

# The Adaptation of Buddhism to the West

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Buddhism was not really known in the West until a little more than 150 years ago. Although since the thirteenth century there had been numerous contacts with local Buddhist traditions, the travellers and missionaries of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance had not yet brought to light the history of Buddhism and its unity across this immense diversity of worship and doctrine, disseminated through most of the countries of Asia. Of course, since the seventeenth century some Europeans had guessed at the Indian origin of the Buddha<sup>1</sup> and they succeeded in pinning down his historical existence after a fashion. In 1691 and 1693 Simon de la Loubère, Louis XIV's envoy at the court of the king of Siam, published remarkable research which established the possibility of a link between the different regions of Siam, Ceylon, Japan and China and conjured up the possible existence of a single founder long before Christ.<sup>2</sup> But this far too isolated knowledge had scarcely any impact in Europe. It was only with the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 that orientalism was to enjoy a rapid and decisive expansion. The word 'Buddhism' appeared from the 1820s onwards,<sup>3</sup> and with it the first conceptualization of a tree with many branchings. But it was not until the publication, in 1844, of Eugène Burnouf's magisterial *Introduction l'histoire du buddhisme indien*,<sup>4</sup> that more detailed knowledge became available, thanks to a critical scrutiny of the most varied sources. The works of the French scholar and of other pioneers in Buddhist studies – mainly Alexander Csoma de Köros<sup>5</sup> and Edmond Foucaux<sup>6</sup> on Tibet, Jean-Pierre Abel-Remusat<sup>7</sup> and Stanislas Julien<sup>8</sup> on China, Christian Lassen<sup>9</sup> and Spence Hardy<sup>10</sup> on Ceylon – were to give rise to a tremendous craze for Buddhism in Europe. Since then there has been no break in the successive waves disseminating it right up to the present day, when the majority of Western countries appear to be so receptive to the message of the Buddha that for some years the media have been insistently questioning the reasons for this 'Buddhist wave'.<sup>11</sup>

In the course of these 150-odd years of the diffusion of Buddhism in the West, two major facts relating to its reception can be highlighted. First, Buddhism has continually been received through culturally distorting prisms<sup>12</sup> and reinterpreted at each high-point of its diffusion according to the preoccupations of the Westerners who make use of it. In a recent historical study<sup>13</sup> I have demonstrated that Westerners have been struck above all by the relationship of Buddhism to Western modernity and, ever since its scholarly discovery, have constantly interpreted it in 'modernist' terms. But while the Europeans of the nineteenth century emphasized above all the 'rationality' of Buddhism, from the 1960s onwards its 'pragmatism' has been particularly insisted upon. We can thus distinguish – and this is the second major fact – two great periods that are fundamentally distinct: the first period, which runs from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, is essentially distinguished by an intellectual interest,

while since the 1960s it has been above all motivations of an existential, spiritual and psychological character which have predominated. From this follows a quite different understanding and adaptation of Buddhism. Now this change of perspective appears to be intrinsically connected with a change in the dominant mode of transmission. Until the eve of the Second World War, the majority of Westerners were actually only interested in the message of the Buddha through the reading of scholarly works and popularizations. From the 1960s, however, they sought above all to meet spiritual masters who could initiate them, by means of direct oral transmission, into the Buddhist way of spiritual health and the practice of meditation. Intellectual preoccupations had not disappeared, far from it, but they were relegated by many to second place: what was above all imperative for the new Western disciples of *Sakyamuni* was to undergo a spiritual experience under the direction of a practised master. Thus we shall see that the accent placed upon the written or upon the oral manifests and/or involves a radical shift in perspective: on the one hand, Buddhism is welcomed as a philosophy and an atheistic morality; on the other, the intention is interior transformation through the practice of meditation. In the first case, conversion to Buddhism is very rare indeed. In the second, it has become frequent. Although this very general scheme should be nuanced – there were some isolated cases of conversion to Buddhism from the end of the nineteenth century and numerous Westerners today continue to seek a purely intellectual interest<sup>14</sup> – none the less it seems to me effectively to express an important historical development: from a solely intellectual interest linked to written transmission, Buddhism increasingly gives rise to a spiritual and practical interest which cannot be disassociated from an oral means of transmission.

### **The interpretation of Buddhism in rationalist terms**

Since its investigation by scholars, a great debate has rocked the European intellectual milieu: is Buddhism a philosophy or a religion? Behind this debate lies a disturbing constant for the intellectuals of the nineteenth century: that of the paradox of a tradition older than Christianity, presenting the majority of the characteristics typical of religions – canons, collective rituals, clergy, authorized transmission, socializing function, popular religiosity, etc. – but which claims to be based on reason alone, flaunts its non-theism, places individual experience at the centre of its praxis, does not appear to be based on any intangible dogma, puts forward a humanist morality without reference to any divine revelation whatsoever, and so on.

### **Ideological disruption of the reception of Buddhism**

In fact, this paradox was virtually unassimilable for nineteenth-century minds: according to the ideological *a priori* and the conceptual categories of all and sundry, Buddhism *had* to be either a purely rational philosophical system surprisingly compatible with modernism – which could admittedly be distorted into religion by popular superstition – or, on the other hand, a pagan religion poles apart from modern Western rationality, at the heart of which a learned élite cultivating a sort of nihilist atheism could be discerned. The

ideological quarrels between Christians and atheists, Catholics and anti-clericalists, played a decisive rôle in this polemic. This was particularly true of France, a Catholic country where the split between supporters and opponents of a Roman Catholic Church fiercely opposed to scientific and liberal evolution was complete. 'In the second half of the nineteenth century, the divorce between two worlds, two societies, two mentalities, seemed absolute and irrevocable', wrote René Remond. 'The Catholic Church represented the past, tradition, dogma, constraint. Reason, freedom, progress, science, the future, justice were in the opposing camp.'<sup>15</sup> Thus, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Buddhism spread, at first in France and then throughout Europe, as an awesome argument against Christianity. The majority of scholars and atheist intellectuals extolled 'rationalism', 'atheism' and Buddhist 'positivism' over and against 'dogmatic' Christianity which represented, according to the positivist vision of Auguste Comte, an infantile stage of humanity. Nietzsche, for example, wrote in 1888 in his *Antechrist*:

Buddhism is a hundred times more realistic than Christianity, it has inherited by atavism the capacity of posing problems objectively and coolly, it originated *after* a philosophical movement which has lasted hundreds of years; the notion of God was already obliterated when it arose. Buddhism is the only effectively *positivist* religion which offers us history, even in its theory of knowledge (a strict phenomenism), it no longer declares 'war on *sin*' but, giving reality its rights, 'war on *suffering*'. It has gone beyond – and this is what distinguishes it profoundly from Christianity – the snare of self-deception that is moral concepts – it holds onto – to use my own language – what is *beyond* Good and Evil.<sup>16</sup>

### The search for the original 'authentic' Buddhism

These ideological polemics gave rise to another debate which divided the scholarly community. Which was the authentic Buddhism? That which we observe today in the majority of countries in Asia through living traditions, or rather that revealed by the oldest scriptural sources? The first, above all in the countries distinguished by the Mahayana tradition certainly appeared to be a religion characterized by all sorts of divinities just as ancient Buddhism had all the features of a philosophical system, which not only denied the existence of God but also of the soul. The chronological antecedence of Pali Buddhism having been established fairly quickly, the majority of orientalist came from that time onwards radically to oppose the *Hinayana* Buddhism of the South (*Pali* sources), viewed as 'authentic', to the *Mahayana* Buddhism of the North (Sanskrit sources), viewed as 'debased'. The orientalist Rhys Davids, for instance, opposed the 'rationalism' and 'purity' of primitive Buddhism to the 'corruption' of Tibetan Buddhism<sup>17</sup> whilst the historian of religion, Marcus Dods, explained that it is difficult to 'detect any close relationship between the superstitious and idolatrous religion of the Northern Buddhists and the original system of the Buddha'.<sup>18</sup> For these scholars and their numerous commentators 'authentic Buddhism', as revealed by the oldest texts, was therefore a 'totally rational' and 'atheist' message which no longer had much in common with the religiosity observed everywhere in Asia today, even in some southern countries. For them, the 'original' Buddhism, considered as the only true Buddhism, is a philosophy in the current Western sense of the term, and not a religion.

## The Theosophical Society and Buddhist 'modernism'

This interpretation of Buddhism in rationalistic terms was so widespread at the end of the nineteenth century that it was also adopted by the great representatives of esotericism who, however, attempted to revive a symbolic and mythical system of thought over and against the 'materialism' of Western thinking. What, for instance, is one to make of the highly esteemed Theosophical Society, founded in 1875 by Helena Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott? On the one hand, the Theosophists were fascinated by the mysterious and inaccessible Tibet and revived the myth of the magical Tibet and the lamas with extraordinary psychic powers, who were to be the last great initiates of the planet. On the other hand, they also reinterpreted the Buddhism of the South in rationalistic terms and even sought to bring the Singhalese monks back to 'original authentic Buddhism'. Thus in 1881 Colonel Olcott published a Buddhist catechism<sup>19</sup> which aimed to remind the Buddhists of Ceylon and elsewhere of the original teaching of the Buddha according to the most ancient texts, and turn them away from certain of their current practices and religious beliefs deemed 'superstitious'. Following the example set by the co-founder of the Theosophical Society, many Westerners occupied themselves with attempting to work for the renewal of Buddhism and to become the fervent promoters in Europe of this 'Buddhist modernism'. One of the most colourful of these figures is indisputably the French explorer Alexandra David-Neel, who discovered Buddhism through the Theosophical Society and who initially espoused the rationalist views of her contemporaries. In a little book she published in 1911, just before a thirteen-year-long journey in Asia, *Le modernisme bouddhiste et le bouddhisme du Bouddha* ('Buddhist modernism and the Buddhism of Buddha'), David-Neel expressed her wish of making Westerners discover 'a living teaching, close to the conclusions of the science of today and, I am not afraid to say, of tomorrow; a teaching suitable for the modern mind-set, capable of being a guide for individuals and a light for society'.<sup>20</sup> The intellectual development of Alexandra David-Neel is, however, extremely interesting and very enlightening for our subject. In the course of this long tour in the East in contact with a multiplicity of local traditions, particularly Tibetan, the interpretation in rationalist terms constantly became more blurred in favour of a much broader understanding of Buddhism, including a component of irrationality, myth, magic thought and, above all, pragmatism. David-Neel also discovered with the Tibetan yogis what no book could offer her: practical knowledge of meditation. Thus she wrote in 1921: 'meditation is the profound basis for the life of the Buddhist, the basis of the Buddhist doctrine, itself originating in the meditation of its founder, Siddhata Gotama, the Buddhist. Just as one cannot logically give the name Christian to a man who does not pray, he who does not meditate has no real right to call himself Buddhist.'<sup>21</sup>

## Interpretation of Buddhism in pragmatic terms

At the time when the French explorer was writing these lines, the first Westerners to have understood the existential element of Buddhism linked to the efficacy of its techniques had to go to Asia to learn to practice them with qualified masters. Today the presence of numerous Asian spiritual masters in the West and the foundation of several centres of meditation enable all those who wish to do so to commit themselves 'existentially' to the

Buddhist way by being initiated, under the guidance of an expert, in various practices, of which meditation is the archetype. The French explorer and orientalist did no more than anticipate by half a century what was to be, from the 1960s, the dominant feature of the interest of Westerners in Buddhism: a spiritual way which enables work upon the self, self-knowledge and self-transformation.

### Counter-culture and the quest for 'authentic' spiritual masters

The historical turning-point was indeed the 1960s, when the spiritual 'demand' and the number of young people coming from the counter-culture movement encountered the availability of the 'offer' of numerous Asian Buddhist masters. It is very clear that the drama of Tibet<sup>22</sup> played a major rôle in this process, promoting contact between numerous Tibetan lamas in exile and Westerners. The latter initially took the road to India, before inviting the lamas to found centres in Europe and the United States. The study I have just published on Buddhism in France<sup>23</sup> demonstrates that the impressive expansion of Tibetan Buddhism – a very minor current in Asian Buddhism, but of major importance in the West – stems essentially from this presence in the West of numerous accomplished spiritual masters. All the evidence gathered instances the decisive importance of the lama who attracts by his personal charisma and socializes the new adherent in the Buddhist *sangha* by his qualities as a teacher and meditator. The oral character of the transmission is always underlined by converts as having been decisive and irreplaceable. Western practitioners all insist on the importance of the direct relationship with the master. A veritable guide to the interior life, the master is believed to help the disciple commit himself to the way, supporting him at difficult times, illuminating it by his teaching and practical councils. If he gives himself totally to the quest, the master promises to lead the disciple to safe harbour. This is why the sole true authority for the acceptance of these new converts is not that of some magisterial person or other, or some scriptural authority, but that of their lama, their master in meditation. The 'authenticity' of Buddhism is no longer sought in the authenticity of texts, as in the nineteenth century, but in the personal quality of the spiritual master. 'One cannot do without an authentic being who has lived the experience before you and who is like a mirror for you', says Jacqueline, a retired professor of literature and a disciple of Tibetan Buddhism. 'He can verify the authenticity of your spiritual experience at any time. "Here, we have a little intellectual deviation. There, it is a fantasy." He is, as it were, the guide to the inner life. This ongoing relationship of the disciple and the true spiritual master – I am not speaking here of the false masters who travel all over the world – is essential. But the master must be well chosen and one must not allow oneself to be mesmerized by him.' Western disciples talk ceaselessly of the exemplary quality of the master whom they systematically contrast with rabbis, pastors and priests who 'do not practise what they preach'. For them, an 'authentic' master is judged by his human and spiritual influence. He must be consistent in word and deed and above all have experienced himself what he teaches others. 'An authentic master has always lived what he teaches', insists Jacqueline. 'I have had the privilege of being personally received by Bokar Rinpoché. Then I had the experience – and you can never deny your own experience, it is not a question of an act of faith – of having opposite me a fully alert being, someone who was fully awake. He has such goodness, immense compassion,

he no longer has any ego. He is opposite you in deep intelligence, complete and unveiled from your own nature, and he helps you discover it. That is ineffable, inappreciable. You experience a transforming joy in your whole being which is extraordinary.' Another aspect, essential for Westerners, is the fact that this transmission from master to disciple enables the teaching to be made living and incarnate. It is not a 'dead' discourse, devoid of concrete experience that is transmitted, but a teaching made current by the evidence of those who proclaim it. 'Buddhism is in my opinion the only living, authentic tradition on the planet which is transmitted from master to disciple', asserts Christophe, a young unemployed engineer converted to Tibetan Buddhism. 'It is said in Tibetan Buddhism that if the living transmission is broken, even for a moment, all will be lost', Jacqueline went one better. 'And what is infinitely precious is that this tradition continues to be transmitted from master to disciple, in a living and personal way, throughout the world.' Most people contrast this 'living' tradition with the 'formalism', 'moralism' and 'dogmatism' of Jewish and Christian traditions, deemed too 'cerebral', too 'enclosed in institutional preoccupations', and which have lost the keys of spiritual initiation and of a contemplative life encompassing body and emotions.

### **A modern science of the subject**

We can therefore observe the importance of direct oral transmission in the contemporary processes of conversion to Buddhism. Conversely, it did not even cross the mind of most European intellectuals of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century – who only knew Buddhism through its written form – to convert to *dharmā*. If the contemporaries of Nietzsche and Renan, who displayed a purely intellectual interest in Buddhism, interpreted it in rationalist terms, how do today's Western disciples of the Buddha, who show more interest in the techniques of meditation, receive its message? How is Buddhism perceived today, how is it understood and perhaps reinterpreted by these 'practitioners'? A protracted survey that I have made of 1,000 French practitioners of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism<sup>24</sup> makes it possible to answer this question fairly exactly. The 'modernist' reinterpretation has not disappeared, but it is more closely tied to the pragmatic experience. The new disciples of the Buddha insist much less than their elders on the rational and atheist character of Buddhism, but translate its modernity in terms of personal, concrete and effective experience. The interior experience promoted by Buddhist meditation is conceived as a veritable science. Thus Matthieu Richard, a former researcher at the Institut Pasteur who became a Buddhist monk, contrasts with western science – which is concerned with external phenomena – the 'interior science'<sup>25</sup> which Buddhism constitutes, a 'science' which makes it possible to answer the great questions of existence and to help the individual find true happiness. This individual search for happiness, inscribed on the heart of modern psychology, also constitutes the central axis of the processes of Buddhism, itself perceived by Westerners as rigorous and scientific. One can thus say that Buddhism offers its new disciples a sort of objective science of the subjectivity of the subject. However, as Edgar Maurin puts it: 'The development of the individual poses with increasing anxiety or virulence the problem of subjectivity in a world which is conceived ever more objectively through science, for there is no science of the subject'.<sup>26</sup> Thus it is through the breach of subjectivity that Buddhism has gained

admittance into Western modernity as a 'modern science of the subject', which moreover possesses a definite advantage: that of practically promoting individual happiness by means of work upon the self which integrates all the dimensions of the person: body, imagination, emotions, psyche and spirit.

### **An effective psycho-corporeal technique**

This very widespread understanding of Buddhism in terms of 'science of the subject' or 'science of interiority', which is enhanced by contact with masters of meditation, receives much more detailed acceptance in the minds of a large number of Western practitioners, as a method of personal development. With the exception of a small élite totally infused with Japanese or Tibetan religious cultures, the great majority of French men and women who practise meditation in Buddhist centres do so in a perspective considered very far from orthodoxy by the majority of Asian masters, especially the Tibetan.<sup>27</sup> The latter constantly recall that the ultimate goal of meditation is to facilitate the liberation of the spirit and achieve final awakening. However, although this is sometimes mentioned, this objective most frequently moves into second place among Westerners' motivations, behind more concrete and immediate goals, such as the harmonization of relations between body and spirit, the calming of the mind, the benefit of a certain serenity, the development of good energy and so on. Thus, in a questionnaire returned by 903 practitioners of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, it appeared that fewer than 10 per cent of the converts had the ultimate goals of Buddhism in their minds. For the majority, meditation was conceived of as a psycho-corporeal technique which enabled them 'to feel more at ease with themselves', which brought 'emotional equilibrium' and better 'concentration and lucidity'. Nevertheless, only 30 per cent of the practitioners who believed in transmigration declared that they wanted to free themselves from the cycle of rebirths. Interviews also very clearly demonstrated that Buddhism was essentially assimilated as a technique of personal development. The goal sought was not liberation of the spirit and the extinction of all desire, but well-being and psychological equilibrium. Basically, we discover there the watchword of modern psychology: the fulfilment of the self by the self. Using the techniques offered by Buddhism, the West seeks in itself the keys to its well-being and the development of its personal potential.

### **The emergence of a Western Buddhism**

This isomorphism between Buddhism and modernity of a 'spiritual health' or a 'happiness' which eliminates all suffering and is obtained solely by the efforts of the individual is undoubtedly one of the keys to the current success of Buddhism in the West. But it could not mask the fundamental difference in perspective between the teachings of the Buddha and the imperative of modern psychology. On the one hand, happiness is obtained at the price of long vigilance and interior asceticism in a total detachment which implies the extinction of all desire, even the desire to be reborn. On the other, it is sought as the full realization of individual potential and as the assuaging of the desires of the individual, even the fantasy of immortality which haunts the modern West. On the one hand, happiness is obtained by the detachment of the self, on the other, by the development of

the self. Unless most of one's time is spent in meditation, it is difficult to see how Buddhism can be adopted in all its integrity by a Westerner imbued with the modern cult of the individual. Luc Ferry has brought out this contradiction very well in his book, *L'Homme-Dieu ou le sens de la vie*:

One would like to love and not to suffer, take what our individualistic world offers that seems to our eyes best, and correct it with some doses of Buddhism: that is impossible, and, for anyone who is not a monk, who does not take it seriously, could Buddhism ever be more than spiritual dietics?<sup>28</sup>

Probably not. Nietzsche had, after all, 'prophesied' the coming of a sort of 'European China with a gentle Buddhist-Christian belief, and, in practice, an Epicurean *savoir-faire*'. The distant voice of the Buddha will undoubtedly not be successful in leading crowds of Westerners along the roads of renunciation in search of nirvana. But with the exception of monastic élites, has more than this happened in the East? Full Buddhism will undoubtedly remain élitist. Its philosophy, universal moral values, techniques of meditation which make it possible to calm the mind, and some of its religious rituals which bind man to a living cosmos surely none the less constitute so many supports already added to and reinterpreted a thousand times in the course of its long history, and which will continue to illumine the path of numerous individuals, whether Christian, Jew or atheist, whether they come from the East or the West.

If the shape of Western Buddhism thus seems to us essentially hybridized and reinterpreted in terms that sometimes contradict the fundamental message of the Buddha, can we speak – within this general tendency – of a specifically French Buddhism as distinct from a German or an American Buddhism? Different sensitivities can be observed. American Buddhists, for instance, are very responsive to the extremely refined form of Zen, which moreover enables them to graft unproblematically all sorts of personal beliefs onto this sober practice of meditation. The English are particularly affected by Zen Buddhism but also by *Theravada*, doubtless in part for historical reasons and because of the closeness of Protestantism to this fairly bare and ethical form of Buddhism. The French, as well as the Spanish and the Italians, favour Tibetan Buddhism (which is in any case the majority form throughout the West). Here the relationship to Catholicism is not in question. Thus, from a common attraction for a message perceived as rational and pragmatic, and therefore modern, Westerners are turning towards a cultural form of Buddhism closest to their sensibility, although it may mean subsequently adjusting it to their perspective and their needs. I will not therefore speak, as some authors do,<sup>29</sup> of a 'new', *coherent* 'vehicle' to describe the emergence of a 'Western' Buddhism, properly speaking, but rather of a multitude of signs, symbols and techniques pulled out of their orbit of traditional coherence and reused by each person in accordance to their personal aspirations. It is Buddhism *à la carte*, then, which flourishes in parallel with the reconstruction – very marginal but nevertheless vigorous – of the Asian traditions (mainly Tibetan, Khmer, Birman, Sri-Lankan and Vietnamese) in the very heart of the West.

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Starting from the acknowledged fact that Westerners systematically receive Buddhism by assimilating it to modernity, we have seen that this reception is distinguished above all by



a 'rationalist' interpretation at a time when Buddhism was discovered through its scriptural sources, while it was to be perceived in 'pragmatic' terms from the 1960s onwards, when oral transmission through contact with a spiritual master predominated. In the first period, the 'authentic Buddhism' sought by Westerners was identified with that revealed by the oldest texts. The 'philosophical purity' of the Buddha's message became the exemplary model. In the second period, 'authentic Buddhism' is a spiritual practice transmitted by masters who have themselves experienced what they teach. The message of the Buddha, as codified in the canonical texts, henceforth counted for less than the personal spiritual experience, which is most frequently motivated by a desire for well-being and self-fulfilment, thus responding to the watchword of modern psychology. From a desire for orthodoxy (the search for true doctrine), but strongly disrupted by a positivist ideology and an anti-Christian polemic, there has therefore been a shift to a desire for orthopraxis (the search for correct practice), but ultimately almost always relative to the subjectivity of the subject and to their personal goals. But whatever the ideological or cultural prisms, the reception of Buddhism in the West, for 150 years, seems almost always to respond to this logic of assimilation of a doctrine or of a spiritual practice offering a 'modern' alternative to the traditional religions of the West, judged too dogmatic and insufficiently rational on the one hand, too abstract and insufficiently bound to experience on the other.

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(translated from the French by Juliet Vale)

## Notes

1. For instance in his *Vie de saint François-Xavier*, published at Lyons in 1666, Bartoli wrote: 'it is certain in any case that Xaca was one of the most famous gymnosophists in India; his father was king in the Ganges Basin; his surname, Buddha, means wise and educated; he lived about 1000 BC' (p. 153).
2. Simon de la Loubère. (1691–1693). *Description du royaume de Siam*, 2 vols. Paris: Imprimerie royale.
3. Among the very first occurrences, note the work of the Frenchman Michel-Jean-François Ozeray, *Recherches sur Buddou ou Bouddou, instituteur religieux de l'Asie orientale*. (Paris: Brunot-Labbé), who cites the word 'Buddhism' in 1817. The term, which is not found in Asia, is sheer invention on the part of the first European orientalisists. The spelling of the word varies considerably until the 1860s, when 'Buddhism' (in English-speaking areas) and *bouddhisme* (in France) were finally established. As for the Asians themselves, they speak of *dharma* (Sanskrit) or *dhamma* (Pali) to describe the teachings and the law of the Buddha.
4. Eugène Burnouf. (1844). *Introduction à l'histoire du bouddhisme indien*, vol. 1. Paris: Imprimerie royale.
5. The Hungarian Alexander Csoma de Köros published a *Grammar* and a Tibetan–English *Dictionary* containing 30,000 words from 1834 onwards, then from 1836 numerous articles in *Asiatic Researches*, the prestigious publication of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
6. Note especially his translation of *Lalstavistara*, a highly coloured account of the life of the Buddha, after the Tibetan version and the original in Sanskrit: *Rgya tch'er rop pa, ou Développement des jeux, contenant l'histoire du Bouddha Cakya Mouni*, 2 vols. Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1847–1848.
7. The publication in 1936, a year after his death, of *Foé Koué Ki ou Relations des royaumes bouddhiques*. (Paris: Imprimerie royale) revealed the first great Buddhist text to appear in Europe in its entirety.
8. Stanislas Julien. (1853–1858). *Voyages des pèlerins bouddhistes*, 3 vols. Paris: Imprimerie impériale.
9. Christian Lassen and Eugène Burnouf. (1826). *Essai sur le Pali, ou Langue sacrée de la presqu'île au delà du Gange*. Paris: Dondey-Dupré.
10. Spence Hardy. (1853). *Manual of Buddhism and Its Modern Development*. London.

11. This was the title of the front page of *L'Express*, 24 October 1996.
12. This is a fact which has been effectively underlined by all the authors who have made a careful study of the reception of Buddhism in the West. See especially Guy Richard Welbon, *The Buddhist nirvana and Its Western Interpreters* (Chicago and London, 1968); Philip Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge, 1988); Peter Bishop, *Dreams of Power: Tibetan Buddhism and the Western Imagination* (London, 1993); Roger-Pol Droit, *Le culte du néant* (Paris, 1997); Donald Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La* (Chicago, 1998).
13. Frédéric Lenoir, *La reconquête du bouddhisme et de l'Occident* (Paris, 1999).
14. We could cite in France today intellectuals such as the sociologist Edgar Morin, the philosopher André Comte-Sponville or the script writer Jean-Claude Carrière who claim to be 'close' to Buddhism in a perspective which has no religious commitment about it and which remains solely philosophical.
15. René Remond, *Introduction à l'histoire de notre temps. Le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1974), p. 201.
16. Nietzsche, *L'Antéchrist* (1888), para. 20, trans. Éric Blondel (Paris, 1994), p. 63 (author's emphasis).
17. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism: Being a Sketch of the Life and Teachings of Gautama, the Buddha* (London, [1870]), pp. 208–209.
18. Marcus Dods, *Mohammed, Buddha and Christ: Four Lectures on Natural and Revealed Religion* (London, 1877), p. 177.
19. Henry S. Olcott, *Le bouddhisme selon le canon de l'Église du Sud et sous forme de catéchisme* (Adyard, 1881).
20. Alexandra David-Neel, *Le modernisme bouddhiste et le bouddhisme du Bouddha* (Paris, 1911), pp. 7–8.
21. Alexandra David-Neel, in an article in *Buddhist Review*, 8 no. 4 (October 1921), reprinted in Marc de Smedt (ed.), *L'Orient intérieur* (Paris, 1985).
22. Followed, accompanied or preceded by hundreds of high-ranking lamas, the dalai-lama took the road of exile for India in 1959. In 1960 Dargpo Rinpoché went to France and in 1967 Chogyam Trungpa founded the first Tibetan centre in the West in Scotland.
23. Frédéric Lenoir, *Le bouddhisme en France* (Paris, 1999).
24. Published in Frédéric Lenoir, *Le Bouddhisme en France*.
25. Matthieu Ricard and Jean-François Revel, *Le moine et le philosophe* (Paris, 1997), p. 143.
26. Edgar Morin, *Sociologie* (Paris, 1984 and 1994), p. 369.
27. See especially Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoché's very virulent criticisms of Westerners' 'spiritual materialism' in his *Pratique de la voie tibétaine* ([Paris], 1976) or, more recently, that of Droukchen Rinpoché in a vitriolic interview with the French periodical, *Sangha* (September–October 1994).
28. Luc Ferry, *L'Homme-Dieu ou le sens de la vie* (Paris, 1996), p. 26.
29. Christmas Humphreys, one of the main proponents of Buddhism in Great Britain, proclaimed the arrival of a third vehicle, after Hinayana and Mahayana: that of Western Buddhism, which he calls 'Navayana'.