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Deconstruction of Hume-Buddhism Relation: A Final Note on Anattā Debate

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Abstract

When Hume’s understanding of empiricism is handled, his ideas towards human self are usually narrated with the phrase of “bundle theory of the self”. Hume, different from rationalists -and even from Locke as an empiricist who stays close to rationalist tradition about the matter of individual’s self- defends the idea that humans have no self as an independent structure and the thing which is accepted as the self is actually a bundle of perceptions. Even though it is not clear if this interpretation of self as a thing which has no coercive quality -which means that what is called self is just a sum or combination of experiences- is a destructive critic towards rationalists’ idea of self or simply a pointing-towards another base in an epistemological and ontological sense. This understanding of his is said to have shown a similarity with the term of Anattā from Buddhist teaching which mentions that there is no permanence or unchanging substance in existence and beings”. In here, it has been researched that if it is possible to deconstruct by investigating in which points Hume’s views towards the idea of self has a corresponding with and differentiation from the contexts that the term Anattā is thought within Buddhist tradition of thought. With this reading, how much Hume’s opinions are related to Anattā is opened up to debate with problematizing the concepts like sameness, difference and similarity.

Keywords: Buddhism, Comparative Philosophy, Ego, Empiricism, Self, Soul

Hume-Budizm İlişkisinin Dekonstrüksiyonu: Anattā Tartışmasına Son Bir Not

Öz

David Hume’un empirizm anlayışı ortaya koyulurken onun insanın benliğine/kendiliğine dair görüşleri genellikle “Ben’in algılar demeti kuramı” ifadesi ile tanımlanır. Hume, rasyonalistlerden farklı olarak hatta bir empirist olarak Locke bile kişinin özü/kendiliği/ruhu/benliği konusunda rasyonalist geleneğe yakındır. insanın bağımsız bir yapı olarak benliğe/kendiliğe sahip olmadığını ve benlik/kendilik olarak kabul edilen şeyin aslında kişinin algılarından oluşan bir demet olduğunu savunur. Kohesif bir niteliğe sahip olmayan bir yapı olarak bu kendilik yorumunun -yani kendilik denilen şeyin sadece deneyimlerin bir toplamı ya da birleşimi olması- Hume’un rasyonalistlerin ben fikrine karşı yıkıcı bir argüman mı yoksa ben fikrine dair epistemolojik ve ontolojik bir başka temele işaret etme durumu mu olduğu belli olmasa da, onun bu görüşü canlıların içinde “değişmeyen, sabit kalan bir benlik ya da ruh olmamasına” dair Budist düşüncenin Anattā terimi ile bir paralellik gösteriyor olabilir. Bu çalışmada Hume’un ben/kendilik fikrine yönelik görüşleri ile Budist düşünce geleneği içindeki Anattā teriminin düşünüldüğü bağlamların hangi noktalarda uyuşup hangi noktalarda farklılaştığı araştırılarak “benlik/kendilik” kavramı üzerine yeni bir söylem geliştirilip geliştirilemeyeceği denenmiştir. Bu karşılaştırmanın derinleşmesi için, ilgili karşılaştırma felsefi olarak sorunsallaştırılıp bir yeniden okumaya tabi tutulmuştur. Bu okuma ile Hume’un kendilik üzerine görüşlerinin ne oranda Anattā fikri ile ilişkili olduğu -aynılık, farklılık ya da benzerlik kavramları problematize edilerek- tartışmaya açılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Budizm, Ego, Empirizm, Karşılaştırmalı Felsefe, Kendilik, Ruh.

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Introduction

It can be said that, relatively to the field of comparative philosophy, the field of fusion philosophy can be seen as a promising and problem-fixing approach,² because while it doesn't have the restrictions which comparative philosophy willingly has, it is also more flexible in intellectual and methodological aspects. It is a matter of -as now almost famously cited in this field- *philosophically comparing something rather than simply the act of comparing philosophies*.³ This can be indeed a fruitful and a sincere manner of approach which can create a useful alternative for comparative philosophy when it is stuck in its endeavours and enterprises. In this article these two methods will be kept in mind in every step of its research and they will be used -when necessary- in a more eclectic and selective way when one or another -or both- is needed to perform or operate.

But even though this, when the most problematic situation -which runs more deeper- is taken into consideration, the difference between comparative philosophy and fusion philosophy turns into just an important detail, an important one for sure, but nevertheless a detail, not an essential distinction, for now. The problematic of any comparative or fusion research is two-folded at the beginning. First layer is about the hermeneutics of the contexts and forms. It is about how to interpret to information and data that are collected within the research. For one to be able to deduct results and make assumptions, one needs to be aware of and decisive about the manner of approach and type or style of investigation which are adopted within the research. The same information and data can be interpreted differently with respect to research's manner or way of approach. Two things can share a similarity from an existential point of view but bear no resemblance to each other from a linguistic or historical glance. This means, deciding whether two or more things have something in common or not bases on or is related to the mindset and the construct of the schema or template which is applied to the data in order to product meaningful outcomes and conclusions from them. This is the first layer of the problematic. It is about *questioning the approach* which will handle the information.

The second layer is, in its essence, a meta-discussion about the units and building blocks of the mindset, of the pattern, of the approach which is relevant in the first layer. The second layer consists of an examination of the presumptions, assumptions, acceptances, biases, prejudgements and axioms which shape and determine the structure and outline of the aforementioned approach within the first layer. It is about questioning the concepts or inner understanding which are working under and designating the process of reflection when two or more things are philosophically compared or fused. It is about the deconstruction of the ground where, according to it, two things are decided if they have something in common or not. It is about the examination of how and on what principles the meaning of the concepts like "similarity", "commonness", "difference", "distinction", "resemblances", "sameness" is decided and defined. When two or more things are compared or fused philosophically and a judgement or a statement is made about them "having similar aspects", what is that thing which is considered before this statement and made this statement possible and true? On what ground? On what justification? According to what, can it be said that two things have a similarity or resemblances? According to what, can it be said that two things are same or different? This is not about the context of the information that is gathered. Rather, it is about the *intuition which makes the essence of the approach what it is*. This is the second layer of the problematic.

² Siderits, M. 2016. *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons*. New York: Routledge, 1-7.

³ Chakrabarti, A. and Weber, R. 2016. "Afterword/Afterwards", *Comparative Philosophy Without Borders*, Ed. Arindam Chakrabarti, Ralph Weber, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 235.

In both comparative and fusion philosophy, these layers, of course, are already well-known. even though they are not presented in this manner, the problematic about the mind-set of the approach and its relation to the terms like “same”, “different”, and “similar” is already put to examination.⁴ And thanks to this awareness, the philosophy concerning to these comparative or fusion fields can proceed and advance in its path robustly. In here, some aspects of a rather famous subject matter in both these fields will be thought over again, namely the matter of Hume-Buddhism correlation with respect to the idea of the self. This supposedly relation or connection between D. Hume and Buddhism was a hot topic (now, not that much) for some:

Although it might seem far-fetched to some philosophers, there do exist certain similarities between Buddhism and certain aspects of Hume’s philosophy [...] My discussion will evaluate the thesis of Nolan Pliny Jacobson, who holds that Hume was influenced by Buddha insofar as Buddhist philosophy was carried to the West by way of Chinese cultural traditions. And Edward Conze, who sees no real parallel between the two.⁵

It is for sure that there is a satisfactory side for the interpreter, for the author to link two different philosophy and/or teaching from two different cultural traditions from two different locations and time. This satisfaction comes from the possibility of digging up and discover an influence, a similarity or an interaction which would otherwise remain hidden to the memory or history of philosophy. Even though the major concern of both comparative and fusion philosophy is not tracing and finding influences and interplays, but understanding the party philosophies themselves more thoroughly as G. Parkes said before,⁶ it should also be taken into consideration that those possible discoveries and reflective, alternative and sound re-readings and interpretations might be one of the main sources, as long as they are able to justify themselves philosophically of course, for philosophy in this field to evolve and progress in its path. As Parkes also agrees,

Finally there is the case of two philosophies from different cultural contexts in which the possibility of influence can be ruled out completely. In lifting the philosophies out of their historical context we do, of course, lose something. But as long as our interpretations of the texts keep the appropriate linguistic and historical contexts in view, and refrain from projecting anachronistic or culturally incongruous meanings on to them, the losses can be outweighed by the gains. More important than the contexts themselves are the situations of the thinkers in relation to their backgrounds.⁷

Following remarks of G. Parkes above, the debate about the connection or relation between Hume and Buddhism is problematic on some levels. The first level is about the issue of influence, to be more precise, whether Hume was influenced by Buddhism or not. Is it something that can be ruled out completely? Is it something that can be affirm outrightly? Undecidable, for now. For this to be decided for sure (if it is possible), and for other obscure and questionable aspects to be resolved, now it is necessary to repeat and analyse at least three things: (1) What did D. Hume say about the concept of self?; (2) What did Buddhism say about the concept of self?; and (3) From which perspectives did the philosophy concerning about the similarities and parallels between these two relate and connect the former to the latter? By investigating these three elements, it will hopefully be possible to gain some new insights to reflect upon this famous debate. This is how the deconstruction of Hume-Buddhism relation begins. It begins with a reconstruction. Reconstruction of the three elements in order to have, so to speak, *the scene*. Like the detectives do in their mind after they first enter and search through the crime scene. They piece together the evidences and clues and try to recreate the moment of

⁴ Chakrabarti, A. and Weber, R. “Introduction”, *Comparative Philosophy Without Borders*, 2.

⁵ Gupta, B. 1978. “Another Look at the Buddha - Hume ‘Connection’”. *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, 5 (3): 371.

⁶ Parkes, G. 1990. “Introduction”, *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Ed. Graham Parkes, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 3.

⁷ Parkes, G. 1990. *ibid*, 3.

crime, the event, in their imagination in order to understand what had happened and find the missing links, lacking parts of the event, like the perpetrators, the stolen thing etc. It is a reconstruction of what is available and collected to find missing parts, sometimes, and most of the times, without knowing what the missing parts are. The same reconstruction will be done here with regard to Hume-Buddhism relation [Is it really the *same* though?]. Are there missing parts of this relation? One can usually never figure out if there is a missing piece within the chaotic present of the hundreds of puzzle pieces in a puzzle box, without trying to finish the puzzle first. But is there a *whole* for this relation? Can there be a whole for this relation? Even when the authenticity and originality of the relation is still in question? Undecidable, for now. All these said aside, for a thing or an event to be deconstructed, it still has to be constructed first, even when it seems it is already constructed.

1. First Piece: David Hume and Self

The first piece in the comparison [or relation, connection] is Hume. For one to be able to differentiate (especially during the third piece) between “what Hume really said” and “what the philosophy after him thinks he said”, about this subject matter, one needs to go through and analyse what Hume really said. Hume talked about his ideas concerning the concept of self in his famous *Treatise*, especially in Book 1, Part 4, Section 6.⁸ It is last section before the closing section of both Part 4 and Book 1. Even though it is not sure what this “being last” means (or even if it holds a special meaning or not), still it can be deduce that Hume wanted to finish his Book I with his thoughts that he wrote in Section 6. Maybe he thought that the opinions he presented in this section was extremely radical and controversial for his time and people, so he thought that if somehow he can manage to put them both in the end of the book and in the middle of the book, no one will read it or will read it superficially and they will go unnoticed. Or maybe the opposite, he thought that they constitute the most boring and unimportant part of the *Treatise*, so he placed them in that specific location, in the end of the Book I, where everyone reading the *Treatise* already get the essence of the first book, the crux of what the first book really wanted to say so many pages ago; and again already to eager to read what the second book will be about. He placed them in a location which might have the potentiality of being one of the most skippable zones in a book, just before the important conclusion part of the first book, and again, just before the important second book starts. Maybe there is no hidden agenda of the placement of the section and Hume had no particular reason in his mind to place this section in that zone of the *Treatise*. Maybe both. But in the end, the *Treatise* wasn't welcome in the Britain by people, and later nor by Hume. Aforementioned section was one of the many sections that didn't make it to the *Enquiry*.⁹

But the first and real problem with this section is not its location. The problem is the title of it: *Of personal identity*. Hume indeed talks about his ideas about the concept of the self under this section. But, he doesn't use the word “self” in the title. Why? Why did Hume use the title “Of personal identity” but not “Of self”? Does he see a difference between the idea of *personal identity* and the idea of *self*? Is there a difference between personal identity and self? For example, it seems like Eric T. Olson deliberately avoids using the word “self” as a noun in sentences in his article about personal identity¹⁰ and he later explains his reasons about his attitude briefly

⁸ Hume, D. 2007. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. A Critical Edition, Vol. 1: Texts. Ed. David Fate Norton, Mary J. Norton. New York: Oxford University Press, 164-170.

⁹ Hume, D. 2009. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Tom L. Beauchamp. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹⁰ Olson, E. T. 2003. “Personal Identity”. *The Blackwell Guide to Philosophy of Mind*. Ed. Stephen P. Stich, Ted A. Warfield. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 352-68.

in the beginning of the entry on the same subject he made within the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.¹¹ Maybe these are the same reasons why Hume didn't put the word "self" in the title of his section. Maybe he doesn't want to talk about something that is seen as an unchanging and immaterial subject of consciousness, a *substance of self*, *self as a substance*, per se. He wants to talk about something that is more psychological, more changing in structure and character, and which has both material and mental aspects, *self as personal identity*, per se. But nevertheless, he still uses it in the section, almost frequently. But, the question of "Did Hume see a difference between the idea of personal identity and the idea of self?" still remains. With this question in mind, one can start to read the section.

There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our self; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity [...] Unluckily all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience which is pleaded for them; nor have we any idea of *self*, after the manner it is here explained. For, from what impression could this idea be derived? [...] If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives [...] But there is no impression constant and invariable [...] It cannot therefore be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea.¹²

The section starts with an almost clear criticism. The phrase "there are some philosophers" implies the phrase "I'm not one of those philosophers". The whole structure of the beginning of the section is "they are like that, but I'm not". This opposition helps the reader what Hume thinks on a given subject matter. Reader concludes that if he says "they think that this is x" then, he must have meant "I think this is not x". [The phrase "contrary to" in the sentence "Unluckily all these [...]" clearly emphasizes and strengthens the opposition]. It is not sure this structure is really fruitful or even useful for the reader to get inside Hume's head, but since he constructed this structure first, then the reader must go along with it, without any choice.

One can easily sense the main theme and way of approach which Hume is adopting here. In here, clearly an empiricist talks about the ground and means which led to the *idea of self*. In here, it is important to not misunderstand Hume. The examination here, in the beginning at least, mainly a criticism towards the methods and attitude which allegedly leads to the idea of self and the structural character of it. This is not an ontological criticism, again in the beginning, about the *being or existence of self*.¹³ Hume does not say, for now at least, that the self doesn't have a perfect identity or that it doesn't have a simplicity or a continuity in existence. It might have these qualities and attributes indeed, or maybe it might not. For Hume, the problem is not an ontological problem at this level of the examination, but an epistemological one.¹⁴ It is not about directly what self is, but about how one achieves, acquire and obtain the final and true conclusions about what one thinks the self is and if these conclusions and methods we gain and attain them by are really trustworthy or not, from an epistemological point of view. He problematizes and opens to critics the methods and the intellectual, mental processes

¹¹ "The topic is sometimes discussed under the protean term self. 'Self' is sometimes synonymous with 'person', but often means something different: a sort of unchanging, immaterial subject of consciousness, for instance (as in the phrase 'the myth of the self'). The term is often used without any clear meaning and shall be avoided here." Olson, E. T. 2019. "Personal Identity". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Version), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/identity-personal/>>. (last accessed: 2020.03.11; 11:24 a.m.).

¹² Hume, D. 1888. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 251-52.

¹³ For an examination under this differentiation, see, Swain, C. G. 1991. "Being Sure of One's Self: Hume on Personal Identity". *Hume Studies*, 17 (2): 113-120.

¹⁴ But of course, this doesn't mean that the problematization doesn't have an ontological or metaphysical aspect to it, which indeed it has, especially when it comes to the axioms that are subscribed to material objects, material world and human minds, see, Pears, D. 1975. "Hume's Account of Personal Identity". *Philosophic Exchange*, 6 (1): 16.

which after one reaches these qualities and attributes as results and outcomes about the self. The most critical question here includes impression, idea and derivation. He asks, to those philosophers: “from what impression could the idea of self be derived?” He thinks that if he finds the impression, he will trace its connection so he can reach the idea of self.¹⁵

But the link between an impression and the idea of self is also problematic for Hume. First aspect is about singular-plural incompatibility. While the idea of self seems to refer something singular, it should be something which naturally addresses to several impressions. So, for Hume, there’s a somewhat logical impossibility or inconsistency in the beginning with the vain endeavour of trying to link the idea of self with a singular impression. It is a logical and rational dead-end. No single impression can be the source of the idea of self. Secondly, while impressions are never constant and invariable (as he says), the idea of self is thought to be constant and invariable in its essence. By this difference in type, it seems impossible to point towards an impression as the source of the idea of self is derived from. As he says “It cannot therefore be from [...]. But again, Hume should not be misunderstood here. All he says that, there is no impression that can be fit to the idea of self, so therefore, it is impossible to derive the idea of self from any impression. Still, he doesn’t say anything about the self as such. He doesn’t say anything about if there *is* a self or not. Maybe there is a self, maybe there is not. All he says that the source of the idea of self can’t be traced back to a given impression. So, by logic of Hume [that all ideas should be derived from impressions], “there is no such idea”. It is not “there is no such thing as self” but it is “there is no such thing as the idea of self”. This is the distinction that the reader should heed for now.

He does not tell anything ontological about the self yet. And it would not be fair to expect Hume to think like a phenomenologist in his era. And what he said so far does not contradict any of the axioms that an empiricist should have by definition. But the problems still remain. If the idea of self does not come from any impression, then where does it come from? And what is the nature of it? Hume continues:

For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception [...] I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception [...] If any one upon serious and unprejudiced reflexion, thinks he has a different notion of *himself* I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be in the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps, perceive something simple and continued, which he calls *himself*; though I am certain there is no such principle in me.¹⁶

Now, this is indeed an interesting passage, because it clearly shows an aspect of the structure of Hume’s examination. The interesting part is not the part where Hume is telling about that without perceptions, self would be an empty concept. More than being empty, without the observations of the perceptions that enables one to sense the self, it would be impossible to experience it in any way. This is not an interesting opinion. Especially when it comes from an empiricist. It is exactly what would an empiricist say about the relation between perception and self. It is well-expected. What is interesting is the second half of the passage. Actually, in the first half of the passage, when he chooses to say “may truly be said not to exist”, but not “may truly not exist”, he implies what is about to come in the second half of the passage. There is an extreme normalcy in the transition when he talks about death removing all the perceptions and the annihilation of him (he means not as *the I, is* but as *the I, he was*). Even in here, he still approaches the hypothetical perfect non-entity in the hypothetical

¹⁵ This relation between impression and self, or the perception of the impression and self, is also problematic on some other aspects, see, Rosenthal, D. M. 2004. “Being Conscious of Ourselves”. *The Monist*, 87 (2): 159-162.

¹⁶ Hume, D. 1888, *ibid*, 252.

after death situation with the theme of “conceivability” of a no more present subject. This “avoidance from ontological statements”, for Hume it was probably “avoidance from metaphysical statements”, clearly deepens and becomes the major character of his investigation.

With starting this, and in the whole second half of the passage, Hume tones down being an empiricist a little and starts to talk more as a sceptic. Especially when he says “all I can allow him is [...]”, if it’s not a sarcasm [hard to tell, just by reading], he takes the decisive step away from claiming the certainty of his argument. He, as a sceptic now, concludes that this examination of the self has now reached to a point where the opposing parties of the discussion should just agree to disagree and go on their own ways. Even though Hume is sure of his own position about the subject matter, now he is also sure that the core of the personal-identity-self discussion is so obscure and unknowable for good that it is improbable to justify the arguments of each of these parties philosophically to the point that one of them is crystal clear true and without need of any proof further.¹⁷ He rejects something being true without saying that thing is definitely false. This is a textbook attitude of a sincere sceptic, which Hume indeed was [as he agrees in the Appendix].¹⁸ Now, as a both empiricist and a sceptic, the theme of the examination of Hume seems like it turned from a discussion on “personal identity-self”, towards to the discussion on “personhood-self”.¹⁹ The discussion is now as psychological as it can get. Next lines in the section includes the signification which is the source of the famous phrase in philosophy, namely “the bundle theory of self”. And it is also the passage where things get exciting.

But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. [...] nor is there any single power of the soul, which remains unalterably the same, perhaps for one moment. [...] There is properly no *simplicity* in it at one time, nor *identity* in different; whatever natural propension we may have to imagine that simplicity and identity.²⁰

There is no essential equivocation in the passage. His metaphor almost checks out perfectly [He mentions the *soul*, which is a whole another subject matter so it will be dealt later in this article],²¹ and he is also aware of this “almost” so in the end of the passage, he warns the reader to not misread the meaning of the metaphor. The self is nothing other than a collection of perceptions. Hume’s point about self is getting clear. He thinks that self can be interpreted as a personal theory or as a personhood which basically is a bundle of changing and different perceptions of the human, but thinking it as a non-changing substance is deeply problematic. Thinking the self as a substance is both empirically impossible to prove, unprovable and logically unsupportable and unfathomable.²² For Hume, thinking self under the theme of bundle theory is as good as it can get. No matter how extraordinary it may sound to think it not as a substance,²³ it is still the favourable and philosophically justifiable choice which can be reasoned soundly. It is not because self is not a substance. It is because showing

¹⁷ For an elaboration, see, Strawson, G. 2016. “Hume on Personal Identity”. *The Oxford Handbook of Hume*. Ed. Paul Russell, New York: Oxford University Press, 275-82.

¹⁸ See, Hume, D. 1888, *ibid*, 633.

¹⁹ See, Ashley L. and Stack M. 1974. “Hume’s Theory of the Self and its Identity”. *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review / Revue canadienne de philosophie*, 13 (2): 245-249.

²⁰ Hume, D. 1888, *ibid*, 252-53.

²¹ But for a possible reading of soul and identity of self together with the famous analogy of republic or commonwealth, see Duque, C. E. G. 2009. “Hume and Self- Identity”. *Discusiones Filosóficas*, 10 (14): 19-20.

²² For a comprehensive study on this matter, see, Schmidt, C. M. 2003. *David Hume: Reason in History*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press, especially, 15-27, 72-80.

²³ See, Hume, D. 1888, *ibid*, 635.

that self is a substance and showing that self is not a substance is both defective and malformed from the empirical and philosophical aspect. He even admits in the Appendix that “For my part, I must plead the privilege of a sceptic, and confess, that this difficulty is too hard for my understanding, I pretend not, however, to pronounce it absolutely insuperable. Others, perhaps, or myself, upon more mature reflexions, may discover some hypothesis, that will reconcile those contradictions.”²⁴ So, about the dilemma of self as a substance or not, he chooses not to choose between them as a sceptic, and at the same time, he chooses, but with also accepting that the opposite argument might be also true, to define self as a bundle as an empiricist.²⁵ In every step, he stays in-between as much as he can.²⁶ Since the experience of impressions can’t produce the constancy of a self which is as a substance (or is a substance), there is no philosophically justifiable ground to think self as constant, organizing and unifying component, inner-subject of the mind.²⁷ Self can’t be seen something like a primordial, a priori agent that is responsible for the continuous subjectivity or agency of the consciousness, but it is more like a quality that is attributed.²⁸

This should be said, in passing, that there is no distinctive “no-self theory” in Hume, as famously phrased everywhere else, for the particular reasons and explanations mentioned above. His theory might be eliminative or reductive in some aspects, but still, the remark of “no-self” indicates an ontological attitude, which Hume was definitely lack of. For Hume, human’s act of giving the sense of substance or identity to the self mainly arises from a mistake in the mind, to be more correct, a compensation of a mistake in the mind.²⁹ For now, how this compensation or correction happens is really not that important for the investigation that is being conducted here. Or the similarities between Locke and disputes between Berkeley concerning self and self-consciousness aren’t important either.³⁰ Or the interpretation that how this correction can be read as a faulty response to Descartes.³¹ Or the relation between this bundle theory and Hume’s idea of free will, liberty, belief and metaphysical issues, especially causation and external objects.³² Or how Hume might be contradicting himself with his idea of self when he uses it differently when he talks about pride, humility and self-consciousness.³³ Or the main objections to Hume’s idea of self.³⁴ These are all irrelevant for now. Because the essence of the Hume’s ar-

²⁴ Hume, D. 1888, *ibid*, 636.

²⁵ See, Brett, N. 1990. “Hume’s Causal Account of the Self”. *Man and Nature / L’homme et la nature*, 9: 29.

²⁶ This “in-between” status might be also seen his methodological aspect, namely phenomenalism and his physiological aspect, namely interactionism. See, Porath, B. M. 1989. “Hume’s Positive Theory of Personal Identity”. *Auslegung*, 15 (2): 148-149.

²⁷ For further investigation, see, Garrett, D. 2011. “Rethinking Hume’s Second Thoughts about Personal Identity”. *The Possibility of Philosophical Understanding: Essays for Barry Stroud*. Ed. Jason Bridges, Niko Kolodny, and Wai-hung Wong. New York: Oxford University Press, 27-30.

²⁸ Hume, D. 1888, *ibid*, 260.

²⁹ “The relation facilitates the transition of the mind from one object to another, and renders its passage as smooth as if it contemplated one continued object. This resemblance is the cause of the confusion and mistake, and makes us substitute the notion of identity, instead of that of related objects. [...] Thus we feign the continued existence of the perceptions of our senses, to remove the interruption; and run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation.” Hume, D. 1888, *ibid*, 254. About how this explanation may apply to the idea of personal identity, especially see, 259-60.

³⁰ See, Bettcher, T. M. “Berkeley and Hume on Self and Self-consciousness”. *Topics in Early Modern Philosophy of Mind*. Ed. J. Miller, Berlin: Springer-Science+Business Media B.V., 2009, 205-210.

³¹ See, Broackes, J. 2002. “Hume, Belief and Personal Identity”. *Reading Hume on Human Understanding*, Ed. Peter Millican. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 200-203.

³² See, Swain, C. G. 2006. “Personal Identity and the Skeptical System of Philosophy”. *The Blackwell Guide to Hume’s Treatise*. Ed. Saul Traiger. Oxford: Blackwell, 138-141.

³³ See, Campolo, C. K. 1992. “Unidentified Awareness: Hume’s Perceptions of the Self”. *Auslegung: A Journal of Philosophy*, 182: 164-166.

³⁴ For at least four objections, see, Nielsen, L. 2016. “Defending Hume’s Theory of Personal Identity and Discarding the Appendix”. *Ostium*, 12 (2): 4-6; also see, Sirswal, D. R. 2008. “Humans Beings Have No Identical Self”. *Proceedings of the 20th Conference of*

gument about the concept of self is clear. And this clarity is what is needed in the comparison with the second piece. If needed, these now irrelevant things can always be taken into consideration in the third piece or after it.

2. Second Piece: Buddhism and Self

Self can be a term about personal identity, as it can also be a term related to one's own mental states. It can also imply a metaphysical agent that is independent from all of empirical subject's (in a Kantian terminology) attributes and status. It can be a substance, it can be a quality (as it is shown above in Hume). With all these things in mind, it's been generally said that there's a similarity between Hume's understanding of self and Buddhist approach to self. Indeed, for example, one can easily see the resemblance with Hume in the summary of an article below.

Generally speaking, Buddhists were empiricists who criticized metaphysics. They [...] criticized antireductionists who argued that the self is an entity that exists on its own [...] His [Buddha] argument is that from the fact that we think and talk about "I" (*aham*) and "self" (*atman*) it does not follow that "there exists a corresponding mysterious and undying entity called Self." [...] A second general argument [...] is that the Self is supposed to be something permanent and not subject to any change. However, since nothing is permanent and everything is subject to change, such an entity as the Self simply cannot exist [...]³⁵

Even though name of Hume is never mentioned in the summary, one can easily hear its resonance loud and clear. If you peel the *Buddhist-Hindu* terms like *aham*, *atman*, *dharmin*, *vikapla* etc. and Buddha from the passage, one can easily turn this summary into almost some remarks or abstract about Hume's idea of self. Of course, the supposed similarities between Hume and Buddhism are not strict and limited with the concept of self. Issues like "incapability of human understanding with respect to comprehending the nature of God" and "denying the existence of substances" are the most prominent ones.³⁶ In this second piece, to deconstruct this similarity, some relevant Buddhist texts will be read again for further justifications.

Of course, at first, some clarifications must be made. The first clarification should be on terminological level. In western culture, there are terms like *subject*, *self*, *selfhood*, *person*, *personhood*, *personality*, *agent*, *agency*, *selfdom*, *identity*, *ego*, *oneness*, *ownness*, *nain*, *individual*, *individuality*, *nain*, *auto* etc. All these words try to understand and express the different aspects and perspectives of the same thing. Or, they try to understand and express the same thing from different aspects and perspectives, or so it's been told. They do not mean the same thing, since they have different meanings, with nuances in difference. This is the linguistic situation in western intellectuality, especially in English thinking minds. Of course, some particular and untranslatable terms from different languages like German, French etc. can also be added to this situation. Within the eastern intellectuality, to be more precise, in East Asia and Southeast Asia, terms like *Jīva* (*individuated self*) *Ātman* (*soul/self*), *Brahman* (*Spiritual oneness*), *Citta* (*emotive mind*), *Manas* (*intellective mind*), *Paramātmāṇ* (*selfless universal Self beyond*), *Īśvara* (*Ishvara*) (*Impersonal Brahman*), *Vijñāna* (*Viññāṇa*) (*personal consciousness*), *Anattā/Anātmā* (*non-self*), *Pudgala* (*personal entity*), *Purusha* (*cosmic self*), *Ahaṅkāra* (*ego-soul*), *Ahaṃ-pratyaya* (*I-notion*), *Svabhava* (*own-being/own-becoming*), *Grāhaka* (*Grasper-subject*), *Buddhadhātu* (*Buddha-nature*) etc. welcome the researcher, who is doing a research about the idea of "self" within Buddhism, since it is the second piece of

All Orissa Philosophy Association, 207-209.

³⁵ Berčić, B. 2017. "Introduction: Editor's Overview". *Perspectives on the Self*. Ed. Boran Berčić. Rijeka: University of Rijeka, p. 20-21. For the relevant article, see in the same study: Kardaš, G. 2017. "The No-Self View in Buddhist Philosophy", 189-202.

³⁶ See, Gupta, B. 1978, *ibid*, 272.

the investigation here. Anyone who is a little interested in general East Asian teachings and philosophies can easily sense that there's at least two problems with this second group of words.

First problem is about this group of words having essentially a different signification from the first group, even though in a singular and reciprocal manner, all of these terms have a relation with the idea of self, one way or another. In a selective and particular context, even though these two group tend to cover the same subject matter, they do not designate the same whole. And this problem affects the core of investigation, shapes it, and even maybe changes the outcomes of the whole investigation.

Second problem is about the extension of the categorization. One look at these words, and it can be easily seen that this group of words is not only related to Buddhism. Almost more than half of the words are more associated with Hinduism than Buddhism. Is this an unnecessary expand of the investigation field for this examination? Or is there any necessary reason for this expand? When the central term of this second piece, namely *Anattā*, is one of the most fundamental differences between Hinduism and Buddhism,³⁷ is this expand really needed? With these problems (and some more) and questions in mind, the investigation might continue.

Before even coming to the first problem, another problem arises and blocks the way at the start. It is in the title of the second piece in this article. The title "Buddhism and Self" implies that the relation between Buddhism and the idea of self does not have a plural structure. It falsely indicates the sense that there is only one Buddhism and there is only one type of idea of self and there is only one understanding between them. It should be said upfront that this false sense of monotype conceptualization is not the case here.

Nevertheless, we find that this problem occurs almost always among Buddhist groups only. [...] the problem of whether there is permanent self in Buddhism, occurs between some Mahayanist sects and some Hinayanist, or Theravadin, sects [...].³⁸

This situation, if wanted, can be read in similarity with the differences between Christian denominations, like East-West Schism, namely Catholic-Orthodox. They belong to same religion, with different creeds. But, this approach might be problematic, since Buddhism is not a constitutionalized system of belief and religion and it doesn't have a main scripture like Quran to Islam and Holy Bible to Christianity.³⁹ So, it should be kept in mind that, Buddhist approaches to the idea of self are not unified into one single understanding, even though the most dominant one is surely the notion of *Anattā*.

With this word comes into play, the first problem arises. Pali *anattā* includes "an" (not, without) and "attā" (soul).⁴⁰ Equipollent and equivalent Sanskrit term *anātman* is constructed the same way, "an" (not, without) + *ātman* (self, soul).⁴¹ So, this word⁴² builds its meaning on two things: (1) the negation of "an" and (2) the word of *attā*, which has a wide range of signification. The problem is clearer now. In western culture, even though some may see a direct, essential and non-disposable link between *soul* and *self*, the conceptual and

³⁷ See, Collins, S. 1994. "What Are Buddhists Doing When They Deny the Self?". *Religion and Practical Reason*. Ed. Frank Reynolds, David Tracy. New York: State University of New York Press, p. 64; Plott, J. C. 2000. *Global History of Philosophy: The Axial Age*, Vol. I, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 63.

³⁸ Bhikkhu, B. 1990. *The Buddha's Doctrine of Anattā*. Bangkok: The Dhamma Study & Practice Group, 3.

³⁹ Lopez, D. 2004. *Buddhist Scriptures*. New York: Penguin Books. ix–xv.

⁴⁰ Davids, T. W. R., Stede W. 1921. *Pali-English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 22

⁴¹ Bronkhorst, J. 2009. *Buddhist Teaching in India*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 124-125.

⁴² Since *anātman* has a more resonance with Hinduism, from now *anattā* will be used.

theoretical differentiation between these two terms has been well made, even on some degree in Descartes.⁴³ But, for Buddhism (again, a faulty but necessary generalization) the difference between these two terms are not so clear and well established.⁴⁴ In Buddhist terminology, the translation of *attā* (soul, spirit or self) was problematic because the soul and the self are not distinct from each other. That's why, the translation choice of "self" should be explained first.

The translation to be given to the *attā* is to be fixed from the very outset. The translation of *attā* as 'soul' ought to be discarded [...] It is obvious that this kind of *attā* or 'soul' is emphatically rejected in many a passage of the Nikāyas [...] The word 'spirit' does not appear fully to convey this meaning [...] Therefore it seems better to choose 'self' as the English equivalent to *attā*.⁴⁵

So, *attā* is the self. It is the self that, on certain context, can be translated as spirit or soul.⁴⁶ But it is nonetheless the self. It has more of a metaphysical resonance in it, than psychological. But nonetheless, self. It designates an absolute, transcendental (if wrongly put), substantial, permanent self which is beyond and immune to the changing of the phenomenal world.⁴⁷ It's the real, immanent (again, wrongly put) essence and substance lying under the empirical, material and mental components of human mind or consciousness.⁴⁸ It is what gives the fixed identity to a person, a subject throughout time and lifespan.

The second element of the word *anattā* is "an" (not, without). Thus, *anattā* can be translated into something like *not-self*, or *no-self*, or *non-self*.⁴⁹ But before choosing one of these alternative translations, one should ask: "what does this 'an' mean?" or more precisely, "what is the function of this 'an' in *anattā*?" Is it a dialectic negation? Is it an absolute annihilation? Is it just a linguistic preference? This prefix is main debate area for the researchers because it precisely shapes what *anattā* means

The *anattā* concept is a negative concept. A negative concept obtains its fundamental meaning from its positive counterpart. [...] *Anattā* may be said to deny in the first place the *attā* of the heretics which is identified with the *khandhas* or the *samsaric* factors in man. [...] Beyond that, we shall discover in the texts an irreconcilable opposition and polarity between *attā*, the true self, and *anattā*, which as a noun stands for something positive and opposed to *attā*, 'the non-self'. From this point of view, the opposition between *attā* and *anattā* is not the opposition between *mitra* (friend) and *amitra*, the latter meaning merely the absence of a friend, but the opposition between friend and enemy.⁵⁰

This interpretation of the *attā* and the *anattā* seems more compatible with both *the doctrine of two truths* and understanding of *yin-yang*, which both are essential features of interpreting and comprehending the nature, existence and reality in Buddhism. In East, negations or understanding of negations do not occur within the framework of Aristotelian logic⁵¹ or Hegelian dialectics.⁵² This interplay of opposite sides, parties builds the

⁴³ See, Calkins, M. W. 1908. "Self and Soul". *The Philosophical Review* 17 (3): 272-280.

⁴⁴ It seems like self and soul can be used almost interchangeably and synonymously while being used as the translation of ātman, see McClelland, N. C. 2010. *Encyclopedia of Reincarnation and Karma*. London: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers, 226.

⁴⁵ Pérez-Remón, J. 1980. *Self & Non-Self in Early Buddhism*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 7-8.

⁴⁶ Harvey, P. 1995b. *The Selfless Mind*, Surrey: Curzon Press, 17-19.

⁴⁷ Harvey, P. 1995a. *An introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 51.

⁴⁸ See, Collins, S. 1990. *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravada Buddhism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 4-7.

⁴⁹ See, Anacker, S. 1999. "No Self, 'Self', and Neither-Self-Nor-Non-Self in Mahāyāna Writings of Vasubandhu". *Communication & Cognition*, 32 (1/2): 88-91.

⁵⁰ Pérez-Remón, J. 1980. *Ibid*, 2-3.

⁵¹ Hsiao, P. S. 1990. "Heidegger and Our Translation of Tao Te Ching", trans. Graham Parkes, *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Ed. Graham Parkes, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1990, 99.

⁵² It should be kept in mind that, in Buddhism, any assertions about the nature of reality are, in fact, self-defeating and self-denial in a manner of creating the opposite meaning within while also not losing the first sense which is negated. Meanings are constructed

main functionality in Buddhist soteriology, phenomenality and psychology.⁵³ This is also the essential reason behind the choice of “non-self” instead of “no-self” or “not-self”. Because in *non-self*, even though the *attā* is fully and absolutely negated and *anattā* is the whole presence, it is not the simply lack of the *attā* but rather the non-presence of *attā* in the phenomenality and existence of *anattā*.⁵⁴ It is not a matter of *attā* being cancelled out for good by the *anattā* but *attā* being absorbed and transformed into and by *anattā* under a new kind of beingness.⁵⁵ So, *anattā* is not a selflessness but is a self which can't be adopted and essentially carried by what *attā* is. So to speak, *anattā* is a self which is not a self, therefore a *non-self*. This type of thinking does not have a mainstream correspondent within the Western philosophy. But, in general, the thought of negative/apophatic theology can give a hint about or sense of the understanding of inner relation between the opposite parties and their interplay.⁵⁶ The sense of *anattā* as a non-self, then, points toward to the not destruction or annihilation of *attā* but rather a negative deconstruction of it. Its occurrence does not happen mainly on the psychological sphere but with a more phenomenological and cosmological resonance.

This cosmological aspect to the thought of *anattā* actually comes from that interplay. It comes from the sense of the *attā*. Because *attā*, while referring to an understanding of soul, it does not only refer to a personal soul, but even more, it refers to a non-personal, cosmological, absolute and holistic soul and self which covers and occupy whole existence of reality. That's why *anattā* does not only mean the non-self of the humans, subjects and conscious agents, but of all living and inanimate beings in existence.⁵⁷

There are two main aspects of this notion of *anattā* that should be mentioned here in order to understand what it signifies. The first one is about the bigger structure that *anattā* is a part of. This is the famous three marks of existence of Buddhism: *aniccā* (impermanence), *duḥkha* (suffering or unsatisfactoriness) and the last one, *anattā* (non-self).⁵⁸ These three marks; *aniccā* being about falling into the illusion that permanency exists and has a presence; *duḥkha* being about falling into the illusion that there is a possibility of finding absolute satisfaction in transient and temporary world and existence and *anattā* being about falling into the illusion of the presence of self or absolute identity in living beings and cohesive substance or essence in phenomena or beings.⁵⁹ And even more than that, *anattā* has a wider scope it doesn't only apply to the conditioned phenomena but also unconditioned ones. Thus, even the understanding of *nirvana* includes and consists of *anattā*.

The Buddhist *anattā* doctrine is comprised in a well-known *ti-lakkhana* formula [...] (“all conditioned things are impermanent, all conditioned things are painful [or: unsatisfactory], all *dhammas* are without Self” [...] I is significant that when impermanence and unsatisfactoriness are in question the word *saṃskāra* is used, but it is replaced by *dhammā* in the case of selflessness. The term *saṃskāra* in this context refers to all conditioned, com-

with negations and double negations. see, Shaw, J. L. 1978. “Negation and the Buddhist Theory of Meaning”. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 6 (1): 69-75.

⁵³ Fontana, D. 1978. “Self-Assertion and Self-Negation in Buddhist Psychology”. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 27 (2), 180-186.

⁵⁴ For an extensive study, see, Gómes, L. O. 1999. “The Elusive Buddhist Self: Preliminary Reflections on Its Denial”. *Communication & Cognition*, 32 (1/2): 35-41.

⁵⁵ See, Albahari, Miri 2002. “Against No-Ātman Theories of Anattā”. *Asian Philosophy: An International Journal of the Philosophical Traditions of the East*, 12 (1): 10-14.

⁵⁶ See, my work, 2018. *Sessizliğin Fenomenolojisi ya da Batı Düşünmesinde Özel bir Sessizlik Deneyiminin İzini Sürmek*. Isparta: Fakülte Kitabevi Yay, 8-12.

⁵⁷ For a further elaborative examination, see, Mejer, M. 1999. “‘There is No Self’ Nātmāsti. -Some Observations from Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakōśa and the Yuktidīpikā”. *Communication & Cognition*, 32 (1/2): 110-119.

⁵⁸ See, Gombrich, R. 2006. *Theravada Buddhism*. New York: Routledge, 47.

⁵⁹ See, Morris, B. 2006. *Religion and Anthropology: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p. 51; also see, Humphreys, C. 2012. *Exploring Buddhism*. New York: Routledge, 42-43.

pounded, originated things both physical and mental, in other words, it refers to five aggregates. But *dhammā* is much broader as the term means not only all conditioned things but also the non-conditioned. Thus *dhammā* includes *nibbāna*. The differentiation is used here to highlight the unquestionable: there is no Self beyond all conditioned things. *Nibbāna*, the *summum bonum*, which is neither *anicca* nor *dukkha* is definitely *anatta*.⁶⁰

This aspect clearly reveals two things about *anattā*: (1) It is not only about the possibility or impossibility of the idea of a personal self, it belongs -as being one of the three parts- to a bigger, tripartite structure which shapes the main backbone of the approach that Buddhism adopts while giving meaning to reality and existence; (2) More than just being the code or protocol of the conditioned things, of the phenomenal world, it is also, more importantly, reflects and designates the sense of the innermost understanding of how Buddhism believes the endgame of itself. It is still a non-self, a characteristic of non-substantial essence of all living and inanimate beings; it is still the possible and psychological source of self-awareness of a person, an individualized subject, but now, it is much more than all of these, so much more. It defines, if the essential nature or Being of Nirvana has also *anattā* as its most fundamental state of being, then *anattā* turns into the main, central piece of the aforementioned tripartite structure. It clearly becomes the absolute ontological essence (as something between substantial and non-substantial), the truth that Buddhism is intrinsically about. It is the both material or non-material nature of the metaphysical and natural truth of Buddhism.

Just when it turns into the truth of Buddhism, second main aspect about the notion of *anattā* comes to the scene, and everything said so far falls into a severe questioning and hesitation. It is an understanding, teaching or belief that, at first glance, seems impossible to be in an authentic compatibility with the notion of *anattā*. It is the belief of *metempsychosis*, *rebirth* or *reincarnation* in Buddhism.⁶¹ Without a liberation or an enlightenment, the cycle of dying and coming into life again continues endlessly. When one doesn't succeed or complete the reaching to *moksha* (*vimutti*) and/or *nirvana*, then the circle goes on and a new existence will be waiting for the one after the death. This foundational doctrine of Buddhism, while it is also about self-realization, self-actualization and self-knowledge as the non-self on a more personal and psychological level, [with *moksha* and *nirvana*, comes the intuitive elevation and transcendence from the self-cognition and the breaking the illusion of the idea of I] has a more original sense and goal of escaping from coming into existence again and again. It is the finally getting rid of being have to become and coming into becoming over and over.⁶² It is the endgame, the salvation.

But the question arises on the relation of *anattā* and rebirth. The question is precisely this: "How can there be a 're-' of birth, if there is no self in a sense of substance?" "If there is no something like absolute 'identity' or 'sameness with oneself' or 'one's identical unity with itself', then how come there can be a repetition of it? For a thing to be able to "turn into something entirely different" but still "have a sense of sameness", then there must be something that constitutes the "identity" between two different things (the thing before the transformation and the thing after the transformation).⁶³ But, let's not talk about things. Let's talk about persons, since the rebirth is mainly for them. A person, if the ultimate liberation hasn't happened yet, will come

⁶⁰ Szczyrek, P. 2008. "Prajñāvādāṃś ca bhāṣase: Polemics wit Buddhism in the Early parts of the Bhagavadgītā". *Buddhist Studies*. Ed. Richard Francis Gombrich, Cristina Scherrer-Schaub. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 209.

⁶¹ See, Trainor, K. 2004. *Buddhism: The Illustrated Guide*, New York: Oxford University Press, 58.

⁶² See, Carisle, C. 2006. "Becoming and Un-becoming: The Theory and Practice of Anatta". *Contemporary Buddhism*, 7 (1): 82-86.

⁶³ This meta-discussion can also be implemented on the *anattā - attā* relation, see, Santina, P. D. 1999. "Beyond Self and Not-Self: The Mahayana Vision of Multidimensional Being". *Communication & Cognition*, 32 (1/2): 157-163.

back to existence within one of the six realms (heavenly, demigod, human, animal, ghost and resident of hell) as a being part of it.⁶⁴ This means that after one dies, one might come back to existence as an animal, as a ghost as a demigod etc. But, isn't a substance necessary to track down the continuity and sameness under the change? If there is no idea of identity under it, then is it possible to say that a person "turned into" a demigod or a ghost? Without the ground of substance, no thing can "turn into" something else and still stay being the same thing, it would *be* simply something *else*. Without a sense of given identity, there would be no continuity or sameness between two after the "turning into" or "transformation" happens, because the difference that transformation creates would commit those two as absolutely two different element, no phenomenological or ontological inner link between whatsoever. Because there would be no "between" at all. Then wouldn't this mean that the idea of *anattā* and teaching of rebirth are intrinsically in contradiction with each other, both on eschatological and psychological sense? This is the seemingly impossibility that Buddhism builds itself on.

The acceptance by Buddhists of the belief in karma and rebirth while holding the doctrine of no-self gave rise to a difficult problem: how can rebirth take place without a permanent subject to be reborn. The relation between existences in rebirth has been explained by the analogy of fire, which maintains itself unchanged in appearance and yet is different in every moment -what may be called the continuity of an ever-changing identity.⁶⁵

So, this seemingly impossible relation, even though it is still in discussion by some schools of mainstream Buddhism, finds its own possibility on the unorthodox interpretation of the notion of sameness and identity. Death is simply the transfer of a continuum -which has in itself an ever-changing structure- from one impermanent existential constitution to the next, just as the light from one candle may be transferred into the next in a series of candles.⁶⁶ This continuum is sometimes handled with the idea of consciousness or *karma*. What is passing from one existence to another is not the self, soul or substance but the karma of the person or the subject. This karma may or may not need a carrier, it depends on the perspective from which the karma is understood. Is karma same with itself? Is karma different from itself? Karma might be the thing that provide the *anattā* its state of non-substance, by sharing or lending its own sense in a way that *anattā* and rebirth (more correctly, re-becoming) can reconcile. But still, paradoxes remain.

What is most paradoxical in all of these terms is that they openly state that it is "consciousness" in some form that carries the karma and yet there are passages in the same canon that categorically state that consciousness [...], or at least personal consciousness, does not pass on from life to life but disintegrates like the rest of the psychophysical aggregates.⁶⁷

These paradoxes arise, partially, because of the lack of a holistic view towards Buddhism. Without understanding the related teachings and understandings like *Buddha-nature* (buddhadhātu), *Śūnyatā* (emptiness, voidness), upādāna (appropriation), primordial or empty awareness, Pratītyasamutpāda (dependent arising), it would be impossible to frame the meaning and scope of *anattā* pinpoint.⁶⁸ Maybe it would be even still impossible to do that after understanding those related elements, even if they are examined under several topics like Buddhist psychology, eschatology and soteriology. But, this kind of broader investigation is not necessary for the aim of this article. Because, even though it is not clear what *anattā* precisely means, it is somewhat explicit

⁶⁴ See, Buswell Jr., R. E., Lopez Jr., D. S. 2014. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 708.

⁶⁵ Doniger, W. 1999. *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*. Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, p. 148.

⁶⁶ Buswell Jr., R. E., Lopez Jr., D. S. 2014. *ibid.*, 709-10.

⁶⁷ McClelland, N. C. 2010. *ibid.*, 226.

⁶⁸ For a resourceful work, see, Lusthaus, D. 2002. *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-hih lun*. New York: Routledge.

enough how Buddhism approaches *anattā*. This would be enough for the comparison (and starting the third piece).

3. Third Piece: Hume and Anattā

The idea of a hand-made constructed personal self-image, (in Hume as a fiction of personal identity, and in *anattā* as an illusion of individuated subject) is indeed a refreshing and alternative way of thought, especially when compared to the other substance-based ideas that the historical era dominantly accepted and embraced. This alternative-ness, is definitely the first formal similarity of two between Hume's idea of self and the Buddhist notion of Anattā. Both of these are expressed as an alternative, for what was mainstream and well-accepted. Second formal similarity that should be remarked between them is that this alternative-ness, on both cases, had a radical, unorthodox and destructive resonance. They were not alternatives as something that can merge or go along with the older model, theory of self. They did not designate a continuity in history with respect to understanding of self, but a parting-ways with the older for good. It is of course debatable how well-approved they were/are or how much recognition they gained. But, that's not an important detail. Other than these formal similarities, it is generally assumed that there are contextual and conceptual similarities as well. In this third piece, those assumptions will be examined. Now, after two pieces, it can be said that, although there are surface resemblances between the two views of the self, a deeper analysis revealed significant differences. In this piece, these differences and resemblances will be taken into consideration with the meta-questions like "what does it really mean for two things to be similar or having differences?", "what does it really mean for two things to be same with each other?" etc.

The first matter here is the issue of influence. It is the question of if Hume somehow knew or heard something about the notion of *anattā* or not, or in general, if Hume's philosophy is affected by Buddhism. This is a hard question to answer, mainly because of two things. Firstly, it is hard to define what "influence" is. One can know things or be aware of things or have a knowledge of things but still not be influenced by them. Secondly, it is impossible, from a historical texts and archives, to tell for certain if Hume really had any deep knowledge about Buddhism. All one can do is an "informed guess". "[.] in spite of this, it was possible for Hume to have had contact with Buddhist philosophical views. The link to Buddhism comes through the Jesuit scholars at the Royal College of La Flèche. Hume lived in La Flèche from 1735–1737 and wrote the Treatise there. In particular, Charles Francois Dolu was a Jesuit missionary who lived at the Royal College in La Flèche from 1723–1740, overlapping with Hume's stay."⁶⁹ So, Hume might have talked with some Jesuit missionaries who had studied Buddhism. This possible informed guess might also be supported by the fact that in the historical era which Hume lived in, there's an interest towards Chinese art culture in European markets or the general intellectual and cultural development of Enlightenment towards Chinese and Japanese thought.⁷⁰ This means that, even if Hume himself didn't study on Buddhism, European authors he read and the environment he lived in was interested in Oriental thought, so he, even unconsciously, must have been influenced.⁷¹ Of course, this can be seen as a far-fetched interpretation. This can be seen as forcing the datums and inputs' hand towards an infor-

⁶⁹ Gopnik, A. 2009. "Could David Hume Have Known about Buddhism? Charles Francois Dolu, the Royal College of La Flèche, and the Global Jesuit Intellectual Network". *Hume Studies*, 35 (1&2): 6.

⁷⁰ For a summary of interaction between East and West in this subject, see, Conze, E. 1953. *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 210-12.

⁷¹ See, Gupta, B. 1978, *ibid*, 375-76.

mation that those can't bear or carry easily. Interpreting supposed evidences into some knowledge when there is a chance that they didn't witness that knowledge can always cause problems during reconstruction. The disposition of going to the extremes while interpretation historical facts into new contexts show the creative side of the interpreter. This creative side is useful when one needed to think out of the box or when an alternative reading is needed. But, claiming truth for these extreme interpretations and contexts is always hard. Harder, when there are compelling counter-arguments with almost solid ground and reasons. It might be that the differences are way to essential that the similarities are just shallow, superficial, insignificant features.

For Hume, on the other hand, all mental contents are of equal value, and for him, it makes no sense to speak of "surface" or "depth", of "inwardness" or "alienation." [...] its rejection by Hume meant that he dropped all quest for the transcendental, and, appalled by his own nihilism, turned away from philosophy [...] Whereas Hume reduced selfhood to the level of the sub-personal, the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā* invites us to search for the super-personal.⁷²

So, the idea of influence, in the end, bases on the subjective inclination of the interpreter, not the definitive, decisive historical facts. The question of whether Hume was influenced by Buddhism or not is a question that researchers should try to answer, if the answer is wanted and needed, by themselves, alone. All that will be advised here about this influence problem is that one should keep in mind to look at the whole picture. Whole philosophy of Hume should be taken into consideration when the element of influence by Buddhism is sought. Yes, there might be a similarity when he talks about the "self" in his Treatise. But, are there any more similarities in the other parts of the Treatise as well? When imagined, is there any significant sense of Buddhism in the whole Treatise or Hume's philosophy? Has the author *in* the Treatise (not the author *of* it, heed the hermeneutic emphasize) a Christian, a Buddhist, an atheist, or an agnostic temperament or character? Was the Treatise written by a Buddhist, a Christian or an atheistic thought?⁷³ Was Hume a Buddhist? If he is influenced by a thought or teaching of Buddhism in some way or another, can it said for sure that he is still not a Buddhist, even in some sense? Or, to be more precise, was the Treatise a Buddhist, a Christian or an atheistic text? Maybe, a combined of them? If combined, then what are the ratios and proportions of these in regard? % 80 Christian, % 10 Buddhist and & % 10 agnostic? Researchers should decide these on their own. And also the significance of these proportions matter and important. Did that % 10 Buddhist part of the Treatise give or create the most essential sense of What Treatise is all about? Was that % 10 atheistic or agnostic part of the Treatise the essence of it? These questions lead toward the questioning about the position of Hume's remarks on self. Were these remarks about the self just a necessary outcome of a bigger, in a European and agnostic/sceptic sense, investigation he carried about impression and the nature of knowledge, or did it have a Buddhist essence in the begin with? And what were the relation of these remarks on self to the main structure and content of the Treatise? Was the notion of self as Hume understood it a unifying, binding, essential part of the Treatise, or was it a less significant part which, if to be removed from, the Treatise would not miss it enough to lose being what it is. These are the questions and perspectives that researchers should heed.

The examination of differences and similarities in context starts here. For Hume, a close examination of our mind, or consciousness, reveals that there is no real impression of self, soul, or "I" that exists continually through time. So, human mind kind of creates a fiction -to bind temporal mental processes- and calls

⁷² See, Conze, E. 1963. "Spurious Parallels to Buddhist Philosophy". *Philosophy East and West*, 13 (2): 114.

⁷³ For a study on comparison of the understanding of self between Christian and Buddhism, see, Silva, L. A. 1988. *The Problem of the Self in Buddhism and Christianity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, especially, 138-144.

it the self. Buddhist doctrine seems to think that the idea of a permanent self is an illusion. For Buddhism, every feature of reality is impermanent and all elements of the universe are in an endless process of change and transition. In Buddhist thought, similar to Hume's bundle theory, the self is composed of five aggregates: Rupa-physical form; Vedana-sensation (perceptions); Samjna-conceptualization or feelings; Samskara-dispositions to act (motives); and Vijnana-consciousness.⁷⁴ There is a continual interplay occurring between them, but there is no substance or identity beyond the dynamic interaction, behind this interplay.⁷⁵ Sincere Buddhists believe that these aggregates are entirely impermanent, just like Hume thought perceptions which one tends to think constitute the self are always changeable. And just as Buddha's famous "this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self" approach,⁷⁶ for Hume, none of the possible perceptions of impressions can lead a self. Even though the linguistic and choosing of words is different, they seem to contemplate on the sub-components of the idea of self in a similar way. Of course, the motivation and purpose behind this examination of the nature of selfhood is different.

The difference between Hume and the Buddha is most evident in the motivation for dealing with the problem of the self. Hume's interest in the self was purely intellectual. [...] The Buddha's theory of the self arises from two motifs of great relevance. The first is the basic metaphysics of impermanence. [...] The second involves the axiological concerns relating to the postulation of the pervasive predicament of the human condition and the ubiquitous suffering and the means of overcoming it. [...] In short, while Hume's interest was intellectual, the Buddha's was ethical. Consequently, while Hume, led by logical consistency, proceeded towards obtaining theoretical finality, the Buddha did not push the questions of identity and self towards their theoretical finality.⁷⁷

So, Hume just wanted to inform his readers about how far his critics of impression and process of gaining knowledge can go.⁷⁸ He wanted to show that what he seminally did to the supposedly misunderstanding of cause and effect also happens, almost revolutionarily, to the self on the base of impression and perception.⁷⁹ It would've been a great start for the deconstruction of the subject-oriented philosophy in Western thought. But, almost ironically, subject-oriented philosophy, namely modern philosophy had just started with Descartes, even though it is always easy to find a special emphasize on the soul in Plato and link it to the idea of self.⁸⁰ For Buddhism, the non-self is a discourse of salvation. The clinging to the illusion of self is something to get rid of if to reach the absolute liberation, especially for the monks. So, the non-self was something more than just an intellectual and philosophical enterprise for the Buddha. It has a more spiritual, theological and metaphysical resonance to it.⁸¹

And one should also not forget the time gap between the Buddha and Hume. Buddha had lived in the 5th century BCE. Hume lived in 18th century. When Buddha was talking about anattā, one of the main opponents

⁷⁴ Sirswal, D. R. 2010. "Concept of Self in David Hume and Buddha". *Satya Nilayam: Chennai Journal of Intercultural Philosophy*, 17: 29-30.

⁷⁵ Giles, J. 1993. "The No-Self Theory: Hume, Buddhism, and Personal Identity". *Philosophy East & West*, 43 (2): 196-97.

⁷⁶ Gowans, C. W. 2005. *Philosophy of the Buddha*. New York: Routledge, 65-66.

⁷⁷ Sirswal, D. R. 2010. *ibid.*, 32.

⁷⁸ See, Sirswal, D. R. 2005. "Hume's Ideas on the Problem of Personal Identity". *Journal of Bihar Philosophical Research (Combined Edition)*: 192-95.

⁷⁹ See, Schwerin, A. 2008. "Hume and the Self: A Critical Response". *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, Jan 2008, 5 (1): 21-27.

⁸⁰ Within the context handled in here, see, Hoffman, L., Stewart, S., Warren, D., and Meek, L. 2009. "Toward a Sustainable Myth of Self: An Existential Response to the Postmodern Condition". *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 49 (2): 135-41.

⁸¹ One might find this metaphysical resonance of the self and consciousness in Hegel or postmodern thought, and even more similarities with the notion of anattā.

of him was animism, whereas Hume didn't have to deal with or fight against hard anything such as that in his own era.

The fundamental importance in Buddhist philosophy of this Phenomenalism or Non-substantialism is a protest against the prevailing Animism, which, beginning with projecting the self into objects, elaborated that projected self into noumenal substance, has by this time been more or less admitted.⁸²

With the opponent of animism on the other side of the line, the scope of the *anattā* becomes clearer. It is now has a link to the mythological and anthropological aspect as well, whereas Hume's criticism of self was lack of these. For Hume, the discussions about hylozoism or animism belonged to the old times, not his era. Even though he dealt with a kind of panpsychism through some components of the philosophy of Spinoza, Leibniz and mostly G. Berkeley, still his bundle theory of the self had nothing to do with that.⁸³ Hume and Buddha were not only living in different continents and historical eras, but they have also lived in different paradigms dominating the world around.

This remark of continent reminds another difference between Hume and the Buddha or Buddhism. It's about the mentalities of the societies with respect to individuals and subjects. It has been generally regarded that the Western conception of the self is characterized by "individualism" and the non-Western by "wholism". Western self is egocentric, non-western self is sociocentric. Key terms for Western understanding of self; *personalization, individuated, independence, autonomy, differentiation, firm self-other boundary, personal control*; and for non-western self; *collectivity, unindividuated, ensembled individualism, field control, fluid self-other boundary, interdependence*.⁸⁴ This socio-anthropological portraying and characterization of Western and Eastern societies (even though some of them doubtlessly arguable) essentially shapes the differences between Hume's idea of self and Buddhist *anattā*. Because the historical pasts of the two discourse of selves are different (one already had a 2300 years of run when the other just only began), the phenomenology of those selves also have to have different associations.

But, just like for two things to be able to have similarities, they have to be something different from each other (there can't be any similarities between absolutely two same things, sameness does not allow any resemblance or similarity, because an identity can't bear a resemblance or similarity with itself), for two things to be able to be different from each other, they have to have some kind of similarity between (without the possibility of similarity, the absolute difference between two things would be a phenomenological tautology, insignificance or meaninglessness, because some sense of common ground or sameness gives the ability to the differentiation of things to have phenomenological meaning). Just like a thing can't be same with itself, it also can't be different from itself. So, because of the reason why two things can never be exactly, absolutely same (because everything aside, there are "two" of them), those two things can never be exactly, absolutely different (because everything aside, there "are" two of them). This is the source of the *Als-struktur*, or the *as such structure*. All beings are similar to each other with respect to Being. Therefore, all beings are different

⁸² Rhys Davis, C. A. F. 1900. *A Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics of the Fourth Century B.C.*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, xxxv-xxxvi.

⁸³ Of course, there might be more interactions within the Western cultural past and Asian one, see Johnson, M. R. and Shults, B. 2018. "Early Pyrrhonism as A Sect of Buddhism? A Case Study in the Methodology of Comparative Philosophy". *Comparative Philosophy*, 9 (2): 7-12.

⁸⁴ Spiro, M. E. 1993. "Is the Western Conception of the Self 'Peculiar' within the Context of the World Cultures?". *Ethos*, 21 (2): 115-16.

from each other with respect to Being.⁸⁵ So, this difference in phenomenology of the self can guide to the path of the similarities as well. One of the similarities is the avoiding from the extremes. In Hume, this opens itself as an agnostic and sceptic attitude; in Buddhism, the teaching of Middle Way. The teaching which is perfectly described in the Buddha's same answer -answer as silence- to the questions of both 'Is there an *Ātman*?' and 'Is there no *Ātman*?' For Buddha, claiming about the opposite sides of the existence of self (it is or it is not) is equally inaccurate because they are both derive from a problematic understanding of the self.⁸⁶

This attitude of the Buddha, or Buddhism -almost identical with the attitude of negative theology in St. Augustine or Meister Eckhart- shows the line which Buddha's tiptoeing without falling neither of sides, namely one side ontology which will make him a nihilist, a metaphysician or an eternalist, the other side epistemology or a mere consciousness-mind theory which would not cut for a world religion or belief.⁸⁷ So, the Buddha chose the third side, a side that doesn't exist, the side that is not. He chose what is un-present. Because while the second side was not enough for a wholistic world view and belief, the first side was already present, it was present in a way that the Buddha was a symbol of parting-of-ways from it.

Originating in the Indian tradition of Vedism and Brahmanism, the path of salvation proclaimed by the Buddha is on the one hand indebted to these philosophical systems, on the other hand, it is shaped as a 'critical' answer to them. [...] Religious salvation consisted in the osmosis of *Ātman* and *brahman* which, actually, are two aspects of an identical principle. The Buddha denied the Brahmanical notion of *Ātman* as an individual soul (*jīvatman*) that is related to the single controlling power that is Brahman, the universal soul (*Paramātmān*).⁸⁸

So, the notion of *anattā* signifies the separation, moving away from what is Brahmanical.⁸⁹ It is the Buddhism, while emerging for the first time, going away a different path from what is Indian, what is Sanskrit, what is Hindu. Thanks to the notion of *anattā*, Buddhism breaks away from the already-present tradition (and being one of the other creeds of it)⁹⁰ and so begins to turn into, transforms into what it potentially would become, namely Buddhism. It is enterprise of taking the ownership of the self⁹¹ back from Brahman and cast it into fire so it can turn into a transcendental state of non-being whose ashes' scent can guide the liberation seekers to the nirvana, in all means possible. It is the naked truth about what is otherwise conceived falsely as an all-encompassing reality.

This prescriptive description⁹² of the self is different from Hume's approach. In Hume, it is hard to find this kind of normative application, even though he doesn't hold back his criticisms towards the dominant and accepted understanding of self in his era. This is because on one side the word *anattā* has a religious sense, it is

⁸⁵ For an elaborated work on this subject, see, Heidegger, M. 1957. *Identität und Differenz*. Pfullingen: Günther Neske Verlag.

⁸⁶ See, Richards, G. 1978. "Conceptions of the Self in Wittgenstein, Hume, and Buddhism: An Analysis and Comparison". *The Monist*, 61 (1): 51-2.

⁸⁷ Although, there can be a thorough examination of this idea of non-self on epistemological aspect, see, Albahari, M. 2014. "Insight Knowledge of No Self in Buddhism: An Epistemic Analysis". *Philosopher's Imprint*, 14 (21): 6-16.

⁸⁸ Dessein, B. 1999. "Introduction". *Communication & Cognition: The Notion of 'Self' in Buddhism*. Ed. Bart Dessein. 32 (1/2): 5.

⁸⁹ See, Shrivak, L. 1999. "Buddha's Rejection of the Brahmanical Notion of Ātman". *Communication & Cognition*, 32 (1/2): 13-18.

⁹⁰ See, Kathuria, R. 2019. "'Self' in Indian Philosophy and Its parallel in Western Philosophy". *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 7 (1): 305-307.

⁹¹ See, Chadha, Monima 2018. "No-Self and the Phenomenology of Ownership". *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 96 (1): 21-25.

⁹² Dessein, B. 1999. "Self, Dependent Origination and Action in Bactrian and Gandhāran Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma Texts". *Communication & Cognition: The Notion of 'Self' in Buddhism*. Ed. Bart Dessein 32 (1/2): 57.

a term of belief. But for Hume, the bundle theory or the idea of non-self (it would be a mistake to use the “non-self” for Hume, maybe a no-self would be a better suit) doesn’t have this kind of connotation.⁹³

The last difference that would be uttered here is that, for Buddhism, the idea of non-self always has a relation with meditation practice, a strategical mind-set for a true pray to be able to happen.⁹⁴ It is a congregational manner that subject who wants to be on the path of liberation should study and apply on the subjectness he think he has or is. It is the ecclesiastical praxis or protocol that should be embodied by the one who seeks to reach nirvana. It is the linguistic and sociological link or calling which beckons the yet-unenlightened to the quenching in a manner of speak that they can make sense of. This doctrine offers not only an enlightened metaphysical insight on the ultimate nature of things, but also an effective remedy for eradicating ignorance.

4. Final Note

Eastern philosopher Avicenna’s famous floating man corresponds a wish that lied inside every living heart at least once; the possibility for an immortality. The argument for the existence of a soul concerns a person as long as it has something to do with the possibility of an immortality. One wants to have a soul, in order to become immortal. If the soul does not have the ability to give immortality, then what the use of it? What good does it do? All this talk about permanence, impermanence and the continuity of existence, in fact, happens under the anxiety, fear and before the face of unavoidable, inescapable, always-haunting death. One wants to have a thing that is able to cheat death, something that can override it, something that can transcend it. One, as something or as a subject who/which has a common ground with what is [with Being], does not want to lose this commonness with it. With this commonness, one *is*, one *exists*. If one does not have any relation or commonness with Being, then the whole meaning of existence and meaning of that one falls into an ontological oblivion. With this commonness with Being, a human *is able to be*. *With a soul, a human can be. With a soul, a human is*. This is the first aspect of the immortality question.

The second aspect is about the truth. In the naked inescapability of the death which is always about to catch, one needs the truth. If the death is inevitable, then the truth is the only thing that is sought. Before the death grasps and claims what belongs to it, knowing the truth (truth about gods, truth about god, truth about life, truth about existence, truth about beings, truth about Being, etc.) is the only effort that is truly matters. So, one wonders and search if there is something like soul, generally with a wishing that there is. The fictional dialogue between King Milinda and the Buddhist Sage Nagasena was a product of this wonder and search.⁹⁵ So, the analogy of chariot teaches that a thing can’t be identified with any part of it, [nor with any sum of these parts] or one can’t be identified with one’s own body or consciousness. But these, [anything or anyone] can also not be conceived as existing independently of the parts. This analogy and conversation -which is also a conversation on *anattā*- includes these two aspects while being an intellectual debate. Of course, if wanted, this debate can also be seen as contemplation which is related to nominalism or the interaction between reality and language. But, there is, so to say, a bigger fish to catch here.

⁹³ For a further examination on this matter, see, Gupta, B. 1977. “Buddha and Hume: A Popular Comparison Revisited”. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 17 (2): 138-143.

⁹⁴ Rudd, A. 2015. “No Self?: Some Reflections on Buddhist Theories of Personal Identity”. *Philosophy East and West*, 65 (3): 878-80.

⁹⁵ See, (1) 1890. *The Questions of King Milinda*. Part I of II, Trans. Davids, T. W. R. Oxford: The Clarendon Press; (2) 1963. *Milinda’s Questions*. Vol. I. Trans. Horner, I. B. London: Luzac & Company, Ltd.; (3) 1969. *Milinda’s Questions*. Vol. II. Trans. Horner, I. B. London: Luzac & Company, Ltd.; (4) Pesala, B. 2001. *The Debate of King Milinda*. Penang: Inward Path.

This is about if all the present remarks so far in history of humanity on the essence of identity -or the nature of self- become somewhat meaningless or not. Non-self doctrine is about a human letting go his idea of being. It is an existential and phenomenological statement which says “it’s fine, if I’m not permanent, it’s fine if I’m not immortal”. It takes all the courage to admit and feel this kind of acceptance. The difference between the no-self and non-self is not just about substance. But it’s about a confession. It is a confession that says it would be eventually fine if one let the idea of self lay where it is tired for good. Can one imagine how it is a crisis situation for a person to accept that there’s no self, even there’s a still sense of self that is felt? At immediate experience, it must be almost like falling of *axis mundi*, the absolute annihilation of what makes sense. It is the one step before the cliff. It is not the one step before “if there is no object, then there is no subject” which is very Buddhist thought in its core,⁹⁶ but rather the absolute madness point of “if there is no subject, then..” [Which Hume, if he were an existentialist or a phenomenologist, would’ve felt and said. Luckily for him, he wasn’t one⁹⁷ and luckily for the rest, existentialism and phenomenology found a solution to surpass this crisis.⁹⁸ There are even postmodern thoughts which interprets the self under new analogies.⁹⁹ That’s the main issue here why Buddhism and Hume, once on the same path, finalize their journey on the opposite outcomes. Buddhism turns away from sensual pleasure and earthly passions toward into meditation and contemplation and a kind of prayer or realization/liberation which has, in praxis and partially in hypothetic and conceptual signification, a trance or ecstatic state. But Hume as the famous quote about slavery, reason and passions indicates, follows what is sensual, because they are the impressions, the only things that can be experienced for real. For Hume, they are the only things that can be said to exist for sure. Even though they come and gone, even though they are not permanent, they are what is experienced, so they are the only rope that the one can hold on to.

During this reconstruction, [now that it is over], it is seen that most of the researchers choose to overlook or ignore this existential and phenomenological issue. It is indeed true that none of the opponents of the comparison are belong to the tradition of phenomenology or what is existential. Nor, from the historical point of view, they have the chance to look at the discussion topic within an phenomenological or existential manner. But, it is still also true that, these two mentalities -which are entitled to their differences- are interested in what the phenomenology and what the existential is interested in. They were interested in the same thing under the labels of experience, sensation, perception, sense perception and phenomena. They cared about what they are experiencing, how they are get in touch with the world around and beings in it. They thought on the matter of subject as how it relates to the Being. This is not an expand of phenomenology and existentialist approach to the further back in time and history, to Hume and Buddhism. That can’t be done without falling into being anachronic. Hume and Buddhism have nothing to do with existentialism or phenomenology, in the strict sense of the words. But, this tying-together of the two can be seen as an alternative reading or hermeneutics of the Hume-Buddhism relation. Because just like the soul, the *attā* matters only on the edge of death and life, so does *anattā*. The *anattā* is something that is related to self, this is for sure. But maybe more than that, it is something related to the idea of death and immortality. In the case of immortality, there is no substantial meaning of *anattā*, it becomes a meaningless detail. Permanence becomes a meaningless detail before the existence of

⁹⁶ See, Nyanaponika, M. 2009. *Pathways of Buddhist Thought: Essays from The Wheel*. New York: Routledge, especially, 149-170.

⁹⁷ About his reasons to approach to the notion of personal identity, see, Roth, A. S. 2000. “What was Hume’s Problem with Personal Identity?”. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 61 (1): 100-107.

⁹⁸ For a discussion of self within this context and some similarities of Nietzsche’s thought, see, Davey, N. 1987. “Nietzsche and Hume on Self and Identity”. *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 18 (1): 21-26.

⁹⁹ For an example, see, Sorensen, R. 2007. “The Vanishing Point a Model of the Self as an Absence”. *The Monist* 90 (3): 440-47.

death. Just like death's existence as a non-present, *anattā*'s existence as a non-self only matters on the horizon of immortality.

If it would be a sure thing (logically, practically and phenomenologically) that after the demise of the physical body in the physical world, the one continues to somewhere else, something else, then death would be a normalcy. It would still be seen as a kind of rite of passage (which Buddhists now do, more or less), but not as a transformation like transfiguration of Jesus (which is, in its essence, not a transformation because it is not an alteration or conversion, but rather a transition, because Jesus, as being the Son, was always Holy in his essence, from the beginning. He just turns back to what he really is. But a transformation is an alteration, there is no hierarchy between the opposite sides, there is no “turning back”, but “turning into”.) but rather as a transformation like switch from one to another.

Essentialism or foundationalism tend to think that, when thought in a hypothetical thought experiment, the absolute experience or phenomenality of the afterworld would be the decisive proof or evidence that what is physical is inferior to the what is ethereal. It would be the final say about the domination of the soul over the body. But from an existential or phenomenological point of view, that kind of absolute existence of the afterworld would only settle and level what is physical and what is after-physical (namely, numinous, spiritual and psychic) to each other. Let's imagine a scenario where people, after living in the physical world for eighty, ninety years they die and go to heavenly realms. Just like the Abrahamic religions say. But, in these heavenly realms, souls do not exist or live forever. Let's say, after the soul enters the heavenly realms, it (I, he, she, it) lives only for ten or fifteen years and then they cease to exist forever. The soul dies and then the absolute nothingness. According to this scenario, can one say for surely that what is ethereal is superior to the what is carnal? Hardly. Because the idea of superiority of soul over the body comes from the notion that soul goes on forever while body only lasts for a while.

Moreover, only before the ever-continuous continuity of immortality, the spiritual and physical would be a detail so insignificant that they would not be able to construct an opposition. Under the absolute immortality (immortality as material body or immortality as the spiritual soul, doesn't matter) their differences would not consider as opposite but continuous, like in cognitive development of a person, the early stages of human mind are thought to be; or modes to the substance in Spinoza's thought. This is what Buddhism tries to comprehend with the word *anattā*. They try to understand the subject's disposition and state before the immortality and death. They try to understand the subject's disposition and state within the *nirvana*. This word *anattā*, it is less about the self, but more about the experience of thoughts and feelings that makes self what it is. They wanted to know what happens to a one when exposed to the endlessness, possibility of endlessness. Buddhism and phenomenological/existential approach, even though they definitely focus on the different things, have much more in common that they are thought to have.

It is true that it is easier to find things that can be rendered as existential / phenomenological concerns in Buddhism than to find these in Hume. But, this doesn't mean that there are none. Just as mentioned above, even though they (Hume and existential/phenomenological approach) do not use the same terminology and do not have the same mentality as a ground, they surely have similar considerations that frame their inquiry. Their enthusiasm to not confine the idea of personal identity to a substance, the emphasize on the sensations and passions, the remarks on the importance of impressions and experiences, is-ought problem etc. These are

all the relevant and necessary elements that make these two related to each other. Their means and methods might be different (death, immortality, absolute endlessness, mortality, nature of mind etc.) but what they originally focus on is more than close enough. It can be said that Hume and existential/phenomenological approach are definitely not on the same road, but they are headed towards the same direction. Now, it seems like there can be an essential link between Hume and Buddhism over the idea of existence and phenomenology of self.¹⁰⁰

5. Conclusion

After the reconstruction and the deconstruction of the Hume-Buddhism relation, it is seen that even though the difference between Hume's *bundle theory* on personal identity and Buddhism's *anattā* have so much fundamental differences (in nuances, resonances, associations, historical contexts, conceptual usages etc.) that similarities might be rightfully insufficient for some. But, the examination of relation opens up the possibility that there might be some solid grounds which these two components of the relation might relate to each other on a deeper level. With a more existential / phenomenological reread or interpretation, it is seen that -even though their concerns, manners and outcomes are be different- they have more in common than it is presented before. Hume didn't write or think like a Buddhist; and Buddhism means so much more when the word *anattā* is used than Hume could've ever meant with his bundle theory and no-self idea. But still, there's a deeper resemblance between them. It is a similarity that is constructed not on an affirmative or positive concept, but on a negative one. Both Buddhism and Hume, they are similar to each other with their relation to existential / phenomenological mind-set. They bear a resemblance on -while they have little to do with the existential/phenomenological approach- how they carry a disposition or character that would be a perfect fit, if the history and time would to allow, for the existential / phenomenological. They are the same with being nothing existential / phenomenological, but still closely gaze upon to the existential/phenomenological. They are identical with respect to being not existential/phenomenological but still including all the right elements that the existential / phenomenological approach fundamentally concerns, the elements that matter for the existential / phenomenological. With a reference to the *mitra* and *amitra*, they are typical with each other in not being existential / phenomenological, and at the same time, being non-existential / phenomenological. So, it can be said that, they are related to each other in the way that they are non-related to existential / phenomenological.

With this signification, it seems that there are new possible ways to think Hume-Buddhism relation under some other topics and key terms. But this is not a place for it, since this inquiry was meant to only focus on what no-self of Hume and non-self of *anattā* had to do with each other and say. Those other topics and key terms are bound to be investigated in some other and more comprehensive works, definitely not suitable for the end of a worn-out examination in an article. So, at the time that assignment is completed, it is for the best to end with a famous Chinese proverb which probably gives the quintessence of the crux of this investigation that is conducted here: "Water flows in only to flow out".

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¹⁰⁰ For a study on their possible relation, see (1) Rice, P. B. 1950. "Existentialism and the Self". *The Kenyon Review* 12 (2): 304-330; (2) Kasulis, T. P. 1984. "Buddhist Existentialism". *The Eastern Buddhist: New Series* 17 (2): 134-141.

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