答案無疑是引喻失義、不得其要。復次。如果發問者認爲在此一靈魂的影響之下，世界才會生滅變化、起落消長，則任何的答案都是不適當的。------如果世界是永恒的，則吾人永遠處於現在的狀態，永無解脫之日；如果是非永恒的，則世界將自然的趨於滅絕、虛無。

相同的理由，佛陀也沒有說明世界在空間上是有限還是無限的。

犢子部又問：那麼佛陀何以沒有說明如來死後還存在與否的問題呢？

世親答道：如果考慮到發問者內心的動向，則這問題絕不是三言兩語即可交待清楚。發問者內心已經假定所謂的「佛陀」——覺悟者，意謂著有一超絕的靈魂從生死輪迴的繫縛中解脫，而事實上根本沒有這回事，所以實在無法回答肉體死亡以後它是否還存在。(註六)

由上引俱舍論，吾人可知：阿毘達磨學者無記的眞正答案，相當於佛陀對靈魂、世界的看法，亦即是：「靈魂」不過是對某一狀態的描述，根本沒有一個與「靈魂」相應的事物存在。(就好像龜毛兔角一樣，雖然有此一名詞，實際上却沒有龜毛兔角)。可是愚意以爲：佛陀把每一種「理論」都看成是一種有所見的教條(有所見即有所不見)。其次，阿毘達磨學者的詮解把本質上是理性衝突的無記問題，轉變成語言表達的困難，這似乎沒有抓住問題的重心。

不過，這種詮解對中觀學者的解釋——佛陀的眞正本懷還是有所啓發的。

(下期續完)

世親答道：因爲佛陀考慮到發問者內心的動向。如果佛陀說「我」不存在，則發問者可能認爲吾人的生命連續也是虛無的，則他會落入虛無主義。

犢子部又問：爲什麼佛陀說「我」僅是無常相續的生命和合體的約定俗成性用語？

世親答道：因爲發問者無法把握「五蘊」理論的眞義。------佛陀這種因材施教的方法，可以下例爲證：有一次遊方僧瓦恰問佛陀某些問題（詳見下述），而佛陀却以「沉默」答之，這使佛陀的侍者阿難感到疑惑不解，佛陀乃對阿難說明他何以會沉默。對此，鳩摩羅多曾說：佛陀以極爲謹愼的態度來說明關於五蘊的教理。這就好像母獅銜子一樣（不能太緊，否則會傷及幼獅；不能太鬆，否則會掉下)(註五)佛陀一方面看出教條主義的弊端（相信永恒論），另一方面又瞭解虛無主義會抹殺人類道德勇氣，墮落而不肯爲自己的行爲負責，如此則人類的善良道德將蕩然無存。鳩摩羅多接著說：既然「我」是不存在的，所以佛陀沒有說明它與肉體是同一還是別異。可是佛陀也沒有直接說「我」不存在，因爲佛陀恐怕吾人會誤解他的話，而把經驗的現實假我（指我們現實的存在）也認爲是不存在的。

犢子部又問：何以佛陀沒有解答世界在時間上是否爲永恒的問題呢？

世親答道：其理相同！佛陀考慮到發問者的內心動向。首先，發問者可能會認爲「宇宙的靈魂」（指世界的第一因）就是世界，但佛陀根本不承認有此種靈魂存在，所以諸如它是永恒的、非永恒的、亦永恒亦非永恒的------等

批判，這部論典代表着部派佛教（即阿毘達磨佛教）思想的顛峯。

問題可以分爲四種：

1. 可以直接回答的問題
2. 在回答之前必須先加以分析的多重性問題。
3. 以反問回答的問題。
4. 根本無法回答的問題。

對於這四種方式，俱舍論加以一一論列，而十四無記即是屬於最後一種——無法回答的。

犢子部雖然也是佛教的宗派之一，但它的見解却與佛陀的教法有一些差距。犢子部的「不即蘊我不離蘊我」即是世親菩薩在俱舍論中批判的對象。在論證的過程中，我們即可看出世親菩薩自己的看法。

關於「不即蘊我不離蘊我」是否存在，犢子部問道：

如果有情生命的個體即是構成生命的五蘊，那麼佛陀爲什麼不明白的提出「我」（即是靈魂，亦是指第二節所列之命與身一、命與身異中的命）與身體是同一還是別異呢？

世親答道：因爲佛陀考慮到發問者內心的動向。發問者問到是否有一能控制吾人行爲的實在個體—即「我」是否存在，但是「我」絕不可能存在，佛陀如何能判斷「我」是與肉體同一還是別異呢？這就好像有人問龜毛兎角是硬是軟一樣的可笑。許多古代的先賢對此已經有所分析了。

犢子部又問道：那麼何以佛陀不直接說「我」不存在呢？

度來解決它，佛法的辯證思想於焉誕生。在西洋哲學思想尚未有與此一方式相埒者出現之前，佛陀便已提出此一辯證法。愚意以爲：就純哲學而言，佛陀已經達到很高的哲學心智的層次，而且他確實已經告訴我們對無記問題的答案——而且可能是「經驗之批判」唯一的答案。事實上，如果佛陀提出一「是」或「不是」的答案，無疑他將會陷入與他一再駁斥者相同的誤謬。在「永恆論」（即佛典所謂的常見論）與「虛無論」（即佛典所謂的斷見論）的對立之外，佛陀提出了另一更基本的對立——獨斷的教條主義與批判主義的對立。（永恆論與虛無論都是屬於獨斷的教條主義，而批判主義即是分析、反省教條主義的心智）。批判主義即是將人類的心理從所有的執着與煩惱中解脫出來，而它即是解脫的本身。這正是中觀的眞義。下面筆者擬引述一些經典並加以討論，以證成此一主義。不過筆者認爲我們先看看阿毘達磨學者（指「有部」與「經量部」的詮解，或許有助於我們瞭解無記的問題。

IV阿毘達磨學者對無記的詮解

阿毘達磨佛教可說是一種「半批判主義學派」。它否認有一常恆不變的「眞我」（即前文所指的靈魂），而認爲「眞我」乃是在經驗界中一個約定俗成的名詞。但是由於他們對佛陀所開示的「蘊」、「處」、「界」(註三)的思想瞭解不夠深刻，所以他們本身也提出一種「思辯形上學」—「法」的理論。世親菩薩在其名著「阿毘達磨俱舍論」(註四)的篇尾對「無記」的討論，主要係着眼於它跟靈魂的關係，他的詮解可說是一代宗師的高見。他是經量部的學者，却深受有部的影響，俱舍論即是他對有部思想的整理與

驗屬性的絕對存在，而把如來形容爲「最上性」是說如來爲離現象之外的存在。而它的反命題就是否認有此一類實體的存在，反命題即是把形上學所討論的「實在」限定在經驗界—感覺經驗中討論，這種見解將會產生實證主義或虛無主義。

這些問題是三方面的，而我們的興趣主要是在所知的物，能知的主，以及二者的統一。當然，還有其他更多的次級問題，及有關這三個問題的其他層面。

III 佛陀如何解答無記問題

從這些問題的正反命題相互背反，即可明顯的看出理性的衝突。而佛陀宣稱這些問題無法解答，即意味着佛陀瞭解這些問題並非就一般經驗的層次而論，同時這些問題無法訴諸經驗事實來解決。當理性試圖超越現象界以追求終極實體時，便使其自身陷入糾纏不清的衝突。以理性爲基礎建立的「思辯形上學」之間，不僅見解有所不同，甚至彼此對立；如一方說「是」（正命題），另一方則答以「非」（反命題），針鋒相對，互不相讓。從佛陀與弟子間的對話中，我們可以看出佛陀對這些正反意見瞭解頗深，特別是在佛典中常提及所謂的「六師外道」。註二而這正是六種對無記問題的典型見解。在巴利文『長部』「梵網經」開頭的一段對話，便是在說明佛陀對此問題的看法。佛陀把所有基於理性思辯而構成的理論，概稱之爲獨斷的教條主義，而這些不同的教條主義皆自稱能瞭解現象的本來面目，但却又彼此對立，孰是孰非，難以爲斷。佛陀很清楚的看出這些衝突的本質，所以用超越的反省，批判的態

元乃是超越吾人經驗以外，是無法認知的。尅實以言之，如果吾人能瞭解關於「經驗世界」之存在是永恆或無常變化之問題的變項，吾人才能正確的抓住問題的方向。因爲就是「永恆論者」也並不否認我們所認識的世界不斷的在變，事實上他們也無法否認這一點。永恆論者所要肯定的是在無常變化的經驗世界以外有一超越、永恆的本體。而此一命題的反命題就是否認有一此種本體的存在。愚意以爲：從哲學史的發展來看，佛陀之前，必然已經有數論派的「自性」的正命題與唯物主義所提出的反命題。

最後一類是討論自我或靈魂的問題，它的正命題即是在追求個體內在主觀的終極實體。如果靈魂與肉體是不同的存在，則靈魂即是離肉體與心理活動的絕對、無爲的存在。根據此一對靈魂的觀念，則靈魂與廣義的唯心論所謂的「意識」一樣，是一個別的實體；與直覺的悟性的「單純」一樣；靈魂的不死乃是由於它是渾然天成，不是和合而成的；靈魂的自主自在也是理所當然。當然，討論所謂的靈魂，並不是在指稱會生死變化的我們平常所經驗的個體，而是在討論終極本質與作爲超越性個體的靈魂的存在狀態。這種靈魂的觀念就是數論派所謂的「神我」（精神原理），佛陀在說明靈魂問題時，即是把「神我」作爲正命題。而此一正命題的反命題就是否認上述有關靈魂的種種，而認爲靈魂與肉體是同一的。

關於「如來」的問題，事實上它牽涉到靈魂的問題與覺悟以後的境界。一般均認爲如來—完美的人，覺悟者是宇宙的終極最後本質，他的地位就好像理性神學中所謂的「天主」。而此一類問題的正命題就是接受如來爲超越經

C如來死後
1. 還繼續存在？
2. 不存在？
3. 亦存在亦不存在？
4. 非存在非不存在？

D命（即靈魂）與身（即肉體）是
1. 同一？
2. 別異？

把事物分成四個「變項」就是佛學上所謂的「四句分別」。亦即是對事物的：

1. 肯定
2. 否定
3. 亦肯定亦否定
4. 非肯定非否定

肯定就是辯證法上的正命題；否定就是反命題；亦肯定亦否定就是前二者的折衷，非肯定非否定即是正反命題都不承認。無記的問題與康德著名的「二律背反」，或中觀學派的「八不」極爲相似。著者以爲到底有多少問題或這些問題的次序如何並不重要，重要的是：無記問題的本質，與如何來表達無記問題的核心。A、B兩大類是討論世界起源、「存續」及其範圍，這是宇宙論的兩大主要問題。人類的理性不斷的追問事物的究竟本元，要打破沙鍋問到底，這就是想發現如印度六大哲學學派之一的數論派所提到的「自性」（物質原理）之類的「超越性實體」——現象界背後的本體與萬物所由生的無限存在。理性宇宙論的目的乃是在透過理性的「回溯推理」（即由結果推到原因），而發現經驗以外的本元。事實上，這種方法本身即有瑕疵，有牽强附會之嫌，而康德更明白的指出：事物之本

「吾人可以肯定的說：佛教絕不是虛無論者。這部經就排斥虛無論的見解，如果認爲從佛教的見解，吾人何以作成佛教是虛無論的主張，則這僅意味着對佛法的認識不夠。其實無記問題的重心，是佛家哲學對無記所作的結論是什麼？如何才是無記的合理解答？佛家絕不可能把涅槃當作是一種「業有」——通常的存在形態，因爲涅槃並非感官所能知覺的，同時佛家也不認爲是不存在的。佛教認爲涅槃乃是一種既不能肯定它存在，也不能肯定它不存在的境界。」

如果吾人能以最大的虛心，深入佛家討論無記問題的文獻，明其是非，較其不同，則合理的解答並非是不可能的。

II 無記本質上的特徵——二律背反

雖然無記的解說各家不同，但一般皆同意無記共有十四個問題。事實上，這十四個問題可分爲四大類，其中三大類各有四個不同的問題，而最後一類有關靈魂的則僅有二個問題，至於爲何它會僅有兩個問題，吾人無法明其究竟。十四無記是：

A 世界在時間上是
- 1. 無限的？
- 2. 有限的？
- 3. 亦無限亦有限？
- 4. 非有限非無限？

B 世界在空間上是
- 1. 有限的？
- 2. 無限的？
- 3. 亦有限亦無限？
- 4. 非有限非無限？

I 有關「無記」的解說

某些東方的學者認爲佛陀之所以拒絕回答無記的問題，而保持他那著名的沉默，無非是因爲佛陀對形上學的無知，或者可以是說佛陀對這些問題沒有興趣，因爲佛陀是位有名的修行者，以重行持見稱於世。持這種見解的有力根據源於巴利文藏經『中部』第六十三經「箭喻經」。這部經的大意是說：「釋尊把追求形上問題的人比喻爲一被箭所傷的人，而在沒有診治之前，此人却急於知道他是被何種箭所傷；行兇者來自何處；目的何在等一連串的問題。但在尚未得到滿意的答覆之前，此人必死無疑。」這個寓言在說明形上學的論究是沒有必要的，甚且對精神生活有害無益。不過有的學者從另一個方向思考，而認爲佛陀是位不可知論者，雖然佛陀的思想在根本上不是很明顯的不可知論，但把佛陀這種態度解爲不可知論，却頗合於佛陀的教學思想與道德戒律。著名的佛學者歐登堡便是基於此一假設，而主張：「無記問題是可以不必回答的，而事實上也不能回答。」歐登堡也曾作過一些否定的，斷滅性的解說，如說：「佛陀乃是以規避回答『自我』是否存在的問題，來闡釋佛教的前提——『自我』是不存在的、換句說話，涅槃即寂靜。」

上述三種解說—實踐論者、不可知論者與斷滅論者，可說是誤解佛法的典型代表，這些解說都違背了佛陀的教說與佛家哲學。任何生活方式皆免不了隱喻着一種哲學，一種對終極本體的評估。人類的心靈絕不甘於處在永恆的懸宕不決。關於佛陀是否爲一虛無論者，湯姆士博士提出了最妥切的答覆：

佛陀的沉默(上)

——形上學的反省

穆　帝　原著
郭忠生　譯中

編者按：本文譯自穆帝所著「佛教根本哲學」第二章。

前言

佛陀認爲有些形上學的問題，是無法予以回答的。要正確的把握中觀思想，愚意以爲佛陀對這些問題所表現的沉默，實有重估的必要。其實中觀思想佛陀早有論及，但並不怎麼明顯，中觀學派不過把這「隱藏的哲學」加以系統的整理與解說而已。

無記的問題，在釋尊和弟子的對話之間，常有論及。後人把這些相類似的問題歸納成所謂的「十四無記」。(註一)

. . . If eternal, there is no hope of final release; if non-eternal, the world-process would break of its own accord.

For the same reason, Buddha did not solve the four questions regarding the end of the Universe."

Vātsīputrīya—"And why was the question about the existence of a Buddha after death refused an answer?"

Vasubandhu—"A simple answer was not possible, taking into consideration the intention of the questioner. The latter in asking his question was surmising that the term Buddha denoted the (absolute) soul liberated from all bonds of transient existence. Since the existence of such a soul was not admitted, it was impossible to answer whether it did or did not exist after the death of the body."[18]

The realist solution of the avyākrta amounts to this that Buddha himself advocated a *view* of the soul, of the world of things etc. The view is that the soul is but a name for the states; there is nothing unitary or identical corresponding to the name. But all our accounts are unanimous in declaring that the Tathāgata characterised all views as things of dogmatic speculation (ditthigatānimāni) and did not entertain any view himself. Secondly, the Ābhidharmika solution reduces a conflict of reason to a difficulty of verbal formulation—one that would give least offence to the weak-minded. The interpretation is, however, valuable as paving the way for the Mādhyamika standpoint which is the real heart of Buddhism.

(To be Continued)

his doctrine concerning the elements of existence (with the greatest caution) like a tigress who holds her young by her teeth, (her grasp is not too tight in order not to hurt him; nor is it too loose in order not to let him fall). Buddha saw the wounds produced by the sharp teeth of the dogmatic (belief in eternity) on the one hand and by the downfall of (every responsibility for one's) actions on the other. If humanity accepted the idea of an existing soul, it lay down wounded by the sharp weapon of dogmatism. But if it did cease to believe in the existence of a conditioned self, then the tender child of its moral merit would perish![17] The same author goes on and says: 'Since the living being does not exist, the Lord did not declare that it is different from the body. Nor did he declare that it did not exist, fearing that it could be understood as a denial of the empirical self.'

Vātsīputrīya—"And why did Buddha not settle the questions about the Eternity of the world etc.?"

Vasubandhu—"For the same reason! He took into consideration the intention of the questioner. First of all the latter would have meant the (Universal) Soul to be the world. But then as for Buddha no (such) soul did altogether exist, every answer such as: it is eternal, it is not eternal, it is partly eternal and partly non-eternal . . . would have been out of place. If again the questioner would have meant under the Universe the appearing and disappearing of all (its elements), every answer would have been out of place,

Vasubandhu—Because he took into consideration the intention of the questioner. The latter asked about the existence of the soul as a real living unit, controlling our actions from within. But as such a Soul is absolutely non-existing, how could Buddha have decided whether it did or did not differ from the body. Fancy someone asking: 'are the hair of the tortoise hard or smooth?' This question has already been analysed by quite ancient teachers.[15]

Vātsīputrīya—And why did not the Lord declare that it does not exist at all?[16]

Vasubandhu—Because he took into consideration the questioner's state of mind. The latter could have understood that the living being (jīva) is the same as the continuity of elements of a life (and that this continuity) is also denied. He thus would have fallen into a wrong doctrine, (the Doctrine of Nihilism).

Vātsīputrīya—Why then did not Buddha declare that the 'living being' is a conventional name for a set of constantly changing elements?

Vasubandhu—Because his interlocutor was not capable of grasping the theory of elements. . . . This (method of teaching in conformity with the mental capacity of the taught) can be clearly seen in the express words of Buddha to Ānanda, when he had answered by silence Vatsagotra and the latter had departed. . . . This point has been explained by Kumāralābha thus: 'The Buddha was pleased to construct

an imperfect understanding of the utterances of Buddha about the skandha, dhātu and āyatana. Vasubandhu discusses the avyākrta principally with regard to the soul in the concluding portion of his *Abhidharma Kośa.*[12] Coming from an ācārya (teacher), one of the greatest of all times, his interpretation bears the impress of a master-mind. Himself a Sautrāntika, he has summed up the Vaibhāsika view. It represents the highest level to which the earlier Buddhism could attain.

Questions are of four kinds: those that can be answered directly, multiple questions that require analysis before answer, those that are answered by counter-question and lastly those that cannot be answered at all (sthāpanıya). The *Abhidharma Kośa* enumerates and explains these.[13] The fourteen avyākrta belong to the last class—sthāpanīya.

The Vātsīputrīya heresy of a quasi-eternal soul (pudgalātman) that cannot be defined as either identical with the states (skandhas) or different from them is the target of Vasubandhu's criticism. His own interpretation emerges through this polemic against the pudgalātmavāda.

The existence of the soul as something identical with or different from the body is denied. The Vātsīputrīya asks:

If the individual represents exactly the elements he is composed of and nothing else, why then did the Lord decline to decide the question, whether the living being is identical with the body or not.[14]

to it was formulated in the West. We contend that Buddha reached a very high level of philosophic consciousness, and he did give an answer to the problem—the only answer possible for a critic of experience. Had he resiled from this position and given a 'yes' or a 'no' answer, he would have been guilty of that very dogmatism (diṭṭhi) which he so consistently condemned in others. On the opposition of the eternalist and nihilist views (śāśvatavāda and uccheda-vāda), Buddha erected another and more fundamental opposition—that between dogmatism (both śāśvata and ucchedavādas are species of dogmatism) and criticism which is the analytic or reflective awareness of them *as* dogmatic theories. Criticism is deliverance of the human mind from all entanglements and passions. It is freedom itself. This is the true Mādhyamika standpoint. We shall enforce this contention by citations from texts and by arguments. Before we do so, we might profitably consider the Ābhidharmika (Vaibhāsika-Sautrāntika) interpretation of the avyākrta.

IV. THE ĀBHIDHARMIKA INTERPRETATION OF THE AVYĀKRTA

The Ābhidharmika system is a semi-critical school. It rejected the unchanging identical soul (ātman), declaring it to be a name having conventional meaning in the context of the empirical. It, however, constructed a system of speculative metaphysics—a theory of Elements (dharmas), based on

concerning the object, the knowing subject and the unity of both. There may, however, be many secondary questions and even questions about the other aspects of these three.

III. BUDDHA'S SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

The formulation of the problems in the thesis-antithesis form is itself evidence of the awareness of the conflict in Reason. That the conflict is not on the empirical level and so not capable of being settled by appeal to facts is realised by Buddha when he declares them insoluble. Reason involves itself in deep and interminable conflict when it tries to go beyond phenomena to seek their ultimate ground. Speculative metaphysics provokes not only difference but also opposition; if one theorist says 'yes' to a question, the other says 'no' to the same. We know from the dialogues that Buddha was acquainted with the different speculations, especially of the six tithiyas (heretics). The opening dialogue of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (the *Brahmajāla Sutta*) indicates the standpoint of Buddha. He characterises all speculations as ditthi-vāda (dogmatism) and consistently refuses to be drawn into the net (jāla). He is conscious of the interminable nature of the conflict, and resolves it by rising to the higher standpoint of criticism. Dialectic was born. To Buddha, then, belongs the honour of having discovered the dialectic long before anything approximating

mortality as not being composite and its freedom follow as natural consequences. The question is not about the empirical individual who is perceptibly subject to the vicissitudes of birth and death, but about the ultimate essence and separate existence of the soul as a transcendent entity.[10] Such a conception of the soul was advocated in the Sāṅkhya doctrine of puruṣa. Buddha might have had this in view as illustrative of the thesis. The antithesis (sa jīvas tac charīram) denies every one of the above implications of the thesis by identifying the soul with the body (upādāna in general). This is the materialist view of Ajita Keśakambalin and others.

The question regarding the Tathāgata is in fact about the ultimate ground of both the soul and objects[11]—about the unconditioned in general. The Tathāgata as the Perfect Man (uttama puriso parama puriso. *Sam. N* IV, p. 380) is the ultimate essence of the universe. His position is analogous to that of God of Rational Theology (*ens realissimum*). The thesis accepts the absolute existence of the Tathāgata free from his empirical adjuncts. The phrase param maranāt—really means existence apart from relation to phenomena. The antithesis denies the existence of any such reality. The implication of this would be the confining of the real to be empirical—the sense-experience. This amounts to Positivism and Nihilism.

The questions are threefold, as our interests are mainly

cendent substance like the Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya, the primordial ground of phenomena, an infinite all-pervasive cause capable of producing all things. The aim in the cosmological speculations (Rational Cosmology) is to reach the unconditioned ground of empirical objects by means of a regressive chain of reasoning (i.e. arguing from effect to cause) stretched illegitimately, as Kant points out, beyond the possibility of experience. We will not get the correct orientation to this and other questions, if we understood the alternatives (śāśvato'yam lokah etc.) as referring to the permanence and impermanence of the empirical world. For, the Eternalist does not and cannot deny empirical change. What he does affirm is that there is an eternal transcendent ground of these changing phenomena. The anti-thesis just denies the existence of this transcendent ground. Buddha must have had before him the Sāṅkhya conception of Prakṛti for the thesis and the materialist denial of the non-empirical for the anti-thesis.

The last question is about the self or the soul (jīva). The thesis seeks to really the ultimate (non-empirical) unity of the subjective states in an independent entity. If the self were distinct from the body and the states (anyo jīvo'nyac charīram) it follows that it enjoys an unrelated, unconditioned existence apart from the body and the mental states. Its separate reality as consciousness (idealism in a broad sense), its simplicity as pure awareness, its im-

cerning the soul (jiva) has only two. One does not however see why the last question too could not be logically formulated in the fourfold way like the others. The questions are:[8]

(1) Whether the world is eternal. or not. or both, or neither;

(2) Whether the world is finite (in space), or infinite, or both, or neither;

(3) Whether the Tathāgata exists after death, or does not, or both, or neither;

(4) Is the soul identical with the body or different from it?

In the composition of the alternatives, there is a positive thesis which is opposed by a negative counter-thesis; these two basic alternatives are conjunctively affirmed to form the third alternative, and disjunctively denied to form the fourth. The similarity of the avyākṛta to the celebrated antinomies of Kant and the catuskoṭi of the Mādhyamikas cannot fail to strike us. No insistence need be made on the order or the number of these questions. Importance, however, attaches to their nature and the form of stating them. The first two questions concerning the world—the one with regard to its origination and duration, and the other about its extent—are the two main cosmological problems. Human reason seeks to understand the ultimate unconditioned ground of objects. It seeks to find a trans-

ultimate appraisal of reality. The human mind cannot for long be in a state of suspense and postponement. As regards the annihilationist interpretation, Dr. E. J. Thomas very pertinently observes:

It is certain, however, that that is a conclusion which the Buddhists never drew. In this very sutta, annihilation is rejected. It is not really to the point to say that Buddhist premises tended to this conclusion. The only real question is what conclusion did the Buddhists draw and what for them was the logical answer. They could not consider it (Nirvāṇa) as bhāva, for it is not what is cognised by the senses, nor as non-existence. The Buddhists had reached the conception of a state of which neither existence nor non-existence could be asserted."[7]

A fairly cogent solution of the problem is possible if all the passages, where the questions are discussed in the Buddhist records, are considered together with the characteristic interpretations of the Buddhist schools themselves. We may then critically assess the value of these considerations

II. THE ANTINOMICAL CHARACTER OF THE AVYĀKṚTA

All our authorities agree in enumerating the avyākṛta as fourteen. Actually, there are four sets of questions, three of which have four alternatives each, and the last one con-

in it, as he was eminently a practical man with a severely practical aim. The *locus classicus* of this view is the *Cūla Mālunkya Sutta*[3] wherein Buddha likens the metaphysician to that foolish man wounded by an arrow who, before being attended to, would like to know what sort of arrow struck him, whence it came, who aimed it etc. The wounded man would have died before he got satisfactory answers to his questions. The moral drawn is that metaphysical enquiries are unnecessary and can even prove harmful to spiritual life. It is contended by some others[4] that Buddha was an agnostic, though his agnosticism was not a cogently reasoned one, and that this alone fits in with his system and moral discipline. Oldenberg suggests that the questions ought not to be answered and even that they could not be answered. A negative answer or the annihilationist interpretation is also given by the same scholar: "Through the shirking of the questions as to the existence or non-existence of the ego is heard the answer to which the premises of the Buddhist teaching tended: the ego is not, or what is equivalent to it—the Nirvāna is annihilation."[5]

These three principal interpretations—the practical, the agnostic and the negative—are stated here as specimens of the incorrect reading of Buddhism. These and similar interpretations do not accord with the teaching of Buddha and the doctrines of the Buddhist schools. We cannot have a way of life which does not imply a philosophy,[6] an

(Editor's note: *This is the 2nd Chapter of T. R. V. Murti's* *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism.*)

Buddha declared certain questions of a distinctly metaphysical character to be unanswerable. For a correct understanding of the Mādhyamika system it is necessary that the 'silence' of Buddha should be properly appraised. It is our contention that the Mādhyamika dialectic is anticipated in essentials by Buddha. The Mādhyamikas have but systematically formulated his suggestions and drawn out their implicationns fully.[1]

The Inexpressibles (avyākata, Skt. avyākṛtavastūni) occur in very many dialogues.[2] They are invariably enumerated as fourteen and practically in the same order.

I. SOME INTERPRETATIONS

Several interpretations of the avyākṛta have been offered by oriental scholars. It has been suggested that Buddha was innocent of metaphysics or was not interested

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