The Nature and Solution to Solutionless Problems with Special Regard to Buddhism
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                 FINAL ASSESSMENT

This very general assessment of Vaclav Smilauer's diploma thesis highly commends him in offering an *excellent* account (*classification 1*) of how suffering can be reduced or eliminated through an experiential process whereby important knowledge is brought more explicitly to ("self") awareness. He does this by distinguishing between a subject who is aware of being the subject of experience (often called "self-conscious" activity) and one who is not – who is just having the experience without being reflectively aware of it. In general, the project aims to provide a working model for how suffering can be reduced, or at least more effectively managed by decreasing ignorance through increasing self-awareness.

Mr. Smilauer argues that reducing suffering is achieved at least in part when one is willing to recognize what his or her goals are, and learns to achieve them with less obstacles. Some of those obstacles are "psychological" or a function of one's own inability to identify and prioritize one's goals, as well as to know how to find solutions when they are blocked. Other obstacles are more "external" or more of a result of forces beyond one's immediate control, for example, being caught in a traffic jam so that getting to work on time is jeopardized. Moreover, the merely "technical" solution to a problem that would resolve the blocking of a goal may not be the "ethical" one – the one that we should want to ultimately achieve – the (Buddhist) goal of eliminating suffering. Thus, the ethical solution frees us from the ignorance that keeps us in the wheel of suffering while the technical solution is more general and applies to any activity that achieves its goal (like eating when hungry, whether or not that is a good thing). I do not need to go into any more details of the account, as it is clearly written in the thesis itself. I only want to point out that Mr. Smilauer shows how a complex interaction between internal and external obstacles can increasingly be brought under conscious control, thereby increasing one's experience of subjective calm and self-direction in the face of such challenges.

I think Mr. Smilauer's thesis is very commendable, and goes beyond just showing a sufficient mastery of the subject he writes on for two main reasons. First, his thesis

provides an interesting *comparative* analysis in the philosophy of mind. Second, and even more critically, it has direct practical application rather than just being conceptual. It provides a theoretical *and* operational model to eliminate suffering for ordinary people in the usual course of living. Thus, one does not need to become a Buddhist monk to gain rich insight into how to live in a way that is freer from suffering. Nor is it usually the case that traditional Western philosophy offers more than just conceptual analysis. Mr. Smilauer's comparative analysis makes some core Buddhist doctrines more available to Westerners by showing how some basic Buddhist truths can be discussed and applied in Western philosophical terminology, as well as how they can be directly applied by the average person in everyday circumstances.

In conclusion, Mr. Smilauer systematically argues that fundamental philosophical problems can be resolved on the basis of "inner transformation", and this shows how philosophy is not just an abstract discipline preoccupied with conceptual analysis only. It shows that "enlightenment" is not just for academicians or monks, but that philosophy can produces results for *anyone* who would want to reduce suffering through increasing self-awareness.

For the reasons above I deem that Vaclav Smilauer be granted a Masters Degree in Philosophy for writing an *excellent* thesis (classification 1).

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