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List of Contributors

Richard Gombrich founded the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies in 2004, on his retirement from the Boden Chair of Sanskrit at Oxford University. He has recently retired as Academic Director, although he continues on the Board of Trustees. He wishes that more people shared his interest in most aspects of Buddhism. richard.gombrich@balliol.ox.ac.uk

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Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi is an American Buddhist monk. He holds a PhD in philosophy from Claremont Graduate University (1972). After completing his university studies, he traveled to Sri Lanka, where he received novice ordination in 1972 and full ordination in 1973. Ven. Bodhi has many important publications to his credit, either as author, translator, or editor. His most recent translation is *The Suttanipāta: An Ancient Collection of the Buddha's Discourses* (Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2017). He lives and teaches at Chuang Yen Monastery in upstate New York. venbodhi@gmail.com

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Editorial

Alexander Wynne

This edition of JOCBS is the first since Richard Gombrich stepped down as Editor and Academic Director of the OCBS. Another milestone has been reached, in that the OCBS recently became independent from the University of Oxford. Since the OCBS was never funded by the University, independence will not affect any of its current activities; further online courses, in Pali and early Buddhist Studies, will soon be produced, and the journal will still be published. The JOCBS will also continue to publish special editions of the journal. The next volume, a supplement to this volume, is entitled *Buddhist Leadership in Contemporary China*, guest edited by Dr. Carsten Krause of the Numata Center for Buddhist Studies (University of Hamburg).

Anyone who has benefited from the output of the OCBS is deeply indebted to Richard Gombrich; his creation of this journal, which is quite unlike any other in the field, is particularly important. Thanks to the diversity of its contributors, many of whom hail from outside academia, JOCBS covers a broader range of subjects and expresses a far more varied set of opinions than normal. With virtually no subject off limits, and with free-thinking welcomed and debate encouraged, JOCBS could be said to have been crafted in Richard's image. This is exactly what is needed right now.

As Richard has occasionally lamented in his editorials, the horizons of Buddhist Studies seem to be contracting. In particular, the study of early Buddhism has been marginalised, and a strange code of silence prevails with regard to the Buddha. One reason for this is the relatively small world of Buddhist Studies. There being few people with whom to discuss and debate, scholars often work in isolation, and the loudest voices tend to dominate. The resulting herd mentality benefits nobody, especially when it militates against certain opinions and particular areas of enquiry.

Exactly this has happened with regard to the study of the Buddha. To see its effects we need look no further than Richard's editorial to JOCBS 4, which describes how an article of his was rejected because of the 'assumption that we know what the Buddha taught', and because 'of presenting no arguments' for this. Since academic opinion about the Buddha is split – some think the evidence shows that the Buddha existed, others deny this – what is an editor to do? Richard's approach, followed by JOCBS, is that if 'it can be seen that the alleged flaws are matters on which scholars disagree, it is the editor's clear duty to publish what the author wants to say, even if it is not his/her own view, rather than take sides with the reviewer.'

The fact that this simple point is no longer obvious is concerning. Even more worrying, however, is the likelihood of censorship. Since the field of Buddhist Studies is small and Richard's style inimitable, the reviewer(s) would have known whose work they were rejecting. The peer review process is quite easy to corrupt. As Richard noted, it is 'only the referees who are truly anonymous. This demands a high standard of integrity. If a referee misrepresents what is in the article, they can harm the author without fear of redress'.

This state of affairs is alarming, but the moral failure is compounded by the inevitable double standards. A few years ago, the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, the most important journal in the field, published an article entitled 'The Idea of the Historical Buddha'.[1] This paper is thin on argumentation, does not consider any primary textual evidence, and ignores everything which disagrees with it, including important recent studies of early Buddhist texts.[2] Notions such as that there is 'an industry devoted to the production of sensational claims about the Buddha' reveal the article to be nothing more than a polemic. While provocation can be useful in academia, and in this case a couple of substantial replies have already appeared,[3] it is doubtful that the JIABS published the article for this reason.

[1] David Drewes, 'The Idea of the Historical Buddha'. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 40 (2017).

[2] The most notable omission being *The Authenticity of early Buddhist* teaching, by Bhikkhus Sujato and Brahmali, a special edition of JOCBS from 2015.

[3] Oskar von Hinüber, 'The Buddha as a Historical Person', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, 42 (2019); A. Wynne, 'Did the Buddha Exist?', *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies*, 16 (2019).

An insight into the extent of the madness comes from a rather predictable source. In the introduction to Steven Collins' recent book, *Wisdom as a Way of Life: Theravāda Buddhism Reimagined*,[4] Justin McDaniel refers to Collins' view that academic reconstructions of early Buddhism are 'intellectually dangerous'. While the precise nature of the danger is not stated, it would seem that thinking about the Buddha is now regarded as morally repugnant. But if the Buddha no longer has a place within academia, critical thought about him now seems to be flourishing in the temple. In a strange inversion of perspectives, most of the reasonable voices on the subject are Buddhist monks. Whereas the likes of bhikkhus Analayo, Bodhi, Brahmali and Sujato all consider the evidence carefully and offer balanced arguments (often in the JOCBS), modern sceptics spout their forebodings of doom, and issue their priestly missives, from the ivory towers of academia. The priests would seem to have switched places with the scientists.

Where do we go from here? We should perhaps reflect on the Buddhist truth that suffering is inevitable, and often inflicted by our species' particular capacity for stupidity. A Buddhist analysis of the root cause of this malaise would probably identify ignorance (about what ultimately matters) and desire (to control what people think and say). The remedy for this problem, alas, is unlikely to be found in kindness and compassion. We should instead take a lead from another aspect of early Buddhism, and reflect on the atmosphere of open debate which existed during the life of the Buddha, which is mirrored in our modern tradition of enlightened freedom:

> But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.[5]

It was in this spirit that the JOCBS was founded by Richard Gombrich, and so shall it continue. Submissions from all aspects of opinion are welcome, and any opinion will be considered, in particular anything that is deemed dangerous.

[4] *Columbia University Press*, 2020.

[5] J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 2

Obituary

Richard Gombrich

In our editorial to the previous issue (May 2020) we published a rather brief obituary for Prof. Stefano Zacchetti (1968-2020), who died suddenly on 29 April, and we promised to give more details of his academic career in this issue. His old friend Prof. Francesca Tarocco has kindly given us permission to reprint an obituary which she originally wrote for the *Bulletin of the European Association of Chinese Studies*, and has been reprinted on the website glorisunglobalnetwork.org/in-memoriam-stefano-zacchetti/; she also drew my attention to the list of his academic publications on the internet at http://aisc-org.it/stefano-zacchetti-publications-list. We are grateful to her for her help.

Professor Stefano Zacchetti, who died on 29 April 2020 at the age of 52, was one of the world's most distinguished scholars and teachers in the field of Buddhist Studies. His untimely death has shocked all of us who knew him and were fortunate enough to be his friends and colleagues. An intellectual of the highest order whose boundless energy and thoroughness showed in each and every one of his published papers and monographs in both English and Italian, he was also an exceptionally charming and generous man, a loving father, and a steadfast and loyal friend. As I sit down to write this tribute to the Yehan Numata Professor of Buddhist Studies and fellow of Balliol College, Oxford, I do it in the full knowledge that he would quite possibly have been embarrassed by it. He was a humble person. His attitude toward life was urbane, vivacious and light-hearted.

Stefano's was a life well lived. He spent part of his youth in the beautiful Italian town of Stresa on Lake Maggiore. Perhaps because of this, he remained keenly aware of his natural surroundings and loved walking in the mountains. At the *liceo classico* of Novara, he received an early philological training in

Latin and ancient Greek. He also studied music and played the viola well; he loved to immerse himself in the study of the sonatas of Tartini and Scarlatti. Far from being contemptuous of the academic rigours imposed on his youth, he was incredibly grateful to all those who taught him, including the Catholic priests of the Collegio Rosmini founded by the noted philosopher and theologian Antonio Rosmini. "Once a *rosminiano*, always a *rosminiano*" – he told me with his characteristic ironic smile when we first met at Sichuan University in 1992. For all his erudition, Stefano was a witty and convivial man who never took himself too seriously. He loved to tell funny stories, which he crowned with infectious laughter. He spent two happy and productive years in Chengdu, where he met his life partner, Yang Kan. They married before moving back to Italy, and then to Japan. Stefano absolutely adored their two children, Giulio and Livio. Their lives were cosmopolitan and multilingual, full of laughter, books, and long walks in their beloved alpine region of Cansiglio in Northern Italy.

Stefano's life work was dedicated to the study of early Chinese Buddhist translations (2nd-5th centuries CE) and Mahāyāna sūtra and commentarial literature in Sanskrit and Chinese. As a young man, he was already committed to the highest standards of scholarship. His outstanding *tesi di laurea* (undergraduate dissertation) was a comparative study of all the Chinese versions of the Diamond Sutra from the Han to the Tang periods, running to almost 400 pages. Written with clarity and insightfulness in the beautiful prose that characterised all of Stefano's writings, it included a masterful account of the textual history of a Mahāyāna scripture.

His penetrating and authoritative analysis of the language of the early Chinese translations of Buddhist texts is undoubtedly one of his major contributions to the field and one of the topics that preoccupied him for the remainder of his life. Of the intertwined worlds of translation and exegesis, he wrote in the Preface to his thesis: "For translation was always, for Chinese Buddhists, also exegesis, a lively knowledge-making process… not just an ἔργον but also, and mostly, an ἐνέργεια". This sentence strikes me as almost autobiographical.

Contemplating the ever-increasing demands imposed on our time and that of our students, I find it remarkable that Stefano always knew that he should take his time: he spent years working assiduously on each of his publications. In his youth, he looked for congenial surroundings to pursue his studies and sought out scholars who could teach him Sanskrit and Classical Chinese, as well as Buddhist philology, including Giuliano Boccali, Maurizio Scarpari, Tillman Vetter and Erik Zürcher. How precisely to combine a deep knowledge of

Buddhist Sanskrit and literary Chinese to study the obscure and stubborn idiom of the early Chinese translation of Buddhist scriptures is something he strove to understand all his life. We should all be grateful for the commanding results of his endeavours. Recently, he had revisited some of his early efforts in the article "Mind the Hermeneutical Gap: A Terminological Issue in Kumārajīva's Version of the Diamond Sutra" in *Proceedings from the Symposium "Chinese Buddhist Studies in the Past, Present and Future"*, Foguang daxue fojiao yanjiu zhongxin 佛光大學佛教研究中心, 2015. This illuminating essay he dedicated to "the memory of my teacher Tillman Vetter", whose photograph sat by Stefano's desk in Oxford.

Stefano was known among his friends as an avid pipe smoker, a pipe collector and a bibliophile. He started building up his own personal library in his early 20s. He found Antonello da Messina's painting of "St. Jerome in his Study" particularly poignant and for years kept a copy of it by his desk. In Venice, he had had access to a remarkable collection of books on India and East Asia, which were kept in stunning if unlikely surroundings at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini on San Giorgio Maggiore Island. He loved to cross the waters to consult the *Taishō Tripiṭaka* in the rooms of the collections of "Venezia e l'Oriente", a memory he joyfully shared with others whose intellectual trajectories in Buddhist Studies, Chinese Studies and Japanese Studies had begun in the same rooms.

Stefano delighted in linguistic and philological challenges. Because he never forgot that the texts he painstakingly studied were created from human experience and imagination, he remained somewhat sceptical of theory pursued for its own sake: thoroughness and clarity grounded his work. He was convinced that the study of early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures represented a rich and largely untouched source for the study of the history of medieval Chinese. In particular, he was long interested in the relation between text and commentary, which, in contrast to prevailing views, he saw as an interactive two-way street. His ideas on philology, the value of early Chinese materials and the history of texts were most powerfully argued in one of his major works, a study of the prolific translator *Dharmarakṣa's earliest version of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā and its surviving parallel Sanskrit tradition: In Praise of the Light: A Critical Synoptic Edition with an Annotated Translation of Chapters 1-3 of Dharmarakṣa's Guang zan jing* 光讚經*, Being the Earliest Chinese Translation of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā*, Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica VIII (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for

Advanced Buddhology, 2005 [The pdf version is freely accessible online: http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/orc/Publications/BPPB/index_BPPB.html].). This monograph, a substantially modified version of his doctoral dissertation (originally written in Italian), which he had submitted to Ca' Foscari University in Venice in 1999, is a formidable scholarly effort and an invaluable resource for many scholars. It is no exaggeration to say that even its introductory section on the lineages of Chinese Buddhist canons, which serves as a background to the actual study, is authoritative.

In an academic career that took him from Venice to Chengdu, Leiden and Tokyo, back to Venice, and finally to Oxford, Stefano held forth on Buddhology, the possibilities of translation, the history of philology, lexicography, textual hermeneutics, and Sinology. He is also the author of two beautifully crafted translations of Buddhist texts: *Storie delle sei perfezioni. Racconti scelti dal Liu du ji jing [Selected tales from the Liu du ji jing T 152]*, Venezia: Marsilio, 2013, and *Fazang – Il Trattato del leone d'oro*, Esedra Editrice, Padova 2000 [Critical edition and annotated Translation of Fazang's 法藏 *Treatise on the Golden Lion* 金師子章], with an introductory essay].

From 2001 to 2005, Stefano was an associate professor at the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University in Tokyo, where he spent many happy years working in close contact with colleagues and friends who were very dear to him, including Akira Yuyuama, Seishi Karashima and Jan Nattier. His first child, Giulio, was born in Japan. When the family decided to return to Italy, Stefano became a tenured lecturer at the Department of Asian and North African Studies at the University of Venice, where he fondly enjoyed the friendship of many of his colleagues, with many of whom he also actively collaborated. During his time in Italy, he published two major articles; "A 'New' Early Chinese Buddhist Commentary: The Nature of the *Da anban shouyi jing* 大安般守意經 T 602 Reconsidered", in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1–2, 2008 (2010) pp. 421–484 and "Defining An Shigao's 安 世 高 Translation Corpus: The State of the Art in Relevant Research", in: Shen Weirong 沈 衛 榮 (ed.), *Historical and Philological Studies of China's Western Regions* (西域历史语言研究集刊), No. 3, 2010, pp. 249-270.

In 2011, Stefano held a visiting professorship in Buddhist Studies at UC Berkeley and in 2012, he took up the position of Numata Chair of Buddhist Studies at the University of Oxford, a move that helped strengthen the Asian Studies faculty of both Balliol College and the university. His experience

of a variety of environments no doubt made his shift to Oxford all the more successful. While there, he kept up his international activities and was a frequent visitor to China, where he was regularly invited to teach in intensive Buddhist Studies training programmes and summer schools. This he did with considerable panache. He was a popular and inspiring teacher who often achieved impressive results from his undergraduate and postgraduate pupils.

Stefano relished the major intellectual challenge of breaking new ground in his multifaceted field and was also, equally, generous in acknowledging his peers' contributions to his work. His closest colleagues and teachers were also his best friends. He loved reading and translating Buddhist texts together with other scholars in Europe, Japan, Taiwan and the United States and worked tirelessly to set up and convene online and offline gatherings. In his college life at Balliol, he enjoyed the civilized and cosmopolitan atmosphere, in which he could, for instance, discuss Italian literature, in Italian, with the college fellows. The opportunities for conviviality and good conversation were a perfect match for his character. At the time of his passing Stefano was putting the finishing touches to a book titled *The* Da zhidu lun 大智度論 (**Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa) and the History of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā: Patterns of Textual Variation in Mahāyāna Sūtra Literature* (Forthcoming from Hamburg Buddhist Studies).

We will miss you terribly Stefano, *caro amico*.

Publications.

Monograph:

1. *Storie delle sei perfezioni. Racconti scelti dal Liu du ji jing* [*Selected tales from the Liu du ji jing T 152*]. Venezia: Marsilio, 2013.
2. *In Praise of the Light: A Critical Synoptic Edition with an Annotated Translation of Chapters 1-3 of Dharmarakṣas Guang zan jing* 光讚經, *Being the Earliest Chinese Translation of the Larger Prajñāpāramitā*, The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology — Soka University (Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica VIII), Tokyo 2005. [The pdf version is freely accessible online: http://iriab.soka.ac.jp/orc/Publications/BPPB/index_BPPB.html].
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Article:

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28. “The Rediscovery of Three Early Buddhist Scriptures on Meditation: A Preliminary Analysis of the *Fo shuo shier men jing*, the *Fo shuo jie shier men jing* Translated by An Shigao and Their Commentary Preserved in the Newly Found Kongōji Manuscript”, *Annual Report of The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University for the Academic Year 2002*, n. 6, 2003, pp. 251-299. = “*Sanbu zaoqi chanding fojiao jingdian de chongxin faxian- xin faxian Jingangsi An Shigao yi Foshuo shi’ermen jing, Foshuo jie shi’ermen jing yiji zhushi de chubu yanjiu*” 三部早期禪定佛教經典的重新發現——新發現金剛寺安世高譯《佛說十二門經》《佛說解十二門經》以及注釋的初步研究, Ji Yun 紀贇 (tr.), in: Hong Xiuping 洪修平 (ed.), *Studies of Buddhist Culture* (佛教文化研究), Vol.6, Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2018. pp.102-181.

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Edward Conze: A Call to Reassess the Man and his Contribution to Prajñāpāramitā Studies

Jayarava Attwood

Abstract

Edward Conze still dominates the field of *Prajñāpāramitā* Studies, such as it is, forty years after his death in 1979. He continues to draw the highest praise from some quarters for his "meticulous" scholarship and his "pioneering" work on *Prajñāpāramitā*. Does he deserve this praise? As a person, he could be extremely unpleasant shading into something more like malevolence. He was a self-confessed elitist, who hated "blacks" and thought of women as "servants". As a scholar, Conze was erratic, eccentric, and obscurantist with a *conscious* commitment to magical thinking. His editions, translations, and exegesis of *Prajñāpāramitā* are all unreliable. The argument here, however, is not for summary judgement; rather, I present evidence to establish the case for a thorough reassessment of Conze's oeuvre.

Introduction

The eccentric Anglo-German scholar, Eberhard Julius Dietrich Conze (1904–1979), aka Dr Edward Conze, looms large in the study of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.[1] In an *unfavourable* review of Conze's *Large Sutra* translation, Leon

[1] I posted a draft of this essay on academia.edu and received some helpful comments from various people. I would especially like to acknowledge the extensive input from Eric Zsebenyi who took me to task for being unfair on Conze. Although I am unrepentant, Eric's comments did make me reinforce my case somewhat. Several high-profile academics encouraged me to pursue this aspect

Hurvitz (1923-1992) referred to Conze as "a meticulous scholar" and suggested that alone of Buddhist converts, his scholarship is "above reproach" (Hurvitz 1969: 403-404). Such accolades are not unusual right up to the present and one could be forgiven for thinking that this was a consensus view.

The key historical source for Conze's life is his *Memoirs of a Modern Gnostic* (1979 I & II), written at the behest of Jan Willem de Jong (see Wiles 2018). It was published in two parts, though these were circulated together in a ring-bound A4 format. Conze alludes to a Part III which contains statements his lawyer deemed open to prosecution for libel or breaching the Race Relations Act. Conze decided to delay publication until after the deaths of the people concerned on the principle that dead men file no lawsuits. After Conze died in 1979, Part III disappeared without a trace. There is a persistent rumour in the Triratna Buddhist Order that Sangharakshita (d. 2018), who had been on good terms with Conze, had a copy of Part III. I asked him about this in 2007 and he denied ever having had a copy of the manuscript and said he thought Muriel had destroyed it after Conze's death. Paul Williams, who helped to arrange the purchase Conze's library for Bristol University ca 1980-81, recalls seeing the manuscript but it was not part of the purchase and he also thinks that Muriel destroyed it (personal communication 21 May 2020). It was not amongst the personal papers that later were acquired and archived at Bristol. So it seems unlikely that any copies survive. On balance, this is probably a good thing.

Jan Nattier (2003) noted several principles for extracting historical information from normative texts such as Buddhist sutras, one of which was the *principle of embarrassment*. This states that if something is included in a normative text that reflects poorly on the author, then it is likely to be true, for few authors set out to darken their own reputations. A great deal of what Conze says about himself reflects poorly on him and this has been exacerbated by social changes in the last 10-15 years that have shifted public attitudes. Some may argue that it is unfair to judge him by the standards of our time when the moral boundaries have been redrawn. As we will see, even by the standards of his day, Conze was a rather extreme man. The standards for good scholarship, by contrast, have not changed very much and holding him to these standards needs no justification.

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of my work on the *Heart Sutra* without wanting to be drawn into the inevitable controversy. I'm not entirely comfortable being a lightning rod, but someone had to say something. I thank Eivind Kahrs for discussing this issue with me at length and for reading and critiquing the draft essay.

In the Romantic view, a genius may be forgiven any number of flaws as long as they produce art or literature that appeals to Romantic sensibilities. Historical examples include Mozart's appalling manners, Byron's drug addiction, and Jung's sexual incontinence. Typically, the flaws of the Romantic "genius" are minimalized by Romantics because of their contributions to art and letters. True art is thought to transcend such petty concerns as morality. Conze's oeuvre very much appealed to the Romantic sensibilities of the post-War English-speaking world and his class sensibilities likely appealed to the English (though not to some in the British Labour Party). He partly rode the post-war rush to embrace so-called "Eastern Mysticism", so poignantly described in Gita Mehta's book, *Karma Cola*, but he was also fêted by scholars like Hurvitz who seemed to view religious enthusiasm warily.

I approach Conze with the jaundiced eye of Generation-X, having grown up with vocal feminists attacking the patriarchy and the ongoing exposure of church leaders and popular entertainers as sexual predators. I'm also one of a handful of scholars who have published more than one article on the *Heart Sutra*, and one of perhaps a dozen who have had a *sustained* interest in *Prajñāpāramitā* after Conze. In this essay, I try to establish a case for re-evaluating Edward Conze and his contribution. Firstly, I will use his own words to indict him as a snob, a narcissist, a racist, and a misogynist. Worse, I will argue that Conze was a kind of intellectual fraud. Much of his scholarship is tainted by poor attention to detail. The fact that he was very obviously *not meticulous* raises the question of why he is so often credited with such accolades. By far the worst aspect of Conze's contribution, however, has been his confusion of Buddhism with his peculiar personal religion, which mixes Theosophy with a melange of perennial philosophy and mysticism framed in Buddhist technical terms. Having encountered Conze's work over nearly three decades and more recently having reviewed his work on the *Heart Sutra* in forensic detail, my principal response has been to ask, "How did he get away it?"

As we learned in laborious and painful detail watching the political events of American politics in 2019, an indictment is not a trial. An indictment is an argument for the necessity of a trial. And even when that argument is successfully made, a trial may not occur. I will be making the best case I can that Conze deserves to be put on trial, which in this context means being subjected to critical scrutiny. Historian, Carl R. Trueman makes the salient point that objectivity is not neutral or unbiased (2010: 27ff). Objectivity by its very nature excludes the majority of explanations. My aim here is objectivity, not neutrality. The corollary is that scholars have not looked at Conze and *Prajñāpāramitā* objectively and critically. I will offer evidence to all these charges.

Conze the Man

Reading *Memoirs* we wade through a series of self-absorbed anecdotes full of Conze's trademark contradictions and disparaging remarks. We meet a man who has many of the social attitudes we might expect from his bourgeois European background (concerning class and race for example) but who was also an avowed Communist (at least for a time). He professed to hate warmongering but, because of his intolerance, he harboured lifelong animosities based on perceived faults in others. He was an industrious worker, but a lazy intellectual who preferred magical thinking and mysticism to reason and science. As he says, his "life-long acceptance of magic... has not been so much due to theoretical considerations as to the early acquired intuitive certainty that beyond, or behind, the veil of the deceptive sensory appearances, there lies a reality of magical, or occult, forces" (I 32). And in his view science "…has little cognitive value, but is rather a bag of tricks invented by God-defying people to make life increasingly unbearable on Earth and finally to destroy it" (I 32).

Conze was a man who believed in his own genius and seems to have something of a Messianic complex. For example, he says, "From early times onwards it has been my conviction that I have come from a higher realm... and that I was sent to the Western barbarians so as to soften their hearts by teaching them the Holy Prajñāpāramitā" (I 55). On the other hand, he makes it clear that he despises those same barbarians: "Speaking of 'hoi polloi', it has always been a cornerstone of my beliefs that there are two qualitatively distinct kinds of people... 'the Noble ones' and 'the foolish common people'... the elite and the canaille" (I 52). The French word *canaille* means "a pack of dogs". The messiah who hates the people he has been sent to save is not a common trope in storytelling, but messianic delusions are, sadly, all too common.

Early Life

Conze freely admits that he was a man of his class and age (I iv). His father was from German aristocracy and his mother the daughter of a wealthy industrialist. The Conze family owned textile manufacturing plants in the small but wealthy town of Langenberg near the Ruhr Valley. His mother's family, the Köttgens, were also "textile barons" (Heine 2016: xvii). Conze describes the 1903 marriage of his parents, Dr Ernst Conze (1872–1935) and Adele Louise Charlotte Köttgen (1882–1962) as, "a marriage between two factories" (I 1). Ernst Conze earned a doctorate in law from Bonn University, then joined the *Auswärtigen Amt*

(Foreign Office), where he served in Berlin and Antwerp, before being posted to Britain as a Vice Consul. Eberhard was born in London, in 1904. However, the family soon returned to Langenberg where Ernst became first a magistrate and then the District Court Director in Düsseldorf. He also held the office of President of the *Reich Disciplinary Chamber* from 1924 to 1934 (*Langenberger Kulturlexikon* 2009: 262). Adele was a painter of some talent, even exhibiting her work in 1930 (*Langenberger Kulturlexikon* 2009: 875).

His parents' marriage was unhappy and he did not have a good relationship with his mother (I 4). This seems to have affected his relations with women generally. Conze notes that his mother had great potential but was forced into the life of a small town *hausfrau* with no prospect of escape. As Conze tells the story, she was bored and bitter, and since young Eberhard leaned towards his father, she included him in the enmity she felt for Herr Conze. His younger brother, Wolf, however, was the object of her affections. Conze admits to choosing women like his mother – small and dark. Accused of grooming a young woman employed as a typist he complains that it is ridiculous because she is blond and he "does not even like blonds." The accusation was not simply random however since he reveals that he repeatedly chose his sexual partners from amongst his female students. He recounts sexually assaulting a female student as though it were an amusing anecdote (II 116-118). He also confesses that his first sexual experiences were with the Conze family's blond maid.

Being born in Britain entitled Conze to British Citizenship and when he visited England in 1924 he took the opportunity to renew his citizenship. Thus, when he fell foul of the Nazis, who he deplored on class grounds as much as anything, he was able to escape to Britain. Conze's attitude toward the Nazis is instructive. He described Hitler as someone literally possessed by demonic forces but he also says that Hitler "illustrates the danger of allowing the lower middle classes to exercise power" (I 9). Hitler was not one of the social elite and thus lacked the upbringing and education to fit him for leadership (I 11). Indeed it is likely that the mocking epithet "Nazi" reflects the same social prejudice. The German bourgeoisie of that time would often tell jokes in which the butt was a Bavarian peasant nicknamed Nazi, short for the popular name, Ignatius (Forsyth 112-3). Conze's stories about the Nazis vary. Early in the *Memoirs,* he says he was warned by Nazis to flee Germany in a rather bland encounter over the flying of a flag from his balcony, but later (I 40, n.1) he seems to suggest that he was being actively pursued by the Gestapo. In any event, Conze left Germany on 15th June 1933, six months after Hitler was appointed Chancellor.

Although Conze hated the Nazis he did share some of their views on race, for example, he says, "In due course [Notting Hill] was finished off by the blacks, who slowly moved down from Paddington Station" (I 64). He writes about being "driven out of Notting Hill by the blacks" (I 102), but also notes, "My further comments on the negrification [sic] of Notting Hill Gate manifestly contravene the Race Relations Act of June 1977. They are therefore removed to Part III" (I 65). When mentioned in *Memoirs*, people of African descent are always negatively characterised. Although he writes positively of Jewish people, Conze uses the racial label in an essentialist way. That someone is "a Jew", for example, is always stated whereas he does not insist on referring to, say, Giuseppe Tucci, as "an Italian" or "a Fascist", indeed Tucci is characterised as rich and socially superior (Conze admired his gold cutlery). Jewishness is not necessarily disapproved of – Conze's first wife was Jewish – but it is always *marked*.

Conze recounts that his first contact with Buddhism was aged thirteen when he came across an account of the religion by Lafcadio Hearn (I 6). His interest in Buddhism continued through his university days. At one point he says that shortly after gaining his PhD, he was introduced to Theosophy and astrology by Professor Johannes M. Verweyen (I 9), of Bonn University, who at that time ran the German Theosophical Society and whose special field of research was parapsychology. Later on, Conze says that "the Conze family had always harboured a number of Theosophists though they were usually of the Rudolf Steiner persuasion" (I 31). When he was ill as a child one of his aunts gave him a copy of Annie Besant's translation and explanation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. He says, "I was terribly excited by it" (I 31). Conze embraced the irrational and rejected science early on. Referring to this encounter with the occult before WWII, he says, "Astrology has set me inwardly free from the claims a technological society can make on my allegiance" (I 32). It is important to keep in mind that astrology and Theosophy were *foundational* to Conze's worldview and that there was none of the compartmentalisation we might expect from a scholar. Conze had no interest in objectivity. His worldview was only reinforced by his contact with D. T Suzuki.

The family wealth allowed Eberhard to pursue his university education in a desultory fashion, moving around until he found a teacher to his liking. He describes himself as "rebellious", but I suspect he simply did not like or respect his teachers and lacked the self-control or motivation to hide it. Being unwilling to put up with anyone he judged inferior and having more or less

unlimited funds from his father, he simply moved on when he disliked his teachers. Thus he studied at half a dozen different German universities before he eventually completed the equivalent of a doctorate at the University of Cologne in 1928 (aged 24). Young Eberhard also showed early promise as a linguist, acquiring proficiency in at least a dozen languages although he officially studied philosophy.

We can only presume that it was after arriving in England, in 1933, that Eberhard became Edward, but he does not mention this change. Conze had a variety of teaching jobs during and after the war. It is notable that he never held a permanent academic position, but continued to be peripatetic and often supported himself by teaching night classes. The one academic position he was offered was in the USA but the US government saw him as an undesirable alien because of his involvement in Communism. Late in his life, some bequests made him financially independent.

On fleeing Germany, Conze had married his (pregnant) partner, Dorothea Finklestein, as much as anything to prevent her being sent back to Germany and certain death because she was Jewish. This marriage did not last long. They were briefly reconciled but then separated again, although they did not divorce until much later, partly because Dorothea converted to Catholicism (I 48). On reflection Conze says:

> "I did not want a wife at all, but a servant who would look after me while I was doing my scholarly work. If it had not been for the servant shortage which set in after 1918, I would never have had any motive to marry at all" (I 31).

Conze started a relationship with Muriel Green, the sister of one of his students, in 1948 (WWII did not improve the servant shortage), though of course Conze was still married to Dorothea and so he and Muriel could not marry. The two lived together as a married couple and Muriel changed her name to Conze by deed poll. Conze credits Muriel with providing the "material stability" that enabled him to continue his work. He was, in the manner of bourgeois men, incapable of any domestic task. However, before he met Muriel, Conze went through a crisis.

As a student, Conze also became infatuated with Communism and helped to organise political activities, particularly once the Nazis rose to prominence, and wrote books on Marxism. He continued his involvement in radical politics on

moving to Britain and made connections in the British Labour party, particularly with "Red" Ellen Wilkinson with whom he wrote anti-fascist pamphlets and two short books. Conze visited Spain (I 18-20) just before the Spanish Civil war, under the auspices of the publisher Warburg. He was disgusted with the Spanish communists and the piece he published on return outraged many on the Left (I 20). After a series of vituperous clashes with the "Stalinists" in the Labour Party, Conze completely abandoned politics in Britain. He nonetheless remained committed to communism throughout his life. In a letter to Herbert Elbrecht dated 23.10.76, Conze wrote: "In contrast to the 'Our God has failed' school, I have never lost my devotion for the Soviet Union and consider most of what one reads in the capitalist press as despicable warmongering for world war three."[2] However, his break with the Labour Party resulted in a broader crisis. In his memoriam for D. T. Suzuki, Conze (1967) says:

> "My political faith had collapsed under the impact of Stalinism and of what I had observed in Spain, my marriage had failed, my job seemed distinctly bleak, I had even started to consult psychoanalysts, and there seemed nothing left that I could live for"

It was at this point, around 1937, that Conze (re)turned to Buddhism. He credits this to his acquaintance with three men: D. T. Suzuki, Har Dayal, and Graham Howe, but Suzuki seems to have been the pivotal figure, so it is worth spending some time on him.

D. T. Suzuki

Daisetz Teitarō Suzuki (1870–1966)[3] was for some decades the face of Zen Buddhism outside of Japan. After university and his period of Rinzai Zen training at Engaku Temple (1892-1897), Suzuki spent several years in the US working for the theologian and author, Paul Carus. Here he came into contact with various occult ideas including the work of Emmanuel Swedenborg. Between 1909 and 1915, Suzuki translated several of Swedenborg's books

[2] "Zum Unterschied von der 'Our God has failed' Schule habe ich nie meine Hingabe an die Sovietunion verloren und betrachte das meiste was man in der kapitalistischen Presse liest als verächtliche Kriegshetze für den dritten Weltkrieg" (Conze 1976). My thanks to Eivind Kahrs for translating the German.

[3] The Kanji for his name are: 鈴木 大拙 貞太郎. He adopted the name Daisetsu or Daisetz during his Zen training at Engakuji in Kamakura (1892-1897).

into Japanese and composed a biography of him (Mulder 2016: 5). Another source for Suzuki may have been Theosophy which seems to adopt many of the same ideas, especially a fascination with the Neoplatonic idea of "The One" or "The Absolute". Such ideas became part of the vocabulary of Western Buddhist discourse despite having no traditional equivalents. For example, Conze says at one point: "'Truth' should here be understood as the One in contrast to the manifold variety of error" (1975: 105). Suzuki's wife, Beatrice Lane, was a major figure in the US Theosophical world.

Suzuki called his approach to *Prajñāpāramitā* "the logic of sokuhi". The Japanese term *sokuhi* (即非 Ch. *jí fēi*) translates roughly as "is/not". As Suzuki formulated it, the logic runs: "That A is A means that A is not A, and therefore A is A" (1964: 59-60). This derives from a series of apparent negations in the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Conze cites a version of this formula in his commentary on the *Heart Sutra* (1958: 84). Michiko Yusa quotes Suzuki referring to this as "the logic of spiritual intuition... If you understand what it means, you will understand not only the *Diamond Sutra* but also the entire *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* of 600 scrolls" (Yusa 2019: 590).

This expression of "logic" was influential on the Kyoto School of Japanese philosophy via Suzuki's lifelong friend, Nishida Kitarō (1870–1945). The Kyoto School were implicated in the nationalistic aggression of Japan in the 20th Century and have come in for much criticism in the 21st Century. The adoption of the logic of sokuhi by members of the Kyoto School can also be seen in the light of nationalism. On learning the way Suzuki was thinking, Nishida wrote an encouraging letter to him, saying, "We must construct it logically so that it can stand on its own to face Western logic" (Yusa 2019: 590). The scandal of Orientalism, in which the attitudes of European scholars studying the people and cultures of the Middle East and Asia were exposed as racist fantasies (Said 1978) led to a major shift in academia. Suzuki came to be seen as an Asian who adopted the forms of Orientalist exoticism in his presentation of Zen to Americans and Europeans. Bernard Faure (1995) has referred to this in relation to the Kyoto School as "reverse Orientalism".

The idea of the Kyoto School was to find a native Japanese approach to logic that could be positively contrasted with "Western" logic. Suzuki's "reverse Orientalism" presentation of Buddhism emphatically contrasted an idealised, but fundamentally corrupt (dualistic and discriminative) Western society with an idealised and fundamentally pure (non-dualistic and non-discriminative) Eastern society epitomised by the Japanese, and within Japan by the Zen Monk.

However, Suzuki's nationalism went a little deeper than just pro-Japanese sentiments.

In his meticulous studies of Meiji Japanese militarism, Brian Victoria (1997, 2003) has shown that the Zen Buddhist establishment was complicit in and actively supportive of the Meiji wars of aggression and associated atrocities as well as institutionalised domestic terrorism (2019).

> "Suzuki addresses all of the criticisms levelled at the Nazis, i.e., their oppression of the Jews, their totalitarianism, their regimentation of youth, their fanatical hatred of Soviet Communism and ultimately supplies a convincing rationale for all of their extremist stances within the context of the times." (Victoria 2013a: 14)

D. T. Suzuki was perhaps not the worst offender, but in a series of articles Victoria demonstrates that Suzuki had close personal contacts with Nazis in Japan, was sympathetic to their policies in Europe, and sought to recast Zen Buddhism as a "death cult" so that Japanese soldiers would kill (and die) without hesitation or remorse (Victoria 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b). Suzuki himself made much of his *kenshō* or "insight" experience. However, as Victoria notes this doesn't seem to have made him any more compassionate:

> "As Suzuki's subsequent statements make clear, his kenshō experience did not alter his view of "religion during a [national] emergency." Again, this is hardly surprising in light of the fact that Suzuki's own Rinzai Zen master, Shaku Sōen … was also a strong supporter of Japan's war efforts." (2013b: 4).

Suzuki's support for the Nazis did not come to light after the Japanese surrender, so he was free to spread his message untainted by his close association with them. Suzuki's cachet in Buddhist, especially Zen, circles remained intact. His brand of mystical anti-intellectualism had fuelled the imagination of the baby boomer generation, meshing with and amplified by the psychedelic counter-culture in the 1960s. And it continues to be influential. However, Robert Sharf is emphatic that despite the influence of Suzuki and other Japanese intellectuals on the conception and practice of Zen in America and Europe, they did not represent the Japanese monastic tradition of Zen nor did they have influence in that sphere. Rather, Sharf says, "the style of Zen training most familiar to Western Zen practitioners can be traced to relatively recent and sociologically

marginal Japanese lay movements." (1993: 40). It seems that the Zen monk at the heart of Suzuki's utopia simply does not exist. Arthur Koestler was perhaps the only public intellectual who was not taken in by Suzuki's hand waving at the time:

> "There is one redeeming possibility: that all this drivel is deliberately intended to confuse the reader, since one of the avowed aims of Zen is to perplex and unhinge the rational mind. If this hypothesis were correct, Professor Suzuki's voluminous oeuvre of at least a million words, specially written for this purpose, would represent a hoax of truly heroic dimensions, and the laugh would be on the Western intellectuals who fell for it" (from the essay "A Stink of Zen", cited in Sharf 1993: 41).[4]

Ironically, Paul Harrison has shown that Suzuki's understanding of the *Vajracchedikā* was based on a misconception (2006: 136-140). The Tibetan translations reflect the correct reading of the compounds involved in the negations of the *Vajracchedikā*. To take his principle example, Conze (1957: 75) translated Section 13c into Buddhist Hybrid English: "And that which as a world system was taught by the Tathagata, as a no-system that has been taught by the Tathagata. Therefore it is called a 'world system'" (138).[5] Harrison argues that while "no-system" is a grammatically possible reading, it is not philosophically cogent. Rather the phrase should be read "Any world-system there is has been preached by the Realised Ones as systemless. Thus it is called a world system." (138). Harrison concludes:

> "The Vaj is not therefore an expression of some kind of mystical paradoxicality, but is rather analogous to the standpoint taken by Nāgārjuna, in asserting that conventional language only makes sense because of the ultimate emptiness of the things it names, embedded as they are in a network of causal relationships" (140).

If Harrison is correct, and I think he is, then Suzuki's whole approach to *Prajñāpāramitā* is discredited as is Conze's. Although Harrison has published

[4] Elsewhere Sharf (1995: 158 n.98) records some of the retorts that Koestler's comments drew from apologists including Christmas Humphries and Carl Jung as well as Suzuki himself.

[5] *yo 'pyasau lokadhātustathāgatena bhāṣitaḥ, adhātuḥ sa tathāgatena bhāṣitaḥ | tenocyate lokadhāturiti ||*

this argument, it is only available to date in an obscure and expensive Norwegian monograph (Harrison 2006). Harrison's forthcoming book on the *Vajracchedikā* is long overdue, but it should be more accessible and we can anticipate that it will do much to clear up the confusion surrounding this text.

Despite being a Nazi sympathiser, an Orientalist, misrepresenting Japanese Zen Buddhism and monasticism, and despite having misunderstood the core text of his philosophy Suzuki was enormously influential. Something about his message struck a chord amongst his audience. And in particular, he was a seminal influence on Conze and his approach to *Prajñāpāramitā*. Faure, Sharf, and Victoria are leading figures in a general reappraisal of D. T. Suzuki's life and work in the light of Meiji Japanese politics and culture. No such movement yet exists for the reappraisal of Edward Conze. Conze's naïve encounter with Suzuki—for whom he expressed "unlimited admiration, little short of idolatry" (I 78)—was to prove decisive in his life.

Midlife Crisis

In Suzuki's series of essays on Zen, Conze found a framework for rationalising his rejection of a world and an affirmation of his idiosyncratic, not to say syncretic, worldview, which I will refer to as his *idiodoxy*. In Suzuki's idiodoxy, the mythical Zen monk, perhaps an idealised memory of Suzuki's own time at Engaku Temple, was the focus. Conze was drawn to the ideal that Suzuki described and initially sought to emulate it. With the zeal of the new religious convert he threw himself into what he imagined an ideal Buddhist life to be:

> "In 1937, at the age of 33… Under the impulse of D. T. Suzuki's message I then withdrew into a private wood belonging to a Quaker friend of mine in the New Forest, and practised as much meditation as can be practised in this evil age" (1967a).

This was the wood called Sandy Balls, near Godshill Village, Hampshire, owned by Aubrey Westlake. In the *Memoirs* Conze recalls living there for several years (I 38). However, he also says that he moved there because the outbreak of war (in Sept 1939) had interrupted his night classes and deprived him of an income (with no mention of Suzuki or meditation). The chronology of this period seems particularly confused in Conze's account. Also for several pages (starting on I 41), he details his difficulties finding work while living at Sandy Balls, so he was hardly in retreat.

Of this period of meditating, he says that he "experienced a great elation of spirit" (I 45). Later in *Memoirs,* he mentions that in his book *Buddhist Meditation* he mainly covered meditation practices drawn from Buddhaghosa. It seems to have been these that he practised in Sandy Balls.[6] Living an ascetic life, combined with his bourgeois domestic incapacity left Conze with symptoms of malnutrition such as chronic diarrhoea and degeneration of the gums leading to the loss of all his teeth (I 47). The combination of malnutrition, the cold of winter, sleep deprivation, and long periods of meditation probably all contributed to the delusions he apparently experienced: "Unbidden, several psychic faculties came my way" (I 46). As already noted, magical thinking was foundational to Conze's worldview so that he interpreted any unusual experiences that he might have had in line with his existing beliefs (as we all do).

Conze does not say how long this period of meditation was. He decided to end his retreat: "I also felt that I had gained as much insight as I could bear in my present body or realise in our present social circumstances" (I 47). Conze later refers to the effects of "years of meditation on *mettā*" (II 79) but it's unclear from *Memoirs* to what extent he continued to pursue meditation. He blames his failure at Sandy Balls on "this evil age" or "our present social circumstances" but the severe discomfort caused by malnutrition is the more obvious immediate cause of ending his retreat. At about the same time his wife, Dorothea, asked him to move back in with her for the sake of their daughter. So he moved to Oxford and was assigned a job in the wartime Ministry of Agriculture. This led him back into the orbit of academia.

Scholarship

Living in Oxford with a wife to attend to his domestic needs and an undemanding government job gave Conze leisure to study and access to research materials in the Bodleian Library and the India Institute Library. He took Sanskrit lessons from Thomas Burrow (1909 – 1986). He also met Frederick W. Thomas (1867 – 1956) and collaborated with him on a translation of a Jain text from Sanskrit. Academic connections led to further literary ventures and, after 1945, to invitations to teach abroad, including in Germany and the USA.

[6] Sangharakshita confirms: "and he practised meditation, following very seriously the instructions given by Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhimagga, and achieving some degree of meditative experience" (1996: 20).

Despite his animus towards so many people, Conze had several productive working relationships, for example with Jan Willem de Jong, Giuseppe Tucci, Isaline B. Horner, and Lewis Lancaster. That Tucci was a supporter of Italian Fascism and Benito Mussolini does not seem to have deterred Conze. In turn, and despite his abrasive personality and sloppy and distorted work, many scholars of the day idolised Conze and he is still the subject of effusive and obsequious praise from many quarters.

Conze set himself the task of translating all of the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts into English. In some cases, as with the *Heart Sutra*, this involved establishing a critical edition of the Sanskrit texts. Without the burden of a permanent academic position, Conze could stay largely focused on editing and translation work and he published many editions and translations as well as other books on Buddhism and meditation, with a focus on *Prajñāpāramitā*. Amongst these were a long essay outlining the extent and history of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature (1960) and a lexicon which was intended to be expanded into a dictionary of *Prajñāpāramitā* but never completed (1967b).

Conze approached Mahāyāna Buddhism with enthusiasm and industry. The great shame is that so much of what he did was careless, flawed, and coloured by his idiodoxy. It all needs to be done again. At the same time, there seems to be little interest in *Prajñāpāramitā* in academia in the present day and no appetite for critical editions or translations. A handful of scholars struggle away, year after year.[7] The "publish or perish" mentality means that even those with nothing to say must continue to publish several times per year. However, I think the nonsensical interpretation of *Prajñāpāramitā* fostered by Suzuki and uncritically repeated in universities around the world, as well as the bizarre translations and interpretations by Conze, combine to put most students off pursuing research in this area.[8]

The first *Prajñāpāramitā* text Conze worked on was one of the best known and most widely read texts in all of Buddhism, i.e. the *Heart Sutra*. And he

[7] About a dozen scholars publish serious work on *Prajñāpāramitā* in English. More work is done in Japan, but it is seldom translated. From what little of the Japanese *Heart Sutra* research that I have access to it seems to be largely in the service of religious orthodoxy. *Prajñāpāramitā* scholarship has been severely diminished by the deaths of Karashima Seishi in 2019 and Stefano Zacchetti in 2020.

[8] This observation is partly based on informal comments by several academics who did not wish to go on record. Most academics seem to be *very* guarded about making public comments on Conze.

returned to it repeatedly. Just as the *Heart Sutra* is a representative microcosm of the *Prajñāpāramitā* macrocosm, Conze's work on this text reflects trends in his oeuvre more generally and thus we can use it as a window on his scholarship. Before this, however, we need to draw out more detail of Conze's approach to Prajñāpāramitā: his idiodoxy. One place to start is his 1953 article entitled "The Ontology of the Prajñāpāramitā" published in *Philosophy East and West*.

Conze-ism

Conze begins his exposition on *Prajñāpāramitā* ontology by stating that *Prajñāpāramitā* texts do not make reasoned arguments (1953: 117) and then proceeds to exemplify this. Conze sees *prajñā* as "a special virtue, or force" (118). Buddhism, he argues, uses this special virtue to arrive at a non-rational understanding of "the ultimate facts of reality" (*dharmas*) (118). The special virtue of wisdom is that it allows us to see that the "own being" (*svabhāva*) of dharmas is "emptiness". Reflecting his commentary on the *Heart Sutra*, Conze says that "dharmas, when viewed with perfected gnosis, reveal an own-being which is identical with emptiness, i.e. in their own-being they are empty" (120). Conze bends this around to a more conventional Madhyamaka view so that it means that *dharmas* do not have *svabhāva*.

Conze outlines three approaches to the abstract noun "emptiness". Firstly he sums up the "ontology" of dharmas in a series of mutually contradictory propositions: "*dharmas* are nonexistent" and "*dharmas* have a purely nominal existence" and "*dharmas* have no characteristics", "*dharmas* are not related to each other", "dharmas have never left the original emptiness" (though "original emptiness" is not defined). In short, Conze's ultimate facts of reality are like the old quip about the Holy Roman Empire, not Holy, not Roman, and not an Empire. Still, ignorance of these facts is, according to Conze (126), the root of all evil. However, we should (or must) *ignore these facts* and disbelieve them (124). This should be relatively easy because *we ourselves do not exist* (125). If we can only extinguish our non-existent "self" then we will see this because it is precisely the existence of our non-existent self that prevents us from seeing (and ignoring) the true nature of ultimate reality. The (nonexistent) saint has no opinion or anything to say about any of this or anything. At this point, Conze turns to the "logic" of *Prajñāpāramitā*.

After all this heavy-duty dualism, Conze precedes without irony to tell us that the heart of this logic is *non-duality*. However, sometimes, when they make distinctions between dharmas, then nonexistent people do exist and they make distinctions between dharmas (126). Still, absolute knowledge abolishes them (whether nonexistent people or nonexistent distinctions are abolished is unclear). This is because: "It is the same to be as not to be" (126). And this, according to Conze is the important point: despite the facts of ultimate reality being nonexistent, merely by saying this, we confirm that they *do exist*. And by saying that they do exist we confirm that they *do not exist*. And *this is wisdom*.

Charitably, Conze admits that "this kind of philosophy gives little comfort to common sense" (128), but he assures us that it is "perfectly consistent with itself". His final word is that "The ontology of the Prajñāpāramitā is a description of the world as it appears to those whose self is extinct. That is its justification, and the source of both its strength and of its limitations." (129).

Since this drivel was published in a prestigious, peer-reviewed journal, and because it is still accepted as gospel by religieux and scholars alike, I need to add a few words of commentary. The Emperor is not wearing any clothes. This not only seems like nonsense, it genuinely *is nonsense* completely lacking in scholarly objectivity and critical thinking. What was editor, Charles A. Moore, thinking when he published this? Did this article really survive anonymous peer-review? Conze is obsessed with nonexistence, magic, and metaphysics while the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts are concerned with the absence of sense experience and epistemology. *Prajñā* is a word that fundamentally refers to some form of *knowledge,* not to some "special virtue or force". It is something that one *learns* from applying meditative techniques in which sense experience ceases and leaves one in a state of absence (*śūnyatā*) of experience or "contentless awareness".

With this, let us turn our attention to the *Heart Sutra*.

Heart Sutra

Conze first published a translation of the Sanskrit *Heart Sutra* in 1946, along with some background in a series of three articles in *The Middle Way*, the journal of the Buddhist Society. His critical edition of the Sanskrit text appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* in 1948 and was subsequently revised in 1967. He published a four-part essay entitled "The Heart Sutra explained" in *The Middle Way* in 1955-56. The *Middle Way* articles were collated and

published as *Buddhist Wisdom Books* (1958), which contained a translation of and commentary on the *Vajracchedikā* and a version of the Sanskrit text of the *Heart Sutra* along with a translation and commentary. A second edition of *Buddhist Wisdom Books* was published in 1975. Another translation of the *Heart Sutra* was published in *Perfect Wisdom: The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts* (1973). Conze tinkered with his edition, his translation, and his interpretation over several decades.

Sanskrit Edition

In his book on the Tibetan editions of the *Heart Sutra*, Jonathan Silk refers to Conze's Sanskrit edition as "chaotic" (1994: 32) and comments that "… due to the lack of anything approaching a complete and reliable [Sanskrit] edition, nothing can be said about the possible affiliations of any of our Tibetan recensions or sub-recensions with any given Sanskrit tradition" (1994: 40). Conze's edition, such as it was, contained several simple grammatical errors that were not repaired in the 1967 revised edition (Attwood 2015, 2018b). This was not unusual. Greg Schopen notes many errors in Conze's edition of the *Vajracchedikā*. He says, for example: "The edition of the late Edward Conze… is of very dubious value from a text-critical point of view… In regard more specifically to the Gilgit text it should be noted that Conze's notes to his edition reproduce all the errors in Chakravarti's edition, and that there are a number of cases in which Conze's notations in regard to the Gilgit text are wrong or misleading" (Schopen 1989: 96-97). Conze acknowledges this problem with his work:

> "I am constitutionally incapable of registering meaningless details correctly (that is the price of being an intuition type). Even when reading proofs I miss most of the misprints, because I automatically read not what is there, but what ought to be there. In addition, both my interest and my training in grammar leave much to be desired…" (1979: I 92)

Unfortunately, the details that Conze misses are not "meaningless" but have quite major implications for how we understand the *Heart Sutra*. It is a curious fact that Conze's mistakes stood for around 70 years, despite the scrutiny of some competent Sanskritists, some of who were renowned for acerbic comments on other people's work (more on this in my concluding remarks).

In the first sentence, Conze gave the phrase *pañca skandhāḥ* in the nominative plural case, stranding it without any clear relation to the rest of the sentence and depriving the transitive verb *vyavalokayati sma* of an object. Attwood (2015) showed that Conze's witnesses include some that give the word in the accusative plural and that this resolves the problem through the simple addition of *anusvāra* (*ṃ*) to the *dhā-akṣara*. This allows us to read *pañca skandhāṃ* as the object of the verb and to make a coherent sentence out of it, i.e. "Avalokiteśvara… examined the five branches of experience…". The addition or elision of *anusvāra* is one of the most common scribal errors in Sanskrit manuscripts. The solution also allows us to remove extraneous modern punctuation that Conze added since the Sanskrit is now fully parsable and has clear clause boundaries. Note also that Conze insists on translating *vyavalokayati* as "looks down" when in fact it means "inspect, examine". He seems to be concerned tie the name of Avalokiteśvara to the legend of the thousand-armed figure who "looks down" on the world in compassion, but falters and splits into many parts that are reassembled into the thousand-armed, eleven-headed form by Amitābha. In this he may have been influenced by commentaries preserved in Tibetan, see for example Donald Lopez's translation of Vimalamitra's commentary (1996: 52). Although note also Joel Gruber's comment:

> "After noting that Vimalamitra's composition is the "first" and "longest" among the Indian commentaries, Conze disparages the commentary with a string of analysis unrelated to the actual content of the text he lambastes. His critiques are strange enough that those familiar with the work might wonder whether he has mistakenly analyzed an entirely different text." (2016: 51-52).

Later, in the section he labels VI, Conze inserts a full stop after the word *acittāvaraṇaḥ*, and in doing so he creates a sentence with one connecting qualifier (*cittāvaraṇa-nāstitvād*) and three adjectives but no verb and no noun or pronoun for the adjectives to relate to (Attwood 2018a). Since the adjectives (self-evidently) relate to the subject of the previous sentence—i.e. *bodhisattvaḥ*—the obvious solution is simply to remove the full stop. In turn, this resolves the ambivalence that Conze apparently experienced over the case ending of *bodhisattva*: in his 1948 edition he gives the case as genitive (*bodhisatvasya*) leaving the sentence without a subject. In the 1967 revision, he switches to the nominative (*bodhisattvaḥ*). The popular text and exegesis (1958,

1975) leave the case as genitive. The fact that the *bodhisattva* is the subject of the sentence and that adjectives which relate to him are all in the masculine nominative singular tells us that *bodhisattvaḥ* must be correct.[9] Attwood (2020) shows, on the basis of Huifeng (2014), that there are deeper problems with this sentence that can be explained by the Sanskrit text being a translation from Chinese. A more idiomatic Sanskrit translation of the Chinese text looks very different indeed. Conze seems not to have registered the extremely odd features of the Sanskrit text itself or the fact that the second sentence is not a properly constructed Sanskrit sentence. The many scholars and religieux who published translations of the text also failed to notice these things.

These are admittedly simple errors. We might have written them off as typographical errors had they not persisted through multiple revisions and editions. In both cases, however, they result in garbling of the text. Two long sentences that don't make sense in a very short text is rather a lot.

Translation and Exegesis

It is widely assumed that Conze knew what he was talking about, just as it is assumed that he was a competent editor. For these reasons, summing up Conze's exegesis of the text is a more complex task. As yet, there is no critical study of Conze's interpretation of the *Heart Sutra*. An assessment is made all the more difficult because Conze is still considered an authority on the wider *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and his idiodoxy has influenced most writing on the subject since the mid-twentieth century. Conze's commentary on the *Heart Sutra* is eclectic and associative, with Conze making connections far and wide:

> "The *Prajñāpāramitā* texts are so elusive to our understanding not only because they presuppose a high degree of disinterested spirituality, but also because they are full of hidden hints, allusions, and indirect references…" (1975: 101)

As we have already seen, one reason the texts are elusive is that they were full of mistakes. His translations are also unhelpful at times: *vyavalokayati sma* does not mean "looked down"; "nonattainmentness" is not a word; "thought coverings" is a poor translation of *āvaraṇa* (Huifeng 2014). Paul Griffiths (1981: 29-30) used a random paragraph from Conze's *Large Sutra* translation,

[9] This might be the only text in which the neuter past participle *nirvāṇa* is used adjectivally and declined in the masculine.

to illustrate what he meant by "Buddhist Hybrid English", saying, "Dr. Conze's translation bears only the most tenuous relationship to the English language in terms of syntax, and is full of unexplained technical terminology;" (29) The translation cannot be understood at all without reference to the Sanskrit text, and those who can read Sanskrit do not need a translation. However, Griffiths adds

> "I chose this example not because Dr. Conze's translations are worse than anyone else's; in fact they are better than most. Rather, it illustrates with a concrete example *the kind of gibberish* that is all too often produced by the Buddhological community in the sacred name of translation" (1981: 30. Emphasis added)

Part of Griffiths' argument is that the Buddhological community, more specifically *Sanskritists* in the Buddhological community, are not served at all by a "barbaric translation" of a "barbaric Sanskrit text" (29). The hermeneutical task of making his understanding available to others would have been better served by producing a critical edition and a critical study of the structure of the text and its relations to the other *Prajñāpāramitā* texts. An unreadable translation serves no one. Of course, there is no guarantee that Conze could have pulled off such a task. His editions of the much shorter texts of the *Hṛdaya* and *Vajracchedikā* leave much to be desired. What's more, his critical study of the *Heart Sutra* takes us in some very strange directions.

Some of the "hidden hints and illusions" exist only in Conze's mind. For example, Conze presented the *Heart Sutra* as a Mahāyāna version of the four noble truths (or "holy Truths" as he calls them), going to elaborate lengths to make this seem plausible (1975: 90, 100-1). The idea is based on the commentary in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*. Conze's arguments for this interpretation are *prima facie* unconvincing. When we look at his "barbaric" translation of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* (Conze 1975) we note two things. The *Heart Sutra* does indeed quote from the section associated by the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* with the noble truths, however the quoted passage begins with the last few lines of the paragraph that supposedly outlines the second truth (*samudaya*) and ends halfway through the section on the third truth (*nirodha*). The *Heart Sutra* includes nothing from the paragraphs on the first (*duḥkha*) or fourth (*marga*) truths. Whether the author of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* has made a plausible argument that these lines in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* represent the four noble truths is moot, but having read these lines in Sanskrit and Conze's translation I can say that I do not find them remotely suggestive of the four noble truths.

Similarly, Conze stated that "this mantra has the traditional attributes of the Buddha" (1975: 102). In fact, "Of the terms in the *Heart Sutra*, only *anuttara* 'unexcelled' has an actual parallel and it is a rather common superlative applied to any and all Buddhist ideals" (Attwood (2017: 29). And they are not applied to the mantra, but to *Prajñāpāramitā*.

When the text says that "there are no four noble truths" Conze gets around the apparent contradiction by denying that "no" means "no". It cannot be an ordinary negation, he says, "because it is used in a proposition of which one term, i.e. 'emptiness', is itself a self-contradictory unity of Yes and No" (1958: 90). Unsurprisingly, Conze goes on to admit that this kind of rhetoric confused everyone. Without any trace of irony, he refers to the confusion engendered by his self-contradictions as his readers being "dazed by so much splendour" (1975: 90).

Despite his admiration for Suzuki, the two men did not always agree. Suzuki was not happy about the presence of a mantra in the text that was so important to Zen Buddhism.

> "This [mantra] is apparently a degradation of degeneration… Why this nonsense, so to speak… What has this ejaculation to do with disciplining oneself in deep Prajnaparamita? A Mantram or Dharani is generally supposed, *when uttered, to effect wonders*… Can we say, then, that the end of the Buddhist disciplines can be attained by means of a mere mystic phrase?" (1934: 210. Emphasis added).

Suzuki spent fully half of his essay on the *Heart Sutra* decrying the presence of the mantra and trying to explain it away. He concludes that "taken in itself [it] has no meaning, and its vital relation to the Prajñāpāramitā is unintelligible" (Suzuki 1934: 217). Conze takes the opposite view and appears to quote Suzuki when he says: "Mantras are incantations which effect wonders when uttered" (1975: 102). Again, Conze is engaged in magical thinking: "It is… not the fault of mantras that in this present age they run up against the general incomprehension of magical forces which the vulgarisation of science has fostered amongst town-dwellers" (1975: 103).

Conze's contempt for ordinary people is evident throughout his commentary on the *Heart Sutra*:

> "This Sutra is not meant for the stupid, the emotional, or the uninformed. Other means will assure their salvation. Everything that is at all worth knowing is contained in the [*Heart Sutra*]. But it

> can be found there only if spiritual insight is married to intellectual ability, and coupled with a delighting in the use of the intellect." (1958: 99).

As noted above, Conze sees himself as a member of an elite who have special knowledge not available to the "stupid, the emotional, or the uninformed". Passages like this reek of narcissism.

The "intellectual" influence of Theosophy can be seen in statements such as "'Emptiness' is our word for the beyond, for transcendental reality… this is the mystical identity of opposites" (1958: 83). Recall that by "the beyond" Conze refers to a magical reality he is convinced exists beyond the phenomenal world. He also says things like, "[The bodhisatva] is able to bear the absolute aloneness of his solitary Spirit" (1958: 94). Other examples include:

> "The series of negations… does not add up to nothingness, but points the way to a unique ultimate reality" (1958: 95)

> "When viewed from the subject-side, the transcendental reality is known as 'thought only', because, one and simple, free from duality and multiplicity, it is without a separate object. This Thought, or Spirit, forms the very centre of our being" (1958: 96)

Decades later, what can we say about passages like these? Foremost in my mind is the question of how he got away with so blatantly misrepresenting Buddhism. The language is such a mishmash that teasing out the origins would be impossible, but if it were a cheap perfume then we would detect notes of Neoplatonism and Vedanta, on a base of Theosophy.

Conclusion

In my introduction, I said that this essay would be an indictment of Edward Conze, i.e. a call to objectively assess Edward Conze and his contribution to Buddhism and Buddhist Studies. That Conze deserves a place in the history of Buddhist Studies is undisputed. The general view of Conze seems to be that he was a curmudgeon but that he made an invaluable contribution through his editions, translations, and exegesis. With so many curmudgeons in the field (including, some would say, the present author), we could not afford to judge Buddhist Studies on this criterion. I have tried to show that this view of Conze is understated on one hand and overstated on the other. Conze's personality was

abrasive, his manner acerbic, and his commentary on other people brutal. These flaws are less serious than his open racism, misogyny, and misanthropy. In light of this, his messianic delusion seems tragically funny. That his Buddhist idol Suzuki was a Nazi sympathiser fits this picture perfectly. Still, he was enormously influential. Like the Danish physicist Niels Bohr, Conze seems to have had the kind charisma that made for sycophantic converts. Physicist and philosopher of science, David Albert describes the effect that Bohr had on other physicists:

> "… there was just this long string of brilliant people who would spend an hour with Bohr, their entire lives would be changed. And one of the ways in which their lives were changed is that they were *spouting gibberish that was completely beneath them about the foundations of quantum mechanics for the rest of their lives*… And they revered him. There's a quote from [John] Wheeler saying, "The thing that made me convinced that there were people like Jesus and Moses and Buddha was meeting Niels Bohr" (emphasis added).[10]

Conze openly acknowledged his character flaws in the *Memoirs*, but nonetheless maintained the delusion that he came from a "higher realm" to save humanity; even though he found that he could not love humanity. Conze says of himself, "Throughout my life I have been a stranger on this earth and never felt at home anywhere. Nor have I ever found anyone who was completely congenial or whom I could trust altogether" (1979: I 54). Muriel Conze referred to him as "the old man who hates everybody" (II 75). A more tragic epitaph for a Buddhist Messiah or bodhisattva can hardly be imagined.

If Conze were merely an unpleasant person and a bigot, this would be incongruous with his religious profession, but it would not invalidate his claim to being a great scholar. However, his combativeness had a rather deleterious effect on Buddhist Studies. As Charles Prebish reminisces,

> "I was convinced that Buddhist Studies, as it was developing in North America, was misguided. In the first place, most of the role models for this blooming discipline: Edward Conze, Leon Hurvitz,

[10] The quote is from an interview with David Albert by Sean Carroll on his podcast *Mindscape*. From the online transcript (starting at 41:40): https://www.preposterousuniverse.com/podcast/2019/03/04/episode-36-david-albert-on-quantum-measurement-and-the-problems-with-many-worlds/.

> Alex Wayman, and a few others, were amongst the meanest individuals in academe [sic]. While they were utterly brilliant scholars, they seemed to take real delight in humiliating students rather than encouraging them." (Prebish 2019).

As far back as 1979, Edward Bastian was hoping that a reissue of Conze's survey of *Prajñāpāramitā Literature* would help "to *rekindle interest* in this crucial aspect of Buddhist Studies (1979: 99. Emphasis added). Bastian's review is the only example of a critique of Conze's views on *Prajñāpāramitā* that I have seen.[11] Summing up his scholarly contribution, Eric Zsebenyi—who has been working on a biography of Conze for some years—says, "Conze's pioneering accomplishment is still hailed as a model of meticulous scholarship, and he ranks among the greatest and most prolific modern translators of the Buddhist tradition" (2004: unpaginated). Effusive praise such as "utterly brilliant", "pioneering contribution", and "meticulous" is *de rigueur* for Conze. Having worked on the *Heart Sutra* for eight years I simply cannot understand it. His editions are "chaotic" and "unreliable", his translations are "barbaric" and all too often "gibberish", and his exegesis seems to bear only a tenuous relationship to Buddhism as I understand it.

It is interesting that Prebish brackets Conze with Hurvitz (1923–1992) and Wayman (1921–2004). The two younger men might have turned their critical eye to Conze's work and saved us a lot of trouble. Hurvitz (1975, 1977) and Wayman (1977, 1984) both published articles on the *Heart Sutra*, but neither noticed crucial mistakes in Conze's Sanskrit edition or expressed doubts about his idiosyncratic translation and interpretation of it. Even when he was being critical of Conze's botched *Large Sutra* translation, Hurvitz could still say that Conze's scholarship was "above reproach" (Hurvitz 1969: 404). All of the published reviews of the *Large Sutra* translation that I can find are complimentary to Conze at the same time as being sharply critical of the work. David Seyfort Ruegg (1977) praises Conze but spends most of his short review pointing out unfortunate translation choices. Even the often combative Greg Schopen (1977), who spends most of his *seventeen-page* review pointing out mistakes and infelicitous translation choices, gives Conze the benefit of the doubt at the end of this catalogue of blunders: "There is both much to be criticized and much to be praised." (151). The wonder

[11] In the same issue Bastian wrote a short obituary, promising a longer review of Conze that never emerged.

is that Conze was on the friendliest of terms with Jan de Jong. Charles Prebish again: "De Jong was famous for his book reviews, which regularly tore apart the research publications of even the greatest scholars of the discipline, while rarely publishing anything original of his own" (2019).

In his *Heart Sutra* commentary, Conze wrote: "It is not the function of a commentary to make this paradoxical doctrine plausible, to guard it against misunderstandings, or to show up its manifold theoretical, spiritual and practical consequences." (1975: 84). On the contrary, this is *exactly* the function of a commentary or at least in Paul Griffiths' (1981: 30) words, the "hermeneutical task" of the commentator. And concerning Conze's translation of the *Large Sutra*, Griffiths says that "he failed signally in his hermeneutical task" (30). Nattier (1992), Huifeng (2014), and Attwood (2015, 2018a) show that Conze also failed in the case of the *Heart Sutra*. Schopen (1989) and Harrison (2006) have shown he failed in the case of the *Vajracchedikā* as well.

Conze's oeuvre is an example of what Carl R. Trueman calls the *atheistic fallacy*, which can be summarised as: "if it looks convincing, it is convincing" or applied to the world of scholarship: "if it looks scholarly, then, agree or disagree with it, it is scholarly and must be taken seriously and allowed a place at the scholarly table" (2010: 45). Conze's aberrant scholarship looked convincing to me until I began to try to parse his Sanskrit *Heart Sutra* and tried to understand his English translation of the text. The appearance of scholarship fell apart and left me wondering how his faulty work had ever passed scrutiny, especially in the light of my own sometimes bruising encounters with Buddhist Studies journal editors and anonymous reviewers. The likes of Hurvitz, Wayman, and de Jong could be brutally critical of others and yet they gave Conze a free ride.

The indictment is that while Conze adopted the forms and methods of scholarship, he was not a skilled editor (by his own admission) and rather than being a Buddhologist, he was primarily a theologian of Conze-ism: a syncretic mishmash of Theosophy, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism, and Mysticism, framed in the technical jargon of Buddhism but unrelated to any form of Buddhism traditional or modern. He convinced more or less everyone that Conze-ism was synonymous with *Prajñāpāramitā* largely because the only other commentator of note was Suzuki who was equally flaky. Hurvitz and Wayman might have exposed the hoax but merely helped to normalise Conze-ism. This situation in which aggressive (white) men dominated the field of Buddhist Studies for decades and normalised complete nonsense would be an ideal target for a Feminist or a Foucauldian critique.

Edward Conze came to the study of *Prajñāpāramitā* with many preconceptions that caused him to misunderstand what he was looking at. These were not the unexamined biases of the uneducated. Conze had a PhD *in philosophy* and had consciously adopted an anti-intellectual pose and embraced magical thinking. He was not misled by D. T. Suzuki, but simply changed the brand of obscurantism he endorsed from Marxism to Buddhism. The tragedy is that Conze's idiodoxy became orthodoxy in academia and some Buddhist circles. *Prajñāpāramitā* has never produced the kind of critical scholarship that makes the study of Pāli texts so stimulating because of the likes of Dines Anderson, Richard Gombrich, Oscar von Hinüber, Roy Norman, Helmer Smith, and a long list of others all involved in a creative dialogue and bringing unique points of view. The study of early Mahāyāna via the Chinese and Tibetan translations has also been fruitful (see Drewes 2010 for a summary and assessment of this field). *Prajñāpāramitā* studies, by contrast, are still dominated by Conze and have made little progress since Conze's death 40 years ago, largely because almost no one wants to work on these texts. Conze might have pioneered *Prajñāpāramitā* Studies, but he also murdered them at birth.

Edward Conze thought of himself in messianic terms, but in the immortal words of Mandy Cohen, "there's no messiah in here, there's a mess alright but no messiah."[12] We would do well to stop idolising Edward Conze and to start paying critical attention to what he said and did because he was neither a gentleman nor a scholar and the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts really are some of the most important Buddhist texts.

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[12] For the uninitiated, this line is from the Monty Python film *Life of Brian*. One of the most insightful satires of British society and politics ever produced.

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On Translating "Buddha"

Bhikkhu Bodhi

Abstract

Translators of Buddhist texts into English have rendered *bodhi* and its cognates, particularly *buddha*, in two different ways, each based on an implicit metaphor. *Bodhi* has been translated as "enlightenment" and "awakening," *buddha* as "enlightened one" and "awakened one." While the former alternative in each pair prevailed among earlier translators, in recent years a swing has taken place to "awakening" and "awakened one." The argument offered to support this change contends that these words are more faithful to the root *budh* from which they are derived than "enlightenment" and "enlightened one." In this paper the author argues in defense of "enlightenment." He bases his defense on three grounds: (1) the meaning the words "enlightenment" and "awakening" bear in ordinary English diction, and how those meanings relate to the descriptions of the Buddha's experience of *bodhi* found in the Nikāyas; (2) the actual meaning of the Pāli-Sanskrit root *budh* and its derivatives such as *bodhi* and *buddha*, which he maintains primarily signify understanding or perceptual knowledge rather than awakening; and (3) the imagery used in the texts to convey the "flavor" of the Buddha's attainment and his function in relation to the world.

From the Buddha's first sermon onward, the entire history of Buddhism flows from the experience the Buddha underwent in his thirty-fifth year while seated on the bank of the Nerañjarā River near the village of Uruvelā. He called this experience *anuttarā sammā sambodhi*, and it was by virtue of this attainment

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that he could describe himself as a *sammā sambuddha*. *Anuttarā* is an adjective meaning "unsurpassed, supreme," and *sammā* an indeclinable that might be rendered "perfect" or "complete." Both words describe *sambodhi*, a prefixed form of the noun *bodhi*, from the verbal root *budh*. The prefix *sam* is a mere intensifier, adding a sense of fullness to the base noun.[1] The word *buddha* itself is a past participle of the verb *bujjhati*, from this same root.

Translators of Buddhist texts into English have rendered *bodhi* and its cognates, particularly *buddha*, in two different ways: *bodhi* as "enlightenment" and "awakening," *buddha* as "enlightened one" and "awakened one." Both English words are figurative, each based on an implicit metaphor: the former, a movement from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge; the latter, a change of mental state, from sleep to full awareness.

Already the early translators of Buddhist texts into English differed in their choices among these renderings, and a single translator might even switch from one to the other. Max Müller, in his *Chips from a German Workshop* (1872), wrote that "Buddha is an appellative meaning Enlightened" (p. 209) and that Gotama "claimed the name of Buddha, 'the Enlightened'" (p. 244). But in his translation of the *Dhammapada* (1881) he rendered Buddha as "the Awakened." T.W. Rhys Davids, the founder of the Pali Text Society, uses "Fully-enlightened One" for *sammā sambuddha* and "supreme and perfect enlightenment" for *anuttarā sammā sambodhi* in his anthology, *Buddhist Suttas* (1881, p. 47). But in the first volume of his *Dialogues of the Buddha* he translates *sammā sambuddha* as "all-awakened-one" (1899, p. 67). F.L. Woodward, the early translator of the Saṃyutta Nikāya ("The Book of the Kindred Sayings"), uses "enlightenment," while E.M. Hare, the early translator of the Aṅguttara Nikāya ("The Book of the Gradual Sayings"), uses both "awakening" and "enlightenment," even in the same volume.[2] I.B. Horner consistently uses "Awakening" and "Awakened One."[3]

Among translators working in Sri Lanka, both Westerners and Sri Lankans, "enlightenment" and "enlightened one" prevailed through most of the twentieth century. The German monastic pioneer, Nyanatiloka Thera, in his *Word of the Buddha* uses "enlightenment" as a rendering for *bodhi*, though in his

[1] The explanation of *sam* at Vism 201–2 as representing *sāmaṃ*, "by himself," is probably a mere word play. There is no essential difference between *bojjhaṅga* and *sambojjhaṅga*, but *sam* merely adds the nuance of fullness.

[2] See for instance *Gradual Sayings* 3:175–77, where "awakening" is used, and 3:2, 22, 117, where we find "enlightenment."

[3] See for example her translation of the Mahāvagga, 1951:1.

explanation of "Buddha" he recognizes both: "Buddha or Enlightened One—literally, Knower or Awakened One." His pupils, Nyanaponika and Ñāṇamoli, consistently use "enlightenment" and "Enlightened One" in their writings, as do the leading English-speaking Sri Lankan monks of the post-colonial period, such as Nārada, Piyadassi, and Walpola Rāhula.

In recent years, among scholars and translators a swing has taken place away from "enlightenment" toward "awakening" for *bodhi*, and from "Enlightened One" to "Awakened One" for *buddha*. The rationale for this shift is succinctly stated by the prominent philologist, K.R. Norman, another former president of the Pali Text Society:

> The translation "enlightenment" is normally reserved for *bodhi* or *sambodhi*, but it is somewhat misleading in that the root *budh* which underlies these words has no direct connection with "light." The root means literally "to wake up," or metaphorically "to wake up (to a fact), to know it," and "awakening" would be a more literal translation of *bodhi*. The past participle *buddha* is used actively to mean "one who has awakened, one who has gained knowledge."[4]

This trend continues, with "awakening" and "awakened one" now the preference of such scholars and translators as Rupert Gethin and the bhikkhus Ṭhānissaro, Anālayo, Ānandajoti, and Sujāto. The large encyclopedic volume called *The Buddhist World* also consistently uses "awakening" for *bodhi*, on the grounds that the Sanskrit root *budh* literally means "to wake up."[5] Gethin, the current president of the Pali Text Society, explains the meaning of *buddha* in reference to what he sees as the underlying metaphor:

> In brief, the word "buddha" is not a name but a title; its meaning is "one who has woken up." This title is generally applied by the

[4] Norman 1993:129. See too Norman 2006:38–39. In the latter passage Norman says that "enlightenment" is misleading because it can be confused with the word's use to describe the European intellectual movement of the eighteenth century. I don't see this as at all problematic, for our minds can easily separate the two spheres of reference. The more serious problem with "enlightenment" is that it conveys a particular mystique, signifying a state that defies rational comprehension. But "awakening" has the opposite drawback of suggesting a state of mere heightened awareness or a sudden recognition of our existential plight rather than a deep, inwardly transformative level of understanding.

[5] Powers 2016:5.

> Buddhist tradition to a class of beings who are, from the perspective of ordinary humanity, extremely rare and quite extraordinary. In contrast to these Buddhas or "awakened ones" the mass of humanity, along with the other creatures and beings that constitute the world, are asleep—asleep in the sense that they pass through their lives never knowing and seeing the world "as it is" (*yathābhūtaṃ*).[6]

Outside the scholarly world, in popular presentations of Buddhism, especially in the West, the words "awakening" and "awakened" have triumphed over their older competitors. This may have been partly driven by the observations of the scholars cited above, but the change in preference may also have occurred because, for most people, the idea of awakening is more accessible, more concrete, and more "hip" than the rather mystifying idea of "enlightenment."

While the choice of renderings for the Pāli-Sanskrit terms at issue here depends to some extent on the understanding and temperament of the translator, I believe there are sound reasons for preferring "enlightenment" to "awakening" as a rendering of *bodhi* or *sambodhi*, and for preferring"enlightened one" to "awakened one" as a rendering of *buddha*. In this paper I want to argue the case for these preferences. I will base my argument on three grounds: (1) the meaning these terms bear in ordinary English diction, and how those meanings relate to the descriptions of the Buddha's experience of *bodhi* found in the Nikāyas; (2) the actual meaning of the Pāli-Sanskrit root *budh* and its derivatives such as *bodhi* and *buddha*; and (3) the imagery used in the texts to convey the "flavor" of the Buddha's attainment and his function in relation to the world.

1. Dictionary meanings

It may be hazardous to choose between these two alternatives—"enlightenment" and "awakening"—on the basis of formal dictionary definitions. Such definitions hardly provide a secure basis for accurately rendering words with extremely rich meanings coming from an ancient spiritual tradition rooted in a culture very different from our own. However, while such definitions cannot be treated as decisive, they might still prove helpful in weighing the relative strengths and drawbacks of the alternatives.

[6] Gethin 2008:xxxii.

Consider, then, the definitions of the two words found in the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

> *Awakening*: (1) a rousing from sleep; (2) a rousing from inactivity or indifference, a revival of interest in something; (3) a coming into awareness.[7]

> *Enlightenment*: (1) the state of having knowledge or understanding; (2) the act of giving someone knowledge or understanding; (3) a movement of the 18th century that stressed the belief that science and logic give people more knowledge and understanding than tradition and religion; (4) *Buddhism*: a final spiritual state marked by the absence of desire or suffering.[8]

I am not concerned here with the fact that the dictionary gives priority to the literal meaning of "awakening" and lists the "final spiritual state" prized by Buddhism under "enlightenment" rather than "awakening." On this latter point, it's likely that the dictionary is simply following the precedent established by earlier translators. I want to focus, rather, on the contrast between awakening as "a coming into awareness" and enlightenment as a "state of having [or acquiring] knowledge or understanding." As I see it, the salient difference between these two definitions is that the former suggests an abrupt glimpse of insight or a change in level of consciousness, while the latter points to thorough and stable comprehension.

Now let us see how the Buddha described his attainment of *anuttarā sammā sambodhi*. The classic description comes toward the end of the first sermon, the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta*. Here is the passage, with the term in question left untranslated:

> "So long, monks, as my correct knowledge and vision, in the above three phases and twelve aspects, was not thoroughly purified in regard to these four noble truths, I did not claim that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* in this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when my correct knowledge and vision, in

[7] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/awakening
[8] https://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/enlightenment

> the above three phases and twelve aspects, was thoroughly purified in regard to these four noble truths, then I claimed that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* in this world with its devas…."[9]

The passage in the sutta that precedes this showed that the fully purified knowledge and vision of the four noble truths unfolded in three phases: (1) knowledge of *the referent* of each truth; (2) knowledge of *the task* to be performed in regard to each truth; and (3) knowledge that the task in regard to that truth has been *completed*. When these three phases are applied to the four truths, the twelve aspects of the liberating knowledge emerge. As to the tasks, the truth of suffering must be fully understood; the truth of its origin, namely craving, must be abandoned; the truth of its cessation, nibbāna, must be realized; and the truth of the path must be developed. Only when he fulfilled these four tasks—a complex, interrelated process—could the Buddha claim that he had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi*.

Elsewhere in the canon the Buddha provides other grounds for the claim that he has attained perfect *sambodhi*, all based on his clear understanding of fundamental principles. These may be seen as alternative ways of describing penetration of the four noble truths, opening up other perspectives on the scope of this liberating knowledge. One sutta describes his *sambodhi* as understanding the gratification, danger, and escape in regard to the five aggregates. The gratification (*assāda*) consists in the pleasure and joy that arise on the basis of each aggregate; the danger (*ādīnava*), in the fact that the aggregates are all impermanent, unsatisfactory, and subject to change; and the escape (*nissaraṇa*), in the removal of attachment to the aggregates. The Buddha then

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[9] SN V 422–23: *yāvakīvañca me, bhikkhave, imesu catūsu ariyasaccesu evaṃ tiparivaṭṭaṃ dvādasākāraṃ yathābhūtaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ na suvisuddhaṃ ahosi, neva tāvāhaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya 'anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho'ti paccaññāsiṃ. yato ca kho me, bhikkhave, imesu catūsu ariyasaccesu evaṃ tiparivaṭṭaṃ dvādasākāraṃ yathābhūtaṃ ñāṇadassanaṃ suvisuddhaṃ ahosi, athāhaṃ, bhikkhave, sadevake loke … 'anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho'ti paccaññāsiṃ.*

Note that in the construction *anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho*, the past participle takes its cognate noun as its own object. Similarly, in the phrase *tathāgato anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambujjhati*, the indicative verb takes its cognate noun as its object. Despite the wording, what the Buddha understood beneath the Bodhi tree was not the awakening or enlightenment itself—which would be circular—but such things as the four noble truths and dependent origination.

issues a declaration that explicitly connects his attainment of *sambodhi* to an understanding of the five aggregates from these three angles:

> "So long, bhikkhus, as I did not directly know as they really are the gratification as gratification, the danger as danger, and the escape as escape in the case of these five aggregates subject to clinging, I did not claim that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* in this world with its devas…. But when I directly knew all this as it really is, then I claimed that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* in this world with its devas…."[10]

The same template about correctly understanding gratification, danger, and escape is applied to the four material elements (SN II 170), the five spiritual faculties (SN V 204), and the world as a whole (AN I 258–59).

Another sutta about the five aggregates states that the Buddha could only claim to have attained unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* when he had understood each of the five aggregates by way of four aspects: its content, its origin, its cessation, and the path to its cessation (SN III 58–61). Still other suttas connect the Buddha's *sambodhi* to his discovery of the interconnections between the ten or twelve factors that make up the sequence of dependent origination, in the orders of both arising and cessation (see SN II 5–11, SN II 104–5).

These suttas make it clear that the Buddha's attainment of unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi* involved a thorough, profound, and accurate understanding of fundamental existential matters—an understanding that culminated in the proclamation: "My liberation of mind is unshakable; this is my last birth; now there is no further existence."[11] The fully purified knowledge and vision of the four noble truths, as we saw, was complex, involving twelve aspects. The liberating knowledge of the five aggregates was also complex, involving either fifteen aspects, by way of gratification, danger, and escape in regard to each of the five aggregates; or twenty aspects, by way of content, origin, cessation, and the path to cessation in regard to the aggregates. Similar kinds of complexity apply to the understanding of the four elements, the five faculties, and the world as a whole. And certainly discovering the conditional relations between the factors of dependent origination involved an extremely sophisticated and complex process of discernment.

[10] SN III 28,19–31.

[11] At SN III 28,32–33, SN V 423,10–11: *Akuppā me cetovimutti; ayamantimā jāti; natthi dāni punabbhavo.*

At this point we might ask: "Which term, 'awakening' or 'enlightenment,' better captures the complexity and comprehensive range of the knowledge and vision that constitutes the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi*? Is that attainment best viewed as an abrupt 'coming into awareness' of these matters or is it better seen as 'a state of having [or acquiring] knowledge or understanding'?"

The answer is not unequivocal. It seems that "awakening" better captures the element of *discovery* involved in the attainment of *sambodhi*, and to that extent might be justified as a rendering of the word. But "enlightenment" better conveys the depth, complexity, stability, and liberating efficacy involved in the Buddha's consummate achievement. The Buddha did not merely "awaken" to the four noble truths; he gained a thorough, lasting, and multifaceted comprehension of them, and only on that basis could he begin his task of teaching and guiding others.

This would apply not only to the Buddha's attainment but also, to a lesser degree, to the achievement of his disciples who reach arahantship by following the path he made known.[12] For disciples, the full realization of liberating knowledge proceeds through four stages: stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and arahantship. In the light of these distinctions, it may be more plausible to associate the word "awakening" with the attainment of stream-entry than with arahantship. The four Nikāyas themselves do not use the word *sambodhi* (or even *bodhi*) as a designation for stream-entry.[13] In these collections this word seems to be confined either to the Buddha's unique achievement of buddhahood or the attainment of arahantship by disciples. Nor do the suttas use some other Pāli word for the knowledge of stream-entry that conveys the literal meaning of "awakening." Nevertheless, the texts do depict the attainment of stream-entry as a sudden breakthrough to the truth of the Dhamma, an initial discovery of things not known before, and in that sense this attainment might be described in English as an "awakening."

[12] The commentaries recognize three kinds of *bodhi*, which they call *sāvakabodhi*, attained by a Buddha's disciples; *paccekabodhi*, attained by *paccekabuddhas*; and *sabbaññutā*, "omniscience," or *sammā sambodhi*, attained by a *sammā sambuddha*. See for instance Sv I 161,1–2, Spk II 340,29–30, and Sv-pṭ II 115,2.

[13] This is in contrast with later exegetical works, such as Nidd1 456,9, which defines *bodhi* as the knowledge in the four paths: *bodhi vuccati catūsu maggesu ñāṇaṃ*. Nidd1 481,24–25 defines *sambodhi* in the same way.

To get some sense of what this attainment involves, consider the story of the householder Upāli's conversion to the Dhamma (MN I 379–80). Upāli had been a follower of the Jains who tried to defeat the Buddha in debate. Having crushed Upāli and won his confidence, the Buddha gives the householder a sequential discourse on his teaching that concludes with the four noble truths. Then, "just as a clean cloth, rid of stains, would perfectly take up dye, so, while Upāli was sitting in that seat, there arose in him the dust-free, spotless eye of Dhamma: 'Whatever has the nature of origination all has the nature of cessation.'"[14] Although the image used here is not one of waking up from sleep but the opening of an eye, this gain of the Dhamma-eye might reasonably be described as an awakening, as an abrupt insight into something previously unknown that sets the disciple on the irreversible path to liberation. The stream-enterer has not yet attained *sambodhi*, but is described as being "fixed in destiny, having *sambodhi* as destination" (*niyata sambodhiparāyaṇa*), bound to attain it in seven more lives at most.[15]

While the word "awakening" might well characterize this sudden breakthrough to the truth of the Dhamma, in my view it does not adequately represent the comprehensive and multifaceted cognition attained by the Buddha and the arahant disciples. If we go back to the definitions offered by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, that attainment, a state of profound knowledge and understanding, is better represented by the word "enlightenment." Illustrating these stages by means of everyday experience, we might compare the attainment of stream-entry to awakening from sleep, when we open our eyes to the sound of the alarm clock, and the attainment of *sambodhi* to turning on the light after one has gotten out of bed. One "awakens" by achieving stream-entry, at which point one emerges from the somnolent condition of an ordinary worldling and arrives at the irreversible path to the final goal. Then, by attaining arahantship, one turns on the light, flooding the mind with liberating knowledge, with "enlightenment," just as the electric light illuminates the room.

[14] MN I 380,3–7. *Seyyathāpi nāma suddhaṃ vatthaṃ apagatakāḷakaṃ sammadeva rajanaṃ paṭiggaṇheyya, evameva upālissa gahapatissa tasmiṃyeva āsane virajaṃ vītamalaṃ dhammacakkhuṃ udapādi: "Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhamman"ti*.

[15] *Sattakkhattuṃparamatā*. See SN II 133–38.

2. The verb *budh* and its derivatives

The case for using "awakening" rather than "enlightenment" as a rendering of *bodhi* often rests on the argument that the verbal root on which the noun is based, *budh*, means "to awaken, to wake up." I quoted Norman earlier, who writes that "the root means literally 'to wake up,' … and 'awakening' would be a more literal translation of *bodhi*." Numerous other authors as well who use "awakening" for *bodhi* and "Awakened One" for *buddha* base their renderings on the premise that these are more faithful to the literal meaning of the words than the alternatives, "enlightenment" and "Enlightened One."

But is it actually the case that *budh* necessarily means "to awaken" and that its derivatives are intended to convey the idea of awakening, either literally or figuratively? If we examine the various usages of words derived from *budh* in the Pāli Canon and its commentaries, it would become clear that "to awaken" is only one meaning of this verb and not at all the one most prominent in these texts. In fact, I have not been able to locate in the Nikāyas any occurrences of unprefixed verbs based on *budh* that have the literal meaning of "awakens."

But before we turn to the suttas, let's first see what grammars and dictionaries have to say about this family of words. The *Saddanīti*, a Pāli grammar composed in Myanmar in the twelfth century, by an erudite monk named Aggavaṃsa, explains the root *budh* thus:[16]

> ***budha avagamane****. avagamanaṃ jānanaṃ*.[17]
>
> *budh* in [the sense of] understanding. Understanding is knowing.

After listing words based on the root *budh*, in the same section the *Saddanīti* explains the meaning of *buddha* as "one who understands the truths, one who causes the population to understand, or else one who has known everything that can be known with wisdom ripened by the *pāramitās*."[18] For the word *bodhi*, the relevant explanations that it offers are: (1) the path, because of the statement that "the knowledge in the four paths is called *bodhi*," and

[16] I am thankful to Bryan Levman for providing me with scans of passages from Helmer Smith's edition of the *Saddanīti* and for discussing the meaning of these passages with me in correspondence.

[17] Smith 481,25 (§1132). For the Myanmar version, see CST 4, *Saddanītippakaraṇa* (*Dhātumālā*), 228.

[18] Smith 481,28–482,1: *Tatra buddho ti "bujjhitā saccānīti buddho, bodhetā pajāyāti buddho," atha vā pāramitāparibhāvitāya paññāya sabbampi ñeyyaṃ abujjhīti buddho*.

(2) the omniscient knowledge, because of the statement that "the one of excellent vast wisdom reached *bodhi*."[19] In both instances, *bodhi* is equated with a type of *ñāṇa*, "knowledge," and no connection is made with the idea of "awakening."

In the next section, the *Saddanīti* analyzes the root *budh* in the sense of *bodhana*, which can mean either "understanding" or "leading to understanding."[20]

> ***budha bodhane**. Sakammakākammako'yaṃ dhātu. Tathā hi bodhanasadduccāraṇena jānanaṃ vikasanaṃ niddakkhayo ca gahito, tasmā "**budha** ñāṇe, **budha** vikasane, **budha** niddakkhaye" ti vuttaṃ hoti. Bujjhati bhagavā dhamme, bujjhati pabujjhati padumaṃ, bujjhati pabujjhati puriso, buddho pabuddho, bodheti, pabodheti iccādīni*.[21]
>
> *Budh* in [the sense of] *bodhana*. This root is both transitive and intransitive. Thus by the utterance of the word *bodhana*, "knowing, blossoming, and the ending of sleep" are included. Therefore, it is said: "*Budh* in the sense of knowledge, *budh* in the sense of blossoming, *budh* in the sense of the ending of sleep." The Blessed One understands phenomena; the lotus blooms, blossoms; a man wakes up, awakens; woken up, awakened (or understood, realized); causes to wake up (or: causes to understand), causes to awaken (or: causes to realize)," and so forth.[22]

[19] Smith 482,12–14: *"Catūsu maggesu ñāṇan" ti āgataṭṭhāne maggo. "Pappoti bodhiṃ varabhūri sumedhaso" ti āgataṭṭhāne sabbaññutañāṇaṃ*.

[20] Following Cone 2020: 596.

[21] Smith 483,24–29 (§1133). For the Myanmar edition, see CST 4: *Saddanītippakaraṇa* (*Dhātumālā*), 230.

[22] I translate in accordance with the punctuation of Smith's edition. The punctuation in the Myanmar edition differs. Smith has the causative form of the last two verbs, whereas the Myanmar edition has *bodhati*, *pabodhati*. I take it that these examples should be divided into five sets: the first, with the Buddha as subject, has the transitive verb with *dhamme* as object; the second has *padumaṃ* as subject with two intransitive verbs; the third has *puriso* as subject with two intransitive verbs; the fourth has two past participles, which are ambiguous and can mean either "woken up, awakened" or "understood, realized"; and the last set has two causatives, which are also ambiguous, either "wakes up, awakens" or "causes to understand, causes to realize."

According to this explanation, awakening from sleep is a possible meaning of *budh*, but a meaning subordinate to that of knowledge. Even though the *Saddanīti* admits meanings of *budh* that convey the idea of waking up, these are differentiated from the meaning that applies in the case of the Buddha's *bodhi*, which is that of understanding, knowing, or realizing.

In his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Monier-Williams lists as possible meanings of *budh* and the derivative verbs: "to wake up, be awake; to observe, heed, attend to; to perceive, notice, learn, understand, become aware of; to know to be, to recognize as." Apte, in his *Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, lists "to wake up, awake" *sixth* among possible meanings of *budh*. In first place he has "to know, understand, comprehend," and in second place "to perceive, notice, recognize."

In the new *Dictionary of Pāli*, Margaret Cone gives four meanings for the verb *bujjhati*, citing copious examples of each meaning from the texts: (1) realizes, becomes or is aware of, recognizes; (2) understands; (3) realizes, understands, the true nature of the world of experience, understands *saṃsāra* and the way to release from it; and (4) wakes, opens, blooms.[23] As can be seen, the sense of "wakes up" comes in the fourth place. She cites only a few texts illustrating this last meaning, none from the Nikāyas themselves. For the past participle, *buddha*, she has "who has great understanding, wise … esp. who has understood the true nature of the world of experience, who has understood *saṃsāra* and the way to release from it."[24]

It is obvious from such a varied list of meanings that, whatever connection *budh* and its derivatives may have with the idea of awakening, this is a secondary sense of the word. What unites the various words based on *budh* is the idea of *being aware*, of *being cognizant*. In the Pāli texts, the primary meaning of *budh* in most ordinary usages is not "to awaken" but "to understand, to know directly, to realize."

A brief survey of the verb and its derivatives as used in conventional discourse, without reference to higher spiritual attainments, will confirm this. Here I offer a few examples of the non-technical use of the verb *bujjhati*, with the Pāli followed by my own translation. In each case I highlight the English word that renders *bujjhati*.

[23] Cone 2020:588–89.
[24] Cone 2020:590.

littaṃ paramena tejasā, gilamakkhaṃ puriso na bujjhati.
(DN II 349,4–5)

The dice is smeared with intense burning [poison],
but the person swallowing it does not *know* this.

suṇoti na vijānāti, āloketi na passati;
dhammasmiṃ bhaññamānasmiṃ, atthaṃ bālo na bujjhati.
(SN I 198,32–33)

He listens, but does not understand;
he looks, but does not see.
When the Dhamma is being spoken,
the fool does not *understand* the meaning.

sārattā kāmabhogesu, giddhā kāmesu mucchitā,
atisāraṃ na bujjhanti, migā kūṭaṃ va oḍḍitaṃ.
(SN I 74,10–11)

Smitten with pleasures and wealth,
greedy, dazed by sensual pleasures,
they do not *realize* they’ve gone too far
like deer [that enter] the trap laid out.

atha pāpāni kammāni, karaṃ bālo na bujjhati;
sehi kammehi dummedho, aggidaḍḍho va tappati.
(Dhp 136; see too Th 146)

But while doing evil deeds,
the fool does not *know* [this].
The witless one is burned by his own deeds,
like one burned by fire.

te abhāvitakāyā samānā abhāvitasīlā abhāvitacittā
abhāvitapaññā abhidhammakathaṃ vedallakathaṃ kathentā
kaṇhadhammaṃ okkamamānā na bujjhissanti.
(AN III 107,1–5)

Those [monks of the future] who are undeveloped in body,
conduct, mind, and wisdom, while engaging in talk on the

> Abhidhamma, in miscellaneous talk, will slip into a dark Dhamma but will not *realize* it.

Still more passages could be cited to support my point, but these should suffice to make it clear that *bujjhati* does not necessarily mean "awakens," which is in Pāli actually a secondary meaning of the verb. In each of the passages cited, to translate *bujjhati* as "awakens," though possible, would strain ordinary English usage. Here, the sense of "directly knows, understands, realizes" is far more natural and appropriate. But if *bujjhati*, in these commonplace contexts, can bear this meaning, it seems reasonable to suppose that in relation to the exalted achievement of the Buddha and his arahant disciples, *bodhi*, the noun based on this verb, should mean "deep knowledge, comprehensive understanding, true realization." This accords with the definition of *bodhi* that Cone offers in her multi-volume *Dictionary of Pāli*. In the sense relevant to this discussion she defines *bodhi* as: (1) "the supreme understanding by which a man becomes a *buddha*; the understanding of the true nature of the world of experience, of *saṃsāra* and the way to release from it; the omniscience of a *buddha*"; and (2) "that understanding gained by an *arhat*."[25] In my view, "enlightenment" captures these senses far more successfully than "awakening."

Verbs and verbal derivatives from the root *budh* do occur in the Nikāyas with the literal meaning of "to awaken," but in such cases they are formed with a prefix, either *paṭi* or *pa*. Thus it is said that one who has mastered the mind-liberation of loving-kindness "awakens happily" (*sukhaṃ paṭibujjhati*; at AN IV 150,13, and AN V 342,6). One who has seen beautiful scenery in a dream, having awakened, does not see anything (*so paṭibuddho na kiñci passeyya*; at MN I 365,31).[26] The same verb, *paṭibujjhati*, is used elsewhere in a context where it best corresponds to the English word "recognizes" rather than "awakens." Thus in a sutta on "future dangers" (at AN III 105–6) the Buddha warns the monks: *tāni vo paṭibujjhitabbāni; paṭibujjhitvā ca tesaṃ pahānāya vāyamitabbaṃ*; "those [dangers] should be recognized by you, and having recognized them, you should strive to abandon them."

[25] Cone 2020:596.

[26] See too Sn 807: *supinena yathāpi saṅgataṃ, paṭibuddho puriso na passati*; "having awakened, a person does not see what was encountered in a dream."

In several places we find a derivative of *budh* with the prefix *pa* used figuratively to mean "awakens," in contrast with those who are figuratively said to be asleep:

> *yesaṃ dhammā appaṭividitā, paravādesu nīyare;*
> *suttā te na ppabujjhanti, kālo tesaṃ pabujjhituṃ*.
> (SN I 4,4–5)

> Those who have not penetrated things,
> who may be led into others' doctrines—
> asleep, they do not awaken:
> it's time for them to awaken.

In this verse it is not clear whether the infinitive *pabujjhituṃ* means "to awaken" in the sense of attaining *bodhi* or simply "to recognize," to see one's own heedlessness, arouse a sense of urgency, and begin walking the Buddha's path. Given that the people referred to have not even started to engage with the practice, the latter seems a more cogent interpretation.

It remains a question whether the simple verb *bujjhati* (or its derivatives) is ever used in the Nikāyas to mean "awakens" in the literal sense. I have not been able to locate any such occurrences, and Cone does not give any in her comprehensive dictionary. In any case, since the simple verb often occurs in conventional discourse in the ordinary, non-technical sense of "know, understand, realize," with no implication of "waking up," there is no justification for insisting that, in relation to the Buddha's exalted attainment, *bodhi* must convey the sense of "awakening" to the Dhamma. In this context, its usage is better matched in translation by the meanings it bears in conventional discourse in the passages cited above, that is, as understanding and direct perceptual knowledge, though at a higher level—precisely the sense conveyed by "enlightenment."

To further support my contention that words based on *budh* need not imply the sense of awakening, let us consider another word derived from this root that has no overtones at all of awakening, not even figuratively. This is the noun *buddhi*. The word occurs in mainstream Indian philosophy and psychology as well as in Buddhist texts. Monier-Williams, in his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, defines *buddhi* as "the power of forming and retaining conceptions and general notions, intelligence, reason, intellect, mind, discernment, judgment." Strangely, while the word is so close to *buddha*, it is seldom found in the Nikāyas. The few places where it does occur regularly—the *Jātakas* and the *Apadāna*—are likely somewhat later than the oldest strata of the Sutta Piṭaka.

The meanings listed by Monier-Williams are relevant to the sense of *buddhi* as found in the Pāli canonical texts and commentaries. One such occurrence is in the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* of the Dīgha Nikāya, where *buddhi* occurs among a group of desirable qualities that the future Buddha sought to promote in others (DN III 165,11–12):

> *saddhāya sīlena sutena buddhiyā,*
> *cāgena dhammena bahūhi sādhuhi*.
>
> With faith, good behavior, learning, *intelligence*,
> generosity, righteousness, and many [other] good qualities.

The word appears too in the *Theragāthā* (v. 75), ascribed to a monk named Susārada:

> *sādhu suvihitāna dassanaṃ, kaṅkhā chijjati buddhi vaḍḍhati;*
> *bālam pi karonti paṇḍitaṃ, tasmā sādhu sataṃ samāgamo*.
>
> Excellent is it to see the well disposed; doubt is cut off,
> *intelligence* grows. They make even the fool turn wise; therefore
> it is excellent to meet good persons.

In both passages, *buddhi* apparently represents a disposition of character, akin to faith and generosity, and thus might be seen as the intellectual acuity needed to grasp matters pertaining to the moral and contemplative life. This nuance is best conveyed by the word "intelligence," though intelligence with a moral and spiritual orientation. In this respect *buddhi* differs from *bodhi*, which is a specific spiritual attainment rather than a capacity. It would hardly make sense to translate *buddhi* as "awakening," despite its origins in a root that sometimes means "to awaken." We might perhaps take *buddhi* to be the faculty needed to arrive at the experience of *bodhi*, that is, as the spiritual intelligence capable of grasping liberating truth.

This interpretation is borne out by the commentaries, which include *buddhicariyā*—the practice of intelligence—among the prerequisites for attaining buddhahood. It is said that during his career as a bodhisattva, while fulfilling the *pāramīs*, the future Buddha had to reach the pinnacle in the practice of intelligence before he could attain buddhahood.[27] The Dīgha Nikāya subcommentary subsumes *buddhicariyā* under "the perfection of wisdom"

[27] Ud-a 134,8–9: *buddhicariyaṃ paramakoṭiṃ pāpetvā anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambujjhi*.

(*paññāpāramī yeva*), explaining it to mean "the practice of knowledge by way of knowing the operation of kamma, acquaintance with blameless occupations and sciences, acquaintance with the aggregates and sense bases, etc., and investigating the three characteristics."[28]

The *buddhicarita*, the intelligent temperament, is one of the six character types in the scheme adopted by the *Visuddhimagga* (Vism 101–8), the type distinguished by prominence of wisdom (*paññavā buddhicarito*). The qualities typical of such a person include openness to advice, associating with good friends, moderation in eating, mindfulness and clear comprehension, and wisely directed endeavor. Again, these all support the interpretation of *buddhi* as a character trait, in contrast with *bodhi*, which is the event of acquiring supreme knowledge, understanding, or realization, or the knowledge so acquired.

The point I wish to make in referring to these sources is that the word *buddhi* is also derived from the root *budh* and the verb *bujjhati*, yet has no connection to the idea of "awakening." If that is the case with this word, there is no cogent reason to insist that *bodhi* and *buddha* must figuratively convey the idea of "waking up." If we can translate *buddhi* as "intelligence" or "a capacity for understanding," then we can take *bodhi* as the act or process of understanding that culminates in transcendent liberation.

3. Metaphors and Imagery

The Pāli suttas abound not only in doctrinal expositions, dialogues, analysis, and practical instructions, but also in similes, metaphors, and word plays dazzling in their diversity and vivacity. Now if the Buddha had used the words *bodhi* and *buddha* to indicate that his liberating realization was one of "awakening," we would expect to find the Nikāyas abounding with similes and metaphors that illustrate his attainment of *anuttarā sammā sambodhi* as an act of waking up from sleep. Similarly, we would also expect to find the state of ignorance to be compared to sleep. Yet, contrary to these expectations, it is hard to locate in the Nikāyas even a single passage that unambiguously uses the imagery of waking up to represent the Buddha's attainment of *bodhi*, or a single passage that unambiguously uses the imagery of sleep to represent the state of ignorance. Rather, the imagery used to illustrate the Buddha's realization of *bodhi* centers

[28] Sv-pṭ I 131,15–20: *kammassakatāñāṇavasena, anavajjakammāyatanavijjāṭṭhānaparicaya-vasena, khandhāyatanādiparicayavasena, lakkhaṇattayatīraṇavasena ca ñāṇacāro buddhicariyā*.

around light, luminosity, and radiance, and the imagery used to characterize ignorance and delusion is that of darkness. These images occur repeatedly and abundantly, which entails that we must look at *bodhi* as suggesting "the light of knowledge" rather than a metaphorical waking up from sleep.

As a precaution against misunderstanding, I must make it clear that the root *budh* and the words derived from it in no way denote the ideas of "light" or "illumination." There is no etymological connection in Pāli between such words as *bodhi* or *buddha* and the various words that signify light—*āloka*, *pabhā*, *obhāsa*, and so forth. Similarly, while the English word "enlightenment" is based on the word "light," the sense of light inherent in the word serves merely as a metaphor for the illumination of the mind by understanding and does not entail an inner vision of light.

There seems, however, to be a universal tendency cutting across cultures to depict the acquisition of knowledge by means of imagery that evokes the idea of light. In English this connection is established by actually embedding the word "light" in "enlightenment" in whatever way that word is used. In the Nikāyas, though the words for "light" and "knowledge" are not etymologically related, the connection between them is consistently established by means of imagery and metaphor. This confirms, to my mind, that the translation of *bodhi* as "enlightenment" is more faithful to the imagistic dimension of the Nikāyas than "awakening."

Let me now cite some examples from the texts that support this suggestion. The standard canonical account of the Buddha's attainment of *sambodhi* explains it as the acquisition of three kinds of clear knowledge (*vijjā*): the recollective knowledge of his own past lives, the knowledge of how beings pass away and take rebirth in accordance with their kamma, and the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas*, the primordial defilements that bind the mind to the cycle of repeated birth and death. Each knowledge is said to have occurred during a different watch of the night. Significantly, the acquisition of each knowledge is depicted by the image of light dispelling darkness. Thus, at the conclusion of the third knowledge, the knowledge of the destruction of the *āsavas*, the Buddha declares: "This was the third clear knowledge attained by me in the last watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and clear knowledge arose, *darkness was banished and light arose*, as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute."[29]

[29] MN I 23,25–28: *ayaṃ kho me, brāhmaṇa, rattiyā pacchime yāme tatiyā vijjā adhigatā, avijjā vihatā vijjā uppannā, tamo vihato āloko uppanno, yathā taṃ appamattassa ātāpino pahitattassa viharato*. See too MN I 117,19–22, MN I 249,18–21, AN IV 179,8–11.

Following the attaining of *sambodhi*, the newly enlightened Buddha contemplated dependent origination in direct and reverse order. Thereupon he recited "an inspired utterance" (*udāna*), in which he uses the image of the rising sun to illustrate his attainment:

> *yadā have pātubhavanti dhammā, ātāpino jhāyato brāhmaṇassa,*
> *vidhūpayaṃ tiṭṭhati mārasenaṃ, suriyo va obhāsayam antalikkhaṃ.*
> (Ud 3; Vin I 2)
>
> When indeed things become clear
> to the ardent meditating brahmin,
> he stands dispersing Māra's army,
> like the sun lighting up the sky.

The next major event in the Buddha's career took place at Bārāṇasī, where he "set in motion the wheel of the Dhamma" by expounding the four noble truths in three phases and twelve aspects, as we saw above. Citing each of these aspects in turn, he says: "In regard to things unheard before, the eye arose in me, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, clear knowledge arose, light arose."[30] We here see the three cognitive terms—*ñāṇa*, *paññā*, and *vijjā*—associated with two metaphorical terms, *cakkhu*, the "eye" with which one sees the four noble truths, and *āloka*, the "light" of knowledge that illuminates the truths. It was the clear knowledge and vision of the four noble truths in these twelve aspects that entitled the Buddha to claim that he had attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi*.

Toward the very end of the *Dhammacakka-ppavattana Sutta*, after the deities have applauded the Buddha for setting in motion the wheel of the Dhamma, the narrator reports that "a measureless great radiance appeared in the world, surpassing the divine majesty of the gods."[31] This again suggests light as the most fitting symbol for the perfect *sambodhi* of the Buddha. In fact, another sutta tells us that such a "measureless great radiance" occurred along with his attainment of *sambodhi* itself (at AN II 131,15–16).

In his relationship to the world, the Buddha is depicted not as one who wakes people up from sleep, but as one who dispels darkness by shedding light, that is,

[30] SN V 422.

[31] SN V 424,5–7: *appamāṇo ca uḷāro obhāso loke pāturahosi atikkamma devānaṃ devānubhāvaṃ*.

the light of wisdom. We are told that there are four kinds of light—the light of the moon, the light of the sun, the light of fire, and the light of wisdom—and the foremost of these is the light of wisdom (AN II 139,25–28). The last is the light that the Buddha provides: "The sun shines by day, the moon shines by night, the warrior shines in his armor, the brahmin shines in meditation; but all day and night, the Buddha shines with splendor" (Dhp 387).

A sutta in the *Sacca-saṃyutta* states that before the sun and moon arise in the world, sheer darkness prevails, but when they arise they produce a manifestation of great light and radiance, dispelling all darkness and gloom. The same holds by analogy with the Buddha:

> When the Tathāgata arises in the world, the Arahant, the Sammā Sambuddha, then there is the manifestation of great light and radiance; then no blinding darkness prevails, no dense mass of darkness. Then there is the explaining, teaching, proclaiming, establishing, disclosing, analyzing, and elucidating of the four noble truths.[32]

The stock expression of appreciation uttered whenever an inquirer is won over after listening to a discourse by the Buddha again brings in a simile involving light. The new disciple states: "Master Gotama has made the Dhamma clear in many ways, as though he were ... holding up a lamp in the darkness for those with eyesight to see forms."[33]

Texts that describe the Buddha as a light-maker (*pabhaṅkara*), a source of radiance, recur often, most prominently in verse. Thus we read:

> *yadā ca buddhā lokasmiṃ uppajjanti pabhaṅkarā,*
> *te'maṃ dhammaṃ pakāsenti dukkhūpasamagāminaṃ*.
> (AN II 52,25–26)

> When the buddhas, the makers of light, arise in the world they illuminate this Dhamma that leads to the stilling of suffering.

[32] SN V 443,10–15: *yato ca kho, bhikkhave, tathāgato loke uppajjati arahaṃ sammāsambuddho, atha mahato ālokassa pātubhāvo hoti mahato obhāsassa. neva andhatamaṃ tadā hoti na andhakāratimisā. atha kho catunnaṃ ariyasaccānaṃ ācikkhaṇā hoti desanā paññāpanā paṭṭhapanā vivaraṇā vibhajanā uttānīkammaṃ*.

[33] For instance, at MN I 290,5–7: *andhakāre vā telapajjotaṃ dhāreyya, cakkhumanto rūpāni dakkhantīti. evamevaṃ bhotā gotamena anekapariyāyena dhammo pakāsito*.

In the *Yakkha-saṃyutta* a young spirit praises the Buddha to his mother:

> *esa devamanussānaṃ, sammūḷhānaṃ pabhaṅkaro;*
> *Buddho antimasārīro, dhammaṃ deseti cakkhumā.*
> (SN I 210,22–23)
>
> He is the light-maker for bewildered devas and humans; the Buddha, bearing his last body, possessing eyes, teaches the Dhamma.

It is not only the Buddha himself who is said to be a maker of light. The arahant disciples are also said to be light-makers. The *Itivuttaka* says that those monks accomplished in conduct, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and the knowledge of liberation, who teach, encourage, inspire, and delight others with their teaching, can be called "dispellers of darkness, makers of light, makers of luminosity, makers of lanterns, torchbearers, makers of radiance."[34]

If *sambodhi* is understood as "awakening," and the Buddha as "an awakened one," then it would follow that ignorance (*avijjā*, *moha*) should be compared to sleep, and the Buddha's task would be to wake others up from the sleep of ignorance. As Rupert Gethin, quoted above, puts it: "In contrast to these Buddhas or 'awakened ones' the mass of humanity, along with the other creatures and beings that constitute the world, are asleep—asleep in the sense that they pass through their lives never knowing and seeing the world 'as it is.'" While sleep seems a fitting symbol for ignorance, somewhat surprisingly we do not find in the Nikāyas clear-cut passages that describe ignorance as a state of sleep. Rather, when ignorance is represented symbolically, it is depicted as a state of darkness.

Thus in the stock description of his *sambodhi*, quoted above, the Buddha says: "Ignorance was banished and clear knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose." The sutta that compares the Buddha to the sun and moon says that his arising in the world drives away darkness and gloom. The *Itivuttaka* compares delusion to blinding darkness, and one who destroys ignorance to the rising sun that dispels darkness.[35] In the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*, too,

[34] It 108,6–9: *tamonudā ti pi vuccanti, ālokakarātipi vuccanti, obhāsakarātipi vuccanti, pajjotakarā ti pi vuccanti, ukkādhārā ti pi vuccanti, pabhaṅkarā ti pi vuccanti.*

[35] It 84,27–28: *andhatamaṃ tadā hoti, yaṃ moho sahate naraṃ. mohaṃ vihanti so sabbaṃ, ādicco v'udayaṃ tamaṃ.*

when disciples attain arahantship, they often describe their experience, not as a waking up from sleep, but as "splitting the mass of darkness."[36]

Generally in the Nikāyas, when the imagery of sleep is used, it symbolizes, not the state of ignorance, but heedlessness and laziness, and it is then contrasted, not with *bodhi*, but with heedfulness (*appamāda*) and wakefulness (*jāgariya*). The *Dhammapada* (v. 29) says that the wise person is "heedful among the heedless, wakeful among those asleep" (*appamatto pamattesu, suttesu bahujāgaro*). Another verse says that death carries off one with a mind of attachment as a deluge carries off a sleeping village (Dhp 47). The *Uṭṭhāna Sutta* (at Sn 333) exhorts disciples to rise up and cast off sleep, for sleep (that is, heedlessness) is useless while one is still stricken with the darts of defilements.

4. Some Ambiguities

Although I said above that it is hard to find even a single passage in the Nikāyas that unambiguously uses the imagery of waking up to illustrate the Buddha's attainment of *bodhi*, there are two passages that may involve a word play between *bodhi* and waking up. One is the verse cited above that uses the verb *pabujjhanti* (in the negative) to describe "those who have not penetrated things." In the counterpart verse that follows, "those who have penetrated things well" (*yesaṃ dhammā suppaṭividitā*) are called *sambuddhā* who, through correct knowledge, "walk evenly amidst the uneven."[37] It is possible that here *sambuddhā* is part of a word play that contrasts these "awakened ones" with the others who have not penetrated things and are therefore said to be asleep. This, however, is far from certain, and *sambuddhā* may have been used simply in the sense of "those who have become enlightened" without intending a contrast between "awakened ones" and those asleep.

The second ambiguous example is found in the *Māra-saṃyutta*. The Buddha has spent much of the night pacing back and forth in the open air. As dawn arrives he enters his dwelling and lies down, intending to sleep. Just then Māra appears and ridicules him for sleeping after the sun has risen. The Buddha replies: "With the destruction of all objects of attachment, the Buddha sleeps. What is that to you, Māra?"[38] Here, too, it is possible the Buddha is saying that

[36] For example, *tamokhandho padālito* at Th 128. See too Th 627 and Thi 3, 28, 44, 120, 174

[37] SN I 4,6–7: *te sambuddhā sammadaññā, caranti visame samaṃ*. See too the sutta that follows this one, which differs only in a single word.

[38] SN I 107,25–26: *sabbūpadhiparikkhayā buddho soppati kiṃ tav'ettha māra*.

as an Awakened One, who has eliminated all attachments, he is entitled to sleep after sunrise. But seeing a contrast here between "awakened" and sleep may be reading more into the verse than is intended. The Buddha may simply be referring to himself by his familiar title, without positing a contrast between his status of being "awakened" and his sleeping at dawn.

It is in the commentaries that we find occasional attempts made to draw out from the words *bodhi* and *buddha* the nuance of being "awake." Such passages, however, should not be used to claim that these words, as used in the canonical texts, intentionally conveyed this meaning. One of the methods of the commentaries, in its analysis of terms, is to elicit from the word being examined all its possible implications, whether these are actually intended by the original or not. Such explications often rely on fanciful word plays, such as we also find in canonical texts.[39]

When commenting on the word *bujjhati*, the commentaries, in a stock passage, draw out a meaning related to waking up:[40]

> *bujjhatī ti kilesasantānaniddāya uṭṭhahati, cattāri vā ariyasaccāni paṭivijjhati, nibbānam eva vā sacchikarotī ti vuttaṃ hoti*.
>
> *bujjhati*: what is meant is that one rises up from the sleep of the continuum of defilements, or one penetrates the four noble truths, or one realizes nibbāna itself.

Although this explanation of *bujjhati* provides three alternatives, we can discern here a progression of increasing depth. The most elementary stage is rising up from the sleep of defilements, which might be seen as the initial step in arriving at *bodhi*; the next step is the penetration of the four noble truths, the cognitive act entailed by *bodhi*; and the third step is the realization of nibbāna, the result that follows when the four truths are fully penetrated.

The commentary to the *Mahā-niddesa* also draws a connection between *buddha* and awakening:[41]

> *cittasaṅkocakara-dhammappahānena niddāya vibuddho puriso viya sabbakilesaniddāya vibuddhattā buddho ti*.

[39] See the etymologies of the *Sabhiya Sutta* (Sn 3.6) for a good example of canonical word plays.
[40] The same passage is found at Ps I 83,13–15, Spk III 138,16–18, and in still other commentaries.
[41] Nidd1-a 441,32–34.

> Just as a person awakens from sleep by abandoning the factors that constrict the mind, so one is a buddha by having awakened from the sleep of all defilements.

The *Mahā-niddesa* itself, however, in its detailed explanation of the word *buddha*, uses two agent nouns derived from the root *budh*, *bujjhitā* and *bodhetā.* The former is based on the simple verb *bujjhati*, the latter on the causative *bodheti*. Here is a translation:

> He is a buddha as one who understands (*bujjhitā*) the truths, as one who causes the population to understand (*bodhetā*); as all-knowing, as all-seeing, as not being guided by others, as one who has blossomed, as one whose *āsavas* are destroyed, as one without defilements, as one utterly devoid of lust, hatred, and delusion, as one utterly without defilements, as one who has gone by the one-way path, as one who attained the unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi*…. *Buddha* is a name pertaining to the end of emancipation, a designation accruing to the buddhas, the blessed ones, along with realization, with the obtaining of the omniscient knowledge at the foot of the bodhi tree.[42]

The words *bujjhitā* and *bodhetā* might have been rendered into English as "one who has awakened to" the truths and "one who awakens" others, but those choices would not necessarily be entailed by any indication in the Pāli that the words are derived metaphorically from the idea of "waking up from sleep." In fact, since the rest of the explanation revolves around the themes of knowing and understanding, with no suggestion that the Master was figuratively called "buddha" because he awakened from sleep, it seems highly unlikely that this idea was ever intended. The main emphasis of the passage is on the attainment of knowledge and purification as the defining marks of a buddha rather than waking up from the sleep of ignorance.

[42] Nidd1 457–58: *bujjhitā saccānīti buddho, bodhetā pajāyāti buddho, sabbaññutāya buddho, sabbadassāvitāya buddho, anaññaneyyatāya buddho, visavitāya buddho, khīṇāsavasaṅkhātena buddho, nirupakkilesasaṅkhātena buddho, ekantavītarāgoti buddho, ekantavītadosoti buddho, ekantavītamohoti buddho, ekantanikkilesoti buddho, ekāyanamaggaṃ gatoti buddho, eko anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddhoti buddho…. vimokkhantikametaṃ buddhānaṃ bhagavantānaṃ bodhiyā mūle saha sabbaññutañāṇassa paṭilābhā sacchikā paññatti, yadidaṃ buddhoti*.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is not to reject "awakening" point-blank as a rendering for *bodhi* or "awakened one" as a rendering for *buddha*. The choice between the two alternatives—"awakening" vs. "enlightenment," and "awakened one" vs. "enlightened one"—depends largely on the personal predilection of the translator and the response the rendering is intended to evoke in the reader or listener. My purpose has been, rather, to dispute the claim, put forth by several recent translators and scholars, that "awakening" and "awakened one" are more faithful to the literal meaning of the original words, *bodhi* and *buddha*, and therefore that "enlightenment" and "enlightened one" are misleading renderings that should be discarded in favor of the alternatives.

This claim rests on the contention that such words as *bodhi* and *buddha*, based on the verbal root *budh*, should be rendered in accordance with the root's meaning, "to awaken," which such translators take to be its original sense. Against this claim, I have come to the defense of "enlightenment" for *bodhi* and "enlightened one" for *buddha*, basing my defense on three grounds. The first, which uses dictionary definitions of the alternative English words as the standard, maintains that "enlightenment" better captures the nuance of *bodhi* as it is described in a number of passages in the Nikāyas, which show that achievement to be a profound act of understanding with a comprehensive range. "Awakening," on the other hand, as suggesting an initial flash of insight or a sudden shift in level of consciousness, serves better in my view as a way of characterizing the attainment of stream-entry than as a rendering for the *bodhi* of the Buddha and the arahants.

My second argument is that words derived from the root *budh* do not necessarily carry overtones of "to awaken" either literally or figuratively. In the Pāli Nikāyas and commentaries such words, as they are found in ordinary discourse, usually convey the simple sense of "to know directly, to understand, to realize." A case in point is the word *buddhi*, which clearly signifies the capacity for intelligent understanding, with no nuances of "awakening" at all.

My third argument is based on the imagery—the metaphors and similes and figures of speech—used in the texts to illustrate the meaning of *bodhi*. If *bodhi* were intended to convey the sense of "awakening," we would expect to find the Nikāyas teeming with images of the Buddha as one who has "woken up," and of the condition he has eliminated, ignorance, compared to a state of sleep. Such imagery, however, is most conspicuous in the texts by its almost total absence.

The plain fact is that, apart from a few ambiguous passages, the Nikāyas do not depict *bodhi* as an act of awakening and ignorance as a deep sleep. Instead, the language used to depict *bodhi* and the Buddha himself draws upon images of light and radiance: the sun rising and lighting up the world, a lamp brought into a dark room, and so forth. In relation to others, the Buddha is not one who awakens them from sleep, but one who dispels darkness (*tamonuda*), who illuminates their minds with the light of knowledge, that is, one who enlightens them.

Thus, when the ascetic Gotama arrived at the Deer Park in Isipatana and claimed to be a *buddha* who had attained unsurpassed perfect *sambodhi*, it is highly unlikely that the five mendicants, his first disciples, heard him saying, "I have woken up. I have arrived at supreme awakening." It is far more probable that they heard him saying, "I am one who has known. I have arrived at supreme knowledge." And this supreme knowledge, this *anuttarā sammā sambodhi*, I maintain, is better represented by the English word "enlightenment" than by "awakening."

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Upaniṣadic Echoes in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*

Dhivan Thomas Jones

Abstract

Scholars have already identified verbal echoes of the Upaniṣads in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* ('Discourse on the Simile of the Water-snake', M 22 PTS i.130–42). In this article I argue that the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* also contains muffled verbal echoes of the famous story of Indra's search for the self in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.7–12. By making this echo audible, I add to the evidence that the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* as a whole can be understood in terms of the Buddha's rejection of an Upaniṣadic soteriology.

Introduction: Ariṭṭha's Wrong View and the Upaniṣads

The narrative setting (*nidāna*) of the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* ('Discourse on the Simile of the Water-Snake') concerns a monk called Ariṭṭha, formerly a vulture-catcher, who has conceived the following bad wrong view: 'I understand the way to awakening taught by the Blessed One in such a way that those things that the Blessed One says are obstacles are not sufficient to impede one who pursues them.'[1] The discourse does not tell us what is meant by 'those things (*dhammā*) that the Blessed One says are obstacles', but the monks who hear about Ariṭṭha's wrong view take it that he is referring to pursuing sensual pleasures (*kāma*).

[1] M 22 PTS i.130: *tathāhaṃ bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājānāmi yathā yeme antarāyikā dhammā vuttā bhagavatā te paṭisevato nālaṃ antarāyāya*.

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Ariṭṭha is reported to the Buddha, who calls him a foolish person (*mogha purisa*), and explains that he teaches the very opposite view, reminding him that 'I have said that sensual pleasures bring little gratification, much dissatisfaction, much distress; and that the danger in them is great.'[2] The Buddha goes on to remind Ariṭṭha of some vivid metaphors for the unsatisfying and dangerous nature of sensual pleasures.[3]

Ariṭṭha's wrong view became a case for monastic discipline (Fuller, 2005, pp.28–9). The commentary reconstructs the logic of Ariṭṭha's view. He must have thought to himself that:

> 'There are householders enjoying the five sensual pleasures who are stream entrants, once-returners and non-returners. Monks also see pleasing physical forms cognisable by the eye etc., they touch tangible objects cognisable by the body, they enjoy soft cloaks and rugs, and this is entirely appropriate. Why are the physical forms, sounds, smells, tastes and bodies even of women not appropriate? These too are appropriate.'[4]

This is to suggest that Ariṭṭha observed that there are householders at the lower stages of awakening, who still enjoy sense-pleasures, and so sense-pleasures cannot in themselves be at odds with those lower stages of awakening. Ariṭṭha, so the commentary has it, supposes that it is possible to progress towards awakening by enjoying sense-pleasures without having a desire for them; but in the discourse, the Buddha rejects this view unequivocally:

> 'I have said in many ways that those practices that cause obstacles are sufficient to impede one who pursues them […]. So this monk Ariṭṭha, formerly a vulture-catcher, misrepresents me through his own misunderstanding, hurting himself and creating a lot of demerit.

[2] M 22 PTS i.130: *appassādā kāmā vuttā mayā bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā ādīnavo ettha bhiyyo*.

[3] Anālayo (2011, pp.147–8) records parallels to the *Alagaddupamā Sutta* preserved in Chinese and Tibetan, with no significant differences from the Pāli version.

[4] Ps ii.103: *tatrāyaṃ bhikkhu bahussuto dhammakathiko sesantarāyike jānāti vinaye pana akovidattā paṇṇattivītikkamantarāyike na jānāti tasmā rahogato evaṃ cintesi ime āgārikā pañca kāmaguṇe paribhuñjantā sotāpannāpi sakadāgāminopi anāgāmino pi honti. bhikkhū pi manāpikāni cakkhuviññeyyāni rūpāni passanti pe kāyaviññeyye phoṭṭhabbe phusanti mudukāni attharaṇapāvuraṇādīni paribhuñjanti etaṃ sabbaṃ vaṭṭati. kasmā itthīnaṃ yeva rūpasaddagandharasaphoṭṭhabbā na vaṭṭanti. etepi vaṭṭantī ti.*

> And this will be for this foolish person's long-term suffering and harm. For it is not possible that one will pursue sensual pleasures (*kāma*) except through sensual desires (*kāma*), except through the perception of sensual pleasures, except by thinking about sensual pleasures.'[5]

As the commentary helps us understand, it is only through subjective sensual desires (*kilesa-kāma*) that someone would pursue objective sensual pleasures (*vatthu-kāma*); without sensual desire there would be no causal motivation to pursue pleasure.[6] Ariṭṭha misunderstands human psychology if he thinks he can pursue sensual pleasure without sensual desire. The Buddha's teaching on the way to awakening precludes a positive evaluation of sensual desire.

Richard Gombrich (1996, pp.22–4) interprets Ariṭṭha as holding that the Buddha's warnings against sensual pleasures did not preclude sex.[7] Alexander Wynne (2010, p.199) suggests that Ariṭṭha has taken the Buddha's teaching over-literally, believing that the distinction between an action and the intention behind it means that sex itself may not be an obstacle if it is without desire. Assuming that Ariṭṭha's wrong view was indeed about sexual desires, his fault was not that he had them. Elsewhere, the Buddha is shown as skilled in handling the spiritual psychology of sexual desire, helping the monk Nanda to sublimate his desire for a lovely girl by prompting in him a desire for some much lovelier heavenly nymphs, which eventually led to Nanda's letting go of his desires.[8] Ariṭṭha's fault was his obstinate misunderstanding of the Buddha's teaching.

It is hard to see a logical connection between the introductory narrative of the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, concerning Ariṭṭha's wrong view, and the main body of the discourse, in which the Buddha presents various teachings, summarised in the following sections of this article. I propose that, whether or not Ariṭṭha was

[5] M 22 PTS i.133: *anekapariyāyena hi kho bhikkhave antarāyikā dhammā vuttā mayā alaṅ ca pana te paṭisevato antarāyāya… atha ca panāyaṃ ariṭṭho bhikkhu gaddhabādhipubbo attanā duggahitena amhe ceva abbhācikkhati attānaṅ ca khanati bahuṅ ca apuññaṃ pasavati. taṅ hi tassa moghapurisassa bhavissati dīgharattaṃ ahitāya dukkhāya. so vata bhikkhave aññatreva kāmehi aññatra kāmasaññāya aññatra kāmavitakkehi kāme paṭisevissatī ti netaṃ ṭhānaṃ vijjati.*

[6] Ps ii.105. In both Sanskrit and Pāli, the word *kāma* means both pleasure and desire, and the specific connotation is usually clear in context.

[7] An interpretation also taken in Holder (2006, p.101); Gethin (2008, p.156) also discusses the commentary.

[8] Ud 3: 2 PTS 21. The concluding stanza describes how a successful practitioner has 'crushed the thorns of sense-pleasures' (*maddito kāmakaṇṭako*).

aware of it, his view about the relationship of desire to the spiritual life in fact echoes a particular passage of the Upaniṣads, in which finding the self (*ātman*) is presented as the fulfilment of desire (*kāma*). *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (CU) 8.7 has the god Prajāpati describe the goal of the spiritual life as an *ātman* or true self whose desires (*kāmā*) are real:

> 'The self (*ātman*) that is free from evils, free from old age and death, free from sorrow, free from hunger and thirst; the self whose desire (*kāma*) and intention (*saṃkalpa*) is real – that is the self you should seek, that is the self that you should desire to know. When someone finds that self and knows it, he obtains all the worlds, and all his desires (*kāma*) are fulfilled.' So said Prajāpati.[9]

Dermot Killingley (2018, p.143) points out that CU 8.7 is unusual among teachings in the Upaniṣads in associating liberation with the fulfilment of desire. In contrast, Yājñavalkya's teaching in *Bṛhadāraṅyaka Upaniṣad* (BU) envisages the liberated self as without objects of sensation (BU 4.3.23–31), and the liberated self as without desires (BU 4.4.6–7).[10]

Perhaps Ariṭṭha had come under the influence of this unusual Upaniṣadic view about the place of sensual desires in the liberated state. Whether or not this was the case, the rebuttal of Ariṭṭha's view provides the Buddha with a starting point, in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, for what will turn out to be a long and detailed refutation of the Upaniṣadic view of the *ātman* and the nature of liberation. Moreover, the passage above from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* marks the starting point for the well-known story, in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.7–15, of Indra's search for the self. My argument will be that in fact there are echoes of this story in the Pāli text of the *Alagaddupamā Sutta*. These echoes are buried and lie dormant and forgotten, but can be brought to light. The Buddha therefore appears to connect Ariṭṭha's wrong view with a particular Upaniṣadic soteriology, then goes on to engage with that soteriology in more detail.

[9] Trans. Olivelle (1998, pp.279–81) (here with small changes). CU 8: 7: *ya ātmā apahata-pāpmā vijaro vimṛtyur viśoko vijighatso'pipāsaḥ satya-kāmaḥ satya-saṃkalpaḥ so'nyeṣṭavyaḥ sa vijijñāsitavyaḥ | so sarvaṃś ca lokān apnoti sarvaṃś ca kāmān yas tam ātmānam anuvidya vijānāti iti ha prajāpati uvāca*.

[10] BU 4.4.7 trans. Olivelle (1998 p.121): 'When they are all banished, those desires lurking in one's heart; Then a mortal becomes immortal, and attains *brahman* in this world.' (*yadā sarve pramucyante kāmā yesya hṛdi śritāḥ | atha martyo'mṛto bhavaty atra brahma samaśnuta iti* ||).

K.R. Norman, Richard Gombrich and Alexander Wynne have already drawn attention to different ways in which the Buddha in the *Alagaddupamā Sutta* engages in debate with Upaniṣadic teachings, so I will review these discussions. I will argue further that the discourse *as a whole* shows the Buddha presenting his teaching over and against the teaching of the Upaniṣads. The Buddha's discussion of Ariṭṭha's wrong view gave the Buddha the opportunity to present his own teaching as a systematic rebuttal of an Upaniṣadic soteriology and its conception of the *ātman*.

The Buddha's critique of the *ātman* in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*

Following the narrative setting (*nidāna*) of the Discourse on the Simile of the Water-snake, concerning Ariṭṭha and his wrong view, the Buddha goes on to teach how the *dhamma* is like a water-snake – it can be grasped in the wrong way, which causes harm, or in the right way, which does not.[11] This simile does not directly address Upaniṣadic soteriology, or any particular teaching at all, but concerns how to *handle* the Buddhist teaching. The Buddha goes on to explain how the teaching is like a raft, for crossing over, not for holding on. With these two similes, the Buddha emphasises the pragmatic nature of his teaching (Gombrich, 1996, p.24). Wrong view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) concern whether or not the practitioner holds on to views (Gethin, 2004), and does not concern the kind of metaphysical speculation that is found in the Upaniṣads.

The discourse continues with a discussion of how there are six points of view (*diṭṭhi-ṭṭhānāni*), namely, (1–4) that in which an uneducated non-Buddhist considers each of the first four constituents (*khandha*s) of physical form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*) and formations (*saṅkhārā*), as 'this is mine, I am this, this is my self';[12] (5) the view that what is 'seen, heard, thought, cognised, attained, searched for and explored with the mind' is likewise considered 'this is mine, I am this, this is my self';[13] and (6) the point of view that:

[11] The teaching relies on a pun, since the verb *gaṅhāti* and its cognates means both 'grasp' and 'understand' – just like the English 'grasp'.

[12] M 122 PTS i.135: *rūpaṃ* [etc.] *etaṃ mama eso 'ham asmi eso me attā ti*.

[13] M 122 PTS i.135: *yam pi taṃ diṭṭhaṃ sutaṃ mutaṃ viññātaṃ pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā tam pi etaṃ mama eso 'ham asmi eso me attā ti samanupassati*. My translation of *mutaṃ* as 'thought' facilitates comparison with the Upaniṣad, below, although in Buddhist usage *mutaṃ* can be understood in relation to tasting, smelling and touching, as 'sensed' (implicitly, at S 35: 95 PTS iv.74, explicitly at Nidd² §298).

> 'the world is the same as the self; having departed I will be permanent, fixed, eternal, not of a nature to change; I will stay like this, the same for ever' – one considers this too as 'this is mine, I am this, this is my self'.[14]

The Buddha goes on to explain that the educated Buddhist does not consider any of these points of view to be true. While points of view (1–4) concern a pre-theoretical identification with aspects of experience, points of view (5) and (6) concern a deliberate theoretical commitment. In fact, they concern the taking up of an Upaniṣadic point of view. In relation to point of view (5), Richard Gombrich (1990, pp.14–16) identifies in it verbal echoes of Yajñāvalkya's teaching in the *Bṛhadāraṅyaka Upaniṣad*.[15] To identify as 'mine' what is 'seen, heard, thought, cognised' would mean to take up Yājñavalkya's advice to his wife:

> 'You see, Maitreyī – it is one's self (*ātman*) which one should see and hear, and about which one should think and concentrate. For when one has seen, heard, thought and cognised one's self, one knows this whole world.'[16]

While Yajñāvalkya teaches the value of equating the microcosm (one's personal self) with the macrocosm (the whole world), the Buddha teaches that one considers even the microcosm of one's own experience not to be one's own.[17] Alexander Wynne (2010b, p.201) also makes the point that the Buddha's

[14] M 122 PTS i.135–6: *yam pi taṃ diṭṭhiṭṭhānaṃ so loko so attā so pecca bhavissāmi nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāmadhammo sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassāmī ti tam pi etaṃ mama eso 'ham asmi eso me attā ti samanupassati*.

[15] The identification of this view with the Upaniṣadic formula had already been made by Jayatilleke (1963, pp.60–1); Gombrich's discussion is rehearsed further in Fuller (2005, p.31), and Wynne (2010b, pp.200–2). Gombrich disagrees with the interpretation of this passage in Bhattacharya (1980), who argues that the Buddha teaches a metaphysical 'Absolute' no different from that of the Upaniṣads (see also Bhattacharya, 1989, p.23, and n.22 below).

[16] BU 4.5.6: *ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyo maitreyi | ātmani khalv are dṛṣṭe srūte mate vijñāta idaṃ sarvaṃ viditam*; trans. Olivelle (1998, p.129), with changes to facilitate comparison with Buddhist texts.

[17] Gombrich, (1990, p.16) makes the point that the Buddha did not reject everything that Yajñāvalkya said, citing BU 4.4.5, in which Yājñavalkya revalorises *karma* to mean ethical as well as ritual 'action'; the Buddha accepted such a revalorisation while going even further, in considering the ethical significance of action (*karma*) to lie in intention (*cetanā*). It should similarly be noted that the Buddha did not reject Yājñavalkya's teaching about the value of paying

mentioning of what is 'attained, searched for and explored with the mind'[18] covers the possibility that the Upaniṣadic *atman* might be realised through meditation, a possibility stated at BU 4.4.23.[19]

While point of view (5) concerns one's true identity while alive, point of view (6) concerns the metaphysics of identity beyond death. K.R. Norman (1981, p.20) observes that the wording of this last point of view includes 'actual verbal echoes' of the Upaniṣads, and he quotes from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (CU) to make his point.[20] The Upaniṣad repeats the phrase 'this self of mine'[21] as a verbal expression for the deep, inner truth of subjectivity, upon which one should resolve in order to become it after death: 'What a person becomes on departing from here after death is in accordance with his resolve in this world… "It is *brahman*. On departing from here after death, I will become that."'[22] One might add that the phrase 'the world is the same as the

attention to the 'seen, heard, thought, cognised', but revalorised it in terms of realising the true nature of experience as lacking a true self or experiencer (see Ud 1: 10 PTS 8; S 35: 95 PTS iv.73).

[18] M 122 PTS i.135: *pattaṃ pariyesitaṃ anuvicaritaṃ manasā*. 'By adding a few words suggesting the attainment of the religious goal through meditation, the Buddha adapts the Upaniṣadic pericope to suggest that identifying oneself with the *ātman*, through meditative realisation or otherwise, is misconceived' (Wynne, 2010b, p.202). Likewise, at A 11: 9 PTS v.324 (also discussed in an Appendix, below), the Buddha teaches Sandha that one who meditates (*jhāyati*) based on (*nissāya*) 'what is seen, heard, thought, cognised, attained, searched for and explored with the mind' is an 'unruly person' (*purisakhaḷuṅka*). Wynne (2010b, p.202, n.47) lists further occurrences of the whole formula, to which I would add that it is also found at M 143 PTS iii.261. In each case, 'what is seen, heard, thought, cognised, attained, searched for and explored with the mind' represents the entirety of the experienced world, which may become the basis for views and which should be let go of.

[19] BU 4.4.23: *tasmād evaṃvic chānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvātmany evātmānaṃ paśyati sarvam ātmānam paśyati*: 'Therefore the one who knows this becomes calm, controlled, restrained, patient and concentrated; he sees the self in his very self, he sees everything as the self' (trans. Olivelle, 1998, p.127, with small changes).

[20] Bhattacharya (1998, p.10), points out that he among other scholars (Oldenberg, von Glasenapp) had already noticed this apparent echo (Bhattacharya, 2015, p.45), and suggests that BU 4.5.6 itself echoes *Śatapatha Brāhmana* X.6.3 (see also Bhattacharya, 1997, p.25). But see n.22 below.

[21] CU 3.14.2–4: *eṣa ma ātmā*, trans. Olivelle, 1998, p.209.

[22] CU 3.14.1: *yathā kratūr asmiṃl loke puruṣo bhavati tathetaḥ*; CU 3.14.4: *etam itaḥ pretyābhisaṃbhavitāsmīti*, trans. Olivelle, 1998, p.209, with small changes. Bhattacharya (1998) argues that this 'echo' risks an absurd mis-reading of the Upaniṣad, which concerns a 'vision of the Absolute… beyond the subject-object split' (p.15). However, it is clear that the Buddha is critiquing 'points of view', expressed in terms reminiscent of the Upaniṣad, rather than 'a vision of the Absolute'.

self' should be read as an echo of the Upaniṣadic phrase, '*Brahman*, you see, is this whole world'.[23]

In the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, the Buddha goes on to say that the educated Buddhist does not hold any of these six points of view.[24] In answer to a monk's question, he explains that this letting go of views ought not provoke anxiety and does not amount to annihilationism in regard to the self, since an empirical examination of experience reveals that there is nothing to be found there that is 'permanent, fixed, eternal, not of a nature to change'.[25] We can infer that the Buddha regards the teaching of the Upaniṣad, that there is a permanent self (*ātman*) that is metaphysically identical with this whole world (*brahman*) as a theory of self which leads to disappointment;[26] and he regards the taking of up such a theory, which the Upaniṣad teaches is soteriologically effective, merely as dependence on a view (*diṭṭhinissaya*). The Buddha concludes:

> 'Monks, given that in actual fact neither a self nor what belongs to a self is found, isn't this point of view – "the world is the same as the self; having departed I will be permanent, fixed, eternal, not of a nature to change; I will stay like this, the same for ever" – a totally and completely foolish teaching?'[27]

In short, the Buddha regards the famous teaching of the Upaniṣad, that there is a permanent self (*ātman*) that is metaphysically identical with reality (*brahman*), as a theory of the self (*attavāda*); and he regards the taking of up

[23] CU 3.14.1: *sarvaṃ khalv idaṃ brahma*. Norman's analysis is rehearsed in Gombrich (1990, p.15), Fuller (2005, p.31 and n.5, pp.186–7), and Wynne (2010b, p.202). All these scholars repeat Norman's discussion of the teaching of a 'world self' ('world-*attā*') in the Upaniṣads. I take it that this is a reference to *brahman*, in that, according to the Upaniṣads, *brahman* is the whole world, and the *ātman* is *brahman*.

[24] The manner of 'not holding' a view is in accordance with the simile of the water-snake: the educated Buddhist observes how the six points of view are incorrect, in that no self is to be found, but does not enter disputes about these points of views, as if there were some value in dispute.

[25] M 122 PTS i.137: *nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāmadhammo*.

[26] M 122 PTS i.137: *aham pi kho taṃ bhikkhave attavādupādānaṃ na samanupassāmi yaṃ sa attavādupādānaṃ upādiyato na uppajjeyyuṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā* ('Monks, I too do not consider there to be a way of making a theory of self one's own which would not produce grief, sorrow, pain, misery and unrest for the one who does so.')

[27] M 22 PTS i.138: *attani ca bhikkhave attaniye ca saccato thetato anupalabbhamāne yam pi taṃ diṭṭhiṭṭhānaṃ so loko so attā so pecca bhavissāmi nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāmadhammo sassatisamaṃ tatheva ṭhassāmīti nanāyaṃ bhikkhave kevalo paripūro bāladhammo.*

such a theory, which the Upaniṣad teaches is soteriologically effective, to be merely dependence on a view (*diṭṭhi-nissaya*). Taking up a theory of self, which is just dependence on a view, is foolish because it does not lead to liberation.

Returning to the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, the Buddha goes on to question the monks about their experience. In an exchange familiar from other discourses,[28] he asks if the constituents (*khandha*s) are permanent or impermanent, whether what is impermanent is painful or pleasant, and whether it is appropriate to regard what is painful and liable to change as one's self. Since it is not appropriate, practitioners should regard all aspects of experience as 'this is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.'[29] In this way, the Buddha's teaching of the way to awakening is clearly articulated in terms of a rejection of Upaniṣadic metaphysics.[30] The Buddha then describes a practitioner awakened in this way using five epithets for an *arahant*, who has abandoned ignorance, the cycle of rebirth, craving, the lower fetters, and the conceit 'I am'.[31]

Norman identifies one last rejection of the Upaniṣadic worldview in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* in the Buddha's advice to 'give up what is not yours'.[32] Just as the grass and wood there in Jeta's Grove, where the Buddha is speaking, does not belong to the monks, so that burning it would not be burning what is theirs, so the constituents are not the self (*attā*) nor do they belong to the self (*attaniya*). Norman (1981, p.23) identifies an implicit argument here: if 'the self is the same as the world',[33] then burning the grass and wood in Jeta's Wood,

[28] Especially the *Anattalakkaṇa Sutta*, S 22: 59 PTS iii.66–8.

[29] M 22 PTS i.139: *n'etaṃ mama n'eso 'ham asmi na m'eso attā*.

[30] Wynne (2010a, pp.103–114) makes the important distinction between a Buddhist 'no-self' teaching (the metaphysical denial of a self as permanent essence of a person) and a 'not-self' teaching (the empirical denial that the person has the characteristics of a self or permanent essence). While the Buddhist tradition has the reputation of denying the self in the manner of the 'no-self' teaching, early Buddhist discourses – as in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* – more often simply deny that a self can be found. The 'not-self' teaching in this way denies Upaniṣadic metaphysics without making an alternative metaphysical claim.

[31] The epithets are also found at A 5: 71 PTS iii.84–5, and discussed in Anālayo (2011, p.155). Levman (2014, pp.282–7) explores the linguistic ambiguities of these epithets, the meanings of which differ across early Buddhist traditions. In the Pāli tradition, these epithets are (1) one who has lifted up the cross-bar, (2) one who has filled in the trench, (3) one who has uprooted the pillar, (4) one who has no bolt, (5) a noble one who has lowered the banner, who has put down the burden, who is without fetters (M 22 PTS i.139).

[32] M 22 PTS i.140: *yaṃ na tumhākaṃ taṃ pajahatha*.

[33] M 22 PTS i.135: *so loko so attā*; assuming that this is an allusion to e.g. CU 3.14.1: *sarvaṃ khalv idaṃ brahma*, 'this whole world is *brahman*'. Again, Norman distinguishes the individual

which are part of the world, would be burning the self. But since burning the grass and wood in Jeta's Wood is not burning the self, then the self is not the same as the world.[34] Likewise, if one identifies the self with the constituents, then 'I' would feel pain (which is a modality of feeling or *vedanā*), and this painful feeling would be 'mine'. But since, according to the Buddha's teaching earlier in the discourse, the constituents are directly observed to be neither 'I' nor 'mine', then self is not the constituents. Therefore, the practitioner should give up the constituents, which are not the self and nor do they belong to the self.

Prajāpati's teaching and Indra's search for the self

Just prior to the passage in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* in which the Buddha advises the monks to 'give up what is not yours', there appears a short section in which the Buddha praises the one who has let go of all wrong views:

> 'Monks, the gods together with Inda, Brahmā and Pajāpati, searching for the monk whose mind is thus liberated, do not ascertain that which the consciousness of the *tathāgata* is reliant on. What is the reason? Monks, I say that in this world the *tathāgata* is not to be found.'[35]

My conjecture is that this flourish relates specifically to the well-known story, found in CU 8.7–12, of Indra's search for the self. The story begins with a teaching, already cited, by the Vedic deity Prajāpati, here speaking in the role of an Upaniṣadic sage:

> 'The self (*ātman*) that is free from evils, free from old age and death, free from sorrow, free from hunger and thirst; the self whose

attā from the 'world-*attā*', and I take it that by 'world-*attā*', Norman has in mind the *brahman*. Taking the 'world-*attā*' to be an equivalent of *brahman* also allows us to dispute the argument made by Johannes Bronkhorst (2007, pp.217–8), that the fact that the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* does not refer to *brahman* means that the early Buddhists were not familiar with the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* as we now have it but rather with a teaching circulating in the spiritual culture of Greater Magadha at the time.

[34] I have presented the argument here so that it takes the form of *modus tollens*: if *x* then *y*; not *y*; therefore not *x*.

[35] M 22 PTS i.140: *evaṃ vimuttacittaṃ kho bhikkhave bhikkhuṃ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā anvesaṃ n'ādhigacchanti idaṃ nissitaṃ tathāgatassa viññāṇan ti. taṃ kissa hetu? diṭṭhevāhaṃ bhikkhave dhamme tathāgataṃ ananuvejjo ti vadāmi.*

> desire (*kāma*) and intention (*saṃkalpa*) is real – that is the self you should seek (*anveṣṭavyaḥ*), that is the self you should desire to know (*vijijñāsitavyaḥ*). When someone finds that self (*anuvidya*) and knows (*vijanāti*) it, he obtains all the worlds and all his desires (*kāma*) are fulfilled.' So said Prajāpati.[36]

The successful seeker of the self, says Prajāpati, has all their desires (*sarvān kāmān*) fulfilled (*apnoti*), a teaching that may be particularly relevant in relation to the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, in which Ariṭṭha has a more positive view about sensual desires than the Buddha.

Having heard this teaching, Indra from among the *devas* and Virocaṇa from among the *asuras* become Upaniṣadic pupils in order to learn how to find this *ātman* (CU 8.8.1–3). Prajāpati teaches them that the *ātman* reflected in the mirror and which they can dress up (i.e. the body) is the immortal *brahman*. Virocaṇa and Indra go off 'having contented hearts' (*śāntahṛdayau*). Of course this *upaniṣad* or 'hidden connection' between the *ātman* and *brahman* is false, for if the *ātman* is the same as the body then when the body dies the *ātman* will die, which means that this *ātman* is not the immortal *brahman* at all (CU 8.8.4–5). Indra realizes this and comes back to Prajāpati for more teachings (CU 8.9).

Indra is led by by Prajāpati in three further steps to the teaching that the *ātman* is not the same as the mortal body but dwells in it as an immortal (*amṛta*) and bodiless (*aśarīra*) *ātman*, the seer behind seeing, the hearer behind hearing, an *ātman* untouched by bodily pleasures and pains (CU 8.10–12). Perceiving this *ātman* one will attain the world of *brahman* after death, but also in the present, perhaps in meditation:

> This serene one, having arisen from this body and reached the light beyond, is revealed in his own form. He is the highest person (*uttamaḥ purusaḥ*).[37]

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[36] Trans. Olivelle, 1998, pp.279–81 (here with some changes). CU 8.7.1: *ya ātmā apahata-pāpmā vijaro vimṛtyur viśoko vijighatso'pipāsaḥ satya-kāmaḥ satya-saṃkalpaḥ so'nveṣṭavyaḥ sa vijijñāsitavyaḥ | so sarvāṃś ca lokān apnoti sarvāṃś ca kāmān yas tam ātmānam anuvidya vijānāti iti ha prajāpati uvāca* (reading *sarvāṃś*, with Limaye and Vadekar (1958) (via GRETIL) rather than Olivelle's *sarvaṃś*).

[37] CU 8.12.3: *eṣa saṃprasādo 'smācchrīrāt samutthāya paraṃ jyotir upasaṃpadya svena rūpeṇābhiniṣpadyate | sa uttama puruṣaḥ.* One who *ātmani sarvendriyāṇi saṃpratiṣṭha* 'concentrates all the faculties on the *ātman*' attains the world of *brahman*: CU 8.15.

Having taught Indra about this self (*ātman*), Prajāpati makes a final speech showing that it is indeed this experience of the self that brings the results he had promised:

> Those gods venerate this self (*ātman*), as a result of which they have obtained all worlds and all his desires (*kāma*) are fulfilled. Likewise, when someone finds that self and knows it, he obtains all the worlds, and all his desires are fulfilled.[38]

Knowing such an *ātman* is therefore associated with the fulfilment of sensual desires (*kāmā*), in the world of *brahman*. Alexander Wynne (2010a, pp.132–8) makes the important conjecture that the successively more satisfactory conceptions of the *ātman* taught to Indra by Prajāpati in CU 8.7–12 were familiar enough to the Buddha for him to use them as a foil for a three-stage critique of the *ātman* in the *Mahānidāna Sutta* (D 16 PTS ii.66–8):

1. The Buddha's argument against the conception of the self as the same as feeling (*vedanā*) corresponds to Prajāpati's first teaching that the self is the same as the body (in CU 8.8–9), a teaching that Indra sees through as implying that the self will suffer and die; this first argument also corresponds to Prajāpati's second teaching that the self is like the person in a dream (CU 8.10), in that such a self still experiences feeling. The Buddha likewise argues that a self that suffers and dies is an unsatisfactory account of personal identity.
2. The Buddha's argument against the conception of the self as being without feeling and experience corresponds to Prajāpati's third teaching that the self is like deep sleep (in CU 8.11), a teaching that Indra sees through as implying experiential annihilation. The Buddha's argument is that a self which transcends experience (comparable to deep sleep) would lack the conditions for being recognisably a self.
3. The Buddha's argument against the conception of the self as being different from feeling, but not without feeling

[38] CU 8.12.6: *taṃ vā etaṃ devā ātmānam upāsate | tasmāt teṣāṃ sarve ca lokā āttāḥ sarve ca kāmāḥ | sa sarvāṃś ca lokān āpnoti sarvāṃś ca kāmān yas tam ātmānam anuvidya vijānāti*. This translation is from Olivelle, 1998, p.287, with some changes.

> and experience, corresponds to Prajāpati's fourth and final teaching that the true self is bodiless and immortal, while yet experiencing bliss and the satisfaction of desire (in CU 8.12). The Buddha's argument is that feelings are the condition for being a self, which can therefore never exist independent of feeling in some bodiless form.

The Buddha concludes that self-consciousness always depends on conditions, making the Upaniṣadic ideal given in CU 8.12 of realising the *ātman* impossible to fulfil. Instead the Buddha teaches liberation through letting go of dependence on conditions.

The Buddha's critique of Prajāpati's teachings to Indra suggests that the story of Indra's search for the self was well-known in the Buddha's milieu.[39] My contribution here is to suggest that there is further evidence, in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, for the Buddha's familiarity with and rejection of Prajāpati's teaching about the self in CU 8.7–12. My conjecture is that the Buddha's flourish in praise of the liberated monk includes muffled verbal echoes of the story of Indra's search for the self. I begin with the names of the deities. In the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, the Buddha refers to 'the gods together with Inda, Brahmā and Pajāpati' (*sa-indā devā sa-brahmakā sa-pajāpatikā*). Although Inda (in Sanskrit: Indra) and Pajāpati (in Sanskrit: Prajāpati) are mentioned elsewhere in the Pāli canon, it is usually only as representatives of the Vedic deities, members of the thirty-three gods of whom Sakka (in Sanskrit: Śakra) is the chief.[40] Only in this discourse (and two others)[41] are the names of Inda and Pajāpati found together in this way, rather than in the company of other Vedic deities. In Vedic mythology, Brahmā is closely related to or synonymous with Prajāpati.[42] It is therefore possible that the particular association of Inda, Brahmā and Pajāpati found in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* represents an allusion to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Since there appears to

[39] The philosophical implications of this story are studied in detail in a positive way in for instance Kapstein (2001, pp.53–76) and Ganeri (2012).

[40] This is to summarise the information gathered in the inestimable *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* (Malalasekera 1938), s.v. Inda and Pajapati.

[41] These two others are discussed in an Appendix, below, in order to fully draw out some further significance in their formulations.

[42] This is the case even at CU 8.15, directly after the story of Indra's search for the self, in which it is said that the teaching of the Upaniṣad was passed on from Brahmā to Prajāpati, and thence to Manu and his children (*tadaitad brahmā prajāpataya uvāca prajāpatir manave manuḥ prajābhyaḥ*).

be no other reason for mentioning these particular deities, my conjecture is that this passage is an allusion to the story of Indra, instructed by Prajāpati, in search of the *ātman* and the way to the world of *brahman*, though this original allusion has here almost disappeared into inaudability.

While this conjecture is far from certain, there are other hints of connections. In the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, Inda (= Indra) and Pajāpati (= Prajāpati) are represented as indeed on a search, although it is not for an *ātman*, but for 'the monk whose mind is liberated' (*vimuttacitta bhikkhu*). The word used here for 'searching' is *anvesaṃ*, echoing their interest in the *ātman* which, in Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8 is *anveṣṭavyaḥ* 'to be sought', both terms deriving from the verbal root *anu-iṣ*, 'search' or 'seek'.[43] In the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, therefore, the Buddha acknowledges the theme of a spiritual search, using the same verb, while disputing with the Upaniṣad the object of that search.

In CU 8.7, Prajāpati teaches that one should 'should desire to know' (*vijijñāsitavyaḥ*) the *ātman*, and Indra and Prajāpati take up the search; at CU 8.12, Prajāpati teaches that 'someone who knows (*vijānāti*) the *ātman* has their desires fulfilled'. However, in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, the Buddha presents Inda and Pajāpati as unable to find the kind of 'knowing' or 'consciousness' (*viññāṇa*) of the liberated monk. The Sanskrit *vijijñāsitavyaḥ* and *vijānāti*, as well as the Pāli *viññāṇa* derive from *vi-jñā*, 'know something'.[44] Again, the Buddha takes up the theme of the goal of the spiritual search as a kind of knowing, the object of which is, in the Upaniṣad, the *ātman*; but for the Buddha the 'knowing' of the monk whose mind is liberated will remain unknown to those who seek to know the *ātman*.

Not only do Inda and Pajāpati in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* not find the *ātman* of a monk with a liberated mind, but they 'do not ascertain that which the consciousness ['knowing'] of the *tathāgata* is reliant on'.[45] The word

[43] In Pāli, *anvesaṃ* is a *namuḷ* form of absolutive (Geiger 1994: §215). At S 4: 23 PTS i.122, Māra *anvesaṃ n'ādhigacchati* ('searching does not ascertain') the *viññāṇa* of the monk Godhika, who has just attained *parinibbāna*. In Sanskrit, *anveṣṭavyaḥ* is a gerundive, with a prescriptive sense.

[44] In Pāli, *viññāṇa* is a nominal formation from *vi-jñā*, and (despite its standard English translation as 'consciousness') it is a word for a kind of (conscious) knowing of an object. In Sanskrit, *vijijñāsitavyaḥ* is the gerundive of the desiderative of *vi-jñā*, signifying the prescription of a desire to know. It is a passive participle, hence literally meaning 'to be desired to be known', but this is awkward in English.

[45] M 22 PTS i.140: *n'ādhigacchanti idaṃ nissitaṃ tathāgatassa viññāṇan ti*.

tathāgata has here the meaning of 'one who is like that', i.e. reached the ineffable state of awakening, rather than referring specifically to the Buddha.[46] Elsewhere in the Pāli discourses, a *tathāgata* is described as *uttamapuriso*, 'the highest person'.[47] This is the very phrase (*uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ*) which, at CU 8.12.2, Prajāpati uses to describe to Indra the person who has attained the immortal bodiless *ātman*. We thus appear to find the Buddha implicitly contending the true meaning of the *uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ*. While in the Upaniṣad this highest person taught by Prajāpati had realized the *ātman*, in the Buddhist discourse, the state of consciousness of the highest person, called *tathāgata*, is something of which this same Upaniṣadic teacher cannot ascertain the basis. The Upaniṣadic 'highest person' is therefore, from the Buddhist perspective, not the highest at all.

The Buddha explains that the reason Inda and Pajāpati do not ascertain that which the consciousness of the *tathāgata* is reliant on, is that the *tathāgata* is *ananuvejja*, 'not to be found' (DOP i.97).[48] In the Upaniṣad, Prajāpati teaches that by 'finding (*anuvidya*) and knowing that self (*ātman*), one obtains all worlds and all one's desires are fulfilled'.[49] Both *ananuvejja* and *anuvidya* are derived from *anu-vid*, 'find'. This suggests that, according to the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, Inda and Pajāpati, although they are supposed to have found the *ātman*, will not be successful when they try to ascertain the basis of the *tathāgata*'s consciousness. The reason has already been given in the Buddhist discourse: someone examining their mind for any traces of an *ātman*, finds that *n'etaṃ mama n'eso 'ham asmi na meso attā ti,* 'this is not mine, this is not what I am, this is not my *ātman*' (M 22 PTS i.139). The highest person, for the Buddhists, lets go of what is not the self.

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[46] DOP ii.286 s.v. *tathāgata*, '2. a designation of an arhat'; also discussed in Gethin, 2008, p.xlvi, p.287; the ineffability of the *tathāgata* is discussed in Gombrich, 2009, pp.151–2.

[47] At S 22: 86 PTS iii.116 (= S 44: 2 PTS iv.381), the *tathāgata* is described as the 'highest person' (*tathāgato uttamapuriso*); at S 22: 57 PTS iii.61, 'the perfected one who has lived [the spiritual life] is called "the highest person"' (*kevalī vusitavā uttamapuriso 'ti vuccati*); likewise in a slightly different context at A 10: 12 PTS v.16; at It 97 PTS 96, the monk of 'lovely conduct' (*kalyāṇasīla*) is described in the same way; see also S 44: 9 PTS iv.398.

[48] We are again reminded of Godhika at S 4: 23 PTS i.122: although Māra searches (*samanvesati*) for the liberated monk Godhika's consciousness (*viññāṇa*), he cannot find it, because it is 'unestablished' (*appatiṭṭhita*); at S 22: 53 PTS iii.53, the Buddha describes the unestablished consciousness as liberated (*appatiṭṭhitaṃ viññāṇaṃ… vimuttaṃ*).

[49] CU 8.12.6: *sa sarvāṃś ca lokān āpnoti sarvāṃś ca kāmān yas tam ātmānam anuvidya vijānāti*.

The common terms of debate between the Upaniṣad and the Buddhist discourse can be summarised in a table:

common terms	**CU 8.7–12**	**M 22**
anu-iṣ ‘seek’	The *ātman* is ***anveṣṭavyaḥ*** ‘to be sought’.	Inda and Pajāpati, though ***anvesaṃ*** ‘searching’,
vi-jñā ‘know something’	The seeker ***vijijñāsitavyaḥ*** ‘should desire to know’; when successful, ***vijānāti*** ‘one knows’.	do not ascertain the ***viññāṇa*** ‘consciousness’ of that liberated monk,
anu-vid ‘find’	The successful seeker, ***anuvidya*** ‘finding’, the *ātman*,	who is ***ananuvejja*** ‘not to be found’,
		elsewhere in Pāli discourses
uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ ‘highest person’	realises the nature of ***uttamaḥ puruṣaḥ*** ‘the highest person’ through meditation.	like that of the *tathāgata*, who is the ***uttamapurisa*** ‘the highest person’.

Table 1: comparison of terms

This comparison tries to reveal how the Buddha’s words in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* appear to contain muffled echoes of a debate with teachings found in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.7–12. What is at stake is the true nature of the goal of the spiritual life. While both the Buddhist discourse and the Upaniṣad agree that liberation from and transcendence of *saṃsāra*, the round of rebirth and unsatisfactoriness, is the goal of the spiritual life, they disagree about the nature of this goal. For the Upaniṣad, the discovery of the *ātman* or true self, through study and meditation, is the goal; while for the Buddha, the realisation that no *ātman* can be found in experience is an insight that leads to a complete letting go.

Conclusion: The Buddha and the Upaniṣads

The *Alagaddūpama Sutta* concludes with the Buddha explaining that 'the *dhamma* that has been well proclaimed by me in this way is clear, open, visible and laid bare'.[50] He goes on to say that, because his *dhamma* is like this, those who practise it will succeed in gaining various stages of awakening, from *arahant*-ship to rebirth in heaven. Although this conclusion stands on its own, we may now read into it an implicit judgement that the teaching of the self in the Upaniṣads is ineffective. We have seen that an Upaniṣadic teaching of the self, according to the Buddha's critique in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, involves a deliberate theoretical commitment to the view that there is a permanent self behind experience which is identical to the reality of the cosmos; and that there is a self attainable after death, which is immortal and bodiless. But such a self in experience cannot be actually be found; and such a post-mortem self is likewise a 'foolish teaching'. And by alluding to the story of Indra's search for the self, the Buddha takes up what may have been a popular teaching vehicle for an Upaniṣadic view of the self, in order to present his soteriology as superior. In this way, the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* as a whole can be read as an indirect rebuttal of Upaniṣadic teachings about the self.

The Buddha's strategy as implied in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* gives us some insight into the relationship of the Buddha to the Upaniṣads. Nowhere in the discourse, nor anywhere else in the Pāli canon, does the Buddha directly discuss or critique the Upaniṣads. Rather, it seems that the teachings that we now read in the texts called the Upaniṣads provide an important though implicit part of the intellectual context for the Buddha's own teaching. Criticising the tendency towards metaphysical speculation in the Upaniṣads offers the Buddha the opportunity to demonstrate a different path to liberation. The Buddha's approach is anti-metaphysical, viewing religious speculation of the Upaniṣadic sort as a form of conceptual proliferation (*papañca*) to be abandoned. His discussion of Upaniṣadic teachings therefore lacks systematic disproofs, instead favouring *reductio ad absurdum* arguments that undermine the tendency to metaphysical speculation and promote the letting go of views.[51] This strategy is subtle, and does not yield clearly articulated accounts of defined points of view.[52]

[50] M 22 PTS i.194: *'evaṃ svākkhāto bhikkhave mayā dhammo uttāno vivaṭo pakāsito chinnapilotiko*.

[51] The Buddha's strategy in M 22 is similar to his strategy towards interlocutors in direct debate, a strategy discussed by Rhys Davids (1899, pp.206–7), as first accepting the point of view of his opponents, so as to lead them beyond those views.

[52] As Rhys Davids (1899, p.207) puts it: 'In accepting the position of the adversary, and

Thinking more broadly, it is possible to identify two issues that have made it difficult to identify a Buddhist critique of the Upaniṣadic view of the self in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. Firstly, Upaniṣadic views do not appear in the discourse as opinions actually held by actual people. Rather, they appear as ways of thinking and points of view passed on by word of mouth among the brahmans and renunciates with whom the Buddha conversed. It is as if the actual composers of the texts we now know as the Upaniṣads, and the communities of those for whom the Upaniṣads were important or sacred, were elsewhere and known only indirectly by the Buddha in his social world. Hence the sense from the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* and elsewhere, that the Buddha is discussing views and opinions that are perhaps secondhand and perhaps imperfectly understood by those who hold them. Secondly, it would appear that the compilers and reciters of the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, working probably after the Buddha's death, though perhaps remembering his words, had little idea of the philosophical context of the discussions and debates they sought to pass on.[53] Hence Upaniṣadic ideas and stories, such as that of Indra's search for the self, are preserved only as unconscious turns of phrase about Inda and Pajāpati, or passings words like *ananuvejja* and *anvesaṃ*. These two issues mean that the 'Upaniṣadic echoes' I have sought to identify in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* are muffled by time and circumstance. By the time of the commentaries, Buddhists no longer heard these echoes at all.

And what of Ariṭṭha? It is possible that his wrong view about sense pleasures that sets the scene for the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* means that he had come under the influence of an Upaniṣadic teaching about an *ātman* whose desires will be fulfilled. Other discourses in the Pāli canon suggest that the Buddha did in fact come across ascetics and brahmans who held to a belief about a sensually

adopting his language, the authors compel us, in order to follow what they give as Gotama's view, to read a good deal between the lines. The *argumentum ad hominem* can never be the same as a statement of opinion given without reference to any particular person.' Although these comments are made in reference to the Buddha's dialogue in D 8 with the ascetic Kassapa, they apply in principle to the indirect debate of M 22 with his monks about the Upaniṣadic view of the self. (Rhys Davids seems to use the idea of an *argumentum ad hominem* in a positive sense, whereas it is usually understood to mean a fallacious attack on the character or qualities of the person making an argument).

[53] Wynne (2010b) makes a different, though not incompatible argument, that idiosyncratic features of the *Alagaddūpama Sutta* suggest that it may record the Buddha in the process of formulating his ideas. In contrast with Wynne's concern for the possible historicity of the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, I restrict myself to a discussion of the discourse as literature.

fulfilling post-mortem existence. In the *Poṭṭhapāda Sutta* (D 9 PTS i.192), the Buddha tells the wanderer Poṭṭhapāda about such men, 'who hold beliefs and views like this: "there is a self that is completely happy and healthy after death".'[54] The Buddha goes on to tell Poṭṭhapada about his subsequent conversations with such ascetics and brahmans, in which he asks them about the evidence for their beliefs and views, which turns out to be lacking: the Buddha describes their views as 'not very impressive talk'.[55] The Buddha compares such men with someone who says, 'I want and desire the most beautiful girl in the land',[56] but who, on being asked if they know her social background, her name, her height, her shape, her skin colour, or where she lives, says, 'no'. The Buddha appears to have regarded the belief in a post-mortem self whose desires are fulfilled merely as a soteriological fantasy, and his teaching that 'sensual pleasures bring little gratification, much dissatisfaction, much distress'[57] invites an investigation of experience. What Ariṭṭha appears to lack is an inkling of the Buddha's middle way, which begins from the experience of non-sensual pleasure and happiness through practising the path of meditation and insight.[58]

[54] D 9 PTS i.192: *evaṃ vādino evaṃ diṭṭhino ekantasukhī attā hoti arogo paraṃ maraṇā ti*.

[55] D 9 PTS i.193: *appāṭihīrakataṃ*: the word seems to mean 'not done in a wonderful way'. The difficulties of understanding and translating this word are discussed by Jayatilleke, 1963, §557–9. It is not that speech which is *appāṭihīrakata* is 'foolish' or 'nonsensical, exactly; but that it has gone astray philosophically, that it has missed the point.

[56] D 9 PTS i.193: *ahaṃ yā imasmiṃ janapade janapadakalyāṇī taṃ icchāmi taṃ kāmemī ti*. It is hard not to hear in the Buddha's humorous simile an echo of CU 8.2.9: *atha yadi strīlokakāmo bhavati | saṅkalpādevasya strīyaḥ samuttiṣṭhanti | tena strīlokena saṁpanno mahīyate* || 'If such a person desires the world of women, by his intention alone women rise up. And, securing the world of women, he rejoices' (trans. Olivelle, 1998, p.277). The simile of 'the most beautiful girl in the land' (*janapada-kalyāṇī*) is also found at D 13 PTS i.227; M 79 PTS ii.34; M 80 PTS ii.41.

[57] M 22 PTS i.133 etc.: *appassādā kāmā… bahudukkhā bahupāyāsā*.

[58] This middle way is evoked for instance at M 36 PTS i.247, in which the Buddha recounts how, prior to his awakening, he recalled a childhood experience of meditative pleasure beneath a Jambu tree, and realised that this non-sensual pleasure was the way to awakening: 'And I thought, I am not afraid of that happiness which is totally without sensual pleasures and totally apart from unwholesome states' (*na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhassa bhāyāmi yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññatreva kāmehi aññatra akusalehi dhammehi*).

Appendix: Disputing the 'Highest Person'

The Pāli Buddhist texts preserve what may be some further allusions to the Upaniṣadic story of Prajāpati's teaching and Indra's search for the self, although these possible allusions only indirectly support my conjecture of Upaniṣadic echoes in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*. Hence, to preserve the flow of the argument above, I discuss these further allusions here in an Appendix.

In the *Sandha Sutta* (A 11: 9 PTS v.322–6),[59] the Buddha teaches the monk Sandha how an 'excellent, well-bred person' is like a well-bred horse in thinking in a well-trained way. But in addition, free of the five hindrances, such a person does not meditate (or think, *jhāyati*) relying on any familiar object, including 'whatever is seen, heard, sensed, cognised, attained, searched for and explored with the mind', and yet that person still meditates (or thinks). The Buddha concludes with a formula and a stanza repeated three times:

> 'But the gods, together with Inda, Brahmā and Pajāpati, honour from afar the excellent, well-bred person who thinks in this way:
>
> 'Homage to you, thoroughbred person,
> homage to you, highest person (*uttamapurisa*).
> What it is you rely on when you think
> we do not understand.'[60]

There is no direct connection between this juxtaposition of Inda, Brahmā and Pajāpati with *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.7–12, as discussed above. Rather, the allusion appears to be to the Upaniṣadic story via the Buddha's own discussion of it in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, assuming my conjecture about this discourse to be the case. There, the Buddha says that the gods cannot ascertain the consciousness of the unfindable *tathāgata*, whereas in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.12, those same gods believe that the 'highest person' is the *ātman*. In the *Sandha Sutta*, the Buddha's stanza summarises the same rhetorical dispute, praising the 'highest person', the basis of whose meditation (or thinking) the gods do not understand.

[59] Already cited above, n.18.

[60] A 11: 9 PTS v.326: *evaṃ jhāyiñca pana… bhadraṃ purisājānīyaṃ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti*: *namo te purisājaññā | namo te purisuttama || yassa te nābhijānāma | yampi nissāya jhāyasī ||*.

This rhetorical differentiation of the Buddhist 'highest person' from that of the Upaniṣads recurs at the end of the *Khajjanīya Sutta* (S 22: 79 PTS iii.86–91). In this discourse, the Buddha teaches with great subtlety how someone who thinks 'I' in relation to the five constituents (*khandha*s) is consumed (*khajjati*) by those constituents, whereas the Buddhist practitioner, through analytic reflection, does not fabricate such a self. Yet the constituents remain. Of such a practitioner the Buddha concludes:

> 'Monks, the gods, together with Inda, Brahmā and Pajāpati, honour from afar the practitioner whose mind has been liberated in this way:
>
> Homage to you, thoroughbred person,
> homage to you, highest person.
> What it is you rely on when you think
> we do not understand.'[61]

The indirect allusion to the story in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.7–12 in this concluding flourish suggests that disputing the meaning of the 'highest person' with the Upaniṣads was a regular feature of the Buddha's teaching. It illustrates, in the context of religious discussions of the Buddha's day, the difference between the pursuit of the *ātman* taught by Prajāpati and practiced by Indra, and the way to liberation taught by the Buddha, which involves observing how 'I am not this, this is not mine, this is not my self (*anattā*)' in relation to all experience.

Abbreviations

A	*Aṅguttara Nikāya* PTS eds. vols.1–5 (Morris and Hardy 1885–1900)
BU	*Bṛhadāraṅyaka Upaniṣad* (Olivelle 1998)
CU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (Olivelle 1998)
D	*Dīgha Nikāya* PTS eds. vol.1 (Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1890), vol.2 (Rhys Davids and Carpenter 1903), vol.3 (Carpenter 1910)
DOP	*A Dictionary of Pāli*, Vol.1 (Cone 2001), Vol.2 (Cone 2010)

[61] S 22: 79 PTS iii.90–1: *evaṃvimuttacittaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhuṃ saindā devā sabrahmakā sapajāpatikā ārakāva namassanti: namo te purisājaññā | namo te purisuttama || yassa te nābhijānāma | yampi nissāya jhāyasī ||.*

It	*Itivuttaka* (Windisch 1889)
M	*Majjhima Nikāya* PTS eds. vol.1 (Trenckner 1888), vol.2 (Trenckner and Chalmers 1898), vol.3 (Chalmers 1899)
Nidd^2	*Cūlaniddesa* (Stede 1918)
Ps	*Papañcasūdanī (Majjhimanikāya-atthakathā),* PTS vols. 1–5 (Woods, Kosambi and Horner, 1922–38)
S	*Saṃyutta Nikāya* PTS eds. vols.1–5 (Féer 1884–98)
Ud	*Udāna* (Steinthal 1885)

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Is It Possible for an Entire Sangha to be 'Defeated' in the Holy Life?

Brian Victoria

Abstract

In the spring of 2019 a major peace exhibition took place at Higashi Honganji temple in Kyoto. The exhibition was entitled "No War – Peace" with the subtitle: "Tragic — Human Beings — How Brutal They Are!" While sectarian leaders admitted their own sect's war culpability, the exhibition's focus was almost exclusively on Japan as a victim of war, thereby, at least implicitly, avoiding an examination of both Japan's role as war victimizer and their own sect's unconditional support of Japan's wartime aggression. The historical reality is, of course, that not only Higashi Honganji but all traditional sects in Japan were united as one in their support of Japan's war effort. This reality raises the question of how to deal with the longstanding Buddhist practice that clerics who intentionally broke one of the four *pārājika* rules, including killing, were declared to have been "defeated" and barred from the Sangha for life. In light of the massive loss of life resulting from Japanese aggression abroad, are postwar Buddhist peace exhibitions focused on Japan as a victim of war sufficient to restore the Buddhist affiliation of their sects?

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Introduction

From the time of its establishment by Shakyamuni Buddha, it is clear that the Buddhist Sangha, one of the three core components or jewels of Buddhism, was designed to be a self-governing, self-regulating group of spiritual practitioners. When necessary, it was, as a last resort, prepared to expel those members who had violated the precepts all initiates pledged themselves to follow. The four *pārājikas* (defeats) describe those rules that, if broken, require expulsion from the Sangha. Should Buddhist practitioners break any one of these rules they are automatically "defeated" in the holy life and immediately forfeit membership in the Sangha. Further, they are not allowed to become practitioners again for the remainder of their lives. However, it should be noted that in all four cases Sangha members must have purposely intended to commit a proscribed act for an offence to have occurred.

The four *pārājikas* for bhikkhus (male clerics) are:

1. Sexual intercourse: engaging in any sexual intercourse.
2. Stealing: the robbery of anything worth more than 1/24 troy ounce of gold (as determined by local law).
3. Intentionally bringing about the death of a human being — whether by killing the person, arranging for an assassin to kill the person, inciting the person to die, or describing the advantages of death.
4. Deliberately lying to another person that one has attained a superior human state, e.g. claiming to be an *arahant* when one knows one is not, or claiming to have attained one of the *jhānas* when one knows one has not.

In creating this system it is clear the assumption was made that the Sangha, by virtue of its adherence to the *Pātimokkha*, i.e. the basic code of monastic discipline, is in a position to pass judgement on the intentional acts of its members. A second assumption is that the Sangha itself is capable of judging possible offenders without recourse to assistance, much less interference, from outside parties. Nowhere, it seems, is there any provision, or even consideration, that the entire Sangha itself, not simply individual members, might be responsible for violating one or more of the four *pārājikas*. Farfetched as this possibility might seem, there appears to be no prescribed method for the Sangha to address it.

Looked at historically, it is clear that early in Buddhist history the Sangha was no longer able to police its members without outside assistance. As Richard Gombrich notes:

> The Sangha, and hence Buddhism, has a particular need of political patronage if it is to flourish. Monks can reach decisions to expel malefactors – or pronounce that they have automatically expelled themselves – but they lack the power to enforce those decisions. History has shown time and again that without state support – which need not mean *exclusive* state support – the Sangha declines for this very reason.[1]

One early example of outside intervention occurred at the hands of the Indian Emperor Ashoka (c. 304-232 BCE) with regard to what the correct teaching of the Buddha was. Ashoka had the following question put to an assembly of bhikkhus who were suspected of embracing heretical doctrines:

> 'Sir, what did the Blessed One teach?' And they each expounded their wrong doctrine, the *Sassata*-doctrine and so forth.[2] And all these adherents of false doctrine did King [Ashoka] cause to be expelled from the order; those who were expelled were in all sixty thousand.[3]

The Sangha, in having to call on Emperor Ashoka to expel 60,000 monks harbouring "false views," was clearly no longer able to police, or cleanse, itself without the aid of a powerful secular force, i.e., Emperor Ashoka. However, one of the universal problems of doctrinal "heresy" is that, as history reveals, this label can be as readily used to silence justified criticism, particularly of unjust rulers, as it can to protect the "purity" of the faith. Additionally, Ashoka is said to have had the power to prescribe passages from the sutras which Sangha members were required to study, and those who failed to do so could be defrocked by his officers.[4] In fact, it is said that it became necessary to receive Ashoka's permission even to enter the priesthood.[5]

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[1] Gombrich, Theravāda Buddhism, p. 117.

[2] The *Sassata*-doctrine is a form of "eternalism", centered on the belief that the *ātman* (soul) and the universe are eternal.

[3] Chapter Five, "The Third Council," *The Mahāvaṃsa*, available on the Web at: https://mahavamsa.org/mahavamsa/original-version/05-third-council/.

[4] Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, p. 56.

[5] Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*, p. 56.

Although the details of these accounts remain contentious, their import reveals that by the time of King Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, the Sangha was no longer, at least in part, a self-governing, self-regulating entity. That is to say, it had already come under the influence, if not control, of secular rulers. One example of the close relationship that existed between the Sangha and an early Sinhalese ruler, extending even to waging war, is made clear in the epic poem *Mahāvaṃsa* (Great Chronicle), attributed to a Sinhalese Buddhist cleric of the sixth century CE.

The *Mahāvaṃsa* contains a description of a war fought between the Sinhalese Buddhist King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi (r. 161–137 BCE) and the Tamil King Eḷāra (204–164 BCE). The claim is made that Duṭṭhagāmaṇi deeply regretted the loss of life the war entailed. This regret led to the following conversation between the king and his Buddhist cleric advisors:

> How shall there be any comfort for me, O venerable sirs, since by me was caused the slaughter of a great host numbering millions?" [One monk advisor replied]: "From this deed arises no hindrance in thy way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges, the other had taken on himself the five precepts [of Buddhism]. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from thy heart, O ruler of men!"[6]

Although the *Mahāvaṃsa* is noncanonical, it has nevertheless played an influential role within not only Sri Lanka but other Theravādan Buddhist countries as well. This is because its denial of the humanity of "unbelievers and men of evil life" has been used over the centuries to justify killing, extending to the present day. For example, in mid-1970s Thailand, there was increasing domestic unrest, with demonstrations by farmers, labourers, and students. Senior Thai Buddhist cleric Kittiwutto Bhikkhu was a coleader of the psychological warfare unit Nawapol, a legacy of CIA counterinsurgency operations in that country. He taught that "communists were the national enemy" and therefore "non-Thai". These supposedly non-Thai communists should be killed: "Because whoever

[6] "The Victory of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi," *Mahāvaṃsa*, chap. 25, http://www.vipassana.com/resources/mahavamsa/mhv25.php.

destroys the nation, the religion or the monarchy, such bestial types [of man] are not complete persons. Thus we must intend not to kill people but kill the Deva [Māra]; this is the duty of all Thai."[7]

In Sri Lanka, during the twenty-six years of civil war ending in 2009, many Buddhist leaders and laity also invoked the *Mahāvaṃsa* to justify the Sri Lanka military's use of deadly force to defeat the Tamil Tiger insurgency. Even more recently, on October 30, 2017, Sitagu Sayadaw, a high-ranking monk in Myanmar, gave a speech to military officers urging them not to fear the karmic consequences of taking human life. He said:

> Don't worry . . . it's only a little bit of sin. Don't worry, even though you killed millions of people, they were only one and a half real human beings. Now I'm not saying that, monks from Sri Lanka said that. . . . Our soldiers should bear this [story] in mind.[8]

Needless to say, Sitagu was also referring to the *Mahāvaṃsa,* and the killing he alluded to was, first and foremost, the Myanmar military's use of force against the non-Buddhist, Muslim Rohingya.

Despite the preceding, it must be admitted that state interference in Sangha affairs did not always have a negative impact. As Richard Gombrich has noted, the Sangha often benefitted from the patronage of the rulers of those countries in which it flourished. In fact, it can be said that, historically speaking, Buddhism would not have spread throughout Asia without this patronage. However, there was a cost attached to this patronage, i.e., a degree of state interference in the Sangha's internal affairs. Nor should it be forgotten that it was Shakyamuni Buddha himself who is said to have admonished his followers, "'I prescribe, monks, that you meet kings' wishes."[9]

Given this background, it is hardly surprising that over the centuries the Sangha seldom if ever dared to criticize, let alone challenge, the state and its rulers no matter how despotic and cruel their actions might be. On the contrary,

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[7] Quoted in Michael Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, eds., *Buddhist Warfare*, p. 189. Originally, Māra was the demon who assaulted Shakyamuni Buddha beneath the bodhi tree, using violence, sensory pleasure, and mockery in an attempt to prevent the Buddha from attaining enlightenment. In popular usage, Māra represents the personification of Death, the Evil One, the Tempter (the Buddhist counterpart of the Devil or Principle of Destruction).

[8] "Sayadaw: Killing Non-Buddhists Is Not a Sin," *Engage Dharma*, November 3, 2017, https://engagedharma.net/2017/11/03/sayadaw-killing-non-buddhists-is-not-a-sin/.

[9] *Vinaya* I, 138. Quoted in Gombrich, *Theravāda Buddhism*, p. 117.

as in the case of the *Mahāvaṃsa,* the Sangha ended up not only collaborating with state warfare but justifying its use of violence. This historical background should be borne in mind as we turn our attention to the complete subservience of traditional Japanese Buddhist sects to Japanese totalitarianism and foreign aggression in the 20th century.

Higashi Honganji's 2019 "Peace Exhibition"

In the spring of 2019 a major peace exhibition took place at Higashi Honganji temple in Kyoto. The exhibition was entitled "No War – Peace" with the subtitle: "Tragic — Human Beings — How Brutal They Are!" A further inscription noted this was the nineteenth year that the exhibition had taken place.[10] Immediately adjacent to the exhibition title were words of welcome in Japanese, with Chinese, Korean and English translations, written by Bishop Hiroshi Tajima, Chief Administrator of the Ōtani branch of the Jōdo Shinshū (True Pure Land) sect, popularly known, and frequently referred to in this article, as Higashi Honganji:

> The Gathering in Memory of the War Dead which we once hold [sic] annually has been renamed as the Dharma Gathering in Memory of All War Dead, with the words "Dharma" and "All" added since 1987. This year's gathering marks the thirty-third year since the renaming. The addition of these two words is the embodiment of our sincere repentance for our denomination's cooperation in the war effort during World War II, which contributed to tremendous suffering of people in many countries, and of our firm determination to remember the frightful calamity of the war that devastated not only the battlefields in other lands but in our own country as well. We hold this Dharma Gathering in order to be face to face with each of the war victims and to listen to their unfathomable grief whether they were soldiers or civilians.

The words of welcome make it clear they were written on behalf of the annual war memorial gathering rather than specifically for the peace exhibition. While this is of little consequence, it is interesting to note the changes in the

[10] A further exhibition was scheduled to be held in April 2020 but was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

formal title of the memorial gathering, i.e. the addition of the words "Dharma" and "All" to the title. In other words, prior to the name change, the annual gathering had been dedicated solely to the memory of those *Japanese* soldiers and civilians who perished during the war. On the one hand, the 1987 addition of the word "all" to the memorial gathering's title may be considered a welcome addition, for it signals the sponsors' recognition, as Buddhists, that the tragedy and pain of war are not limited to one side alone. That is to say, they are indeed universal and fully deserve to be recognized as such. On the other hand, it can be said that, in the light of the war's end in 1945, the addition of the word "all" for the first time in 1987 was a change late in coming. At the same time, the question must be asked: how often, if ever, do religious war memorial services in Western countries recognize the pain and suffering of former enemies, military or civilian?

In Japan, the practice of holding memorial services dedicated to both one's own war dead and those of the enemy has a long history. Since the Middle Ages, victorious warlords have established the tradition of holding a mass for the repose of the war dead of both friend and foe, including building cenotaphs in memory of both parties. One of the largest of these cenotaphs is located at Rinzai Zen sect-affiliated Engakuji temple in Kamakura. It was built by Regent Hōjō Tokimune (1251–1284) to commemorate both Mongol and Japanese warriors who died during the Mongols' attempted invasions of Japan in the 13th century. In Japan this practice is regarded as stemming from the Buddhist idea of the "equality of friend and foe" (J. *onshin byōdō*) and rooted in the teaching that it is wrong to kill out of hatred.

War Responsibility

It is also significant that Bishop Tajima clearly recognized his branch's war responsibility when he expressed, "our sincere repentance for our denomination's cooperation in the war effort during World War II, which contributed to tremendous suffering of people in many countries, and of our firm determination to remember the frightful calamity of the war that devastated not only the battlefields in other lands but in our own country as well." This recognition, too, had been long in coming, for, although Bishop Tajima didn't mention it, it was not until 1987, i.e. the same year that "all" was added to the title of the annual war memorial service, that Higashi Honganji first admitted its war responsibility as follows:

> As we recall the war years, it was our sect that called the war a "sacred war". It was we who said, "The heroic spirits [of the war dead] who have been enshrined in [Shinto's] Yasukuni Shrine have served in the great undertaking of guarding and maintaining the prosperity of the Imperial Throne. They should therefore be revered for having done the great work of a Bodhisattva." This was an expression of deep ignorance and shamelessness on our part. When recalling this now, we are attacked by a sense of shame from which there is no escape. . . .
>
> Calling that war a "sacred war" was a double lie. Those who participate in war are both victims and victimizers. In light of the great sin we have committed, we must not pass it by as being nothing more than a "mistake". The sect proposed to revere things that were never taught by the Saint [Shinran]. When we who are priests think about this sin, we can only hang our heads in silence before all who are gathered here.[11]

Late as this postwar admission of war responsibility was, it was nevertheless the first time any of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects had done so. By comparison, the United Church of Christ in Japan, Japan's largest Protestant denomination, admitted its own war responsibility in 1967, twenty years earlier. Albeit late, it was certainly appropriate for Higashi Honganji to express its contrition. For example, in March 1943, on the occasion of the sect's Twenty-Fourth General Assembly, the branch's organ, *Shinshū,* trumpeted the following headline: "The Imperial Way-Shin Sect Establishes the Path for Public Service." The term "Imperial Way-Shin Sect" meant the recognition of the absolute power and authority of the emperor. It must be stressed, however, that there was nothing fundamentally new in this development. Shin scholar Daitō Satoshi recognized this when he wrote: "During the fifteen years of war [1931-45] the content, i.e., the actual activities, of the sect can be said to have been those of the 'Imperial Way-Shin Sect'. In fact, to be precise, it can be said that the Imperial Way-Shin sect was only the completion of what had been passed down from the Meiji [1868-1912] and Taishō [1912-1926] periods."[12]

[11] Quoted in *Nihon Shūkyō-sha Heiwa Kyōgikai*, ed. *Shūkyō-sha no Sensō Sekinin*; *Zange, Kokuhaku, Shiryō-shū*, p. 34.

[12] Daitō, *Otera no Kane wa naranakatta*, p. 110.

What was it that this branch actually taught its adherents about fighting in Japan's wars as True Pure Land Buddhists? The answer came as early as April 1905 when Japan was in the midst of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5). It was then that scholar-priest Ōsuga Shūdō (1876-1962) penned a pamphlet entitled, "An Overview of Evangelism during Wartime" (*Senji Dendō Taikan*). Its content became the standard expression of Higashi Honganji's doctrinal approach to war up through Japan's defeat in August 1945. The following passage is representative of the pamphlet's content:

> Reciting the name of Amida [Skt. Amitābha] Buddha makes it possible to march onto the battlefield, firm in the belief that death will bring rebirth in Paradise. Being prepared for death, one can fight strenuously, knowing that it is a just fight, a fight employing the compassionate mind of the Buddha, a fight of a loyal subject. Truly, what could be more fortunate than knowing that, should you die, a welcome awaits you in the Pure Land [of Amida Buddha].[13]

The Exhibit Proper

In the light of the branch's unconditional endorsement of Japan's wartime aggression, one might expect that references to the war-affirming teachings of the True Pure Land faith would form part of the exhibition. However, the branch's wartime teachings were not addressed. Instead, the first section of the exhibition moved directly from words of welcome to a series of depictions of wartime Japan, not as aggressor but as victim, i.e., victim of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The first photograph in the exhibition vividly captured the utter devastation resulting from the bombing that instantly killed some 70,000–126,000 civilians and 20,000 soldiers. Over the next two to four months, the bomb's after effects would kill an additional 90,000 to 146,000 people in Hiroshima.

[13] Quoted in Daitō Satoshi, *Otera no Kane wa naranakatta*, pp. 131-32.

"Hiroshima after dropping the atomic bomb. October 26, 1945."

At this point the exhibit took something of an unusual turn in that photographs gave way to drawings of the victims. The exhibit explained this development in English as follows:

> These drawings on display in this gallery depict the scenes that happened in Hiroshima. These drawings were drawn as a joint work by witnesses who experienced the atomic bombing and the students of the Hiroshima Municipal Motomachi Senior High School Course of Creative Expression. . . . There was the determination of the witnesses who talk about a painful experience, and the high school students' will to convey it while feeling the suffering by listening to the story and facing the reality.

The first drawing depicted one of the most poignant scenes to result from the bombing.

“A young mother carrying her dead baby on her back.”
An additional description of the scene stated:

> Mrs. Kishida found a young mother in a line of refugee[s]. With a bloody face, she was carrying her baby, who was to all appearances dead. She said to each person, “Please give my baby something to eat. Please give him water.” Since all anyone could do was to protect himself or herself, no one could do anything else.

Hiroshima consists of a series of large islands located on the broad fan-shaped delta of the Ōta River. The cry for water was a universal characteristic of those wounded by the bomb. They stumbled, sometimes crawled, to the river’s nearest channel, where they often died after taking a last drink.

"Drifting dead bodies under Miyuki Bridge."
The student artist who made this drawing stated:

> Naturally, I have never seen floating bodies. So I felt horrible when I imagined the sight while creating this drawing. When I thought that a sight which I feared was real about 70 years ago. I will be grateful if many people come to think deeply about the A-bomb through this drawing.

In the face of many thousands of deaths, there was no time, space or fuel available for traditional individual cremations of the dead. The cremations took place en masse with no time to record names or personal details. To this day, the cremated remains of about 70,000 A-bomb victims are buried in the Atomic Bomb Memorial Mound, located in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. Of this number, only the identities of 814 are known.

The drawing's caption read: "Corpses waiting to be cremated."
An A-bomb survivor commented:

> It was difficult to cremate a large number of bodies if they were piled up into a heap. So instead, they were cremated as pictured in the drawing. I watched as they burned bodies this way.

While the initial blast from the A-bomb destroyed many buildings, not to mention their occupants both inside and out, this was quickly followed by massive fires that swept through the many wooden buildings in the city. Inasmuch as both Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples are traditionally constructed of wood, they were quickly set alight and nearly always consumed in the flames.

*“The temple suffered from the tornado of fire.
” The scene was described as follows:*

When Mr. Kuniwake and his father looked toward a temple from a bank of the river, the temple, the shrine and the forest of ginkgoes and camphor trees were all on fire. The fire became a tornado, and was swallowed up into the sky. After that, they went to the river bank and lay down there.

The final panel in the first section of the exhibition consisted of a single color photo. This photo featured the exhibition's only reference to the dropping of a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki, three days after the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, i.e., on August 9, 1945.

"A Buddhist ceremony held to celebrate the construction of a 'No-Nuclear, No-War Cenotaph."' An additional explanation stated:

> A "No-Nuclear, Anti-War Cenotaph" was constructed in 1999 in front of a Nagasaki [Christian] Church where a new building to hold the remains of those killed by the A-bomb was built. On the ninth day of every month, a no-nuclear, no-war Buddhist memorial service is held as well as a yearly no-nuclear, no-war service on August 9th.

The Second Section of the Exhibition

The second section of the exhibition was quite short, consisting of only one explanatory panel and a second panel featuring a collage of photos. Interestingly, there was no English or other foreign language explanation provided for this section. For whatever reason, it was meant for "Japanese eyes only", perhaps because this was the first time in the exhibition an attempt was made to elaborate on the sect's complicity with Japanese imperialism. The Japanese explanation, entitled "Revering Things that St. Shinran Never Revered", suggests the sect now realized that its prewar and wartime proselytism on the Korean peninsula was, in fact, an integral part of Japan's colonial efforts. The description of the sect's efforts in this regard is translated here in its entirety:

> The year 2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the March 1st Movement seeking Korea's liberation and independence from Japanese colonialism. What kind of history does the Ōtani branch have on the Korean peninsula in the modern era? Let us recall the steps taken by the Ōtani branch of Jōdo Shinshū on the road to war.
>
> In 1876 the Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity was signed, opening up Korea and providing for such exclusive rights as consular jurisdiction for Japanese residents in Korea, thereby marking the first unequal treaty. The Ōtani branch took advantage of this treaty to begin mission work in the port city of Busan, using the [Japanese] settlement as its base. In August 1877, the Ōtani branch, acting on the recommendation of Lord of Foreign Affairs Terashima Munenori and Lord of Home Affairs Ōkubo Toshimichi, dispatched Okumura Enshin [1843-1913] to Korea. Okumura Enshin was thought to be a descendant of Okumura Jōshin who founded the temple of Kōtokuji in Busan in 1585 at the time Toyotomi Hideyoshi [1537-1598] dispatched troops to Korea. Okumura Enshin was the elder brother of Okumura Ioko, the first head of the Patriotic Women's Association.
>
> In November 1877, Okumura Enshin and others rented and restored the former offices of the Tsushima island envoy in Busan, turning it into a missionary station. Thereafter they opened an elementary school for the children of Japanese residents in the city, engaged in welfare activities for the poor and established a missionary society

to aid those who had fallen ill on the street. The following year they renamed their mission station as the Busan branch temple of Higashi Honganji, with Okumura serving as its first head on a rotating basis. Thereafter, they established mission stations in Wonsan in 1881, Incheon in 1885 and Keijō (Seoul) in 1890. In 1893 they created a prison chaplaincy for the Japanese consular prison in Keijō and began missionary work among the city's defense forces. The following year, following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War [1894-95], they created a military chaplaincy as well.

In 1910 Japan annexed Korea, turning it into a colony. Accompanying this, the Ōtani branch strengthened its proselytism on the Korean peninsula, changing the name of its missionary operation from "Manchuria-Empire of Korea Missionary Division" to "Korea Missionary Division".

On March 1, 1919 the people of Korea issued a "Declaration of Independence" in which they expressed their desire to free themselves from colonial control. Demonstrators shouting "Long live Korean Independence" could be found throughout the country. However, the Japanese military and police suppressed these demonstrations. Korean Buddhists like Han Yong-un [1879-1944] had been deeply involved in drafting the Declaration.

At the same time, it is reported that the Ōtani branch took advantage of the many Koreans who gathered for the March 1st [1919] market day in Wonsan City. The branch had a mission station there that set up a number of platforms from which they distributed propaganda leaflets, gave fiery speeches and led the thousands of assembled Koreans in repeated cheers for the long life [of the emperor of Japan] so as to prevent a violent outbreak. In June of the same year the Ōtani branch instructed its missionary staff that, as educators, they were to contribute to the great work of governing the country by convincing the people to exert themselves on behalf of the unification [of the two countries]. They considered the voices of those Koreans hoping for liberation and independence as no more than a "disturbance".

> It was also Ōtani branch prison chaplains attached to the Seodaemun prison [in Seoul] who attempted to make imprisoned Korean patriots see the error of their ways. Japan's colonial rule lasted for thirty-five years. In the postwar era, all of Ōtani's branch temples and regular temples disappeared. This makes us ask anew what was the meaning of proselytism on the Korean peninsula?

The adjacent panel featured a collage of photos relating to the branch's proselytism in Korea:

The caption beneath the photo in the top half of the panel read: "The main hall of the Keijō [today's Seoul] branch temple". The photo's source was identified as: "April 10, 1911 issue of Honganji Shiyō (Honganji Sect Magazine)."

The caption beneath the photo on the lower left stated: "An imperial plaque at the Keijō branch temple [entitled]: 'Daikan Amida Honganji'" [Amida Honganji Temple in the Empire of Korea].

The caption beneath the photo on the lower right stated: "Keijō branch temple". The photo's source was identified as: Fifty Years of Proselytizing in Korea, published in October 1927.

The explanatory material at the bottom of the panel stated:

> The August 25, 1910 edition of the "Shūhō" (Sect News), No. 107, disclosed that in July 1910 the Korean Emperor [Sunjong] graciously bestowed an imperial plaque on the Keijō Branch Temple. "Keijō" is today's Seoul. On July 12, 1910 an enshrinement of the plaque took place. From the Korean side, the emperor's chamberlain, the minister of state for domestic affairs, seven court ladies, and more than ten high-ranking government officials took part. From the Japanese side, Deputy Resident-General Yamagata [Isaburō], translators and members of the Buddhist Women's Association participated, making a total of more than three thousand attendees. This occurred only a month before the annexation of Korea [on August 22, 1910] and left a deep impression of friendship at the level of ordinary people.

Significantly, there is nothing on this final panel to indicate that the branch's activities in Korea had been anything but honorable, either before or after the 'annexation' (J. *heigō*). In fact, by featuring Korea's independent, precolonial name, i.e., "Empire of Korea", on the plaque in the photo at the bottom left, one is left with the impression that the Ōtani branch respected Korea's independence, territorial integrity and emperor. While that may have been true initially, it certainly was not the case by the time Japan 'annexed' Korea. Needless to say, the annexation, a euphemism for colonization, took place with the full concurrence of Higashi Honganji and, for that matter, all traditional Buddhist sects in Japan.

Conclusion

The reader will recall that a Buddhist cleric is guilty of having broken his *pārājika* vow of non-killing in the following circumstance: "Intentionally bringing about the death of a human being — whether by killing the person, arranging for an assassin to kill the person, **inciting the person to die, or describing the advantages of death**" (my emphasis). In light of these provisions, there can be no question that scholar-priest Ōsuga Shūdō, quoted above, broke this vow when he made such statements as "reciting the name of Amida Buddha makes it possible to march onto the battlefield, firm in the belief that death will bring rebirth in Paradise." Furthermore, inasmuch as Ōsuga's views were accepted by the entire Ōtani branch, the entire branch was equally guilty of the same breach. Not only that, but, as I have shown in other writings, the same can be said about the war-affirming stance of *all* traditional Japanese Buddhist sects.[14]

In light of the horrific nature of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, it is not surprising that the Japanese leadership of Higashi Honganji chose to focus on their citizenry as victims to express the deep tragedy of war. And it is also true that in his welcoming remarks, Bishop Tajima admitted his own sect's responsibility in having supported Japanese aggression. Yet the question must be asked, what nation doesn't focus on and lament the losses and hardships of their own citizenry, especially military, in war rather than those of the 'enemy'? By focusing almost exclusively in this exhibition on Japan as war *victim,* there is at least an implicit devaluation/avoidance of Japan's role as war *victimizer.* By focusing on *Japanese* as victims, there is a danger of turning far more numerous *non-Japanese* victims, especially in China, into little more than abstract numbers, if they are thought about at all. Hasn't Japan's postwar fixation on its own wartime victimization resulted in its inability to be reconciled, even now, with those nations it invaded and brutalized during WWII?

Additionally, the question must be asked, what is *Buddhist* about focusing almost exclusively on one's own pain while giving little more than lip service to the pain of others, especially pain caused by one's own government? Is it too much to characterize "peace exhibits" like this one as yet a further prolongation of Japan's well known, and ongoing, proclivity to refuse to acknowledge fully the pain suffered by so-called "comfort women" (military sexual slaves) and forced labourers during the war?

[14] See, for example, Zen at War, *Zen War Stories, and Zen Terror in Prewar Japan: Portrait of an Assassin.*

The argument can be made that in at least two panels, out of approximately twenty, Higashi Honganji did reveal the collaborative nature of their missionary activities in Korea with Japanese colonialism. However, given the far more ubiquitous nature of the doctrinal and spiritual support the branch gave to the Japanese military, is it sufficient to acknowledge to a postwar Japanese public that it was only the questionable nature of its missionary activities in one colony that was of concern? If Higashi Honganji, like Japanese Buddhists overall, find themselves, as evidenced by this exhibit, unable or unwilling to take the lead in honest self-reflection and atonement for their role as *victimizers*, who in Japanese society can be expected to fulfill this role? With notable exceptions, postwar Japanese political figures have shown an equal if not greater reluctance to confront the past.

And finally, perhaps the thorniest question of all is what is the *Buddhist* status of those traditional sects in Japan who were united as one in their support of Japanese totalitarianism at home and aggression abroad? True, many, but not all, of these sects have expressed regret/remorse for their *collective* actions in the postwar period, but this does not change the fact that, traditionally, Buddhist clerics who intentionally broke more and more of the *pārājikas* were declared to have been "defeated" and barred from the Sangha *for life.* In the face of the massive loss of life resulting from Japanese aggression abroad, are postwar expressions of regret and remorse by a number of traditional sects sufficient to restore the *Buddhist* affiliation of their sects?

If there is a ray of hope for war-affirming Buddhist sects in Japan, it is to be found in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (J. *Bonmō-kyō*) of the Mahāyāna tradition. Apocryphal though this sutra may be, it still offers the possibility of redemption. While not killing or encouraging others to kill is listed as one of the ten major precepts, and while those who intentionally break this precept are still labeled *pārājikas,* as Bernard Faure notes, "the culprit can now rehabilitate himself through his own repentance and through the merits of others."[15] Attractive as this possibility is, at least for Mahāyāna adherents, the question remains, have traditional Buddhist branches like Higashi Honganji genuinely repented their wartime conduct?

It is also attractive to think that, as in days long past, an outside power, e.g., political leaders, could intervene to 'cleanse' the Sangha as Emperor Ashoka is said to have done. However, in Japan's case it was the Japanese government, with the emperor's consent, that ensured all of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects

[15] Faure, *The Red Thread*, p. 92.

would wholeheartedly support Japanese aggression. Thus, even today, there is no force outside the collective Sangha in Japan that is in a position to intervene in Sangha affairs to address this issue.

While war responsibility is clearly a question for the Japanese Sangha as a whole, regardless of sect, it is clear that this not a problem restricted to the Japanese Sangha alone. For example, it is equally clear that many, albeit not all, senior leaders of the Sangha in Myanmar support the ongoing brutal ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya in their country. The country's *de facto* political leader, Aung Sang Su Kyi, said to be a devout Buddhist, has made it abundantly clear that she will not intervene to stop the government's policies of ethnic cleansing, much less intervene to cleanse the Sangha in Myanmar of those leaders who support ongoing government brutality. In short, in the absence of any effective mechanism to cleanse an entire Sangha of breaking its *pārājika* vows *in any Asian country*, it must be said that this is a major problem in Buddhism that remains unresolved, if not unresolvable. In this respect, of course, it can be cogently argued that Buddhism is no different from any of the world's other major religions. For Buddhists, however, this can offer scant comfort.

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The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics. Edited by Daniel Cozort and James Mark Shields. 2018. Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-874614-0

Reviewed by Katie Javanaud

The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics explores some of the most important moral questions of our time and demonstrates the value of thinking through these problems from Buddhist perspectives. Comprising 31 chapters, this book covers everything from the doctrinal and historical foundations of Buddhist moral discourse to contemporary Buddhist views on issues such as animal rights, the ethics of climate change, euthanasia, abortion and much else besides.

The chapters are logically arranged into five sections. The first of these, 'Foundations,' examines the basic principles of Buddhist ethics, introducing key doctrines such as karma, rebirth, the transference of merit, etc., and analyses the roles of precepts, vows, meditation and wisdom in the moral lives of Buddhism's spiritual aspirants. Part two, 'Ethics and Buddhist Traditions,' showcases Buddhism's diversity and examines the ways in which the foundational concepts have been interpreted in different historical, geographical and cultural contexts. This part of the book explores the broad scope of ethics in Southeast Asian, Madhyamaka, Pure Land, Zen, Tantric and Tibetan traditions (amongst others), and does so through an equally extensive range of perspectives – philosophical, historical, anthropological, emic and etic, as well as through text-critical methods. Part three, 'Comparative Perspectives,' addresses the important question of whether, and to what extent, Buddhist and Western ethics are comparable, while part four, 'Buddhism and Society,' considers how Buddhists might respond to problems such as social injustice, climate change and war or violence. Finally, in part five, contributors turn our attention to 'Contemporary Issues' in ethics and present Buddhist perspectives on human and animal rights, gender and sexuality, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, and so on.

In their 'Introduction' to the book, editors Daniel Cozort and James Mark Shields identify its main objectives and intended audience. One of their aims in assembling such a large number of essays has been to provide a comprehensive account of Buddhist ethics as it has been conceived down the ages and in different settings. Although it is doubtful that a truly comprehensive account of Buddhist ethics is possible, given that some important ancient texts may be irrevocably lost and given that some Buddhists would resist the idea that experiences of *bodhicitta* or *mahākaruṇā* can be adequately explained in language, Cozort and Shields have certainly met their first objective as fully as anyone could expect.

The scope and scale of this book means that few reviewers would be competent to judge every chapter fairly. The field of Buddhist studies is so multifarious that it requires specialization, and a specialist in, say, contemporary Thai Buddhism will not necessarily be equipped to evaluate contributions on the historical development of Pure Land conceptions of what it means to live the right life. Accordingly, this is only a partial review of *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*. It will touch on quite a number of the chapters but will focus only on those I have found particularly stimulating, informative or intriguing. That even those who have dedicated several years, or even a whole lifetime, to the study of Buddhism will have plenty to learn from reading this volume, and may even be guided towards new research projects,is probably the book's greatest achievement.

The editors have sought to generate fresh insights into the field of Buddhist ethics by bringing scholars together on a collaborative project, thereby achieving what would have been impossible for any one individual. However, the extent to which this ambition is realised is less certain: even on issues of importance, contributors disagree, but do not always engage with each other. Consequently, and despite the considerable length of the book, some key issues in Buddhist ethics are left largely unresolved. This could be a serious problem for a book which is sure to attract not just other scholars (the target audience) but also students, for whom this might be their first introduction to Buddhist ethics. It is one thing for different contributors to hold conflicting views, and indeed this is only to be anticipated, but it is quite another for them to present their views as definitively settling controversial questions. There is a risk here of confusing those who are just beginning their Buddhist studies.

For example, the question of whether Engaged Buddhism represents a genuinely new development or whether its roots are embedded in ancient Buddhist texts and traditions recurs throughout the book. In her chapter 'The

Changing Way of the Bodhisattva: Superheroes, Saints, and Social Workers', Barbara Clayton asks whether and how we might conceive of bodhisattvas represented in Indian Mahāyāna literature as Engaged Buddhists. To answer this question Clayton examines how the bodhisattva is presented in a small number of admittedly highly influential texts: the *Ugraparipṛccha Sūtra*, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, and commentaries on them by Pema Chödrön, a nun in the Shambhala tradition. Clayton argues that answering this question requires a distinction between the canonical and the contemporary, secularized, perspectives of the bodhisattva path. To do this Clayton employs "an analogy of the bodhisattva as an astronaut" (p. 156) tasked with obtaining a rare mineral from Mars which has the power to alleviate great sufferings caused by disease. She contends that, from the traditional Buddhist perspective, the bodhisattva would prioritise acquiring the skills needed to become an astronaut so that, in the future, (s)he could administer the life-saving mineral to everybody. In contrast, from the contemporary Buddhist perspective, the bodhisattva need not wait until (s)he has collected a sufficient quantity of the mineral to save everybody before (s)he starts distributing it to save at least some. Effectively Clayton is arguing that Engaged Buddhists today have substantially revised the role of a bodhisattva. She concludes that "while the canonical, premodern bodhisattva is in a long-term, multi-lifetime, elite training programme, the contemporary bodhisattva must be a social worker in the here and now" (p. 157). Contrastingly, in his chapter 'A Perspective on Ethics in the Lotus Sūtra' Gene Reeves first challenges the generally accepted definition of a bodhisattva as somebody who voluntarily postpones her/ his attainment of *nirvāṇa* to help others and then contends that "from the perspective of the Lotus Sūtra, full Buddhist practice is necessarily action-oriented and social" (p. 217). The issue receives further attention in Christopher Queen's chapter 'The Ethics of Engaged Buddhism in the West': he argues that public welfare projects initiated by revered Buddhists of the past (such as Emperor Aśoka) "do not fit the pattern of today's counter-cultural movements" associated with Engaged Buddhism (p. 501).

What becomes clear from reading these chapters is that a compelling case can be made on both sides of the argument. The issue cannot, therefore, be settled on the basis of such a small number of texts as those alluded to above. Clayton's initial posing of the question in terms of whether Indian Mahāyāna literature supports or undermines the idea of bodhisattvas as socially engaged activists now seems dubious. For what this book demonstrates so successfully is

that Buddhist traditions are so diverse as to leave any such sweeping statement open to objection. Unfortunately, however, because Clayton, Reeves, and Queen all present their own particular stances on this issue as definitive, it is possible that students new to the subject will be perplexed by the conflicting opinions.

Another important, and related, question to receive a lot of attention throughout the book is whether, for Buddhists, ethics is primarily about action or intention. As previously, the variety of different answers proffered in the book attests more to a problem with the way the question is posed than to anything else. It would be nonsensical to imagine that a single answer, applicable to all the different strands of Buddhism, could be available. Indeed, despite the fact that early chapters of the book (in the 'Foundations' part) do occasionally portray karma as a doctrine of ethical intentionality on which all Buddhists are agreed, most contributors are careful to point out that even Buddhists belonging to the same school/ sect have disagreed, sometimes profoundly, on how the karmic mechanism works and on the overall importance of action versus intention.

That this complex issue requires a more thorough investigation than it has so far received comes out especially clearly in Michael Conway's excellent chapter 'Ethics in Pure Land Schools.' Conway maintains that although some of Pure Land Buddhism's foundational sūtras "deny the necessity for moral action and ethical behaviour as a prerequisite to enlightenment," there has been more "plurality of thought in the broader Pure Land tradition throughout history" than is usually acknowledged (p. 184-186). The emphasis on ritual chanting in Pure Land Buddhism as a path to attaining liberation has meant that scholars have tended to overlook this tradition as a source of valuable insight into ethical questions with which all Buddhists should be concerned. For instance, what does the claim "we will do anything that karmic conditions prompt us to do" (attributed to Shinran) tell us about the human capacity for freedom and the prospects for moral responsibility? As Conway is surely right to assert, the counterintuitive, and often radical nature, of some of Shinran's sayings (another being "if even the good person is born in the Pure Land, how much more so the evil one") might give the impression that he is not worth taking too seriously as a source of moral insight. Yet, as Conway convincingly argues, Shinran and others belonging to the Pure Land schools of Buddhism are subtler thinkers than one might first recognise. Just as the debate between Protestants and Catholics is sometimes crudely cast in terms of faith or works, when in fact it is more a question of which comes first, so too would it be a mistake to imagine that Pure Land Buddhists are committed to ritual activity while wholly disinterested in

ethical action. Rather, for Shinran, while faith in Amitābha may be the cause of liberation, this faith inspires more compassionate behaviour. So, as Conway concludes: "a person with faith is said to live in such a way as to express a sort of non-volitional compassion in their every act… [and] Shinran is very much concerned with issues of good and evil, right and wrong" (p. 199-201).

Another chapter to deserve a special mention is that by Juliana Essen 'Buddhist Ethics in South and Southeast Asia.' With relatively few words, Essen manages to cover a vast amount of ground in surprising detail. Her chapter is divided into five sections which explore (1) political ethics, (2) monastic ethics, (3) social and environmental ethics, (4) karmic ethics (for lay Buddhist practitioners), and (5) a new development she calls "ethics of worldly benefit." Essen's chapter is a rich source of information on everything from 18th and 19th century Thai politics to contemporary Thai social movements such as the Santi Asoke Buddhist Reform Movement. Essen has clearly been personally moved and inspired by her time spent living in the Santi Asoke community (which she documents elsewhere, on the Global Wellbeing Institute website, of which she is the founder) and these experiences have given her an insider's perspective on the respective place of karma and *nirvāṇa* as sources of moral motivation in the lives of most Thai Buddhists. She concludes that although "during months of conversations with Asoke residents, *karuṇā* was referenced infrequently, whereas *bun* (merit)… came up several times a day" Santi Asoke members "are indeed motivated by the ethic of compassion even if they don't label their actions so" (p. 270). This chapter draws on anthropological literature and enthographic evidence to paint a picture of how ethics is conceived and, most importantly, practised in a range of social settings in Thailand both now and in the past. Of course, Thailand is not the whole of South/ Southeast Asia and it could fairly be noted that the title of Essen's chapter is a bit misleading.

Parts four and five of *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics* are likely to have much wider appeal than the first three parts of the book because the issues dealt with are so topical and are of almost universal interest. In part four, the chapter by Stephanie Kaza, 'Buddhist Environmental Ethics: A Contextual Approach,' and that by Michael Jerryson, 'Buddhism, War, and Violence,' are especially worth reading. Kaza proudly acknowledges that, for her, the question of how best to respond to the climate emergency "is not theoretical." She says: "I come to this position from a sense of urgency and candour about the state of the earth's ecological systems" (p. 449). Over the years Kaza has written and edited numerous books and articles on the themes of over-consumption,

greediness, and how humanity can fulfil its role in repairing some of the environmental damage we have already caused. In this chapter Kaza makes several distinct but related points: First, she favours a constructivist, or what she calls "an emergent and contextualist", approach to environmental ethics over and above the kinds of virtue-theoretic approaches which have been advanced in recent years and which she thinks "reflect a privileged position that may be seen as elitist in some of the contexts of environmental choice-making" (p. 434). Secondly, she argues that although Buddhist practices – such as mindfulness – may equip the individual to make better environmental choices, it would be woefully inaccurate to suppose that personal behaviour change will be enough to achieve the kind of systematic and structural-level changes that are required. Instead, Kaza calls for a Buddhist social ethic based on the recognition of the deep interconnectedness of all life. Thirdly, Kaza observes the close affinities between key Buddhist doctrines routinely invoked to promote a harmonious relationship with nature (e.g. dependent origination, the idea of greed as the root of suffering, and the notion that humans are not intrinsically superior to other forms of life) with ideas present in other environmental philosophies, such as deep-ecology and general systems theory. This last point is important because a solution to the environmental crisis that relied on everybody's first becoming Buddhist would be no solution at all. Yet, as Kaza points out, core Buddhist values such as non-harming, compassion, etc., have begun to permeate Western culture and thus to challenge some of the dualistic ways of thinking (such as the self/other or the man/nature dichotomies) often credited with distorting our sense of self-importance on the global scale.

The next chapter, by Jerryson, continues with the theme of destruction, probing the Buddhist stance on issues of war and violence. Unlike those with a tendency to view Buddhism through rose-tinted spectacles as a tradition which has always lived up to its commitment to non-violence, Jerryson presents a lengthy catalogue of conflicts in which Buddhists have participated. Generally speaking, Jerryson presents a balanced view of Buddhism's stance on war and violence by documenting some of the atrocities carried out by nationalistic, perhaps even bloodthirsty, monks persuaded of the lesser humanity of their non-Buddhist opponents. He also examines texts, such as excerpts from the *Upāyakuaśalya Sūtra*, which seek to justify acts of violence only when they are a means of safeguarding the spiritual wellbeing of others in the long term.

However, whilst Jerryson's discussion on the ways in which Buddhists have dehumanized their opponents is generally sound, there is one particular point

at which his treatment of the subject misses the mark. Referring to the teaching of emptiness, he contends that "perhaps the most extreme religious rhetoric of dehumanization occurs within Mahāyāna doctrine: If a person is empty of substance, what is being murdered? One text that offers an answer is the Chinese text called the *Susthitamati-Paripricchā*… [wherein] the Buddha explains that there is neither killing nor killer" (p. 465). The idea that the teaching of emptiness effectively offers Buddhists a licence to kill would, however, be sharply contested by the vast majority of Buddhists. Jerryson's omission of the word *ultimately* from the claim "there is neither killing nor killer" is an extremely serious oversight based on misunderstanding of several key doctrines, including the two truths, no-self, and karma. That is, Buddhism's denial of an ultimately existent, metaphysically substantial, self does not amount to a denial of a conventionally real person and, in fact, Buddhists are very keen to point out the importance of acknowledging the conventional existence of the person so that ordinary, everyday, inter-personal transactions can be successfully performed. Indeed, as even the earliest Buddhist texts establish, were it not for the conventional existence of the person, the attribution of karmic merit or demerit for intentions formed and actions executed would be impossible.

Jerryson compounds the problem when, some pages later, he argues that from a Buddhist perspective abortion is impermissible because "Buddhist notions often pinpoint life at conception [and so] the abortion of a foetus is the ending of a self" (p. 469). Yet, by invoking the two truths teaching, we see that this also is not the case: at most, for Buddhists, abortion prevents the birth of what would be a conventionally real person. The round of *saṃsāric* rebirth nevertheless continues unabated. The permissibility or otherwise of abortion, euthanasia, and suicide are examined in much more detail in the chapters dedicated to these topics by Michael G. Barnhart, Damien Keown, and Martin Kovan respectively.

Contributors to *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics* are to be credited for their willingness to challenge and expose certain Buddhist principles as inconsistent and unethical, at least by contemporary standards. For example, the question of the role and status afforded to women in Buddhist traditions is explored in several chapters from historical and philosophical perspectives. In his chapter 'Bhikṣuṇī Ordination,' Bhikkhu Anālayo (who has written on this subject elsewhere, including in the *Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies*) provides a helpful survey of positions adopted on the question of the legitimacy of female ordination. He discusses the transmission of the bhikṣuṇī lineage in Sri Lanka and China and examines the possibilities, in terms of

whether the Vinaya requirements can be satisfied, for restoring the lineage in Southeast Asian countries today where the practice has died out. Bhikkhu Anālayo's thorough investigation of this topic is well supplemented by Alice Collett's brilliant chapter 'Buddhism and Women', which focuses less on the 'legal' question of whether a female lineage can be revived and more on the fact that women have been, and continue to be, subjugated in most Buddhist traditions. Though she remains respectful of the tradition, Collett is unafraid to demonstrate the hypocrisy and inconsistency of Buddhists who maintain the intrinsic inferiority of women, yet simultaneously endorse the doctrines of dependent origination, karma and rebirth, according to which the ascription of any *intrinsic* property is nonsensical. Or, as Collett puts it: "This notion that the transformation of human nature is possible underwrites all fundamental Buddhist doctrine, in all schools… To say that a woman is inferior to a man because of her (static and unchangeable) 'female nature' is therefore to deny the quintessence of Buddhism" (p. 559).

To conclude, there are many chapters in this book worthy of greater consideration than can be afforded them here. As is only to be expected in a book of this length, some chapters are more readable than others, some have wider appeal, and some engage with their topics in more dynamic and exciting ways. The inclusion of a list of recommended reading at the end of each chapter is a very helpful feature for those wishing to pursue further research in the specified field and, although one of the stated aims of the book is to provide "much deeper treatment [of the topics] than… possible in an introductory text" (p. 3), it is nevertheless the case that this book will serve as an introduction to the entire field of Buddhist ethics for many students. If the present and forthcoming generation of religious studies, philosophy and anthropology students read this book and seek to emulate the work of many of its contributors, we can surely look forward to the time when they build on this already excellent body of work and seek to settle the still unanswered ethical questions in years to come.

The *Life of Jamgon Kongtrul the Great*, by Alexander Gardner. 2019, Snow Lion, Boulder, Colorado. 506pp. Preface ix-xiii.

Reviewed by Rob Mayer

Alexander Gardner is much to be congratulated for this excellent biography of Jamgon Kongtrul (*'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas* 1813-1899), one of the most important figures in 19th century Tibetan Buddhism, whose wideranging influences continue to pervade Tibetan Buddhism in the present day.

Gardner's historical sources are listed on pages x to xi of his Preface. While he makes no claim to have identified previously unheard-of sources that revolutionise our understanding of Kongtrul, he has seamlessly woven together already known sources to construct a minutely chronologised and densely detailed narrative of Kongtrul's life that greatly exceeds anything hitherto published. Gardner's work will very likely remain the go-to resource on Kongtrul's life for many years to come. It is painstakingly researched, but also highly readable. As a disclaimer, I should add that for the purposes of this short review, I have not found the time to compare Gardner's readings with his original Tibetan sources, but my hope and expectation is that he has done them justice.

Gardner has organised the volume into three sections, entitled Training, Collaborations, and Deaths. Part One (pages 3-115) describes Kongtrul's training under different teachers and at different institutions; Part Two (pages 119-320) describes his famous collaborations with other lamas, including Khyentse Wangpo (*mKhyen brtse dbang po*) and Chogyur Lingpa (*mChog gyur gling pa*); while Part Three (pages 323-351) documents the deaths of the important people in Kongtrul's life, followed by his own demise.

The volume also includes a timeline (pages 354-355), some maps (358-363), a full list of Tibetan orthographic equivalents (65-416), notes (417-451), a list of works cited (453-462), and a bibliography (463-474) and index (475-506).

One of the best qualities of this book is the great wealth of detail it contains. We learn a great deal not only about Kongtrul himself, but also about the historical times and the society and culture in which he lived, and of course, about Tibetan Buddhism.

Gardner presents much interesting information about all the important and well-known aspects of Kongtrul's own life, far too numerous to mention here: his birth family and its Bon po affiliations; his relationship with the powerful patron of his early years Khangsar Tsepel (*Khang gsar tshe 'phel*); his happy existence at Zhechen (*Zhe chen*), and his forced removal to Pelpung (*dPal spung*); his favoured ritual practices, such as Jatshon Nyingpo's Konchog Chidu (*'Ja' tshon snying po, dKon mchog spyi 'dus*); his writing of a Gazeteer of Khams; his abiding interests in pilgrimage and in sacred landscape; his great textual endeavours such as the Treasuries; his founding of Tsadra (*rTsa 'dra)* meditation centre; his famous religious collaborations (with Khyentse Wangpo in particular); his involvement in Treasure revelation; his banishment from Pelpung and the events leading up to it; what non-sectarianism (*ris med*) meant to him; and so forth.

In addition, Gardner is able to present a more detailed view than hitherto available into innumerable less prominent events within Kongtrul's life, which are nevertheless highly revealing. To give one example, we learn a lot from Gardner's narratives about the finer nuances of Kongtrul's relationship to his environment and the local deities inhabiting it, through smaller repeated events that would not normally evolve into well-known narratives, such as the routine burial of Treasure Vases, and other propitiations of local deities. Likewise, we learn more about the finer details of Kongtrul's religious life, for example, individual religious dreams are contextualised, as are his Treasure discoveries (which are frequently related to dreams).

The Nyarong War (*Nya rong*) and the decline of Derge (*sDe dge*) in its aftermath make interesting reading, particularly of course in relation to Kongtrul's unavoidable involvement in those events.

In a work of this scale, replete with so many details and so many interpretations, it is inevitable that readers might disagree with occasional statements that were expressed a bit less carefully than they should be. While experienced readers should largely remain unaffected by these, in some cases novice readers might be misled. For example, there is a problem with Gardner's apparent assertion (page 198) that treasure revealers like Chogyur Lingpa would only produce offspring by accident, as a downfall, through their failure to retain semen

during sexual yoga practices. Yet there is in many cases a perceived religious benefit when tantric masters manage to beget suitable progeny to perpetuate their hereditary tantric lineages (*gdung rgyud*). Gardner is inevitably aware of this kind of deliberate production of children by rNying ma lamas, and by this time in his career Chogyur Lingpa might already have been a sufficiently established figure with enough support from senior masters like Khyentse and Kongtrul, to produce his own lineage without fear of scandal. But somehow this was not discussed clearly here, more likely a lapse in authorial mindfulness than any intellectual misunderstanding. Likewise, amongst Gardner's many cited secondary sources, I was surprised not to find Matthew Akester's 2012 translation of Kongtrul's biographies of Khyentse Wangpo (although Akester's 2016 translation of *Jamyang Khyentse's Guide to Central Tibet* is there). Elsewhere, Adam Pearcey has questioned Gardner's assertion (page 275) that Kongtrul never met Dza Patrul (*rDza dpal sprul*) in person. But trivial points like these cannot detract from the great and abiding value of this book. It is a very fine work, rich in detail yet highly readable, a valuable resource that will be widely read for many years to come.