

Reprinted from

बौद्ध अध्ययन की भारतीय अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय पत्रिका

THE INDIAN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUDDHIST STUDIES

(New Series in continuation of the *Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. X)



Number - 5

2004

B.J.K. INSTITUTE OF BUDDHIST AND ASIAN STUDIES

ADITYA SHYAM TRUST, 76 NANDNAGAR - VARANASI

The silence of the Buddha and the questions about the *Tathāgata* after death

Abraham Velez de Cea*

Introduction

There are ten¹ views in the Pāli *Nikāyas* that often appear in the form of questions.² The Buddha left these questions undetermined³ and this has been interpreted as an eloquent silence about metaphysics. This understanding of the 'silence of the Buddha' has been interpreted in a variety of ways, as a form of pragmatism, agnosticism, skepticism, mysticism, empiricism, or apophaticism.

In this article I question this widespread understanding of the silence of the Buddha and I propose a new interpretation of it. The Buddha of the Pāli *Nikāyas* did not remain silent before the undetermined questions, but rather answered them in very explicit ways and for different reasons. The special answer given to the question about the *Tathāgata* after death suggests and this is the main thesis of the article that the silence of the Buddha is not about undetermined questions but rather about *Nibbāna* after death.

* Post-Doctoral Fellow, Georgetown University, Theology Department, Washington, DC 20057-1135, USA

Author would like to thank Professor Luis Gomez (University of Michigan), Professor Francisca Cho (Georgetown University) and Professor Charles B. Jones (Catholic University of America), and the anonymous reviewers of this article for their helpful suggestions.

¹ In Sanskrit and other non-Pāli Buddhist texts, the ten views become fourteen by adding the last two possibilities of the *tetralema* (both A and B, neither A nor B) to the questions about the world.

² The ten views are: 1) The world is eternal. 2) The world is not eternal. 3) The world is infinite. 4) The world is finite. 5) Body and soul are one thing. 6) Body and soul are two different things. 7) The *Tathāgata* exists after death. 8) The *Tathāgata* does not exist after death. 9) The *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death. 10) The *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death.

³ Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi as undeclared, *avyākata* in Pāli or *avyākṛta* in Sanskrit.

1. Contemporary interpretations of the silence of the Buddha

The first systematic attempt to classify the different interpretations of the 'silence of the Buddha' was done by T.W. Organ (1954:125-140). According to him there are six main ways of interpreting the 'silence of the Buddha'. Eternalism: The Buddha accepted the current metaphysical views of Brahmanism and he had nothing new to say (A.K. Coomaraswamy). Annihilationism: The Buddha rejected the views of Brahmanism, and keeping silent was a formal denial of its views (H. Oldenberg, La Vallee Poussin). Agnosticism: The Buddha had no views of his own. Here, Organ distinguishes between three different reasons for his agnosticism: A) Because he did not know the answers (Naïve Agnosticism); B) Because he held that the limited capacity of the human mind could not successfully deal with such questions (Rational Agnosticism, which Organ compares with the agnosticism of Hume and Kant); C) Because of the unknowable character of the world (Organ relates this to the Mādhyamika and Zen schools but he explains that this does not mean that the Buddha was agnostic). Esotericism: The Buddha knew all about the ultimate problems but did not reveal the answers to the multitudes for fear that he might disturb their minds (Radhakrishnan). Apophaticism: The Buddha was unable to answer because of the insufficiency of human language to express the highest truth and because some questions carried implications that he could not accept. Silence is the best expression of reality, the answer is known only intuitively through a non-linguistic and non-conceptual mystical experience (D.T. Suzuki). Pragmatism: The Buddha did not want to be distracted from his main purpose, namely, to overcome suffering. Those theoretical questions were useless and harmful because they did not contribute to the practice of the way leading to the extinction of suffering (Organ).

Gadgin M. Nagao (1955) criticizes the pragmatic interpretation of Organ. Nagao refutes the claim that the Buddha was only a religious teacher without a fully developed philosophy. He was also a highly rational and critical philosopher. That is, behind the silence of the Buddha there was a philosophical reason, not just a religious or pragmatic one. That philosophical reason was related to the inadequacy of language to express ultimate truth, as well as to the concept of *śūnyatā* understood both as an ontological term (non-substantiality or *niḥsvabhāva-śūnya*), and as an epistemological term (non-perceptibility or *anupalabdhi-śūnya*). However, the philosophical position underlying the silence of the Buddha did not

crystallize into a philosophy until Nāgārjuna. So Nagao combines the pragmatic interpretation with the apophatic interpretation, interpreting the silence of the Buddha from the philosophy of Nāgārjuna and the Mahāyāna's conception of emptiness.

T.R.V. Murti (1955) devotes a chapter of his book about the Mādhyamika system to the silence of the Buddha combining both the agnostic and the apophatic interpretation. Like Nagao, he claimed that the Buddha was a forerunner of the Mādhyamika dialectic and that there was a philosophical reason behind his silence. For him too, the Buddha was a great philosopher, and a great metaphysician. He compared the undetermined questions to the Kantian antinomies of reason. The questions about the world show "how human reason seeks to understand the ultimate unconditioned ground of objects" (1955:39). The questions about the soul "seek to reach the ultimate (non-empirical) unity of the subjective states in an independent entity" (1955:39). And the questions about the Tathāgata are "in fact about the ultimate ground of both the soul and objects—about the unconditioned in general" (1955:39). For Murti, the Buddha tries to resolve the conflict of views, like Kant's Critic of Pure Reason, by raising the human mind beyond the empirical level of phenomena to a higher level of reality; a level where neither existence nor non-existence can be asserted, a standpoint where the categories of thought and dialectics do not apply. The unanswered questions are unanswerable because they are about the Unconditioned and the Unconditioned cannot be characterized by the phenomenal, that is, it is transcendent to thought, it cannot be grasped by conceptual knowledge. For Murti, the silence of the Buddha "can only be interpreted as meaning the consciousness of the indescribable nature of the Unconditioned Reality." (1955:48)

K.N. Jayatilleke (1963) interprets the silence of the Buddha as a special kind of Logical Positivism: The questions are (logically) meaningless and therefore not admitting of an answer. But for Jayatilleke this Buddhist Logical Positivism should not be confused with Western Logical Positivism: whereas for Western logical positivists it is meaningless to speak about anything transcendent to language and empirical experience, for the Buddhists it is possible to speak meaningfully about *nirvāna* as a realizable transcendent state. The meaningfulness of the undetermined questions is due in part to the inadequacy of the concepts contained in them to refer to the state of the Tathāgata in *nirvāna*. So one can speak meaningfully of the possibility of experiencing *nirvāna*, but it is meaningless to ask whether the Tathāgata exists or does not exist, is reborn or is not

reborn in that state. As Jayatilleke puts it: "The transempirical cannot be empirically described or understood but it can be realized and attained." (1963:475-6) After quoting the famous conclusion of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent", Jayatilleke states: "This attitude has, however, to be distinguished from Agnosticism. It was not that there was something that the Buddha did not know, but that what he 'knew' in the transcendent sense could not be conveyed in words because of the limitations of language and of empiricism." (1963:476) The state of the Tathāgata in *nirvāṇa* is transempirical and transcendent, therefore, one should be silent about it. So, Jayatilleke, like Murti, interprets the silence of the Buddha as a combination of apophaticism and rational agnosticism. The difference between them is that whereas Murti interprets the Buddha from a Kantian and Vedantic point of view, Jayatilleke does it from an Empiricist and Logical Positivist one.

In a similar way, Ninian Smart (1964:34) affirms that the undetermined questions were "wrongly put, and incapable of meaningful answer". Such questions were analogous to asking about the baldness of the king of France. Since currently there is not any king in France, it is meaningless to ask about his baldness and it is impossible to answer such a question. As Smart puts it "the question 'Does a Buddha or saint survive his decease?' was unanswerable, because it is an improper or defective question" (Smart, 1964:35).

David Kalupahana (1976), himself a disciple of Jayatilleke at the University of Peradeniya (Sri Lanka), and like himself trained philosophically in England, goes one step further than his teacher's interpretation. Kalupahana considers the Buddha a radical empiricist for whom there was nothing transempirical, not even the state of the Tathāgata in *nirvāṇa*, as Jayatilleke believed. The Buddha did not answer the questions because they contained metaphysical views in the logical positivist sense of the term, that is, statements impossible to verify in experience and therefore meaningless. The questions cannot be answered because there is not any direct experience of the metaphysical views they contain. The questions about the world "cannot be decided on the basis of the knowledge available to man." (1976:156) The same can be said of the other questions, even of the questions about the Tathāgata, they are like asking whether unicorns exist or not. The best answer to meaningless questions containing

meaningless metaphysical views is silence.⁴ So Kalupahana rejects the apophatic aspect of Jayatilleke's logical positivist interpretation and explain the silence of the Buddha as a consequence of his radical empiricism.⁵

Steven Collins (1982) in his book *Selfless Persons*, speaks of two basic reasons for leaving the questions undetermined, one being linguistic and the other psychological. The questions are linguistically ill-formed because they presuppose the existence of a real entity as the referent of terms such as 'Tathāgata', 'being', 'self'. Since for the Buddhist there is not any permanent entity corresponding to personal terms, it is not correct to ask questions presupposing the existence of real referents for such terms. As Collins himself puts it: "the most important reason for not answering the questions is that they are linguistically ill-formed. They use personal referring terms, which according to Buddhist thinking have no real referent; hence, any answer given directly to them would necessarily confirm the misleading presupposition that such terms do refer to some real and permanent individual." (1982:133) The psychological reason is that those who ask them do so because they are conditioned by attachment. The views are based on the conceit 'I am' and they consider the aggregates in relation to a self (*attan*, Skt. *ātman*), that is, they presuppose an identity view (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) or as Collins calls them, a personality belief: "the Unanswered Questions are simply forms of Personality Belief; a theoretical error caused by seeing a relation, of one sort or another, between a 'self' and the *khandhā*." (1982:133) Those who make the questions relate the concept of self to the aggregates by making a wrong conceptual inference from the phenomenological existence of the conceit 'I am'. The Buddha, having no sense of 'I' does not draw any conceptual conclusions

⁴ "Since no answer based on experience is possible, the Buddha remained silent when pressed for an answer and maintained that the questions as to whether the *tathāgata* exists (*hoti*) or arises (*uppajjati*), does not exist or does not arise, both or neither, do not fit the case (*na upeti*). It is like asking whether unicorns exist or not. It is not that the questions impute to transcendental reality the characteristics of 'existence', 'nonexistence', and the like, which have valid application only within the realm of ordinary experience, as Jayatilleke seems to think." (Kalupahana, 1976:157-158).

⁵ Kalupahana's views are widely held in Sri Lanka. See for instance (Tilakaratne, 1993).

about the Tathāgata after death or about the non-existent referent of first person singular verbs, names, and personal pronouns (1982:133).

Raimundo Panikkar (1989) interprets the ‘silence of the Buddha’ as a silence of God, but by silence of God he does not mean silence of *devas* or gods but silence of the Absolute. Panikkar is aware of the fact that the problem of God is not explicitly mentioned in the undetermined questions. However, he interprets the questions as silence of God. Up to about the question of God, “the Buddha refuses an answer, rejecting even the formulation of such a question” (1989:62). For him, the Buddha neither affirms nor negates the existence of the Absolute. Panikkar defines the Buddha’s position as ontic apophaticism, which means that the ultimate reality is so ineffable and transcendent that it does not exist, that is, it is neither a being nor the non-being. The reason for the Buddha’s silence is that the ultimate reality ‘is’ not, which means that the ultimate reality is empty of being, that is, beyond the dialectic of being and non-being, and therefore, beyond ontology. The rejection of the four logical possibilities of each question implies a transcendence of ontology and an attempt to liberate our minds from what Panikkar calls *ontolatry*. The silence of the Buddha in the undetermined questions shows also the limitations of logic and the inadequacy of thought to express the ultimate reality: “It seems to me that the intentionality of the *avyākṛta* does not regard the logic of thought—does not bear upon a softening of the principle of non-contradiction or of the Excluded third, but rather points to the imperfection, the limitation, the inability to express the real.” (1989:70).

Peter Harvey’s *Selfless Mind* (1995) speaks of three reasons for the silence of the Buddha: to avoid distractions from the spiritual life, not to legitimize the illusory self that is projected into the questions, and to prevent misunderstandings about the nature of the world, the self and the Tathāgata: “The reason for the Buddha’s not answering the undetermined questions, though, seem to be not *only* those of avoiding timewasting and not legitimating the Self-delusion built into the questions. There is also the issue of people misunderstanding the nature of the world etc.” (1995:84). The questions project the concept of a self into the concepts of world, soul or life-principle as Harvey translates *jīva*, and the Tathāgata. Since the concept of self is baseless, the questions cannot be answered, they are meaningless, they ask about the characteristics or the status of something non-existent: “Clearly, the questions are asked by those who projected the concept of Self onto the ideas of ‘world’, ‘life-principle’, and ‘Tathāgata.’ Their questions are about the nature of

‘Self’s world’, ‘Life-principle’s Self’ and ‘Tathāgata’s Self’, even though ‘Self’ is a baseless concept. As such, no answer can be given to the questions, just as an innocent man cannot answer either ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to ‘have you stopped beating your wife?’” (1995:84) The main misunderstanding that the ‘silence of the Buddha’ tries to avoid is the confusion of the world, the soul and the Tathāgata with a permanent self that is either eternally existent or annihilated at death (1995:239).

The XIV Dalai Lama (2002), following the standard scholastic presentations of Tibetan Buddhism, suggests that the Buddha remained silent before the ‘inexpressible views’ due to his skilful means. The Buddha taught different things about the self depending on the mental capacities of his disciples. Some disciples ‘were likely to go either to the extreme of eternity or to the extreme of annihilation if Buddha answered their questions in the positive or the negative’ (2002:54).

2. The silence of the Buddha is not about the undetermined questions

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as the silence of the Buddha regarding the undetermined questions. The undetermined questions are not inexpressible, unanswered or unanswerable. In fact, the Buddha answered them in very explicit ways and for more than one reason. The most common answer of the Buddha to the undetermined questions is that he does not hold the views contained in them. The answer of the Buddha ‘*na kho ahaṃ vaccha evaṃditthī*’ (M.N., I. 484), that is, ‘Vaccha, I do not hold the view or that view or such view’, depending on how one translates ‘*evaṃ*’, is quite eloquent and we do not see any justification to interpret it as silence, even in a metaphoric sense. The second answer of the Buddha to the ten questions is that he has left the views contained in them undetermined. Again, the Buddha’s response ‘*mayā avyākataṃ*’ (M.N., I, p. 431), which literally means ‘by me has been undetermined’, or in a more idiomatic translation ‘I have left undetermined’, is not in any sense a silent answer. Both answers are related: the Buddha left the views undetermined because he did not hold them. The answers make perfect sense for someone like the Buddha not holding those views. If the Buddha did not hold the ten views, then logically, when asked about them, he had to reply whether that he had nothing to declare or determine about them (I have left such and such a view undetermined), or that he did not hold them (I do not hold such and such a view). It is like someone who does not want to get involved in politics being asked whether his or her views are conservative or

liberal. Obviously, being neither a conservative nor a liberal, one cannot but answer 'I do not hold a conservative or liberal view' or 'I have nothing to declare about that conservative or liberal view.'

If it is true that there is not such a thing as the silence of the Buddha in relation to the undetermined questions, it would be more accurate to speak about the answers of the Buddha to these questions. What should be investigated is not why the Buddha kept silent before them but why he replied in the way he did. In other words, the question to be asked is why the Buddha did not hold views, or why he said that he leaves them undetermined or undeclared.

2.1 Pragmatic, affective and cognitive reasons for the answers of the Buddha.

The immediate and most common opinion among scholars is that the Buddha did not hold the ten views, or left them undetermined, for pragmatic reasons. In my view the pragmatic interpretation of the Buddha's answers to the undetermined questions is no doubt correct but, as we will see, insufficient. The two main classical sources for the pragmatic reasons of the Buddha's answers are the *Aggivačchagotta Sutta* and the *Cūlamālunkya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

In the *Aggivačchagotta Sutta*, after saying that he does not hold any of the ten views, the Buddha is asked by the wanderer Vacchagotta, or Vaccha, as he is called by the Buddha, what are the reasons, literally the danger (*ādinava*), for not taking up those views. The Buddha answers by describing each of the ten views as 'the thicket, wilderness, contortion, vacillation and fetter of views; something beset by suffering, vexation, despair, and fever; something not leading to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, and *Nibbāna*' (*M.N.*, I.485). It is evident that the Buddha did not hold the ten views because they did not lead to liberation from suffering, his main concern, and because he did not want to be entangled in useless speculations, disputations, and the suffering associated with all that.

In the *Cūlamālunkya Sutta*, the monk Mālunkyaṇḍita thinks that the Buddha left the ten views undetermined because he does not know and see enough, that is, because he is not really a Buddha or awakened one. He tells the Buddha that he will abandon the monastic order unless the Buddha determines or declares something about the ten views. The Buddha replies that he never told him 'lead the holy

life under me and I will determine to you' such and such view. Then, the Buddha compares Māluṅkyaputta's attitude with that of a man wounded by a poisoned arrow who wants to know irrelevant things as the condition for receiving treatment (*M.N.*, I.429-30). From the simile of the wounded man it is also evident that the Buddha did not hold the ten views because he did not consider them relevant for solving the more immediate and important problem of suffering. This is confirmed by the continuation of the text, where the Buddha says that whether the world is eternal or not, etc., the problem of suffering remains (*M.N.*, I.430). The pragmatic reasons for the Buddha's answers are even more explicitly stated in the continuation of the text, where the Buddha concludes his sermon to Māluṅkyaputta contrasting what he has left undetermined (the ten views) with what he has determined (the four noble truths: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation) (*M.N.*, I.431). In sum, the Buddha did not hold the ten views or left them undetermined because they were a useless distraction and a harmful obstruction for living the holy life and destroying suffering. They lead to confusion, passion, conflict and more suffering, not to knowledge, detachment, peace and liberation.

It is indisputable that the Buddha's answers to the undetermined questions are due to pragmatic reasons, but the Buddha had more reasons for not holding the ten views or leaving them undetermined. Even if one limits the investigation to the *Suttas* where the pragmatic reasons are more obvious, it is possible to infer the existence of more reasons than the pragmatic ones. For instance, in the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta*, just after explaining the dangers and the pragmatic reasons for not taking up any of the ten views, the wanderer Vacchagotta asks the Buddha whether or not he holds any view at all. The Buddha's answer suggests that there are also cognitive and affective reasons besides the pragmatic ones. When Buddha says that he has seen the five aggregates, their origin and their disappearance, he is clearly referring to cognitive reasons, that is, to the insight of dependent origination, which is equivalent to the elimination of ignorance. Similarly, when the Buddha says that he has relinquished all conceivings, all I-making, and all mine making, he is referring to wrong cognitions and the subsequent views that consider the aggregates in relation to the concept of self. These defective cognitions or views are technically called *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* or 'identity views'. The Buddha did not hold views because he did not have 'identity views', or as the text puts it, because he had put all views away. The Buddha was able to put all views away because he had a clear cognition of the real nature of the five aggregates, that is, knowledge of their origin and their disappearance.

When the Buddha says that he has destroyed the underlying tendency to conceit and that he is liberated through not clinging, he is referring to the affective reasons. The Buddha did not hold views because he had no attachment to the aggregates, not even the underlying tendency to conceit. The latent conceit 'I am' in relation to the aggregates is the least degree of attachment that a person may have, even if that person has no views about the self. The removal of the latent conceit 'I am' indicates that the Buddha not only has eliminated the gross attachment to the aggregates associated to the wrong cognitions called identity views, but also the subtlest manifestation of affection or clinging to the aggregates. The implication of this fragment of the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* is that for the Buddha, those who hold views have ignorance and attachment in relation to the aggregates. In other words, they have not seen or known the dependent origination and selflessness of the aggregates and attach to them; they consider them as 'I' and 'mine', or in relation to the concepts of 'self' and 'myself'; and they have the conceit 'I am' in relation to the aggregates, that is, they still cling to them. In sum, the reasons for the Buddha's answer are both cognitive (having seen the dependent origination and selflessness of the aggregates, not considering the aggregates as 'I' and 'mine', 'self' and 'myself'), and affective (not having clinging or attachment to the aggregates, not having the conceit 'I am' in relation to the aggregates).

The distinction between these two kinds of reasons, cognitive and affective, does not appear in former interpretations of the silence of the Buddha. The distinction, however, appears in the Pāli *Nikāyas*. In some occasions the texts speak of both kind of reasons, but in others just of affective reasons or cognitive reasons. For instance, a combination of both cognitive and affective reasons can be seen in *S.N.* (IV.388-9). There, a disciple of the Buddha says that those who delight and rejoice in the aggregates do not know and see their cessation, and hold the four views about the Tathāgata after death. On the contrary, those who do not delight and do not rejoice in the aggregates, know and see their cessation, and do not hold those views (*S.N.*, IV.388-389). The same fragment is repeated in the following paragraphs but replacing the word 'aggregates' by the words 'existence', 'clinging', and 'craving' (*S.N.*, IV.389-391).

An example of the affective reasons alone can be seen in *S.N.* (IV.387-8). There, the Buddha says that the four views about the Tathāgata after death are typical of those who have lust, desire, affection, thirst, passion and craving for the aggregates. Examples of cognitive reasons appearing alone are more frequent. For instance, in

S.N. (IV.386-7) it is said that the four views about the Tathāgata after death derive from not seeing the origin, the cessation and the way leading to the cessation of the five aggregates. The cognitive reasons appear also alone in *S.N.* (IV.287), where a disciple of the Buddha states that the ten views and all the other views, originate when there are identity views (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), and there are identity views when the aggregates are seen in relation to a self. Similarly, in *S.N.* (IV.393) the Buddha tells Vacchagotta that he answers the undetermined questions in the way he does because he considers the six senses as 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' On the contrary, the wanderers of other sects hold the ten views because they consider the six senses as something that they are, as something belonging to them or as their self. In *S.N.* (IV.394), the Buddha says to Vacchagotta that the wanderers of other sects hold any of the ten views because they consider the aggregates in relation to a self. On the contrary, the Buddha do not hold these views because he does not see the aggregates as self, or self as possessing the aggregates, or the aggregates as in self, or self as in the aggregates. In sum, the Buddha's answers are due not only to pragmatic reasons but also to cognitive reasons (he has seen the origin, the cessation and the way leading to the cessation of the five aggregates, he has no identity views and he does not consider the aggregates in relation to the concepts of 'I', 'mine', 'self' and 'myself'), and affective reasons (he has no clinging, lust, desire, affection, thirst, passion and craving for the aggregates, not even the conceit 'I am' in relation to them).

2.2 Philosophical reasons for the answers of the Buddha

Closely related to the cognitive reasons but not to be confused with them, there are also philosophical reasons for the Buddha's answers to the undetermined questions. They can be seen in *S.N.* (IV.400-1), where the Buddha is asked by Vacchagotta whether or not there is a self. The Buddha remains silent and only after Vacchagotta has left, he explains to Ānanda the reasons for his silence. The Buddha did not reply 'There is a self' to avoid the extreme of eternalism and because that would have not been consistent with the insight of non-self (*anattan*, Skt. *anātman*), here expressed as "the arising of the knowledge that 'all phenomena are nonself.' The Buddha did not reply 'There is no self' to avoid the extreme of annihilationists and because that would have created greater confusion to Vaccha, a believer in an ultimately existing self. This text is crucial for understanding the difference between the Buddhist teaching of non-self and the annihilationist negation of a

self. The text makes clear that the doctrine of non-self is not equivalent to the statement 'There is no self'. In other words, the teaching of non-self is not the opposite of the teaching of self, but a middle way between two extreme views of self. This point is very important because it explains why the Pāli *Suttas* use the word self (*attan*, Skt. *ātman*) numerous times, and why there is not a single text where the Buddha says explicitly 'There is no self'. The text also shows that the rejection of the annihilationist view does not entail the acceptance of the extreme of eternalism or the ultimate existence of a self ('There is a self'). If something can be inferred from this text, it is that the Buddhist teaching of selflessness is intended to transcend both extremes and therefore, it is closely related to the teaching of dependent origination as the middle way.

The text in *S.N.* (IV.400-1) is the only instance in the Pāli *Suttas* in which the Buddha answers silently to a question similar to the ten undetermined questions. In fact, this text is in the *Avyākatasamyutta*, the longest compilation of texts within the Pāli Canon dealing with the ten undetermined questions. But the reasons for this silent answer are immediately explained to Ānanda a little later. Thus, even in this case the answer of the Buddha is not silence but the explanation given to Ānanda. The explanation to Ānanda makes clear that the Buddha does not hold certain views or leaves them undetermined because they have ontological presuppositions incompatible with his teaching of dependent origination and his understanding of non-self. The ten views presuppose the belief in an ultimately real self, and they relate that concept of self to the concepts of world, soul, and Tathāgata. They are inconsistent with the middle way of dependent origination and non-self.

The first four questions seem to deal with cosmological issues (eternity or temporality of the world, infinity or finitude of the world), the next two with anthropological issues (identity or difference between body and soul), and the last four with eschatological issues (existence of the Tathāgata after death, non-existence, both existence and non-existence, or neither existence nor non-existence). However, the Buddha considers the ten views as manifestations of the identity views or views relating the aggregates to the concept of self. The views that seem to deal with cosmological questions, in fact, concern the psychological and cognitive world of living beings. That is, they are questions about the self in relation to the world. It should not be forgotten that the Pāli *Nikāyas* define the world and the end of the world in psychological terms *S.N.* (IV.39-40); an end that cannot be reached in a physical or spatial sense, but

only by making an end to suffering *S.N.* (IV.95). The relationship between the questions about the world and the concept of self can be seen in several Pāli texts. For instance in *M.N.* (II.233-4), the Buddha enumerates views that consider the self and the world as eternal, not eternal, both eternal and not eternal, neither eternal nor not eternal; finite, infinite, both finite and infinite, neither finite nor not finite, etc.⁶ According to those who hold the first and the fourth views, the self of the psychological world of beings is spatially and temporally infinite. On the contrary, for those who hold the second and third views, the self of one's own world is spatially and temporally finite.

The views that seem to deal with anthropological issues, in fact refer to the problem of transmigration and the transmission of suffering and happiness from one life to the next. The relationship between the questions about the soul and the concept of self can be seen in *S.N.* (II.61). There, the Buddha, while discussing the twelve factors of dependent origination, says that the question 'What now is aging-and-death, and for whom is there aging-and-death?', is inappropriate (*no kallo*) and equivalent to stating 'Aging-and-death is one thing, the one for whom there is this aging-and-death is another'. Then the Buddha relates both questions to the views 'The soul and the body are the same' and 'The soul is one thing, the body is another'. He says that with those views the holy life cannot be lived and that 'without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the *Dhamma* by the middle: 'With birth as condition, aging-and-death [arises].' So, for those who hold the fifth view, the soul transmigrating from body to body is always the same. The suffering or happiness transmitted from life to life as a consequence of one's actions is produced by a permanent soul. For those who hold the sixth view, the soul transmigrating from body to body is completely different each life, and the suffering or happiness transmitted was produced by a completely discontinuous soul.

The relationship between the questions about the Tathāgata after death and the concept of self can be inferred if we compare the texts relating the self to the aggregates with the texts relating the Tathāgata to the aggregates. For instance, we saw that according to *S.N.* (IV.287), the ten views arise when there are identity views, and there are identity views when the aggregates are regarded as self, or self as possessing the aggregates, or the aggregates as in self, or self

⁶ For more views relating the concepts of world and self, see also *M.N.*(I.136), *D.N.* (I.13f), *D.N.* (III.136-137).

as in the aggregates. Similarly, according to *S.N.* (III.112) it is wrong to describe the Tathāgata after death as annihilated because that view is like regarding the aggregates as the Tathāgata, the Tathāgata as in the aggregates, the Tathāgata as apart from the aggregates, the aggregates taken together as the Tathāgata, the Tathāgata as without the aggregates. Later in the same *sutta* it is also said that those who regard the aggregates as self, self as possessing the aggregates, the aggregates as in self, or self as in the aggregates, are uninstructed in the *Dhamma*, and they do not see as it really is the impermanent, painful, selfless and conditioned nature of the aggregates.

For those holding the seventh view, the Tathāgata is an immortal self-existing after death. For those holding the ninth view, the Tathāgata has a self with a double nature; he is partially mortal and partially immortal. For those holding the eighth view, he is a self-annihilated after death, and for those holding the tenth view he is a self-existing after death but in a very mysterious or subtle way.

In sum, the Buddha has philosophical reasons for his answers, namely, his understanding of dependent origination and non-self as a middle way between the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism. The ten questions presuppose extreme views of self, that is, views that imply whether the extreme of eternalism (*sassatavāda*) or the extreme of annihilationism (*ucchedavāda*). The annihilationist views presuppose that the self related to the world, the soul, and the Tathāgata disappear completely after death, and the eternalist views presuppose just the opposite, their eternal existence. To reply affirmative or negatively to these entailed the acceptance of such extreme views of self.

3. The silence of the Buddha is about *nibbāna* after death

There is another answer of the Buddha, but it is only given to the last four questions about the Tathāgata after death. For instance, in the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* the Buddha is asked by Vacchagotta whether a liberated mind after death reappears, or does not reappear, or both reappears and does not reappear, or neither appears nor does not reappear. The Buddha replies that the views do not apply (*na upeti*), and he illustrates this inapplicability with the famous simile of the extinguished flame.⁷ This difference between the answer to the

⁷ ‘When that fire before you was extinguished, to which direction did it go: to the east, the west, the north, or the south?’ –being asked thus, what would you answer?’ ‘That does not apply, Master Gotama. The fire burned in dependence on its fuel of grass and sticks. When that is used up, if it does not get any more fuel, being without fuel, it is

questions about the Tathāgata and the answers to other questions is, in my view, very significant.

Former interpreters have explained the silence of the Buddha to the ten questions as a whole, without paying enough attention to the special answer to the last four questions. The consequence is that they have extrapolated this special answer to all the other questions, and consider them equally unanswerable. As we have seen, according to Murti, Nagao, and Panikkar, the ten questions are unanswerable because they are related to some sort of transcendent absolute: the unconditioned, the ultimate reality of *Śūnyatā*, and God. According to Jayatilleke, Kalupahana, Smart, Collins and Harvey, the questions are unanswerable because they are logically meaningless, beyond our experience, wrongly put, ill formed.

I cannot agree with these interpretations for several reasons. First as I have contended, because the questions are answered in different ways. If the questions were unanswerable the Buddha would have kept silent or replied something like 'no answer can be given', 'I do not understand what you ask' or 'what you are asking is nonsense.' Instead of saying anything of that sort, the Buddha answered the questions in very clear and straightforward ways. The questions were not to be answered like other questions by giving a categorical answer, or by distinguishing, or by posing another question, but by setting them aside (*thapitāni*) or rejecting them (*paṭikkhitāni*). Saying that one does not hold certain views or that one has left them undetermined, are legitimate ways of answering, not expressions of silence before unanswerable questions. Second, I disagree with the interpretations of Murti, Nagao, and Panikkar because the questions are not related to any noumenic unconditioned (Murti), or transcendent *Śūnyatā* (Nagao), or apophatic God (Panikkar). Even if one admits that the questions about the Tathāgata are somehow questions about *nibbāna* understood as a kind of absolute reality, it is not the case that the Buddha is silent either about *nibbāna* or the Tathāgata. There are numerous Pāli *suttas* discussing *nibbāna* and the Tathāgata. Unless one concludes that the Pāli *Nikāyas* are inconsistent (some times keeping silence about *nibbāna* and the Tathāgata, other times speaking about them), this interpretation of the undetermined questions should be discarded. Third, I disagree with the interpretations of Jayatilleke, Kalupahana, Smart, Collins and Harvey because the questions are logically meaningful and linguistically well

reckoned as extinguished." (Ñānamoli and Bodhi 1995: 593) (*M.N.*, I.487).

formed. Otherwise the Buddha would not have answered them in the ways he did. The problem of the questions is not their defective logic or their improper usage of personal terms, but their philosophical assumptions and the mental state of the questioner. The questions derive from unwholesome mental states such as craving, attachment and ignorance. They presuppose views incompatible with Buddhist spirituality and philosophy, that is, extreme views of self. These extreme views lead to useless speculations, disputes and the perpetuation of attachment and ignorance. Furthermore, the views are inconsistent with the doctrines of dependent origination and non-self. The Buddha's answers are not the consequence of logic or linguistic reasons, but, as we have seen, of pragmatic, cognitive, affective and philosophical reasons.

It must be conceded, however, that in the case of the last four questions about the Tathāgata, and only in this case, there is a special answer of the Buddha due to apophatic reasons. After the simile of the extinguished flame, the Buddha explains that the last four questions do not apply because the Tathāgata has abandoned the aggregates by which one might describe him: he has cut them off at the root, made them like a palm stump, done away with them so that they are no longer subject to future arising; the Tathāgata is liberated from reckoning in terms of the aggregates, he is profound, immeasurable, unfathomable like the ocean.⁸ The reasons are clearly apophatic, as the comparison between the Tathāgata and the ocean suggests. Even though the apophatic reasons are related to the limits of logic and language, I do not think they are the result of the lack of logic or the meaninglessness of the questions. This interpretation of the Buddha as an Indian precursor of logical positivism or Oxford philosophy is anachronistic.

As it is explicitly stated in *D.N.*(II.68), the reasons of the Buddha for answering '*na upeti*' are related to the limits of designation, language, concepts, cyclic existence and understanding.⁹

⁸ *M.N.*(I.487-488). See also *S.N.*(IV.376-7,391,402).

⁹ "And if anyone were to say to a monk whose mind was thus freed: 'The *Tathāgata* exists after death', that would be [seen by him as] a wrong opinion and unfitting, likewise: 'The *Tathāgata* does not exist..., both exist and does not exist..., neither exist nor does not exist after death.' Why so? As far, Ānanda, as designation and the range of designation reaches, as far as language and the range of language reaches, as far as concepts and the range of concepts reaches, as far as understanding and the range of understanding reaches, as far as the cycle reaches and

From these apophatic reasons, it is possible to infer that the silence of the Buddha is about *nibbāna* after death. The special answer of the Buddha to the four questions about the Tathāgata after death is nothing but the consequence of this silence. If by definition the limits of designation, language, concepts, cyclic existence and understanding, are the five aggregates,¹⁰ once they are extinct without remainder, that is, once *nibbāna* without remainder is attained, nothing can be said. If it is true that after *nibbāna* without remainder nothing can be said, then it makes sense to say that the questions about the Tathāgata after death do not apply. Even when the aggregates are extinct with remainder, that is, even while the Tathāgata is alive, it does not apply to say that he exists, do not exist, both or neither *S.N.* (III.118-9; IV.384). At best, one can say that Tathāgata cannot be reckoned in terms of the aggregates, or that he is profound, immeasurable and unfathomable like the ocean. Similarly, I believe that speaking about the existence of *nibbāna* with remainder does not apply, but it is required to motivate the practitioner. However, once the aggregates are fully extinct (*nibbāna* without remainder), there are not more grounds for designation and it is utterly impossible to say anything. As *Sutta Nipāta* puts it “When all dharmas are removed, all ways of speech have also been removed.”¹¹

The silence about *nibbāna* after death is intertwined with the limits of designation, language, concepts, cyclic existence and understanding. They condition each other and I do not think it is possible to determine which one is first. If there were not limits of designation, etc., there would not be silence about *nibbāna* after death, and if there were not silence about *nibbāna* after death, there would be not limits of designation.

Much has been written about *nibbāna*,¹² but to my knowledge no one has ever argued that in the Pāli *Nikāyas* there is not a single text clearly referring to *nibbāna* after death. The few texts that seem to speak about *nibbāna* after death can be interpreted as referring to

revolves—that monk is liberated from all that by super-knowledge, and to maintain that such a liberated monk does not know and see would be a wrong view and incorrect.” (Walshe, 1987:228). (*D.N.*, II.68).

¹⁰ Literally mind and matter together with consciousness (*nāmarūpam saha viññāṇena*) (*D.N.*, II.63-64). See also (*D.N.*, II.68).

¹¹ *sabbesu dhammesu samūhatesu, samūhatā vādapathāpi sabbeti. Sutta Nipāta* (verse no. 1076).

¹² See for instance Welbon, 1968.

nibbāna at the moment of death, or as referring to the consciousness of a liberated one at the moment of his or her death. For instance, the distinction between *nibbāna* with remainder and *nibbāna* without remainder made in *Itivuttaka* (38-9) can be interpreted respectively as *nibbāna* at the moment of awakening or cessation of defilements (*kilesa parinibbāna*), and *nibbāna* at the moment of death or cessation of aggregates (*khandā*). Nothing suggests that *nibbāna* without remainder is referring to *nibbāna* after death.

Another text that is usually interpreted as a description of *nibbāna* after death is *Samyukta Nikāya*. There the Buddha sees the corpse of Godhika and a cloud nearby moving relentlessly. The Buddha says that the cloud is Māra, the evil one, trying to find where Godhika's consciousness has reappeared after death. The Buddha tells the monks that Godhika has attained *Parinibbāna* with an unestablished consciousness.¹³ I do not see any reason to interpret this text as referring to the experience of *nibbāna* after death, as Peter Harvey (1995:208-210) suggests. I believe that the text is referring to the state of Godhika's consciousness at the moment of his death. I concur with Bhikkhu Bodhi when he says that "When the monk is said to attain final *Nibbāna* with consciousness unestablished, this should not be understood to mean that after death consciousness survives in an 'unestablished' condition (a thesis argued by Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, pp.208-210); for enough texts make it plain that with the passing away of the arahant consciousness too ceases and no longer exists." (Bodhi, 2000: 421) Unestablished consciousness in this context can be interpreted as referring to a consciousness without foundation or support for reappearing within *samsāra* once again. A consciousness without any base for reestablishing itself in another samsaric realm is, therefore, ready to attain *nibbāna* without remainder.¹⁴ It is true that for Peter Harvey the unestablished consciousness experiencing *nibbāna* beyond death is non-self, but as long as he understands *nibbāna* beyond death as a permanent consciousness, his interpretation cannot avoid the extreme of eternalism. Similarly, when the Dalai Lama insinuates the eternal existence of liberated beings when he discusses the early Buddhist

¹³ *appatīḥitena ca bhikkhave viññānena godhiko kulaputto parinibbutoti. S.N., I.122.*

¹⁴ Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000: 421) refers to Buddhagosa to justify this interpretation: "when the commentator says 'because it was unestablished,' what is meant is that the cause for the nonestablishment of consciousness was precisely the cause for his *Parinibbāna*".

concept of *nirvāṇa* without remainder (Dalai Lama, 2002:27), he cannot avoid the extreme of eternalism. It is true that he considers the immortal aggregates as empty of inherent existence and non-self, but this is nothing but a more sophisticated form of eternalism. Just stating the non-self nature of the unestablished consciousness beyond death or the empty nature of the immortal uncontaminated aggregates is not enough.

If the difference between eternalist Buddhist and eternalist Hindu interpretations of early Buddhism is that for the Buddhists the consciousness of liberated beings after death is non-self or empty, whereas for the Hindus it is self and full, one has to conclude that the difference between them is mainly nominal. The true transcendent self that Hindu interpreters see in the Tathāgata of the Pāli *Nikāyas*, and the non-self unestablished consciousness of Harvey or the Dalai Lama's uncontaminated immortal aggregates, are equally transcendent, free from ignorance, the conceit 'I am', and attachment to the concepts of 'I' and 'mine.' If it is true that the Buddha of the Pāli *Nikāyas* wanted to avoid both extremes by teaching the middle way, I do not think one should interpret texts about Tathāgatas or their consciousness as proving their eternal existence.¹⁵ Similarly, I do not think one should interpret the early concept of *nirvāṇa* without remainder as implying the eternal empty existence of liberated minds; even less insinuating that the early disciples were not mature enough to understand teachings about the immortal uncontaminated aggregates without falling into either eternalism or annihilationism.¹⁶

Avoiding annihilationism by falling into sophisticated forms of eternalism is not the only possible solution. In order to do justice to the middle way of the Pāli *Nikāyas* one has to avoid even in the subtle manifestations of eternalism. I believe that the two extremes

¹⁵ Peter Harvey (1995:243) concludes his study of the Tathāgata by saying that "Beyond death, a Tathāgata exists in the form of nibbānic discernment [consciousness]: objectless, unsupported, non-manifestative, stopped, unborn, deathless, infinite, radiant, and blissful.

¹⁶ This interpretation of the Dalai Lama (2002:54) seems to me an anachronistic attempt to legitimize a Mahāyāna interpretation of liberated beings. It not only underestimates the intelligence of the early disciples but also overlook the fact that already in the Pāli *Nikāyas* the doctrine of dependent arising is understood as the middle way between the two extremes of eternalism and annihilationism. Not surprisingly, Nāgārjuna quotes the *Katyāyāna Sūtra* in *MMK*, XV.7 to justify his understanding of the middle way.

can be avoided by interpreting the silence of the Buddha in a new way, namely, as silence about *nibbāna* after death and, consequently, about the Tathāgata after death.

It might be objected that the Pāli *Nikāyas* are not silent about *nibbāna* or the Tathāgata after death, because the comparison between the Tathāgata and the extinguished flame suggests that the Tathāgata after death exists in an ineffable and transcendent state of *nibbāna*. The precursor of this interpretation was O. Schrader, who claimed in 1905 that an extinct fire in ancient India was believed to return to its pure and original state, in other words, the fire, like the Tathāgata, did not cease to exist but rather continued to exist eternally in the pure and original state of *nibbāna*. This view has influenced scholars of the Pāli *Nikāyas* such as R. Johansson (1969:58-59), and more recently P. Harvey (1995:156-7, 228). However, Steven Collins has shown that the Buddhist understanding of an extinct fire cannot be interpreted as implying its subtle existence. As Collins (1998:219-220) rightly says “In the majority of uses of fire-imagery in Buddhist texts the fires which go out or go down like the sun, are – like the three fires of Greed, Hatred and Delusion- precisely what must be *wholly* eliminated for release to be possible. If the fires simply returned to their ‘primitive, pure, invisible’ state, then according to Buddhist logic and psychology, their invisible existence and potential reappearance would make release impossible”. I fully agree with Collins in this point and I do not see any reason to infer the subtle existence of the Tathāgata after death from the simile of the extinguished flame.

The question now is: does the Buddhist understanding of the extinguished flame implies the non-existence of Tathāgata after death? Does the rejection of eternalism, even in their subtle forms, imply the acceptance of annihilationism? In other words, was the Buddha of the Pāli *Nikāyas* either an eternalist or a nihilist? Since the Buddha is quite explicit in his rejection of annihilationism in *M.N.* (I.140), it is very tempting to conclude that he has to accept somehow the eternal reality of the Tathāgata. Eternalist interpreters influenced by Hinduism tend to argue that otherwise liberation would not make sense and the whole Buddhist soteriological system would collapse (Pérez-Remón, 1980; Bhattacharya, 1973). Since the Buddha speaks about the ineffability and transcendence of the Tathāgata’s consciousness in several texts, it is also tempting to extrapolate this transcendence beyond death. However, in my view, these eternalist argumentations do not take seriously enough the silence of the Buddha and the way the Pāli *Nikāyas* avoid the two extremes.

In *M.N.* (I.140) the Buddha avoids annihilationism by saying that 'formerly and now what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering.' Similarly, in *S.N.* (III.112) Sāriputta avoids annihilationism by saying that the five aggregates are suffering and that they cease and pass away. Nothing suggests in these two texts that for the Buddha of the Pāli *Nikāyas*, the liberated being after death exists in a subtle way beyond the categories of logic. In fact, this view is explicitly rejected in *S.N.* (III.118-9) and *S.N.* (IV.384). There, the disciple Anurādha insinuates that the Tathāgata beyond death in a mysterious fifth state apart from the four logical possibilities of existence, non-existence, both or neither. The Buddha explains how to consider the Tathāgata in relation to the aggregates, and he concludes by saying that he makes known 'just suffering and the cessation of suffering.'

From this limitation of the Buddha's teaching to suffering and its cessation, it is also possible to infer that the silence of the Buddha is about *nibbāna* after death. If by definition the Buddha limits himself to teach suffering and its cessation, then it is logical to expect silence about what happens after the cessation of that suffering. This silence, however, must be relative, for soteriological purposes, after the cessation of defilements at the moment of awakening, but it is absolute after the cessation of aggregates or *nibbāna* without remainder. Similarly, it seems logical to expect silence about what happens before suffering. In fact, the Pāli *Nikāyas* do not say anything about a state prior to *samsāra*. Perhaps the answers to the questions about the finitude or infinitude of the universe could be interpreted as the consequence of the limits of his teachings, but this is not our concern here. Our concern here is the nature of the silence of the Buddha and its relation to the limits of his teachings.

The silence of the Buddha and the limits of his teachings are intertwined. The best way to understand their relationship is in terms of mutual conditionality. If there were no silence, there would not be limits, and if there were no limits, there would not be silence. The limits of the teaching, the limits of designation, etc., and the silence of the Buddha are all interrelated: the limits of the Buddha's teachings seem to be the same as the limits of designation, etc., namely, suffering and its cessation; and the silence of the Buddha 'starts' right where those limits end. Teaching or speaking about what happens after cessation is an attempt to go beyond those limits and that silence. That is precisely what the questions about the Tathāgata after death try to do. Anything one says or teaches about the Tathāgata after death does not apply, at least within the limits of the

Buddha's teaching and the limits of designation within it. The dilemma either eternalist or nihilist is another attempt to transgress the limits and go beyond the silence of the Buddha. In my view, this dilemma is precisely what the Buddha of the Pāli *Nikāyas* tries to avoid with his silence about *nibbāna* after death, the limits of his teachings and the limits he sets for designation, language, concepts, cyclic existence and understanding. The answers of the Buddha to the undetermined questions about the Tathāgata are the natural consequence of his silence about *nibbāna* after death and the limits he puts to language and his teachings. If we want to do justice to the middle way of the Pāli *Nikāyas*, I believe it is extremely important to respect the silence of the Buddha, the limits of his teachings and the limits of designation according to them. Otherwise we would do what Collins has described as "filling Buddhist silences" with our personal hermeneutic agenda.

Abbreviations

- D.N.* = *Dīgha Nikāya* (PTS edition)
M.N. = *Majjhima Nikāya* (PTS edition)
MMK = *Mūla Madhyamaka Kārikā*
S.N. = *Saṃyukta Nikāya* (PTS edition)

Bibliography

- Bhattacharya, K., 1973. *L'Ātman-Brahman dans le Bouddhisme Ancien*. Paris: EFEO.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu and Ñānamoli, Bhikkhu, 1995. *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Bodhi, Bhikkhu, 2000. *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Collins, S., 1982. *Selfless Persons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Collins, S., 1998. *Nirvana and other Buddhist Felicities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalai Lama, 2002. *The Buddhism of Tibet*, Ithaca: Snow Lion. Originally published in London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975.
- Harvey, P., 1995. *Selfless Mind*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press.

- Jayatilke, K.N., 1963. *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- Johansson, R., 1969. *The Psychology of Nirvāṇa*. London: Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Kalupahana, D.J., 1976. *Buddhist Philosophy. A Historical Analysis*. Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i.
- Murti, T.R.V., 1955. *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Nagao, G.M., 1955. "The Silence of the Buddha and its Madhyamic Interpretation," trans. Y. Fujitani in *Studies in Indology and Buddhology*. (Presented in Honour of Professor Susumu Yamaguchi on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday.) ed. Gadjin. M. Nagao, and J. Nozawa. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1955. pp. 137-151. Published again in *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*. Albany: SUNY, 1991. pp. 35-49.
- Organ, T. W., 1954. "The Silence of the Buddha." In *Philosophy East and West*. Ed. Roger T. Ames. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i. Issue 4:2. pp. 125-140.
- Panikkar, R., 1970. *The Silence of God: the Answer of the Buddha*. New York: Orbis book, 1989. Originally published in Spanish. *El silencio de Dios: la respuesta del Buddha*. Madrid: Guadarrama, 1970. The English translation is from the Italian translation of the Spanish original. There is a second revised Spanish edition. *El silencio del Buddha*. Madrid: Siruela, 1996.
- Pérez-Remón, J., 1980. *Self and Non-Self in Early Buddhism*. New York: Mouton.
- Smart, N., 1964. *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Tilakaratne, A., 1993. *Nirvāṇa and Ineffability*. Colombo: Karunaratne & Sons.
- Walshe, M., 1987. *Thus Have I Heard. The Long Discourses of the Buddha*. London: Wisdom Publications.
- Welbon, G., 1968. *The Buddhist Nirvāṇa and its Western Interpreters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.