Western Buddhism: Tradition and Modernity

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The idea of a fragmented, de-traditionalized society has been much discussed over recent years. While Anthony Giddens has suggested that the issues surrounding postmodernism and postmodernity do not constitute the end of modernism and modernity, there has been a significant disjunction in the modernist narrative. Indeed, the project of modernity has been instrumental in the perceived de-traditionalization of society through an intensification of globalization where local contexts are invaded by abstract systems. In this paper, using the existence of Buddhism in the West as an example, I argue that this does not signify the end of tradition as such. Introducing certain aspects of Theravada Buddhist philosophy as a means of comparison, I further argue that it is possible to reclaim a place for religion by suggesting that traditions may exist in their own cultural niches which appear throughout society; as well as at various times during the life of an individual. This I call a de-universalized society in which religious tradition persists, albeit not in an inclusive form.

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In the discussion which follows I draw upon Buddhist philosophy and contemporary social theory in order to argue an 'elective affinity' between certain Buddhist ideas and certain features of late modern British society. Suggesting it is more appropriate to talk of a 'de-universalized' rather than a 'de-traditionalized' society, I pay particular attention to the themes of tradition and identity. With regard to these themes, I concentrate initially on what I call *diachronic identities* and *diachronic traditions*, arguing that Buddhist conceptions of personality construction can assist us in understanding contemporary patterns of selfhood. Following from this, I draw some conclusions concerning the way in which we might conceive of religion in a society which is both globalized and, in certain respects, marked by fragmentation.

Diachronic Identities and Diachronic traditions

In his paper 'Buddhism in Recent British Philosophy and Theology', Steven Collins asserts.

> One (conventional) person can only inherit the karmic results of action performed by a single series of predecessors. Equally, if anyone achieves the rare but possible 'supernormal knowledge' which consists in remembering past lives there can, again *objectively* be only a single series which he can remember. But such an objective diachronic series is not (ultimately) a *personal* fact.[1]

Here Collins is concentrating on a single diachronic series of lives, and it is within this framework I wish to draw out two forms of individuality. The first is at the stage of *nibbana* where the 'individual' is able to view each of his or her rebirths (*attabhava*) within a single diachronic series; and the second, unenlightened stage, where the individual's cognition is limited to his or her current *attabhava*.

With regard to these forms, Collins notes a number of qualifications concerning the individual's perception of previous rebirths.

> . . . it is natural for the unenlightened to see the penumbra of self-interest as extending beyond this life into the future. Nevertheless, it is clear that the further one moves

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away from present conditions into other lives, which may be in a different sex, a different biological species . . . the empathic imagination required to regard these lives as one's own will increasingly—and soon—come to resemble the empathy needed to imagine oneself as someone else.[2]

Thus, Collins suggests that such recollections are 'best characterized not as ordinary memory, but as quasi-memory'. Furthermore, he asserts that even ordinary memories are in a sub-class of these quasi-memories. Derek Parfitt explains the processes involved.

(1) I *seem* to remember having an experience, (2) *someone* did have this experience and (3) my apparent memory is causally dependent, in the right kind of way, on my past experience. On this definition, ordinary memories are a sub-class of quasi-memories. They are quasi-memories of our own past experiences.[3]

What is being questioned here is the ability of individuals to recall their experiences with exactitude. This is difficult to judge for a number of reasons. First, their perception of the world is not a uniform one over time. As a result their memories of the past will pass through a filter of changing perception. Second, if this is so for the individual, then it will be more so for the 'other' as an additional filter of personal perception will be employed. Third, a similar shift may occur where the perception of the individual is radically altered; that is, if his or her life undergoes radical change, so that his or her previous persona is practically an-other.

These distinctions are important ones, as I intend to illustrate by applying them to some aspects of the contemporary debates regarding Western society. By doing this I wish to note an affinity between the enlightened and the unenlightened views of Buddhist cognition with aspects of contemporary self-identity, and eventually to tradition.

Lifestyle Choices and Fateful Moments
According to Douglas Kellner:

Identity today . . . becomes a freely chosen game, a theatrical presentation of the self, in which one is able to present oneself in a variety of roles, images, and activities, relatively unconcerned about shifts, transformations, and dramatic changes.[4]

Here is a view of identity in contemporary society in which individuals are able to exhibit themselves differently in a number of different situations, and it is with this aspect of contemporary self-hood that I wish to make comparisons with the points noted above. Whereas Collins talks of a series of diachronic rebirths, I wish to show that life in contemporary Western society can be seen as a diachronic series of roles, brought about by a series of lifestyle choices made through a process of reflexivity. These include those choices which are made at times that Anthony Giddens refers to as 'fateful moments'. These are points at which, no matter how reflexive an individual may be in the shaping of his or her own self-identity, he or she 'has to sit up and take notice of new demands as well as new possibilities'.[5] Such moments are not fully in the control of individuals and have profound repercussions on their futures.

These fateful moments are irregular and will often come unexpectedly. They are not, however, solely responsible for the changes which occur in the diachronic development of self-identity. There are also more subtle changes which act as a continuous process of checks and balances which can be seen as reflexive responses to the wider milieu. These must be seen in the context of contemporary society where, as Giddens argues.

. . . the discovery of oneself becomes a project directly involved with the reflexivity of modernity.[6]

This relates to Collins' suggestion that Buddhist practitioners are engaged in a process whereby they are discovering more and more about their 'self-state' (*attabhava*). Through this linkage I am suggesting that it is possible to place the development of the individual into a diachronic series of rebirths; where, in this sense, a rebirth counts as a fateful moment which radically changes the life, and perception, of the individual. In doing this I am comparing the process of reflexivity in modernity *between* fateful moments to that of a single life in a series of rebirths. In suggesting this, however, the problem of enlightenment arises. The principal difficulty here being the extent to which a fateful moment can be related to an enlightened experience.

Problems of Reality

Central to this problem is the fact that I am seeking to juxtapose two abstract ideas, one philosophical and the other sociological. For my purposes, however, I would suggest that by viewing this relationship in terms of the transformations of cognition which individuals *actually* perceive to experience, I am able to achieve a position in which the respective changes caused by these phenomenon can be discussed. This is made possible by the concept of quasi-memory. As each fateful moment occurs, so the perception of the individual will change, rendering perceptions of events previous to this experience increasingly incomplete. This is not the only difficulty, however. A further problem emerges with regard to levels of cognition in Buddhism is that of reality where any perception is seen as being neither-real-nor-not-real. This is very subtle and subsequently problematic when attempting to discuss the cognition of individuals. In terms of my arguments here, however, I would again suggest that it is the *actual* self-cognition of the 'individual' that is important. To the unenlightened person what he or she perceives as reality is what maps out his or her actions and, as a result, it is this that is valid for my analysis.

There are, however, also questions in contemporary society which revolve around the problem of what is ultimately real. In explaining these I feel that it is possible to further the equation which I have already made between experience and enlightenment. I suggest that as Enlightenment for the Buddhist results in 'true' perception; so experience is, to a certain extent, necessary to discern the nature of reality in contemporary society which seems to have proved so elusive for so many.

This argument highlights the nature of the problem which, according to Mike Featherstone, had its beginnings in 'the new experiences of *modernité* in the big cities of the mid to late-nineteenth century', 'as discussed by Baudelaire, Benjamin and Simmel'.[7] Here 'the new department stores and arcades were temples in which goods were worshipped as fetishes'.[8] This marked the beginning of a definite move from an emphasis on production to one of consumption, a major catalyst for this being the mass-media:

> This leads to a breakdown of the relationship between signifiers and the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents. . .[9]

This seems to coincide with Buddhist notions of reality. In other words, as the enlightened 'Buddhist' would perceive reality as a series of perpetual presents; so too can the individual in contemporary society—if he or she has garnered enough experience.

Consequently, I would argue that 'true' perception in both Buddhist philosophy and contemporary society depend on the degree to which the individual perceives this dichotomy of reality and illusion. This is discussed by Jean Baudrillard who considers that 'we live everywhere already in an 'aesthetic' hallucination of reality'.[10] As Featherstone comments.

> Baudrillard refers to this as 'hyperreality', a world in which the piling up of signs, images and simulations through consumerism and television results in a destabilized, aestheticized hallucination of reality.[11]

I have already argued that with regard to such ideas experience is akin to enlightenment in terms of the realization of what is illusory. It is only through experience of the world in which the individual lives that he or she can discern what is or is not real. Furthermore, as with Buddhist philosophy, the idea of hyperreality cannot be conceived by the individual who lives his or her life in the everyday world of 'common' perception. In other words that which the individual perceives everyday. It might be possible, therefore, to conceive of a world of hyperreality for an individual who is constantly and *exclusively* subjected to mass media imagery. Similarly someone who constantly and exclusively meditates may also realise the true 'Buddhist' nature of reality.

The Role of Tradition in Western Buddhism

In the light of the above points I wish to take the discussion a stage further and consider how ideas of diachronic tradition can be applied to the nature of tradition in the broader sense. This will require attention to how the synchronic interaction of individual diachronic series come together at different times to form a single diachronic tradition. According to Edward Shils this may be problematic as the past has a bearing on the attitude of the individual in the present, but, he suggests, his or her actual cognition of the past may not be fully correct.[12]

Here a form of quasi-memory may be employed, and, again, if this is so for the individual; then how much more so will it be for the 'other'? Although the level of quasi-memory may be significant it does not lessen the importance of synchronic interaction between individuals, especially those who have a shared or similar past. In order to do this, however, we must look at a diachronic series of generations, rather than of individuals, and this is where synchronic interaction is important.

While is possible to talk of a diachronic series of rebirths, to the unenlightened there is only this life (*attabhava*). Consequently, a similar view should be taken of generational evolution as the enlightened individual would of his or her previous rebirths. Where successive lives in a diachronic series of rebirths cannot be wholly empathic with each other due to their different milieux; so it is the same for successive generations within a tradition.

In terms of the transition and translation of Buddhism into the West, this is important as the continuation of such a diachronic tradition is central to the success of such a process. So for tradition to exist there must be some form of diachronic connection, although at the same time there must be a synchronic sharing of experience between individuals. This, according to Shils, occurs through memory in the formation and continuation of a tradition.[13] The nature of quasi-memory is an important consideration here. This suggests that the 'transmissions and receptions' will not be accurate. Individuals are relying on their own perceptions of their past, which

may well have been unconsciously altered by the quasi nature of their own memories. Furthermore, they will also have been affected by the nature of their own milieux.

Identity and Tradition in 'Postmodern' Society

By looking at diachronic series of individuals in the relative contexts of Buddhist philosophy and contemporary sociology, it is possible to create a *theoretical* linkage with which to explore some of the problems that can arise in evaluating the transfer of Buddhism into Western society.

In order to support this further I shall examine the nature of contemporary society in the West, incorporating what I have already discussed into an analysis of the processes which lie behind concepts such as fateful moments and reflexivity. In doing so I shall map out the roles of tradition and identity, and discuss how Buddhism can exist in such a society.

In outlining this area I wish to begin with a quotation from Giddens.

> The more tradition loses its hold, the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options.[14]

This highlights many of the difficulties which arise when discussing religion in contemporary society. Tradition is central to any discussion of religion. Giddens' assertion, however, that tradition is losing its hold does point to a diminished role for religion. I wish to argue that religion can still have a role in society, albeit an altered one.

Central to this idea is the notion of lifestyle choices. In the past it has been argued that individuals 'need overarching reality definitions to give meaning to life as a whole'.[15] This stems from the aforementioned rise in self-awareness that modernity brought—allied with a perception of the centrality of tradition. So whereas in the past 'overarching reality definitions' were seen at a societal level, this is no longer the case. Awareness is no longer limited to the local. Technological advances have given people, especially in the West, a global perspective. This creates a tension between the parochial and the cosmopolitan.[16] Although it should be pointed out that this will not be the case for all Westerners because of their geographical, cultural, and especially, economic situations. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that the ensuing discussion of lifestyle choices does not apply to society as a whole. As I will show it is in the very nature of such a society that decisions such as these are not universally available.

I shall initially discuss some of the terminology which is often used in conjunction with such ideas. Principal amongst these is the idea that contemporary society is a postmodern one. Such a term has become a repository for a number of different ideas, not all of which are consistent with each other.

I wish to begin such a discussion with Giddens who accuses postmodernists of rejecting the notion of the 'master narrative' while still utilizing a diachronic location in appointing the postmodern as a 'successor' to the modern. In arguing against this he states.

> It is not just that more or less continuous and profound processes of change occur; rather change does not consistently conform either to human expectation or to human control. The anticipation that the social and natural environments would increasingly be subject to rational ordering has not proved to be valid.[17]

It is this that has caused postmodern thinkers to discuss ideas of discontinuity to a point when the unevenness and unpredictability of change gives modernist narratives their

fragmented appearance resulting in developments which are largely unforeseen. It is the notion of reflexivity, an integral part of this high modern anomie, which, as Philip Mellor suggests is.

> . . . not just a generalized tendency towards revisionism, but a process of *chronic revision*, an orientation towards systematic and potentially radical reappraisals of all aspects of modern life.[18]

The result of this disorientating milieu is reflected in a loss of confidence in society. This can be seen in Baudrillard's work on hyperreality which looks to the aestheticization of everyday life. This is one of the hallmarks of postmodern thought where 'the 'essentialist' forms of modernism, which still assume a historical subject and unified world-view, eventually give way to a present-oriented aesthetic of immediacy, plurality, and simultaneity.'[19] This is characterized by a collapsing of boundaries between 'high' and 'mass' culture into a 'postmodernist eclectic mixing of subject matter, styles and attitudes formerly confined to separate realms.'[20]

This is connected to the notion of diachronic individuality by Zygmunt Bauman who suggests we find that,

> Postmodern nomads, unlike Protestant 'pilgrims through life', wander between *unconnected* places. It is on this that they differ—not in the concern with *establishing* and *preserving* their identities, a concern which they share with their pilgrim ancestors.[21]

In terms of my discussion of diachronics and quasi-memory this idea of postmodern nomads wandering between unconnected places is particularly apposite. Here Bauman outlines the situation where the diachronic individual undergoes a series of fateful moments which lead to major disjunctions in his or her life. Moreover, the constant process of reflexivity or 'chronic revisionism' results in a continual process of change and readjustment. This, coupled with, and caused by, a view of reality which is highly stylized and aestheticized leads to a situation where the individual feels out of control.

When this is applied to the ideas of diachronic series we can see that this high-modern process involves a relatively low level of consciousness in terms of the reflexive reactions of individuals to their own constantly and rapidly changing milieux. Bauman also suggests, however, that in this process there is a concern with the preservation of identity. Here the quasi-memory of the individual will perceive a process when remembering his or her past 'life' which is more continuous than is actually the case. This predilection towards constancy results in the individual seeking some historical reference point to which he or she can refer as a significant facet in his or her development; hence the nostalgia boom that has occurred over the past decade. However, while nostalgia allows the individual a perceived continuity in his or her own diachronic process, it does not, to any great extent, give the individual an enhanced feeling of security when attempting to relate his or her life to the broader milieu.

In order to assess the level of control that individuals have, or perceive to have, in society I shall now discuss the idea of self-identity introducing some specifically Buddhist examples. According to Giddens self-identity.

> . . . is not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is *the self as reflexively understood be the person in terms of his or her biography.*

This, he continues; 'includes the cognitive component of personhood'. Thus, he concludes,

> The capacity to use 'I' in shining contexts, characteristic of every known culture, is the most elemental feature of reflexive conceptions of personhood.[22]

Here we see the employment of quasi–memory in the self-understanding of biography. This is allied with the conception of the self in the current 'shifting context' of contemporary society. These points can be taken at two levels. First, at a diachronic level, where the biography is developed, or perceived to develop, over a period of time through a succession of contexts. In addition to this there is the possibility of a succession of contexts at any one given time; what I have referred to previously as lifestyle choices. Reflexivity, furthermore, is fundamental in the formation of lifestyle choices, which can either occur as a result of fateful moments or in the continuous process of reflexivity.

Buddhist Tradition in a 'Postmodern' Society

A number of problems arise from this. Because of the utilisation of quasi–memory, the individual may perceive a certain continuity. Yet, as Bauman has shown, he or she may be wandering nomadically between unconnected points, although the individual will attempt to maintain this sense of continuity despite the fragile nature of his or her own biography. In their best efforts to construct a coherent diachronic biography individuals also need to look to the future. In making lifestyle choices they are also seeking a further continuity. Inherent in such choices, furthermore, is the risk of making the 'wrong' ones. This lack of control through reflexivity or 'fate' further engenders a feeling of helplessness on the part of the individual which leads to an even greater desire for continuity.

Looking at this from a Buddhist perspective it is necessary to reiterate my earlier assertion that what is important to my assessment of the processes involved in a diachronic series is the actual perception of the individual. In Buddhist terms this means the perceived proximity to nirvana. This is related to what David Bastow calls the 'intention of action' which can be assessed in terms of two value systems in Buddhism.[23] These are respectively associated with karma and nirvana. The former can be seen in terms of a very limited perception in which the memory is not, to a large extent, utilized. Here the individual is seeking a limited degree of self-change in the context of seeking a favourable rebirth. This limited path, however, is less common in Western Buddhism where there is a greater sense of nirvanic immediacy. In this latter system there is a greater desire for self change and as such the individual attempts to recreate him or herself 'around a completely new structure of intentions, a structure which itself is fully intended.[24] This suggests a much more significant utilization of quasi–memory.

This is important as it reflects a much more distinct form of lifestyle choice than that of the karmic system; which may, in a continuous process of reflexivity, lead the individual to a situation where nirvana may be seen as a more immediate goal. There is still, however, the aforementioned desire for continuity; this being the underlying motivation for seeking the Buddhist path within a tradition. The Buddhist is now seeking to extinguish such desires in order to gain a feeling of self-control through a process of self–discovery and self–realisation. Looking at this from the point of view of the reductionist, this is thought to be achieved through the attainment of knowledge; in Buddhist terms: wisdom.

It may be suggested that greater knowledge would increase the amount of control which the individual perceives to have over his or her fate. Indeed, the perception

might result in greater awareness, yet Giddens argues that this is not the case. He feels that greater knowledge may lead to greater control of knowledge about the physical world 'but not about the universe of social events'.[25] He adds,

> No amount of accumulated knowledge about social life could encompass all circumstances of its implementation, even if such knowledge were wholly distinct from the environment to which it applied. If our knowledge about the social world simply got better and better, the scope of unintended consequences might become more and more confined and unwanted consequences rare. However, the reflexivity of modern social life blocks off this possibility. . .[26]

This seems problematic. If we link this in with my discussions on the nature of reality, however, it is possible to assert that the aforementioned Buddhist path towards nirvanic knowledge may possibly be attained only through the most eremetic of practices. As a result it could be argued that the individual is still anchored in the gross world from which he or she is attempting to escape. Consequently, I would suggest that despite the motivational impulses to achieve Enlightenment, the Western Buddhist may well become trapped by his or her own reflexivity.

This can be reflected in the function of tradition in Western Buddhism. Here we see Buddhism acting in the role of an abstract system; which, according to Giddens, attempts to 'create large area of relative security for the continuation of day-to-day life'.[27] This results in a greater reliance on external advice systems which may be looked upon by individuals as 'significant others' in their quest to overcome the risks that are inherent in contemporary Western society. This gives an appearance of control. Such advice may, however, be subjective and particular; and certainly 'only valid 'until further notice' '.[28] In a Buddhist sense the security element is provided by the diachronic nature of tradition where the authority of the 'advice' can be traced back directly to the Buddha himself. This is important for the perception of the individual. However, the teaching may actually be more speculative that authoritative. As I have already discussed there may be a high degree of quasi-memory operating in the transmission and translation of a tradition; especially when it is into a markedly different social and cultural milieu.

Globalization and the De-universalized Society
Given this discussion on the role of Buddhism in Western society, I shall now broaden my remit to look at society in general in order to discover how, by seeing all religions in the way that I have just described Buddhism, it is possible to argue a different role for religious traditions.

In order to explore this area, however, I feel that it is necessary to re-state a few fundamental concepts. While I do not fully subscribe to a number of the ideas raised by postmodern thinkers, some of them are useful for my analysis. Similarly while the above theories of Giddens are important, I feel that they are too absolute for my requirements—especially with regard to tradition—by not taking into account any provisionality which allows for the *perception* of the individual. It is also necessary, however, to perceive religion itself in a different way. In order to achieve this I would suggest that new parameters should be set on both sides. On the one hand, I would argue that we cannot talk of 'de-traditionalization' as this may be too definite. But neither, on the other hand, can we see religion in a universal sense, since religion(s) in the West no longer pervade society as they once did.

As a compromise between the two I suggest that we should consider what I wish to call a 'de-universalized' society which would still fulfil ideas of fragmentation without negating the existence of tradition within such a milieu. From this I believe it is possible to construct a model of society which will include both components, while taking into account the provisionality of meanings which are contained therein.

This could be seen in terms of Roland Robertson's ideas of religion in a global society. Acknowledging 'the problem the plurality of cultures and faiths at the global level'; he notes,

> . . . consciousness of roots, tradition, heritage, and so on, increases the likelihood that societies will draw upon religiocultural resources in defining their identities and that movements within and across societies will invoke religious symbols.[29]

In accepting this, Robertson shows how individuals look to past traditions in order to construct their own diachronic selves, as well as a diachronic tradition, as I have already suggested in connection with Buddhism. In this way they are able to look back at their own lives in order to see a degree of continuity within them. Moreover, they are also able to trace continuities in terms of tradition. As I have said, this may be in terms of nostalgia. Although I would suggest that this can also be seen in terms of the role of religion in society.

To achieve this I wish to bring together two ideas which may, at first sight, seem paradoxical. First, the notion that we are living in a global society. Here I wish to add to what I discussed earlier about the interaction of the local and the global, as this is one of the main principles of many theories of globalisation. This is explained by Giddens,

> Globalization can . . . be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away.[30]

This could give individuals a further reason to doubt that they are in control of their situations. I feel, however, that this is tempered somewhat by something which I have already touched upon; the move from production to consumption. In this sense the consumer has a choice. But a choice of what? According to Featherstone,

> Consumption, then, must not be understood as the consumption of use-values, a material utility, but primarily as a consumption of signs.[31]

Moreover, consumer culture seems to have widened the range of contexts and situations in which the individual can fulfil the dreams and desires which such a culture introduces. Indeed, it is often the case that where more than one option is offered, choice is not a problem.

> Today's consumer culture represents neither a lapse of control nor the institution of more rigid controls, but rather the underpinning by a flexible underlying generative structure which can handle both formal control and de-control and facilitate an easy change of gears between them.[32]

I would argue, however, that in terms of lifestyle choices made at any given time some will be mutually exclusive, particularly where traditions—and especially where religious traditions—are concerned. Nevertheless, over a period of time it may be possible to

encompass any number of traditions. So as far as Featherstone's above argument is concerned I would wish to add some degree of rigidity when discussing religion and tradition. By choosing to 'plug in' to the past in this way the individual is often taking on board a new selection of norms and values which often represent an intrinsic part of such a diachronic institution.

The second idea which appears, notionally at least, to be paradoxical to the idea of a global society is the particularisation of traditions, which is often expressed as a fragmentation of the global perspective into a series of localised cultures. As Ulf Hannerz comments,

> World culture is marked by diversity rather than by a replication of uniformity.[33]

I suggest that this is a valid statement to make in the context of a global society, since while there is a convincing argument for global systems to exist there are still a variety of traditions within society, each of which represent a culmination of their own diachronic processes—and it is this that makes a 'de-universalized' society possible, with each tradition occupying its own niche within the overall order. Here, when individuals choose a religious tradition, they will often point to a series of events which have led them to it. This may be a form of legitimation. However, just as they point to their own past, as Shils suggests, they also have the past of the tradition to consider, which may originate outside of the local area.[34] This inevitably causes the tradition of the local to interact with a tradition which is alien to it. Here is where Featherstone's assertion of 'a flexible underlying generative structure' proves useful in allowing a place within a de-universalized order for a multiplicity of traditions, which negates any paradox between the global and the particular.

So by drawing on contemporary social theory and discussing it in terms of religious tradition it is possible to construct something of a compromise position which, to some extent, overcomes the problems which are inherent in two opposing ideas which respectively argue for the de-traditionalization of late-modern society and the persist-ence of religion in such a society as a universal phenomenon. Instead I argue that looking at tradition as a diachronic process which can be compared, in part with the Buddhist philosophy of rebirth, it is possible to bring together both the individual and the corporate. Furthermore, it is possible to understand how the diachronic progress of the individual between lifestyles can be translated onto the broader milieu in terms of traditions moving from one situation to another. This has perhaps occurred most obviously with Buddhism in its move Westwards, which is why it acts as a good example of a religious tradition which can exist in a de-universalized society in which it acts as a transitory lifestyle choice for some and a lifetime commitment for others. And this underlines the nature of religion in such a society.

Notes

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