

Educational Concepts and Practices in Early Southern Buddhism

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ABSTRACT

"Buddhist education" is a phrase that is inherently ambiguous. Does it refer to education encompassing Buddhist teachings, practices, communities, or history? Or does it comprise the peculiar methodology employed by the Buddha and Buddhist teachers?

This paper is not concerned so much with motivations, methodologies, techniques, styles, and forms of education. Rather, my basic question revolves around the question of authority and the means by which an individual is transformed from the uneducated to educated state. This transformation comprises the ultimate conversion from suffering to redemption, from ignorance to the destruction of ignorance and to the realization of final and authoritative Truth. In brief, it applies to the loss of imperfection and to the acquisition of the Summum Bonum through the individual's own efforts.

If this is indeed the case for educational transformation, what is the role of the Buddha as teacher and for any teacher who occupies the place of the Buddha vis-à-vis the auditor? Is there a special quality within those who receive, accept, and realize Buddhist teaching to cause the transformation that is striven after?

A clue rests in the use of the term "education" as opposed to the synonyms "instruction," and "training." "Education" implies the existence of knowledge that is already innate within the individual, thus rejecting the notion that individuals enter the world as "blank slates." "Instruction" implies a transfer of information from the knower to the learner, suggesting perhaps that the learner is a blank state when it comes to specific types of learning. "Training" implies discipline, practice, engaging in drills, becoming proficient through instruction and practice.

In a general sense, "Buddhist education" may suggest all three categories, but my purpose in the paper revolves around the transformative experience brought about through education, the role of the Buddha as teacher, and the capacity of the auditor and learner in actualizing the teaching.

Introduction

On one occasion Aristotle was asked how much educated men were superior to those uneducated: "As much," said he, "as the living are to the dead."¹

We sometimes take education for granted in modern society, regarding it sometimes as a commodity, which, together with its purveyors, the teachers, can be bought or sold. Yet it is the glue that bonds society, the method through which culture is translated and transmitted, the foundation of tradition and history, the means through which individuals may transcend their present existence, and the promise of a meaningful and productive life. Although education is viewed in its narrow sense—scholastic or formal education—it is better that we view the term from two perspectives: (1) as the sum of those experiences that broaden the individual's view of the world, humanity, and the Transcendent, and (2) as a particular mode of teaching.

The first perspective refers to a goal not limited to acquiring a simple skill but rather applied to the intellectual and “spiritual” transformation of the individual. When individuals are “educated,” they are expected to exhibit traits that bear little or no resemblance with their pre-educated existence. In other words, educated individuals are considered to have achieved adulthood, maturity, and responsibility.

The second sense indicates the mode of teaching in order to gain that objective. In the words of H.E. Manning, it “is the formation of the whole man—intellect...character, mind, and soul.”² Education, according to the latter perspective, may be considered in some contexts to possess different attributes from those of either “instruction” or “training.” From a purely etymological perspective, “education”—from *éducêre* “to lead forth” (to which the terms “educer” and a large family of words are related, including *duke, duct, doctor, conductor, deduce, reduce, induct, seduction,* and *conduit* are all related)—implies the “drawing out” of a person’s talents rather than the “piling in” or “furnishing” (Latin *instruere* > “instruction”) of information. By extension, the implication of education is that the individual has a sufficient experience of the world to make a connection and to acquire a totally new level of understanding of the subject under discussion. This experience can be explained in a philosophical or religious sense through the implication that knowledge is somehow already innate within the individual. From one perspective, this agrees with the Hindu and Buddhist teachings of karma and rebirth, which assume that individuals cannot be “blank slates” but rather the very opposite: that they are the sum of their past experiences that may lie dormant and become manifested during their present lifetimes.

“Instruction,” on the other hand, implies that there is a transfer of information from the knower to the learner. The learner is considered a mere recipient and not an active participant in acquiring knowledge.

“Training,” a term considered as a partial synonym of both education and instruction, implies discipline, practice, drill, “to make proficient by such instruction and practice.” For the purpose of this paper, I consider “training” as a method of acquiring a discipline or vocation. This acquisition may be limited to a mundane field of expertise or, in the case of Buddhism, to a specific regimen designed to bring about a preternatural or consummate experience—the Summum Bonum to which all Buddhists strive. Etymologically speaking, “to train” refers to a sequence, i.e., of thoughts and physical actions, implying an acquisition of a habit or habits. When applied to the acquisition of knowledge, the emphasis is not on the source of knowledge but on the acquisition of knowledge or a skill through a series of thoughts and actions. Curiously, however, although “train,” “education,” and “instruction” are often interchangeable, one noticeable difference between “train” and “instruction” on the one hand and “education” on the other is the greater exclusiveness of those qualified to be “educated” as opposed to those who are capable of being “instructed” or “trained.” Animals and human beings may undergo training, but animals are not capable of being instructed. Although humans are capable of being both instructed and educated, there is a sense that educated persons are superior to those who are merely trained or instructed because of the ameliorative and transformative consequences of education. One interpretation to this difference may be considered as follows: training implies merely the mastery of a sequence of actions (mental or physical); instruction implies a passivity in the acquisition of knowledge, which may or may not lead to complete understanding of the topic and will certainly not result in a

transformative experience. Education, on the other hand, suggests the transformative experience that is lacking in both training and instruction, a transformation that characterizes fulfillment of human potential. In a similar manner the Swiss educator, Jean Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), viewed the goal of education “not [as] a perfection in the accomplishments of the school, but [as] fitness for life; not [as] the acquirement of habits of blind obedience and of prescribed diligence, but [as] a preparation for independent action.”³

Education, instruction, and training therefore are characterized by the methods employed and the distinctiveness of the knowledge acquired or realized. Moreover, when comparing these three approaches, something else must be considered: the sources and limits of knowledge. Knowledge acquired through experience, through the senses, and through “reason”⁴ is universally accepted. Experience may be viewed as information accumulated through various means—including sensual, emotional, and intellectual interaction with the “world”—that allow the individual to assume an opinion of the world. It may also be gained through other means as well, including tradition, supra-rational mentation, and extrasensory perception, the latter two sources of knowledge no longer considered valid in today’s scientifically oriented world. One final observation. Education, instruction, and training do not necessarily involve a teacher-pupil relationship since self-education, self-instruction, and self-training are all possible.

The theory of knowledge that is professed by the Buddha and his followers is an important condition in understanding the techniques in education and instruction espoused and supported by them. It is a topic discussed in some detail in the *Saṅgārava Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* II.209-213). Responding to the question by the Brahmin Saṅgārava on the source of the Buddha’s teaching, the Buddha offers his views on what both he and other teachers base their knowledge. First, there is the assertion that a segment of the orthodox Brahmin and heterodox recluse communities—the Buddha included in the latter—first achieved *nirvāṇa* or some equivalent before taking on the role of the teacher.⁵ Following this achievement is a classification of how the enlightened ascetic or Brahmin will reveal the holy or Brahma-like life (*ādi-brahmacariyaka*). In other words, upon what foundation is the knowledge imparted to their disciples? To this, the Buddha responds that his contemporary ascetics and brahmin teachers fall under three categories: the traditionalists (*anussavikā*), the rationalists (called *takkī* “reasoners” and *vīmaṃsī* or “investigators”), and the experientialists (after the description given in the Sutta: “[those] who, having directly known the Dhamma for themselves among things not heard before, claim [to teach] the fundamentals of the holy life after having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge.”⁶ The Buddha then asserts that he belongs to the third classification (*tesāham asmi*).

This is important because of what follows in the *sutta*. Unlike the traditionalist approach (in which authority rests outside the teacher) or the “rational” approach⁷—which is based upon indirect experience—the “experientialist” approach is direct and immediate and by implication ultimately real. This seems to be the intent of the conversation that follows between Saṅgārava and Buddha.

If the Buddha’s success came through experience, then this would indicate that the most effective method leading to the transformation of individuals is not through the practice of acquiring teachers and becoming disciples but through personal effort.

This is in my opinion abundantly clear from the biographies of the Buddha. What follows is a brief biography of the Buddha from the standpoint of education.

The Buddha

As is the case for everything associated with Buddhism, the Buddha serves as the model and foundation for every discussion that is important and pertinent to Buddhist teaching: the ethical system, education, philosophy, politics, psychology, mind development, and the ultimate goal of Buddhism: liberation and *nirvāṇa*.

The life of Gautama, known as the Buddha after his Awakening at age thirty-five, provides an abundance of evidence of the importance of education and his proficiency in acquiring learning from an early age. The *Lalitavistara*, a biography emphasizing the supranormal abilities and traits of the Bodhisattva (a Buddha-to-be), informs us that as a young child entering the schoolroom for the first time, the teacher, Viśvāmitra, immediately recognized the splendor of the boy and so prostrated himself before the child, for the young boy, so declared a witness (the divine Śubhāṅgha from the Tuṣita heaven), already had been expert due to his long line of meritorious previous lives in the worldly arts, all the sciences (*śāstras*) or divisions of knowledge, numbers, scripts, and mathematics, but most importantly, so states Śubhāṅgha, “[h]e has come for the instruction of even the well-educated, to lead hundreds of thousands of beings to Immortality” (I:188).

A few years later, the Bodhisattva demonstrated his skill in the worldly arts in order to win the daughter of Śākya Daṇḍapāṇi, Gopā, in marriage. In competition with five hundred Śākyas, the Prince-Bodhisattva demonstrated his superiority in the areas of sport, feats of strength, the arts, business, magic, the arts, music, literature, and Brāhmaṇical knowledge (I: 219-235).

Since the Bodhisattva eventually sought insight in areas not of this world, he did what many before him did: left home, abandoned family and birthright, and sought out a spiritual guide. After his renunciation from the secular life at age 29, he sought out a spiritual guide or *guru*, for Truth according to ancient tradition can only be gained with the help of a teacher or guide. At first Ālāra Kālāma of Vaiśālī taught him everything he know but could only advance the Bodhisattva to the meditative stage of nothingness. Next, he studied under Udraka Rāmaputra, again to no avail.

It is only after his Awakening that the Buddha became a teacher displaying talents like none before him, if we are to believe the biographies. His task was to reveal and convey to others his incomparable and indescribable discovery of the Truth by setting forth a path that would prove effective and sustaining for those who listened to him. Indeed, there was a period of hesitation on his part. Could the ordinary folk grasp his message? Would they have the patience to do so?

Of course, the decision to share his discovery with the world was the course of action he chose, and this decision to be a spiritual guide (Pāli *garu*; Sanskrit *guru*), a teacher (P. *satthar*; S. *śāstr*) separated him from other Buddhas who chose not to teach and make their discoveries known: the first known as a Buddha who is *sammā-sambuddha*, perfectly awakened, as opposed to a Buddha who does not teach, a *pacceka-buddha*. From the earliest texts on, it was a teaching not easily grasped, for the Buddha, upon his Awakening and decision to teach the Dhamma, the Truth, considered his audience and its ability to grasp the teaching: “Now, to whom should I first teach *dhamma*? Who will understand this *dhamma* quickly” (*Mv* I, 10)?⁸

The Buddha's Methodology

And teach he did for the next 45 years of his life. From all accounts he was a highly articulate, patient, lucid teacher who did not prescribe the Truth or condemn those who failed to discern the Truth but rather spoke in the language of his listeners, offered stories illuminating the subject, employed similes, and questioned the inquirer always in the hope that the listener would arrive at the proper decision using his own common sense and decency. The similes he employed were designed to make the auditors realize themselves some important reflection on the Teaching. For instance, the Dhamma or Teaching is compared to a raft, important certainly to cross a body of water but once crossed is no longer required. The lesson: let go of the raft-Dhamma once it has performed its task.⁹ Or again, a person who abandons the five hindrances to enlightenment—covetousness, ill will and hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt—is like one who is no longer in debt, cured of a serious disease, released from prison, freed from slavery, and who has crossed the unpredictable desert without loss of property.¹⁰

The Buddha's method of teaching presupposed the inherent good sense of the inquirer, so it was not necessary to browbeat him or her into accepting his point of view but rather to cause listeners to realize for themselves that it was a reasonable and worthy position to take. In this regard, he was a true "educator" in its etymological sense, an approach that is confirmed by the Buddha's definition of a *brāhmaṇa* or member of the first class of society. What makes a *brāhmaṇa* is not the accident of birth and descent but rather "life and conduct" (*Sutta Nipāta* 3.9 and vs. 650).

Yet, the Buddha grew up in the Brāhmaṇical milieu and most likely received an education and attitude towards education reflective of Brāhmaṇical culture: hence the importance of the need to renounce family and the world in his search for Truth at age 29. Upon reaching his goal, however, the Brāhmaṇical model seems to take on a diminished role in favor of his own unique philosophy of education. What did remain as a model for the expectations in lay education is given in the *Sigālaka Sutta* (*DN III*. 189): students should honor their teachers by rising to greet them, by waiting on them, by being attentive, by serving them, and by mastering the skills taught by their teachers. Teachers on the other hand should give a thorough and complete education, make sure their students understand all their lessons, give them a thorough grounding in all skills, recommend them to their friends and colleagues, and provide them with security. Not much has changed over the millennia.

As for the methods employed by the Buddha to elicit enlightened understanding, we cannot be surprised that one of the most effective methods of teaching, analogy, in two literary forms: simile and parable. Similes appear throughout the *Sutta Piṭaka*, but one or two examples will suffice. In the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, the thirty-sixth *sutta* or *sūtra* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*,¹¹ three similes are presented to illustrate the undeveloped in body and mind. The first simile is given as follows:

Suppose there were a wet sappy piece of wood lying in water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: "I shall light a fire, I shall produce heat." What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by taking the upper fire-stick and rubbing it against the wet sappy piece of wood lying in the water?"

“No, Master Gotama. Why not? Because it is a wet sappy piece of wood, and it is lying in water. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment.”

“So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who still do not live bodily and mentally withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has not been fully abandoned and suppressed internally, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment. This was the first simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before.”

A second example appears in *Sutta* 13 of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Tevijja Sutta*. In this *sutta*, the question comes up among two Brahmins, Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, regarding various paths and methods leading to salvation—referring here to union with Brahmā¹²—taught by teachers. If there is only one path that can lead to this goal, how can there be so many paths espoused by the teachers. Or to cite the simile presented by Vāseṭṭha, “Just as if there were near a town or village many different paths—do all these come together at that place? And likewise, do the ways of the various Brahmins ...lead the one who follows them to union with Brahmā?” The response of the Buddha takes us back to the notion of what is considered valid knowledge expressed in the *Saṅgārava Sutta*: that based on tradition, that based on reason and investigation, and that based on experience. It is obvious that Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja refer to teachers who are traditionalists (*anussavikā*), in this instance, those who place ultimate authority on the Three Vedas. The response of the Buddha is typically based on experiential grounds: there is no direct insight, no sensory or extra-sensory perception of the goal and the path leading to the goal. So the Buddha declares, “...is there then a single one of these Brahmins learned in the Three Vedas who has seen Brahmā face to face?” “No,” replies Vāseṭṭha, not only to this question but also to the question of whether the teachers’ teachers or even their ancestors going back seven generations witnessed Brahmā. One simile employed by the Buddha to illustrate the Brahmins’ inability to teach the path leading to the “union with Brahmā” is quoted as follows:

Vāseṭṭha, it is just as if a man were to say: “I am going to seek out and love the most beautiful girl in the country.” They might say to him: “... Do you know what caste she belongs to?” “No.” “Well, do you know her name, her clan, whether she is tall or short..., dark or light-complexioned..., or where she come from?” “No.” “And they might say: “Well, then, you don’t know or see the one you seek for and desire?” and he would say: “No.” Does not the talk of that man turn out to be stupid?” “Certainly, Reverend Gotama.”¹³

It is usually the case that the respondent agrees with the point that the Buddha is making. The outcome of such conversations resulted usually in a positive and an uplifting experience or actual conversion. Thus the clarity of Buddha’s response in the *Tevijja Sutta* caused Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja to take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha.¹⁴ In other cases, Buddha’s audience or inquirer is said to rejoice and delight¹⁵ upon hearing what he said, or is inspired, incited, and delighted.¹⁶ All

indicate the signs of a successful teacher. The Buddha's own definition of a good teacher, or, in the language of the *Lohicca Sutta* (DN I. 232), 'not worthy of reproof' (*na codanāraho*):

Here, Lohicca, a Tathāgata arises in the world, an Arahant, fully-enlightened Buddha (*sammāsambuddho*), endowed with wisdom and conduct (*vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno*), Well-Farer, Knower of the worlds, incomparable Trainer of men to be tamed (*purrisa-damma-sārathi*), Teacher of gods and humans, enlightened and blessed. He, having realised it by his own super-knowledge, proclaims this world with its devas, māras and Brahmās, its princes and people. He preaches the Dhamma which is lovely in its beginning, lovely in its middle, lovely in its ending, in the spirit and in the letter, and displays the fully-perfected and purified holy life.¹⁷

This passage illustrates the unique qualifications of the Buddha as Teacher that cannot be shared by others except other fully-enlightened Buddhas. On the other hand, there are many teachers of mundane topics that fall under the category of good and responsible teachers. The relevant passage appears in the *Sigālaka Sutta* (DN III. 189):

And there are five ways in which their teachers, thus ministered to by their pupils as the southern direction will reciprocate: they will give thorough instruction, make sure they have grasped what they should have duly grasped, give them a thorough grounding in all skills, recommend them to their friends and colleagues, and provide them with security in all direction.

Whatever is said of the techniques and responsibilities of the teacher, The *Lohicca Sutta* suggests that what is truly important are the teacher-educator's unique experiences and special knowledge—a knowledge beyond reason and the senses—that is truly transformative. It is this knowledge that is capable of affecting listeners to bring about a complete transformation of their existence. The teacher-educator in brief is the motivator. The *Lohicca* repeats the passages appearing in the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (DN, sutta 2) that describe the steps taken by the listener-householder once the Dhamma is heard. The householder, according to this *sutta*, goes through the following steps (DN I.63-97):

1. Once the listener-householder hears the Dhamma, faith (*saddham*) in the Tathāgata is established.
2. This faith leads to the homeless (*anagāriyam*) life of the holy or brahmalike life (*brahmacariyam*).
3. As a homeless renunciant, he follows the Pāṭimokkha constraints, the rules of the community of monastics and concentrates on right behavior.
4. Right behavior is continued with the perfecting of all the virtuous actions (*sīla*) described in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (DN, sutta 1).¹⁸
5. Once perfected in virtuous actions, the monk (*bhikkhu*) then guards the door to his sense organs (*indriyesu*).
6. This is followed by his being accomplished in mindfulness (*sati*) and comprehension (*sampajaññā*).
7. This leads to the monk being contented (*santuṭṭha*) with his condition in life.

8. Equipped with these qualities (numbers 4-7) he seeks a secluded lodging and maintains his mindfulness.
9. Having forsaken covetousness in the world, he dwells with a mind free of covetousness, and so he abandons the five hindrances: ill-will and hatred, sloth and torpor, worry and anxiety, and doubt.
10. Once achieved, delight (*pāmuḍḍa*) arises, followed by joy (*pīti*), which brings tranquility of the body. From tranquility of the body comes an ease (*sukha*) that leads to focused thought (*sukhino cittaṃ samādhiyati*).
11. The mind, once focused or concentrated and detached from sensuality (*kāmehi*) unwholesome mental states (*akusalehi dhammehi*), he enters the first *jhāna* or meditative stage.
12. He then progresses to the second, third, and fourth meditative states, the latter a state beyond mental ease and dejectedness (*somanassa* and *domanassa*).
13. The mind (*citta*) concentrated, purified, free of impurities (*vigatūpakkilese*), is then directed to seeing by means of insight knowledge¹⁹ (*ñāṇa-dassana*) understands the body as material and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) bound to it.
14. With concentrated mind, he produces a mind-made or psychic body (*mano-mayaṃ kāyaṃ*) and draws that body out of this body. Just as one were to remove a reed from the grass (*muñja*) sheath, so too from the mind-made body is extracted a perfected mind-made body.
15. With concentrated mind (and perhaps due to the perfected mind-made or psychic body) comes the ability to demonstrate the various psychic powers (*iddhi*) such as becoming many, walking on water, and flying cross-legged.
16. Other powers are developed, such as clairaudience (*dibba-sota*), mind-reading (*cetopariyañāṇa*), knowledge of one's previous existences (*pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa*), the knowledge of the passing away and arising of beings with the "divine eye" (*dibba-cakkhu*), and most importantly, the gaining of the knowledge of the destruction of the intoxicants (*āsava-kkhaya-ñāṇa*) of sense-desire (*kāma*), of becoming (*bhava*), and of ignorance (*avijjā*), which is another way of stating that the monk has gained liberation (*vimutta*). The statement that ends this sequence with the statement declaring the Summum Bonum or Arahantship: "Ended is birth, the brahmaṇical-life has been led, done is what had to be done, there is nothing further here" (*khīṇā jāti vusitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ kataṃ karaṇīyaṃ nāparaṃ itthattāyāti*).

Conclusions

What lessons may be drawn from this and the other *suttas* cited in this paper? First, we must be mindful that Buddhist education employed as a phrase or compound does not necessarily possess a clear and unambiguous sense. Buddhist education may entail education on the topic of Buddhism in general or, more specifically, in Buddhist values. It may also entail a specific or unique methodology employed by Buddhists in disseminating information on either Buddhism or on topics that are non-Buddhist. Although the teaching methodology is important, it is not my intention to place greater importance on the methodology employed by the Buddha and his followers. As described in this paper, his methods are effective, insightful, and cognizant of the foibles of human behavior. As an effective teacher, his purpose was primarily

motivational, designed to instigate his audience to act upon the fundamental Truths as revealed by the Buddha regarding who we are and what we can become.

Methodology and motivation notwithstanding, Buddhist education is primarily concerned with an eschatology that is based upon the direct experience of the teacher and that can be replicated by those who follow his guidance. This eschatology is one that reveals the great themes of suffering and redemption, the destruction of ignorance and realization of final and authoritative Truth, and the assumption that one's transformation from an unperfected to a perfected state is achieved through one's own efforts and not the efforts of others.

Furthermore, there is the underlying assumption that there is a "quality," "ability," "potential," or perhaps "process" within the individual that makes it possible to achieve this goal. In the context of Buddhism, this process is karma.²⁰ Past actions define one status in the present, so we may assume that one's current habits, abilities, talents, and inclinations are not accidental but rather the results of intended or planned activities committed sometime in the past. No individual is born a blank slate but is rather programmed to become conscious of certain aspirations that may arise naturally or through the inspiration of another: a gifted teacher, for instance, who instigates individuals to act upon their inclinations.

I believe that such is the case of the Buddha, the teacher who motivates the others to take heed of his message. Not only are some individuals prepared to receive the message from the teacher, but the teacher too is equipped to deliver the message because it is based upon his direct experience and not upon ideology, appeal to authority, or through reason. This experience is assumed to be the highest form of knowledge perhaps because it is a knowledge not previously known before. If a doctrine is revealed as entirely novel—never stated before—then what is the source of this doctrine? Surely not from a previous teacher or teaching.

Because of this approach, we find an emphasis in Buddhism on knowledge, the various means of acquiring that knowledge, the stages of knowledge, and the sources of knowledge. In the general context of society at the time of the Buddha, we might conclude that the dominant or orthodox religious worldview (the Brāhmaṇical) placed greater emphasis on the *external* forces of nature and the divine world, on a sympathetic magic or ritual action (*karma-mārga*) that controlled the forces of nature for the benefit of the community. On the other hand, the Buddha and other experientialists of his time placed more emphasis on forces within the individual capable of experiencing a reality beyond the natural world, this reality subsumed under the term "knowledge" (*jñāna-mārga*).²¹ In a sense, both reflected methods reflecting in a metaphorical sense the "physical" alchemical approach (i.e., the Brāhmaṇical worldview) and a "spiritual" alchemical approach (the Buddhist worldview).

One must concede that both represented great discoveries in the annals of epistemology. Indeed, permutations of both approaches are reflected in the sciences (for example the progression of alchemy to chemistry, astrology to astronomy) and in modern occult and esoteric movements in the West. Both are viewed as valid by portions of the community, but why one is chosen over the other is not easily answered. Indeed, the whole issue of critical or correct thinking is based upon the presumption that one source of knowledge is valid and the other not: a rather arbitrary standard for such an exacting discipline.

Given what is stated above, it should not be surprising that the Buddha was first and foremost an educator, only secondarily a trainer or instructor. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, “education” implies a drawing out of the person’s own experience in the light of day. The further implication is that this drawing out is a realization or understanding of the matter under question. Education seems to be a corollary to the experientialist stance of the Buddha, just as “instruction” is the corollary to the traditional or authoritative approach. “To educate” implies that the person already has internal information and experience to understand the new teaching; “to instruct” does not. Although there is room for “instruction” or “training” in the Buddhist “education,” when the term education is employed, it points not to a specific regimen and goal but rather to a whole system and path designed to lead the individual from the ordinary state of human existence to that extraordinary state of realization. For this reason, I believe that the statement of Aristotle as quoted by Diogenes Laertius aptly encapsulated the difference between an educated and uneducated person: “As much,” said he, “as the living are to the dead.”

Notes

¹ Aristotle, as quoted in Diogenes Laertius (200 CE), in *From the Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* (Bohn Classical Library, and translated by Charles Duke Yonge).

² This is quoted from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. V, 74.

³ S. J. Curtis, and M. E. A. Boulton, *A Short History of Educational Ideas*, 4th ed. (London: University Tutorial Press Ltd., 1965), 337.

⁴ “Reason” is a label to include any mental process or logical sequence that reaches a truth based solely on the mental process.

⁵ Achieving perfection in the higher knowledge in this present existence (*abhiññā-vosāna-pārimippattā*) is the phrase used in the text. The term *abhiññā-* is translated as “direct knowledge” in Bhikkhu Ñānamoli’s and Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 820.

⁶ This is discussed in detail in K. N. Jayatilleke’s *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963), 170f. The passage is as follow: ...*pubbe ananussutesu dhammesu sāmaṃ yeva dhammaṃ abhiññāya dīṭṭhadhammābhiññā-vosānapāramippattā ādibrahmacariyaṃ paṭijjānanti.*

⁷ Which in the present *Sutta* bases reason on faith (in this instance on non-Buddhist movements) but may also be based on a number of other factors, including tradition, meditational [*jhānic*] experiences, retro-cognition, or reasoning itself. Why faith would be the basis of reason may be explained through the context of the Cankī *Sutta* (*Majjhima Nikāya* II. 173), wherein faith is employed more as the foundational tool leading to the study, reflection, examination of the teachings and eventually complete or perfect knowledge. See also *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 262. For details see pp. 204-261.

⁸ *The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya Piṭaka)*, vol. IV (*Mahāvagga*), translated by I.B. Horner (London & Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), 10 [*Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, vol. XIV].

⁹ *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 134 (Alagaddūpama *Sutta*, 13-14).

¹⁰ *Majjhima Nikāya* I. 274-75 (Mahāssapura *Sutta*, 13).

¹¹ The quote is taken from the *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 335-36.

¹² Just what is meant by the phrase, “union with Brahmā” (*brahmāṇaṃ saḥavyūpagā* or *brahma-sahavyatā*) is unclear in the *sūtra*. It is certain, however, that there is considerable discussion both within the Vedas concerning the relation of the neuter *brahman* and masculine Brahmā in an effort to establish the authority of the Vedas. An excellent discussion of this subject appears in Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 172-184.

¹³ *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, translated by Maurice Walshe (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 190.

¹⁴ Also in the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (Dīgha Nikāya I.202), *the Subha Sutta* (DN I. 210), and the *Lohicca Sutta* (DN I. 234).

¹⁵ The two terms are *attamana* and *abhi-nand* in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (DN I. 46), *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* (DN I. 86], and *abhi-nand* in *Mahāli Sutta* (DN I. 158), and the *Kevaddha Sutta* (DN I. 223)

¹⁶ *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (DN I. 126): *samādapetvā samuttejetvā sampahaṃsetvā*. Also in *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (DN I.149).

¹⁷ Quote taken from *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 184.

¹⁸ The actions are described in DN I.8-28.

¹⁹ I am grateful to Bhikkhu Pasadika for this translation.

²⁰ For a discussion of karma, see my “A Theravāda Buddhist Contribution to Universal Ethics,” *Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism*, vol. 3 (2002): 14-26.

²¹ Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 416-25.