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THE BUDDHA AND THE JAINS  
A REPLY TO PROFESSOR BRONKHORST

Richard Gombrich, Oxford

#1. My friend Prof. Johannes Bronkhorst (hereinafter JB) has been so kind as to send me the corrected edition of his book *The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India*.<sup>1</sup> To this second edition he has written a new preface, in which he does me the honour of giving some prominence to an article of mine. He takes it as representative of a view of early Buddhism with which he disagrees and which indeed his book intends to refute. He writes that I lay "stress on the fundamental homogeneity and substantial authenticity of at least a considerable part of the Nikāyic materials", whereas he feels "a cautious optimism" about "the possibility of retrieving the doctrine of early Buddhism" (p.vii). If one puts it like this, the difference between us sounds rather negligible, even though JB goes on to suggest that my position "may raise a hypothesis into a principle". I must say at the outset that I do not wish to find myself painted into some kind of "fundamentalist" corner; and indeed I am inclined to treat our sources with more critical scepticism than does, for example, the recent book in this field by Prof. Vetter<sup>2</sup> — as my review of it makes clear<sup>3</sup>. My problem with JB's book is rather that I find myself in disagreement with him on many specific issues.

It is, I think, in the spirit of Karl Popper, a philosopher for whom he and I share a deep admiration, that JB ended the preface to the first edition<sup>4</sup> of this book with these words:

This book presents a *theory* about... early Buddhism... Such a starting point has consequences for those who wish to disagree with my theory. It will not be just enough to say that it has not been proved. It may be more worthwhile to try and show that the theory does not fit certain facts. Criticism of this kind, though not without value, will at best bring us back to the situation where the

- 1 Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi 1993. On the reverse of the title page this is misleadingly called the first edition. All references are to this edition unless otherwise stated.
- 2 Tilmann VETTER, *The Ideas and Meditative Practices of Early Buddhism*, Leiden etc. 1988.
- 3 *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 2, 1990, pp.405-7.
- 4 Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, Stuttgart 1986.

contradictions in the Buddhist canon are, again, unexplained. Really constructive criticism of my theory will present *an even better theory*. (p.xviii)

I completely agree. Now in his new preface JB seems (very fairly) to have directed the challenge more specifically to me, for he writes that "scholarship..., as Gombrich points out, should at least try to progress by argument" (p.xiii). However, were I to attempt to answer his book point by point, it would be difficult not to degenerate into at least the appearance of polemic, and impossible to prevent all but a few specialist readers from losing their way in the maze of detail. Moreover, the reply would have to be as long as his book. On the other hand, I do have what I consider to be "an even better theory", but to set it out properly will probably require another book. I must try here, within the scope of one article, to steer a middle course between criticising JB and ignoring him; and to indicate the general lines of my approach (and why I prefer it to his) without getting diverted by side-issues, however fascinating. The best course has seemed to me to be to show where I stand vis-à-vis JB, *grosso modo*, on his major conclusions (#2); to move on to more detail with regard to those texts with which JB deals in his first two chapters: texts dealing with Jain ideas and practices (#3); to sketch in my own approach (#4); and then to present as a case study how my approach tackles the same issue: the Buddha's relation to Jainism (#5).

#2. Let me again try to let JB set the terms of our debate. He is concerned to differentiate between what the Buddha taught and what he did not — the latter he refers to as "non-authentic".

"How could we ever discover the non-authentic elements in the Buddhist texts? ... Elements that were not part of the teaching of the Buddha but were not rejected either, might find their way in — after or even before the death of the Buddha — without anyone ever noticing, least of all the modern scholar. Perhaps the only hope ever to identify non-authentic elements in the Buddhist texts is constituted by the special cases where elements which are recorded to have been rejected by the Buddha, yet found their way into the texts, and, moreover, are clearly identifiable as belonging to one or more movements other than Buddhism ... I would not know what better criterion there could be in the circumstances. Unfortunately, the importance of this criterion seems to have escaped all of my critics" (p.ix).

There is indeed nothing wrong with this criterion, though I hope to show below that it need not be our only hope. The problems lie with some of the uses that JB makes of it.

At the end of his book JB sums up his conclusions, with admirable brevity, in two paragraphs. I quote the first of them:

"The results of this study can be briefly restated as follows: in the ancient Indian religious movements other than Buddhism there was a tradition of asceticism and meditation which can be described and understood as direct and consistent answers to the belief that action leads to misery and rebirth. In this tradition some attempted to abstain from action, literally, while others tried to obtain an insight that their real self, their soul, never partakes of any action anyway. Combinations of these two answers were also formed." (p.128)

In his book JB has shown that we can speak of three sets of material in the canonical texts concerning meditation. One is about the four *dhyāna*. These are probably the Buddha's invention. One is about ascetic practices and meditation involving great physical effort. These are generally connected in the texts with Jains<sup>5</sup> and an account of them is given as the wrong path which the Buddha followed in his years of asceticism, just before he found the Middle Way. The third set of material is about various labelled groups of meditative states, central among which are the "formless" states (*āruppa*). These too are not what the Buddha taught, says JB.

At one level this observation is utterly uncontroversial. The vast majority of Buddhist scholars, both ancient and modern, have agreed that the Buddha taught the four *jhāna* and was opposed to Jain ascetic practice. That opposition is, for example, embodied in the concept of the Middle Way.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the Buddhist tradition itself ascribes the formless states to non-Buddhist sources<sup>7</sup>: the Buddha is said to have learnt them from his two teachers, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. So what is new? With what do I take issue?

5 Sometimes also with other ascetics, such as the Ājīvikas, from whom indeed the Jains are not always clearly differentiated; but for the purposes of this article we can ignore the distinction.

6 AN IV, 200-2 is a *sutta* which describes the Middle Way's avoidance of Jain-type asceticism with explicit clarity.

7 To quote but one example: probably the most successful introduction to Buddhism of modern times, Walpola RAHULA's *What the Buddha Taught* (London 1959), says of the formless states: "This form of meditation existed before the Buddha. Hence it is not purely Buddhist, but it is not excluded from the field of Buddhist meditation" (p.68).



The newness seems to me to start with an ambiguity in JB's concept of "what the Buddha taught". He repeatedly makes this mean "what the Buddha was the first to teach". Thus, if it seems unlikely that some teaching originated with the Buddha, he assumes it to be a later accretion. In the passage from his new preface quoted above he writes of "elements finding their way in — after or even before the death of the Buddha", but in the body of the book those elements are always made to sound posthumous. More fundamental, however, than this purely chronological point is that JB's "elements" appear always to "find their way in" rather than being there from the start. Yet what could be more natural than that the Buddha should have acquired some beliefs and opinions before he came on the special ones that constituted his Enlightenment? How can a teaching be a hundred per cent original? If it were, its teacher would have so little in common with his audience that he would probably have enormous difficulty in making himself understood.

This last point would not, I think, upset JB, for he does indeed espouse the astonishing position that the Buddha probably had, or at least began with, no insight that could be put into words. His "liberating insight" (*paññā*) "referred to some unspecified and unspecifiable kind of insight" (p.108). All the Buddha had actually discovered, and all he could teach, was the new type of meditation. It led to a gnosis (my term), but no one could say what that was! The common formulation "morality, concentration, insight, liberation" "may have made it plausible to the Buddhists themselves that the Buddhist doctrine knew some 'liberating insight' as well which had to be specified. The choice fell on the Four Noble Truths and on the other contents which we have seen were subsequently given to this insight" (p.108).

Notice the impersonal expression "the choice fell". It was not the Buddha who preached the Four Noble Truths or other cardinal doctrines, but followers who simply had to think of something to say! JB naturally does not mention the account<sup>8</sup> that the Buddha despatched his first sixty converts with the instruction to "preach the *dhamma* auspicious in the beginning, middle and end, with its letter and spirit, sheer and complete". He does not say so, but I can deduce that he dismisses that story too as a late invention and considers that no such episode took place.

I myself do not think that in the first sermon and its summary of the Four Noble Truths we have the precise words of the Buddha, or that the

despatch of the first missionaries must have taken place precisely as reported. No stenographer was present on those occasions, let alone modern recording equipment, and accounts of them had to be formalised for memorisation and recitation, probably many years after they occurred. (Tradition says it was at the First Council, three months after the Buddha's death, and I find that plausible.) I think Prof. Vetter is extremely rash to build theories on details of what is alleged to have happened on the day the Buddha preached the first sermon<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, Norman has shown<sup>10</sup> that the words of that first sermon rather allude to doctrines than state them, and could not have been fully intelligible in the summary form in which they are recorded. So it is not sensible to interpret the text too literally; it is at best a plausible approximate reconstruction of events, emphasising points of symbolic importance. But still less is it sensible, it seems to me, to claim that Buddhism began as a teaching with no doctrine. Has any religion ever spread without a doctrine? Someone must at the very outset have supplied a doctrine, and my guess is that it was the Buddha.

Is this too credulous? Am I "raising a hypothesis into a principle"? I think that the boot is on the other foot: it is JB who seems to evade the simplest explanation of texts, which is that they are telling the truth — to the degree I have just specified. Let me illustrate. JB builds his book on the foundation of the Buddhist rejection of the strenuous and painful meditation practices which were held to be the wrong way in which Siddhattha had sought Enlightenment. He quotes the account of those activities from the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* (MN I, 237-51), but assumes that it cannot originate with the Buddha himself.

"The Bodhisattva, we know, abandoned his intention to fast to death. The author of the episode really did not have much choice here, for if he had let the Bodhisattva die as a result of these hardships, the latter could not have reached enlightenment in the same life. Embarrassment could however have been avoided by placing the episode in an earlier existence of the Bodhisattva. In that case the Bodhisattva could finish his fast to death completely. Why was this not done?" (p.19)

To quote the above passage is almost tantamount to refuting it. The reason why the *sutta* has the Bodhisattva abandon his fast is that in fact he

9 VETTER, *op. cit.*, pp.XXIX ff. and pp.7 ff..

10 K.R. NORMAN, "The Four Noble Truths", *Indological and Buddhist Studies* (Volume in honour of Professor J.W. de Jong), Canberra 1982, pp.377-91; reprinted in *Collected Papers II*, Pali Text Society, Oxford 1991, pp.210-23.

abandoned it. Had he not done so, in my naive view, there would be no Buddhism. And who was "the author of the episode"? The author of the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, if we mean the author of the very words that have come down to us, is anonymous and probably multiple, a series of Buddhist monks, of whom the most important and possibly the first — but certainly not the only one — could well be Ānanda, whom tradition supposes to have recited the text at the First Council; but the author of the gist of the text I take to be the Buddha. In other words, I feel sure that in the Buddha's lifetime there was no such text as the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*; but I feel almost as sure that the substance of the account on which JB is basing his argument does go back to the Buddha. This is the most economical hypothesis and I cannot find in the book any reason to doubt it.

Indeed, JB's rejection of the Buddha's (substantive) authorship seems inconsistent. For at the other end of his book we find the following:

"[The Buddhist texts] contain some very clear passages that claim that the Buddha discovered these [meditational] techniques himself. First among these is the passage in which the Buddha to be remembers how he reached the First Dhyāna while still a child."

But — as JB himself points out — the claim that it was this memory which put the Buddha on the path to Enlightenment is made in the very same *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*; it paints a picture of the first *dhyāna* to combine with the Jain-like practices. JB, I think rightly, takes one half of the diptych as veridical; but the other half not. I find this arbitrary.

It is the same with the matter of the Buddha's teachers. Tradition has it that with Ālāra Kālāma the future Buddha learnt meditation states up to "the plane of infinite nothingness" and with Uddaka Rāmaputta up to "the plane of neither apperception nor non-apperception". These are the last/highest two of what the Buddhists classified as the "formless" states. In most of the Buddhist sequences they are capped by "extinction of apperception and sensation" (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). Oldenberg<sup>11</sup> long ago suggested that this final meditative "attainment" (*samāpatti*) may be due to the Buddha himself; he drew this implication both from the story of the two teachers and from SN IV, 228, a text in which it is said that renunciates from other sects claim that the Buddha talks of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* as happiness (*sukha*), and he admits it. It is fair to say, however,

11 *Die Lehre der Upanishaden und die Anfänge des Buddhismus*, 2nd ed. Göttingen 1923, p.286 and note 213. The first edition (1915) is not available to me.

that the texts contain no explicit statement about this. What they do say, in several places, is that even meditation states are impermanent<sup>12</sup>, though that *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* is impermanent (lasting seven days at most) seems to be a post-canonical doctrine<sup>13</sup> — implied however e.g. by MN I, 301-2, which describes the leaving of that state.

Whether or not Oldenberg is right, the story of the two teachers certainly carries the implication that the meditative practices which lead to the formless states were not merely *non-Buddhist* but *pre-Buddhist* in origin.

Nevertheless, JB says that "no credence can be given to this story" (p. 85). (In the text he goes on to say that he relies on reasons presented by Bareau, but he withdraws this in a new footnote.) He says that the names of the two teachers occur when "the Buddha, after his enlightenment, wonders to whom he will preach his doctrine first" (pp.85-6), and goes on:

"He thinks of Ārāḍa Kālāma and Udraka the son of Rāma, but learns that both have died recently. No word is said about the Buddha's relationship to these two people, nor indeed do we hear what these men had been or done. This would be hard to explain if the training of the Bodhisattva under them had been related at that time a few pages earlier as it is now. One suspects that the names of these two men originally occurred only where the Buddha thinks of possible persons with whom to start his missionary activity. In order to give some content to these mysterious names, the account of the Bodhisattva's training under teachers with these names was added."<sup>14</sup> (p. 86)

He adds that "the story serves the additional purpose of denouncing the Stage of Nothingness and the Stage of Neither Ideation nor Non-Ideation" (p.86).

I find this perverse. Surely the simplest explanation of why the text did not mention at that point who the two men were is that everyone already knew it. To invent a couple of teachers for one's own teacher would be extraordinary in India, where pupillary succession is taken extremely seriously. The very fact that the names of these teachers are not otherwise known speaks for the story's truth: had one invented teachers for

12 For example, the seven stages of consciousness (*viññāṇaṭṭhiti*) and two (higher) planes (*āyatana*) at DN II, 69-70; and the four *jhāna*, the four *brahma-vihāra* and the formless planes up to nothingness at MN I, 350-2.

13 *Visuddhi-magga* XI, 124; XXIII, 35 and 38.

14 JB adds that a variant recension of the text supports him, but in my view it does not.

the Buddha they would have been the most illustrious names conceivable, perhaps divine.

My view, again, is that the simplest explanation is probably right, and that the Buddha probably did study meditation with the two teachers so named; but that this does not guarantee accuracy in such detail that we can be sure that what they taught corresponded so neatly to an evolved Buddhist schema, or that they had in fact, by a coincidence, both died just before the Buddha could reach them to tell them of his discovery.

JB's idea of the invention's "additional purpose" raises a further point which goes far beyond this particular example, a point concerning the Buddha's cultural heritage. Again, JB seems to see in black and white: he seems not to envisage the possibility that the Buddha could have inherited an idea or a practice, decided that it was not salvific, and yet not abandoned it entirely. JB rightly notes that "the Bodhisattva complains that these two stages do not lead to what he is looking for" (p.86); he equates this with the "denouncing" he mentioned four lines earlier, but in truth it is something far milder than denunciation. Yet again, I see no reason to challenge the Buddhist tradition in the place that it assigns to the formless states (while nor do I wish to dispute that there are inconsistencies in detail which may fruitfully be studied). The meditative exercises which constitute *samādhi* and/or *samatha* are considered a training necessary<sup>15</sup> to prepare the mind for the grasping of salvific truth; they are not the truth, or "liberating insight", itself. It is as if an athlete were to inherit a technique, and then to decide on the basis of his own experience that that technique had a useful part to play in training but should be discarded during the race itself. (The analogy is not perfect: the Buddha rather decided that the meditative techniques did not *constitute* the race itself.) The texts are full of references to meditative attainments which are valued because the Buddha practised them and recommended them as pleasant and useful, even though they do not lead directly to nirvana. Indeed, the pleasure to be derived not merely from the four *jhāna*, the Buddha's invention, but also

15 I am aware that, at least in Theravāda, there was a view that training in meditation was not necessary. I am preparing work for publication to show that this development is probably secondary and may even post-date the Buddha by some generations.



from the formless states is mentioned in the texts.<sup>16</sup> In this connection we may note the tradition that the Buddha on his deathbed practised both the *jhāna* and the formless states (DN II, 156). It is most unlikely that even a Buddhist saint can tell from observing someone else what meditative states they are in, so that the text is obviously an ideological construct; but the idea that lies behind it must be precisely that to stay in those states is the least uncomfortable way of sustaining physical suffering.

This is relevant to my interpretation of a passage to which JB gives prominence in his new preface (p.x). As he says on pp.29-30, there is a *sutta* in which the Buddha pokes fun at a teacher who teaches his pupils how not to receive (or respond to?) sense data; the Buddha says that in that case a blind or a deaf person could be said to have developed sense faculties (*bhāvitindriya*). JB rightly contrasts this with an episode recounted from the last days of the Buddha's life: the Buddha claims that once in a thunderstorm two farmers and four oxen near him were struck dead by lightning, and yet he did not notice a thing (DN II, 131-2). JB follows Bareau in seeing this as "a story of non-Buddhist origin" (p.79). In this case I agree that the discrepancy raises a problem. The text does not even claim that the Buddha was meditating at the time<sup>17</sup>; on the contrary, the Buddha specifically states that he was fully conscious (*saññā*), which excludes the state of *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*. What the story seems to conflict with is therefore not so much the specific Buddhist theory of meditation as the general recommendation that one should be aware (*sato sampajāno*) of what is going on around one. If the Buddha really did make this boast, he was not on his best form at the time. Is such an idea appropriate or plausible? The episode occurs just after the Buddha has eaten his last recorded meal, a dish of pork which has given him the dysentery which kills him. He is represented, plausibly enough, as exhausted and dehydrated<sup>18</sup>. Given this context, it is not surprising if he performs for once below par. However, the possibility does remain open that JB is right and this is merely the invention of a stupid hagiographer.

16 SN IV, 228. The Buddha says that an even finer pleasure comes from "the extinction of apperception and feeling", and specifies that it is not only a "feeling" (*vedanā*) which he calls "pleasure" (*sukha*).

17 JB's wording (pp.x, 79) suggests that he may have overlooked this point.

18 I owe this point to an unpublished paper by Gananath OBEYESEKERE. The Buddha's almost peevish insistence that Ānanda fetch him a drink fits the context perfectly.



Given that I am as willing as JB to admit that *in principle* passages of canonical text may not go back to the Buddha's own teaching, nothing further hangs on which explanation for the above example seems preferable. However, my view that the Buddha may have allowed, or even recommended, in one context practices which he disparaged in another has weightier consequences when we come to consider the strenuous Jain-like meditation practices which the Buddha had found not to lead to Enlightenment.

#3. In footnote 8 on p.29 (referred to again on p.79) JB lists canonical passages which he considers to be inconsistent with the Buddha's abandonment of Jain-like ideas and practices, and says, "In all these cases we can be sure of outside influence on Buddhism." It is by examining some of these examples, as well as texts to which he devotes attention in the main body of his first two chapters, that I shall hope to clarify the contrast between JB's position and mine.

At the outset let me reiterate that I have no *a priori* objection to JB's claims. I do not see the texts of the Pali canon, or even the *suttas* of the four *Nikāyas*, as entirely homogeneous in content and internally consistent, nor can I see any reason why in principle there should not be outside influence on a Buddhist text. Thus, I think that one of JB's examples on p.29 is probably valid. Let me deal with this first.

In the *Udāna* (Ud.21) "we are confronted with a monk 'in a cross-legged position, with body erect, mindful and conscious, and bearing without a murmur, acute, piercing and terrible pains, the result of deeds done in the past'". This is from a prose paragraph, otherwise devoid of context, which serves to introduce a verse in *vetāliya* metre<sup>19</sup>. The prose has a mixture of typical Buddhist phraseology (*sato sampajāno*) with the suspicious information that the monk is tolerating terrible pain. The verse (not cited by JB), though it does not mention pain, sounds more unequivocally Jain: "The monk who abandons all acts (*kamma*) and shakes off the dust previously done (*purekataṃ rajam*), who remains without thought of 'mine', indescribable (*tādi*), has no need to talk to people." We recall that for Jains karma is a kind of dust which clings to the soul (which is moist), so that past karma has to be expunged, by a process known as *nijjarā*, while one does no new acts, which would deposit new dust. The

19 Thus on metrical grounds I would adopt the variant reading for the first word and read *sabbakammahassa*.

lack of interest in talking to anyone also sounds more like Jains and similar ascetic groups than like Buddhists, who generally have no objection to being sociable. I think that in the *Udāna* (as in several texts) the verse is older than the prose, which is a kind of commentary on it (though it is still technically canonical — *pāli*, not *atthakathā*). From the fact that the author of the prose here mentions pain, though it is not in the verse, I deduce that he recognised the verse as describing Jain or Jain-like practice; so I would say that the verse — but not the prose — was of non-Buddhist origin.

Evidently in real life Buddhist monks and nuns frequently interacted with their Jain counterparts. The *Thera-therī-gāthā* contain specific cases of people being converted from Jainism to Buddhism.<sup>20</sup> At Thīg.88 a nun refers to former ascetic practices of hers which sound Jain or similar; the same is true at Thīg. 107-9, where the commentary plausibly relates that the author of the verses was a former Jain nun. At Thīg.427ff., Isidāsī encounters a nun called Jinadattā, presumably a Jain, and declares her intention of expunging (by *nijjarā*) her evil karma (v.43). However, in the next verse her father persuades her to become a Buddhist instead.

That use of technical Jain terminology is paralleled by Thag.81, a poem consisting of a single verse. The author's name is given as Samitigutta, "protected by *samiti*", and *samiti* is a Jain term for certain specific restraints. The content of the verse is no less unequivocally Jain: "The evil I formerly did in other births must be experienced right here. There is no other chance (to expunge it)." In this case, the only evidence we have for the author's conversion to Buddhism is the presence of his verse in the Buddhist canon.

Samitigutta gives us even clearer evidence than the *Udāna* verse that there were Buddhist monks and nuns who had personal experience of Jain practices. In fact, the *Thera-therī-gāthā* verses do more: they are canonical texts composed by such people. This seems to me to be even stronger evidence than any that JB adduces to show that in principle Jainism would be likely to have left traces in the canon. But note a proviso: these texts are not attributed to the Buddha himself. *Udāna* 21 is a marginal case, but I would class the verse, an observation on a particular monk, with the *Thera-therī-gāthā* material.

Let us now look at MN I, 120-1, the first example of alleged contradiction within the texts that JB adduces (p.15). This *sutta* (MN 20:

20 See K.R. NORMAN, *Elders' Verses* I, note on verse 81 (p.142) and further references there cited.

*Vitakka-santhāna-sutta*) has the Buddha recommend five techniques for getting rid of bad thoughts. One of these involves "clenching the teeth, pressing the tongue against the palate, and suppressing and squeezing thought with thought", like a strong man grabbing a weaker by the head or shoulders. These very words occur in the Buddha's account of his misguided attempt to gain Enlightenment; there, however, we are immediately told that he sweated, and he went on to suppress his breathing, whereas here the text goes no further. I do not find it at all strange that a technique which, used by itself and taken to excess, turned out not to lead to Enlightenment, could be recommended by the Buddha as one of a range of methods for overcoming a particular difficulty. Analogies from physical health are easy to think of: purgatives as a sole means of producing health are likely to do more harm than good, but there is nevertheless a sound case for using a purgative at a specific juncture.

The series of texts from AN V which JB adduces (p.29, fn.8) as contradicting standard Buddhist doctrine seem to me to do no such thing. In them the Buddha declares that one cannot put an end to (*vyantibhāva*) karma which has been intentionally performed (*saṃcetanika*) without experiencing its result. It is Buddhists, not Jains, who only count as karma that which is done with intention. In Buddhism a person who attains Enlightenment and so is not reborn may not live to experience the results of any but the most serious evil deeds (the five *ānantarika*<sup>21</sup> *kamma*), but that is not "putting an end to" karma (*vyantibhāva*); it is what we might call side-stepping. On the contrary, what these AN V texts do contradict is the statements cited by JB himself higher in the same footnote, that a monk *can* "put an end to old *kamma*". It is these texts, AN I, 220-1 and AN II, 197-8, which will occupy us at length below.

#4. I wish now to shift the emphasis of this article to the positive, and make good my claim to have "an even better theory" than JB. My theory is connected to my belief that the Buddha inherited beliefs and practices and must be interpreted in the context of his own milieu. On this general and somewhat obvious point I shall not repeat what I have published elsewhere. More specifically, I have already shown that we can trace in the Pali texts the Buddha's reactions to doctrines around him, and that he was wont to

21 *Vin.II*, 193, where the term (without explanation) refers to shedding the blood of a Buddha. The extension of the term to killing a parent or an *arhat* and to splitting the Sangha seems however to be post-canonical.

reinterpret the terms in which those doctrines were couched, either making what was meant literally into a metaphor or giving to an old metaphor a new twist. A well-known and uncontentious example of such a twisting of terminology is the term *brāhmaṇa*; the Buddha explains several times in the canon that by *brāhmaṇa* he means not a member of that social status group but a virtuous person, pure by reason of their good deeds.<sup>22</sup> "Purity" is another such metaphor. In brahminism it is partly literal — for it involves washing — and partly metaphorical; the Buddha used the term strictly as a metaphor, so that the ultimate purity (*visuddhi*) is the attainment of nirvana. However, it seems to me that the most fundamental move of all was the Buddha's reinterpretation of the word *kamma*: it is notorious that literally this means "action", but the Buddha declared that he used the word to mean "intention" (*cetanā*).

In expositions of Buddhist doctrine to which JB refers in his bibliography, I have shown both that the transposition of *kamma* is fundamental<sup>23</sup> and that another area of Buddhist metaphor derives from brahmin fire worship<sup>24</sup>. There are three fires to put out because the orthodox brahmin kept three fires for sacrifice; and the term *nibbāna* refers to the "extinction" of those three fires of greed, hate and delusion. Another pun lies in *upādāna/upādi*, which means both "fuel" and "grasping"; the *nibbāna* one attains in this life has the residue of fuel/grasping (*sa-upādi-sesa*) which enables life to continue, whereas the one with no more fuel/grasping (*an-upādi-sesa*) occurs at death thereafter. Since JB evidently feels somewhat aggrieved by the lack of response to the first edition of his book, let me point out that in the article to which he responds in his new introduction<sup>25</sup> I have both expounded the Buddha's use of the fire metaphor and shown (in which I was not original) that the Pali canon responds to the *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*; and yet JB writes about *upādi-sesa* (pp. 98-9) and about why the *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* must postdate the Buddha (pp. 112-121) as if he had not read my article.

22 E.g. *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (DN sutta 4) and *Sutta-nipāta* verse 136.

23 *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from ancient Benares to modern Colombo*, London 1988, pp.65-9.

24 "Recovering the Buddha's Message", pp.5-23: in RUEGG, David Seyfort and SCHMITHAUSEN, Lambert (edd.), *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka*, (*Panels of the VIIth World Sanskrit Conference*, vol.II), Leiden 1990.

25 *Ibid.*



The Buddha's uses of his opponents' terminology are but instances of what the Buddhist tradition came to call the Buddha's "skill in means". The Buddha evidently adapted his arguments to his interlocutors. (In this I agree with the long passage which JB quotes (p.xi) from David Seyfort Rugg, on which he pours what seems to me unmerited scorn.)

The line of approach which I espouse was expressed, more eloquently than I can, by T.W. Rhys Davids at the end of the last century — which only goes to show that in our field, as an economist colleague of mine once put it, "the problem is not so much extending the frontiers of knowledge as keeping them in the same place"<sup>26</sup>. Rhys Davids' words are so important that I must quote them at length.

When speaking on sacrifice to a sacrificial priest, on union with God to an adherent of the current theology, on Brahman claims to superior social rank to a proud Brahman, on mystic insight to a man who trusts in it, on the soul to one who believes in the soul theory, the method followed is always the same. Gotama puts himself as far as possible in the mental position of the questioner. He attacks none of his cherished convictions. He accepts as the starting-point of his own exposition the desirability of the act or condition prized by his opponent — of the union with God (as in the *Tevijja*), or of sacrifice (as in the *Kūṭadanta*), or of social rank (as in the *Ambaṭṭha*), or of seeing heavenly sights, etc. (as in the *Mahāli*), or of the soul theory (as in the *Poṭṭhapāda*). He even adopts the very phraseology of his questioner. And then, partly by putting a new and (from the Buddhist point of view) a higher meaning into the words; partly by an appeal to such ethical conceptions as are common ground between them; he gradually leads his opponent up to his conclusion. This is, of course, always *Arahatship*...

There is both courtesy and dignity in the method employed. But no little dialectic skill, and an easy mastery of the ethical points involved, are required to bring about the result ...

On the hypothesis that he was an historical person, of that training and character he is represented in the *Piṭakas* to have had, the method is precisely that which it is most probable he would have actually followed.

Whoever put the Dialogues together may have had a sufficiently clear memory of the way he conversed, may well have even remembered particular occasions and persons. To the mental vision of the compiler, the doctrine taught loomed so much larger than anything else, that he was necessarily more concerned with that, than with any historical accuracy in the details of the story. He was, in this respect, in much the same position as Plato when recording the dialogues of Socrates. But he was not, like Plato, giving his own opinions. We ought, no

26 Andrew Graham of Balliol College. He was working with people in public life who make economic policy.

doubt, to think of compilers rather than of a compiler. The memory of co-disciples had to be respected, and kept in mind. And so far as the actual doctrine is concerned our Dialogues are probably a more exact representation of the thoughts of the teacher than the dialogues of Plato.

However this may be, the method followed in all these Dialogues has one disadvantage. In accepting the position of the adversary, and adopting his language, the authors compel us, in order to follow what they give as Gotama's view, to read a good deal between the lines. The *argumentum ad hominem* can never be the same as a statement of opinion given without reference to any particular person.<sup>27</sup>

The above words constitute the foundation of my position but they do not comprise the whole of it. There are undoubtedly inconsistencies and other developments in the canonical texts which cannot be explained as *argumenta ad hominem*, and much work could and should be done on those developments. But words addressed by the Buddha or his disciples to those who hold other positions must always be interpreted with that fact in mind.

A fine example of the Buddha telling his opponents what they should mean by a term, and in effect teaching them something quite new, is afforded by the *brahma-vihāra* ("abiding with *brahman*"), states of mind which are also called "boundless" (*appamāṇa*). I am writing on this topic elsewhere, but mention it briefly here in order to illustrate my method, before applying that method to the Buddha's treatment of the Jains.

Although the *brahma-vihāra* are often mentioned in the Pali canon, I think that internal evidence enables us to identify the *Tevijja Sutta* (DN *sutta* 13) as the original context in which the Buddha talked about them. In that text the Buddha is approached by two young brahmins called Vāseṭṭha and Bhāradvāja, who ask him which is the quick and direct way to companionship (*sahavyatā*) with Brahman: the one explained by the brahmin Pokkharasāti or the one explained by the brahmin Tārakkha? We are not told just what those two brahmins had been explaining, but we are told that the place was a brahmin village where a lot of eminent brahmins were to be found. *Brahman* in the neuter is of course the monistic principle, the absolute, which the Upaniṣads urge must be realised, that gnosis constituting salvation. *Brahman* in the masculine is the brahmins' highest god, the personification of that absolute. I hypothesise that the personified form was worshipped primarily by those for whom the abstract

27 T.W. RHYS DAVIDS, "Introduction to the Kassapa-Sihanāda Sutta" in *Dialogues of the Buddha I* (*Sacred Books of the Buddhists II*), London 1899, pp.206-7. I have modernised the transliteration.



form was too rarefied, too sophisticated; but one must also remember that those who achieved the salvific gnosis of *brahman* during their lives were said to go to the world of Brahman at death.<sup>28</sup> The ambiguity about whether *brahman* in "the world of *brahman*" (*brahma-loka*) is masculine or neuter, personal or impersonal, is echoed in the Buddha's term *brahma-vihāra*.

*Brahma-vihāra* contains a further, crucial, ambiguity. The word *vihāra* means "spending time, living". (It is also *where* one spends one's time, and hence comes to mean a monastery.) *Brahma-vihāra* can thus mean "living with *brahman*" and be understood as a synonym of *brahma-sahavyatā*. On the other hand, the kind of "brahma-living" which the Buddha is advocating is "living like *brahman*" or "holy living". For the text culminates with his recommendation of four *brahma-vihāra*, the mental states of kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. Thus the Buddha is here treating Upaniṣadic metaphysics in his usual way, and substituting for an ontology (*brahman* as "being") a process ("living with *brahman* as the moral work of self-cultivation").

In the introduction to his translation of the *sutta*, Rhys Davids wrote that "it was deliberately inserted here as the Buddhist answer to the Upanishad theory".<sup>29</sup> So far so good; Rhys Davids had recovered for us something already forgotten by the commentators. But his interpretation then went off the rails, for he wrote: "If you want union with Brahmā — which you had much better not want — this is the way to attain it."<sup>30</sup> The Buddha presents the *brahma-vihāra* as something you *should* want, not a *pis aller*; and that entirely fits his style of argument. Rhys Davids may here have been influenced by the misunderstanding which arose early in the Buddhist tradition, which took the *brahma-vihāra* as states which will take one only as high up the universe as the *brahma-loka*, in other words fall well short of the attainment of nirvana. This literalist cosmology is a secondary development.

Moreover, mistranslation apparently prevented Rhys Davids from noticing another important Upaniṣadic echo. The brahminical doctrine is that works, *karman*, receive appropriate reward, but since each work (which is normally of a ritual character) is finite, so is its reward. What

28 *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 6,2,15. This passage in fact refers to "worlds of *brahman*" in the plural.

29 *Dialogues of the Buddha* I, p.298.

30 *Ibid.*, p.299.

lacks this finite character is gnosis of one's identity with *brahman*, so the resultant staying with (or merging into) *brahman* is also infinite. The Buddha is evidently responding to this doctrine when he says that when one has cultivated one of the four holy states of mind, kindness etc., the finite acts one has performed (*yaṃ pamāṇa-kataṃ kammaṃ*) do not remain.<sup>31</sup> This is the original reason why these states of mind are known as "infinite" or "boundless" (*appamāṇa*); the term then came to be applied to breaking down the boundaries between oneself and others — yet again twisting metaphysics into ethics.

Another brahmin-Buddhist parallel in the *Tevijja Sutta* is not quite so near the surface. The text repeatedly alludes to the brahmins whom it is ridiculing as *tevijja*, "knowing the three Vedas". *Veda*, though to us the name of a set of texts, means "knowledge" — the knowledge that really counted. It was threefold, because there were at that period three such texts. And that is why the Buddha himself claimed to have attained three knowledges (*tisso vijjā*) at his Enlightenment. Because of this parallel, I do not accept JB's claim (pp.119-20) that the first two of the Buddha's three knowledges are later additions.

#5. For the rest of this article I shall consider texts in which the Buddha takes issue with the Jains, while to some extent adopting their terms. The specific words which concern us come from the Jain theory of the operation of karma, to which I have alluded above. The Jains conceive that karma "flows in" on the soul as a kind of dust, and then has to be expunged. For the "flowing in" they use the terms *āsava* and *avassava*, both connected with the Sanskrit root *sru* "to flow". It is well known that the Buddha often phrased Enlightenment in terms of the "wearing out" (*khaya*) of the *āsava*, of which there are either three (sensual desire, desire for further existence and ignorance — *kāmāsava*, *bhavāsava* and *avijjāsava*) or four (the above three plus speculative views — *diṭṭhāsava*). For Buddhist psychology the literal term "influxes" makes no sense, so that the term has caused translators much trouble; but the wearing out of the karma that has flowed in on his soul is just what the Jain hopes to achieve.

The Jain term for "expunging" karma, *nijjarā*, seems to have been peculiar to their vocabulary. In contrast to *āsava*, the Pali texts use *nijjarā* very rarely so that the word retains a strongly Jain flavour. In this article I shall mention all passages in the Pali canon in which the *Pāli Tipiṭaka*

31 DN I, 251.

*Concordance* records the use of *nijjarā* or its cognates. I suggest that originally it figured only in sermons which were addressed to Jains. While the Buddha infused the term *āsava* with a new meaning, he did not do so to any other specifically Jain term so far as I am aware.<sup>32</sup>

Our primary interest is in the texts which JB considers to contradict Buddhist doctrine. But to give a more complete picture I must first summarise a text addressed to the Jains in which the Buddha uses some of their vocabulary without noticeably changing its meaning: the *Devadaha Sutta*.

The *Devadaha Sutta* (MN *sutta* 101 = MN II, 214-28) is addressed by the Buddha to an anonymous group of monks. He begins by telling them that there are some brahmins and ascetics who believe that whatever one experiences, whether pleasure,<sup>33</sup> pain or neutral, is the result of former acts. (It becomes clear below that "former acts" means "acts performed in former lives".) The Buddha once asked some Jains if they believed this, and they agreed that they did. The rest of the sermon reports his conversation with them. This introduction — a conversation without preamble reported to an anonymous group — looks as if the original introduction has been lost. This impression is reinforced when we find that the rest of the first four pages of the Pali text repeat (at greater length) material from the *Cūla Dukkha-kkhandha Sutta* (text *A* below), with the sole addition of a simile which also occurs elsewhere. This material I shall report below, when I deal with the latter *sutta*.

The rest of the *Devadaha Sutta* is devoted to making two related points: that the Jains have a wrong view of karma, and that they exemplify wrong effort — with which the Buddha contrasts right effort, in which seeking discomfort has a strictly limited place. The Buddha presents his teaching as straightforwardly rational in comparison with Jainism: when he points out to the Jains that they suffer when they torture themselves, and not otherwise, they have no reply (pp.218-20). Then he asks whether their efforts (*padhāna*) can influence their karma in any one of ten ways, to each of which they reply "No" (pp.220-1). This section blatantly misrepresents

32 A possible exception is *sallekha*: see the *Sallekha Sutta*, MN I, 40-46. *Sallekha* may originally have meant "scraping away" (sc. old karma). But the Jain term *sallekhanā*, whatever its derivation, refers to voluntary death by starvation.

33 "Pleasure" here translates *sukha*; but I have also felt free to translate *sukha* "happiness" or "comfort", as seemed to suit the context. My translations of *dukkha* are equally varied.

Jain doctrine. For example, the second question is: "Is it possible by exertion and effort to experience in this life *kamma* which is to be experienced in a future life?" and the Jains are made to say no, though in fact real Jains do believe that they can thus bring karma to fruition more quickly.

The Buddha then presents five possible reasons why one may suffer pleasure or pain, and argues that since the Jains are now undergoing pain, any one of these five reasons brings discredit on them (pp.222-3). The first possible reason is former acts, and it is here that one sees that this expression refers to acts in former lives. The Buddha argues that if Jains are suffering so much now, and the theory of previous karma (which in fact they do hold) is true, they must have been very wicked in their former lives. Other possible reasons are God's ordinances, fate, or belonging to a wicked race. From what he said above (pp.218-20), as well as from general knowledge of the Buddha's teaching, one may deduce that the reason he regards as both true and relevant is the one he lists last: that pleasure and suffering arise from one's own efforts in this life.

The Buddha next (pp.223-5) presents what he considers fruitful exertion and effort. He begins by using another Jain concept. The Jains consider the soul to be moist and sticky, so that karma adheres to it. The Buddha begins: "A monk does not moisten his soul, which was not moist, with suffering, nor does he abandon virtuous pleasure, nor does he get infatuated with that pleasure." (*Bhikkhu na heva anaddhabhūtaṃ attānaṃ dukkhena addhabhāveti, dhammikaṃ ca sukhaṃ na paricajjati, tasmīṃ ca sukhe anadhimucchito hoti.*) The pleasure is compared to a woman with whom one used to be in love, but to whom one can learn to grow indifferent. The monk by stages acquires equanimity, and so his suffering is expunged (*dukkhaṃ nijjinṇaṃ* — the Jain term).

In this case the story is however not yet over. The monk in this illustration finds that while he is living in comfort he is deteriorating morally. So he decides to make an effort to be less comfortable (*yaṃ nūnāhaṃ dukkhāya attānaṃ padaheyyan ti*). He does so, his mental state improves, and so he stops giving himself a hard time. As a fletcher makes a sharp arrowhead by heating it between two brands but does not reheat it once he has got it right (pp.225-6).

At this point there is an irrelevant insertion of a stock passage (pp.226-7) about how a Buddha becomes Enlightened. The purpose of the insertion is clear: it is to introduce the Buddha as subject matter. For the *sutta* ends (pp.227-8) with a passage in which the Buddha talks about himself in terms precisely answering the passage (pp.222-3 above) in



which he ridiculed the Jains. Just as the fact that they are suffering reflects discredit on them, whichever of five theories of karma you adopt, conversely the fact that the Buddha is now feeling so good must reflect credit on him. Although the term is commonplace in the canon, it can be no accident that in this context the Jain term *āsava* is used: the fact that the Buddha is comfortable is expressed by saying "that he now feels such pleasant influx-free feelings" (*yaṃ etarahi evarūpā anāsavā sukhā vedanā vediyati*). For the rest, this passage strikes me as humorous. When the Buddha says that if creatures experience pleasure and pain because of God's so ordaining, then he was made by a benign God (*bhaddakena issarena nimmito*), I see his tongue in his cheek. Moreover, if this is humorous, the parallel passage on p.222 criticising the Jains is at least half humorous too.

The inserted passage about the Buddha's Enlightenment on pp.226-7 probably arose as the expansion of some brief remark introducing the Buddha, who, having exerted himself correctly, is now free of *āsava* and comfortable, in contrast to the ascetic Jains. It seems to me that most of the first four and a half pages of this *sutta* belong in the *Cūla Dukkha-kkhandha Sutta* and have been attracted to here by the similar subject matter. If one makes these two subtractions, the *Devadaha Sutta* becomes completely coherent. To Buddhists it lays down the precise and limited conditions under which it may be useful to cultivate suffering.<sup>34</sup> It is perhaps unfortunate that the Buddha misrepresents the Jain doctrine, thus making his polemical task easier, but that would not be without parallel; besides, we cannot exclude the possibility that the doctrine reached his ears in a garbled form. The Buddha uses Jain terms at points throughout the *sutta*, which suggests that it may have been originally addressed to some (lay?) followers of the Jains, or to people who had been converted from that persuasion. My feeling is that his humorous denigration of the Jains and praise of himself similarly points to some authentic episode: the Buddha would be more likely to make such jokes to a particular person or group than in a sermon addressed to "monks" in general. Thus I think that we have lost the story's original frame, so that the *ad hominem* character of what the Buddha says has been obscured.

The *Devadaha Sutta* uses some Jain terms and presents a coherent anti-Jain argument, but, unless it is the way in which the Buddha describes

34 Compare this with my remarks on p. 1080 above on MN *sutta* 20.

his feelings as *anāsava*, I do not see that in this text he is twisting their terms as a homiletic device.

I shall now deal with a group of texts which for convenience I shall refer to as *A*, *B* and *C*, as follows:

*A: Cūla Dukkha-kkhandha Sutta*, MN *sutta* 14 = MN I, 91-5.

*B: AN Tika-nipāta, Ānanda-vagga, sutta* 74 = AN I, 220-2.

*C: AN Catukka-nipāta, Mahā-vagga, sutta* 195 = AN II, 196-200.

*A* is in two parts which seem to have nothing to do with each other. The first one and a half pages of the text in the Pali Text Society edition are a conversation between the Buddha and a Sakyan called Mahānāma and will not concern us further. The remaining two and a half pages are an account which the Buddha gives Mahānāma of a conversation he had with a group of Jains. This second framework is an unusual one, in that it presents the Buddha as accosting a group of Jains while he is out on an evening stroll. The *Devadaha Sutta* too presents the Buddha as initiating his conversation with the Jains. It is not common for the Buddha to pick an argument; usually it is the others who come to him with a question or an assertion. For the Buddha to initiate controversy conflicts with the quietistic pose adopted in the *Aṭṭhaka Vagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*. Since the two texts share this odd feature, and I have already suggested that the *Devadaha Sutta* has lost its original introduction, it is possible that the two texts were originally one. In that case the suggestion made above that the passage which the two texts share should be subtracted from the *Devadaha Sutta* would have to be revised.

Let us now look at that passage. The Buddha asks the Jains why they are torturing themselves by never sitting (or lying) down.\*<sup>35</sup> They tell him that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (= Mahāvīra) is omniscient and has salvific knowledge (*ñāṇadassana*), and that continuously (*satatam*), whether he is walking or standing, asleep or awake. He has told them that they have formerly done evil and they must expunge it (*nijjaretha*) by this asceticism. If they now restrain body, speech and thought they will do no evil in future; so by putting an end to their old karma through asceticism (*tapasā*), and doing no new karma, they will have no influxes (*anavassavo*, a synonym of *anāsavo*) in future. This will lead to the wearing out of their karma, that in turn to the wearing out of their suffering, that to the wearing

35 Everything between the two asterisks is repeated, many times though not in the same order, in the *Devadaha Sutta* at MN II, 214-8.



out of sensation, and that to the expunging of all suffering (*vedanākhayā sabbaṃ dukkhaṃ nijjiṇṇaṃ bhavissati*). They declare themselves satisfied with this teaching.

The Buddha thereupon resorts, implicitly, to his dictum that one should take nothing on trust. He asks them whether they know for sure: that they formerly existed; that they did evil acts (in general); that they did particular evil acts; that they have expunged a certain quantity of suffering, still have so much to go, and how much the total to be expunged is; how to get rid of bad states and attain good ones. They say no.\*<sup>35</sup> In that case, the Buddha says, it must be people who were bloody-handed in their former lives, hunters etc., who become Jain ascetics. With this last remark the Buddha is ironically drawing a logical conclusion from their present suffering.

Their response is to defend their sufferings by taking a different tack. They say that happiness can only be attained by suffering, not by other happiness. (JB, p.27 footnote 4, cites an early Jain text which does say precisely this.) If happiness could procure happiness, the king would attain it, since he lives more happily than the Buddha. The Buddha warns them that they have spoken rashly; they should rather have asked who lives more happily, the king or the Buddha. To this they agree. In answer to the question he has put into their mouths, the Buddha asks them a counter-question: can the king stay seven days and nights without moving a muscle or saying a word, but experiencing pure happiness (*ekanta-sukha-paṭisaṃvedī*)? No. The Buddha gets them to agree that the king could not do this for even a single day or night, and that therefore he lives more happily than the king.

The Buddha does not refer to his own pleasant state by any Buddhist technical term, and since he is talking to Jains one would not expect him to, but the reference to staying motionless for seven days and nights strongly suggests that he means *saññā-vedayita-nirodha*; we have seen above that he considered that to be pleasant — unless "blissful" is a better translation.

This narrative — the latter part of the *sutta* — seems internally coherent and one does not immediately feel that there are loose ends. As JB rightly says, the main point is the contrast between the painful practices of the Jains and the pleasant life of the Buddha. When we look at other *suttas*, however, we shall see that this *sutta* supplies material to form a larger pattern.

Let me now deal with *B* and *C*. These are two of the texts which JB cites as clear cases of outside influence, since they allegedly contradict the

Buddha's teachings. In *B*, two Licchavi men come to talk to Ānanda about Mahāvīra's teachings. (Note: the sermon is not ascribed to the Buddha.) The text then has almost the same paragraph about Mahāvīra's omniscience and doctrine of *nijjarā* as we have met in *A* (at MN I, 92-3). Almost the same, but not quite: the two texts supplement each other quite usefully. Here the restraint of body, speech and thought is not specifically mentioned; but not doing new karma is called "destroying the causeway" (*setu-ghāta*) — presumably the causeway is the metaphor for the force which propels one from life to life. At the end of the paragraph the two Licchavis do not make the comment that they are satisfied with the teaching — after all, they are but lay inquirers — but instead there is a rather obscure short sentence: "Thus by expunging in this very life, by purification, one transcends this" (*evam etissā sandiṭṭhikāya nijjarā*<sup>36</sup> *visuddhiyā samatikkamo hoti*). "This" is feminine: I do not understand what the pronoun refers to. Has a word been lost?

Ānanda replies that the Buddha has explained three "expungings, purifications" (*nijjarā, visuddhiyo*) which lead to Enlightenment: training in morality; the four *jhāna*; the wearing out of the *āsava*. (These three amount to the standard formula: *sīla, samādhi, paññā*.) Of each of these three in turn, Ānanda says that the monk who does them "does no new karma and touch by touch puts an end to the old karma — expunging in this very life, with no time-lag, something to see for oneself, conducive to Enlightenment, for intelligent people to realise individually". (*So navañ ca kammaṃ na karoti purāṇaṃ ca kammam phussa phussa vyantīkaroti sandiṭṭhikā nijjarā akālikā ehipassikā opanayikā paccattaṃ veditabbā viññūhī ti*.) The reader will recognise that the expunging, *nijjarā*, has here acquired a set of epithets which in the standard formula are attached to the Dhamma, the Buddha's teaching. When Ānanda has expounded the three *nijjarā*, in identical terms, his interlocutors agree that if anyone did not approve of Ānanda's speech his head would fall off!

The other sermon, *C*, is ascribed to the Buddha. It plays on the word *āsava*. Vappa, a follower of Mahāvīra, says that someone may be restrained in body, word and thought, and yet, because of his past karma, painful influxes may flow in on him in future (*dukkha-vedanīyā āsavā*

36 I take *nijjarā* as a truncated form for *nijjarāya*. One version of the commentary (AA II,332) reads a *samāsa*, *nijjarā-visuddhiyā*, but there are variant readings, and in any case the meaning would not be affected. I rely on the fact that in the following paragraphs *sandiṭṭhikā nijjarā* occurs three times.

*assaveyyuṇ abhisamparāyaṇ*). Moggallāna takes Vappa to the Buddha, who particularly asks him to raise objections if he sees fit and to ask questions if he does not understand. On Vappa's agreeing, the Buddha continues: "So what do you think, Vappa? The *āsava* which arise to vex and burn<sup>37</sup> because of bodily undertakings do not arise to vex and burn one who abstains from bodily undertakings. That man does no new karma and touch by touch ... (as above). Do you see a basis on which painful influences might flow in on him in future?" "No, sir." The Buddha repeats his words, substituting for "bodily" first "vocal" and then "mental". Then he says: "The *āsava* which arise to vex and burn because of ignorance do not arise to vex and burn through the arising of knowledge from dispassion towards ignorance.<sup>38</sup>" Then he again repeats the same statement about karma and *nijjarā*.

The Buddha has here been making play with the ambiguity of the term *samārambha*: it means both "undertaking" and "violence". The ambiguity is acute for Jains, since in their doctrine any movement is potentially an act of violence, at least against microscopic creatures, and the intention is not relevant to the moral character of the act. Even a Buddhist, let alone a Jain, would agree that the evil consequences of *samārambha* could be avoided by not doing any.

The Buddha goes on: "Such a monk's mind is properly liberated and he has attained six continuous states (*satata-vihāra*)." He has become indifferent to the impressions of the six senses. Besides: if he has a sensation co-extensive with his body or with his life, he feels it as such, and is aware that after the break-up of his body and the completion of his life all the feelings, in which he takes no joy (anyway), will grow cold. The Buddha then produces a simile: if a stump throws a shadow, and one utterly destroys the stump, there will be no more shadow.

Vappa seems to understand this perfectly. He says that in following the foolish Jains he was like a man who is keen to have an income but tries to rear horses for sale; he gets no income and nothing but trouble.<sup>39</sup>

Obscurities remain in *B* and *C*, but at least I can see that between them *B* and *C*, and probably *A* as well, are fragments of some larger and

37 I interpret *vighāta-parilāhā* as a dative (<-āya) and *sa* as <Sanskrit *śma*.

38 My "from dispassion towards ignorance" translates *avijjāvirāgā*, an odd expression. Buddhaghosa glosses it as *avijjāpahīnattā*, "from the abandonment of ignorance" (MA II, 18, line 25, glossing MN I, 67, line 32).

39 It is notorious that horses breed very poorly in India.

more systematic argument which turned the Jains' terminology against them. In *C*, the Buddha says that a monk who is rid of the influxes has "continuous states". Here I catch an echo from the beginning of *A* and *B*, where Mahāvīra is said to claim to be continuously (*satatam*) in a state of omniscience. (This pericope also occurs in the *Devadahā Sutta* at MN II,218.) We recall that that opening remark found no parallel in Ānanda's reply in *B*. I think that the original challenging question from a Jain included it, and the original answer from the Buddha answered it, and the words fitted better (punningly?) than they do now. Possibly the original question also included a passage to which the Buddha's remarks about sensations co-extensive with the body and life was an answer; maybe someone will find that passage in yet another text.

For those latter sentences in *C*, however, there is another, perhaps more likely, explanation: they also occur in another text, at SN II,198. There they are accompanied by a different simile. The point of both passages is to describe the kind of emotionally imperturbable life led by an enlightened monk. He still has sensations but merely observes them without reacting to them, and he knows that when his body dies there will be no more sensations. The parallel passage adds the words: "Just his physical relics remain" (*sarīrāni avasissantī*), and then compares the monk's body to a newly fired pot which loses its heat after removal from the kiln. (The commentary on *C* (AA III,174-80), while sparse and unhelpful with the first part, claims that "co-extensive with the body" refers to feelings arising from the five senses, and "co-extensive with life" to purely mental feelings, but I find this far-fetched. I also disagree with the commentator's application of the simile: that the tree-stump stands for the body is correct, but the commentator says that its shadow stands for good and bad deeds, whereas I think that the context shows that it stands for feelings (*vedanā*).)

The potential point of similarity with Jainism that I see here lies in indifference to one's feelings. The Jains stress such indifference, using it to mortify the flesh. The Buddha is describing only the indifference of an enlightened person, and assumes no such mortification. Nevertheless, since his tactic was to seek out points of apparent similarity between his views and those of his interlocutors, in order then to steer them into his way of thinking, I do see this passage as relevant to the context.

To a Jain the first paragraph of *C*, about bodily undertakings, would mean that the influx of karmic dust caused by physical activity vexes and burns the soul to which it clings, but can be stopped by stopping the activity. A Jain would still have to cope with all the previous influx/dust,



but this the Buddha does not mention. His statement is so close to a tautology that Vappa can hardly fail to assent to it, unless he interrupts by saying, "You have left out a crucial point" — and such an interruption would be unlikely in that cultural milieu. Moreover, the Buddha then goes on to state what seems to the Jain familiar doctrine, about not doing any more karma but gradually wearing out the old.

To a Buddhist the same words about influxes mean that the results of physical violence stop if one eschews such violence. I may be over-interpreting, but it could be that the rather odd word order is meant to create an ambiguity, so that in the Buddhist interpretation the vexing and burning apply to what the physical acts do to *others*.

When we take *A*, *B* and *C* together, we find that everything of value for understanding the main ideas is to be found in *A* and *C*. *B* is completely secondary; no wonder that it is not ascribed to the Buddha. In part it consists of passages also found in the other two texts, and its usefulness is confined to providing a few extra words as a parallel recension. *B* would be rather obscure if we did not have (in *A*) a parallel to the opening passage which shows why the *nijjarā* should number three. Ānanda's response is a clumsy attempt to do the Buddha's trick of twisting round terms; clumsy, in that there is nothing particularly *nijjarā*-like about the triad morality-meditation-wisdom.

Finally, why the strange passage, common to *B* and *C*, in which it is claimed that a *Buddhist* "does no new karma, and touch by touch puts an end to the old karma — expunging in this very life"? As JB and Ruegg (quoted at JB p.xi) say, the idea that one can put an end to one's karma contradicts many other texts. The commentary (AA II, 333) says: "He uses up the karma by touching so as to come in touch with the result" (*vipāka-phassaṃ phusitvā phusitvā tam kammaṃ khepeti*). I cannot see that this advances matters. Of course, once a Buddhist has experienced the result of a particular act, that is the end of it; but the only acts of which he must inevitably experience the results are the heinous crimes mentioned at the end of section #3 above. For a Buddhist, such dabbling away (*phussa phussa*) seems pointless.

Unfortunately I have no complete explanation. It is evident that the texts are corrupt: even the sentence quoted has no syntax, for from "expunging" on we have a string of hanging nominatives. By taking the texts in association I can, however, offer a couple of observations.

(1) Mahāvīra is said (MN I,93 = AN I,220) to put an end to old karma "by asceticism". In the parallel Buddhist retort it is done "touch by

touch", implying very gentle action. Thus the Buddhists eschew self-torture.

(2) The Buddha's version of *nijjarā* is here and now, something you can see for yourself. Here text *A* is relevant. The Buddha shows the ascetics that they are taking the past on trust from a teacher; moreover, they have no idea how much *nijjarā* they have got left to do — it could take them many lives. The *nijjarā* the Buddha offers is thus not merely gentler: it is guaranteed to take effect within this life, and you can *verify your own progress*.

(3) Though this does not seem to solve the puzzle about the words used concerning karma, it seems very likely that in the sentence under discussion there is a pun on *nijjarā*. The string of epithets normally applied to the Buddha's teaching sit very oddly if applied to *nijjarā* in the Jain sense. But *jarā* in the meaning of "ageing, decay", is a very common term in the Buddha's teaching for it is part of the standard amplification of *dukkha*, the first noble truth. *Nijjarā* can presumably be taken to mean that which is free from ageing and decay, namely nirvana. This is certainly something "for intelligent people to realise individually". Granted, the previous epithet, *opanayikā*, fits less well, but I attribute its presence to the power of formulae. When the Buddha originally made the pun he probably left that word out.

(4) In sum, I think we may continue to follow Rhys Davids and can posit that what has been lost here is something which would clarify not a new and conflicting doctrine but an *ad hominem* argument.

Into the wider context of a hypothetical text or set of texts arguing with the Jains we must insert one more fragment. At AN I,215-6, in a sermon in which neither speakers nor context are stated, the Buddha (if it is he) says that there are ten *nijjarā-vatthūni*,<sup>40</sup> "occasions of expunging". They are the eight factors of the eightfold path plus knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and release (*vimutti*): in each case, once one has the right one (view etc.) the wrong one is expunged (*nijjinṇa*). Precisely the same content is found at MN III,76-7, in the middle of one of those texts (MN *sutta* 117, *Mahā Cattārīsaka Sutta*) which consist of numbered lists of doctrinal items, an *abhidhamma* text *avant la lettre*. Similarly, the list recurs at DN III,291.

40 The P.T.S. edition prints *nijjara*, but gives *nijjarā* as a variant reading.



Let me sum up. I think that our wider knowledge of the Buddha's context and mode of preaching allows us to see that when talking to people who already adhered to a doctrine he tried to lead them into his way of thinking by first stressing the similarities between them and then subtly infusing new meaning into words and phrases. The texts preserve an imperfect record of this process, in general because they naturally preserve the gist of the Buddha's message rather than his precise words,<sup>41</sup> and in particular because detailed knowledge of the doctrinal views of the Buddha's opponents was for the most part lost. In these *suttas*, two of which have preserved an important sentence about wearing out old karma, we have fragmentary reflections of a larger and originally more coherent account of how the Buddha converted (or tried to convert) Jains by twisting their own terms against them. How this earlier account related to what really happened — whether it reflected one actual episode or rather, as a literary creation, summarised the Buddha's preaching in this area — I consider unknowable. But we can conclude on the one hand that we have some clouded reflections of the Buddha's preaching style, and on the other that the texts as they stand are of later origin.

41 This is precisely what the Buddha exhorts his followers to do in the *Alagaddūpama Sutta*, including the famous simile of the raft (MN I,133-5). Unfortunately that simile has been much misunderstood by being taken out of context, so that, paradoxically, a condemnation of literalism has been too literally interpreted. I hope to return to this elsewhere.