



Review: [Untitled]

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Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge by K. N. Jayatilleke
Richard H. Robinson

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Feature Book Review

Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, by K. N. Jayatilleke

London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963, 519 pp., 70 s.

This book contains much less and much more than the title promises. Many topics that one expects to meet in a modern European or medieval Indian treatise on epistemology are either wholly absent or barely mentioned: the nature and operation of memory; theories of error; the faculties, objects, and processes of thinking (in contrast to perception); and the faculties and operations involved in paranormal (yogic) cognition. In good part these topics are omitted because the Pāli Canon has nothing much to say about them. But a major limitation of the book under review is that, though it cogently demonstrates that Early Buddhist thought is the most sophisticated and technically advanced of all the archaic Indian schools, it does not indicate either its shortcomings or its relation to the later evolution of Indian philosophy. The impression conveyed is that the significant history of Indian thought began with the *Ṛg-veda* and ended with the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. Despite this limitation, the book is a masterpiece of Indology and of history of philosophy. It surveys the antecedents and contemporaries of Early Buddhism more fully and more definitively than any previous work, and it deals superbly with the questions of authority, reason, and experience in the Pāli Canon, especially the *Sutta-piṭaka*. The Western philosopher who is not daunted by the copious citations in Pāli and Sanskrit (most but not all accompanied by translations) will be rewarded with an intelligible and accurate picture of archaic Indian thought on certain epistemological questions. This much can be said for no other book.

Though Jayatilleke does not go out of his way to find fault with Early Buddhist theories, his treatment is objective and his judgments are fair. He vindicates Gotama's philosophical honor against some biases and misunderstandings of A. B. Keith, E. J. Thomas, Mrs. Rhys Davids and L. de La Vallée Poussin, but he makes no claims that are not substantiated by the texts. In a few places he shows that Theravāda orthodoxy deviates from the canonical doctrine (e.g., pp. 361, 365-368), and he takes it for granted that there are earlier and later strata in the *Sutta-piṭaka* (e.g., p. 384, concerning faith). He says that the authority of omniscience is not claimed for the statements of the Buddha until the very latest strata of the Pāli Canon (pp. 380-381). Nevertheless, he appeals to text-critical constructs only when necessary, and avoids all far-out theories about a primitive, pre-canonical Buddhism.

A key text for Jayatilleke's interpretation of Gotama's teaching is the address to the Kālāmas, which lists six kinds of authority and four kinds of reasoning that are not to be taken as sufficient grounds for accepting or rejecting an assertion. A good fifth of the book (pp. 169-276) is a commentary on

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this *Sutta*, the laconic phrases of which have hitherto been much misunderstood. He examines exhaustively the Pāli and Brahmanical usage of the two chief terms, *anussava* and *takka*, concluding that *anussava* means “sacred, holy or revelational tradition” (p. 177), and *takka* means “the reasoning that was employed to construct and defend metaphysical theories” (p. 206), and not mere quibbling or destructive argument. Chapter V, “The Attitude to Reason” (pp. 205-276), elucidates the four rational grounds. Chapter IV, “The Attitude to Authority” (pp. 169-204), establishes the following meanings for the six kinds of authority: (1) *anussava*, sacred, holy, or revelational tradition, particularly the Vedic tradition (p. 177), (2) *paramparā*, the unbroken succession of the teaching or the teachers (p. 194), (3) *itikirā*, at least: hearsay or rumor; at most: legendary history (p. 198), (4) *piṭaka-saṃpadā*, the authority of scripture, either Vedic or non-Vedic (pp. 199-200), (5) *bhavyarūpatā*, the competence (or reliability) of the person (p. 201), and (6) *samaṇo no garu*, “our recluse is a respected teacher” (p. 201), that is, acceptance of a statement on the prestige-value of the person uttering it.

The *Kālāma Sutta* concludes with an exhortation to reject beliefs when you yourself realize that when put into practice they conduce to unhappiness, and accept beliefs when you yourself realize that when put into practice they make for well-being (p. 359). This has often been considered a pragmatist theory of truth (“a belief is true if it works”), but as Jayatilleke points out, “it would have been held to be logically or causally impossible for what is false, i.e. what is morally evil to result in what was useful in the sense of being morally advantageous or good” (p. 359). He shows that in Early Buddhism truth is chiefly correspondence with fact, but also consistency or coherence (pp. 352-353). Accordance with fact is more important because the highest means of knowledge is paranormal perception (*abhijñā*, “superknowledge”), through which one confirms and directly realizes what had previously been known only partially and indirectly through valid testimony, rational faith, and intellectual wisdom (*prajñā*).

The author, who is Professor of Philosophy in the University of Ceylon, is a renowned champion of Buddhism. He dedicates his book to “The Torchbearer of Mankind.” He is also a professional philosopher schooled in the British empiricist tradition. For a couple of years he attended Wittgenstein’s classes at Cambridge, and he is at home with the writings of Ryle, Warnock, etc. The reader need not fear, however, another specious attempt to show that ancient India really possessed modern science and philosophy. Prof. Jayatilleke never so much as suggests that the teaching of the Buddha is any truer or better because it occasionally coincides with that of some contemporary philosopher. He deals matter-of-factly with the paranormal powers—clairvoyance, clair-audience, telepathy, and ante-natal retro-cognition—cites Pāli texts and modern research on the subject, and concludes: “We have reason therefore to believe

that genuine claims were made about having such experiences. The other question is whether these experiences were veridical or delusive. This falls outside the scope of our study, and we do not propose to examine it here” (p. 459).

This is a welcome change after T. W. Rhys Davids, who said, “Buddhism, it thus appears, has not been able to escape from the natural result of the wonder with which abnormal nervous states have always been regarded during the infancy of science,”¹ and La Vallée Poussin, who said, “The historian has not to deal with Latin notions worked out by sober and clear-sighted thinkers, but with Indian ‘philosophumena’ concocted by the ascetics whom we shall describe presently: men exhausted by a severe diet and often stupefied by the practice of ecstasy.”² Rhys Davids and Poussin both came to judge Buddhist contemplation and its fruits less harshly after writing these quaintly provincial verdicts, and Poussin in 1925 affirmed that Early Buddhist doctrine is chiefly an elucidation of yogic experience.³ Jayatilleke is fairer, in that he allows that claims may legitimately be based on paranormal experience of this kind, and more discriminating, in that he distinguishes genuine from true experience, and proposes that the claims be verified empirically rather than prejudged.

The first three chapters deal with the historical background to Early Buddhism, Vedic and non-Vedic (Materialism, Skeptics, Ājīvikas, and Jains). In the sequel it appears that Buddhism inherited much from each of these schools, and that its theory of knowledge fairly accurately represented and criticized the range of opinions current in the Buddha’s time. These thinkers fall into three classes:

(1) The Traditionalists, who based their doctrines on scriptural authority. Chief of these were the Vedic schools.

(2) The Rationalists, who sought knowledge through reasoning and speculation but did not rely on extrasensory perception. Among these were the metaphysicians of the Early Upaniṣads, the Skeptics, the Materialists, and most of the Ājīvikas.

(3) The “Experientialists,” who founded their doctrines on direct personal knowledge and experience, including extrasensory perception. Many thinkers of the Middle and Late Upaniṣads, some Ājīvikas, and the Jains belong here. The Materialists, though empiricists, denied the validity of claims based on yogic experience. The Buddha seems to have classified himself as an Experientialist, though he did not hold that paranormal experience is ipso facto true.

The discussion of Upaniṣadic thought in Chapter I is subservient to the investigation of Early Buddhism, but merits study for what it contributes to

¹ Davids, *Buddhism* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1886), p. 176.

² Poussin, *The Way to Nirvāṇa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), p. 111.

³ Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Nirvāṇa* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1925).

the history of Brahmanical thought. Jayatilleke distinguishes the Rationalists from the Yogins, and effectively counters the Neo-Vedāntin tendency to make them all Yogins. His essays on representative Rationalists—Uddālaka (pp. 33-36), Prajāpati (pp. 36-39) and Yājñavalkya (pp. 40-42)—should be read by every student of Indian philosophy. These thinkers are restored to their historical place as bold, naive pioneers standing at the very beginning of rational thought. Their views, moreover, illustrate what Early Buddhism called *diṭṭhi* (views), and show why yogic insight soon seemed a better path to sure knowledge.

Chapter VI, “Analysis and Meaning,” deals with kinds of statements (categorical versus non-categorical, analyzable and non-analyzable), types of questions (to be explained categorically or analytically, to be counter-questioned, or to be set aside), definitions and classifications, delimitation of terms, and ideas about language, meaning, and meaninglessness. The author attributes the cautious critical and analytic approach to the influence of the Materialists (who had rejected baseless belief and affirmed only what could be perceived or inferred from perception) and the Skeptics (who had doubted the possibility of any knowledge at all). He indicates that the Upaniṣadic tradition responded by warning Vedic students not to associate with those who “love to distract the Vaidikas by the jugglery of false arguments, comparisons and paralogisms” (p. 278). He says that the Buddhists and Jains, who wished to propagate their doctrines among the critical intelligentsia, had to be critical themselves. He does not mention the probable reason why the Middle and Late Upaniṣads show so little critical analysis—that a school which recruited boys from sacred lineages had no need to vie for the approval of adult intellectuals.

Chapter VII, “Logic and Truth,” discusses the *catuṣkoṭi* form (which Jayatilleke calls “the four logical alternatives,” “the fourfold logic,” or “the logic of four alternatives”); the relation between truth-value, utility, and pleasantness; truth, correspondence, and coherence; truth and verification; and the theory of double truth (conventional versus absolute). In a brief note on the Middle Way, he considers whether it was dogmatically assumed that the truth must lie in the middle, or whether it just happened that the truth lay between the extremes “everything exists” and “nothing exists,” between extreme hedonism and extreme asceticism (pp. 359-360). He thinks the latter alternative is more plausible. “Logically, there is no reason why the truth should lie in the middle rather than in one of the two extremes though most people would think that a moderate view . . . is more likely to be true” (p. 360). The question is intriguing, but Jayatilleke treats it too briefly and superficially, especially since the rejection of both extremes seems to be the fourth, “neither X nor non-X,” of the “logical alternatives” to which he devotes so much space.

The *catuṣkoṭi* figures prominently in the Pāli Canon as in most later Buddhist philosophical literature. Until recently, modern scholars have not made much sense of this form, and Jayatilleke quickly demonstrates that “neither Poussin’s view that this logic is due to a failure to understand or respect the principle of Contradiction nor the views of Mrs. Rhys-Davids and Barua that they are laws of thought, bear critical examination” (p. 334). He then refers to his own 1950 article,⁴ and states that in none of the several articles on the subject since then is there a serious attempt to clarify the problems involved. He gives short shrift to P. T. Raju,⁵ but concedes that Archie Bahm⁶ makes a significant contribution in proposing that in the four assertions not-P is the contrary and not the contradictory of P (p. 337). This is the cornerstone of Jayatilleke’s theory. He goes on to summarize and criticize an article by Shōson Miyamoto,⁷ concluding, “On the logic of the four-fold formula itself he sheds little light” (p. 338). Schayer’s work on the *catuṣkoṭi*⁸ is alluded to parenthetically (“following Schayer,” p. 350), but not discussed. Hajime Nakamura’s articles⁹ are not mentioned at all, and though my article on Nāgārjuna¹⁰ is criticized briefly (p. 350), there is no mention of my article on Seng-chao,¹¹ in which Indian and Chinese Mādhyamika interpretations of the *catuṣkoṭi* are presented and discussed.

Though it is untrue that none of the articles save Jayatilleke’s seriously attempts to clarify the problems concerning the *catuṣkoṭi*, no other scholar has pursued the subject with such unremitting zeal, or worked out so fully and clearly the logical facets of this form. It is regrettable that the author decided merely to summarize his 1950 article, which is inaccessible to most readers of the book. It is also disappointing that he only considers a few examples from the Pāli Canon, as many of his statements seem to be at variance with the data, some of his theory is unclear for want of examples, and some statements seem

⁴ K. N. Jayatilleke, “Some Problems of Translation and Interpretation II,” *University of Ceylon Review*, 8 (1950), 45-55.

⁵ P. T. Raju, “The Principle of Four-Cornered Negation in Indian Philosophy,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 7 (1954), 694-713.

⁶ Archie J. Bahm, “Does Seven-Fold Predication Equal Four-Cornered Negation Reversed?,” *Philosophy East and West*, VII, 3-4 (1957), 127-130.

⁷ Shōson Miyamoto, “The Logic of Relativity as the Common Ground for the Development of the Middle Way,” in *Buddhism and Culture*, ed. Susumu Yamaguchi (Kyoto, 1960), pp. 67-88.

⁸ Stanislaw Schayer, “Altindische Antizipationen der Aussagenlogik,” *Bulletin de l’Académie Polonaise, classe de philologie* (1933), pp. 90-96.

⁹ Hajime Nakamura, “Kūkan no Kigō-ronrigaku-teki kaimei” [Some Clarifications of the Concept of Voidness from the Standpoint of Symbolic Logic], *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū*, III, 1 (1954), 223-231; “Buddhist Logic Expounded by Means of Symbolic Logic,” *IBK*, VII, 1 (1958), 375-395.

¹⁰ Richard H. Robinson, “Some Logical Aspects of Nāgārjuna’s System,” *Philosophy East and West*, VI, 4 (1957), 291-308.

¹¹ Richard H. Robinson, “Mysticism and Logic In Seng-chao’s Thought,” *Philosophy East and West*, VIII, 3-4 (1958-59), 99-120.

to waver and manifestly need clarification ; for instance : “If we do so, we treat [the first *koṭi*] as an universal affirmative proposition, which it is not (at least always)” (p. 351). Jayatilleke interprets one of his chief examples (pp. 340-341) as follows :

- I. Text : “This world is finite (and bounded all round).”
Interpretation : “The world has the characteristic ‘finite’ *in all respects*.”
- II. “This world is infinite (and not bounded all round).”
“The world has the opposite or contrary characteristic of being ‘infinite’ *in all respects*.”
- III. “This world is both finite and infinite.”
“The world is both finite *in some respect* and infinite *in another respect*.”
- IV. “This world is neither finite nor infinite.”
“IV is said to be the point of view of a ‘reasoner’ (*takkī, loc. cit.*), according to whom the epithets ‘finite’ and ‘infinite’ cannot be predicated of the world and hence it is said that he disagrees with I, II, and III.” (*Loc. cit.*)

This is tantamount to saying that IV is a rejection rather than a negation of the first three *koṭis*. If this is so, Jayatilleke’s apparently sharp distinction between negation and rejection becomes confused. He says that the Buddhists “considered at least one of the alternatives to be true in any particular case. . . . They also rejected all four alternatives when they considered the question meaningless” (pp. 344-345). Jayatilleke thinks that at least some of the *avyākṛta* points were set aside (i.e., rejected) because they were considered meaningless and by their very nature logically unanswerable (p. 291). He cites one example where this is certainly the case: whether the Tathāgata exists after death, does not, both does and does not, or neither does nor does not. It is the only one of the four *avyākṛta* problems which is discussed in the *Aggi-Vacchagotta Sutta*,¹² where the analogical counter-question is: In which direction does a fire go when it goes out? The analogy confirms that the question was considered meaningless, but does not prove that this set of questions, much less the others, was rejected solely because it is meaningless. Nonetheless, if the fourth alternative indicates that the predicate cannot meaningfully be applied to the subject, its rejection would mean: “It is meaningless to assert that it is meaningless to assert that the world is finite, is infinite, or is both finite and infinite.”

Another *catuṣkoṭi* from the Nikāyas is cited in Jayatilleke’s latest article,¹³

¹² *Majjhima Nikāya* No. 72.

¹³ K. N. Jayatilleke, “The Logic of Four Alternatives,” *Philosophy East and West*, XVII, 1-4 (1967), 69-83. (Hereafter cited as “Logic.”)

but not in the book. The *Sutta* says: “They say the soul after death, not subject to decay, and conscious, is (I) altogether happy, (II) altogether unhappy, (III) both, or (IV) neither.”¹⁴ Jayatilleke substitutes “a person” for “the soul after death, not subject to decay, and conscious” (“Logic,” p. 80). His revised version, “A person is neither happy nor unhappy,” is meaningful in that “happy” and “unhappy” are commonly allowed predicates of “person.” The statement would mean that the person was “experiencing a neutral hedonic tone” (“Logic,” p. 80). In such a case, IV cannot be interpreted as the *takkī* would do. But “the soul, after death, etc.” is a different matter from “a person,” since the latter refers to a commonsense entity, while in Buddhist doctrine the *ātman* is not an admissible subject of predications. “The world” is an admissible subject (predicates such as “arises” and “ceases” are applied to it), but “the Tathāgata after death” is not. The form “X is neither Y nor non-Y” obviously requires further study, as neither Jayatilleke’s work nor anyone else’s accounts for the heterogeneity of the examples and identifies a common denominator. I might suggest that when the subject is an admitted (*prasiddha*) entity, the interpretation is: “*In some respects*, this world is not finite, and *in other respects*, it is not infinite.” This is the case in the *Samyutta Nikāya* in the famous discourse to Kaccāna, where it is stated that in one sense the world is not existent (because it ceases) and in another sense it is not non-existent (because it arises).¹⁵ But “existent” and “non-existent” are not logically the same as “happy” and “unhappy”. The IV-form containing them does not mean “the world possesses a neutral ontological status.”

Jayatilleke assumes that all examples of the *catuṣkoṭi* in the *Nikāyas* are logically homogeneous. This assumption calls for proof, as it is anything but self-evident. Semantic multivalence hovers around most of the instances, and is only occasionally marked by qualifiers such as “in some respects.” Where if anywhere is the border between logic and semantics? And is it justifiable to call this fourfold form logical at all, when one term can be used in two senses, and when the predicates are so diverse—contradictories, contraries, opposites, and mere differentials? Some modifiers in the Pāli instances look like predicate quantifiers—“altogether, wholly”—but are not easily convertible to ordinary subject quantifiers, as Jayatilleke shows in criticizing my comparison between the *catuṣkoṭi* and the Aristotelian A, E, I, and O forms (“Logic,” p. 77). The III-form, though, is self-contradictory if taken to mean “X is altogether Y and altogether non-Y.” So it has to be understood, “X is partly Y and partly non-Y” (“Logic,” p. 79). But the *Pāli Suttas* do not use modifiers such as “partly” in this III-form, though “in some respect” and “in another respect” are passable cover phrases for “(infinite/finite) up-and-down” and

¹⁴ *Brahma-jāla Sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya* No. 1, PTS edition I. 31.

¹⁵ Cf. Richard H. Robinson, “The Classical Indian Axiomatic,” *Philosophy East and West*, XVII, 1-4 (1967), 141.

“(finite/infinite) crossways.” What, in logical terms, is a “respect,” and is it not perilously close to a “standpoint” (*naya*)? Jayatilleke says that if each of the four alternatives were true from some “standpoint,” this would involve the Jain relativistic logic, to which Buddhism was opposed (“Logic,” p. 82). But unless each term is used in the same sense throughout the four alternatives, multiple standpoints are in fact involved.

It is hard to see how Jayatilleke can call the *catuṣkoṭi* a “logic,” since it is merely a set of four clause patterns constructed with “and” and “not,” and connected by “or.” It is not a calculus, it produces no theorems, and it participates in no forms of inference such as Aristotle’s or Dignāga’s syllogisms. The subjects of the clauses are usually singular nouns—“*Tathāgata*, world, *ātman*, *jīva* (soul)” —which may stand for a unique individual, or for a class. In the latter cases, we face an undistributed subject and the unresolved question whether the III-form means “Some X’s are Y and some other X’s are non-Y,” or “All X’s are partly Y and partly non-Y.” Later Buddhist thinkers exhibit instances of each kind, not necessarily because, as Jayatilleke declares, they did not “understand the logic of the four alternatives as formulated and utilized in early Buddhism” (“Logic,” p. 82), but more likely because this archaic dialectic device was originally so vague that it permitted quite a few variants. Furthermore, until we understand better what this fourfold set meant in Early Buddhism, it is premature to say that Nāgārjuna, Vimalākṣa, and Candrakīrti did not understand it. And since the *catuṣkoṭi* is not a doctrine but just a form, later writers were at liberty to use it in new ways, doing which does not of itself prove that they misunderstood the early forms.

Jayatilleke says that I call the *catuṣkoṭi* the ‘tetralemma’ (p. 350; “Logic,” p. 73), leaving the suggestion that I invented the term. This is not so. Schayer uses it in the very article (*op. cit.*) which Jayatilleke in the same sentence (p. 350) says he is following. Jayatilleke’s objection to ‘tetralemma’ is that “we do not call Aristotelian logic ‘the dilemma’ because it is a logic of two alternatives” (p. 350). I have already registered some objections to calling the *catuṣkoṭi* a logic. It is simply a pattern consisting of four propositions. By derivation, ‘dilemma’ means “double proposition,” and ‘tetralemma’ means “quadruple proposition.” “The four logical alternatives” and “the logic of four alternatives” contain too many syllables for practical use. “Tetralemma” and “*catuṣkoṭi*” are equally compact. The former looks less outlandish to the Western reader, and provides a stylistically useful synonym even when writing for Indologists. Nowadays, though, Sanskrit is no more foreign than Greek to the world philosophical audience, and perhaps “four-pointer” would be a more transparent and less controversial translation than “tetralemma.”

To conclude this subject in an irenic vein, here are some positive points on the *catuṣkoṭi* as used in the Pāli Nikāyas:

- (1) The third alternative, “X is both Y and non-Y,” is a conjunction of

contraries, not of contradictories. Thus there is no violation of the rule of contradiction.

(2) The fourth alternative, “X is neither Y nor non-Y,” is meaningful when X exists and when Y and non-Y are contraries rather than contradictories. The non-existence of X may have been sufficient reason for rejecting the fourth lemma, though this one, like the first three, was evidently rejected wherever the Buddhist took exception to the questioner’s or listener’s *concept* of X. This, as I have said,¹⁶ is Nāgārjuna’s position. As he considers own-being (*svabhāva*) to be a self-contradictory concept, any proposition containing a term to which own-being is ascribed is to be denied.

(3) Each of the four alternatives is intended to exclude the other three. The questioner Vacchagotta (*loc. cit.*) appends to each proposition in turn, “*etaṃ eva saccam, aññam, aññam moghaṃ*” (this alone is true, another is false).

(4) The four lemmas were intended to be jointly exhaustive. Jayatilleke assumes that the historically correct interpretation must fulfill the logical claims of the earliest proponents. This, though, is not to be assumed without proof. The early claim may be untrue.

(5) The predicates of the first two *koṭis* are sometimes contradictories (“finite or infinite in all respects”), sometimes contraries (“east or west”),¹⁷ and sometimes just phrases containing opposites (“torments himself, or torments another”—p. 342).

(6) The *catuṣkoṭi* forms are exemplified in ordinary English usage. We often say things like “America and North Vietnam are neither at peace nor at war,” without intending a contradiction. Maybe there is a non-Aristotelian, non-Russellian logic implicit in ordinary usage (p. 344), or perhaps the form should be considered rhetorical rather than logical.

(7) The Nikāyas contain assertions attributed to Gotama of propositions in each of the four forms. “Self (*ātman*) is the lord of self” (*Dhammapada* 160). “There isn’t a self in the self” (*Dhammapada* 62). “All the *dharmas* have no self” (*Dhammapada* 279). Some householders (those of good conduct) attain what is right, just, and good, and other householders (those of bad conduct) do not.¹⁸ The Tathāgata avoids the extremes “There is an *ātman*” and “there is no *ātman*.”¹⁹ Candrakīrti is unable to quote any *Āgama* which says that the

¹⁶ “Some Logical Aspects of Nāgārjuna’s System,” pp. 299, 303.

¹⁷ Cf. Yüan-k’ang, quoted in Robinson, “Mysticism and Logic In Seng-chao’s Thought,” p. 114, and Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), pp. 135-136. Jayatilleke gives an example with “east” and “west,” but adduces no canonical or extra-canonical instance.

¹⁸ Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, p. 278. See *Majjhima* II. 197.

¹⁹ *Samyutta* IV. 400-401. Cf. Étienne Lamotte, *Traité de la grande vertu de Sagosse* (Louvain: Bureau du Muséon, 1944), I, 32, n. 3.

self both exists and does not exist.²⁰ His opponent quotes *Dhammapada* 160, to which he replies with *Dhammapada* 279, and goes on to explain the theory of accommodated teachings. As *ātman* is used in its commonsense meaning when affirmed and its metaphysical sense when denied, the exegetical distinction between *neyārtha* (indirect meaning) and *nītārtha* (direct meaning) texts²¹ is involved. This distinction, as Jayatilleke says (p. 366), is the origin of the theory of twofold truth (conventional and absolute). Nāgārjuna says first that the Buddhas have taught *ātman*, non-*ātman*, and neither *ātman* nor non-*ātman* (*Madhyamaka-kārikās* 18.6) and then that all is real,²² or unreal, or both real and unreal, or neither real nor unreal. As Candrakīrti shows, in so doing Nāgārjuna is merely interpreting scripture. He is applying the *catuṣkoṭi* form as a classificatory device, which, as Jayatilleke says (p. 344), was the use to which early Buddhists put it. He is not maintaining that one and the same can be both true and false, or neither true nor false.

(8) The *catuṣkoṭi*, like other Buddhist dialectic, assumes a two-value logic. No truth-values other than true and false are countenanced either in Early Buddhism or in Nāgārjuna. As the silence of the *āryas* is non-propositional, it is out of order to consider inexpressibility as a true-value.

Chapter VIII, "Authority and Reason within Buddhism," begins by asking and answering three questions concerning authority. First, does Buddhism or the Buddha accept uncritically any doctrines on authority from the prevalent traditions? Answer: Rebirth, the chief doctrine which the Buddha is accused of uncritically adopting, was not universally accepted by Indian religions prior to the advent of Buddhism (p. 372). The Materialists denied after-death survival, and in denying the *ātman* the Buddha seemed to his contemporaries to incline toward Materialism. The Buddha had to answer the Materialist critique, and in certain *Suttas* he argues the case on purely rational grounds, with no assumption of the belief in survival (pp. 374-375).

Second: Is the same attitude recommended toward the authority of the Buddha as toward that of external traditions? Did the Buddha expect his statements to be treated as those of an omniscient being? Answer: We cannot hold that the Buddha claimed authority for his statements on the grounds that he was omniscient. Nor can we say that he received his knowledge from an omniscient divine source, that "Buddhism was a faith in revealed truths" (p. 381). The problem hinges on the role of *saddhā* (faith, belief) in Early Buddhism. In the course of a solid and discriminating essay (pp. 382-401),

²⁰ Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*, ed. L. de La Vallée Poussin (St. Pétersbourg, 1903-1913), pp. 354 ff.

²¹ Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, pp. 361-368. See *Aṅguttara* I. 60.

²² Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā* 370. 1, explains this as meaning that the *skandhas*, *dhātus*, and *āyatanas* are real. Jayatilleke, in "Logic," p. 82, mistranslates: "Nāgārjuna, however, says that according to the Buddha, propositions could be true, false, both true and false, and neither true nor false."

Jayatileke establishes that in the earlier stratum of the Pāli Canon, the acceptance of *saddhā* is strictly consonant with the *Kālāma Sutta's* exhortation not to take anything on mere authority. This kind of faith is based on understanding, and serves as a preparation for confirmatory knowledge (pp. 382-386). In a later stratum, the Buddha is considered omniscient, and the *arhant* does not practice the *jhānas* (meditative trances) and so cannot verify for himself the facts of Karma and rebirth. He is *paññā-vimutta* ('emancipated by intellectual knowledge alone'), and has to accept the cardinal doctrines on faith (p. 400).

Jayatileke cites as an instance of this later view a passage from the *Samyutta*: "One becomes an arhant by perfecting and fulfilling these five faculties (indriya) . . ." (p. 399). But the five *indriyas*—faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom—are given as the path by which Gotama realized the Dhamma of *Āḷāra Kālāma* in the canonical autobiography.²³ This pentad looks like a pre-Buddhist *mārga* (path), and the view that fulfilling it constitutes arhantship may be a survival rather than an innovation. The *Samyutta* passage does not elucidate the relationship between perfect faith, the first faculty, and perfect wisdom, the last. Possibly faith is fulfilled when it is subsumed in knowledge. Or perhaps faith in this context is absence of doubt and distraction, a state that would accompany perfect wisdom.

Though it is true that Gotama's knowledge is not said to derive from an omniscient divine being, the *Vinaya* and *Suttas* afford numerous instances of gods and spirits informing the Buddha of some fact. Jayatileke says: "The injunction on the part of Brahmā to the Buddha to preach his religion . . . does not imply that the Buddha gained his knowledge from Brahmā, especially when we see it said that Brahmā was ignorant of the deeper spiritual truths of Buddhism" (p. 381). According to the *Vinaya*,²⁴ when the new Buddha was inclined to remain silent and not preach the Dharma, Brahmā told him that there were beings whose mental eyes are darkened by very little dust, and that they would understand. The Blessed One then regarded the world with his Buddha-eye, saw those beings and that it was so, and consented to proclaim the Dharma. Next he considered preaching his Dharma to his two former teachers, and in each case a spirit informed him that the teacher had recently died, whereupon "knowledge arose in the Blessed One's mind" that this was so. The texts do not say whether Gotama could or could not have come to know these facts if the spirits had not told him. But as the story stands, he was first apprised by the deities, and only afterwards confirmed the matter with his own paranormal powers. The Canon abounds in incidents where Gotama, his disciples, and even ordinary citizens like Tapussa and Bhallika

²³ *Majjhima* I. 240 ff. Cf. E. J. Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1927), p. 63.

²⁴ *Mahāvagga* I. S. 1-13.

(*Vinaya, Mahāvagga*, 1. 4. 2) receive a revelation from a spirit. No account of the Early Buddhist theory of knowledge should slide so lightly over this question.

Third: Do the disciples of the Buddha accept any doctrines on the authority of the Buddha? Answer: The *paññā-vimutta* had no alternative but to accept the Dharma permanently on faith. "It is possible that this new conception of *saddhā* was accompanied by a dogmatism which condemned the free inquiry which the earlier attitude was based on and encouraged" (p. 401). As evidence that free inquiry was the original norm, Jayatilleke refers to the scene of Gotama's deathbed in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, which "still represents [the Buddha] as being anxious that his seeming authority should not stand in the way of the doubts of the monks being dispelled by questioning" (p. 401).

Though this is more liberal than the dogmatist threat that whoever doubts the claims of the Tathāgata will have an unhappy rebirth (p. 400), it is still a far cry from Socratic inquiry. Throughout the *Suttas* and *Vinaya*, though the inquirer may be at liberty to doubt or challenge Gotama's statements, it is taken for granted that Gotama is right and the inquirer is wrong so long as he persists in disagreement. Gotama never once concedes that his opponent is right and he himself is wrong.

Coming to the role of reason, Jayatilleke says that though there is little evidence that any of the basic doctrines of Buddhism are derived by reason, we sometimes meet with the Buddha recommending his doctrines on rational grounds (p. 405). The Buddha's attitude to the numerous theories which were being propagated and defended on rational grounds in his day seems to have been to ignore them. He evidently considered that "when a debate has arisen, the sage does not enter it." This attitude probably explains why the Pāli Canon contains very little rational criticism even of doctrines which Buddhism opposed (p. 407).

Chapter IX, "The Means and Limits of Knowledge," deals first with the "knowing and seeing" through normal and paranormal perception which in Early Buddhism was the preferred means of knowledge. Such knowledge and insight is "mainly though not exclusively . . . a by-product of 'mental concentration' (*samādhi*) in *jhāna* or *yoga*" (p. 418). It is possible to misinterpret such intuitive experiences, and the claims of some contemplatives were rejected by Gotama (p. 462). The example shows that such errors result from generalizing from an inadequate body of insights. The question whether the higher trance states are subject to delusion is not broached in the Pāli Canon, and Jayatilleke does not discuss it. The knowledge and insight attained through the super-knowledges (*abhijñā*) was not considered incommunicable or subjective, and it was held that a sincere and intelligent person, properly instructed, could reproduce it and verify it for himself (pp. 426-427).

This last chapter contains an excellent essay on causation (pp. 443-457),

refuting the allegation of Keith that “to assign to Buddhism faith in the uniformity of the causal process or of nature is absurd” (p. 450).

Jayatileke says, “The approach of Buddhism results on the one hand in the elimination of metaphysics and on the other in the retention and development of some of the empiricist findings in Upaniṣadic theories of perception” (p. 433). Later he again shows the cloven hoof of the Positivist: “The Buddhist theory [of causation] is therefore empirical since it spoke only of observable causes without any metaphysical presuppositions of any substrata behind them” (p. 453). God may have died since 1961, when this book was written, but metaphysics has been resurrected, and the above statements are at least out of philosophical fashion. Not positing substances underlying observed phenomena does not suffice to obviate all metaphysical assumptions or to make a theory of causation empirical. The role of induction in Gotama’s discovery of dependent co-arising is obscure in the canonical texts and is not clarified in Jayatileke’s disquisition. Quite possibly it played a large part in Gotama’s enlightenment, but it certainly did not count for much in the Early Buddhist theory of knowledge. This being the case, Jayatileke is not justified in agreeing with Warder when the latter says that “The Buddha legend synthesizes the quest for truth on scientific principles regardless of past traditions . . .” (p. 464). Jayatileke has shown that Gotama, without being uncritical of archaic Indian traditions, was manifestly influenced by them both in his quest for truth and in the expression of his insights. To believe that the Buddhist seeks truth on “scientific principles,” one must (a) believe that science is good, (b) believe that the Buddha-dharma is good and true, and (c) ignore the radical difference between the non-definitiveness of scientific knowledge and the definitiveness that the Buddha claimed for his teaching, the explicit induction of the former and the unacknowledged induction of the latter, the Buddhist tradition’s conviction that everything of importance was discovered by the Buddha and need only be confirmed by the disciples, and the scientific view that past discoveries are liable to disproof as well as proof and that future discoveries will in all probability dwarf anything found out so far.

I began to review this book intending to summarize its main theses and arguments for the benefit for the non-Indologist. But the contents are so rich and the exposition is so tightly woven that a summary can no more do it justice than a prose digest can express the meaning of a poem. All I can hope is to encourage and facilitate the study of a work which is by any standards a masterpiece.

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