

SELF AND THE WEST IN THAI PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE*

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Historical Background

Thailand was never colonized. This historical “fact,” although not beyond debate, has created a cultural environment wherein anti-western sentiment does not exist. This does not mean that the Thai people do not “fear” the West, if imitation necessarily includes certain elements of fear. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the complex historical relationship between Thailand the West. What is attempted here will be limited to a brief exposition of two major movements of “modernization” in the Bangkok period. The first movement was initiated by King Rama IV and Rama V in the late 19th and early 20th century. This political process was a direct response to Western colonialism in Southeast Asia. The process involved the creation of a national bureaucracy, centralization of political power, nationalization of cultural expressions, introduction of modern railroad and communication system. The second major movement was initiated by Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat in the early 1960’s. With money borrowed from the World Bank, Thailand drew up its first “Economic Development Plan.” These plans, being written every five years, have served as the blueprint of all subsequent government policies. These plants serve as explanation behind the frenzy economic development in the past 30 years. Thailand has decided to “industrialize” without establishing a firm basis for agricultural development, which has been the backbone of Thai economy since the early Bangkok period. This “industry for export” practice has given rise to big city centers, depleted natural forest area from 75% to 28%, and still some scholars think that Thailand has been “modernized” without being “developed.”¹

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Within this second movement of modernization, Philosophy as an academic discipline was born, first in the two Buddhist universities in the year 1946 and 1947, then in secular Thammasat and Chulalongkorn in the years 1963 and 1964 respectively.² Although individual courses in Philosophy have been offered in the early 1960's, philosophy department in major universities were not established until in the early 1970's. The first M.A. thesis in Philosophy was completed in 1973³. Basically it could be argued that the "Thai philosophical discourse" is constituted by 420 items or books and text books on Philosophy, 350 articles in 65 journals and 144 M.A. and Ph.D. theses produced in the past 35 years.⁴ As it would take an enormous amount of time to "read" all these materials in order to construct a faithful picture of the Thai philosophic landscape, what will be attempted here would be limited to the 144 theses carries at least two advantages. First, it should represent the most "vigorous" attempts by Thai students to deal with philosophical issues. Second, many of those who are teaching philosophy and producing text books in colleges and universities in Thailand are the authors of these theses.⁵

Setting Boundaries

It should be noted that M.A. and Ph.D. theses Philosophy in Thailand are produced under the supervision of a rather limited number of professors. This implies that, in the Thai cultural context where the opinions and knowledge of the advisors are held in high esteem, a lot of topics selected and developed into a thesis are heavily influenced by the academic interests of advisors. This implication carries even more weight once one takes into consideration the fact that libraries, even of institutions of higher learning, do not carry extensive collections of materials necessary for an in-depth research. Of all 122 M.A. and Ph.D. theses in Philosophy from Chulalongkorn University, 42.6% were completed under two advisors, whose interests are in the field of Indian and Buddhist Philosophy. Another 50% were completed under the supervision of 5 more professors whose interests cover the fields of Social Philosophy, Ethics and Philosophy of Religion.⁶ In the thesis abstracts of these 122 theses, the term "Indian Philosophy" is mentioned 33 times in 10 theses, the term "Chinese Philosophy" is mentioned 15 times in 7 theses, the

term “Thai” is mentioned 14 times in 4, and the term “Western Philosophy” or “Western World” is mentioned 10 times in 7 theses.⁷ It is interesting to note here that the term “Eastern Philosophy” is mentioned only 5 times in 4 theses, and the term “Asia” is mentioned only once in one thesis.⁸ It should be noted here that when the term “Eastern Philosophy” is used in Thailand, it does not include Buddhist Philosophy.

If the frequency of the terms used can serve as indicator, it should perhaps indicate that there is a conscious effort, among one-fourth of the thesis abstracts, to draw a line or a connection between the spatio-cultural domain of the authors and the objects of study. These statistics should immediately bring to mind the fact that the majority of theses produced from Chulalongkorn University do not mention any indication of geographic or cultural-intellectual civilization. On the one hand, it seems “natural” that philosophic works, being “universal” should go beyond any national, temporal or cultural boundaries. On the other hand, it is quite evident that the “universal” philosophical discourse is essentially “Western.” If this latter point is well-taken, it would mean that the Western dominance in the field of Philosophy is so complete that people who are doing Philosophy are unconscious about it and thus implicitly treat it as a non-issue. Another critical point of observation is that this phenomenon corresponds very well with the fact that the question, “Is There Philosophy in Asia?” is never obsolete.⁹

While the terms “Western” and “Thai” appear not so frequently in theses produced from Chulalongkorn University, those produced from Chiangmai University offer an interestingly different picture. Among the 22 M.A. theses from Chiangmai University in Northern Thailand, the term “Western” is mentioned 17 times in 5 theses, while the term “Thai” is mentioned 40 times in 6 theses. This means that about 50% of the Chiangmai theses are quite conscious about setting the boundaries between being “Thai” and the “West.”¹⁰ Another interesting point is, the philosophic distance between being “Thai” and being “Western” is not significantly accompanied by the mention of Chinese or Indian Philosophical system, and there is only one thesis dealing partially with an Indian philosophical system, and there is only one thesis dealing with Chinese Philosophy. In these two theses, there is no mention of the term “Indian,” while the term “Chinese” is mentioned only once.¹¹

Judging from these two sets of statistics alone, it might not be unreasonable to say that, once consciously stated, the philosophic distance between being Western and being Thai, among the Chulalongkorn theses, is accompanied by the philosophic proximity of Indian and Chinese Philosophy. Whereas an opposite line of reasoning might also be feasible, namely, that, among the majority of the theses which do not mention these national, geographic or cultural terms, the philosophic proximity between being “Thai” and being “Western” is complete. In this sense, one might conclude that theses from Chulalongkorn University aspire to discuss philosophical issues in a “universal” milieu.

The orientation is quite different once we look at the theses from Chiangmai University. Again, judging from statistics alone, it seems that there is a high level of consciousness of being “Thai” or attempting to be “Thai.” This basic concern is best expressed by Ms. Naiyany Nagvatchara who poses this question in her M.A. thesis on “A Study of Philosophic Thoughts in Thai Proverbs.”

“It should be noted that, unlike countries in the West or in China or in India, there has never been a Thai philosopher or a Thai philosophical system. Most writings by Thai sage-scholars are in the forms of literature relating to religious or political institutions. Thus, a puzzle arises, whether the Thai people have their own philosophy or not. If there is one, what does it look like?”¹²

Giving this kind of expressed concern, it seems that theses from Chiangmai University aspire to explore philosophic thinkings of the Thai people as represented in a Northern Thai Legal text, a Thai Classical Thinker, a most famous Thai poet and Central Thai proverbs.¹³

Self and the West in Thai Philosophical Discourse

One of the major difficulties in setting out to discuss the topic of “self” and the “West,” is, among other things, how to define the two terms and how to justify one’s definitions. A whole list of questions arise. Is it possible to have one “self” which represents Thainess? Is there such a thing as one characteristic which could represent the “West?” Are there not many strands of the “West” which are contradictory? What would be

the time frame of one's definitions? In order to side-step all these questions which are beyond the scope of this paper, I propose to approach this task through another mode of understanding the "self" which is philosophically tenable and illuminating for our purpose. Professor Charles Taylor offers an interesting critique of the understanding of the self in the modern world who is a "disengaged first-person-singular self" as evident from the founding figures of the modern epistemological tradition like René Descartes and John Locke. He argues,

"It means that we easily tend to see the human agent as primarily a subject of representations: representations first, about the world outside; and second, descriptions of ends desired or feared. This subject is a monological one. She or he is in contract with an "outside" world, including other agents, the object she or he and they deal with, his or her own and others' bodies, but this contact is through the representations she or he has "within." The subject is first of all an "inner" space, a "mind," to use the old terminology, or a mechanism capable of processing representations. They may also be causally responsible for some of these representations. But what "I" am, as a being capable of having such representations, the inner space itself, is definable independently of body or other. It is a center of monological consciousness."¹⁴

In place of seeing the self as subject of representations, Professor Taylor brings our attention to the fact that rather than representations being the primary locus of understanding, they are just "island in the sea of our unformulated practical grasp on the world." In other words, "our understanding resides first of all in our practices."¹⁵ He offers four paradigmatic cases of "dialogical" acts, which he thinks are illustrative of an embedded and embodied self. He cites sawing, dancing, engaging in conversation and the use of language itself as demonstrating the primacy of this "dialogical self." He concludes,

"Much of our understanding of self, society, and world is carried in practices that consist in dialogical action. I would like to argue, in fact, that language itself serves to set up spaces of common action, on a number of levels, intimate and public. This means that our identity is never simply defined in terms of our individual

properties. It also places us in some social space. We define ourselves partly in terms of what we come to accept as our appropriate place within dialogical actions.”¹⁶

Although the locus of discussion of the self here is primarily the “individual,” the analysis offered by Professor Taylor can be very useful in explicating the “dialogical” relationship between the (Thai) self and the West. This relationship exist in a linguistic practice, with the beings of each self giving rise to the other. This method of analysis could side-step the difficulties imposed by the questions of definitions as discussed earlier. In this dialogical mode of understanding the independent, disembodied, disengaged self is not presupposed, rather one can see the co-arising of interdependent selves, which rhythmically define each other. Based on Professor Taylor’s concept of the “dialogical self” I propose to offer my analysis through three modes of “dialogical” acts.

1. The (Thai) self in dialogue with Buddhism
2. The (Thai) self in dialogue with Siamese heritage
3. The (Thai Buddhist) self in dialogue with the West

Self in Dialogue with Buddhism

As Buddhism has been the de facto national religion of Thailand for over 700 years, it is only natural for Thai students of Philosophy to pay a great deal of effort and emphasis on discussing issues in **relation** to Buddhism. Of all theses produced in Thailand in the past 22 years, one in three are about or directly related to Buddhism.¹⁷ The mode of this “dialogical” relationship can essentially be characterized by four areas of concerns. First, there are explicit attempts to argue for the existence of Buddhist metaphysic. The first Thai M.A. thesis argues that “The lack of attempt by Buddhist Philosophy to create a metaphysical system has given rise to a new and uniquely Buddhist metaphysics of “Non-essentialism (Anatta-vada).¹⁸ Along the same line of observation, the author of the first Thai Ph.D. thesis argues for the necessity of Buddhist metaphysic. He argues, “Although Buddhist metaphysical teachings do not lead to the cessation of sufferings, it does function as a philosophical basis for the practical teachings. If Buddhist Philosophy should lack metaphysic, Buddhist ethico-pragmatic teachings would be without a

basis. It would be like a tree without roots.”¹⁹ It is interesting to note that although the historical Buddha seemed confident in remaining silent on questions of metaphysics, students of Philosophy in Thailand have made explicit efforts to argue for the existence of Buddhist metaphysic. This is perhaps part of an effort to “defend” Buddhism from misunderstandings, to “uphold” the uniqueness of the Buddhist religion, and to “demonstrate” the completeness of Buddhism as a philosophical system. All these attempts are quite evident from many theses.²⁰

Second, there are attempts to argue for the superiority of Buddhist ethics. Take the following as examples. According to the only thesis on Buddhism and human rights in Thailand, the author concludes, “Theravada Buddhist Philosophy does not need the concept of human rights.”²¹ Another thesis on the Buddhist Concept of Karma offers the following comparison. “The Buddhist concept of Karma is more comprehensive than the Brahmanic version because Buddhism offers clear explanations for the present as well as for the future without having to resort to a Deity who acts as protector of the Law of Karma. Besides, Buddhism offers more confidence than other ethical theories which deal with only the present life. Buddhism confirms that results of ethical acts are definitely coming either in this life or the next. Moreover, we can also create a new life for ourselves according to that Law of Karma.”²²

Third, there are several attempts to correlate Buddhism with democracy. According to one thesis, “Both Buddhism and democracy are based on faith in human reason and intelligence, giving great importance to the individual, utilizing majority votes as the deciding factor and giving complete freedom and liberty to the people.”²³ The same author concludes, “Buddhism essentially comprises many democratic elements.”²⁴ Another thesis on Buddhist Philosophy of Education offers the following findings. “The ideal person according to Buddhist Philosophy of Education is called a “pundit” (a learned person). He is someone with great knowledge of right ways of thinking, speaking and acting. He devotes himself to society and has a democratic attitude.”²⁵

Fourth, Buddhism offers highly positive contributions to the cause of women. In a pioneering thesis on Buddhism and the status of women, the author argues, “This research has shown that Buddhism has played an important role in elevating the status of women in many aspects. What

Buddhism did at that time was the opening of a new era when pioneering work was done to support equality between the sexes which served as a ground for later developments. It could be said that Asian people, especially Buddhists, have had an awareness of sexual equality for a long time.”²⁶ By implication this thesis is saying that the question of equality between the sexes is not something imported from the “West.” This “fact” in itself could serve as a legitimation for the Women Movement in Thailand.

In this first mode of dialogical relationship with Buddhism, it can be seen that there are attempts to create a sense of “being in relation to Buddhism.” Thai Buddhism is portrayed in a very positive light both in terms of being the highest philosophic truth as a system of philosophy with its own “non-essentialist” metaphysics. It is also a Buddhism with a superior system of ethics with teachings comprehensive enough to guarantee moral efficacy in future lives, as well as offering confidence for practitioners without the need of a Supreme Deity. This Buddhism is also essentially democratic and supportive of equality between the sexes. As Buddhism has been part and parcel of being Thai, it can be argued that the sense of “self” being created in this dialogical relation to Buddhism, is essentially a “Thai self” with solid grounding in truth, goodness, democracy and justice between the sexes. In other words, it seems that in the process of upholding Buddhism, Thai theses are also uplifting the Thai self.

Self in Dialogue with Siamese Heritage

As Philosophy as an academic discipline was defined, created, debated and developed in the “West,” the Western world does not have to be burdened with the question, “Is there Philosophy in Europe or America?” However, it seems that the rest of the world where they have their own ways of thinking have to face similar challenges whether their “ways of thinking” would deserve the term “Philosophy.” Considerable efforts in philosophical debates in many areas of the world, including Asia, Latin America, and Africa have to deal with this question which the West has the luxury of exemption.²⁷ This “burden of proof” is highlighted in the Thai context through dialogical interrogation with the

Siamese heritage. As there has not been any uncontested claim for any one who can represent a Thai “philosopher,” those whose consultations are sought are the poets, proverbs and some classical texts. In an interesting study of Thai proverbs in the Central area, the author finds that “The Thai people are not interested in questions of metaphysics. Or it can be said that views on metaphysics do not exist in Thai proverbs.”²⁸ The Thai people seem to accept the “reality” of the empirical world which appears before the senses. Their understanding of “truth” is primarily pragmatic.²⁹

If metaphysics is not one of the major concerns, ethics seems to receive much attention. In an attempt to hold dialogue with the thoughts of Sunthorn Poo who is the most popular Thai poet in the Bangkok period, the author makes explicit her wish to prove that the ethical thought of Sunthorn Poo corresponds with a humanist ethics. This is done with the purpose to “use those thoughts as a basis for moral development in Thai society. . . . This study will give us a humanist philosophical ethics which will greatly benefit the Thai people and the Thai nation.”³⁰ It is interesting to note that this dialogical moment with the Siamese heritage indicates a sense of moral decadence within the present Thai society, wherein there is a strong need to re-negotiate with the past in order to reform or rebuild the present. In these theses, there seems to be a deep sense of hope in and respect for the past. Their study approach indicates less a sense of attempting to “critique” the past than a sense of “attempting to find an answer” from their past. Another interesting aspect of this process is the fact that oftentimes there is a felt need to go back even further, namely to back to Buddhism. In the thesis on Sunthorn Poo’s ethical thought, the author concludes,

“It is important to note that from our critical study of Sunthorn Poo’s ethical thought, we find that Sunthorn Poo deals with certain issues, like political ethics and domestic ethics. However, his thought is neither clearly comprehensive nor systematic. When we apply these ethical principles to the daily lives of the Thai people, we should simultaneously rely on Buddhist ethics. Only then, we will have a more comprehensive ethics.”³¹

Along a similar line of thinking, in another thesis on the political thoughts in the (Buddhist) Sutta the author makes explicit his wish to

“develop understanding in the issues of the state, the ruler, the ruled, political system, political power according to Buddhism. This is done with a purpose to create a Buddhist political theory to help remedy the political problems in the present day Thailand.”³²

It is interesting to note that there is an expressed sense of moral and political decadence in Thai society when authors of Thai theses make attempts to hold dialogue with their own cultural past. In this sense the Siamese heritage functions as “filling up station” for the moral and political inadequacy in modern Thai life as perceived by the thesis authors. The very fact that they are searching for “moral and political answers in the Thai cultural past seems to indicate a sense that the West cannot provide the Thai people with this kind of answer. This statement is verified by the fact that none of the 144 theses which deal with non-Thai or non-Buddhist themes, discuss the possibility of adopting any “Western” philosophico-ethical answers for Thai moral or political needs. This does not mean, of course, that we cannot learn from the West, rather that the West does not provide an answer for us. Our own national heritage does.

(Buddhist) Self in Dialogue with the West

Among the 144 Thai theses, only one brings up the common fate of both the “East” and the “West.” This thesis deals with the issue of religious language. It uses Wittgenstein’s theory of language game” to explain the language practice of a radical Buddhist reformist group in contemporary Thailand. The author argues, “Due to rapid advancement in the field of science in the past years, scientific knowledge has become the paradigm of “truth” and “rationality.” Within this mode of thinking, the status of religion has degenerated to an all time low level. Religionists, both from the East and the West, have tried to explain their religions in terms of scientific knowledge. This is attempted to show that religious teachings are rational and true, thus deserving respect in the same way as scientific knowledge does.”³³ It is interesting to note that in the reasoning process of this author, science is not necessarily associated with the West. Rather it is science versus religion, East and West. In this way, the distinction line is not drawn between the East and versus the

West, but between two paradigms of knowledge, namely, science and religion.

However, if one looks at the overall picture, one will see that a clear majority of Thai theses, when juxtaposing the East and the West, they oftentimes reflect an opposing tension, a radical difference or sometimes a sense of superiority on part of the East. The following expositions should serve as representative examples. In a comparative study of the notion of self in Buddhist philosophy and that of David Hume, the author concludes, “The reasons in negating the self in Buddhist Philosophy and the Philosophy of David Hume are the same, that is, they both analyze human beings into composite units and find no self. If it is only because of the necessity to use language for communication, misunderstandings arise as to the existence of the self. However, the purposes of the two Philosophical systems are different. Buddhism negates the existence of the self because it is a method of practice to reach the highest good, that is, for ethical aim; whereas Hume negates the existence of the self because of his theory of knowledge.”³⁴ In another thesis, the importance of epistemology is discussed in the following way. “There still are conflicting debates as to the importance of epistemology in Western Philosophy. Not so in Buddhist Philosophy which holds that epistemology is very important. This is because right knowledge must be able to get rid of *avijja* (ignorance) which is the root cause of sufferings. The way to gain that right knowledge is within the realm of epistemology.”³⁵ This argument seems to indicate that Buddhism has found that ultimate importance of epistemology. As epistemology is the realm wherein the method leading to the cessation of sufferings is embedded. It also seems to imply that Buddhism has advanced further than Western Philosophy because Buddhism has found the true and ultimate importance of epistemology.

In another thesis on the notion of emptiness in Nagarjuna, the author echoes a similar line of reasoning. She argues that Nagarjuna, belonging to the Eastern tradition, and Kant and Hegel, belonging to the Western tradition, both use “Dialectics” in their attempts to reach philosophic truth. But Hegel’s Dialectics is different from that of Nagarjuna in the sense that, for Hegel, Dialectics is a movement from lower ideas with lower essence to higher ideas with higher essence, thus

ultimately reaching highest Truth through intuition which is beyond experience. For Nagarjuna, Dialectics is a critical use of reason to prove the state of emptiness. This state of emptiness will liberate the mind from any theoretic attachment and will reach ultimate liberation.”³⁶ This theme of liberation from attachment is often emphasized in many theses dealing with East and West encounter. In those cases there seems to be an implied sense of superiority on part of Buddhism over its Western counterpart. Take another example in a study of “form” in Buddhism. The author concludes that the purpose of Western analysis of “form” (substance) is to understand its nature, its true state; whereas in Buddhism, a study of “form” is for the purpose of enlightenment, so that a person can liberate himself from the influence of “form.” Then life can be lived without any danger of “form”³⁷ The issue of the “purpose” of philosophic endeavors seems to be the locus of difference between Buddhism and the West. When a philosophic quest is not conducive to enlightenment, the Buddha is not interested in answering. In a thesis on the question of agnosticism, the author argues that Buddhism fully believes in the possibility of ultimate knowledge, but the Buddha remains silent on metaphysical questions not because those question cannot be answered, rather that, they should not be answered because they are irrelevant to the purpose of enlightenment.³⁸

This line of reasoning is repeated in another thesis on the idea of suffering in Schopenhauer. The author concludes that Schopenhauer is an extreme pessimist who insists that life is essentially suffering. This is because the inner nature is a will which endlessly struggles to find contentment only to be replaced by new desires. The cessation of this struggle only leads us to boredom. The method which will lead to the cessation of suffering is to be immersed in aesthetic beauty and a sacrifice of worldly desires. However, according to the author, “(Schopenhauer’s) method only offers temporary sanctuary, it cannot lead to true liberation.”³⁹ Even though this thesis is not a comparative study, at the end of the conclusion, the author still implies that Schopenhauer’s way out is short of being the best. The term “Buddhism” is not directly mentioned here, but any Thai reader would automatically associate that “true liberation” here with Buddhism. Within that association, again, Buddhism reigns supreme over another Western thinker.

Concluding Note

Perhaps one can say that in the process of being exposed to the West in the economic development process, wherein all answers seem to lie in the West, Thai students of Philosophy carry an uneasy ambivalence about the West. This “uneasy ambivalence” seems to be subtly contested in many Thai Philosophy theses. Given the three dialogical movements outlined above, the following will be an attempt to bring all those observations together into a single framework so that a better sense of the Thai self in relation to the West can be developed.

First, it seems reasonable to conclude that in order to create a sense of self, the process of dialogical relationship with the West needs to be constituted through Buddhism. At this first movement, the Thai self does not rely on metaphysical foundation (the Buddhist insistence), but it is a self with solid ethical foundation, is supportive of democracy and advocates sexual equality. The main point here is this ideal self does not need to rely on any Western philosophic ideology. We only need Buddhism.⁴⁰

Second, when there is a felt sense of moral or political decadence in Thai society, a re-constitution of the self is needed in dialogical relationship with the Siamese heritage. It is interesting to note that when going back to Thai poets or Thai proverbs, the constituted Thai self is not put side by side with the West. The only significant mention of the West in this context is an attempt to claim that Sunthorn Poo should be honored as one of the important humanist thinkers of the world.⁴¹ There is also no claim that this version of self with its own ethico-political envelop can be applicable to the West or any other Asian cultures. In short, it might not be illogical to conclude here that the Siamese heritage can provide an answer to the re-constitution of a Thai self, but this self does not indicate universal application. This limited confidence seems to indicate the boundary or the Thai self.

Third, when there is a direct juxtaposition of Thai self with the West, Buddhism is again needed. Oftentimes this dialogical relationship is characterized by tension, difference (especially in philosophic purposes), and sometimes superiority on part of Buddhism. The hidden meaning seems to be that if Buddhism is superior to the West (only Buddhism

offers liberation, philosophic as well as religious?), then the Thai self will also be elevated. The fact that there is never an explicit equation or superiorization of the Thai self over the West seems to indicate two logical possibilities. First, the Thai self can be honorably compared to the West through Buddhist references. Second, the Thai self cannot face up to the West on its own?

The conceptualization of the Thai self in dialogical relation to the West seems to indicate an uneasy acceptance of the West with a felt need to fight back. This “fighting back” is carried out by bringing in the issue whether the philosophies under discussion will lead to the cessation of sufferings or not. This criterion is in itself a Buddhist criterion, and is based on a non distinction between philosophy and religion.

ENDNOTES

¹See for example, Norman Jacobs, *Modernization without Development: Thailand as an Asian Case Study*. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971.

²Suree Suwanpreecha, "Status and Roles of Philosophy in Thai Education," *Thammasat University Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March E.E. 2524), p.126. Although the two Buddhist universities first offered courses on "Buddhist Philosophy" many years before the second modernization movement, I still includes them under the time frame of the 1960's because it is highly probable that the teachings at that time would not be significantly different from teaching Buddhism as a religion.

³See the first M.A. thesis in Philosophy produced from Chulalongkorn University in Cha-earnsri Issarangoon Na Ayudya, "an Analytical Study of 'self' and 'non-self' in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy," Chulalongkorn University Graduate School, B.E. 2514 (1973)

⁴See a recently completed research, Suwanna Satha-Anand, "Thai Philosophical Landscape: Report on Philosophical Research in Thailand (B.E. 2508-2538), 225 pp. This research was commissioned by the Thai National Council, and submitted to the Council in July B.E. 2540 (1997).

⁵It is difficult to obtain complete and accurate data as to what is the percentage of these people who comprise the total number of 200 people who are teaching philosophy in institutes of higher learning in Thailand. I have tried to search for this information with the ministry of University Affairs. I was informed that the data are classified as "restricted."

⁶See Suwanna Satha-Anand, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

⁷These statistics are enumerated by this author from the 122 thesis abstracts produced from Chulalongkorn University Graduate School between the years B.E. 2516–2538 (1973–1995)

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹See prominent example of this questioning in, Frits Staal, "Is There Philosophy in Asia?" in General James Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Eds.) *Interpreting Across Boundaries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 203–229.

¹⁰The same method of enumeration is used to count the appearance of these two terms among 22 M.A. thesis abstracts from Chiangmai University between the years B.E. 2528–2538 (1985–1995)

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Ms. Naiyana Navatchara, "A study of Philosophic Thoughts in Thai Proverbs," M.A. thesis, Chiangmai University Graduate School, B.E. 2531, abstract page.

¹³Please see Ms. Nipapan Chaimongkol, "The Legal Philosophy of Mangrai Customary Law," B.E. 2531; Mr. Mum Manroo, "The Political Philosophy of Tien-wan." B.E. 2534; Ms. Rienthong Somsak, "A Study of Ethical Thoughts in Sunthorn Poo's Literature, B.E. 2529; and Ms. Naiyana Navatchara, "A Study of Philosophical

Thoughts in Thai Proverbs,” B.E. 2531 respectively. All of these are M.A. theses in Philosophy From Chiangmai University.

¹⁴Charles Taylor “The Dialogical Self,” in David R. Hiley, James P. Bohman, and Richard Shusterman (eds.) *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1991, p. 307. Emphasis added by this author.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 308 Emphasis added by this author.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 311 Emphasis added by this author.

¹⁷Suwanna Satha-Anand, *Op. cit.*, p. 18 Between B.E. 2516–2537, 39 in 122 M.A. and Ph.D. theses produced in Thailand are about or directly related to Buddhist Philosophy.

¹⁸Cha-ernsri Issarangoon an Ayudhya, “An Analytical Study of Atta and Anatta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2516 (1973), Abstract.

¹⁹Samparn Promta, “Space and Time in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2530 (1987), Abstract.

²⁰Suwanna Satha-Anand, *Op. cit.* p. 20.

²¹Boontham Poonsab, “Morality and Human Rights in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2533 (1990), Abstract.

²²Preecha Kunawut, “Buddhist Philosophy on Karma and the Result of Karma” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2521 (1978), Abstract.

²³Morakot Singhapat, “An Analysis of Democratic Elements in Buddhism” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2521 (1978), Abstract.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Wichit Kertwisit, “Theravada Buddhist Philosophy of Education” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2519 (1976).

²⁶Parichart Nontaganan, “Buddhist Philosophy on Women” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2523 (1980), Abstract.

²⁷Take the following debates for examples. Vincente Medina, “The Possibility of an Indigeneous Philosophy: A Latin American Perspective,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 29, No. 4, October 1992, pp. 373–380. Polycarp Ikuenobe “The Parochial Universalist Conception of ‘Philosophy’ and ‘African Philosophy,’” *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 47, No.2, April 1997, pp. 189–210. Frits Staal, “Is There Philosophy in Asia,” in Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch (Eds.) *Interpreting Across Boundaries*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 203–229. These debates are in direct contrast to two recent articles on ways of doing Philosophy in North America, wherein the absence of the term “Asia” or any other non-European traditions is not conspicuous. Please see Hilary Putnam, “A Half Century of Philosophy, Viewed from Within,” *Daedalus* Vol. 126, No.1, Winter 1997, pp 175–208. And Alexander Nehamas, “Trends in Recent American Philosophy,” *Daedalus* Vol. 126, No. 1, Winter 1997, pp. 209–223.

²⁸Naiyana Nagwatchara, “A Study of Philosophical Thoughts in Thai Proverbs” Graduate School Chiangmai University, B.E. 2531 (1988), Abstract.

²⁹Chalermkiat Pewnuan, “Truth in Thai Mind” *Journal of Thammasat University*. Vol. 8, No. 3 (January – March 2522), pp. 54–61. (In Thai)

³⁰Rianthong Somsak, “A Critical Study of Sunthorn Poo’s Ethical Thoughts in his literature,” Graduate School, Chiangmai University, B.E. 2529 (1986), Abstract.

³¹Ibid.

³²Tthana Nuanplod, “Political Thoughts in the Sutta Pitaka,” Graduate School, Chiangmai University, B.E. 2536 (1993), Abstract.

It should be noted here that although the Buddhist Tripitaka technically is not part of the “Siamese heritage,” the distinction between the two is not very clear in Thai mind. I therefore, include here a thesis about ideas in the Sutta under the heading, “Siamese heritage.”

³³Sunai Setbunsarn, “The Application of Wittgenstein’s Language Game Theory to the Explanation of Meanings in Religious Language: A Case Study of the Santi Asoka Language” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2528 (1985), Abstract.

³⁴Siriwan Ostanonda, “A Comparative Study of the notion of self in Buddhist Philosophy and the Philosophy of David Hume,” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2523 (1980), Abstract.

³⁵Wichit Kerdwisit, “Theravada Buddhist Philosophy of Education” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2519 (1976), Abstract. (Emphasis added by this author.)

³⁶Sumalee Chimtrakul, “Nagarjuna on Sunyata” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2519 (1976), Abstract.

³⁷Nantaporn Vorakul, “A Study of “form” in Buddhism,” Graduate School, Chiangmai University, B.E. 2533 (1990), Abstract.

³⁸Chutima Ounwong, “Agnosticism in Buddhism,” Graduate School, Chiangmai University, B.E. 2534 (1991), Abstract.

³⁹Porntip Chusak, “An Analysis of Schopenhauer’s Idea of Suffering,” Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University, B.E. 2523 (1980), Abstract.

⁴⁰The thesis by Somparn Promta who insists that Buddhism has its own non-essentialist metaphysics, is establishing this metaphysical foundation without any need to rely on Western metaphysical system.

⁴¹Rianthong Somsak, *Op. cit.*