CHAPTER-IV

DEVELOPMENT OF SECTS - THE TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION OF BUDDHISM AS DEPICTED IN THE KATHĀVATTHU
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The *Mixed Hinayāna Period*¹ one of the most important period in the history of the events and doctrines of Buddhism during circa 350-100 B.C.E, is still not fully known. Firstly, because the sources from which the reconstruction can be made are scanty and secondly, the time of composition of those that are available is of a very late date. This period witnessed the appearance of different sects in the Buddhist Sangha with their growth and spread in India and abroad. Buddhism during this age was characterized by a re-assessment of the meaning, significance, implication and pre-supposition of the traditional Buddhist ideas. Diverse hypotheses were advanced to elucidate and harmonise them internally within the context of Buddhist thought, as also with the ideas, which were then current in the general intellectual milieu of the times.

This chapter will focus on the issues discussed among various sects. Though the list of sects is provided by the *atthakathā* that belongs to a later date still we can have a glimpse of the transformation of the Buddhist doctrine and its interpretation among various sects from the Kathāvatthu itself through the help of these later comments. The chapter is divided into six sections to discuss on: *the formation of different sects, development of Buddhist sects, geographical distribution of the sects, tenets of different sects, Kathāvatthu on the sects and major points of controversy.*

**THE FORMATION OF BUDDHIST SECTS**

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¹ This term has been used by N.N.Dutt in his writings viz. Buddhist sects in India and Early Monastic Buddhism.
The Indic word, both Sanskrit and Pali, that we translate here as 'school' or 'sect' is *nikāya*, meaning, properly, 'group'. In our context, it refers to a group of initiates, most likely monks (bhiksus) rather than laymen, who sincerely profess to be faithful disciples of the Buddha but are distinguishable from other similar groups in that they base their beliefs on a body of canonic texts that differs from others to a greater or lesser extent. These differences between canonic texts involve not only their wording or written form but also a certain number of doctrinal elements and rules of monastic discipline. Despite the dis-aggregative pressures to which they were exposed (the same pressures, indeed, that created them), despite their geographical expansion and sometimes considerable dispersion, and notwithstanding the vicissitudes of history, which often posed new problems for them, most of these groups preserved a remarkable internal cohesiveness throughout several centuries. Still, schisms did occur within many of them leading to the formation of new schools. Moreover, to judge from the documents that we have—though these are unfortunately very scarce—it seems that relations among these various groups were generally good. Their disputes remained at the level of more or less lively discussion and degenerated into more serious conflicts only when involving questions of economics or politics.

According to some eminent scholars, we must distinguish Buddhist 'sects' from 'schools'. Sects under this interpretation were invariably born from serious dissent over issues of monastic discipline. Such dissent resulted in a fracturing of the community, a *samghabheda*, or schism, the participants in which ceased to live together or carry on a common religious life. By contrast, schools were differentiated by divergences of opinion on doctrinal points, but their dissension in these matters never gave rise to a actual schisms or open hostility. This interpretation is certainly attractive, but it must be mitigated somewhat by the recognition that the actual situation prevailing between the various communities of the early church was somewhat more complex and variable than that indicated by the theory advanced here.
The Buddhist community developed into separate schools for many reasons: geographic dispersion and isolation; selective patronage; contact with non-Buddhists; disagreements over disciplinary codes; the absence of a single institutional authority; the divergent views of influential teachers; specialization in segments of Buddhist scripture; and, finally, doctrinal disagreements. Among these, disputes about doctrine, or rather the elaboration and analysis of became a defining activity of the emergent schools. This analysis was called ‘Abhidharma’. Although its original meaning is not certain, most interpretations agree that it refers to its purpose of supplementing (abhi-) or clarifying the teaching (dharma). Abhidharma is not only a genre of texts but also, more importantly, the analytic method and the insight through which one correctly comprehends the Buddhist teaching. For Abhidharma is not an end in itself; the scholastic enterprise, like the original teaching, serves a stereological goal. Abhidharma enables the practitioner to discriminate those aspects of experience that are defiling and so lead to suffering from those that are virtuous; through this discriminating insight, one can remove the defilements cultivate virtue, and thereby emulate the Buddha and attain enlightenment.

According to the self-understanding of the later Buddhist schools, the Abhidharma simply organizes and explicates the often implicit and embryonic teaching preserved in the collections of discourses on doctrine (sūtra) that are attributed to the Buddha. But while the tradition did not consider Abhidharma as innovative – indeed, most schools attributed the content, if not the very words, of the Abhidharma to the Buddha himself – it is none the less clear that the Abhidharma treatises record doctrinal debate that stimulated new doctrines and new methods of exegesis.

Though evidence suggests that each of the early Buddhist schools preserved and transmitted its own complete set of texts, which would have included an Abhidharma collection, only two are extant: that of the Theravāda school, which became predominant in Sri Lanka and spread to southeast Asia; and
that of the Sarvāstivāda school, which became predominant in north, especially northwest, India and spread to central Asia. Although these two were at opposite ends of the geographical and doctrinal range of schools, both of them have Abhidharma collections that are similar in number (seven base texts with commentaries, despite no direct correspondence between the texts of the two collections) and, more significantly, in style and doctrinal subjects. Also, each collection fortunately has a text (the Kathāvatthu and its commentary among the Theravādin texts, and the Vijñānakāya among the Sarvastivadin) that, by extensively citing the views of other schools lacking extant Abhidharma works, completes our picture of early Buddhist sectarian views.

According to Kathāvatthu Atthakathā (and other sources) the first to secede from the parent body was the Mahāsanghika School. The Gokulika (or Kukkutika) and Ekabhūṭarika schools were off-shoots of the Mahāsanghika. From Gokulika arose the Paññattiśāṅki and Bāhuliya (var. Bahussutika) schools. A section of the Bāhuliya became the Cetiyaśāṅki. Apart from these six heterodox schools, the Theravada itself began to proliferate. The first two schools resulting from the Theriya tradition were the Mahīṃsāsaka and Vajjiputtika (Vātsiputiya) groups, and from the latter arose the four schools Dhammuttariya, Bhadrayānīka, Channagārīka and Sammitiya. The Mahīṃsāsaka School gave rise to the Sabbaṭṭhivāda and Dhammaguttika nikāya; the former in turn gave rise to the Kassapika and Sanākantika schools while the latter produced the Suttavāda. Together with the Theravāda they form twelve schools. Along with the six belonging to the Mahāsanghika group mentioned above, they constitute the traditional eighteen schools. All but the Theravada are considered heterodox.

It is generally agreed that the eighteen schools² were in existence during or shortly before the reign of Aśōka, and that six³ others arose about the same

² The names are not quite the same in the various lists and it seems useless to discuss them in detail Dipavamsa, V. 39-48; Mahavamsa, V. and in Rhys Davids, J.R.A.S, 1891, p.411; Rockhill, Life of the Buddha, chap. VI; Geiger, Translation of Mahavamsa, App. B.
period, but subsequently to them. The best materials for a study of their opinions are afforded by the text and commentary of the *Kathāvatthu*, a treatise attributed to Tissa Moggaliputta, who is said to have been President of the Third Council held under Aśoka. It is an examination and refutation of heretical views rather than a description of the bodies that held them but can judge from it what was the religious atmosphere at the time and the commentary gives some information about various sects. Many centuries later *I-Ching* (*Yijing*) tells us that during his visit to India (671-695 A.D.) the principal schools were four in number, with eighteen subdivisions. These four are the *Mahāsāṃghikas*, the *Sthavira* (equivalent to the old Theravada), the *Mulasarvāstivāda* and the *Sammitiya*, and from the time of Aśoka onwards they throw the remaining divisions into the shade.

The differences between the eighteen schools in *Yijing's* time were not vital but concerned the composition of the canon and details of discipline. It was a creditable thing to be versed in the scriptures of them all. It is curious that though the *Kathāvatthu* pays more attention to the opinions of the six new sects than to those held by most of the eighteen, yet this latter number continued to be quoted nearly a thousand years later, whereas the additional six seem forgotten. It may be that they were more unorthodox than the others and hence required fuller criticism. Five of their names are geographical designations, but we hear no more of them after the age of Aśoka.

**DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST SECTS**

Among the groups that developed from the Mahasamghika were the Ekavyavaharika, then the Gokulika, and finally, the Caitika schools. The

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3 The Hemavatikas, the Rajagirikas, the Siddhattas, the Pubbaselikas, the Aparaselikas and the Apararajagirikas.
4 They must not be confused with the four philosophic Schools Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Yogacara and Madhyamika. These Schools came into existence later.
5 Vetulyakas were important in Sri Lanka
Ekavyavaharika probably gave rise, in turn, to the Lokottaravadins, but it may be that the Lokottaravadins were simply a form taken by the Ekavyavaharikas at a particular time because of the evolution of their doctrine. From the Gokulikas came the Bahusrutiyas and the Prajnaptivadins. At least a part of the Caitika schools settled in southern India, on the lower Krishna River, shortly before the beginning of the Common Era. From them two important sects soon arose: the Purvasailas and the Aparasailas, then a little later the Rajagirikas and the Siddharthikas. Together, the four sects formed Andhraka group, which took its name from the area (Andhra) where they thrived during the first few centuries CE.

The Sthaviravada group seems to have remained united until about the beginning of the third century BCE, when the Vatsiputriyas, who maintained the existence of a quasiautonomous ‘person’ (pudgala), split off. A half century later, probably during the reign of Asoka (consecrated c. 268 BCE), the Sarvastivadins also separated from the non-Vatsiputriya Sthaviravadins and settled in northwest India. This time the dispute was over the Sarvastivadin notion that ‘everything exists’ (sarvam asti). In the beginning of the second century, the remaining Sthaviravdins, who appear to have taken at this time the name Vibhajyavadins, ‘those who teach discrimination,’ to distinguish themselves from the Sarvastivadins, found themselves divided once again. Out of this dispute were born the Mahisasakas and the Dharmaguptakas, who opposed each other over whether the Buddha, properly speaking, belonged to the minastic community and over the relative value of offerings made to the Blessed One and those made to the community. At an unknown date about the beginning of the Common Era four new groups sprang from the Vatsiputriyas: the Dharmottariyas, the Bhadrayaniyas, the Sannagarikas, and the Sammatiyas. The Sammatiyas, who were very important in Indian Buddhism, later gave rise to the Avantaka and the Kurukulla schools. One group broke from the Sarvastivadins: the Sautrantikas, who can be identified with the Darstantikas and the Samkrantivadins.
Some of the Vibhajyavadins settled in southern India and Lanka in the mid-third century BCE and seem to have maintained fairly close relations for some time with the Mahisasakas, whose presence is attested in the same area. Adopting Pali as a canonical language and energetically claiming their teaching to be the strict orthodoxy, they took the name Theravadins, a Pali form of the Sanskrit Sthaviravadins. Like the Sthaviravadins, they suffered from internal squabbles and divisions: some years before the Common Era, the Abhayagirivasins split from the Mahaviharas, founded at the time of the arrival of Buddhism in Lanka; later, in the fourth century, the Jetavanivas appeared.

Finally, three sects derived from the Sthaviravadins present some problems regarding their precise relationship and identity. The Kasyapiyas, whose basic position was a compromise between those of the Sarvastivadins and the Vibhajyavadins, apparently broke from the latter shortly after the split that created the Sarvastivada and Vibhajyavada nikayas. More mysterious are the Haimavatas, about whom the facts are both scarce and contradictory. As for the Mulasarvastivadins, or ‘radical Sarvastivadins,’ they appeared suddenly at the end of the seventh century with a huge ‘basket of discipline’ (Vinaya Pitaka) in Sanskrit, much different in many respects from that of the earlier Sarvastivadins.

**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE SECTS**

Two types of records inform us about the geographical distribution of the sects and schools: inscriptions and the reports of a number of Chinese pilgrims who came to India. Numbering only a few tens and raging in time between the second century BCE and the sixth century CE, the inscriptions that mention early sects give us only spotty and very insufficient data. Although they may actually attest to the presence of a given group in a specific place at a particular date, they leave us completely ignorant about the presence or absence of this sect in other places and at other times. The information supplied by the Chinese travelers, principally HuienTsang (Xuanzang) and to a lesser extent Yijing, is
incomparably more complete, but it is valid only for the seventh century, when their journeys took place.

The study of these two kinds of sources- like that of the Sinhala chronicles, which are concerned mostly with Sri Lankan Buddhism- reveals some important general features about the early Buddhist schools. None of the groups was present everywhere throughout India and its neighboring countries; on the other hand no area was the exclusive domain of any one group. For reasons that unfortunately nearly always escape us, certain groups were in the majority in some places, in the minority in others, and completely absent in still others but, as far as we can tell, coexisted in varying proportions with other groups wherever they were found. For example, in a number of places-especially those that history were important places of pilgrimage-the monks of various sects lived together in neighboring monasteries and often venerated the same sacred objects-topes (stupas), bodhi trees, and others. This was the case not only in the holy places in the Ganges Basin, where the major events in the Buddha’s life occurred, but also far from there, in Sanchi, Karli, Amaravati, Nagarjunikonda, and elsewhere.

**TENETS OF DIFFERENT SECTS**

Although many questions divided all or some of the schools, they did not provoke the formation of new sects. These debates were sometimes very important for the evolution of Buddhism as a whole. Often, several of the early sects that we might expect to hold similar views given their genesis in fact adopted doctrinal opinions at great variance with one another. Thus, there often came about, among schools with similar opinions on specific questions, entirely different regroupings from those one would expect in light of their traditional relationships.

The Mahasamghikas probably separated from the Sthaviravadin s over the belief that certain arhats, although they had attained nirvana in this world, could be subject to nocturnal defilements as a result of erotic dreams; that they still
harboured vestiges of ignorance; that they had areas of doubt on matters outside Buddhist doctrine; that they could be informed, indeed saved, by other people; and, finally, that they utter certain words when they meditated on the Path of Liberation. The Sthaviravadins denied these five possibilities, arguing that the arhat is completely free of all imperfections.

The Vatsiputriyas and the schools that later developed from them, the Sammatiyas and others, believed in the existence of a 'person' (pudgala) who is neither identical to the five aggregates (skandhas) that make up the living being nor different from them; neither within these five aggregates nor outside them. Although differing from the Brahmanic 'soul' (atman), denied unanimously by Buddhist doctrine, this 'person' lives on from one existence to the next, thus ensuring the continuing identities of the agent of an act and of the being who suffers its effects in this life or the next. All the other schools rejected this hypothesis, maintaining the logical impossibility of conceptualizing this 'person' and seeing in it simply a disguised form of the atman.

The Sarvastivadins claimed that 'everything exists' (sarvam asti), that is, that the past and the future have real and material existence. This belief enabled them to explain several phenomena that were very important to Buddhists: the act of consciousness, which is made up of several successive, individual mental actions; memory or consciousness of the past; foresight or consciousness of the future; and the 'ripening' (vipaka) of 'actions' (karman), which takes place over a longer or shorter span of time, often exceeding the length of a single life. For the other sects, however, it was perfectly clear that what is past exists no longer and that what is to come does not yet exist.

The Kasyapiyas maintained a position between these two, namely, that a past action that has not yet borne fruit exists, but the rest of the past does not. This approach, however, satisfied neither the Sarvastivadins nor their critics.
The Sautrantikas distinguished themselves from the Sarvastivadins insofar as they considered the canonic ‘basket of sermons’ (Sutta Pitaka) to be the only one to contain the authentic words of the Buddha, whereas the ‘basket of higher teaching’ (Abhidharma Pitaka) is the work of the Blessed One’s disciples. According to some of our sources, the Sautrantikas were also called Smkrantivadins because they held that the five aggregates (skandhas) constituting the living being ‘transmigrate’ (samkränti) from one existence to the next; probably this should be understood to mean that, in their view, four of these aggregates were absorbed at the moment of death into the fifth, a subtle consciousness. It also seems that the Sautrântikas can be identified with the Dârśtantikas, who were often criticized in the Sarvâstivâda writings and apparently gained their name because of their frequent use of comparisons or parables (drśtântas) in their discussions.

An important disagreement separated the Mahisasakas from the Dharmaguptakas. For the former, the Buddha is part of the monastic community (samgha); hence a gift given to the community produces a ‘great fruit’ (mahâphalam), but one directed specifically to the Buddha does not. The Dharmaguptakas, on the other hand, held that the Buddha is separate from the community and as he is far superior to it—since it is composed only of his followers—only the gift given to the Buddha produces a great fruit. These two opposing views had considerable influence on the religious practices of early Buddhism.

The Lokottaravadinës differed from other Mahâsaṅghika schools in holding that the Buddhas are ‘otherworldly’ (lokottara), a word having several very different senses but which they employed loosely to attribute an extraordinary nature to the Buddhas. According to them, the Buddhas are otherworldly not only because their thought is always perfectly pure but also because they remain outside and above the world. Thus it would seem to be among the Lokottaravadins that we should seek the origin of Buddhist docetism, that is, the distinction between the real, transcendent, and infinite Buddha, the ‘body of doctrine’
(dharmakāya), and the apparent Buddha, the 'body of magical creation' (nirmanakāya)- a kind of phantom emanating from the real one. To rescue beings, the nirmanakāya becomes incarnate, taking on their form and thus seeming to be born, to grow up, to discover and preach the doctrine of enlightenment, and to finally die and become completely extinguished. The Lokottaravadins must have also extolled the extraordinary character of the bodhisattva, undoubtedly on account of their supernatural conception of the Buddhas. These singular notions lead one to believe that this sect played an important part in the formation of the Mahāyāna, whose teaching adopted and developed similar ideas.

**KATHĀVATTHU ON THE SECTS**

The religious horizon of the heretics confuted in the *Kathāvatthu* does not differ materially from that of the *Pitakas*. There are many questions about arhatship, its nature, the method of obtaining it and the possibility of losing it. Also we find registered divergent views respecting the nature of knowledge and sensation. Of these the most important is the doctrine attributed to the Sammitiyas that a soul exists in the highest and truest sense. They are also credited with holding that an arhat can fall from arhatship, that a god can enter the paths or the Order, and that even an unconverted man can get rid of all lust and ill-will.  

This collection of beliefs is possibly explicable as a result of the view that the condition of the soul, which is continuous from birth to birth, is stronger for good or evil than its surroundings. The germs of the Mahāyāna may be detected in the opinions of some sects on the nature of the Buddha and the career of a Bodhisattva. Thus the Andhakas thought that the Buddha was superhuman in the

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7 See Rhys Davids in JRAS. 1892, pp.8-9. The name is variously spelt. The P.T.S. print Sammitiya, but the Sanskrit text of the Madhyamakavritti (in Bibliotheca Buddhica) has Sammatiya. Sanskrit dictionaries give Sammatiya. The Abhidharma section of the Chinese Tripitaka (Nanjio, 1272) contains a sastra belonging to this school. Nanjio 1139 is apparently their Vinaya.
ordinary affairs of life and the Vetulyakas held that he was not really born in the world of men but sent a phantom to represent him, remaining himself in the Tusita heaven. The doctrines attributed to the Uttarāpathakas and the Andhakas respectively that an unconverted man, if good, is capable of entering on the career of a Bodhisattva and that a Bodhisattva can in the course of his career fall into error and be reborn in state of woe, show an interest in the development of a Bodhisattva and a desire to bring it nearer to human life which are foreign to the Pitakas. An inclination to think of other states, of existence in a manner half mythological half metaphysical as indicated by other heresies, such as that there is an intermediate realm where beings await rebirth, that the dead benefit by gifts given in the world, that there are animals in heaven, that the Four Truths, the Chain of Causation, and the Eightfold Path, are self existence (asankhata).

The point of view of the Kathavatthu, and indeed of the whole Pāli Tipitaka, is that of the Vibhajjavādins, which seems to mean those who proceed by analysis and do not make vague generalizations. This was the school to which Tissa Moggaliputta belonged and was identical with Theravāda (Teaching of the Elders) or a section of it. The prominence of this sect in the history of Buddhism has caused its own view, namely that it represents primitive Buddhism, to be widely accepted. And this view deserves respect for it rests on a solid historical basis, namely that about two and a half centuries after the Buddha’s death and in the country where he preached, the Vibhajjavādins claimed to get back to his real teaching by an examination of the existing traditions.

This is a very early starting-point. But the Sarvāstivādins (Pāli Sabbatthivādins) were also an early school which attained to widespread influence and had a similar desire to preserve the simple and comparatively

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8 H. Kern (Versl. en Med. der K. Akad. van wetenschappen Letterk. 4. R.D. viii. 1907, pp. 312-319, cf. JRAS, 1907, p.432) suggested on the authority of Kashgarian Mss. that the expression Vailpulya sutra is a misreading for Vaitulya sutra, a sutra of the Vetulyakas. Ananda was sometimes identified with the phantom that represented the Buddha.

9 It is remarkable that this view, though condemned by the Kathvatthu, is countenanced by the Khuddakapatha.

10 The Kathvatthu constantly cites the Nikayas.
human presentment of the Buddha’s teaching as opposed to later embellishments. Only three questions in the Kathavatthu are directed against them but this probably means not that they were unimportant but that they did not differ much from the Vibhajavādins. The special views attributed to them are that everything really exists, that an arhat can fall from arhatship, and that continuity of thought constitutes Samādhi or meditation. These may perhaps be interpreted as indicative of an aversion to metaphysics and the supernatural.

The most important part of the Kathavatthu doctrinally is that which deals with the views of the Pubbaseliyas and Aparaseliyas, related schools of South India, who are referred to collectively as the Andhakas. The commentary does not reckon them among the eighteen sects, but it gives them a very important share in the points discussed. They are evidently the same as the three Schools of Caityasailas, Aparasailas and Uttarasilas mentioned by Vasumitra11 as Branches of the Mahāsāṅghikas. We may put aside what is said of the Mahāsāṅghikas in the Srilankan Chronicles. There we are told that this school formed a great Council after being defeated at the 2nd Council on Ten points of discipline. Bhavya, however, says that the dispute was on five doctrinal points. These points are given by Vasumitra as-

(a) arahats can be tempted by others,
(b) they have still ignorance,
(c) and doubt,
(d) they gain enlightenment through (by uttering an exclamation).

These five points occur in the Kathavatthu (ii, 1-6) almost in this form, where they are attributed to the Pubbaseliyas, etc12.

Whether these points were actually discussed at the 2nd council is not important. The historical fact is that they were held by the Mahāsāṅghikas along with their Buddhological theories.

11 J.Masuda, “Origin and Doctrines of Early Indian Buddhist Schools”, Asia Major, II, p.15
12 La Valle Poussin, The Five Points of Mahadeva, JRAS, 1910, p.413
In the translation of the *Kathāvatthu*. S.Z. Aung and Mrs. Rhys Davids had provided with a list of the controversies assigned to a particular sect or sects in the commentary. This list forms the basis of my study of the development of the sectarian views as reflected in the *Kv*.

**THE POINTS OF CONTROVERSY GROUPED ACCORDING TO THE DISSENTIENT SCHOOLS**

**I**

**THE VAJJIPUTTAKAS (-IYAS) HELD**-

With the *Sammitiyas*:

1. That there is a persisting personal entity, I.1.

With the *Sammitiyas, Sabbatthivādins, Mahāsaṅghikas*:

2. That an Arahant may fall away, I.2.

**II**

**THE SAMMITIYAS HELD THAT**-

1. There is no higher life practised among Devas, I.3.

2. The convert gives up the corruptions piecemeal, I.4.

3. The average man renounces passions and hate, I.5.

With the *Vajjiputtakas*:

4. That there is a persisting personal entity, I.1.

With the *Mahāsaṅghikas*:

5. That acts of intimation are moral acts, X.10.

6. That latent bias is unmoral, XI.1.

With the *Andhakas* generally:

7. That physical sight and hearing may be 'celestial', III.7.

8. That six senses obtain in Rupa-heavens, VIII.7.

9. That there is lust in Rupa-heavens, XIV.7.

10. That Kamma and its accumulation are distinct things, XV.11

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11. That material qualities are results of Kamma, XVI. 8.
With some Andhakas:
12. That Jhāna has five, not four stages, XVIII. 7
With the Pubbaseliyas:
13. That there is an intermittent state, VIII. 2.
14. That vital power is physical only, VIII. 10
15. That previous Kamma may cause an Arahant to fall, VIII.11.
With the Rājagirikas and the Siddhattikas:
16. That merit increases with utility, VII. 5.
With the Mahiṣāsakas:
17. That acts of intimation are morally effective, VIII.9
18. That material qualities are morally effective, XVI. 7.
With the Mahiṣāsakas and the Mahāsaṅghikas:
19. That three factors of the Eightfold Path are material, not mental states, X.2.
With Vajjiputtiyas, Sabbatthivādins, and some Mahāsaṅghikas:
20. That an Arahant can fall away, I.2.

III
THE SABBATTHIVĀDINS HELD THAT-

1. Everything exists, and is existing continually, because it is, was, or will be matter and mind, and these continually exist, I. 6, 7.
2. Penetration of truth is won bit by bit, the past gains persisting, II. 9.
With the Uttarāpathakas:
3. That conscious flux may amount to samadhi (Jhāna) XI. 6
With the Vajjiputtiyas (sic), the Sammitiyas and some Mahāsaṅghikas
4. That an Arahant may fall away, I.2.

IIIa
OF THE SABBATTHIVĀDINS, THE KASSAPIKAS HELD THAT-
5. Some only of the past and of the future exists, I. 8.

IV
THE MAHĀSAṅGHIKAS HELD-
2. Confused notions as to the Path and sense, [X.3] and the Path and morals, [X.6].
3. That one can act by or with the mind of another, XVI. 1, 2.
4. That mind and morals are distinct, [X. 7, 8] and moral growth is mechanical, [X. 9].
5. That acts which are not moral must be immoral, X.11.
6. That iddhi can confer longevity, XI. 5.
7. That self-restraint, as act (not as volition) is morally effective (Karma), XII.1.
8. That moral and immoral motives can be immediately consecutive, XIV.1.
9. That things were mutually related within fixed limits only, [XV.1] and not reciprocally (or symmetrically), [XV. 2].
10. That Buddhas can persistently pervade any part of the firmament, [XXI. 6] and that by iddhi they can suspend any natural law, [XXI. 4].
11. That the decay and death of Arahants is not that of average humanity, [XV.6] but that a residual fetter of ignorance they do not cast off, [XXI. 3]
12. Some held that the Arahant could fall away, I. 2.

With the *Sammitiyas*:
14. That latent bias is unmoral, XI.1.

With the *Sammitiyas* and the *Mahiṃsāsakas*:
15. That three of the Eightfold Path factors are statements about material qualities, not about character, X.2.

Some of the *Mahāsāṅghikas* held, with the *Vajjiputtīyas* (Mss. sic), *Sammitiyas* and *Sabbatthivēdins*:
16. That an Arahant may fall away, I. 2.

V

THE ANDHAKAS IN GENERAL:-
2. That a unit of consciousness lasted a day, II.7
4. That spiritual liberty supervenes while one is lustful, [III. 3] and comes gradually, [III.4] as its blessings become foreseen, [IX.1].
5. That one may be conscious in the Unconscious sphere, [III.11], but not conscious in the 'Neither-conscious-nor-unconscious' Jhāna, [III.12].
6. That space is visible, [VI. 7] also the elements of matter, senses, and action, (Kamma) [VI. 8].
7. That the present instant, and the future can be known, V.8, 9.
8. That the past and future persist as possession, [IX.12] thus in the Fourth Path, the Fruits of the earlier Paths persist as possessions, [IV.9].
9. That to bring about Jhāna, sense gets perverted, V.3.
10. That all knowledge is analytic, [V.5] when popular, truth is its object no less than when it is philosophical, [V. 6].
11. That thought-reading is of bare consciousness only, V. 7.
12. That Arahantship is the realizing of a tenfold release, [IV.10] but the Arahant dies not wholly freed, [XXII.1].
13. That Kamma produces land, [VII.7] also old age and death, [VII.8].
14. That resultant-states themselves entail results, [VII.10] but Ariyan states are negations only, [VII. 9].
15. That Assurance is unconditioned, [VI.1] so too is trance, [VI. 5].
16. That the essential element in the sphere called Rūpa is the presence of matter, [VIII. 5] but there is matter in the sphere called Immaterial Arūpa, [VIII. 8], as in the Rūpa-sphere also, [XVI. 9], and lust in both, [XVI.10].
17. That a certain utterance may induce insight, XI. 4.
18. That X in the Path can discern Y's spiritual victories, V.10.
19. That each Nidāna is predetermined, also impermanence itself, XI. 7, 8.
20. That Jhāna may be enjoyed as an end, XIII.7.
21. That latent bias differs in kind from open vice, [XIV.5] and that the latter happens involuntarily, [XIV. 6].
22. That there may be counterfeit consciousness, XXIII. 4.
23. The Arahant accumulates merit [XVII. 1] and dies with meritorious consciousness [XXII. 2].
24. That there are no guards in Purgatory, and that animals are reborn in Heaven, XX.3,4.
25. That Buddhas differ mutually in many ways, [XXI.5] and choose the woes they undergo as Bodhisattas, [XXIII. 3] that all their powers are Ariyan, [III.2] and are common to their disciples, [III.1], and both can work wonders against nature, [XXI. 4].
26. That a Buddha's daily habits, notably speech, are supra-mundane, II.10.
27. That one in the First Path has not the five spiritual controlling powers, III. 6.
28. That physical sight and hearing can be ‘celestial’ organs when conveying ideas, III. 7, 8.
29. That on entering the First Path, there is First Fruition, III. 5.
30. That six senses and sensuous desires obtain in Rūpa heavens, VIII. 7; XIV. 7.
31. That action and its accumulating results are different things, XV. 11
32. That matter is a result of action, Kamma, XVI. 8.
33. That Jhāna has five stages, not four, XVII.7.
34. That there are two cessations of ill, II.11.
35. That there is immediate transition in Jhāna, XVIII. 6.

With the Sammittiyas:

With the Mahimsasakas:

With the Uttarapathakas:
36. That Asura-rebirth constitutes a sixth sphere, VIII.1.
37. That the six senses obtain in Rupa-heavens, VII.I. 7.
38. That trance-unconsciousness is unconditioned, VI. 5.
39. That views as such are un-moral, XIV.8.
40. That natural kinds are immutable, [XXI.7] ; so too are Kamma process, [XXI.8].
41. That there is but one Path, not four, XVIII. 5.
42. That everything of the Buddha was fragrant, XVIII. 4.
43. That the Buddha entered the Path in a previous birth, IV. 8.
44. That fruitions persist as possessions, IV.9.
45. That latent bias has no mental object, IX. 4.

With some of the above:
46. That latent bias is without mental object, IX. 4.

With the Vetullakas:
47. That sex-relations may be entered on by any human pair (even recluses) with a united resolve, XXIII. 1.

With the Sabbatihivādins, Sammitiyas and Bhadrayānikas:
48. That penetration is acquired piecemeal, II.9.

Vā OF THE ANDHAKAS :- (i) THE PUBBASELIYAS HELD THAT-
1. Sound can be heard by one in Jhāna, XVIII. 8.
2. Vocal sounds are purely psychic waves, IX. 9; it does not conform to mental procedure, IX. 10.
3. Action does not conform either, IX. 11.
4. The word 'Sorrow!' is spoken when by Jhāna the First Path is attained, [II. 5] and induces insight, [II, 6].
5. Mano (mind) is an un-moral organ, XIII.9.
6. Consciousness (citta) and insight (ñāna) are distinct in kind. XI. 3.
7. The sense-sphere means only the pleasures of sense, VIII. 3.
8. The Un-included may include erroneous views, XIV.9.

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9. The Arahant's knowledge may be defective, II. 2; (probably the next two numbers also).
10. Desire for ideas is not a source of I, XIII. 10
11. Sound views are compatible with murderous hate, XII. 7.
12. The act of acquiring and the fruit of religious life are both unconditioned, XIX, 4,3.
13 Knowledge of the Nidanas belongs to the Ariyan Paths and Fruits, XX.6.
14. The Four Truths are unconditioned, VI. 3.
15. The objects of sense are desires, not the subjective experience, VIII.4.
16. The Ambrosial as idea is a Fetter, IX. 2.
With the Sammiyias:
17. That vital power is psychical only, VIII. 10.
18. That there is an intermittent state of existence, VIII.2.
19. That Kamma may cause an Arahant to fall, VIII. II.
With the Mahimsasakas:
20. That the Nidanas were unconditioned, VI. 2.

Vb
THE (i) PUBBASELIYAS AND (ii) APARASELIYAS HELD THAT-
1. Everything has only momentary being, XXII. 8.
2. The embryo does not develop organs in sequence, XIV. 2.
3. All may be attended to at once, XVI. 4.
4. Arahants may be defiled by devils, II.1.
5. Bodhisattas are, when prophesied about, already in the Path, XIII. 4.

Ve
THE (iii) RĀJAGIRIKAS HELD-
1. That purgatorial retribution must last a whole 'kappa', XIII. 1
2. That one in Jhana-trance may die, XV. 9.

Vd
THE (iii) RĀJAGIRIKAS AND (iv) SIDDHATTHIKAS HELD THAT-
1. The classification and association of ideas was a fiction, VII. 1,2, and so too was the theory of ‘mental’ (cetasika) as adjuncts or properties of consciousness, VII.3.

2. Giving (in so far as it is ethically meritorious) is a mental act only, [VII. 4]; things given here sustain life elsewhere, [VII. 6].

3. Death cannot come untimely for an Arahant, XVII. 2.

4. All happens through Kamma, XVII. 3.

5. The Kamma of heinous crime brings a whole Kappa of retribution, XIII. 1.

With the Sammitiyas
6. Merit increases with utility, VII. 5.

VI
THE GOKULIKAS HELD THAT-
1. The world is red-hot with misery, II.8.

VII
THE BHADRAYĀNIKAS HELD-
With the Sammitiyas, Sabbatthivādins and Andhakas:
1. That penetration of the truth is acquired in segmentary order. II.9

VIII
THE MAHIMSĀSAKAS HELD-
1. That the Ariyan (Eightfold) Path was fivefold, XX. 5.
With the Andhakas:
2. That there are two ‘Cessations of III’; II. 11.
With some Andhakas:
3. That transition from one Jhana-Stage to another, is immediate XVIII.6,
With the Pubbaseliyas:
4. That the Nidanas (links in the chain of Causal Genesis) were unconditioned, VI. 2.
With the Uttarāpathakas:
5. That space is unconditioned, VI. 6.
With the Sammitiyas:
6. That acts of intimation are Kamma, [VIII. 9] (cf. Mahāsaṅghikas, 5 in X. 10, 11); hence all matter is of moral import, [XVI. 7].

With the Sammitiyas and Mahāsaṅghikas:

7. That three factors of the Eightfold Path are material not mental states, [X.2]; (hence) the Path was fivefold only, [XX. 5].

With the Hetuvādins:

8. That the five spiritual faculties are not for those in worldly life, XIX. 8.

IX

THE UTTARĀPATHAKAS HELD THAT-

1. There is immediate, fused contiguity in sense, XIV. 3.

2. There can be delight in pain, XIII. 8.

3. Neither memory nor thought of the future has a mental object IX 6,7.

4. Initial application is a constant in all consciousness, IX. 8.

5. Material qualities are moral conditions (hetu); and have a mental object, IX. 3.

6. Dream-consciousness is unmoral, XXII. 6.

7. In heinous crimes want of intention does not exculpate, XX. 1.

8. Any abettor is capable of entering on Assurance of salvation XIII. 3.

9. One in age-long purgatory cannot have good consciousness, XIII. 2.

10. All is uncaused save 'Ill', XXIII. 5.


12. Emancipation is realized while one is hindered, [XIII. 5]; fettered, [XIII. 6].

13. The worldly man can have the insight of Assurance, V. 4; XIX. 7.

14. The learner can discern the mind of the adept, V. 2.

15. He-of-seven-rebirths can only get assurance after the seven, XII. 5, 6.

16. Fruitions are retained as persisting possessions, IV. 4, cf. 9

17. An embryo, a dreamer may penetrate truth, XXII, 4, 5.

18. Corruptions past and present may be got rid of, XIX. 1

19. A layman may be Arahant, [IV. 1]; so may be babies, [IV. 2]; embryos, dreamers, [XXII. 5].

20. Distinctively Ariyan qualities may be moral, XIV, 4.

21. Everything in an Arahant is non-Asava, IV. 3.
22. An Arahant dies like a Buddha, XXII. 3.
23. There may be bogus-Arahants, XXIII. 2.
24. A Buddha is one only in virtue of Bodhi, IV. 6.
25. A Marks-owner must be a Bodhisatta IV. 7.
26. A Bodhisatta chooses his own sufferings, XXIII. 3.
27. The Buddha feels no pity, XVIII. 3.
28. The Sasana has been, may be re-formed, XXI. 1.
29. Only the giver can bless the gift, XVII. 11.
30. Habitual repetition is no true relation. XXII. 7.
Some Uttarāpathakas held that:
32. The Arahant dies in imperturbable absorption, XXII. 2.
With the Andhakas:
33. That Asura-rebirth constitutes a sixth sphere, VIII. 1.
34. That the six senses obtain in Rupa-heavens, VIII. 7.
35. That trance consciousness is unconditioned, VI. 5.
36. That views as such are un-moral, XIV. 8.
37. That natural kinds are immutable, [XXI. 7]; so too are Karma-Processes, [XXI. 8].
38. That there is but one Path, not four, XVIII 5.
39. That everything of the Buddha was fragrant, XVIII. 4.
40. That he entered the Path in a previous birth, IV:13
41. That fruitions persist as possessions, IV. 9, cf.4.
Some Uttarāpathakas only, with the Andhakas:
42. That latent bias has no mental object, IX. 4.
With the Sabbaithivādins:
43. That Samadhi (Jhāna) may be simply the flux of consciousness, XI. 6.
With the Mahimsāsakas:
44. That space is unconditioned, VI. 6.
With the Hetuvādins:
Same as 10. That all, save ‘Ill’, is undetermined, XXIII. 5.
X

THE HETUVĀDINS HELD THAT -
1. The term 'Ill' is exhausted by organic suffering, [XVII. 4], and all save the Path is pain and sorrow, [XVII. 5].
2. Insight is not for
3. Trance is supra-mundane also, XV, 7, but avails only for rebirth in the Unconscious Sphere, XV.10
4. The Four Intoxicants are not intoxicated (non sunt asavasasava), XV. 5.
5. One may hand on happiness to another, XVI. 3.

With the Mahimsāsakas:
6. That the five spiritual faculties do not function in worldly matters, XIX. 8.

With the Uttarāpathakas:
7. That all save 'Ill' is undetermined, XXIII. 5.

XI

THE VETULLAKAS (OF THE MAHA-SUṆṆAVĀDINS) HELD THE 'DOCETIC' VIEWS THAT-
1. The Buddha never lived as Very Man on this earth, XVIII, 1.
2. Nor was he benefited by gifts; hence these bring no reward, XVII.10.
3. The Order is an abstract idea, hence it cannot accept gifts, XVII.6, 7, 8, 9.

With the Andhakas:
4. That sex-relations may be entered on by any human pair (even recluses) with a united resolve, XXIII. 1.

XII

VIEWS NOT ASSIGNED TO ANY SCHOOL
1. That spiritual liberty is a gradual process of realization, III. 4.
2. That with the Celestial Eye or Ear, destinies are inferred in what is seen and heard, III. 9.
3 That there is self-restraint among devas, III.10.
4. That the Arahant can exercise simultaneously six kinds of indifference, IV. 5.
5. That the sphere of Infinite Space is unconditioned, VI.4.
6. That the Arūpa-sphere is simply cognition of immaterial things, VIII. 6, (? Andhakas).
7. That sensations are moral phenomena, X.4.
8. That for a “Seven-Rebirths-man,” in the Seventh rebirth, there is no evil destiny, XII.9.
9. That duration, any stroke of time, is predetermined, XV. 3, 4.
10. That trance is (contra Hetuvādins) mundane, XV.8.
11. That matter has moral concomitants, XVI. 6.
12. That the worldly man can experience the consciousness of three spheres at once, XXI. 2.
13. That the Arahant may feel doubt, and be excelled, II, 3, 4; (Probably a Pubbaseliyan view.)

MAJOR POINTS OF CONTROVERSY

The above discussed controversies current among the sects, at least those points that have been identified by the commentator, prove beyond doubt that most of the issues were trivial. But these very minor issues were the seeds of major disputes that cropped up in later Buddhism. The growth of Absolutistic ideas in the sangha is apparent from these debates. These tendencies were even noticed during the life-time of the Buddha. But he was able to keep a lid on these Absolutistic tendencies. Yet his reluctance to appoint a successor and insistence that the doctrine he taught and the discipline he instituted serve as guides for his future disciples left them with a sense of freedom about interpreting the doctrine as they thought fit. Indeed, this was what prompted the Buddha to formulate the hermeneutical principles; it was also what led to the holding of the First Council three months after his death. It took almost two and half centuries for the controversies to surface again. When they did, they pertained to three issues discussed earlier, namely,(1) the nature of the continuity of the individual, (2) the reality of the elements that constitute the individual, and (3) the status of the
liberated person. These were the primary topics of philosophical controversy during the time of Emperor Asoka.

In the present context, we are interested only in identifying these so-called heresies. It is interesting to note that among the 217 points debated, most of which pertain to minor rules of discipline and the like, there are only three major philosophical issues. Moggaliputta tissa’s analysis and refutation of these three prominent heretical views namely Puggalavādi (or the Personalists), Sabbatthivādi (or the Realists) and Lokuttaravādi (or the Transcendentalists) are discussed in this Chapter.

The hundreds of minor points of discipline debated in the Kathavatthu may vouch for the prevalence of much corruption during this particular period. However, the major doctrinal themes with which it deals—these being three out of 217 topics debated—cannot be issues that sprang up in such a short time. According to Kalupahana,14 “these were problems that persisted even during the Buddha’s day and that continued until Moggalputta-tissa, urged by the Emperor Aśoka, devised ways and means of refuting them. Even if we ignore the rest of the Kathavatthu, the refutation of the three major doctrinal heresies along-those of the Persona list (Puggalavādin), the Realist (sabbatthivādin), and the Transcendentalist (lokuttaravādin) could make Moggaliputta-tissa one of the greatest exponents of Buddhist philosophy since its first enunciation by the Buddha.”

Personalists

The Kathavatthu begins with a question about the conception of a “person” (puggala).15 The language in which the question is formulated is

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15 Kathavatthu, 1.1

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important. The question is not “Is there a person?” But rather “Is there a person as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality?” Or “Is there a person in truth and reality?” (upalabbhati puggalo saccikattha-paramatthenati, where he two terms saccikattha and paramattha are reminiscent of the terms saccato and thetato in the discussion between Sariputta and Yamaka).

It is the essentialist search for ultimate reality or meaning that left the absolutist dissatisfied with the empirical explanation of the human personality in terms of the five aggregates. The problem was confounded when a similar essentialist enterprise gradually gave rise to a theory of moments (ksana), according to which the five aggregates were viewed as having momentary existence. This theory of momentary existence made it most difficult, even for those who were not inclined toward the search for ultimate reality, to explain the identity as well as the continuity in the empirical human person.

The radical empiricism of the Buddha was being confused with atomistic empiricism, like that of David Hume in Western philosophy. Among the Buddhist schools that advocated the most extreme form of this atomism was the Sautrantika School, whose followers argued that there is not even one moment when a phenomenon (dharma) remains in order to be cognized. Thus they were advocates of what came to be popularly known as “a theory of representative perception” (bahyarthanumeyavada). The recognition of a static moment (sthitiksana), they argued, would violate the Buddha’s conception of impermanence (anitya).

The “Sautrantikas” conception of existence as consisting of momentary and atomic events also led them to insurmountable difficulties in the explanation of causation or dependent arising. At the time of the arising of a momentary event, there could be no other event on which the successor could depend for its arising, for that has already passed away. Hence the Sautrantikas favored the view that all that is asserted by a theory of dependence is simply “succession” (samanantara), one event following another with no perceivable asymmetric, or even symmetric, relations. They feared that the conceptions of duration and identity would

16 See Sarvadarsanasamgraha, ed. V.S. Abhayankar (Poona; BORI, 1951), p. 36
necessarily rule out any notion of change or impermanence. Therefore they were compelled to accept a theory of “creation ex nihilo” (a-sat-karya) of every momentary existence.

The Sautrantikas’ inability to account for the principle of dependence (pratityasamutpada) led them to a major doctrinal conflict pertaining to the concepts of impermanence and continuity, especially in relation to the human person. This eventually contributed to the specific thesis of the Vatsiputriyas, who propounded the view that there is a “real person” (santam pudgalam) who is neither a substance (dravya), like material form (rupa), nor a mere designation (prajnapti), like milk (ksira), this latter being no more than an aggregate of substances. The real person transcended both realistic and nominalistic explanations. The deliberate search for a true and ultimately real person, as recorded in the Kathavatthu, now turns out to be the inescapable solution to a sophisticated philosophical dilemma. The doctrine of the non-substantiality of the human person (pudgala-nairatmya), so faithfully followed by some luminaries of the Buddhist tradition, represents a concerted attempt to resolve or dissolve this dilemma and return to the non-substantialist teachings of the Buddha.

Refutation of the Personalist

The conception of a person, whether ordinary or enlightened, was most susceptible to generating an absolutistic form of thinking. The Kathavatthu is one of the earliest texts to deal with such emergent absolutistic tendencies in the Buddhist tradition. In fact, the conception of person (puggala) is the first issue it takes up for lengthy debate. Unfortunately, its subtle philosophical distinctions and abstruse dialogical arguments are couched in such dry, archaic prose that this important philosophical treatise has remained neglected for a considerable period.

The few available discussions of the philosophical method of the Kathavatthu are completely influenced by ideas introduced by the commentator Buddhaghosa; these are accessible to Western scholars through the summaries of

17 Abhidharmakosabhasya, 461
the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* prepared by Nyanatilika Mahathera, as well as the translation of Buddhaghosa’s commentary, entitled. The Debates Commentary, appearing under the name of B.C. Law (1940).

According to Kalupahana,\(^{18}\) “Unfortunately, his (Nyanatilika Mahathera’s) translations of the text and interpretation of the contents remain faithful to the absolutist or substantiality distinctions introduced into the Theravada tradition, advertently or inadvertently, by Buddhaghosa. One of the most pervasive distinctions pertains to whole and parts. Buddhaghosa espoused the view that the Buddha rejected the whole as being a mere convention (*sammuti*) and the parts as being real, even though the Buddha never used the term “ultimate” (*paramam*) to refer to the parts. Applying this to the problem of the human personality, the medieval Buddhist metaphysicians and most modern scholars reached the hasty conclusion that the personality is unreal, a mere convention, a name, and that the aggregates are ultimately real. In fact, in commenting on the terms *sacca* (absolutely true) and *paramattha* (ultimately real), Buddhaghosa introduces an essentialist explanation in terms of intrinsic nature (*sabhdva*).\(^{19}\) Here, no doubt, is the distinction between the nominal and the real, a distinction that is inconsistent with the explanation of the subject or personality in the early Buddhist tradition.”

Before analyzing the arguments in the *Kathāvatthu* against the conception of an ultimately real person, it is necessary to examine some of the terminology utilized in the text. The terms *sacca* (truth) and *theta* (reality) were used in Sariputta’s rejection of the conception of a person *Atthakavagga* of the *Suttanipāta*, where the Buddha refused to uphold by Yamaka. In the At to recognize any view, conception, or idea as “ultimate” (*paramam*), we find the cerebral form *attha*, instead of the dental *attha*, the latter being often used specifically to refer to the fruit or consequence. Even when the term *paramattha* occurs in the early discourses to refer to *nibbāna*, it is used in the sense of ultimate fruit. Thus there is clear evidence that *attha* and *attha* signified the distinction between reality and fruit, the former representing an absolutist or an essentialist perspective of truth,

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18 Kalupahana, David J, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy — Continuities and Discontinuities*, MLBD, Delhi, Reprint 2006, p.131
19 *Kathāvatthuppakarana Atthakathā*, 10
the latter a pragmatic one. If this is any clue, then Moggaliputta-tisssa's selection of the cerebral forms of the two terms saccikattha (satyaka-artha) and paramattha (parama-artha, contrary to the available editions)\(^{20}\) is significant, for what is being debated is the question of an ultimately real person, and not any and every conception of person.

Keeping in mind this important philosophical use of the terms, we can examine the controversy between the Theravadins and the Persona lists. Presenting the debate between the two groups as he does, Moggaliputta-tissa does not use any special logical formula to refute the Persona list view, but simply allows each party to speak its own language and then proceeds to indicate which language is consistent with that of the Buddha. The Theravadin argues against the Persona list thus:

Theravadin: Is a person obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality?

Personalist: Yes.

Theravadin: Is a person, as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, obtained in the way that an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, is obtained?

Personalist: One should not say so.

Theravadin: Admit your refutation.

If your say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, then you should also say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, as an absolute reality, in the way that an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, is obtained, What you state-namely, you should say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, and at the same time not say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, in the way an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, is obtained—is wrong.

If you should not say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, in the way an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, is obtained, then

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you should not say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality. What you state—namely, you should say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, and not say that a person is obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, in the way an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, is obtained—is wrong.\textsuperscript{21}

The two rather complicated propositions involved in the above argument are distinguished as follows:

1. A person is obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality. 
   (\textit{Upalabbhati puggalo saccikattha-paramatthena}.)

2. An absolute truth, an ultimate reality, is obtained. (\textit{Upalabbhati saccikattho paramattho}.)

Most modern interpreters, like Schrayer, Bochenski, Nyanatiloka, Jayatilleke, and more recently, Jayawickrema,\textsuperscript{22} have been misled by Buddhaghosa into believing that, while the first statement describes the person (\textit{puggala}), the second refers to the aggregates (\textit{khandha}; the real parts to which the person can be ultimately reduced). This led Jayatilleke to symbolize the first proposition as \textit{P} and the second as \textit{Q}. He then worked out a logical calculus on the basis of the refutation provided at the end.

However, what Moggaliputta\text{-}tissa appears to have had in mind is something very different. If we are to understand his language properly, we have to symbolize the two propositions not as \textit{P} and \textit{Q} but as

\[ \text{PTR (person in truth and reality)} \]
\[ \text{TR (truth and reality)}, \]

because Moggaliputta\text{-}tissa's intention is to draw out the implications of the terms \textit{saccikath}\text{-}\textit{tha} and \textit{paramattha}, not the term \textit{puggala}. Hence, when the \textit{Persona} list admits a person as an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, Moggaliputta\text{-}tissa immediately brings up the question regarding an absolute

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Kath\v{a}vatthu}. 1
\textsuperscript{22} See Jayatilleke, Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge, pp.412-415
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Kath\v{a}vatthupakarana At\v{t}hakath\v{a} , xx-xxi}
truth, an ultimate reality. The Persona list neither asserts it nor denies it. Instead, he says that one should not say so (*na vattabbe*). This means that it is an inexpressible (*avyākata*). At this point Moggaliputta-tissa insists that without a conception of an absolute truth, an ultimate reality, one cannot have a conception of a person (or a thing) as an absolute truth, an ultimate reality. (This is not much different from the essentialist trap into which the *Sautrāntikas* of a later date fell.)

The rebuttal of the Personalist is equally significant. Not only does it throw light on the implications of Moggaliputta-tissa’s argument; it also explains the Personalist’s own view of the inexpressible:

**Personalist:** Is a person not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality?

**Theravadin:** Yes.

**Personalist:** is a person not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, in the way an absolute truth, an ultimate reality [*is obtained]*?

**Theravadin:** One should not say so.

**Personalist:** Admit your rebuttal.

If a person is not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, then you should say a person is not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, in the way an absolute truth, an ultimate reality [*is obtained*]. What you state-namely, one should say that a person is not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, and not say that a person is solute truth, as an ultimate reality, and not say that a person is not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, in the way and absolute truth, an ultimate reality [*is obtained*]-is wrong.

What you state-namely, you should say that a person is not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, yet not say that a person is not obtained as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality, in the way an absolute truth, an ultimate reality [*is obtained*]-is wrong.\(^{24}\)

\(^{24}\) *Kathāvatthu*, p.1-2
It is significant that both the Theravadin and Personalist disagree with regard to the first proposition but agree with regard to the second. Both seem to assert that one should not speak (na vattabbe) of an absolute truth or ultimate reality (TR). Yet the Personalist proceeds to assert a person as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality (PTR), while the Theravadin does not. The two standpoints may be represented thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personalist</th>
<th>Theravadin</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PTR</td>
<td>obtained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Inexpressible</td>
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</table>

This means that the Personalist believes that "what cannot be spoken of" (na vattabbe) can still be obtained or experienced, whereas the Theravadin insists that what is unspeakable is also not obtained or not experienced. In other words, the Personalist is attempting to provide empirical content for statements left unexplained (a-vyakata = na vattabbe) by the Buddha.

It is only after clarifying the meaning and use of the primary terms—absolute truth and ultimate reality—that Moggaliputta-tissa continues to debate with the Personalist in the format of the above refutation and rebuttal. What follows is an endless series of propositions relating to the concept of a person—whether it is identical with or different from the aggregates, actions, and so on—all couched in the language of absolute truth and ultimate reality.

The actual refutation comes only after the Personalist has quoted a few passages from the Buddha in support of his concept of a person. These include statements like "There is a person who follows his own welfare" (Atthi puggalo attahitaya patipanno) or "There is one person who arise in the world and who is intent on the welfare of the many, the happiness of the many, with compassion for the world, for the welfare, benefit, and happiness of the many."²⁵ Moggaliputta-tissa recognizes all of them but counters with a series of quotations from the early

²⁵ Kathāvatthu, p.65
discourse that emphasizes the non-substantiality (*anatta*) and emptiness (*sunna*) of all phenomena. Interestingly, the series begins with the famous statement of the Buddha, “All [experienced] phenomena are non-substantial” (*sabbe dhamma anatta*). Moggaliputta-tissa administers the coup d'état by focusing on one conception: “pot of ghee” (*sappi-kumbha*). When the Personalist admits that the Buddha spoke of a “pot of ghee”, Moggaliputta-tissa poses a question that probes in two directions, namely, the author and the constitution of the pot of ghee: “Is there someone who makes a pot of ghee?”

Explicitly, the question pertains to the author of the “pot of ghee.” This is what the Personalist wants to prove. Implicitly, however, Moggaliputta-tissa is raising the question of the constitution of the “pot of ghee” itself. Therefore he quotes a passage from the Buddha that refers to a whole series of conceptions relating to containers (such as “pot”, “pan”, “bag”, and “pool”) as well as to the contained (such as “ghee”, “oil”, honey”, “molasses”, “milk”, and “water”). These are:

1. Pot of oil (*thela-kumbha*)
2. Pot of honey (*madhu-kumbha*)
3. Pot of molasses (*phanita-kumbha*)
4. Pot of milk (*khira-kumbha*)
5. Pot of water (*udaka-kumbha*)
6. Pan of water (*paniya-thalaka*)
7. Bag of water (*paniya-kosaka*)
8. Pool of water (*paniya-saravaka*)

To which are added,

9. Regular meal (*nicca-bhatta*)
10. Thick broth (*dhuva-yagu*)

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26 ibid
27 ibid, p.68
28 Ibid. 69
The attempt here is to show how concepts are interchangeable. For example, the term “pot” (kumbha) is common to all the phrases in the first category, and that term is replaced by three other terms in the second category. In the first category there are several different liquids, including water, while in the second category there is one liquid, namely, water (pañīya). In the first list, the common term is for the container, and in the second, it is for the contained. Even though common terms occur in the eight phrases listed, no one of these concepts is identical with another.

The last two phrases are quoted to show that the belief in permanence generated by the apparent “sameness” of concepts, expressed by terms like “permanence” (nicca) and “substantial” (dhuva), can actually imply something else. Thus one can speak of a regular meal instead of a permanent meal (nicca-bhatta), still utilizing the same terms. Similarly, a “substantial broth” (dhuva-yagu) can mean a thick broth and need not necessarily imply permanence. Moggaliputta-tissa concludes his argument by raising the question, “Is there any broth that is permanent, substantial, eternal, and not subject to change?” The Personalist responds in the same old fashion: “One should not say so.” Moggaliputta-tissa retorts, “In that case, do not speak of a person as an absolute truth, as an ultimate reality.

Realists

The second important topic of controversy in the Kathāvatthu is the real existence of “everything” (sabbam) at all times (sabbadā). The rationalization for this view seems to be that, if there is no mysterious agent possessing the aggregates, at least the aggregates must be real and ultimate. This real and ultimate existence cannot be restricted to the past and present only, but must be extended to future events as well. The absolutist vein in this speculation is that uncertainty relating to future events ought to be overcome, and this can be achieve

29 Kathāvatthu, 1.6
primarily by admitting that “nothing comes out of nothing”. Hence, the theory that—“the essence or reality of everything exists at all times.”

The Kathāvatthu, of course, makes no attempt to define that essence or reality. That definition appears with the philosophical school known as Sarvāstivāda, a name derived from the very doctrine of “everything exists” (sabbam athi, Skt. Sarvam asti) discussed in the Kathāvatthu. Faced with the difficulties of explaining continuity in the contest of a doctrine of moments, as in the case of the Sautrāntikas, the Sarvāstivādins distinguished between a thing, even, or phenomenon and its intrinsic nature (svabhāva). This is one of the most explicit and unqualified essentialist views ever to appear in the Buddhist philosophical tradition. It is best illustrated by the ideas of one of its most prominent teachers, Dharmatrata.30

According to Dharmatrata, a thing, event, or phenomenon (dharma) passes through the three periods of time: past, present, and future. In that process, what changes is the manner or mode (bhava) of its appearance, not its substance (dravya). It is this substance that came to be referred to as intrinsic nature (svabhāva). In the sphere of physical phenomena, the intrinsic nature is manifest, for example, in a piece of gold. A piece of gold may appear in different shapes or be given dissimilar shapes at different times, and these shapes or forms are relative to various conditions. Nevertheless, gold remains the same. In conceptual terms, gold remains a hard word.

Interestingly, Dharmatrata avoids a positive assertion that there is a permanent (nitya) element over and above the changing forms; probably realizing that this form of assertion would openly contradict the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence. Yet such an evasion does not help Dharmatrata, for the distinction he is making will remain meaningless unless he is omitted to the view that the so-called substance is permanent and eternal.

The example taken from physical nature (in this case, gold) to justify the conception of substance is very appealing. However, when the explanation pertains to mental events, a similar substantiality conception can lead to

unpalatable conclusions. Thus the recognition of a substantialist conception of
pain or suffering (duhkha) is seen to lead to a pessimistic view of life.31 This fact
is recorded in Vasubandh’s Abhidharmakosabhāsya, where it is said, “According
to some, there indeed is no feeling of happiness. Everything is suffering.”32 Such
pessimism, it is hoped, can be counterbalanced by an equally strong optimism.
But the latter requires another essentialist conception, which, in fact, was what the
Buddhist metaphysician was proposing. Hence, his assertion that- “Happy
feelings do indeed exist in terms of unique character” (asty eva svalaksanatah
sukha vedanā).33 This is no more than the recognition of non-reducible
conceptions or conceptual schemes, which is the result of an essentialist
perspective.

How this conception of self-nature or substance (svabhava) led to a
paradoxical situation regarding causation is evident from another conception
introduced by the Sarvastivadins that of Karana-hetu, generally translated as
“material cause”. However, its definition as “a material cause is [everything]
other than itself” (svato ‘nye karanahetuttih)34 would mean that karana as a relation
(hetu) bears it to all and only the things that “do not bear it to themselves” (svato
‘nyea). To take a more popular example from Western philosophy,35 a barber is a
unique person so long as he shaves others, not himself. If a person were to shave
himself, the conception of barber becomes superfluous, for the service rendered
by a barber is needed only by those who do not shave themselves. This raises the
question of whether the barber shaves himself. The answer to this question
undercuts the definition of a barber. The search for uniqueness (svbhāva) thus
leads to a paradox.

The above is the more sophisticated way of arguing that essentially
everything exists (sarvam asti). “When the Kathāvatthu controverted the view
that “everything exists,” it was not refuting an imaginary or harmless conception

31 Abhidharmakosabhāsya, p.329
32 Ibid, p.330
33 Ibid, p.331
34 Abhidharmakosa, 2.50; see Abhidharmakosabhāsya, p.82
35 Kalupahana, David J, A History of Buddhist Philosophy – Continuities and Discontinuities,
MLBD, Delhi, Reprint 2006, p.129

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but one that was to grow cancerous, hence requiring the services of some of the
best analytical minds—those of a linguistic philosopher (Nagarjuna), a psychologist
(Vasubandhu), and a logician (Dignaga)."36

Refutation of the Realist

Moggaliputta-tissa begins by asking whether “everything exists” (sabbamatthi).37 The Realist answers in the positive. Yet Moggaliputta tissa’s attempt to get a definition of what “everything” means—whether it implies all things “at all times” (sabbada), “in every way” (sabbena), “in everything” (sabbesu), “in a unique way” (ayogam katva), “even inregard to the non-existent” (yam pi n’ atthi), and, finally, “in the way of views” (ditthi)—is frustrated by the Relist, who continues to insist that “one should not say so” (na h’evam vattabbe).

Moving away from the general notion of “everything”, Moggaliputta tissa asks, “Does the past exist?” to which the Realist has a positive answer. Moggaliputta tissa reminds him that, according to the Buddha, the past is generally referred to as “what has ceased, gone away, changed, gone to its end, and disappeared.”. When he admits this, Moggaliputta tissa insists that he should not say that the past exists, and so on with regard to the other periods of time.

Thinking the conception of “exists” as it relates to the present (paccuppanna), Moggaliputta tissa argues that if we are to follow this specific definition we have to say that the present exists because it has not ceased, not gone away, not changed, not gone to its end, not disappeared. However, if one applies the same definition of exists to the past and the future, the Realist is in difficulty—hence his response that “one should not say so.”

Still more specific issues are taken up next. The question now revolves around the existence of past aggregates like material form (rupa), and once again the Realist takes refuge in its inexpressibility. Moggaliputta tissa then makes a distinction between “present [-ness]” (paccuppanna) and “form” (rupa), and wants

36 ibid
37 Kathavatthu, p.1.5

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to know which of these the Realist would designate as existing and which he would perceive as passing away. Thus, when a present material form ceases, it is presentness (paccuppanbhava) that it abandons, not its intrinsic material form (rupabhava). The realist cannot disagree. However, when the question is whether this means abandoning its intrinsic material form (rupabhava), the Realist falls back on inexpressibility. Yet when the same question is put to him in negative form ("Does the material form not abandon its material formness [rupabhava]?"), the Realist answers in the positive. Moggaliputta tissa immediately asks whether this does not imply the permanence of material form. The Realist is once again silent.

The debate proceeds in this manner, involving almost every phenomenon (dhamma) recognized in the Buddha’s discourses, every possible combination, and temporal periods as well. The only passage the Realist quotes from the discourses of the Buddha to justify his contention that what belongs to the past, present, and future exists is one that defines the five aggregates. The Realist argues:

*Did not the Buddha state: “Monks, whatever material form belonging to the past, present, and future, subjective or objective, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, remote or immediate, this is called the aggregate of form”?*

This is only a reference to what may be designated or conceived as material form, without any implication that all of them exist in the present. Moggaliputta tissa’s rebuttal consists in quoting the most significant statement of the Buddha explaining the three linguistic conventions relating to time:

*There are these three linguistic conventions or usages of words or terms which are distinct, have been distinct in the past, are distinct in the present, and will be distinct in the future, and which are not ignored by the wise brahmans and recluses. Whatever material form (rupa) has been has ceased to be is past and* 

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38 Kathavatthu, p.140
has changed is called, reckoned, and termed “has been” (ahosi), and not reckoned as “exists” (atthi) or as “will be” (bhavissati)...

[This is repeated for the other aggregates: feeling, perception, disposition, and consciousness.] Whatever material form has not arisen nor come to be is called, reckoned, or termed “will be” (bhavissati), and it is not reckoned as “exists” (atthi) or “has been” (ahosi)...

Whatever material form has arisen and has manifested itself is called, reckoned, or termed “exists” (atthi), and is not reckoned as “has been” (ahosi) nor as “will be” (bhavissati).39

In addition, Moggaliputta tissa cites a passage from the discourses wherein the Buddha refused to admit a visual faculty (cakkhu) through which one could perceive a Buddha of the past.40 This is followed by a reference to another passage in which a monk named Nandaka declares that in the past he was overwhelmed by greed, which was unwholesome, and that now he is not, which is wholesome.41

Finally, the Realist and Moggaliputta tissa battle it out with two passages, one which the former believes establishes his contention that the future exists (anāgatam atthi), because here the Buddha speaks about the possibility of rebirth, but which the latter contends negates the future. The argument proceeds thus:

Realist: Should it not be said that the future exists?

Theravadin: Yes.

Realist: Did not the Buddha state: “Monks, there is greed, there is delight, there is craving in elation to gross food42. Consciousness is established therein, and grows. Wherein consciousness is established and grows, therein is the entry of the psychophysical personality. Wherever the psycho-physical personality exists, therein is the amplification of dispositions. Wherever there is amplification of dispositions, therein is future birth. Wherever there is future birth, there exists

39 Kathāvatthu, p.140-141 (cf. S 3.70-73)
40 ibid, p.142 (cf. S 4.52-53)
41 ibid
42 kabalinika ahara, one of the four nutritions that contributes to rebirth, the others being contact (phassa), volition (manosancetana), and consciousness (vinnana)

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continued rebirth, decay, and death. Wherever there is rebirth, and death, that is sorrow, that is worry, and that is anxiety”?

Theravadin: Yes [he did].

Realist: In that case, future exists.\textsuperscript{43}

Moggaliputta tissa quotes the passage that immediately follows, wherein the Buddha outlines the negative consequences of not having greed, delight, and craving in relation to gross food.\textsuperscript{44} The Realist admits that in terms of this passage one cannot assert the existence of the future. It seems that the Realist failed to understand that the two passages represent an instance where the Buddha applied the general formula of the principle of dependence in its positive and negative forms to explain how rebirth can take place and how it can be stopped.

\textbf{Transcendentalists}

The third major problem analyzed in the Kathavatthu is the nature of transcendence attributes to the enlightened One. This is a continuation of the same kind of absolutist thinking that was prominent during the Buddha’s day. At first sight, the tendency to view the Buddha as someone who has totally transcended the world, and nirvana as a state of eternal life after death, may seem to be the product of an ordinary untrained, uncritical mind. It is a tendency that is generally said to go hand in hand with confidence or faith that leans toward devotion. It is assumed that this tendency is not found in an intellectual, a trained or a critical human person. This, however, is not always the case. Such tendencies are often uncovered in the intellectual and the non-intellectual, the trained and the untrained, the critical and the non-critical, for they are a product of uncertainty regarding life, which can cause anxiety in almost anyone.

The available evidence seems to suggest that the conception of the Buddha’s transcendence was promoted by the scholastic Sārvāstivādins rather than the Theravada school.\textsuperscript{43,44}
than by the *Mahāsanghikas*, who are said to have broken away from the more conservative *Sthaviravādins* (Pali, *Theravādins*) during the fourth century B.C. In fact, one of two tests that openly espoused the total transcendence of the Buddha, namely, the *Lalitavistara*, is considered to be a *Sarvāstivāda* work. It was not impossible for a conception of transcendence to emerge in the *Sarvāstivāda* School, for even when the Buddha was living, questions about transcendence emerged in connection with speculation about the nature of his knowledge and understanding. Absolute omniscience (*sabbāññutā*, Skt. *Sarvajñatva*), involving an unlimited range of perception, both spatial and temporal, was attributed to the Buddha despite his refusal to claim it. One of the major difficulties in claiming such omniscience is the inability to perceive past and future events in the same way present events can be perceived. However, if we accept a substantial entity (*svabhāva*) or an essential quality (*svalaksana*), it is not impossible to maintain that it exists in an atemporal sense. In spite of the Buddha’s warning against such assertions, the *Sarvāstivādins* insisted on precisely this form of existence, that is, existence during all three periods of time (*sabbadā atthi*). The corollary of this view can be that, if events, things, or phenomena exist in this form, perceiving such form would mean knowledge of all events, things, or phenomena at all times. This is the absolute form of omniscience that the *Sarvāstivādins* attributed to the Buddha, an attribution based not on the uncritical understanding of an ordinary person but on the extremely sophisticated rationalization of an intellectual. Of course, the idea is put forward by an intellectual, the uninitiated person is apt to follow it without much hesitation.

The *Sarvāstivāda* conception of existence, providing a foundation for a theory of omniscience, represents only the positive dimension of a conception of transcendence. However, the dimension of transcendence that became more popular and pervasive, especially after the Buddha’s demise, was the negative one, which was in some ways incompatible with the realistic outlook of the *Sarvāstivādins*. Hence we have to look elsewhere for this more popular conception of transcendence.

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The negative dimension of transcendence involves the negation of three conceptions: (1) the historical personality of the Buddha, (2) the authenticity of the doctrine expounded by the historical Buddha and recorded in the discourses, and (3) the relevance of the Sangha as the living embodiment of the doctrine. In other worlds, what is required is the total replacement of the popular religion based on the historical trinity by one that is founded on what may be called an ahistorical trinity. Once again, this can be the work of a sophisticated intellect rather than an ordinary, uneducated disciple.

It is of immense interest to note that the three points debated in the Kathavatthu pertain precisely to the historical personality of the Buddha (XVIII. 1), the authenticity of the discourses (XVIII. 2), and the significance of the Sangha (XVII.6-11). It is also significant that the controversial views are attributed by the later commentators to the Vaitulyavādins, not the Sarvāstivādins. The commentary on the Kathavatthu (XVII. 6) equates Vaitulyavada with mahasunnatavada or “the theory of great emptiness.” If this later identification is valid, it would mean that Moggaliputta tissa was confronted by a theory of transcendence advocated not by the Sarvāstivādins but by a school that was propounding an extreme form of emptiness (śūnyatā).

Even a most superficial reading of some of the later Buddhist texts, sutras as well as sāstras, would seem to indicate the existence of two theories of “emptiness,” a moderate view and an extreme view. The moderate view can be associated with the middle path advocated by philosophers like Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu, who emphasized “emptiness” (śūnyatā) without denying the empirical or historical content of Buddhist discourse. In contrast, the “great emptiness” (maha-sunyata) seems to wipe out empirical and historical content completely. This idea comes into prominence in the Saddharmapundarika-sūtra, which openly denies the historical Buddha, rejects the doctrinal significance of the early discourses, and condemns the community (sangha), including the early

46 Kathavatthupakarana Atthakathā, p.167, mahasunnatavadasankhatan ca vetullakanam Jayawickrema emends it to mahapunnavadi-
disciples of the Buddha like Sāriputta and Moggalāna; it reaches its culmination in the Lehkāvatāra-sūtra.

Refutation of the Transcendentalist

Although references to the life of the Buddha are scanty and brief, there are extremely valuable and genuine discourses, such as the Padaṇasutta, the Ariyapariyesana-sutta, and the Mahāparinibbāna-suttanāta, to name a few, that contain important historical information. For this reason, when some of the Buddhists who lived before and during the time of Emperor Asoka were influenced by absolutistic thinking and wanted to explain the Buddhist doctrine as a form of "transcendentalism" (lokuttaravāda), they were compelled to deny the historicity of the Buddha’s personality.

The debate between Moggaliputta tissa and the Transcendentalist, as recorded in the Kathavatthu, reads as follows:

Theravadin: Should it not be said that the Buddha, the Fortunate One, inhabited this world of human beings?

Transcendentalist: Yes [it should not be said].

Theravadin: But aren’t there shrines, parks, monasteries, villages, towns, kingdoms, and countries where the Buddha lived?

Transcendentalist: Yes [there are].

Theravadin: If there are shrines, parks monasteries, villages, towns, kingdoms, and countries where the Buddha lived, then you should say that the Buddha inhabited this world.47

Moggaliputta tissa raises two more questions:

1. Is it not the case that the Buddha was born in Lumbini, attained enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree, established the principle of

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47 Kathavatthu, p.559
righteousness (dhammacakkha) at Baranasi, abandoned the disposition to live at the shrine called Capala, and passed away at Kusinara.48

2. Did not the Buddha make the following statements: "Once, monks, I was living at Ukkattha, at the foot of the giant sala-tree, in the forest called Subhage"; "Once, monks, before my enlightenment, I was living at Uruvela by the Goatherd's Banyan", [and similar references to Rajagaha, Savatthi, and Vesali, all of which are reports in the first person (i.e., viharami), not in the third person (viharati), as is often reported by Ananda]?49

   The transcendentalist answers in the positive. However, he then raises a counter question:

   Transcendentalist: Did the Fortunate One inhabit the world of human beings?
   Theravadin: Yes.
   Transcendentalist: Is it not the case that the Fortunate One, born in the world, raised in the world, and having overcome the world, lived unsmeared by the world?
   Theravadin: Yes [it is the case].
   Transcendentalist: If it is the case that the Fortunate One, born in the world, raised in the world, and, having overcome the world, lived unsmeared by the world, then you should not say: "The Buddha, the Fortunate One, inhabited the world of human beings"50

   The debate ends here, leaving the impression that the Transcendentalist has carried the day. Going back to the passage that the Transcendentalist was quoting, namely, the Buddha's conversation with the brahman Dona, where the Buddha refused to identify himself with a human (manussa), Moggaliputta tissa seems to have been reluctant to assert that the Buddha remained in the "human world" (manussa loka). What is surprising is that Moggaliputta tissa makes no attempt indicate this distinction to the Transcendentalist.

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid. p.559-60
50 Ibid. p.560
However, when the Transcendentalist wants to deny the authority of the Buddha's discourses, Moggaliputta tissa seems to be more forceful. The first part of the argument reads thus:

Theravadin: Should it not be said; “the doctrine was preached by the Buddha, the Fortunate One”?  
Transcendentalist: Yes [it should not be said]. 
Theravadin: By whom was it preached?  
Transcendentalist: Preached by the created form (abhinimmitena).
Theravadin: The created form of the Victor is the Teacher, the Perfectly enlightened One, the All-knowing, the All-seeing, the Master of the Doctrine, the Source of the Doctrine? 
Transcendentalist: One should not say so.
Theravadin: Should it not be said: “The doctrine was preached by the Buddha, the Fortunate One”? 
Transcendentalist: Yes [it should not be said]. 
Theravadin: By whom was it preached?  
Transcendentalist: It was preached by the Venerable Ananada.
Theravadin: Venerable Ananada [then] is the Victor, the Teacher, the Perfectly Enlightened One, the all-knowing, the All-seeing, the Master of the Doctrine, the Source of the Doctrine.
Transcendentalist: one should not say so.51 

At the end of this debate, Moggaliputta tissa quotes statements from the discourses, once again expressed in the first person by the Buddha, to justify the view that the doctrine, as embodied in the discourses, was actually preached by the historical Buddha.

The Transcendentalist, having questioned the historical personality of the Buddha as well as the authenticity of the doctrine embodied in the early discourses, continues to argue against the Theravadins regarding the status of the Community (sangha).52 The specific topics debated are:

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51 *Kathavatthu*, p.560  
52 *Kathavatthu*, p.549-557
1. Does the Community accept gifts (dakkhina)?
2. Does the Community purify gifts (i.e., does a gift become pure by being offered to the Community, which is pure)?
3. Does the Community actually enjoy the gifts (i.e., are the gifts real)?
4. Do gifts to the Community bear fruit?
5. Do gifts to the Buddha hear fruit?
6. Does the purity of gifts depend on the giver or the receiver?

The questions seem to indicate the Transcendentalist's reluctance to recognize the usefulness of the Community of disciples, that is, those who follow the path and, in doing so, benefit the ordinary people. Interestingly, most of the questions focus on "gift" (dakkhina). The gifts of food, clothing, and shelter provided by laypeople to those who are devoting themselves to spiritual development have generally been regarded as meritorious. The view that the purity of gifts depends on the purity of the recipient, who is himself struggling for perfection, was not acceptable to the Transcendentalist, who was not even willing to recognize the historical personality of the Buddha. Denying the historical Buddha and down playing reality of the human person seeking enlightenment and perfection, the transcendentalist was prepared to evaluate a gift only in relation to a giver (dayaka).53

What emerges from this debate is philosophically significant. The Transcendentalist, who rejects the historical Buddha, the content of his discourses, the Community that seeks perfection, cannot faithfully admit the reality of the giver of a gift. All he can do is accept the simple act of giving. This would mean that an action is to be evaluated on its own, not in relation to anything else. The absolutist conception of "duty" is clearly on the horizon.

53 Ibid. 556