THE SELF AND THE PRODUCTION OF PLEASURE AND PAIN IN EARLY BUDDHISM

This problem is discussed in two *suttas* whose full understanding is fraught with difficulties[1]. This, however, should not deter us from attempting their study. The interest of this attempt is assured, since all the questions having some bearing on *attā* in the Pāli Canon deserve a special attention. We are referring to the *Acelakassapasutta*[2] and the *Timbarukasutta*[3] both included in the *Saṁyuttanikāya.*

The problem as viewed by early Buddhism

The first *sutta* deals with the origin of pain (*dukkha*), while the second refers to the origin of plesaure-and-pain (*sukhadukkha*). After their own introductions, both the *suttas* open the discussion with the same type of dialogue, changing only the names of the interlocutors (the naked ascetic Kassapa and the wandering mendicant Timbaruka) and substituting *sukhadukkha* for *dukka* in the second one.

In these opening dialogues the Buddha gives a negative answer to the following questions: whether pain or pleasure-and-pain are made by self, whether they are made by another, whether they are made by both, whether they are made neither by self nor by another, i. e. by chance. After exhausting all the possible ways of causation and finding them denied by the Buddha, the questioners may possibly think that for the Buddha pain and pleasure-pain

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[1] See DIPAK KUMAR BARUA, *An Analytical Study of the Four Nikāyas*, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 548-549, "On the other hand, in this *nipāta*, the most striking group of *suttas* which belong to the early stratum is that which contains the metaphysical doctrine of the Middle as the solution to some obstinate antinomies. The problems and the answers are, however, so briefly presented here that a precise statement of their implications displays sundry inconveniences".

[2] S II-III, pp. 18-21, *Nidānasaṁyutta*, 17. All quotations from the Pāli texts in this article will reproduce the divisions in volumes, pagination and numbers of *suttas* or marginal numbers of the *Nālandā Edition*, Pāli Publication Board (Bihar Government).

[3] S II-III, pp. 21-22, *Ibid.*, 18.

do not exist et all. The Buddha emphatically answers that they do exist. The possibility is then noted that the Buddha is ignorant as to the nature of pain or pleasure-and-pain. The Buddha replies, as emphatically as before, that he fully comprehends the reality of pain and of pleasure-and-pain. After showing their bewilderment, the interlocutors entreat the Buddha to elucidate to them respectively "pain" and 'pleasure-and-pain". The answers are as follows,

> (1) " 'The same who acts is the same who experiences the result', this, Kassapa, [said] in the first place of a being as 'pain produced by self', this utterance incurs into [the heresy of] eternalism. 'Another acts and another experiences the result', [saying] this, Kassapa, of a being struck by feeling as 'pain produced by another', this [utterance] incurs into [the heresy of] annihilationism. Avoiding both the extremes, Kassapa, the Tathāgata teaches you *dhamma* following a middle way: 'Conditioned by ignorance latent impressions arise; conditioned by latent impressions arises the intellect; conditioned by the intellect arises individuality; conditioned by individuality arise the six spheres of sense; conditioned by the six spheres of sense arises sensory contact; conditioned by sensory contact arises desire; conditioned by desire arises grasping; conditioned by grasping arises becoming; conditioned by becoming birth comes to happen; conditioned by birth ensue old age and death, distress, lamentation, pain, grief, mental uneasinnes, despondency. Thus takes place the arisal of this entire mass of pain. But by suppression, without remainder of attachment, of ignorance, suppression of latent impressions takes place; by suppression of latent impressions, suppression of the intellect takes place; ...; by suppression of birth old age and death, distress, lamentation, pain, grief, mental uneasiness, despondency are suppressed. Thus takes place the suppression of this entire mass of pain".
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> (2) " 'Feeling and the one who experiences it are one and the same thing', this, Timbaruka, said in the first place of a being as 'pleasure-and-pain [are] caused by self' — I do not declare it in this way. 'Feeling is one thing and the one who experiences it is another thing', this, Timbaruka, said of a being struck by feeling as 'pleasure-and-pain are caused by another', — I do not declare it in this way. Avoiding both the extremes, Timbaruka, the Tathāgata elucidates to you *dhamma* [thus]: 'Conditioned by ignorance latent impressions arise, etc.' " (The text continues exactly as before).

It must be noted that the opening dialogues refer to four possible solutions to the proposed problem. The production of pain or of pleasure-and-pain by self, by another, by both, by none of them. The last possibility is declared equivalent to production by chance. Such interpretation would be admissible on logical grounds

if the term "another" stood here for whatever is not oneself, this not-oneself embracing a free and conscious cause as well as a non-free and non-conscious one both different from oneself. Only then the possibility for the arisal of pain or of pleasure-and-pain would be left to chance alone. But in the second part of each *sutta*, as transcripted in the previous quotations, only two of the proposed possibilities are set aside as unacceptable, namely that pain or pleasure-and-pain be produced by self or by another. Nothing is said of those entities being produced by both of them together or by none of them. The fact is that by rejecting the two first possibilities neither the third nor the fourth are *ipso facto* rejected. Theoretically at least there can be cases where two entities are powerless to do something separately but not together. Regarding the fourth possibility, it is admissible that pain and pleasure-and-pain could be produced by what is neither self nor another if these two extremes refer merely to free and conscious agents, and this is precisely the solution given to the problem in these two *suttas*, where we are taught that pain and pleasure-and-pain are the result of dependent origination within the samsaric process represented by the *paṭiccasamuppāda* series. This shows that the exclusion of any free agent in the production of pain and of pleasure-and-pain does not necessarily lead to the blind alley of chance origination.

Why should, then, the fourth possibility be interpreted as meaning chance origination? This will be admissible only if the interlocutor held the opinion that pain and pleasure-and-pain could only be produced by a free and conscious agent. Only in such hypothesis the rejection of the first two possibilities will entail rejection of the third one and the fourth one be equivalent to chance origination. This hypotesis is plausible inasmuch as there is no production of pain or of plesaure-and-pain unless there be an accompanying experience of it for which a conscious subject of experience is required. This explains the difference existing in giving a solution to the problem between the Jainas and the Buddhists. In the case of the former, consciousness is the essential atrribute of the self, by which the self differs from the non-self, while for the latter consciousness is absolutely non-self, as being something empirical, while the self is metempirical by nature. In the case of tha Jainas pain or pleasure-and-pain ought to be a modification of the self, while in the case of the Buddhists anything that is changeable by nature is to be branded as non-self and for that very reason to be set aside for the sake of liberation.

Another anomaly noticeable in the Pāli text is that although in the *Timbarukasutta* the problem deals with the production of pleasure-and-pain the solution given is couched in the same phraseology as in the *Acelakassapasutta* where the question refers merely to the production of pain. The solution to which we are referring

is given with the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula referring explicitly only to the arisal and suppression of pain, not of pleasure-and-pain. The formulation of the truth of the arisal and suppressión of pain is literally repeated in many other *suttas* of the *Nidānasaṁyutta*[4]. This means that such formulation of the truth of the arisal and suppression of pain was ready at hand and was used by the author of the *Timbarukasutta* without any effort to adjust it to the new context. In facta the *Timbarukasutta* exhibits a more complete view of the question inasmuch as it speaks of both pleasure and pain in relation to *paṭisaṁvedayati* as expressing the result of *kamma* in the form of either pleasure or pain, since *vedanā* or feeling may be pleasurable or painful.

All the same, the *Aññatitthiyasutta*[5] speaks only of pain resulting from *kamma*. This may well indicate that the earlier tradition, while discussing this problem, referred only to pain and that the *Timbarukasutta* is of later origin. Coming back to the *Aññatitthiyasutta*, we see there how certain samaṇas and brāhmaṇas, "believers in *kamma* (*kammavādā*)", proposed also the four alternatives as to the arisal of pain, namely production by self, by another, both by self and another, both by neither self nor another and, therefore, by chance. The addressee of the query made by the followers of other opinions is in the first place Sāriputta and after that Ānanda reports the matter to the Buddha who gives his approval to Sāriputta's handling of the problem. Sāriputta's reply is directed first of all against the last alternative and then applied to the other three,

> "Pain, friends, has been declared by the Blessed One as arising from a cause (*paṭiccasamuppannam*). Dependig on what? Depending on sensorial contact... Regarding this, friends, even in the case of those samaṇas and brāhmaṇas, believers in *kamma*, who declare pain as made by self, that [pain] has also sensorial contact as condition. In the case of those who declare pain as made by another, that [pain] likewise has sensorial contact as condition. In the case of those who declare pain as made both by self and another, that [pain] likewise has sensorial contact as condition. In the case of those who declare pain as not made either by self o by another, arisen by chance, that [pain] likewise has sensorial contact as condition.
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> Regarding this, friends, in the case of those samaṇas and brāhmaṇas, believers in *kamma*, who declare pain as made by

[4] See S II-III, p. 26 f., *Nidānasaṁyutta*, 21, 22, 24, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 46, 47, etc.

[5] S II-III, p. 29 f., *Nidānasaṁyutta*, 24.

> self, it cannot possibly happen that they should experience [pain] independently from sensorial contact. (The same applies to all others)".

The *sutta* ends with the words,

> "And, Sir, if I were questioned what has sensorial contact as condition, on what [depending] has its arisal, its origin, its cause, I would answer [thus]: 'Sensorial contact has the six spheres of sense as condition, as the reason for its arisal, its origin and its cause. But by suppression, without remainder of attachment, of the six spheres of sense, the suppression of sensorial contact takes place; by suppression of sensorial contact, the suppression of feeling takes place; by suppression of feeling, the suppression of desire takes place; by suppression of desire, the suppression of grasping takes place; by suppression of grasping, the suppression of becoming takes place; by suppression of becoming, birth is suppressed; by suppression of birth, old age and death, distress, lamentation, pain, grief, mental uneasiness, despondency are suppressed. Thus takes place the suppression of this entire mass of pain".

The attitude taken by Sāriputta and the Buddha in this *sutta* differs from that taken in the *Acelakassapasutta* and in the *Timbarukasutta*. In the *Aññatitthiyasutta* the opinion is directly denied that pain be produced neither by self nor by another, having thereby a chance origination. Other opinions held by people belonging to other faiths are not directly controverted. Those people are simply told that even if they held those opinions they had to agree that pain has sensorial contact as its necessary condition. And this is the point that the Buddha wanted to convey. This seems to suggest as irrelevant the discussion as to whether self or another are to be credited with the production of pain.

Insistence on the fact that pleasure and pain depend directly for their arisal on sensorial contact, without any immediate dependence on self or another, is a peculiar position of early Buddhism. Thus,

> "One affected by pleasure and pain in village or forest, should not impute them either to self or another. Sensorial contacts touch a man depending on basis for existence. How can sensorial contacts touch one who is without any basis for existence?" [6].

The immediate reason for the arisal of pleausure and pain is therefore assigned to sensorial contact, this in its turn is contemplated within the context of the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, which specifies the way how "all things proceed from a cause". That is why,

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[6] K I, p. 76, *Udāna*, 2, 4, 8.

> "It is impossible for a man of right view to adhere to the view that pleasure and pain are made by self, are made by another, are made both by self and by another, arise by chance not made by self, arise by chance not made by another, arise by chance not made both by self and another. And what is the reason for that? The cause has been properly seen by the man of right view as well as that all things proceed from a cause" [7].

This passage clearly indicates what the view of the opponents was. According to them, if any one denied the immediate causation of self or of another in the arisal of pleasure and pain, it meant that their arisal had to be attributed to mere chance. The doctrine that pleasure and pain or neither pleasure nor pain are immediately due to sensorial contact is positively confirmed in the *Kukkuravatisutta* of the *Majjhima,* where the fruition of dark, bright, and dark-and-bright *kamma* is described in the following way which refers explicitly to dark *kamma* but is applied in the course of the *sutta* to the other two kinds of *kamma,*

> "He thus being reborn in a world that is harmful is touched by harmful sense-contacts. He, being touched by harmful sense-contacts, experiences a harmful feeling which is extremely painful, even as being condemned to hell" [8].

As a colophon to this section, we shall refer to the *Naḷakalāpisutta* of the *Nidānasaṁyutta* where the origin from self, from another, from self and another, from neither self nor another, i. e. by chance, is denied of everyone of the links of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* beginning with old age and death and ending with the intellect, leaving aside latent impressions and ignorance. The chain ends with a knot that intertwines *viññāṇa* and *nāmarūpa,* making the former depend on the latter and the latter on the former. The reasoning runs as follows,

> "Then what, Sāriputta, are old age and death made by self, made by another, made both by self and another, made both by neither self nor another, arisen by chance?

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[7] A III, p. 140, *Chakkanipāta,* 9, 11. The word here translated as "adhere" is in the original *paccagantuṁ,* which comes to be the opposite of what in the *Acelakassapasutta* and in the *Timbarukasutta* is given as *anupagamma.* The six alternatives enumerated here are not essentially different from the four enumerated in those two *suttas.* The fourth one has been particularized into three with the purpose of completeing the number required to include the *sutta* in the *Chakkanipāta.*

[8] M II, p. 64, *Kukkuravatisutta,* 4. *Kamma* which is neither dark nor bright is the one that has neither dark nor bright results and is conducive to the destruction of *kamma.* (Here the first *kamma* refers to deeds, while the second refers to their result to be experienced later on). Cfr. *Yogasūtras,* IV, 7.

> Old age and death, friend Koṭṭhika, are not made by self, are not made by another, are not made both by self and another, are not made both neither by self nor by another and are not arisen by chance, but conditioned by birth arise old age and death" [9].

Thus physical existence which constitutes the *saṁsāra* does not depend immediately for its arisal on the causality of any intelligent-agent, being the product of a process where a given entity depends for its existence on another entity. This is in concord with the central thesis of early Buddhism that samsaric factors are in no ontological relationship with the self and that of everyone of them ought to be said, "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self". Such is the ultimate background for the doctrine we are studying. Thus in the *Dīghanikāya* the Buddha rejects not only the opinions held by some samaṇas and brāhmaṇas that make pleasure and pain take their origin from self, from another, both from self and another, both neither from self nor from another, i. e. by chance, but he rejects as well the opinions that attribute the origin of the-self-and-the-world to self, to another, both to self and another, both neither to self nor to another, having therefore a fortuitous origination [9bis].

The Jaina solution to the problem

The same topic as the one discussed in the *Acelakassapasutta* and the *Timbarukasutta* occurs in Kundakundācārya's work *Samayasāra* [10]. Behold the relevant *gāthās*,

> (1) "From certain points of view the self (*jīvo*) perishes, not however from obther points of view;
> For that very reason, 'the same self acts and another self acts', are not absolute truth".
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> (2) "From certain points of view the self perishes, not however from other points of view;
> For that very reason 'the same self experiences the result (*vedadi* = *vedayati*) and another self experiences the result', are not absolute truths" [11].

In the first *gāthā* Kundakunda states two possibilities of viewing the self while acting, namely as staying unchanged and as becoming another, none of them has an absolute value, so as to annul the

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9 S II-III, pp. 96-97, *Nidānasaṁyutta*, 67.

9bis D III, p. 107, *Pāsādikasutta*, 30.

10 Srī Kundakunda, *Samayasāra*, With English Translation and Commentary Based upon Amṛtacandra's *Ātamakhyāti*, Together with English Introduction, by Prof. A. Chakravarti, Varanasi, 1971.

11 *Samayasāra*, p. 206, *gāthās* 345-346.

validity of the other. In other words, both ways of viewing the acting self, viz. as retaining its self-sameness or as becoming another, are valid. The same applies, in the second *gāthā*, to the self as experiencer of the result of actions. Such a self cannot be said either to stay absolutely the same as before or to become wholly another. Such is precisely the *anekāntavāda* position of the Jainas, according to which identity and difference can be predicated of the same substance from different though real points of view. The extremes proposed in the second *gāthā* correspond with those mentioned in the *Timbarukasutta*, with the difference that in the latter none of the extremes is adhered to.

The point made in the *Acelakassapasutta* seems to be the topic of the two following stanzas in the *Samayasāra*. In this case we prefer to give Prof. A. Chakravarti's translation,

> (1) Let it be known that the person who holds the doctrine that the soul that acts is absolutely identical with the soul that enjoys [the fruits thereof] (*vedayati*) is a wrong believer and is not of the Arhata faith".
> (2) "Let it be known that the person who holds the doctrine that the soul that acts is absolutely different from the soul that enjoys [the fruits thereof] ir a wrong believer and is not of the Arhata faith" [12].

Here again Jainism offers two extreme views of the question: (1) the self that acts is absolutely identical with the experiencer of results, and (2) the self that acts is absolutely different from the self that experiences the results. None of them should be accepted as having an absolute value and as excluding the other. Reality ought to be expressed as a synthesis of both.

The difference-cum-identity advocated so far is going to be illustrated in the stanzas that follow,

> "Even as a craftsman performs his work (*karma*) but does not become identified with it,
> so too the self (*jīvo*) performs his action (*karma*) but does not become identified with it.
> Even as a craftsman works with his tools but does not become identified with them,
> so too the self acts by means of the organs but does not become identified with them.

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[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207, *gāthās* 347-348. The reason for reprodcing Prof. Chakravati's rendering of these two *gāthās* is that, even though recognizing that such ought to be the sense within the mental frame of the Jaina system, we fail to see the accurate correspondence of the first *gāthā*'s rendering with the original as it stands. The difficulty is in *ṇa veyae* (Sk. *na vedayate*) where the negative adverb *ṇa* is out of place if the original is to yield the sense given to it by the translator.

Even as a craftsman manipulates the tools but does not become identified with them,
so too the self makes use of the organs but does not become identified with them.
Even as a craftsman enjoys the fruit of his labour but does not become identified with it,
so too the self experiences the fruit of his action (*karmaphala*) but does not become identified with it.

The following *gāthā* tells us that the *gāthās* just translated state the conventional point of view (*vyavahāra*), adding that the *gāthās* to come declare the real point of view (*niścaya*) [14]. Those who admit the absolute immutability of the self would more readily invert in this case the usage of the terms *vyavahāra* and *niścaya*, applying the former to the view that admits change in the self —a change that will be a mere appearance or superimposition—, and the latter, to the view that does not admit any real change within the self. The *gāthās* translated above refer to the self as not altered by the action and its result. The *gāthās* that follow display the opposite point of view,

"Even as a craftsman performs his bodily motions and is not different from them,
so too the self perfoms the action and is not different [fron it].
Even as a craftsman performing his bodily motions invariably feels the pain [of them],
so too the self exerts itself, and not being different [from that exertion] feels the pain [of it]" [15].

The simile that illustrates the matter in hand is quite clear. In the simile and its application the word *kamma* offers the ambiguity that is its own in Indian philosophy. It may mean a physical action or a moral action and its moral consequences resulting in liability to punishment or reward, and, in Jaina philosophy, has the added meaning of subtle *pudgala* particles capable of impregnating the soul. In the simile we are analysing, the craftsman is described as different: (1) from his work as materials to be operated on and

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 207-208, *gāthās* 349-352.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 208, *gāthā* 353.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 208-209, *gāthās* 354-355. Our rendering differs from Prof. Chakravarti's the latter being rather paraphrastic. It reads, "As the artisan starts with the mental image (of the object to be produced) and translates it into physical form by his bodily activity and thus is one with it, so also the Self starts with the mental counterpart of *karma* and is therefore one with it (354). As the artisan making an effort (to translate the mental image into physical form) always suffers thereby and is therefore one with that suffering, so also the Self that acts as stimulated by impure mental states undergoes suffering and becomes one with it (355).

the change wrought in them by man's action; (2) from the instrumental action of his tools; (3) from the tools themselves even while holding and manipulating them; (4) from the result of his labour. On the contrary, he is considered identified: (1) with the bodily effort he makes, and (2) with the fatigue or pain resulting thereby. Correspondingly, the self is said to stay different: (1) from his *karma* as moral action; (2) from the instrumental action of his organs resulting into mental, oral and bodily activity; (3) from the organs themselves even though forming part of his material factors; (4) from the fruit of his actions, i. e. the formation of karmic matter out of *pudgala* particles and their inflow into the soul. On the other hand, the self is identified: (1) with the inner activity which fosters and executes moral actions, and (2) with the inconvenience caused to the self by exertion, even as it is said somewhere else that "attachment, aversion and delusion are mutations identified with the self, and not characteristics of the objects of sense" [16], even if the self cannot be affected by them without reference to sensorial objects.

It is therefore clear that according to Jainism the answer to the dilemma of the *Acelakassapasutta* will be the acceptance of both the extremes, the extreme that according to the Buddha implies annihilationism and the extreme that implies eternalism, since as we have seen above, "from certain points of view the self perishes (*vinaśyati*), not however from other points of view", the result being that there is no absolute truth in saying either that the same self acts or that another self acts, as in saying that the same self experiences the result or another self does it. In Jaina philosophy, therefore, it is not correct to say that the soul or self that acts is *absolutely* identical with or *absolutely* different from the soul or self that experiences the result.

Let us carry on now with the *Timbarukasutta* and compare it with the Jaina position. Taking the action as well as the experiencer of the result as a complex of changes brought about in the self as well as in the body and in *pudgala*, and noting, as Prof. Chakravarti says, that there is a "responsive reaction on the part of the Self" which is "responsible for the psychophysical changes, when stimulated by karmic material" [17], we are entitled to say that feeling, as far as it depends on the rousing influence of karmic material and operates a change in the self, connotes a change in the latter, but as far as it is a responsive reaction of the self which in some respect endures as the self-same self, it presupposes identity of the self modified by feeling.

The identity of feeling with the self and the difference between

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16 *Ibid.*, p. 217, *gāthā* 371.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 205.

both are asserted by Kundakunda in an earlier passage of his *Samayasāra.*

> "From the real point of view, the self produces only the self.
> Know ye, too, on the other hand, that the self *experiences* only the self" [12]

Thus the identity of the action and the experience of its result in the form of feeling are identified with the self. But there is another side to the coin,

> "But from the conventional point of view, the self produces karmic material of various kinds,
> and, similarly, he also *experiences* karmic material of various kinds" [19].

Here the action as well as the object of experience are projected outside the self and therefore not identified with it. Thus Jainism accepts both the extremes proposed in the *Timbarukasutta,* viz. that feeling and the experiencer are one and the same thing and that they are different, none of them, obviously having an absolute value.

All this is in accordance with the Jaina tenet that all substances, the self included, associate within themselves in a real sense: permanence (eternalism) with change (annihilationism), identity with difference.

The Buddhist solution

The solution to the problem posited in the *Acelakassapasutta* and the *Timbarukasutta* will purport a double interpretation. The first thing to note is the ambiguity of the term *anupagamma* used in both the *suttas* in the phrase, *ubho ante anupagamma majjhena Tathāgata dhammaṁ deseti. Anupagamma* is here the past gerund of *anupagacchati,* a verb meaning "to come near, to approach". In the context, the word may be rendered as "not adhering", and that in a double sense, either merely as "leaving aside, disregarding", or still more as "rejecting". The interpretation of *anupagamma* as "leaving aside, disregarding" will enhance the practical orientation of Buddha's teaching, while its interpretation as "rejecting" will emphasize the ontological implications of the question. For the rest, the feeling of urgency regarding the suppression of existential pain will be present even when giving *anupagamma* the sense of "rejecting".

As to the first interpretation, we well know that the suppression of pain was the main purpose of Buddha's teaching, as it is attested

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[18] *Ibid.,* p. 71, *pāthā* 83.
[19] *Ibid.,* p. 72, *gāthā* 84.

in many a text of the Canon. Compared with this urgent need, all theoretical discussions about the rôle of any self in the production of pain put forward by other schools are irrelevant and a waste of time and precious energy. The lively dialogue between Mālukya and the Buddha reported in the *Caḷamālukyasutta* is a witness to this. After telling Mālukya that the candidate to the *sangha* is never promised that the unexplained questions will be explained to him, the Buddha tells Mālukya that whatever be of the unexplained questions the only certain thing is that,

> "There is old age, there is death, there is distress, and lamentation, and pain, and grief, and mental uneasiness, and despondency, whose suppression in this very life I proclaim" [20].

This is the *sutta* where the well known simile of the arrow is found. A man pierced with an arrow would bleed to death if he would not allow the arrow to be pulled out and his wound healed until all sorts of idle question regarding the arrow were answered him [21].

Following the lead of the second interpretation the above quoted phrase could be as follows, "Rejecting either extreme, the Tathāgata, taking a middle way, teaches his doctrine", this doctrine being the origination of pain depending on a set of conditions, of which sensorial contact is the one most directly related to the feeling produced. We have seen how this condition was singled out in several texts quoted in the first section of this article. Pain's physical reality does not depend on any self, in depends on birth as a necessary condition, birth depending on becoming, and so on. Once the arisal of pain is known, the way to its suppression lies clear ahead of man, since the order of suppression goes counter to that of arisal.

The metaphysical orientation of the question is clear in another context where mention is made of the two extreme tendencies of philosophers either to eternalism or to nihilism, to absolute being or to absolute non-being. The Buddha introduces his conception of "conditioned being", which is neither absolute being, since it depends on something else for its existence, nor absolute non-being, since it has an arisal. Then he continues,

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[20] M II, pp. 111-112, *Cūḷamālukyasutta*, 6.

[21] Other testimonies expressing the cardinal importance of the doctrine on the arisal and the suppression of pain: "Then he preached to him that teaching of the *dhamma* greatly extolled by the Buddhas, to wit, pain, the arisal of pain, the suppression of pain, the way". D I, p. 95, *Ambaṭṭhasutta*, 45. Repeated at: *Ibid.*, p. 126, *Kūṭadantasutta*, 34; D II, p. 33, *Mahāpadānasutta*, 57. *Cfr.* also D I, p. 182, *Subhasutta*, 37; D II, p. 227, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*, 15, where the teaching is known by the name of the "Four Noble Truths".

> "The world, Kaccāna, is for the most part bound by bias to, and in the grip of, attachment. And whoever does not fall into the grip of attachment, the obstinacy, prejudice and bias of the mind, does not grasp at them, does not fix his attention on the saying, 'This is the self for me', but professes that 'only pain goes on arising, only pain goes on being suppressed', has no doubt, suffers no perplexity, and in this matter his knowledge is not dependent on another. In this way, Kaccāna, there is right view" [22].

Then the Buddha proposes his doctrine of dependent origination contained in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula as the middle way in between eternalism and nihilism.

With a similar turn of mind the Buddha vehemently repudiates the accusation of being a nihilist, a teacher of "annihilation, destruction, perishing of the existing being". He concludes,

> "Both previously and at present, I proclaim both pain and the suppression of pain" [23].

We see also in the *Yamakasutta* how after leaving aside other questions on the self after the attainment of *nibbāna,* the only thing that Yamaka is persuaded to hold as sure is,

> "The body, friend, is impermanent, whatever is impermanent is painful, what was painful has been suppressed, has disappeared... (The same appliying to the rest of the *khandhas*)" [24].

And what is the main reason for the rejection of the opinions in point? From the above given exhortation of the Buddha to Kaccāna and from all the Canon says regarding non-Buddhist opinions on the self, we can safely conclude that the opinions meeting with the disapproval of the Budda are to be rejected for being imbued with the spirit of the fundamental heresy, namely the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi,* which identifies the self with the empirical factors, one of them being *vedanā,* "feeling".

This is obviously true of the *Timbarukasutta,* where one of the extremes "rejected" by the Buddha is, "Feeling and the one who experiences it (the self) are one and the same thing". The same obtains in the case of the second extreme, "Feeling is one thing and the one who experiences it (the self) is another thing", where even though an apparent distinction is stated between feeling (*vedanā*) and the one who experiences it, nevertheless the text refers to a being "struck by feeling" (*vedanābhitunna*), indicating that the

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22 S II-III, p. 17, *Nidānasaṁyutta,* 15.
23 M I, p. 185, *Alagaddūpamasutta,* 16.
24 S II-III, p. 334, *Khandhasaṁyutta,* 85.

self so described finds itself immersed in the samsaric process and forming part of it. This is reflected in the very expression of the extreme, "Feeling is one thing and *the one who experiences it* is another thing". This entanglement of the self in the samsaric process is shown also in the *Acelakassapasutta,* where the two extremes are expressed as, "The same who acts is the same who experiences the result", and, "Another acts and another experiences the result", this second one being the first as changed by the experience. Moreover, the text relates explicitly both the extremes with eternalism and annihilationism respectively, two opinions rooted in the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* [25].

A comparaison of Buddhism with Jainism

The originality of early Buddhism in this point will become clearer when compared with the ideas of the self that the Jainas have. Let us review what Kundakunda has to say as to the real nature of the self and its bearing on the matter being discussed. At times, Jaina philosophy has intuitional flashes coincident with Buddhist pronouncements. Thus,

> "[Referring to] any foreing substance which is other [than the self], be it animate or inanimate,
> [Thinking] 'I am that, that is I, I belong to that, that is mine,
> That was formerly mine and I was formerly that,
> That will be mine and I shall be that',
> The deluded man forms such a false notion of the self,
> Not so the wise, who knows things as they really are" [26].

All this is un tune with the fundamental Buddhist dictum, "That is not mine, that I am not, that is not my self", applied to whatever is *anattā* i. e. non-self [27].

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[25] Cfr. K V, p. 172, Pṭs 1, 2, 5, 47-49, and *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173, Pṭs 1, 2, 6, 50-52. See our book *Self and Non-Self in Early Buddhism,* The Hague, 1980, p. 259 f.

[26] *Samayasāra,* p. 29, *gāthās* 20-22. See also, *Ibid.,* p. 31, *gāthā* 25, "If the Self is made into material substance, or if what is other than the Self comes to be of the nature of the Self, / Then only shall I be able to say that material substance is mine".

[27] As parallel Buddhist testimonies we may adduce: "Get rid, *bhikkhus,* of what is not your own. Once you have got rid of it, it will be for your welfare and happiness. And what, *bhikkhus,* is not your own? Bodily form, *bhikkhus,* is not your own, get rid of it. Once you have got rid of it, it will be for your welfare and happines... (Identical assertions are made of the rest of the *khandhas*)", S II-III, pp. 267-268, *Khandhasaṁyutta,* 33. "Since, *bhikkhus,* this has been perfectly seen by means of perfect wisdom by the noble disciple, to wit that. 'This is the arisal depending on conditions and these

The definition of the true self is given by Kundakunda as,

> "I am one only, pure, essential perception and knowledge, ever incorporeal,
> And absolutely nothing that is other [than my self] is mine, even to the extent of an atom" [28].

Again,

> "The self is seen through the knowledge of the Omniscient as invariably connected with the attribute of conscious ness,
> How, then, can it be identified with material substance and how can you say. 'That is mine?' " [29].

It is so therefore that the Jainas, even as the Buddhists, distinguish the self from the non-self, but when they introduced perception and knowledge, i. e. consciousness as the essential attribute of the self they make it liable to change, a change that through perception makes it the experiencer of feeling in all its varied forms. Here it is that Jainism and Buddhism quit one another's company. Buddhism knows of no consciousness that is not mutable by nature, and what is mutable by nature, being impermanent, is

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things have arisen depending on conditions', that is why it is impossible that he should betake himself to the distant past [thinking], 'Was I in the past, or was I not in the past? What was I in the past? How was I in the past? What having previously been did I become in the past?'; or that he should betake himself to the remote future [thinking], 'Shall I be in the future or shall I not be in the future? What shall I be in the future? How shall I be in the future? What having previously been shall I become in the future?'; or that he will be inwardly doubtful as to the present [thinking], 'Am I or am I not? What am I? This being here whence did it come? Where will it go?' ", S II-III, p. 25, *Nidānasamyutta,* 20. This means that all becoming is external to the self and therefore it is erroneous to speak of the true self as an "I" really taking an active part in the process of becoming.

[28] *Samayasāra,* p. 40, *gāthā* 38.

[29] *Ibid.,* p. 31, *gāthā* 24. The word for "consciousness" is, in the original, *upayoga.* Regarding the relation of *upayoga* to the self we read in MOHAN LAL MEHTA, *Outlines of Jaina Philosophy,* Bangalore, 1954, p. 30: "The fundamental characteristic of *jīva* is *upayoga.* Because of its formlessness, it cannot be perceived by the sense-organs. It can be known by introspection and inference. Now, what is *upayoga?* The criterion of *upayoga* is consciousness... To explain the term *upayoga* it is further mentioned that *upayoga* is of two kinds: determinate and indeterminate. Determinate *upayoga* is further divided into eight categories. These categories are: *mati-jñāna, śrutajñāna, avadhijñāna...* Indeterminate upayoga is divided into four categories. These categories are: *cakṣudarśana, acakṣudarśana...*" In addition to this, Jaina philosophy, even without admitting gross material extension as an attribute of the self, admits, nevertheless, for each soul innumerable *pradeśas,* so that, 'By contraction and expansion of its *pradeśas,* a soul is capable of occupying varying proportions of the countless *pradeśas* of the universe..." *Ibid.,* p. 30. All this can justify the view that the Jainas, by Buddhist standards, have a heretical view of the self.

also painful, and a reality which is impermanent, painful, mutable by nature is not such as may be said of it, "This is mine, this I am, this is my self". In fact, Buddhism is the only one among the great Indian systems of philosophy that refuses to recognize consciousness as an attribute of the self, essential or otherwise. In the *Brahmajālasutta* opinions accepting an unconscious condition as the ultimate condition of the self are catalogued as heretical [30] in the same way as those propounding a conscious condition of the self as the ultimate one after death [31], or even those that aver a self neither conscious nor unconscious after death [32]. For early Buddhism it makes as little sense to say that the self is conscious as to say that it is unconscious or that it is neither conscious nor unconscious. Consciousness and unconsciousness are empirical concepts not applicable to the self whose ontological nature is met-empirical and not to be, therefore, described my means of empirical attributes or the denial of them. All the positive attributes we may think of are empirical, even as all the negative attributes we may invent will have a residue of empiricality, as they can only be conceived as related to the empirical attribute they deny. Thus in the *Brahmajālasutta* positive and negative attributes are assigned to the self after death, such as: conscious, unconscious, neither conscious nor unconscious; provided with form, devoid of form, both provided with form and devoid of it, neither having form nor being devoid of it; absolutely happy, absolutely miserable, both happy and miserable, both neither happy nor miserable In all these cases, the corresponding opinion is pronounced as being founded on sensation [33], on sensorial contact [34]. The final veredict passed on the holders of such opinions being.

> "All of them experience sensations owing to their continual contact with the six spheres of sense; owing to sensations arises in them craving; owing to craving, clinging to existence; owing to clinging to existence, becoming; owing to becoming, birth; owing to birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, pain, etc." [35].

And in contrast with all this, the Buddha presents a course leading to transcendence,

> "In as far as, *bhikkhus*, a *bhikkhu* knows according to truth the arisal and disappearance of the six spheres of sen-

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30 D I, pp. 28-29, *Brahmajālasutta*, 78-80.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 28, *Brahmajālasutta*, 75-77.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 29, *Brahmajālasutta*, 81-83.

33 Ibid., pp. 34-36, *Brahmajālasutta*, 105-117.

34 This is positively stated at D I, pp. 36-37; *Brahmajālasutta*, 118-130, and negatively at *Ibid.* pp. 37-39, pars. 131-143.

35 D I, p. 39, *Brahmajālasutta*, 144.

sorial contact, their taste, their danger, and the way to escape from them, this (*bhikkhu*) knows far more than all these theorists" [36].

Here we find the ultimate reason why, when confronted with the metaphysical nature of the self, early Buddhism would never say what the self is but would rather indicate what is not the self and make of it a compelling reason to reject it precisely for not being the self and thus attain liberation. That is why of the liberated self, of the Tathāgata after death, early Buddhism was not ready to say whether it exists or does not exist, whether both exists and does not exist, or both whether neither exists nor does not exist. Existence in this case is not an abstraction and requires for its realization some positive attributes or the absence of them. In early Buddhism the self, in its metaphysical reality, is a unfathomable mystery transcending all our ways of thinking [37]. Any one can see that the definition of the self given by Kundakunda falls within the realm of empirical ideas.

All this seems to be at variance with all the testimonies accumulated in the first part of our book, *Self and Non Self in Early Buddhism*, where the self is presented as the thing of greatest value to be loved and preserved with the greatest care, as the moral agent that may succumb to vice or may conquer it and strive towards perfection and ultimate attainment of *nibbāna*, and furthermore, even as related to *kamma* and rebirth. Without all this, early Buddhism woud have been exposed to the accusation of the heresy of non-action (*akiriyāvāda*) —the greatest moral heresy in the Pāli Canon—, an accusation totally abhorrent to the Buddha [38].

It is true, however, that certain kind of transcendence is attributed at times to the self even as moral agent [39]. But no one can minimize the fact that in contrast with all the passages of the Canon where positive characteristics are attributed to the self as moral agent, we meet with quite a number of passages propounding no connection whatsoever of the metaphysical self with the existential factors and in every way transcending them, so as to render meaningless any way of talking purporting to say something positive of it.

Seeing these two kinds of evidence, we distinguished in our book between the existential and the metaphysical self, proving that from both points of view the self is a reality. These two ways of looking

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36 Ibid., p. 39, par. 145.

37 On transcendence of the true self see our book *Self and Non-Self in Early Buddhism*, p. 276 f.

38 Cfr. the entire first part of our book *Self and Non-Self in Early Buddhism*.

39 See *Self and Non-Self in Early Buddhism*, p. 278 f.

at the self are in some way or another accepted by other systems, being called respectively the *vyavahāra* and the *paramārtha* or *niścaya* points of view. Writers on Buddhims have also referred to the *vyavahāra* point of view and asserted that the Pāli Canon speaks of the self only from this point of view, drawing the conclusion that the self mentioned in the Pāli Canon in a positive way is not a true self, that the teaching of early Buddhism, even as that of later Buddhism, maintains the unreality of the self in the *paramārtha* sense, this being one of its fundamental dogmas.

At times, the *vyavahāra* point of view is assumed to be a way of looking into the nature of the self, not applicable to its ontological nature or to the liberated self, but without detriment to the reality of the self in question, admitting, nevertheless, the relative value of such way of looking at things. Such is the case with Jaininsm. The Nikāyas never try to systematize in a similar way their teaching on what we have called the existential and the metaphysical self, they content themselves with establishing a criterion enabling the adept to discern between the truthful and the false self. This criterion constitutes the fundamental key to the interpretation of the Nikāyas, to wit, any self that, in theory or moral practice, is identified in any way with the existential factors is false, and true the opposite. For the rest, the numerous references to the self scattered all through the Nikāyas, which many would ascribe to a *vyavahāra* point of view, being, however, acceptable according to the criterion mentioned above, are statements of fact made in a direct, spontaneous way. As soon as any reference to the self smacks of personal conceit or of a theorizing intent is frowned upon and definitely suspect of heresy. Conceit, by its very nature, tends to assert the existential self for its own sake, thus deviating from the right attitude that ought to be one of complete detachment. Theories on the self meet with disapproval because they are mental images which distort the reality. Such mental images are mental constructions which being radically empirical cannot truthfully represent the self whose reality is beyond all empirical imagining. Such mental images are rather false idols of the self, which, furthermore, foster in the holder of them feelings of conceit.

There is a great difference between the unconceited description of the workings of the self and the inquiry into their ontological implications. Early Buddhism stood in no need of great effort to see man really involved in the *saṁsāra* and in need of liberation. Hence it could speak of man's self as moral agent and responsible for the result of his works. All these are statements of fact, not mental constructions, but if one tries to theorize on the ontological nature of the self and its workings, he goes beyond the data available to himself, building thereby his system in the air, not on the solid foundation of truth.

The conclusion of all this is that the refusal to accept as true the statements that pain or pleasure-and-pain are made by the self does not contradict the passages where the self is posited as cause of the moral action and as responsible for its results. The reason for such refusal is that the speaker of the statements in point was —in the opinion of the Buddha— relating the ontological nature of the self with what is empirical. Any attempt to theorize on how can the self be involved in the production of pain or of pleasure-and-pain must needs be disapproved by early Buddhism as liable to mix up the ontological nature of the self with what is empirical. We see how this attempt is related by early Buddhism either with the heresy of eternalism or with the heresy of annihilationism or with the identification of the self with feeling, when the heresies of eternalism and annihilationism are founded on the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* that identifies the self with the existential factors, of which the identification of the self with feeling is a particular case. It is logically true that if the self is in itself a mystery, its relations with the world of morality must be a mystery too and beyond all empirical clarification.

This is the reason for the Buddha's silence regarding a question arisen in a *bhikkhu*'s mind as to "how do the works wrought by the non-self affect the self". In the paragraphs preceding the passage to be quoted the Buddha has discussed the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, i. e. the opinion that identifies the self with the existential factors and has taught how can one be freed from egotism (*asmimāna*) by seing the existential factors as they really are, that is to say, as not being the self or constituent parts of the self.

> "Then a reasoning arose in the mind of a certain *bhikkhu* thus, 'It is said, Sir, that body is non-self, feeling is non-self, perception is non-self, the inner complexes are non-self, consciousness is non-self, then what self do the works wrought by the non-self affect?' " [40].

The question ought to be explained in the following way. Any moral action is wrougth by the operation of the existential factors such as body, feeling, perception, inner complexes, consciousness. No moral action can take place without their cooperation. Now then if you say that all those factors are non-self then moral action is wrought by what is non-self. How then can the actions produced by the non-self affect the self? The Buddha does not reply that they cannot affect any self because there is none. This would have been equivalent to admitting the *akiriyāvāda*, the greatest moral heresy in early Buddhism, and would invalidate all the numerous statements which present the self as the moral agent of all actions

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40 M III, p. 81, *Mahāpuṇṇamasutta*, 5.

and responsible for their result. The Buddha's reply to this query known to him by his power to read other people's minds is,

> "This is a fact, *bhikkhus*, there is here a certain foolish man, unwise, affected by ignorance, with a mind overwhelmed by craving who should think of going beyond the teaching of the master, thinking, 'It is said, Sir, that body is non-self, etc.' ".

Then the Buddha insists on what his teaching was, namely that they had been trained to look for dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) in every case, ending with the teaching that what is impermanent is painful and what is impermanent, painful, changeable by nature is not such as to be considered as 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self", applying then the saying to everyone of the existential factors and making of it a compelling motive to feel disgust at them, to get rit of them and be liberated.

From the wording of the *bhikkhu's* query it is obvious that he had in mind a self that could be ontologically affected (the verb used is *phussati*) by the works of the non-self, showing himself thus in the grip of the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*, this being confirmed by the expression, "affected by ignorance, with a mind overwhelmed by craving", such being the accompaniment of all *diṭṭhis* [41].

The Buddha asserts that the *bhikkhu* in question "thought of going beyond the teaching of the master". Now the Buddha certainly taught that the self is an active agent —the Canon is full of such factual statements unavoidable to one who professed the *kiriyāvāda*—, but he never theorized on *how* the self can be a moral agent. On the other hand, even if moral action requires for its realization the cooperation of the existential factors, the latter are in no way ontologically connected with the true nature of the self. We are confronted here with what as a matter of fact is an unexplained question. The Buddha knew that all theories in this regard were liable to mix up the metaphysical nature of the self with empirical reality and to attribute to the self some empirical characteristics.

There is one more passage which comes quite apposite here since the Buddha's partner in conversation is a Jaina called Aggivesana. Questioned about his teaching, the Buddha proposes to Aggivesana his doctrine referring to the existential factors being non-self. In answer to that, Aggivesana offers to give a simile, which he does with the Buddah's approval,

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[41] The same fact and the same teaching are reported in S II-III, p. 326-327, *Khandhasaṁyutta*, 82, where, again, the *bhikkhu's* query and Buddha's answer occur after the Buddha has spoken of the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* and how one can be freed from conceit (*asimāna*) by seing the existential factors as they really are, i. e. as not the self o what belongs to the self.

"Even as, good Gotama, whatever beings are in the vegetable kingdom which come to growth, increase and maturity, all of them do so depending on the earth, taking their stand on the earth; even as, good Gotama, whatever business are done which are to be perform by means of effort, all of them are done depending on the earth, taking their stand on the earth; in the same way, good Gotama, this person taking its stand on the body, on being the body, begets merit and demerit, taking its stand on feeling, on being feeling, begets merit and demerit, taking ist stand on perception, on being perception, begets merit and demerit, taking its stand on the inner complexes, on being the inner complexes, begets merit and demerit, taking its stand on consciousness, on being consciousness, begets merit and demerit" [42].

We are confronted here with the same difficulty as in the passages previously discussed. Even here the Buddha does not give a direct answer to Aggivesana's query as to how the existential factors are instrumental in begetting merit and demerit without their being identified with the self, the person. This cannot mean that the Buddha implicitly denied here what he had asserted on so many occasions, namely that there is a moral self which is the agent to which merit and demerit should be attributed. This would have been equivalent to professing the *akiriyāvāda,* against the explicit confessions found in the Canon [43].

Somewhere else we are told that all Sammāsambuddhas of the past and the future, and the Buddha himself, have been, are and will be believers in *kamma,* believers in action, and believers in moral strangth [44]. But moral strength can be an attribute only of the moral agent, it cannot be an attribute of the existential factors. since it goes counter to them when it works for their elimination as a prerequisite to salvation. In this *sutta* we are told in so many words that of all heretical views Ajita's view is the meanest of all. Another passage identifies the deniers of cause (*ahetuvādā*) with the deniers of action (*akiriyāvādā*) and with the affirmers of "There is not", i. e. the nihilists [45]. Again the cause of the moral action, as such, can inhere only in the moral agent. As indicated in the last footnote, this *nattikavāda,* or nihilism, refers to Ajita Kesakambala's view, based on moral nihilism, i. e. the denial in man

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42 M. I, p. 283, *Cūḷasaccakasutta,* 6.

43 *Cfr.* for. instance, "Gotama the samaṇa, Sir, is a believer in *kamma* (*kammavādī*), a believer in action (*kiriyavādī*), giving preference to non-evil for the sake of people of the brahma-rank", M II, p. 430, *Caṅkisutta,* 4.

44 A I, p. 267, *Tikanipāta,* 14, 5.

45 M. III, p. 141, *Mahācattārisakasutta,* 8. The *sutta* beings with a partial exposition of Ajita Kesakambala's view, which applies *natthi* to all moral realities. The identification of these three terms is found also in: A II, p. 34, *Catukkanipāta,* 3, 10; S II-III, p. 301, *Khandhasaṁyutta,* 62.

of any other reality than the result of a combination of the four elements, which are disintegrated at death and is therefore a form of annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*) [46]. If the Buddha opposes this view it is because he maintains that man is not annihilated at death, and since he explicitly denies that *viññāna*, the central existential factor [47], is the one that transmigrates from one existence to another [48], it follows that there is something beyond the existential factors constituting the core of a human being, the agent of moral action an responsible for its results. This cannot possibly be any other than the moral agent, the self.

There is another *nattikavāda* in the Canon, to wit Makkhali Gosāla's. The latter contended that the purification of beings and their consequent liberation takes place without any reason or cause. He denies any *action of self* or of another, he denies all moral strength and vigour. This is disapproved by the Buddha. But if the Buddha admits the action of self, he has perforce to admit the self, and if he admits the reality of moral strength and vigour, which is the source of the action of self and the reason for the purification of beings, he has to admit the recipient of the said moral strength and vigour [49].

In fine, even though accepting the reality of the moral self, when confronted with the objection latent in Aggivesana's simile to the effect that the denial of selfhood regarding the existential factors was tantamount to denying the reality of the moral agent and its action, the Buddha does not directly give an answer to the objection, but insists once more on his teaching that the existential factors are non-self. The Buddha makes, first of all, Aggivesana confess that for him the existential factors are the self, and rebuts his opinion making him admit as true that he has no direct mastery over the existential factors so as to be able to make them change at will, meaning that if there is no spontaneous self-mastery over the existential factors the latter cannot be the self. It is to be noted that the very wording of Budda's question in this regard postulates a distinction between *the man* and his existential factors,

> "What do you think, Aggivesana, regarding what you say, 'The body (feeling, perception, inner complexes, consciousness) is my self', are you in possession of such a mastery over the

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[46] D I, pp. 48-49, *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, 22-23.

[47] In S IV, p. 174, *Saḷāyatanasamyutta*, 245, *viññāṇa* is given the title of "lord of the town".

[48] See M I, p. 315 f., *Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhayasutta*.

[49] D I, p. 47, *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, 19-20.

body (feeling, etc.) as to be able to say effectively, 'Let my body (feeling, etc.) be thus, let it not be thus?' " [50].

These words do not deny all mastery of the moral agent over the existential factors, but only a mastery identified with them, acting freely and consciously from within them; otherwise all the efforts towards mastery over the senses [51] and the cessation of perception, feeling and consciousness [52] and the practice of the *vimokkhas* would be rendered impossible or left to chance. Nevertheless one thing is clear, the Buddha refused to undertake the discussion of the moral agency of the self on the level proposed by Aggivesana's objection, the reason being the one given above, namely that such discussion was liable to the danger of all theories on self (*attavāda*), viz. the danger of mixing up the ontological nature of the self with empirical notions.

Let us see how fears harboured by early Buddhism in this matter were justified. Kundakunda, in spite of the precautions he takes in this regard, is unable to eschew the danger just mentioned.

Kundakunda begins by asserting the difference between the self and the inflows of karmic material into the soul (*āsravas*) and makes of such realization the motive for abandoning them. One of the *gāthās* adduces a series of motives that sound like an echo of their Buddhist counterparts.

"Knowing them, bound as they are to the self, to be unstable, impermanent,
Not a refuge, painful, and having pain as their fruit, he abstains from them" [53].

This is a typical Buddhist way of presenting what is non-self and a motive for its elemination [54]. But Buddhism could never make its own the preceding *gāthā*, where the self is assigned the positive attributes of perception and knowledge,

"I am really one, pure, not having anything as mine, fulli provided with perception and knowledge,
Established on that self, with a mind concentrated on it, I will bring all those (*āsravas*) to destruction" [55].

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50 M. I, pp. 284-285, *Cūḷasaccakasutta*, 11.

51 See for instance M I, p. 335,*Mahāassapurasutta*, 7.

52 Cfr. our article *Questions on Self and Perception in the Poṭṭhapādasutta of the Dīghanikāya*, BAEO, 1980, p. 59 f.

53 *Samayasāra*, p. 66, *gāthā* 74. The treatment of the subject begins on p. 63, *gāthā* 69.

54 *Cfr.* the standard dialogue, "Is material form permanent or impermanent?..." And as regards the word *asaraṇa* being applied to what is non-self see *Self and Non-Self in Earaly Buddhism*, p. 20 f.

55 *Samayasāra*, p. 65, *gāthā* 73.

Doubtless the author refers here to the ontological nature of the self. The words "one, pure, not having anything as mine" clearly separate the self from the non-self. But early Buddhism would never refer to the ontological nature of the self in any similar positive manner and would never accept perception and knowledge as essential attributes of the metaphysical self.

After establishing the irreconcilable difference between the self and karmic matter, Kundakunda comes to the logical conclusion that the self does not induce any modifications in matter by way of material causality [56]. So far so good. But he says that modifications arising within the substance of the self cause the turning of non-karmic matter (*pudgala*) into karmic matter, and inversely, modifications in karmic matter bring about the arisal of modifications in the self. It is by modifying itself that the self brings about modifications in karmic matter, although without committing his own substance into the process. Such modifications in the self would be unthinkable for early Buddhism, since what is mutable by nature is non-self. The conclusion of the passage that engages our attention is,

> "From the real point of view, the self produces only self, Know ye too that, besides, the self experiences only self.
>
> But from the conventional point of view, the self produces karmic material of various types.
>
> And, similarly, also experiences karmic material of various types" [57].

Kundakunda has made great efforts to separate the ontological being of the self from any substantial connexion with the non-self. By reason of such separation he has demurred to the self being in any way considered material cause in the production of karmic matter, but while admitting the self's activity as *nimitta kāraṇa* he has acknowledged modifications in the very substance of the self. On the contrary the Nikāyas repeat to satiety that nothing, absolutely nothing that is mutable by nature may be the self. Jainism, with a view to preserve intact the ontological independence of the self, admits certain activity within the very substance of the self and even some kind of experience of the self by the self, using in this attempt the same verb to designate both the immanent and the transient activities of the self as well as both the immanent and the transient experiences of the self. In the second case, one may say that using the verb *vedayate* Kundakunda attributes some sort of *vedanā* to the real and ontological independent self, while all *vedanā* is non-self in early Buddhism. With all this in view

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[56] The important passage covers *gāthās* 80-83, *Samayasāra*, pp. 70-71.

[57] *Samayasāra*, pp. 71-72, *gāthās* 83-84.

we ought to acknowledge that in what regards the self early Buddhism was more akin to Sāṅkhya than to Jainism [58].

We could not dream of a more eloquent confirmation of the Buddhist implicit conviction that any theorizing on the ontological nature of the self or on its action is bound to mix up what is empirical with what is metempirical. The Jainas may complain that they are misunderstood, that they speak of an activity and a sort of feeling inner to the self. The Buddhists will state their conviction that feelings are impermanent and therefore painful and that what is impermanent and painful can never said to be the self (*attā*) or something beloging to the self (*attaniya*). The Jainas will argue that by stating so many things about the existential self and its activity toward liberation and denying on the other hand all definability to the metaphysical self, the Buddhists leave unexplained how those two kinds of self are one and the same. Early Buddhism may oppose to that its stance of being interested more in practice than in theory, that it is throungh religious practice, not through theory on the self that this entire mass of pain is to be suppressed, that all such theories, over and above distracting from the main purpose of religious life, develop conceit, the greatest enemy of liberation. It may in addition answer that the ontological nature of the self is a mystery which cannot be elucidated by any theory based on empirical concepts. Such is, we think, the position of early Buddhism regarding the self.

The Middle Way

There is one more question to be touched if we want to complete the study of the *Acelakassapasutta* and the *Timbarukasutta*. The very texts claim that the Buddhist position runs a middle course between two extremes. How is this so?

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58 To be more precise it ought to be said that the Buddhist position is somehow in between Sāṅkhya and Jainism. According to Sāṅkhya, the self, which is pure consciousness, is permanent (*nitya*) and inactive (*akartā*), all activities proceed from, and take place in *prakṛti*. The self is by its very nature an uncommitted spectator, all the changes belong to *prakṛti*. It is true that some kind of complementary influence of the self on *prakṛti* is required as it is expressed by the simile of the blind and the lame, but when moved to state the ultimate logical consequence of their position the followers of the Sāṅkhya system venture to say that, "For that reason no one is bound, is liberated or even transmigrates, it is *prakṛti* inherent in various beings that transmigrates, in bound and is liberated", (*Saṅkhyakārikā*, 62). Early Buddhism would not accept this one-sided statement, which would invalidate a great part of the Pāli Canon. Early Buddhism professes the *kiriyavāda*, thus coinciding with Jainism. On the other hand, early Buddhism would not subscribe to the ontological commitment of the metaphysical self to the changes that accompany any action, and in this it contradicts Jainism. Curiously enough there were in Kundakunda's time some *samaṇas* who, allured by the

First of all we must advert to the fact that the possible causes of pain or of pleasure-and-pain proposed by non-Buddhists are three: self, another, and neither self nor another, i. e. chance. If, in order to make room for a middle way, we wish to establish two extremes, taking into consideration the three of them, the extremes could be on the one side an intelligent and free agent —be it self or another— and on the other side no intelligent and free agent, which in the text is equivalent to chance. It is in between these two extremes that the middle way solution to the production of pain or of pleasure-and-pain may be situated. Pain is a reality within *saṁsāra* —which is the non-self— thus eliminating self and another as causes. Now *samsāra* is a process constituted by twelve root-causes everyone of which depends for its existence on the previous one and forming the necessary condition for the arisal of the following one. The *paṭiccasamuppāda* postulates between two immediate links a dependance of necessary condition; necessary, that is, in two ways: a given link requires as necessary condition for its arisal the existence of the previous one, being at the same time a necessary sequel to its existence. In this way, the arisal of pain as physical entity is not due to the willful activity of an intelligent and free agent, neither is left to pure chance. Thus the arisal of pain will run a middle course between two extremes. This is the position reflected in some of the texts quoted at the end of the first paragraph in this article.

But as a matter of fact, when giving the middle way solution to the problem, the *Acelakassapasutta* and the *Timbarukasuṭṭa* contemplate as the two extremes to be left aside or rejected the production of pain or of pleasure-and-pain by self or by another.

In what concerns the *Acelakassapasutta,* the middle way solution presents itself as being such when the first extreme is identified with eternalism and the second with annihilationism. This double identification is made by the text itself. Of the different descriptions of eternalism and annihilationism, better nihilism, given in the Canon, the one best fitting here is,

> "The world, for the most part, Kaccāna, is bent on the dyad, 'Being and non-being'. What is termed non-being in the world is proved not to be so for one who by means of perfect wisdom sees as it really is the origin of the world. What in the world is termed 'being' is proved not to be so for one who by means

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Sāṅkhya system, admitted a purely passive self, attributing all actions to material *karma*. Thus they drew the consequence that no self is involved in killing, when one is killed by another it is simply so that one *karma* kills and another is killed. (*Samayasāra,* p. 207, *gāthās* 339-340). This is deemed to be a heresy in D I, p. 39, *Sāmaññaphalasutta,* 25. The lack of moral energy of the self is considered a heresy also in K III, pt. I, p. 55, *Paṇṇāsanipāta,* 528, 162-163; K I, p. 33, Dmp 12, 165, etc.

> of perfect wisdom sees as it really is the cessation of the world... 'All is', this, Kaccāna, is one extreme; 'nothing is', this, Kaccāna, is the other extreme. Not adhering to either extreme, the Tathāgata teaches you *dhamma* following a middle way, 'Conditioned by ignorance latent impressions arise, etc.' " [59].

When 'being' and 'non-being' are contrasted in this way and given an absolute value, we are confronted with a conception of reality whose basic principle is that being is and cannot but be while non-being is not and that of necessity. Being then is immutable, because all change either presupposes non-being or leads to it. Being, taken in this absolute way, must also be one, because in the hypothesis of there being many beings, in what they differ they are not, again contradicting the basic postulate. Hence it follows that the world of experience can only be imaginary, because mutability and multiplicity are the contradiction of 'being'. In between these two extremes of absolute being and absolute non-being, Buddhism introduces his conception of conditioned being. The basic fact in this way of looking at things is that the world is not absolute 'non-being' since a real origin can be assigned to it, but it is not 'being' pure and simple either, since it is bound to cease. The conditioned world is explained by the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula of conditioned origination which explains the arisal of this entire mass of pain and shows the way to its suppression.

Things are pretty clear so far, It is not as clear, however, how "pain made by self" is equivalent to eternalism. In this context, "pain made by self" is interpreted as "the same who acts is the same who experiences the result". There is a formulation of eternalism that explicitly refers to this identity,

> "This self of mine, knower and to be made known [60], who in divers places experiences the result of beneficial and harmful deeds, this very self of mine, I say, permanent, stable, everlasting, of a nature not liable to change, will stand like this for ever and ever" [61].

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59 S II-III, p. 17, *Nidānasaṁyutta*, 15.

60 We give this as a tentative translation of the words *vado vedeyyo*, provided *vedo* "knower" (Cfr. M II, p. 59, *Upālisutta*, 21) is substituted for *vado*, "speaker", a meaning which seems to be irrelevant here. I. B. Horner (*The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, Vol. I, London 1976, p. 11) taking her stand on the Commentary translates those two words as, "that speaks, that experiences and knows". But *vedeyyo* seems to be a future participle passive formed with the suffix *ya*.

61 M I, p. 13, *Sabbāsavasutta*, 6. Another formulation of the eternalist view is, "What is the world is the self (*so loko so attā* similar to *sā vedanā so vedayati* in the *Timbarukasutta*), this my self, after death, will become permanent, stable, everlasting of a nature not liable to change, and shall stand like this for ever and ever" (M. I. p. 181, *Alagaddūpamasutta*, 10).

Theoretically we may explain the equivalence of *sayaṅkataṁ dukkhaṁ* with *so karoti so paṭisaṁvedayati* considering that pain is a feeling and therefore it is not pain if it is not experienced as such and surmising that the verb *karoty* has as immediate object the *sayaṅkataṁ dukkhaṁ* of the first phrase. Eternalism would imply in this case that the subject and object of the action and its consequent feeling are absolutely identical conforming a self that is permanent, stable, etc. Orthodox Buddhism would reply that an eternalism such as this is self-contradictory, since it propounds absolute identity in the middle of change, even though the absence of change be formally asserted in *avipariṇāmadhammo*. This conception, applied to the fruit of *kamma* in a subsequent existence, would postulate an absolute identity between the self that previously acted and the one that actually experiences the result. But such a self, forming part of the *saṁsāra*, cannot be of a nature not liable to change.

A similar obscurity envelops the equivalence of pain made by another and annihilationism. According to the text, pain being made by another means that "another acts and another experiences the result". If action and result occur in the same existence that would imply a complete change from the one who acts into the one who experiences, that is a complete discontinuity of selves in the same existence. This contradicts the very meaning of the word "self" or a least involves the truth of the impersonality of *kamma*, while the logic of it demands that the one responsible for the action should be the one to experience its results. The same will prevail, still more cogently, if death is supposed to intervene between the action and the experience of its results [62].

Between the two extremes thus explained Buddhism points to a third solution to the problem which does not refer either to identity or otherness of the self. The self in this solution is ontologically unconnected with the actual production, since it is not ontologically identified either with the production of pain as a samsaric reality or with its experience, be it bodily or mental. Pain, as a reality of the samsaric process depends for its being on the series of conditioned phenomena detailed in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formula. We shall refer later on to the moral responsability of the self.

Coming now to the *Timbarukasutta* no mention is made in it of eternalism and annihilationism as the two extremes are left aside or rejected by the Buddha. At the same time, the fruit of *kamma* is more adequately designated as "pleasure-and-pain".

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[62] Such is the assumption of all the cases of *annihilationism* (*ucchedavāda*) described in the *Brahmajālāsutta*, D I, pp. 30-32, pars. 84-92.

The first extreme, namely "pleasure-and-pain made by self" is deemed to be equivalent to "feeling and the one who experiences it are one and the same thing". Feeling has as its object pleasure and pain, being identified with them. If, on the other hand, feeling is identified with the experiencer and if this is the self then obviously feeling or what is the same, pleasure and pain, are made by the self, since nothing intervenes between feeling and its experiencer, the self. Buddhism will find utterly repellent to hear it said that "pain" or any other samsaric reality is identical with the self.

The second extreme considers "pain-and-pleasure made by another" equivalent to "feeling is one thing and the one who experiences it is another thing". We would then be faced with the absurd situation of a feeling objectively different from the experiencer and nevertheless experienced by him, when no one can adequately abstract feeling from experience and this from the experiencer. This contradicts the Buddhist conviction regarding feeling (*vedanā*) to the effect that, "This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self". The point to be made is that, even while saying that the self is different from the feeling, the self is presented as experiencer of the same feeling. In contrast with this, early Buddhism places the ontological reality of the self beyond all experience.

The middle position in the *Timbarukasutta* is in that, without stopping to consider the identity or difference of feeling regarding the self, postulates feeling to be the result of a psycho-somatic process where it is produced and directly experienced, since the corresponding consciusness is part and parcel of the same process.

G. C. Pande sums up the import of the *Timbarukasutta* in the following words,

> "The next *sutta* has a similar idea. Timbaruka Paribbājaka is told that feelings of pleasure and pain can neither be identified with nor distinguished from the experiencing subject, for the former would represent them as 'caused-by-self' (and hence as necessary and inalienable), whereas the latter would make them 'caused-by-another' (and hence capricious, besides violating our sense of moral responsability). *Paṭiccasamuppāda* avoids making the experience of pleasure and pain 'autonomous' or 'heteronomous' " [63].

We feel that this explanation of the intended sense would be more in line with the Jaina conception of reality as a synthesis of opposites. Thus, to say that "the feeling of pleasure and pain can neither be identified with, nor distinguished from the experiencing subject" would rather mean that the feeling of pleasure and pain

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[63] *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, Allahabad 1957, p. 420.

is at the same time identical with, and different from the experiencing subject. It is better said that the Buddhist position here leaves aside or rejects both the extremes proposed by the heretics and introduces a third one entirely different from them. We do not think that the question of moral responsability is considered here by the Buddha. These *suttas* refer to the ontological relation of feeling with a self that either produces the feeling and perseveres through its experience or experiences it as being produced by another. In any case, such a self will be the one of the heretics, a wrong notion built on the *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*. These *suttas* do not imply any explicit or implicit repudiation of the true self.

Moral responsability

We have just said that the question of moral responsability gets no consideration in the *Acelakassapasutta* and in the *Timbarukasutta*. But it would be utterly wrong to say that the arisal of pain or of pleasure in a given individual life takes place without any connexion with responsibility of the self as moral agent. Pleasure and pain are sequels to the fruition of *kamma* and the latter is due to the wilful acting of the self as moral agent. This is proved by a text already quoted, now to be given in full,

> "And what, Puṇṇa, is dark *kamma* having a dark result? Herein, Puṇṇa, someone performs a harmful bodily action, a harmful action of speech, a harmful mental action. He, having performed a harmful bodily action... a harmful action of speech... a harmful mental activity, is reborn in a world that is harmful, is touched by harmful sense-contacts. He, being touched by harmful sense-contacts, experiences a harmful feeling, even as being condemned to hell. In this way takes place the rebirth of a being from a being, by what one does by that he is reborn, and once he is reborn sense-contacts touch him. Thus I say that beings are heirs to their *kamma*" [64].

This text clearly exhibits two types of causality. We first have the causality by which a harmful action leads the individual to be born in a harmful world. We may catalogue this as "moral causality" ensuing from the responsibility of the individual as to his actions and the fruits thereof. It is in this way that beings are heirs to their *kamma*. Once the individual is born is a harmful world, he is touched by harmful sense-contacts which produce harmful feelings. This is a causality of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* type. The moral agent, as such, does not intervene in the physical production of the sense contacts corresponding to his *kamma* and the feelings arising from such contacts. This second type of causality

[64] M II, p. 64, *Kukkuravatisutta*, 4.

was the only one accepted by the Buddha in the two *suttas* we have studied in this article.

The intentional performance by the moral agent of deeds which demand fruition and the inexorable consequent experience of their result —moral causality— is asserted in,

> "I do not teach, *bhikkhus,* the coming to an end of accumulated deeds intentionally done without being experienced, and this ought to occur either in this very life or in another turn of existence. And I do not teach that there is any making an end of pain without having experienced the accumulated deeds intentionally done" [65].

Even the relation of *kamma* to *attā,* the moral agent, obtains some explicit references in the Canon, For instance,

> "Seen by you were hells, animal births, wandering ghosts (*petā*), asuras, as well as men and gods. You yourself saw the result of the *kamma* of self (*kammavipākamattano*)" [66].

Summarizing, notwithstanding the fact that no efficient or material causality can be attributed to the self in the actual production of pleasure and pain, the result of *kamma,* a kind of "moral causality" should be recognized on the part of self, even when we are told in the *Acelakassapasutta* and in the *Timbarukasutta* that pain or pleasure-and-pain are not made by self or by another and are in actual fact the outcome of the samsaric process.

Bilbao. JOAQUÍN PÉREZ-REMÓN

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[65] A IV, p. 345, *Dasakanipāta,* 21, 8.
[66] K II, p. 226, Ptv 1, 46, 793.