破我品第九大略相同，有興趣更進一步瞭解，可自行參閱。

註七：關於瓦恰與佛陀及其弟子的問答，見雜阿含957經964經等。

註八：「一切法無常」此一句，據顧法嚴所譯之佛陀的啓示頁102註二的說法，乃爲一切法「無我」之誤譯

註九：很有趣的，羅素（Bertrand Russell）在他所著「西洋哲學史」（History of Western Philosophy）一書中，提及亞理士多德論「本體」時，也提到了相同的觀念。見邱言曦譯：西洋哲學史，頁二二八～頁二三一。

蓮華學佛園畢業典禮

高僧居士等多人蒞臨

〔台北訊〕由中國文化學院藝術研究所教授曉雲法師及園長信定法師主持的「蓮華學佛園」，於七月二十二日上午九時半，假陽明山永明寺園址，舉行該園第三屆畢業典禮。

參加典禮的有台北諸長老南亭、香港妙蓮及田博元居士等來賓二百餘人。典禮開始，由曉雲、信定法師報告該園創辦之艱苦經過，下一屆招生名額已滿，將以考試決定錄取名額。

本屆該校畢業學生計二十名，會中各方致贈獎品極多，典禮於十二時結束。會後與會來賓曾參觀成績展覽並午餐。

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在對立的思想有所開展，才會使此一對立更尖銳明顯，這不是短時間之內即可形成的。中觀思想代表着理性衝突的系統化階段，而中觀派繼承了佛陀的本懷，以超越的心智來消解此一衝突。

譯 註

註一：漢譯原始佛典提到無記的地方很多，如：中阿含第221經箭喻經；長阿含13經大緣方便經、28經布吒婆樓經；21經梵動經；雜阿含34、300、961、962經、增一阿含第34經等等。

註二：佛典所提到的外道，並沒有任何貶低他人的意味，它只是一個區別佛法與非佛法的中性名詞。所謂的「六師外道」是指佛陀在世時六位與佛陀見解不同的思想家。

註三：佛法是以有情生命爲本，但如何瞭解有情生命呢？佛陀認爲生命是流轉相續、身心相依，所以便從蘊處界三個不同的方向來觀察生命的有機活動。蘊觀，詳於心理的分析；處觀，詳於生理的分析；界觀，詳於物理的分析。詳見印順法師：佛法概論、頁五五—六二。

註四：法（dharma）之一字，在佛教裏，涵意相當廣泛，據譯者所知，至少有七種以上的意義。不過此處是指阿毘達磨佛教從一機械、孤立的方向來詮解本是身心相依、流轉相續的生命。

註五：此頌玄奘譯爲：「故佛說正法，如虎銜子。執眞我爲有，則爲見牙傷；撥俗我爲無，便壞善業子。」

註六：原著者所引此段文字，其意義與玄奘所譯之俱舍論

個分別是值得注意的。事實上，經上也告訴我們要注意了義經典的價值，而不是不了義經典。中觀派在解釋佛典時，無非也是循着這一標準。

事實上，諸如克恩、奧圖、法蘭克、普新，甚至甘斯等東方學家，他們也都注意到早期佛教思想與中觀派的相同之處。克恩說：「佛教自始就是一個觀念虛無論者。」法蘭克說：「早期佛教的論點與大乘佛教一樣，是屬於否定性的雖然它並非全然是否定論者。」甘斯也引用許多經典說：

「巴利文『中部經』處處包含著『空』的思想…佛法的目的是要吾人越過此一生死之流，但是一旦目的已達，則有沒有佛法已經無關緊要。這就好像幫助我們渡河的船筏一樣，到了彼岸必須放下船筏。」

甘斯在他的「佛教哲學」一書頁六十七又說：

「耶摩迦問須菩提說：如來的眞我是否就是如來的肉體？須菩提說：不是。耶摩迦又問了眞我在肉體之中？肉體在眞我之中？或兩者不相平？但是須菩提都告訴他說：不是。耶摩迦也承認五蘊並不是就如來，但是如來也不是離五蘊而有。就這樣的，須菩提就耶摩迦的問題下結論說：如來在世之日，我們都無法把握他的本質，更何況他死了之後？這段經文是否意味着：耶摩迦眞的無法在如來在世之日說明如來的本質，更何況他去世以後？事實上，這個問題是可以回答的，而且它的答案完全符合中觀的精神。」

以上所論，並不是說我們已經全部討論到佛陀辯證的智慧，不過從邏輯的推論看來，佛陀的說法已經預設中觀學派的辯證法。其理由爲：促使佛陀導出辯證智慧的理性衝突，在佛陀時代尚未成爲有組織、有系統的思想。只有

不一亦不異，不來亦不去。

能說是因緣，善滅諸戲論；

我稽首禮佛，諸說中第一。」(中論觀因緣品第一)

在早期大乘佛典寶髻經中，很明顯的提到「有我」與「無我」此二對立的命題，並且也提到了所謂的「中道」即是超越此二命題。

在『中部』第22經(約當漢譯中阿含200經—阿黎吒經)，佛陀把「法」比喻爲一渡河用的船筏，船筏的功用僅是在渡河，它不是最後的目的。所以中觀派也認爲「法」僅是一種「方便教」，只有方法上的價值，等到目的已達，就應捨棄，不可執着不放。

佛陀爲了說明「苦」是由吾人妄想執着而來，沒有實在性可言，他提出阿修羅的譬喻—阿修羅之是否能解脫完全視其所存之念頭爲惡或爲善而定。在龍樹菩薩的中觀論中，便常常論及妄想分別即是繫縛，而妄想分別的止息就是解脫。此處筆者再度的提醒讀者注意，佛陀之排斥所有的思辯哲學，視之爲教條獨斷主義，並且他宣稱如來是不受任何理論限制的。這種態度可以說就是中觀學派的態度。此外諸如以二律背反的方式討論形上學的問題，還有「四句分別」等，都是中觀辯證法討論問題的標準形態。

或許有利於中觀的「經證」很少，而且帶有教條主義的色彩，但是就整個佛陀教法而言，它們實在需要重新解釋。何以故？因爲我們可以把「蘊的理論」附屬在絕對主義思想之中，作爲入道的方便，却不可本末倒置，把絕對主義附屬在「蘊的理論」之下；蘊處界的理論固然有「現象的有效性」，亦即有相當的意義，但是說蘊處界是虛幻不實，除了從較高的辯證智慧來看以外，實在別無他法。在奧義書中也分別「眞實」與「非眞實」經典的價值，這

眞實的、迷妄的，所以佛陀說一切都是『空』的——相依互存，彼此關涉。」（鳩摩羅什譯爲：因緣所生法，我說即是空。）（註九）

由於某些弟子不能正確的把握此一深邃、深刻的思想，所以佛陀即呵斥說：

「他們不再學習、聽聞如來所說有關於空、緣起的經典，因爲這些經典甚深、極甚深；難通達、極難通達。他們所願聽聞的是那些由詩人、我的弟子所編成，而文詞綺麗、對仗工整的經典。」

如同中觀學派所說的，從此段經文可以看出佛陀教理的中心即是「空」的思想。龍樹菩薩說得好，佛陀並未以「蘊界處的教理」爲最高的教理。

中觀學派的觀點，在一些著名的經文中，即可一覽無遺。佛陀告訴我們說：世上有兩個主要的觀點——存在與不存在（譯按：其實這是指一般所謂的生與滅、有與無、大與小、來與去、淨與染等等二分法的對立，而不僅限於存在不存在之間。）任何人只要執著於其中之一，即無法獲得解脫。只有能分析、把握此二分法的起源、性質及其矛盾的人，才能解脫生死。有一位弟子曾問佛什麼是正見，佛告訴他世人習於二分法，「是」與「不是」截然爲二，但澈知世事生滅的人，基於眞理與智慧，則認爲並無所謂的「是」或「不是」。「一切存在」是一個極端，「一切不存在」是另一個極端，如來處中道而說法，超越此一理性衝突所表現的二分法，因爲沒有「存在」，即沒有「不存在」，反之亦然。所以龍樹菩薩說：

「不生亦不滅，不常亦不斷；

睛說瞎話，而必須承認佛陀確實提出「蘊的教理」。依筆者之見，蘊的教理是必要的，而且是佛法的入門之鑰。如果在宗教、哲學界，僅有一「有我論」，佛陀即不會提出更爲超越的辯證智慧。一個命題必須先有一個「反命題」與之對立，才可能產生辯證的智慧，亦唯有如此，才會產生理性之衝突與試圖超越此一衝突的偉大心靈。所以基於辯證的需要，佛陀提出了與「有我論」對立的「蘊的教理」。大乘佛教講到「無補特伽羅我」——本體之否定的理論時，亦是看出此一辯證上的需要。空也是諸蘊的非實體。熟悉現存佛教傳統的當代佛教學者如金姆拉等人，其說法亦如此。

Ⅶ中觀思想之預設

雖然學術界已公認現今錫蘭、泰國等地所流傳的巴利文佛典爲上座部學派所編纂、增益而成，已非原始佛典之舊；但是從它的字裏行間，我們還是可以清楚的看出：佛陀絕非以「蘊界處的教理」爲其究竟的觀點。

佛陀認爲色、受、想、行、識等五蘊乃是因緣和合，由各種條件組合而成，絕沒有一個主宰的「不變主體」。所謂「如夢幻泡影、如露亦如電」是。巴利文的『中部』經曾說：「因爲灯油與灯蕊的結合，再加上火種，灯才能不斷的放出光芒；離開灯油、灯蕊，絕沒有灯的存在；而灯之大放光明，也不僅是灯蕊或灯油其中一個即可做到。現象界也是這樣，不是因爲某一事物即可使森羅萬象的現象界存在，而是相依互存，彼此關涉，所以說現象界是不眞實的、迷妄的，只有涅槃才是眞實的。」基於此一觀點，龍樹菩薩在他的「中論」一書中說：「因爲一切都是不

的各家學說，而另闢蹊徑。佛陀由此而開出對「眞實」的「非概念性的知解」，此一「非概念性的知解」標出了佛陀思想與當時各家的概念性知解的最大區別。此一基本心態的超越，佛陀自然會回過頭來，分析、駁斥諸家對「無爲」的詮解，佛陀從理性之衝突提昇至「無爲」的不可描述性，對理性之衝突的瞭解，與試圖把問題提到比理性更高的層次來解決，這就是佛陀的辯證法，亦即是中觀學派所用的方法。

復次，奧義書斷言認識「我」即是認識一切，並以之爲解脫的不二法門。奧義書認爲所謂的生死輪迴就是對「我」的無知，佛陀則反其道而認爲「我」根本就是一種錯誤的觀念，佛陀並沒有提出對此一「實體」的把握即是解脫的說法。佛陀認爲能引導吾人走向解脫大道的方法，乃是對痛苦的本質及其原因的把握、瞭解。佛典處處說明佛陀知道什麼是痛苦，痛苦如何產生，如何止息痛苦。所以佛陀所謂的解脫方法，即是對世間事物之理則——緣起法的把握。佛家認爲生死輪迴的根本——無明即是對苦、苦之生起、苦之止息的理智顚倒與感情迷失。中觀學派所主張的「空」或「般若」便是順此一理念，而道出邁向解脫的甘露法門。

或許有人會問：既然佛陀沒有提出任何理論，那何以在許多對話中，他似乎主張蘊、界、處的理論？關於此一問題，有的學者認爲蘊界處的理論乃是後代的部派佛教，違背了佛陀的本懷，所作的不必要的推衍、附會。很明顯的此一說法是在逃避問題，而把責任推給部派佛教。何以故？許多早期佛典處處提到蘊、處、界，我們不能張著眼

確的詮解了佛陀的沉默的問題：

> 佛陀不肯爲「無爲」下定義，或者是以烘雲托月的方法，從反面彰顯「無爲」的本質，在在說明「無爲」之不可「定性」性。那麼佛陀何以不明白的確認「無爲」的實在性呢？因爲佛陀認爲這種描述或定性，無非是基於有爲的、相對性的立場，但是「無爲」絕不是經驗界之觀察所能獲得的，由於經驗界本身的限度，所以在經驗界之中，無法澈見「無爲」。

在印度哲學寶典——奧義書中，以「非、非」的否定方式，來說明「梵」的本質。譬如說「梵」乃是超言絕思，言語道斷，心行處滅；乃是「不可定性」的。許多學者遂以爲這與佛法實有異曲同工之妙。

雖然奧義書與佛家對「無爲」的不可描述性持同一見解，可是在方法上却有所差異。奧義書的先知們本身並沒有注意到其他學派對「眞實」（即「無爲」）的看法，這可能是因爲在印度哲學史上，奧義書是首先討論「眞實」的思想系統，在此以前，很少有可資批判或非難的思想存在。奧義書乃是首先肯定「梵」的直覺或「超哲學」的知解，然後再以討論或以譬喻來引導學生把握此一知解。奧義書雖有時會注意到二律背反——理性之衝突的問題，但僅是有關較粗淺的層次，而且也沒有辯證觀念的存在。佛陀則不然，他以更理性的思考程序來面對、討論問題，可是在思考的過程中，他發現了理性的衝突。因爲在佛陀時代，印度哲學百家競興，概然有「千山競秀、萬流爭壑」之勢，而每一基於理性而建立的思辯思想彼此却針鋒相對，相互駁斥。佛陀超越這些諍論，不理這些源於主觀思辯

由上可知，佛陀之沉默實不可視之爲不可知論者。因爲後者是一種懷疑與失望的態度，而佛陀的答案則是那麼果斷堅決。如果說佛陀是中止判斷，以俟更有利的時機宣說自己的看法，這也不對。他很明確的表示他毫無保留的說出眞理，沒有密教與顯教之分；也不像緊握拳頭的武師，秘而不傳。換言之，他一向就沒有什麼「袖中秘笈」，也絕不會「留一手」。佛陀的沉默，也不表示他不懂形上學。因爲佛陀不但對當時的哲學思辯有極深刻的瞭解，而且他本身也是一位傑出的形上學家。所以他能以深切、透澈的分析，而超越理性教條式的思考過程與方式，他對思辯形上學的批判不但站得住脚而且頗爲精密。對佛陀自己而言，批判的本身就是他的哲學思想所在。

從任何角度看來，佛陀的立場絕不可能是虛無主義，佛陀自己與後來的每一佛家學派也絕不會同意此一說法。佛陀用很明確的語氣說：涅槃的存在，就是佛法與進德修業間的顯現。在許多佛典中，皆正面的肯定涅槃乃是超越種種無常變化、痛苦憂毀的。並且說涅槃是不凋謝、寧靜、不壞、無染、和平、福祉、島洲、依怙、皈依、目標、彼岸等等。在「無問自說經」中，有一段著名的經文說：世上有一不生、不滅、不來、不去、無形、無相的「存在」，如果沒有此一「存在」，則不可能有解脫、捨離與超越生死輪迴的方法。

佛陀並不懷疑涅槃的實在性，只不過他絕不許吾人以經驗性的語詞把它「定性」於有、沒有……等等範圍之內。職是之故，佛陀的沉默僅可從佛陀知道「無爲法之不可描述性」來解釋。羅達克那斯南博士在他的作品中，很正

加以反省，並不即是佛陀提出另一理論，而僅是一種反省的智慧。這就是一種自由。

那麼吾人在何時才能把握色的本來面目，正確的理解理論的特性呢？如果我們以不求甚解，「本來就是這樣嘛！」的態度，沒有批判的精神，或者是被某一種理論外在宏偉的架構所迷住時，我們絕無法正確的爲它下評價或給予合理的地位。譬如一組機器運作正常時，我們可能就會懶惰的認爲本來就應該是這樣，而不會要瞭解它的架構組織；如果我們的興趣專注於它的功能時，我們絕不會把它分解、並進一步瞭解它。如果我們以獨斷的態度利用理性構思理論時，則對於它的本質及它活動的歷程便一無所知。唯有在揚棄直線式的思考方式，放棄一廂情願、一條鞭式的思考態度，而使理性呈現二律背反時，吾人才可能產生批判的心智，透過此種心智以理解性的架構並使它落實，知道某一「理論」是什麼與把握其缺點、誤謬可能是同一回事。

佛陀曾以他特有的方式來批判「理論」說：

「瓦恰啊！認爲世間是永恒的，或是不永恒的，或是執着在你所提出的命題，不過都是理論的叢林、理論的荒野、理論的盤結、理論的桎梏，與愛毀失望痛苦不可分，而不能導致厭離、無欲、止息、和平、正見無上慧與涅槃。這正是我在這些理論所看出的不可靠之處，使我放棄它們。」

這種主張已經預設說對理論的批判並不就是提出另一種不同的理論。

VI佛陀沉默的真義

佛陀答道：

瓦恰啊！如來是不受任何理論所拘束的。可是，瓦恰，如來確實知道：色（指吾人認識客體中屬於物質的部份）的性質、色如何生起、色如何幻滅------如來已獲解脫，無所染着。因爲一切的幻想、激動、妄念，以及一切與「我」有關的事理、觀念，都已祛除、消失、止息、放棄與捨置了。

佛陀不在相互對立的永恆論與虛無論、肯定與否定之中，擇取其一，而提出了與教條主義相對立的批判主義。這就是佛陀所說的「如來離於二邊，處中說法」的中道，但這並不是在兩個極端中間的第三個立場，而實是超越此二立場的「非立場」。

那麼何以其他思想家無法完成此一超越呢？亦即是爲什麼佛陀能完成呢？關於這一點佛陀與其弟子亦有論及，如佛陀告訴瓦恰說：由於無法正確的把握色、受…等諸蘊的本質、它們的形成、消滅、與消滅的原因，其他的思想家才會執着於教條主義。佛陀大弟子之一舍利弗也告訴另一位請問無記的摩訶拘絺羅相同的答案：「對色等諸蘊的無知，乃是由於染著與沉溺於色等諸蘊。」

佛陀與其他思想家最大的不同點就是他瞭解色等諸蘊：它們的本源、它們的本質是苦的，以及如何超越痛苦。可是他却不透過理性，而使之理論化。其他的思想家則致力於建立某種理論，可是其理論的基本假設多少都含有「我」或「我所有」的幻象，以致無法達到他們得解脫的初衷。佛陀與其他思想家的不同即是獨斷教條主義與批判之心智的差異，佛陀對當時的各家理論，本着批判的心智，

語言也僅有這一些，那我們如何描述它呢？無記問題之所以無法直截了當的回答，就是人類全然無法以經驗現象界的語詞表來說明。獨斷的教條主義把具有超越性的「眞實」與經驗界强扯在一起，他們認爲物質、感覺作用，概念化作用、意志作用等諸蘊就是「我」，可是佛陀的見解却大異其趣，而否認「我」就是諸蘊、「我」在諸蘊之中、諸蘊在「我」之中……等等說法，這是因爲佛陀知道這些分類還是落在經驗界的限度內，所以他不理這些無謂的爭執——「眞實」離思惟分別。

瓦恰請問無記問題，佛陀却以「沉默」答之，阿難感到疑惑，於是佛陀對阿難說：

阿難！遊方僧瓦恰問道：「有我嗎？」如果我回答：「有的」，那麼，我就與持永恒論的出家人站在一邊了。

復次，阿難！遊方僧問道：「沒有我嗎？」如果我答「沒有」，那麼我就與持虛無主義的出家人站在一邊了。

再說，阿難！瓦恰問我「有我嗎？」如果我答「有的」，這答案與我所知的「一切法無常」相符合嗎？

阿難答道：當然不符合囉！佛陀。

還有，阿難！遊方僧問我：「沒有我嗎？」如果我答「沒有」，那將使本來已經糊塗的瓦恰越攪越糊塗了。他就會想：我以前還有一個經驗性的假我，而今却沒有了。

如果佛陀回答了這些問題，不管是肯定或否定，佛陀即犯上與自己一再嚴厲批評的教條主義相同的錯誤。佛陀不置答，實與他對經驗之批判的一貫立場相一致。所有的思辨，在形上學僅能產生教條主義、純理論架構而已。於是瓦恰又問：那麼佛陀自己可有什麼理論嗎？

佛陀的沉默
(下)
——形上學的反省

穆　帝　原著

郭忠生　譯中

編者按：本文譯自穆帝所著「佛教根本哲學」第二章。

V 真實離思惟分別

現在我們把這些討論做一總結。瓦恰這位遊方僧常常向佛陀及其上座弟子請問爲什麼佛陀不如其他的思想家，明確的回答無記問題。(註七)從這些事實，吾人可以看出：瓦恰已經看出佛陀與思想家有所不同，不過他尚不知究竟什麼地方不同。佛陀或其弟子就與衆不同。

無記乃是有關於「無爲」的問題，佛陀很清楚的看出：想要以經驗界的語詞來描述超越性的無言之境，是不可能的，就好像說海洋是從這裏開始或不是這裏開始一樣，都是不著邊際。同理，如來也是不可以言語描述的。差摩上座對波斯匿王說：「如來解脫，如甚大海，無以言詮，超言絕思，況其滅後，存在與否？」既然各種名詞（包括描述心理或物質的）都無法描述它，但是人類所能使用的

bhikkhu, tadabiññā vimutto bhikkhu na jānāti na passatiti'ssa ditthiti tad akallam.

50. *Brahmajāla* and other *Suttas.* This is the catuskoti of the Mādhyamikas.

51. nītārtham ca sūtram prati-śaranam uktam iti: catvārīmāni, bhiksavah, pratisáranāni. katamāni catvāri? dharmah pratiśaranam na pudgalah; arthah pratisaranam. na vvañianam, nītārtha-sūtra pratiśaranam na neyārtham; jñānam pratiśaranam na vijñānam iti. Quoted twice in AKV, p. 174; p. 704.

52. *A Manual of Indian Buddhism,* p. 50.

53. Franke's view—See his paper: *Negativism in the Old Buddhist Teaching* (*Festschrift Kahn,* pp. 366 ff). Therein Franke tries "to prove that the idea of Voidness has indeed been in the mind of the founder of the creed or that the Singhalese school itself takes up the idea of voidness or that it has been interpreted into the original conception by the authors of the commentaries (atthakatha) and above all by Buddhagosa." Poussin (E.R.F. VIII, p. 334) says: "There is a great deal of Mādhyamika philosophy in the Pali Canon."

54. *Buddhist Phil* p. 49.

55. This is exactly the conclusion that Nāgārjuna arrives at in his chapter on the *Examination of the Tathāgata* (MK XXII): prapañcayanti ye buddham prapañcātītam avyayam; te prapañcahatāh sarve na paśyanti tathāgatam. tathāgato yatsvabhavas tatsvabhavam idam jagat; tathagato nihsvabhavo nihsvabhavam idam iagat. MK. XXII. 15-16.

56. *Buddhist Phil.* p. 67. See also p. 66.

39. tan mrsā mosadharma yad yadi kim tatra musyate; etat tuktam bhagavatā śūnyatā-paridīpakam. MK, XIII 2.
40. *Sam. N.* II. p. 267.
41. sarvopalambhopaśamah prapañcopaśamah śivah; na kvacit kasyacit kascid dharmo Buddhena desitah. MK. XXV, 24.
42. *Majjh. N.* I. p. 65. See also *Udana* p. 33; *Itivuttaka,* pp. 43-4.
43. dvayanissito khvāyam, kaccāyana, loko yebhuyyeña atthitañ ceva natthitan ca . . . sabbam atthīti kho, kaccāyana, ayam eko anto; sabbam natthīti ayam dutīyo anto. etc te, kaccāyana, ubhe ante anupagamma *majjhena* tathāgato *dhammam deseti. Sam. N.* II. p. 17. See also *Sam. N.* II. pp. 61 ff.
44. kātyayānāvāvāde cāstiti nāstīti cobhayam; pratisiddham bhagavatā bhāvābhāvavibhāvinā. MK. XV. 7.
45. ātmeti, kāśyapa, ayam eko'ntah; nairātmyam ity ayam dvītiyo'ntah; yad ātmanairātmyayor madhyam tad arūpyam anidarśanam . . . iyam ucyate, kāśyapa, madhyamā pratipad dharmānām bhūtapratyaveksā. *Kāśyapaparivarta* p. 87. cf. also the *Samādhirāja Sūtra:* astīti nāstīti ubhe'pi anta ubhe antā vivarjayitvā madhye'pi sthānam na karoti panditah (IX 27) *Gilgit MSS.* Vol. II, p. 103.
46. evam eva kho, bhikkhave, kullūpamo mayā dhammo desito nittharanatthāya na gahanatthāya. kullūpamam vo bhikkave ājānantehi dhammā pi vo pahātabbā; pāg eva adhammā. *Majj. N.* I, p. 135 (Sutta. 22) cf. the Mādhyamika conception: upāyabhūtam samvrti satyam; upeyabhūtam paramārtha-satyam.
47. *Sam. N.* IV, p. 202.
48. MK. XVIII, 5.
49. *Majj. N.* I, p. 486 (72nd Sutta) cf. also *Mahanidāna Sutta,* 32 (*Digh. N.* XV, p. 32) yāvatānanda adhivacanaṁ yāvatā adhivacanapatho, yavata nirutti yavata niruttipatho, yavata pannatti yāvatā paññatti-patho, yāvatā pañña yāvatā paññavacaram, yāvatā vattaṁ yāvatā vattaṁ vattati, tad abiññā vimutto

. . . evam kho bhikkhave jānato evam passato asavanam khayo hoti. *Sam. Nik.* III. pp. 152-3.

28. *Majjh. N.* p. 485-6 (Trans. by Chalmers, slightly modified).
29. Buddha sharply distinguishes his position from the aññanavada of Sañjaya—the Agnostic (vikatthavādin). See *Brahmajalasutta* and *Samannaphala Sutta* etc.
30. *Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta,* ii. 25.
31. *Sam. N.* IV p. 369 ff.
32. *Udāna* pp. 80-81. cf. *Itivuttaka* p. 37 (§43) and p. 61.
33. Cf. *Udāna* p. 80 (VIII. 1).
34. *Gautama the Buddha,* p. 59.
35. *I.P.* Vol. I pp. 682-3.
36. "Historically, it must be said that Buddha preached his phenomenological doctrines in an 'Exoteric form' to the people and his Ontological doctrine in the 'Esoteric form' was reserved only for advanced or brilliant men. Teachings on both these lines proceeded simultaneously without implying any periodical or chronological division. However, from the doctrinal point of view, the former is the more expedient (upāya) doctrine, while the latter is the real doctrine. This order equates well with the inherent natural law in the spiritual domain. Here the former or 'exoteric' must come first and the latter or 'esoteric' would come next." *The Terms Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna* etc. p. 60. See also pp. 47 ff.
37. Phena-pindūpamam rūpam; vedanā bubbulūpamā maricikūpamā saññā, sankhārā kadalūpamā, māyūpamañ ca viññānam dīpitādicca-bandhunā. *Sam. N.* III 142. cf. also the *Majjh. N.* (II, p. 261) passage: anicca, bhikkave kāmā tucchā musā moghadhammā māyākatam etam, bhikkave, bālatāpanam. etc. cf. also *Suttanipāta 757–8.* The Sanskrit versions of these texts are quote at several places in the MKV.
38. *Majjh. N.* III, p. 245 Dialogue, 140.

15. pūrvakair eveti—Sthavira Nāgasenādibhiḥ. AKV. p. 708.
16. itara āha—yadi nāvaktavyaḥ kasmān nokto *nāsti eveti* AKV, p. 708.
17. āha cātreti, bhadanta Kumāralābhaḥ! dṛṣṭi-daṁṣṭrāvabhedam ca bhraṁśaṁ cāvekṣya karmaṇām; deśayanti jinā dharmaṁ vyāghrīpotāpahāravat. AKV. p. 708, also quoted in TSP. p. 129. yathā vyāghrī nātiniṣṭhureṇa danta-grahaṇena svapotam apaharati, nayati, māsya daṁṣṭraya śarīraṁ kṣataṁ bhūd iti, nāpy atiśithilena dantagrahaṇena tam apaharati, māsya bhraṁsapāto'smin visaye bhūd iti. AKV. p. 708.
18. Stcherbatsky: *Soul Theory* pp. 846-849.
19. *Sam. N.* IV, pp. 392-3 & 396.
20. mahāyye samuddo gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāhoti. evam eva kho, mahārāja, yena rūpena tathāgatam paññapāyamāno paññapeyya, taṁ rūpam tathāgatassa pahīnam ucchinna-mūlam tālāvatthukatam anabhāvakatam āyatim annuppādakatam. rūpasaṅkhaya-vimmutto kho, mahārāia, tathāgato gambhīro appameyyo duppariyogāho . . . etc., same with regard to vedanā, saññā etc. *Sam. N.* IV, pp. 376 ff. *Maj, N.* I, pp. 487-8 (Sutta 72).
21. *Sam. N.* IV pp. 395-7.
22. *Sam. N.* pp. 400-1 (*Kindred Sayings.* IV, p. 282. Trans. by Woodward).
23. *Majj. N.* I, p. 486 (Dis. 72) Trans. by Warren—*Buddhism in Translations:* p. 125.
24. *Sam. N.* III, pp. 258 ff.
25. *Sam. N.* IV pp. 386-7.
26. rūpe kho āvuso avigata-rāgassa avigatachandassa avigatapemassa avigatapipāsassa avigataparilāhassa avigatatanhassa, hoti tathāgato param maraṇā ti pissa hoti *Sam. N.* IV p. 387.
27. kiñ ca bhikkhave jānato kim passato āsavānaṁ khayo hoti. iti rūpam iti rūpassa samudayo iti rūpassa aṭṭhagamo, iti vedanā

samāśritya pravṛttāḥ, śaśvato loko' śāśvato lokaḥ . . . ityetāś catasro dṛṣṭayaḥ pūrvāntaṁ samāśritya pravarttante." But it appears more significant to hold that one question refers to the eternity or otherwise of the world and the other to its infinity or limitation in space.

10. *The Brahma Jāla Sutta* (D.N. I, p. 34) says: "In this case some recluse or Brahman is addicted to logic and reasoning. He gives utterance to the following conclusion of his own, beaten out by his arguments and based on his sophistry. The self which is connected with the eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin is impermanent, not perduring, liable to change. But that self or soul which is called consciousness or mind or intelligence is permanent, stable, perduring, not liable to change or it will remain for ever and ever," (Rhys Davids's Translation).

11. In the order of statement of the avyākṛta, this stands midway between the cosmic and the psychological speculations. The Tathāgata is not merely man but a cosmic principle as well. Hence, he could be the synthesis or union of both. But too much cannot be built on the order of the avyākṛta.

12. The Appendix (Pariśiṣṭa) to the VIII Chapter (Astama Kośasthāna) entitled an *Examination of the Soul Theory* (Pudgala-Viniścaya). See AKV. pp. 697 ff. This has been translated by Stcherbatsky with his usual thoroughness and understanding in the *Bulletin of the Academy of Sciences, USSR*, 1919, pp. 823 ff. & 932 ff.

13. AK. V, 22; AKV. pp. 465-7.

14. kasmād bhagavatā sa jıvas taccharıram anyo veti na vyakrtam iti. ayam eṣām abhiprāyaḥ, yadi skandhesu pudgalopacarah kasmāc charīram eva jīva iti noktam iti. AKV. p. 708. The passages cited here are from Stcherbatsky's translation of the *Soul Theory*. pp. 846 ff.

Particular problems: (*Mahānidāna, Brahma Jāla Sutta* (D.N.) *Mahāli Sutta* (D.N.) . . . *Poṭṭapada Sutta* (D.N.), *Mahānidāna Sutta* (D.N.) *Maj. N.* II pp. 228-38. *Sam. N.* III, pp. 213-24 (Diṭṭhisaṁyutta). *Milinda Pañho,* pp. 144 ff. *Abhidharma Kośabhāṣya,* Appendix (Pudgala-viniścaya). MK, XXVII, and also XXII and XXV; ASP, pp. 269 ff. *Mahāvyutpatti,* p. 64 (§206); *Dharmasangraha,* p. 67.

3. *Majjh. N.* I, 426 ff. (*A.N.* IV, 67 ff.)
4. Cf. "It is quite legitimate to hold that the Buddha was a genuine agnostic, that he had studied the various systems of ideas prevalent in his day without deriving any greater satisfaction from them than any of us to-day do from the study of modern systems, and that he had no reasoned or other conviction on the matter. From the general poverty of philosophical constructive power exhibited by such parts of the systems as appear essentially Buddha's, one is inclined to prefer this explanation." Keith: *Buddhist Philosophy,* p. 63. "This leads clearly to the conclusion that agnosticism in these matters is not based on any reasoned conviction of the limits of knowledge; it rests on the two-fold ground that the Buddha has not himself a clear conclusion on the truth on these issues, but is convinced that disputation on them will not lead to the frame of mind which is essential for the attainment of Nirvāna," ibid. p. 45.
5. As quoted by E. J. Thomas in his *History of Buddhist Thought,* p. 127.
6. This issue has been discussed in a previous Section.
7. *History of Buddhist Thought,* p. 128.
8. MKV. p. 446.
9. The first alternative is usually interpreted as referring to the beginning of the world and the second to its end—both with regard to its temporal limitation or otherwise, see MKV, p. 536; antavān lokó nāntavān . . . etāś catasro dṛṣṭayo parāntaṁ

possible, and in entire harmony with the Madhyamika view.[56]

It is not contended that we have a full-fledged dialectic in Buddha; but that there are definite suggestions and indications which led, as a matter of logical development, to the systematic formulation of the dialectic by the Mādhyamika. The reason for this is that the conflict in reason which engenders the dialectical consciousness was itself not in a systematic but suggestive stage then. Only as the rival systems developed and differed radically from each other could their opposition be sharp and sustained. This presupposes a period of several centuries wherein the systems took their definite form. The Mādhyamika represents that systematic stage of the conflict in reason and the solution of the conflict by transcending the alternatives.

References:

1. This is evident from the whole tenor of the Mādhyamika system, especially from its reasoned opposition to all kinds of dṛṣṭi—speculative theories. See the last Chapter (XXVII entitled *Dṛṣṭi-Parīksā*) of the *Mādhyamika-Kārikās* and also pp. 446 ff., 536 ff. MKV; ASP, pp. 269 ff.
2. Reference to the avyākata: *Majjh. N.* I, pp. 426-32 (Sutta 63); pp. 483 ff. (Sutta 72); *Sam. N.* III, pp. 257 ff. (Vacchagotta Saṁyuttam), *Sam. N.* IV, pp. 374-403 (Avyākata Saṁyuttam).

like that of the Mahāyanā, negative though the argument establishes, even taken on its own claims, that the view was idealistic with a tendency, not wholly conscious or articulate, to negativism."[53]

"The *Majjhima Nikāya* freely contains the ideas of Voidness," says Keith giving exact references to a number of passages. "Belief in the existence of ideas is merely a raft to enable men to cross the ocean of existence .... This accomplished, it should be cast away for the useless thing it is."[54]

Sāriputta confronts Yamaka with the question whether the true self of the Tathāgata is his material form and receives a negative reply. Similar replies are given to the questions whether he is in the material form, or it in him, or different from it, and so on with the four other constituents which make up the apparent individual. Yamaka also admits that the five constituents all taken together do not make up the Tathāgata; nor again is he without the five constituents taken together. Sāriputta then confronts Yamaka with the conclusion that even in life he cannot comprehend in truth and essence the Tathagata and that *a fortiori* it is absurd to make assertions of him after his death. Does this mean that even in life Yamaka cannot show the Tathagata really to exist and still less of course in death can his nature by stated?[55] The interpretation is

hysical views; the fourfold formulation of the alternatives which is a regular feature of some of the dialogues[50] anticipates the form also of the Mādhyamika dialectic.

The passages favouring the Mādhyamika interpretation may be few and greatly interspersed with texts of a dogmatic character. Nevertheless, they necessitate a reinterpretation of the entire body of Buddha's teaching. For, it is possible to subordinate the doctrine of elements to the absolutist teaching and not *vice versa*; the skandhas, dhātus and āyatanas may be taken as having phenomenal validity; their formulation would still be significant. But the texts which speak of them as illusory and fit to be rejected as diṭṭhi cannot be understood in any other manner except as the ultimate teaching. An analogous case is the relative value attaching to the 'para' and 'apara' texts of the Upanisads. We are told, in what appears to be a canonical text, that we should attach value to the texts of primary and ultimate import (nītārtha) and not to those of secondary import (neyārtha).[51] The Mādhyamika exegesis consistently explains and interprets texts on this distinction.

That the early Buddhist view was like that of the Mādhyamika has not wholly escaped the notice of orientalists like Kern, Otto Franke, Poussin and even of Keith. Kern says that "from the outset Buddhism was an idealistic nihilism;"[52] "that the early Buddhistic view was,

this passage in his *Kārikaś* declaring that the Lord has rejected both the 'is' and 'not-is' views—all views.[44]

The *Ratnakūṭa (Kāśyapaparivarta),* which is one of the early formative texts of the Mahāyāna, explicitly mentions the two standpoints—ātma and nairātmya-vādas and the middle position as transcending both.[45]

Buddha compares, in the *Alaguddūpama Sutta,* the dharmas to a raft which has to be left off after crossing the stream; they are not meant to be taken as ultimate tenets.[46] The Mādhyamikas take this as the Upāya doctrine, having just a means-value; it is to be abandoned after it had served its purpose.

Indicating that pain is conditioned by imagination and is nothing real in itself, Buddha refers to the parable of the Demon Vepacitta who was bound or free according to the evil or good nature of his thoughts. That imagination (kalpanā) is bondage[47] and the cessation of Kalpanā is freedom is a fundamental Mādhyamika tenet given expression to at several places in his *Kārikās* by Nāgārjuna.[48] Attention must be drawn, once again, to Buddha's rejection of all speculative philosophies as dogmatism (diṭṭhi or diṭṭhigatānīmāni) and his declaration that the Tathagata is free from all theories. This is in entire accord with the Mādhyamika standpoint of criticism and rejection of all theory as constituting the highest wisdom.[49] Importance also attaches to the antinomical way of stating metap-

poets, poetical, adorned with beautiful words and syllables.[40]

This is a significant admission that the real heart of Buddha's teaching is the doctrine of Sūnyatā, as the Mādhyamikas claim. Nāgārjuna is justified in declaring that the Buddha has nowhere taught the doctrine of Elements as the ultimate tenet.[41]

The Mādhyamika standpoint is clearly stated in some celebrated passages. Buddha tells us that there are two principal viewpoints–the existence and the non-existence views (bhavaditthi and vibhavadiṭṭhi). No one holding to either of these can hope to be free of this world. Only those who analyse and understand the origin, nature and contradictions of these two views can be freed from the grip of birth and death–saṁsāra.[42] Kaccāyana[43] desires to know the nature of the Right View (sammādiṭṭhi) and the Lord tells him that the world is accustomed to rely on a duality, on the 'It is' (atthitam) and on the 'It is not' (natthitam); but for one who perceives, in accordance with truth and wisdom, how the things of the world arise and perish, for him there is no 'is not' or 'is'. "That everything exists" is, Kaccayana, one extreme; "that it does not exist" is another. Not accepting the two extremes, the Tathāgata proclaims the truth (dhammam) from the *middle position.* Nagarjuna makes pointed reference to

VII. ANTICIPATIONS OF THE MADHYAMIKA

That the Buddha did not mean the doctrine of elements to be an ultimate standpoint is evident from certain trends and texts of the Pali canons, although they have been subjected, as is accepted now, to a careful and partisan revision and editing by the Theravādins.

Buddha declares rūpa, vedanā, etc. to be illusory, mere bubbles[37] etc. In the *Majjhimà Nikāya*, it is stated:[38] "Depending on the oil and the wick does the light of the lamp burn; it is neither in the one nor in the other, nor anything in itself; phenomena are, likewise, nothing in themselves. All things are unreal; they are deceptions; Nibbāna is the only truth." Basing himself on this text Nāgārjunà says: "In declaring that it is deceptive and illusory, the Lord means Śūnyatā—dependence of things."[39]

Condemning that incapacity of some of the monks to understand the deeper, inner, meaning of his teaching, Buddha speaks of the Bhikkhus of the future period thus:

The monks will no longer wish to hear and learn the Suttāntas proclaimed by the Tathagata, deep, deep in meaning, reaching beyond the world, dealing with the Void (suññatā-patisamyuttā) but will only lend their ear to the profane suttāntas proclaimed by disciples, made by

It might be asked: if Buddha had no theory of his own, how is it that he appears to have suggested a theory of elements (skandha, dhātu and āyatana) at very many places in his dialogues? To suggest, as is done by some scholars, that the skandha-doctrine is a later scholastic elaboration of the monks is to shelve the question. We must accept that Buddha did formulate such a doctrine; the passages are too numerous and the tradition too weighty to be ignored. On our interpretation, the doctrine of elements was necessary as a preliminary step. If there had been only the substance-view (ātma-vāda) in the field, Buddha could not have been led to the dialectical consciousness. A modal view too was necessary. A thesis had to be opposed by a counter-thesis before there could emerge the dialectical consciousness. Then alone could there be a Conflict in Reason and the attempt to transcend it. As a matter of dialectical necessity then did Buddha formulate, or at least suggest, a theory of elements. The Mahāyāna systems clearly recognise this dialectical necessity when they speak of the pudgala-nairātmya—the denial of substance—as intended to pave the way for Absolutism. Śūnyatā is the unreality of the elements as well (dharma-nairātmya). Modern Buddhist scholars like Kimura[36] who are in touch with a living Buddhist tradition also speak in the same strain.

is itself the *means* by which Buddha is led to the non-conceptual knowledge of the absolute, and not vice versa. It is no accident then that Buddha concerns himself with an analysis of the various theories of reality and rejects them all. Buddha ascends from the conflict of Reason to the inexpressibility of the absolute. The consciousness of the Conflict in Reason and the attempt to resolve it by rising to a plane higher than Reason is dialectic. And the dialectical method is the Mādhyamika way.

Again, the Upanisads, with one voice, speak of the knowledge of the self as the knowledge of all and this is the sole means of freedom. Bondage is the ignorance of the self. For Buddha, however, the self is a primary wrong notion. Buddha does not speak of the knowledge of any specific entity as the saving knowledge. For him the awareness of the nature of pain and its cause is itself the knowledge which sets man free. Times out of number we are told that Buddha knows what is pain, how it arises, how it ceases etc. This can only mean that for him knowledge is the self-conscious awareness of the world-process; to realise the inexorability of the Causal Law (pratītya-samutpāda) is to stand aside from it. "Freedom is the knowledge of Necessity." It is an attitude of withdrawal. Avidyā is ignorance of the nature of pain etc; it is the natural but unconscious attachment to things. Buddha's conception of reflective awareness of things as the saving knowledge is the Mādhyamika notion of śūnyatā or prajñā.

of the world of relativity, the legitimacy of which he was the first to contest in others. The absolute is not a matter of empirical observation. The world of experience does not reveal the absolute anywhere within its limits.[35]

A close parallel, as is pointed out by many scholars, is the Upanisadic way of defining Brahman as 'neti' 'neti', as what cannot be grasped by speech, thought or senses. Brahman is nirdharmaka (asthūlam, ananu etc.), devoid of determinations. Far from being unreal on this account, it is the sole reality, the soul of the universe.

While the indescribability of the absolute is common to the Upanisads and Buddha, a difference in their approach must be admitted. The Upanisadic seers do not concern themselves with the different philosophical standpoints and views of the real. Being pioneers in the field, they had not before them many, right or wrong, views to criticise and to condemn. They appear to start with an intuitive or extra-philosophical knowledge of Brahman and then lead the disciple to that knowledge through arguments and analogies. They are not aware, except in a vague form, of the conflict in Reason. Theirs is not a dialectical approach. Buddha on the other hand is more rational in his procedure. He starts with the total and interminable conflict in Reason as exemplified in the several speculative systems of his time. The untenability of each view, of all views, condemns them as mere subjective devices. The rejection of theories (ditthi)

His position was not Nihilism even in an implicit form. Neither Buddha nor any Buddhistic system ever took this to be so. Buddha avers in the most explicit terms the existence of Nirvāna as the implication of his doctrine and the spiritual discipline. Numerous are the passages in which Nirvāna is spoken of in positive terms as a reality beyond all suffering and change, as unfading, still, undecaying, taintless, as peace, blissful. It is an island, the shelter, the refuge and the goal.[31] In a celebrated *Uddna* passage.[32] Buddha says: "There is a not-born, a not-become, a not-created, a not-formed. If there were not this not-born, this not-become . . . there would not be the escape, the way out of this bondage (samsāra) . . . . "

Buddha did not doubt the reality of Nirvāna (Absolute); only he would not allow us to characterise and clothe it in empirical terms as being, non-being etc.[33] His silence can only be interpreted as meaning the consciousness of the indescribable nature of the Unconditioned Reality. Professor Radhakrishnan unerringly indicates the nature of Buddha's silence in his works thus:

If the Buddha declined to define the nature of the Absolute or if he contented himself with negative definitions, it is only to indicate that absolute being is above all determinations.[34] Why, then, did Buddha not admit in express terms the reality of the absolute. Buddha refused to describe the absolute, for that would be to take a step out

shackles of theorising, attended by ill, distress, perturbation and fever; it conduces not to detachment, passionlessness, tranquility, peace, to knowledge and wisdom of Nirvāna. This is the danger I perceive in these views which makes me discard them all.[28]

This contention also necessarily implies that the criticism of views is not itself a view.

VI. THE TRUE NATURE OF BUDDHA'S SILENCE

Buddha's silence, then, cannot be construed as agnosticism,[29] for this is an attitude of doubt and despair; but Buddha's answer is decisive. It is not also true that Buddha's attitude was just a suspension of judgment and that he was awaiting a more favourable opportunity to publish the truth. He tells us expressly that he has taught the truth without reservation and without any distinction of the exoteric and the esoteric;he had not kept back anything like a tight-fisted teacher.[30] Nor is it ignorance of metaphysics. He was not only conversant with philosophical speculations of the time, but was himself a metaphysician of no mean order. By his penetrative analysis he had reached a position which transcended and annulled the dogmatic procedure of Reason. His rejection of speculative metaphysics was deliberate and sustained. Criticism itself is philosophy for him.

be free from the delusion of the 'I' and the 'mine.' The contrast implied is between the dogmatic use of rūpa etc. and the analytic awareness of them, between theory and the critical consciousness of it. To become aware of a theory (ditthi) as such is not to propound another theory, but to be self-conscious of it; and thereby to resolve it. This is freedom.[27]

When do we know rūpa *as* rūpa, a theory *as* theory? Not when we are using it implicitly, putting all our trust in it, enamoured of its externals, but only when we realise its shortcomings. As long as a mechanism is working smoothly, we have no occasion to know its constitution. Interested as we are in its working, we do not take it to pieces. When we use Reason in the dogmatic speculative way to construct theories, we are not aware of its nature, how it works. As Reason becomes involved in antinomies, we grow critical and try to understand the structure of Reason itself. The two may thus be equated; to know what a theory (drsti) is, is to know it as false. The very futility of the attempts of Reason to reach the Unconditioned shows it up as a subjective device.

Buddha condemns theories in his characteristic way:

To hold that the world is eternal or to hold that it is not, or to agree to any other of the propositions you adduce, Vaccha, is the jungle of theorising, the wilderness of theorising, the tangle of theorising, the bondage and the

from attachment, inasmuch as all imaginings, or agitations, or false notions, concerning an Ego or anything pertaining to an Ego, have perished, have faded away, have ceased, have been given up and relinquished.[23]

Instead of the usual opposition between śāśvata-vāda and ucchedavāda, affirmation and negation, Buddha substituted the more fundamental one between dogmatism and criticism. This is his middle position (madhyamā pratipad), which is not a position in the sense of a third position lying midway between the two extremes, but a no-position that supersedes them both. It is thus on a higher plane.

Why do not the other philosophers rise up to this critical plane, or how could Buddha reach this? Again, the Lord or his disciples, Sāriputta and Moggalāna, provide the answer. The Lord tells Vacchagotta that ignorance of rūpa, vedanā etc., how they arise, how they cease, and of the path leading to their cessation is the cause of dogmatism.[24] To another questioner, Mahākotthika, Sāriputta gives the same answer.[25] Ignorance of the truth with regard to rūpa etc. is due to attachment to rūpa and being addicted to existence.[26]

Buddha, unlike the dogmatists, knows what rūpa and other skandhas are; he perceives their origin, their nature as pain and the way to suppress them. He does not theorise about them. Others weave theories regarding these, but do not know their inner constitution. And to know this is to

that would be siding with the recluses and Brahmins who are eternalists. But if, Ānanda, when asked 'Is there not a self?' I had replied that it does not exist, that, Ānanda, would be siding with those recluses and Brahmins who are annihilationists. Again, Ānanda, when asked by the Wanderer: 'Is there a self?' had I replied that there is, would my reply be in accordance with the knowledge that all things are impermanent? "Surely not, Lord," Again, Ānanda, when asked Vacchagotta the Wanderer: 'Is there not a self?' had I replied that there is not, it would have been more bewilderment for the bewildered Vacchagotta. For he would have said: Formerly, indeed I had a self, but now I have not one any more.[22]

If he had answered the questions, yes, or no, i.e. accepted one of the alternatives propounded, he would have been guilty of that very dogmatism (ditthi) which he had so vehemently condemned in others. Consistent with his attitude of a critic of experience, as one rising beyond the relativity which infects every phenomenon, he could not have given any other answer. All the speculations are dogmatic, mere theories. Vacchagotta asks: "But has Gotama any theory of his own?" The Lord answers:

The Tathāgata, O Vaccha, is *free from all theories.* **But this, Vaccha, does the Tathāgata know—the nature of form, and how form arises and how form perishes. . . . Therefore the Tathāgata has attained deliverance and is free**

from measure and form (rūpa-sankhāvimutto); he is deep and unfathomable like the ocean. To say with regard to the ocean that it begins here or that it does not, etc., would be a piece of irrelevance. Likewise, the Tathāgata, as the totality of things, is beyond predication.[20] Khemā Therī gives almost an identical reply to King Pasenadi; and this is later on confirmed by the Lord. The Tathāgata cannot be identified with the material and mental forms, nor can he be characterised by the absence of these. The utter inability to relate and characterise the Unconditioned in terms of the phenomenal is the reason why the questions about the Tathāgata and others cannot be answered outright. Dogmatists invariably confound the Transcendent with the empirical. They take the rūpa, vedanā, vijñāna etc. to be the self. The Tathāgata, on the other hand, does not take these to be the self, nor the self to have the rūpa, nor the rūpa in the self, nor the self in the rūpa.. Deeply conscious of the empirical nature of these categories, the Tathāgata does not indulge in such unwarranted extensions; he does not spin speculative theories.[21] He has realised that the Real is transcendent to thought.

Buddha tells Ānanda, when Vacchagotta had been answered by 'silence' and had departed, the reason for his attitude.

If, Ānanda, when asked by the Wanderer: 'Is there a self?' I had replied to him: 'There is a self', then, Ānanda,

(Editor's note: *This is the 2nd Chapter of T. R. V. Murti's* *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism.*)

V. THE REAL IS TRANSCENDENT TO THOUGHT

All the passages should be considered together to have a complete picture. Vacchagotta—the wandering ascetic—is the principal interlocutor who persistently asks the Tathāgata or his distinguished disciples the reason, the justification, why the Lord does not answer the questions definitely while the other philosophers do so. This is evidence of the fact that Vacchagotta has become aware of the difference between Buddha and other philosophers: he is as yet not aware of the ground of distinction.[19] The Lord or his disciples supply the ground of distinction.

The questions are about the Unconditioned. Buddha is alive, unlike other philosophers, to the insuperable difficulties (*ādīnavam sampassamāno*) in conceiving the Transcendent in terms of the empirical. That form by which the Tathāgata is usually known is no longer present; He is free

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(II)

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