i) adherence to x-buddhism’s claims to verity and (ii) dependency on its charism. Cognitive decision is a technical usage. Derived from Laruelle, it involves a fissure between an immanently and axiomatically given (empty reality of the world) and a transcendently idealized (dharmic representations of the world). This splitting permits x-buddhism the specularly that constitutes it as the totalizing dispensation given in its rhetorics of self-display. Simultaneously, however, decisional splitting excludes x-buddhism from the community of knowledge. Speculative non-buddhism unmasks this decisional syntax, which operates without exception in every instance of x-buddhism.

Desire

In the x-buddhist dispensation, desire is the preeminent cause of pain and suffering. It is a kind of insatiable craving that exacerbates the inherent unease of the human condition. X-buddhism claims knowledge regarding the uprooting of this desire, this craving. But in the very voicing of its claim, x-buddhism ensures that, as Lacan says, desire does not give up on desire. (For Lacan, of course, such persistence is favorable. For x-buddhism, it is detrimental.) The voicing of this claim stimulates in the hearer affective decision. Decision, in turn, requires the birth of a specific variety of desire: the desire for reparation of x-buddhism's self-imagined world-fracture. Ironically, x-buddhism is an instance of what Ordinary Mind Zen teacher Barry Magid calls a "curative fantasy":

A curative fantasy is a personal myth that we use to explain what we think is wrong with us and our lives and what we imagine is going to make it all better. Sometimes these fantasies are quite explicit: we're sure we know what's wrong and we're sure we know what we're after. (*Ending 6*)

To see the irony of this statement, we have to read it against Magid's intention. X-buddhism continually reveals itself as just such a saving "personal myth." X-buddhism is a "curative fantasy" writ large. It is sure it knows what's wrong with you, and it is sure it knows what you should be after. X-buddhism, therefore, aims, for your sake, to foster in you the proper genus and force of its unique desire.

Destruction

What is not being destroyed is buddhistic decision. For, in order for speculative non-buddhism to do its work, that structure must, in the first instance, remain intact. For, obviously, only if intact can it be exposed. Once exposed, however, a re-description occurs that has destructive consequences. Speculative non-buddhism, it can be said, is eminently interested in viewing x-buddhism in the afterglow of its destruction. But, as I mentioned, the destruction that ensues from its analysis is closer to Heidegger's notion of *Destruktion* in *Being and Time*, than it is to an "end of Buddhism/end of religion" rhetoric. It will be instructive to quote Heidegger at length again in this context:

When tradition thus becomes master, it does so in such a way that what it "transmits" is made so inaccessible, proximally and for the most part, that it rather becomes concealed. Tradition takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial "sources" from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand. (43)

Detail fetish

See *Exemplificative braggadocio*.

Devitalization of charism

The x-buddhist vallation is sealed by *charism*. X-buddhistic *charismata* are the incalculable averred “gifts” of wisdom, knowledge, community, teacher-student relationship, healing, and so forth, that cascade out of the dharmic dispensation. Such gifts exert a binding influence on the x-buddhist. One result of charismatic influence is the blinding of the x-buddhist to decisional structure and decisional commitment. Enactment of speculative non-buddhist heuristics enables the x-buddhist to unbind and unblind from the coercive yet largely unconscious effects of the *charism*. Imaginative curvature—speculatively applied reconfiguration—is impossible until this *charism* is quelled.

Dharma, The

The specular *omen pontifactor* of samsaric contingency. Like God, Justice, Logos, Rta, The Dao, and so on, The Dharma (English: The Norm as buddhistic trinity of dispensation, truth, and cosmic structure) is the architect of the cosmic vault and the keeper of its inventory. As such, The Dharma engenders the buddhistic hallucination of reality. In its decisional function, The Dharma is the transcendent-immanent operator that synthesizes the purely immanent dyad of spatiotemporal vicissitude (*samsara*) and contingency (*paticcasamuppada*). The hallucinatory quality results from the fact that The Dharma is a function of a purely idealized (transcendent) grammar that produces oracular statements *ad infinitum* concerning the finite world (immanence). The Dharma is the axis on which turns around and around and around the x-buddhist world-conquering juggernaut. It is the buddhistic gathering together (under the authority of The Dharma) of reality’s posited (by The

Dharma) splintered whole, which splintering is exhibited by the (dharmically indexed) world condition articulated (by The Dharma) as spatiotemporal vicissitude-contingency.

Disinterest

An affective quality. The speculative non-buddhism investigator forfeits his commission if he serves as either the shape of the buddhistic thought-world or as a revolutionary storming the gates of the x-buddhist vallation. Disinterest's physical corollary, when confronted with charismatic x-buddhist omens, is a shrug of the shoulders, followed by a concerned glance toward the harbinger. For, to someone disinterested, interest appears symptomatic of a dissociating yearning for the thaumaturgic *sangha*.

Disruption

X-buddhism's network of postulation is a power grid pumping buddhistic charism through the lines of venerable transmission. Steadied by its rhetorics of self-display, the network extends to sangha sub-stations and into the affective-cognitive-decisional apparatus of the individual x-buddhist person. Speculative non-buddhist heuristics enable an interruption of the power surge in order to inspect its machinery and analyze its juice.

Empty reality

Another name for radical immanence. In other words, the most banal, disappointing, uninteresting, unremarkable, indeed, vacuous, fact of

life imaginable. In one register it is: nothing that is not in the world, and the nothing that is. In another register it is: everything that is not yet in the world, and the everything that already is. Ontically, science charts empty reality. Ancestral statements about the earth's accretion and cell formation as well as descendent statements concerning cell dissolution and the earth's incineration point toward empty reality. Culture adds its representations. The primary purpose of enacting speculative non-buddhist postulates is to encourage us 200,000-year-old *homo sapiens* apes to settle alongside of empty reality with, *initially* at least, whatever culturally minimal representation is required to get along. Dispelling occlusion of empty reality—which occlusion ensues from incognizant, e.g., x-buddhistic, representation—constitutes speculative non-buddhism's very reason for being. Against the narcissistic impulses of the homo sapiens ape to reify and aggrandize his evanescent cultural fictions, empty reality must not be re-inscribed as x-buddhistic śūnyatā, no-self, “things as they are,” dependent origination, or anything else. Empty reality is given in the “just so” of everyday life. The term “empty reality” is used because it names the intimately real, the radically immanent, while refusing to pluck the heartstrings of the soul's *vibrato*. X-buddhicized terms, like “śūnyatā,” do the latter. Śūnyatā, for instance, is “Joe Jikyo Jones Roshi” to *empty reality's* “Joe Jones;” it is, namely a rhetorical flamboyance that serves to occlude what it purports to name precisely because it *overwrites* what it names (with its grandiosity, cultural-historical complexity, etc.). X-buddhists, as the shape of Buddhism, may attempt to comment on empty reality; but, in doing so *qua x-buddhists* via buddhemic utterance, this would amount to yet another inscription of buddhistic decision—yet another turn on the circularity of the dharmic axis. Empty reality is not an issue for x-buddhism. It is none of x-buddhism's business. Empty reality is

nothing at all. Could the term express that point with any more directness and clarity? To a great extent, the term “Buddhism” names a particular manner of *representationally stylizing* empty reality. As terms such as *śūnyatā* intimate, finally, a dark irony is at hand here: x-buddhism encodes its own undoing. But no x-buddhist is able to undo it. That would be impossible. Hence: non-buddhism.

Exemplificative braggadocio

Also known as the x-buddhistic “detail fetish.” It refers to a form of behavior. It is a manner of argumentation in which minute details about *x-buddhism* are made load-bearing structures in arguments about various facets of *reality*. X-buddhist exemplificative braggadocio is a primary manifestation of x-buddhist faith in the principle of sufficient Buddhism. It is the way of x-buddhist commentators to cite as evidence for their position *an example*: *sutta/sutra/tantra-a-b-c* maintains x, y, z; buddhistic-school/teacher-a-b-c maintains x, y, z, etc. I could add, without exaggeration, that they cite their examples *ad infinitum*. For, exemplification is an essential feature of dharmic discourse. Given the long history and vast cultural-geographic range of the dispensation, there is virtually no end to the x-buddhists’ salvo of dharmic exemplification. That is why I say that x-buddhism is a world-conquering juggernaut from which nothing can escape: there is nothing under the sun for which x-buddhism cannot provide an example. The examples it proffers, moreover, derived as they are from buddhistic decision, ensure that “x-buddhist” names a person who, as Ray Brassier says of philosophers, “views everything (terms and relations) from above.” Like Wittgenstein his slabs and Heidegger his hammer, the x-buddhist is entranced by his *examples*. Contrary to

x-buddhism, non-buddhism sees the perpetual crowing of dharmic exemplification not as the specular instantiations of reality that those examples are meant to demonstrate (concerning mind, matter, consciousness, perception, sensation, etc.) but rather as symptomatic displays in need of analysis. It is, in fact, via an analysis of buddhistic exemplification that I arrived at my specific adaptation of Laruelle's axiom of decision in relation to x-buddhism. Endless dharmic exemplification presents the most rigorous basis for the operation of decisional circularity, or what Laruelle calls "auto-position" (specularity), in all of x-buddhism. It is worth repeating Brassier again in this regard:

[d]ecisional specularity ensures the world remains [x-buddhism's] mirror. [Buddhistically theorizing] the world becomes a pretext for [x-buddhism's] own interminable self-interpretation. And since interpretation is a function of talent rather than rigor, the plurality of mutually incompatible yet unfalsifiable interpretations merely perpetuates the uncircumscribable ubiquity of [x-buddhism's] auto-encompassing specularity. Absolute specularity breeds infinite interpretation—such is the norm for the [x-buddhist] practice of thought. ("Axiomatic Heresy:" 26-27)

The illuminating irony of x-buddhists' citing diverse examples to other x-buddhists is that, from a non-buddhist perspective, they are only exhibiting—meta-exemplifying!—the unity of buddhistic syntax. Doing so is all the more illuminating because their examples are not, as they

purport to be, examples from and of reality, but from and of x-buddhism itself, and only itself.

Fitting proximity

A relation of the investigator to x-buddhism's vallation. Too close, and the effulgence of x-buddhism's *charism* blinds; too far away, and the embers turn cold.

Gotamic calculus

The first names or primary raw terms—derived from the canonical protagonist, Siddhattha Gotama, the Buddha—that a given x-buddhism employs to chart its model of being and becoming. In general terms, a calculus is concerned both with the tangent or trajectory of continuous instantaneous change and the area or space that ensues, even if only momentarily, from that change. As such, a calculus is concerned with the quantification of real-world limits. Newton's use of the calculus allowed a mathematical description of physical phenomena. Mathematical equations were, then, the terms of Newton's calculus. By contrast, Gotama is concerned with *qualitative* real-world limits. His major terms are the concepts that make up the dharmic inventory. Different x-buddhisms employ various major terms. An example of a classical-buddhist gotamic calculus might be: disenchantment, ancestral anamnesis, vanishing, symbolic identity, nihility, conceptual proliferation, contingency, world, surface, perspicuity, unbinding-extinction (*nibbida, sati, anicca, anattā, suññatā, papañca, paticcasamuppāda, loka, sabba, paññā, nibbāna*). These foundational concepts are viable candidates for a gotamic calculus because they are arguably the sine qua non of

classical-buddhism (hence, they are first names, or primary raw terms). Devoid of them, the earliest dispensation is hardly anything more than a platitudinous ethical system conjoined to superstitious devotional practices situated within a pedestrian philosophical framework. It is precisely because of its robust existential postulates, such as “vanishing” and “radical contingency,” that classical-buddhism has consistently attracted the interest of the world’s thinkers, including philosophers, physicists, and artists. The great irony here is that the classically-oriented x-buddhisms themselves (e.g., the Secular, Atheist, Agnostic, Thai Forest, traditional Theravadin, Insight, Vipassana, MBSR, and a few others) evade the ultimate and invigorating conclusion—the, or a, seemingly inevitable outcome—of their own terms. The result of this evasion is that these terms haunt x-buddhist discourse. The calculus seems to permit, if not outright dictate, an alternative trajectory. Even as nodes in the network of x-buddhist postulation, a series of fair, yet unexplored, questions presents themselves: don’t concepts such as nullity and radical contingency cast a shadow on x-buddhism’s modern-day Epicurean path to *eudaemonia*? Don’t ideas such as vanishing and extinction hang like a cloud over that path’s destination, nirvana, when construed as a healing garden that “slakes the thirst with a natural cure”? The heuristic tool “gotamic calculus” asks the investigator to perform such recalculations of x-buddhist first names, and to give relentless thought to what unexpected sums might be derived, no matter where such thought might lead.

Great Feast of Knowledge, The

X-buddhistic decision is a specular court of justice that rules from above. Its representatives include, for instance, Enlightenment,

Compassion, Suffering, Delusion, Mindfulness. Consideration of any of these representatives devoid of the royal warrant provided by decision reveals these representatives to be, as buddhistically presented, unfit, unusable, unreliable, and even suspect, characters. For, deflation acts to make manifest the representatives' display of self-importance, necessity, obviousness, assumed desirability, pretense to natural truthfulness, etc. Speculative non-buddhism escorts x-buddhism's representatives to the Great Feast of Knowledge. Seated at the table there, the representatives must hold their own alongside of local knowledges such as art, philosophy, literature, biology, psychology, physics, and so on. From a speculative non-buddhist estimation, the x-buddhist representatives, devoid of their dharmic body guards (the network of postulation), lose all status in such an exchange. That status, founded on the specularity given in decision, is thereby deflated. Sitting at the Great Feast of Knowledge radically alters the contribution of x-buddhism's representatives. (I hear art and evolutionary biology, for instance, holding forth passionately on the absolute necessity and glorious fruits of one of x-buddhism's foremost undesirables, "delusion," to take but a single instance).

Humophobia

"Above all, we should cease postponing the act of becoming what in fact and essence we are," says Henry Miller (*Plexus* 64). What we, in fact and essence are, of course, is human. The force of x-buddhist subjugation can be understood as an effort to repress this fact and reverse or even obliterate this "essence." It does so by offering a pantheon of realized types—from the traditional arahant and bodhisattva to the contemporary mindful practitioner—skilled in the

enlightened arts of wisdom, compassion, kindness, non-judgmental clarity, and a host of other salvific dispositions. X-buddhist typology cynically belies fear of the human of *flesh and blood*, and thus fashions in its place fantastic constructions of enlightened mutants. The only way the x-buddhist typology can function is both to subsume and to overcome the human. That is, x-buddhism first determines what the “the uninstructed worldling” is (lustful, deluded, hostile, unskilled, etc.), and then instructs him on how to surpass himself.

Ideological opacity

X-buddhism is nothing if not a vortex of participation and identity. It aims both explicitly and implicitly to form particular types of subjects, and to do so in its own image. The basis of its transformational program is, furthermore, its own prescribed practices (social, linguistic, devotional, contemplative, etc.). All of this is, finally, accompanied by robust institutional commitment, or hyper-reflexivity. Such features describe not a contestable program of knowledge or skill acquisition, but rather an ideological system of indoctrination. It describes, that is, a systematic program of personal transformation and social reproduction whose ideas—beliefs, goals, actions—derive not from individual agents, but from a pre-established putative norm, in this case: The Dharma. Speculative non-buddhism is constantly alert to any signs in buddhistic decree that indicate a comprehensive view of self, society, and cosmos. Indeed, the very fact that, unmolested by the kinds of methodological moves that speculative non-buddhism makes, The Dharma operates unseen (it is just “how things are,” it is natural and self-evident, etc.), is evidence of the ideological machination of x-buddhism. The question is whether the

non-buddhist intervention may enable transparent insight into such opaque machination of x-buddhist ideology.

Incidental exile

An exile is someone who finds himself or herself in fitting proximity to Buddhism's vallation. I say "finds" because exile, in this case, is not forced: it occurs *incidentally and unexpectedly*. Aporetic dissonance initiates it; aporetic inquiry further drives it. The process goes something like this. Contentedly ensconced within x-buddhism's thaumaturgical refuge, you find yourself soothed by tradition's self-proclaimed "compassionate" charism. (A sufficient apprenticeship within x-buddhism's workshop—locking oneself onto the grooves of borrowed x-buddhistic thought—may be a necessary precondition for exile even to be an option.) But, for whatever reasons, at some point you discover within yourself a sense of ancoric loss and aporetic dissonance. On examination, you hear this ring as the resonance of a complex of disturbing emotions and thoughts: perplexity, puzzlement, confusion, disappointment, and loss. You discover, to your surprise, that x-buddhism leaves much to be desired. You become suspicious of the way it postures as the giver of solutions, as the harbinger of peace. It may answer many questions, but, you are beginning to realize, it all too often does so in a facile and hasty manner. It even encourages superstitious belief and new forms of neurotic attachment. And in the meantime, it is creating for you many questions which it seems impotent to answer. Suddenly, you find yourself incidentally and unexpectedly exiled from the thaumaturgical refuge, from the innocent embrace of the pure dispensation. What will you do? You may, of course, abandon the project altogether and wander on your way, seeking refuge in another self-described specular dispensation or

in a desert of confusion or in nothing at all. Another possibility: you engage the bewildering *aporias* that have opened before your unsuspecting mind. Hence, you set up camp in fitting proximity—fitting, that is, for an exile.

Material

Speculative non-buddhism is a critique of x-buddhist *material*. The material that it takes into its purview includes the numerous forms that make up x-buddhist thought and practice: *sanghas* and practice groups, retreats and retreat centers, rituals and ritualization, protocols, concepts, language usage, rhetoric, websites, blogs, forums, popular and academic books and magazines, canonical literature, paraphernalia, altars, artifacts, iconography, hair styles, naming practices, clothing, and beyond. As the term *material* suggests, specifically x-buddhist configurations of these forms occur always in the second instance only. Decimation of the material thus constitutes a reclamation of the human by the human and for the human.

Postulate deflation

Deprecating the charismatic braggadocio of x-buddhism's conceptual magistrates so that they are forced to join the table of common-law discourse. *See* Great Feast of Knowledge.

Principle of sufficient buddhism

Parallel to Laruelle's "Principle of Sufficient Philosophy," which states that everything is philosophizable. X-buddhistic decision is similarly a

pretension of that mechanism's creators (i.e., x-buddhists) that all things under the sun are matters for x-buddhism's oracular pronouncements, and that the totality of pronouncements (the network of postulation) constitutes an adequate account—a unitary vision—of reality. “Buddhism” thus names, for “Buddhists,” a sufficiency. As postulate deflation reveals, however, this view of sufficiency is maintained only insofar as x-buddhism successfully avoids conversing with the sciences and humanities at The Great Feast of Knowledge. This avoidance amounts to a myopia whereby x-buddhism only *appears* sufficient. This appearance, given the blighted field of reality that it entails, amounts to buddhistic hallucination, whereby “the x-buddhist view of Y” is confused with—seen in place of—“Y.”

Protagonist, The

Also called “the Buddha-figure.” The progenitor of the Buddhist dispensation. He is referred to by various names, such as “The Buddha,” “Gotama,” and “The Blessed One.” Speculative non-buddhism's designation “the protagonist” is intended to indicate the irrefutable fact that “the Buddha” is a historical figure entirely overwritten by a literary one. Not the slightest wisp of evidence has survived that sheds light on the historical progenitor. Any reliable historical evidence that once existed has been reduced to caricature by the machinations of internecine x-buddhist institutional shenanigans and the stratagems of ideological dupery. The figure of the Buddha in the classical Pali texts is a concoction of the collective imaginations of the numerous communities that, over several centuries, had a hand in the formation of the canon. Add to this imaginative mélange the imaginings—cultural, political, fantastic, ignorant—of all the iterations

of all forms of x-buddhism, and the result is the Buddha as Cosmic Magic Mirror, reflecting all things to all people. A viable composite human figure “the Buddha” can be salvaged from this protean symbol of buddhistic vanity only with force of the darkest, most atavistic yearning of puerile nostalgia for The Great Father.

Recommission of postulates

Once deflated, muted, decimated, subjected to the inquiries of the participants at The Great Feast of Knowledge, and otherwise divested of charismatic potency, x-buddhism’s postulates may be released back into the world. The result, however, is, in every instance, a buddhistically uninterpretable result. For instance, the postulate of the second preeminent reality (*idaṃ dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccam: taṇhā*) claims exigent and superior knowledge of the cause of human unease or “suffering” (*dukkha*), namely “craving” (*taṇhā*). Stripped of specularity, derived as it is from the transcendental dharmic inventory, the postulate may be brought into dialogue with, for example, bio-science’s biological incentive system (BIS). BIS identifies the reward-punishment mechanism that explains human craving *vis-à-vis* evolutionary adaptation. In short, the notion of “uprooting,” “extinguishing,” or otherwise extirpating craving (all additional classical-buddhist postulates) in light of BIS looks not only unfeasible but outright hackneyed. Or perhaps not. We won’t know how well the recommissioned postulate holds up at The Great Feast of Knowledge until we observe it in vigorous dialogue.

Rhetorics of self-display

The entrancing nimbus enfolding the palace of The Dharma. The aesthetic affectation of thaumaturgy—clothing, naming, hair styles, painting, sculpture, architecture. To wit: The cult of the book; the exaltation of the dharma talk; the apotheosis of the teacher. To wit: Buddhas and bodhisattvas arrayed in magnificent robes, sitting majestically in their heavenly abodes—their buddha fields—exuding auras of healing light. Magical flesh and bone, fresh as the breath of the Blessed One, efficacious as *amritya*, nectar of the gods. Magnetic mantras—*nembutsu*, *daimoku*, *dharani*—sound tsunamis surging throughout the universe. Ritual paraphernalia—statues, bells, a twirling wheel clutched like a crucifix in the dark. Those living exemplars, as charismatic and clairvoyant as the Buddha walking unscathed on an open road: Roaring roshis, shamanic lamas, wizardly tulkus, and wonder-working arahants. (= A rhetorically-charged display of x-buddhist rhetorics of self- display.)

Saliency of requisite disenchantment

“Disenchantment” is, of course, an eminently buddhistic notion. The protagonist posits it as the catalyst *par excellence*, indeed, the requisite affective condition, of “home-leaving,” of embarking on the “holy life.” In good speculative non-buddhism fashion, however, we can divest it of the limit circumscribed by x-buddhism. Doing so, we claim it as a value of flesh and blood, and turn it back on “home-leaving,” back on “the holy life,” back on x-buddhism. Indeed,

disenchantment—with the buddhistic specular oracularity—is the catalyst to speculative non-buddhist enquiry.

Spiritual narcissism

The x-buddhist subject is doubly narcissistic. First, it is so in a manner consistent with the general, wide-spread condition found among all religious adherents; namely, exalted self-importance. The x-buddhist subject is the holder of the key to the cosmic vault of wisdom (i.e., The Dharma). It is the progeny of the Enlightened One. The elixir-like *mana* of mindfulness courses through its consciousness. As such each and every x-buddhist has the potential—and the right—to outflank interlocutors from every manner of local knowledge, whether of the sciences or of the humanities, and, lead, like Delacroix's *Liberty*, the embattled masses from the front. This form of x-buddhist narcissism is on open display. The second type is more subtle, and so less visible. This insidious type of spiritual narcissism has the potential for what Laruelle's "Theorem 000000" names "the suicide disguised as murder. ("Theorems)" It is as Ovid says in *Metamorphoses*: Narcissus died "because he could not lay hold of himself, and yet perceived himself as other." Like Narcissus, the Buddha's progeny becomes (like the progenitor himself) "tired of hunting and the heated noon"—of stress and unease born of the slow samsaric burn. She or he, too, sits down, "attracted by the peaceful solitudes and by the glassy spring"—the promise that infuses the rhetoric of x-buddhist "refuge-taking." And yet, as the x-buddhist stoops to quench his thirst "another thirst increases," for:

While he is drinking he beholds himself reflected in the mirrored pool—and loves; loves an imagined body which

contains no substance, for he deems the mirrored shade a thing of life to love. He cannot move, for so he marvels at himself.

A Narcissus, the x-buddhist becomes entranced with the watery image of a transfigured self—the realized subject shimmering in the dharmic dispensation. Yet he fails to recognize that before him is—*always and only*—himself alone. Or, put the other way around, he has fallen for the illusion that the x-buddhist subject can replace his identity. The heuristic thus implores the x-buddhist, as Ovid’s narrator does Narcissus,

Avert your gaze and you will lose your love, for this that holds your eyes is nothing save the image of yourself reflected back to you. It comes and waits with you; it has no life; it will depart if you will only go.

We implore, of course, to no avail—the lustful fantasy for the realized subject now has a real, if liquid and ungraspable, form. And so the x-buddhist Narcissus must eventually admit:

This fatal image wins my love, as I behold it. But I cannot press my arms around the form I see, the form that gives me joy.

Thaumaturgical refuge

The affectation of x-buddhist teachers to wonderworking community (sangha). Telling signs of thaumaturgical display among x-buddhist teachers include: masking identity with special naming, clothing, and hair styles; exalted utterance, verbal demiurgy; narratological seizure; assumption of privileged status as ritual officiate; wielding unique power objects; functioning as high pageantry eminence; serving as guardians of the sanghic *axis mundi*. Such displays communicate to the practitioner what the anthropologist Pascal Boyer calls “hidden causal essence.” Given the role that thaumaturgical refuge plays in ideological allurements, it will be instructive to quote Boyer at length:

Notions of ritual specialists are based on non-religious notions of causal essence. People think of such ritual specialists as having some internal, vaguely defined quality that sets them apart from the common folk. Learning to perform the rites [is secondary]; what matters most is possession of that internal capacity, conceived in quasi-biological terms. This is where, once again, what may have seemed a specifically religious phenomenon is derived from common cognition. The notion of a hidden causal essence that cannot be observed yet explains outward form and behavior, is a crucial feature of our spontaneous, intuitive way of thinking about living species. Here, it is transferred upon a pseudo-natural kind, as it were: a sub-kind of human agents with different essential characteristics. (Boyer “Out of Africa:” 33)

The notion of “enlightenment,” is a prime example of “hidden causal essence.” Why does the Dalai Lama present himself in the way he does? Because he is, of course, an “enlightened” being. His actions are impelled by this “essence,” hence it is “causal.” The essence, moreover, is invisible to us; hence, it is “hidden.” Being hidden, how are we affected by it? An all-too-common result of this imputation of hidden causal essence is that we easily—indeed, spontaneously and “naturally”—elevate certain humans to an exclusive status. Cognitive science aims to show that such a move results from the habits of everyday cognition. We assume that entities, whether human, animal, or even imagined (such as “God”), possess qualities that are intrinsic and, indeed, essential to that kind of entity. Buddhist teachers, in North America as in Asia, excite and encourage assumptions of their, and by extension their “*sangha’s*,” special, hidden, causal—in a word, thaumaturgical—essence.

Ventriloquism

The x-buddhist person manifesting buddhistic representation via speech and writing. Ventriloquism is an instance of the x-buddhist as “the shape of the [dharmic] World” (see “World”). Evidence of ventriloquism is the predictable iteration of buddhemes in everything from canonical literature to dharma talks and blog posts. At its most extreme, ventriloquism manifests as follows. In dialogue: the x-buddhist’s mouth is moving, but it is tradition that speaks. In writing: it is a form of spiritualized automatization—a mediunic experience akin to cryptomnesia. At its most extreme, it is a species of stupidity.

Vibrato

Any statement that assumes—whether tacitly or explicitly—that x-buddhism reigns over the court of knowledge resounds with a *vibrato* that originates within x-buddhism’s own orchestration. That *vibrato* results from the strike of multiple postulation. Non-buddhism mutes this *vibrato*, and thereby enervates the postulates’ potency. It does so, in part, by abstaining from enabling buddhistic decision about the value of the postulates lying there, now diminished or outright decimated. Speculative non-buddhism views this deflation as salutary. Whereas the inflated (x-buddhist) postulates cast shadows on the ground of thought, non-buddhism’s deflation clears a bright space for speculation. Whereas x-buddhist inflation attempts to determine the course of thinking (always back to itself), the course of thought and application ensuing from non-buddhist deflation is undetermined.

Voltaic network of postulation

A self-generating totality that constitutes the Buddhist dispensation. It is the totality of premises, claims, propositions, presuppositions, beliefs, axioms, and so on, coupled with the totality of utterances, talks, interpretations, commentaries, sub-commentaries, secondary literature, and so on. Because of the colossal and intricate accrual of this twenty-five hundred year old dispensation, infinite x-buddhisms, each complete in itself, may be generated from this network.

World

The result of a *mixture*; namely, of x-buddhism and the immanent sensorium. Together with “the person” and “the mind,” “the world” forms a primary reference point for x-buddhist doctrinal assertions (*loka*, *kṣetra*, *cakravāla*). The horizon of the x-buddhist “world” includes, but potentially reaches far beyond, the terrestrial sphere, encompassing numerous heavenly and hellish realms in a multi-tiered cosmos and even multiple universes or a multiverse. For the reflexive x-buddhist practitioner, assertions about “the world” become the interpretive basis for the specifically x-buddhist thought-world or the world fashioned from the x-buddhist conceptual materials. It is in this sense that the x-buddhist is, as Laruelle says of the philosopher, “the capital or a quasi-capital in the order of the thought. Or the shape of the World” (*Dictionary* 58). Another way of conceiving of an x-buddhist is thus as the embodied product of the dispensation’s hallucinated thought-world.

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On the Subtitle

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche speaks of “the hope of the epopts looking toward a rebirth of Dionysus, which we must now dimly conceive as the end of individuation.” Why should they want to *end individuation*? The Apollonian “conception of individuation [is] the primal cause of evil” in no small measure because it shrouds the truth of Dionysian self-obliteration in the whole of (in-)humanity, the truth of the Real of primal unity—*anatman*, in x-buddhist terms—in a veil of *self-soothing* comfort. Against this common delusion, the Dionysian figure restores “art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken **in augury of a restored oneness.**”

Crucially, my Laruellen usage of “the One” and “oneness” is wholly bereft of the necessarily joyous life-affirmation that this aesthetic re-immersion in the w/whole of the broken (i.e., individuated) One that we find in Nietzsche. And if *Life* itself is not justified as an aesthetic phenomenon, something like generic aesthetic value remains.



SPECULATIVE NON-BUDDHISM

RUINS OF THE BUDDHIST REAL