Asian Philosophy Vol. 5 No. 2 Oct. 1995, pp. 127-149. Diacretic marks absent in copy

Buddhist functionalism--instrumentality reaffirmed

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ABSTRACT
This article seeks to determine if Buddhism can best be understood as primarily a functionalist tradition. In pursuing this, some analogies arise with various Western strands--particularly James' 'pragmatism', Dewey's 'instrumentalism', Braithwaite's 'empiricism', Wittgenstein's 'language games', and process thinkers like Hartshorne and Jacobson. Within the Buddhist setting, the traditional Theravada framework of sila (ethics/precepts), samadhi (meditation) and panna (wisdom) are examined, together with Theravada rituals. Despite some 'correspondence' approaches with regard to truth claim statements, e.g. vipassana 'insight' and Abhidharma analysis, a more profound functionalism seems present. This is even more clear with the Mahayana. Apart from the basic and explicit Mahayana underpinning of upaya, the Madhyamika, Tantras and Ch'an (Zen) schools are clearly functionalist. Moreover, despite initially seeming more 'absolutist' in their positions, other strands like the Pure Land and Nichiren faith traditions, and Dharmakirti's Vijnanavada epistemology can also be tied into this functionalist setting.

TEXT

Buddhism suffers from a danger, the danger of philosophy! Such a statement seems at first sight ridiculous. After all, one only has to look at the Abhidharma strand in the Theravada to see rigorous analysis; or within the Mahayana at the Madhyamika to encounter dialectics, or Dharmakirti to see epistemological positions and 'proofs'. However, the thesis of this study is to suggest that if one sees Buddhism as 'just' a system of metaphysical abstraction and logic, then one has missed the boat, or to use a traditional Buddhist metaphor the raft! What is proposed is to look at Buddhism's manifestation of a profoundly functional, i.e. instrumental, disposition.

However, some complex methodological issues are raised. Instrumentalism and functionalism are Western philosophical terms, replete with Western philosophical associations; indeed, philosophy itself is a Western term. Can such Western frameworks be properly and meaningfully used with reference to Buddhism, which has its own particular Asian cultural nuances, developments, assumptions and wider associations? Cross-cultural comparison of ideas and beliefs can be prone to misleading simplicity through ignoring such differing internal frames of reference and associations. However, in today's 'global village', questions of comparative philosophy and belief systems are inevitably emerging. Buddhism has anyway already expanded out from India and adapted across a whole range of Asian cultures, most notably in entering China. Moreover, within its early expansion, Buddhism had also come up against and had to explain itself within Hellenic norms in northwestern India, Bactria and Alexandria in the 3rd century BCE. [1] A Buddhist adaptation in the West should then be possible, and with it the possibility of

assessing it in the light of Western terms and values, as well as vice versa. Moreover Western Buddhists are now arising, able to use both Western philosophical and Buddhist terms meaningfully and authentically within their own respective parameters. [2] Indeed by attempting a Western assessment of Buddhism, 'core basic Buddhist themes should thereby be highlighted.

In such a setting of caution yet speculation, the use of the term 'profound' is deliberate, as deep 'spiritual' transformative concerns do seem to underpin this marked Buddhist disposition. [3] To argue that Buddhism is profoundly functionalist or instrumental in character, is admittedly a philosophical-sounding evaluation but it takes Buddhism away from two extremes; one, the extreme of rarefied abstract metaphysical speculation; second, the extreme of rigid credalism and dogmatics. In short, echoing a popular Buddhist term, rather a 'Middle Path'.

Before proceeding, the terms 'instrumentalism' and 'functionalism' need some clarification. This is not quite related to the argument conducted by Hoffman over how far Buddhism is, or is not, a form of empiricism. [4] Southwold does use the term instrumentalism in his study of Sri Lankan Buddhism, but perhaps in an overly theoretical sociological way. [5] A clearer sense of the term 'instrumentalism' comes with the US philosopher and educationalist John Dewey (1859-1952), who developed the pragmatism of William James. For Dewey, ideas and concepts are instruments functioning in experienced situations and determining future consequences. Ideas are plans of actions or instruments that arise in response to a problem, and serve their purposes by solving the problem. Propositions are thus to be regarded as a means in a 'process' of enquiry; it is not so much that they should be judged as true or false but rather they should be assessed in terms of being effective or ineffective. Ideas and practice work together as instruments: ideas relate experiences, and are in turn tested by experience. [6] Here then, we shall use the term as indicating that the 'issue' under study (Buddhism) is understood by its adherents to have the (primary) function (hence the term functionalism) of being an instrument for bringing about certain other esteemed changes, of an experiential nature.

Another term to clarify is 'Buddhism'. Is it a supposed central core (a basic shared Buddhism), is it a supposed earlier form (Theravada), is it a supposed more developed higher form (Mahayana), is it a supposed more truthful form (e.g. particular sectarian claims), or does functionalism provide a way through these seemingly rival truth claims? Theravada and Mahayana forms of Buddhism will be considered in turn, with particular reference to instrumentalist nuances, through using 'internal' Buddhist testimony and appropriate outside comparisons.

(A) Theravada Buddhism

Here, four basic lines of reference will be followed, namely: Theravada Buddhism's own traditional three-fold enumeration of itself as involving (1) ethics (sila), (2) meditation (samadhi) and (3) wisdom (panna), together with a further section on (4) Theravada rituals and scripture.

(1) Sila

At first sight a paradoxical situation emerges with regard to ethics. Buddhism has long had a traditional listing of ethical norms, the precepts (silas), within which were the five general precepts (pancha-silas)--to abstain from killing, stealing, sensuous misconduct, lying and clouding intoxicants. In addition there are five further precepts bearing on the conduct of monks and nuns, e.g. not eating after midday, avoiding dance and other frivolous entertainment, abstaining from perfumes, refraining from sleeping in high comfortable beds and not handling money. A normative ideal seems able to be immediately established for Buddhism. However, a paradox arises, as we also encounter comments by scholars like Harvey that 'having no real "oughts", Buddhist ethics . . .' [7] Instrumentalism perhaps provides a key for resolving this seeming paradox, shown in looking at general approaches, together with some traditional and topical ethical issues.

Two important points can immediately be made. One is that sila (virtue) is the first of the three characterisations of the Buddhist path (sila-samadhi-panna); with its specific manifestations (right actions, etc.) being part of the wider eightfold Path, directly identified as the 'means' (Fourth Noble Truth) towards gaining the 'end'-enlightenment or Nirvana (Third Noble Truth). This suggests a role for ethics that is not so much static 'oughts', but rather is a dynamic procession. Second, is the Anguttara Nikaya assertion "good conduct leads gradually up to the summit [for] one state just causes another state to swell, one state just causes the fulfilment of another state, for the sake of going from the not beyond to the beyond", with sila fostering freedom from remorse, inner states of gladness, joy, meditative calm (samatha), insight (vipassana) and liberation. [8] Such a causal relationship explains why Sangharakshita judges that "sila is prescribed for the worldling, not as an end in itself but as the means of weakening the unwholesome states of mind from which wrong speech and wrong bodily action proceeds". [9] Behind all this is a further significant consideration, for, to quote Harvey, "in Buddhism, moral virtue is the foundation of the spiritual path, though a fixed attachment to ethical precepts and vows is seen as a hindering 'fetter'" [10] Sensitivity on dangers of attachment is particularly central across Buddhism.

Specific ethical issues seem coloured by concern with effectiveness, practicality and instrumentality. This is why Premasiri cautions that "in making moral choices in such dilemmatic situations, one cannot abide by any hard and fast rules. One needs to take into account the total situation, motives and other moral factors, and then make one's choice with a full sense of responsibility."[11] Nevertheless Buddhism has very clear cut traditional stances. For example the First Precept injunction against killing has generally resulted in an aversion to abortion and abhorrence towards (often female) infanticide. Yet there is a subtle and important caution over rigid totalistic mechanistic application of surface precepts. Saddhatissa puts this particularly well, with respect to the seemingly straightforward issue of alcoholic drink, the focus of the Fifth Precept:

> The matter of drinking is only briefly alluded to in the Buddhist texts, the causes being of far greater import . . . The Precepts were never ends in themselves, confined to the mundane life but were the essential

> preliminaries, as also the permanent accompaniments, to attaining to the Highest State . . . the Lalitavistara describes the Buddha as 'the great remover of darts (galya)'. The 'darts' consisted in the following: lust (raga), hatred (dosa), delusion (moha), pride (mana), false views (ditthi), grief (soka) and indecision (kathamakatha). They are the equivalent of the Fetters binding one to the rounds of rebirth. [12]

Here the key would seem to be that it is not so much drink in itself that is flawed, but rather that in practice it can often be the instrument or channel through which underlying lust, hatred, delusion, pride and grief emerge. Drink then actually becomes a secondary issue underneath the primary issues of those flawed consequences. It is not so much that Buddhism rejects alcohol itself, but rather it is even more (or ultimately) concerned with chopping off possible underlying negative roots and consequences. In the precept against 'clouding intoxicants' it would seem that it is the (instrumentalist) adjective/quality of 'clouding' that is the ultimate problem rather than the noun/object of 'drink' in itself. This sort of perspective would seem to also operate for the other (more?) basic precepts against killing, stealing, sensuous misconduct and lying.

Wider surrounding traditional ethical issues also illustrate similar instrumentalist concerns. In larger social terms, a significant early Buddhist stance was to reject the caste system (in its hereditary rigid sense), which had a practical result of potentially opening up Enlightenment to all. Here there may be philosophical analogies with a utilitarian Benthamite outlook of 'the greatest good for the greatest number'. Giving (dana) has traditionally been for Buddhism a primary ethical activity. While this can be tied into being a tangible support by the laity towards the monastic sangha, we could note the practical training result of lowering egotistic attachment, though doing it for narrow karmic benefit could cloud this.

In a traditional yet also modern vein, how does Buddhism see the family? Again one encounters a surface situation, underpinned with more fundamental potential 'purposes'. For Premasiri "the family is considered a unit within which the layman can have his basic spiritual training, by converting his self-centred urge for pleasure seeking into a responsible and dutiful care for their children. Parents in their self sacrificing care for their children, sublimate the sexual urge in the more wholesome relationships of parental love".[13] We might say that this is idealism or monk's theory rather than how families actually operate in Buddhist communities. Perhaps, but nevertheless from a 'normative' point of view Premasiri's choice of the term 'training' seems highly functionalist, i.e. the family as an instrument bringing about more significant central changes in the individual. Analogous situations seem apparent in the more specific areas of marriage forms, sexuality and family planning, where Rita Gross has presented historical variations of outward form coupled with a consistency over inner instrumentalist criteria.[14]

Another ethical area is work. One immediate and traditional sign of Buddhism's practical engagement in this issue is that Right Livelihood forms one of the links in the Noble Eightfold Path, i.e. it is part of training, part of that route towards transformation. From it arose the normative Buddhist stance against livelihood in weapons, animals, flesh,

intoxicants and poisons. Here some attention has been paid to the elaboration of Buddhist economics in recent years. Alexandrin pointed out that "Buddhist economics can be defined as that type of economics which stem from or keeps continuing the experience of enlightenment or that which provides a ground which sustains or contributes to enlightenment."[15] Thus he makes the subtle but important instrumentalist point that "economics was meant to be both ethical and useful".[16]. This echoes the point to be made later on about the Buddhist dharma being both truthful and useful, but with the useful aspect perhaps being crucial. Schumacher's short study Buddhist Economics brings out more precise manifestations of this:

> The Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least three-fold: to give a man the chance to utilise and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his ego-centredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence.[17]

Here the crucial feature picked up by Schumacher is that work enables faculties to be utilised and developed, that it enables one to 'overcome ego-centredness', thereby undercutting trsna-driven egotistic clinging greed. Schumacher's own use of the word 'function' highlights this instrumentalist Buddhist approach towards ethics. Functionalist nuances can be discerned in Buddhist stances towards the important modem environmental challenge. Buddhism declared itself a Middle Path (e.g. between materialism and asceticism, world attachment and world rejection) of practice and attitudes, based on non-grasping. Abuse of the environment in fact reflects and further generates negative attitudes of greed, grasping and ignorance, consequently further hindering spiritual advancement. Conversely, appropriate environmental action could be an effective instrument to manifest and deepen spiritual development and combat negative attitudes.[18]

Another traditional, yet topical and revealing matter arises with violence. This can be pursued with Premasiri's perception that "Buddhism's opposition to violence stems from the analysis that violence is psychologically rooted in dosa (hatred) . . . a dispositional trait that is conditioned by malicious behaviour and, in turn, determines the way human beings behave. It is the fundamental cause of a whole cycle of violence from which individuals and society find it impossible to escape. Therefore no matter what the intended merits of a projected social order . . . if it is established by violence, it will have to be perpetuated by violence, for dosa can only beget dosa. Social change through non-violence is the only realistic path to a stable social order . . . The propensity to violence is addictive and causally forges a chain of reciprocal links." [19] Here, Premasiri sees 'realism' as a key consideration, i.e. violence becoming an instrument for further violence. Since dosa, its psychological root, is one of the three basic defilements (klesas) blocking human development and full realisation, the ethical stance taken is crucially governed by wider deep instrumental concerns.

In this whole area of ethical action, Premasiri fittingly sums up the role played by these real underlying psychological forces in what he considers 'the consequentialist ethic of

Buddhism' which 'attempts to give directions to people who are disillusioned with the false promises of greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and ignorance (moha), and to enable them, by the use of untapped resources to make discoveries of lasting happiness in their own moral experience.' [20] There is an overall sense of ethics 'enabling' one to tap into resources, development and experience--very much an instrumentalist ethic, ethics as a means for changing the individual. As shall be seen in the conclusion, this has some analogies with Braithwaite's emphasis on the 'use' to which ethics are put; nevertheless a Kantian critique would state that an instrumentalist ethic is a contradiction in terms, as what is good is good in itself, rather than in terms of consequences.

Morality is strong in a normative sense, but is also seen for very pragmatic practical reasons as needing to be grounded with other dimensions of Buddhism, notably meditation (samadhi). Thus a subtle point emerges, namely that ethics does not just exist with other elements of the Eightfold Path, and does not just lead to other elements; but that it is also intertwined with other features, in a self-corrective interdependent transformative mode. Modem Theravada figures like Saddhatissa consequently have interesting, intertwining and ultimately practical considerations on this. In responding to the Dhammapada's opening words "Mind precedes all things; all things have mind foremost, are mind-made", for him, "here we have the key to Buddhist ethics, and in fact to the whole teaching, for Buddhism is essentially a 'mind culture'. Any improvement or retrograde step must occur initially in the mind of the person concerned whether it proceeds to external manifestations immediately or at a later date, so that the importance of being aware of [i.e. mindfulness] and of controlling, one's thoughts is continually stressed."[21] Premasiri similarly considers that for Buddhism, 'the highest end is the total elimination of lobha (lust, greed), dosa (hatred), and moha (delusion). When the Buddha is requested to state what in his opinion is moral evil, he mentions these 3 psychological dispositions. Any mental trait that hinders clarity of the mind and mental composure, and which becomes an impediment to Nibbana [Nirvana], is considered evil.'[22] Again we have an instrumental perspective. Ethics is important in itself and for others, but ultimately for importance seems, because of serving, or functioning, a means to deeper and more profound liberating ends.

A Buddhist 'mean' (or Middle Path) emerges. Ethics or meditation on their own could slip into one sided extremism and so, crucially, ultimate ineffectiveness. Saddhatissa considers "the placing of the Moralities [silas] as the first section of the Buddha's teaching is not incidental but is essential if the student is to proceed with the 'mind culture' which is the core of Buddhism. The Buddhist scriptures give frequent warnings regarding the extreme danger of attempting to experience states of mental concentration without thorough grounding in the practice of the Moralities. Any teachings . . . which do not insist on practice of the moralities before embarking on exercises in mental concentration are fraught with disaster and are to be utterly condemned. At the same time, if the Moralities are to be kept to increasing degrees, then cultivation of samadhi and panna [prajna] are essential." [23] Such practical talk on roles and dangers leads to the next section.

(2) Samadhi

By its nature meditation is a clearly instrumentalist general religious phenomenon, dealing with deeper experiential dimensions. Buddhism perhaps shows both a subtle and heightened instrumentalist awareness towards the 'role' of meditation. After all, the very centre of Buddhism is the claim that Sakyamuni achieved enlightenment, thereby becoming a Buddha, following his meditation under the bodhi tree, when various jhana levels were achieved with insight subsequently (i.e. consequently) arising. This is maintained in Buddhism through "the basic function of the meditation . . . . [as] a device for achieving samadhi". [24] In a more subtle sense there is, as just seen, the practical consideration that meditation without ethical grounding could be extremely dangerous.

Further signs of a controlled instrumentalist Buddhist sensitivity towards meditation lies in the large number of samatha 'calm' techniques. Buddhaghosa goes into great detail on this, pinpointing 40 distinct meditation loci in the classical Theravada text, the Visuddhi Magga, where there is explicit talk of the 'benefits' of samatha meditation. [25] The foci are the 10 kasinas ('devices') based on various colours, elements, space and light; the 10 asubha ('repulsive things') like bodily decomposition, etc, the 10 sati ('recollections') on themes like the Buddha, dharma, sangha, morality, death, respiration, peace of Nirvana. The four brahma-vihara ('sublime abodes') focus on loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy or equanimity; while the four ayatana ('formless states') point to infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, neither perception nor non-perception. Two foci could be on loathsomeness of food or analysis of the body. Such meditation exercises have a very practical functional organisation, being aimed at particular types of people, to bring out particular appropriate corrective effects, as follows in Table 1.[26] This framework is also related to suitability for achieving various different jhana meditation levels. A further traditional practical consideration is indicated through the guiding mentor role of the kalyanamitta 'good friend', crucial in directing the trainee towards the appropriate meditation exercise, fostering its proper instrumental potential for transformation, i.e. Nirvana, Enlightenment.

The other avenue for Theravada meditation was vipassana ('insight'), which might seem to indicate direct and absolute Truths being perceivable, analysis of truth in its own terms, and not just in terms of its effectiveness. But it can be argued that vipassana still reveals an instrumentalist orientation, for from insight came various consequences, i.e. cutting the cycle of rebirth, cutting away of trsna, clinging desire, and the attainment of Nirvana. Moreover it was not so much insight into static truth, but rather insight into 'processes', in particular anicca ('impermanence, change') and paticcasamuppada ('conditioned arising').

(3) Panna

Within Buddhism's traditional description of itself, panna ('wisdom') was a third strand, which raises the complex yet important issue of the role of truth in Buddhism. Buddhism has put forth particular formulations of truths, e.g. the three universal 'marks' of existence (anicca, anatta, dukkha), the four Noble Truths (on dukkha), Conditioned Arising, etc. Here we approach what may seem to be straight doctrine, metaphysics and philosophy. However, the question then arises for analysis of Buddhism (as also for Western

philosophy) of what is meant conceptually by the term 'truth'. When saying that something is true in Buddhism, does it mean (a) that it is factually true, (b) that it is figuratively or symbolically true so that its value is utilitarian and heuristic, or (c) that it is relatively true within a particular world view, language game or wider conceptual scheme. Such positions echo the Western philosophical categories of (a) 'correspondence', (b) 'pragmatic utility' and (c) 'coherence'. [27] All three positions arise in various Buddhist settings, such as Abhidharma 'correspondence' vis-a-vis the reality of dharmas. However, position (b) seems more often and centrally perceivable, with Buddhism showing a certain caution over absolute metaphysical speculation, and instrumental considerations seemingly central.

One sign of this was with an interesting episode when the Buddha was asked 'what is the Truth (Dhamma)?' Instead of replying with standard set Buddhist formulations he took this approach:

> Of whatsoever teachings thou can assure thyself thus: 'Those doctrines conduce to passions not dispassions: to bondage, not to detachment: to increase of (worldly) gains, not to decrease of them; to covetousness, not to frugality: to discontent, and not content: to company, not solitude: to sluggishness, not energy: to delight in evil, not delight in good'--of such teachings thou may with certainty affirm 'This is not the Dhamma, this is not the Discipline. This is not the Master's Message'. But of whatsoever teachings thou can assure thyself . . . [as above, but opposite]--of such teachings thou may with certainty affirm 'This is the Dhamma'. [28]

What stands out here is the explicit functionalist listing of traits of character, through which one can recognise the Truth; thereby emphasising that wisdom points to actual transformation, rather than ontological definitions. Verbal formulations are not then in themselves the crucial factor, it is whether they are resulting in, or being the instrument of particular changes. In this vein we then have the Pali Canon's famous Raft metaphor. [29] The whole point of the analogy is that it pinpoints the function of Buddhist teachings (the raft) as being effective, that they are there to bring movement, or transformation, with the other side, Nirvana, being reached. The raft is still a means rather than the end, the raft not carried on one's head (not clung to) on reaching the other shore.

Equally interesting is the Buddha saying, "Bhikkus, of what I have known I have only told you a little", which led into the famous 'unanswered questions', classical metaphysical questions concerning creation and the afterlife, which the Buddha refused to answer. To explain why he did not answer them the Buddha then used the 'Poisoned Arrow' analogy. Here a person hit by a poisoned arrow should not spend (i.e. waste) time on vague speculation about whence it had come, the motives of the person shooting the arrow, etc. Instead they should do the one immediate practical thing which would change their situation, namely take action--pull the arrow out! In a similar way those classic metaphysical questions were ultimately distractions, for one should instead do something about the here and now. As the Buddha said of those 'unanswered questions':

> Why, Malunkyaputta, has this not been explained by me? It is because it is not connected with the goal, is not fundamental to the brahma-cariya 'holy life', and does not conduce to turning away from, nor to dispassion, stopping, calming, superknowledge, awakening, nor to Nibbana. Therefore it has not been explained by me. [30]

For Jayatilleke this stance identified the Buddha as a 'Pragmatist', with a criterion for dismissing questions "if they were not relevant to the central problems of religion". [31] The Buddha's continuation, on exactly the same funcfionalist grounds, was "then, what has been explained by me, Malunkyaputa? . . . anguish (dukkha) . . . the arising of dukkha . . . the stopping of dukkha . . . the course leading to the stopping of dukkha has been explained by me because it is connected with the goal, etc." [32] Traditional metaphysical speculation about the past and future was not practically effective, whereas the Fourth of the Four Noble Truths (the eight-fold Path) was effective. Ultimately truths were only useful if they were instrumental in bringing about the necessary transformational changes, themselves centred on cutting trsnd ('craving, desire').

Here reference should be made to Abhayarajakumara Sutta[33]. Jayatilleke, whose work *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* remains an important point of reference, found this sutta of particular epistemological interest. The sutta gives three sets of considerations governing the Buddha's statements, i.e. statements that were true (bhutam, taccham), or false (abhutam, ataccham), those that were useful (atthasamhitam) or useless (anatthasamhitam) and those that were pleasant (paresam piya manapa) or unpleasant (paresam appiya amanapa).

Eight possible variations or combinations emerge. With regard to pleasantness, Buddhist wisdom may be pleasant or unpleasant—that just reflects what is appropriate to the situation. With regard to truth and utility, instrumental effectiveness for Buddhist purposes seems implicitly paramount. On the one hand "the dhamma was useful for salvation and its value (though not its truthfulness) lay in its utility. It ceases to have value, though it does not cease to be true, when one has achieved one's purpose with its help by attaining salvation." [34] Buddhist wisdom was itself true (factually), but this was a secondary feature, with its primary feature one of being useful. It was this that made it part of the dhamma. On the one hand, a statement could be useless without being false. A mundane example is that the Caspian Sea has a certain depth and area, but while that is true it is not particularly useful for Buddhism in helping one achieve or realise Enlightenment. Such a 'fact' is not an example of Buddhist 'wisdom'. Conversely the benefits accruing from meditation or ethical application, from a Buddhist perspective are both true (can be experienced) but above all useful. In such settings, can Buddhist wisdom be untrue yet still useful? This line of thought does not really appear in the Pali Canon, but reappears with the Mahayana.

An interesting nuance is that Buddhism, while presenting teachings in doctrinal scriptural formulation, shows wariness about ultimately depending on such material. This is brought out in the famous Kalamas episode, where the Buddha was asked to adjudicate

between different claims by varied teachers of the day, both in terms of actual content, but also in terms of approaches or methodological stances for resolving questions of truth. The Buddha's response was distinctive:

> Kalamas, do not be misled by reports, or tradition, or hearsay. Be not misled by the proficiency in the collections of religious texts, nor by mere logic or inference, nor after considering reasons, nor after reflection on and approval of some theory, nor because it fits becoming, nor out of respect for a recluse. [35]

Here, traditional props of religious formulations (scripture and teachers) are undercut, as indeed is much of formal philosophy. Instead, the Kalamas were advised "when you know for yourselves that these things are unprofitable, these things are blameworthy, these things are censured by the intelligent, these things, when performed and undertaken, conduce to loss and sorrow, then indeed do you reject them."[36] This talk of 'unprofitability' and 'conduce' has a practical, functionalist ring to it, and it echoes Dewey's stance that ideas must always be tested by experiment.

All this means that although there is the traditional formula of taking refuge (saranam) in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, such refuge is perhaps more a question of practical confidence rather than any faith. As the popular Dhammapada summed up "only a man himself can be the master of himself: who else from outside could be his master?", for "it is you who must make the effort; the Tathagatas only show the way."[37] This reasserts the instrumentalist role of Buddhist doctrines as being to generate transformation of the individual, so that the individual then will truly know for themselves, based on their own consequent experiential verification. Jayatilleke has this in mind when considering Buddhist saddha (faith, belief) in truth statements as being to "provisionally accept a proposition for the purpose of [experientially] verifying its truth."[38] Elements of 'correspondence' are here, but 'Truth' in an abstract sense has become a spur to deeper experiential development, with the specific initial formulation being more a means than an end.

(4) Theravada ritual and scripture

One interesting point made in this area is a stylistic one raised by Sangharakshita, in connection with the 'Dialogues' of the Buddha being "richly embellished with similes, metaphors and parables . . . This is not just a literary device, or empty rhetorical flourish, but an integral part of the Buddha's teaching method. It represents an attempt to communicate his vision of reality, not merely in abstract and conceptual terms, but by means of concrete images, appealing not to the understanding alone, but to the total psyche, including those unconscious but powerfully operative forces that are hardly to be reached in any other way."[39] Talk of concrete images, the total psyche, and of powerful operative forces, takes this material away from just being theoretical exposition. They are there to operate, instrumentally speaking, to bring about response and change in the audience. All religious literature is of course, or tries to be, effective in terms of its

intended audience, yet there seems a more explicit awareness and use of this in Buddhism.

Popular literature maintains this anchoring, as in the Jataka tales on the former lives of the Buddha. Certainly they can be read as mythological tales, providing popular grass roots stories to entertain the laity. However, Ling noted a more serious, extremely practical, side to this, that "the Buddhist . . . says in effect: 'If that is what you believe, and if that is how you see this life, then let us start there!' And he proceeds to use this initial position as the taking off point for an approach to the eternal Dharma. Almost always he makes use of popular stories and legends . . . They cannot be said to form anything more than a threshold to Buddhist belief; but it is a wide threshold and offers plenty of scope for all. Buddhism has in this matter, I believe, displayed considerable wisdom." [40] The wisdom would seem to lie in the practical grounding and usefullness of such material.

Sangharakshita also gives high effectiveness value to the role played by such popular literature, for 'appropriating the entire wealth of ancient Indian folklore . . . en bloc in their own rapidly growing oral-cum-literary traditions as the simplest and most effective means of propagating the truths of the Dharma among the common people . . . The audience is simultaneously amused, instructed and inspired."[41] Popular and loved background stories could thus be adopted, yet also adapted. In doing so, Buddhist teachings (themselves a spur to action) could have a bigger practical chance of local acceptance, through using 'the simplest and most effective' means. Ling seems to have noticed a similar process with respect to such Theravada literature, that "the important point to notice is that although Buddhism has thus allowed an open frontier between its own Dharma and animistic beliefs, this frontier has always been firmly controlled from the Buddhist side. What may be seen to have happened in the course of Buddhist history is not demythologising, but a Buddhist-inspired remythologising of popular thought: a recasting and refilling of potent psychological symbols as a result of the stimulus of Buddhist spiritual experience." [42] Again, such a phenomenon is of course not restricted to Buddhism; most religions have done this to a greater or lesser extent.

However, one could argue that Buddhism shows a distinctly more flexible attitude in this area than most other traditions. Again we have this sense of practical results being achieved through such literary developments, using 'potent psychological symbols' following on from and in turn helping to foster the 'Buddhist spiritual experience'. A further manifestation of this instrumental grounding of scriptures lies in related congregational chanting, where Sangharakshita asserts a strong functional significance:

> One might even argue that the texts were compiled in their present form for the purpose of liturgical meditation, wherein the grave rhythm of the chanting serves to calm and concentrate the mind, while the recurrence, at regular intervals, of certain key words and phrases, enables it to penetrate, with each repetition, ever deeper into the truth which these formulae represent. [43]

Such talk of mnemonic value and meditative undertones indicates deeper potential functions for rituals, serving and enabling deeper developments and so indeed, though subtly, being instrumental.

(B) Mahayana Buddhism

The preceding details have been taken from Theravada Buddhism. This 'basic' predisposition would, it can be argued, also operate for Mahayana Buddhism, which retained Pali Canon (Sutta pitaka) type material within its own canonical literature. Moreover, certain Mahayana features maintained and highlighted this instrumental predisposition of Buddhism still further.

A particularly specific Mahayana development, seen in such popular early classics as the Saddharma pundarika sutra (Lotus Sutra) was in upaya ('skilful means'). Pye quite rightly wrote a whole study on this important Mahayana theme. [44] In a sense this is but the application of Pali Canon teachings on the Buddha's teaching being 'effective' (kusala). The Mahayana then picked up this theme, as illustrated in the famous Lotus Satra story of the burning house, whereby various messages were given in order to get the children in danger out of the burning house, itself a metaphor for the raging fires of trsna. [45] The logic being that if the same full message had been given to all, then not everyone would have taken the appropriate action. Here teaching explicitly becomes a means rather than an end--the instrumental means to bringing about progress and transformation. The Pali Canon permutations (and an element of tension) surrounding teachings in terms or truth/untruth, usefulness/uselessness, pleasantness/unpleasantness have already been mentioned, with the Pali material presenting Buddhist wisdom as being both true and also useful, with the implication being that the crucial attribute was in its usefulness. With the Mahayana the implications of this emerge even more strongly, as upaya above all is an instrumental feature--whether the content is strictly true or not is overridden by the use (direct/outcome) of the statement or action. Thus, untruthful statements (or even ones immoral on the surface, as in some of the stories about Zen and Tantric masters) could be justified in the short term if they brought longer-term effective changes, as in the Burning House story of the Lotus Sutra. This readiness to acknowledge the provisional and instrumental character of teaching was maintained and disseminated in further popular Mahayana classics like the Vimalakirti nirdega sutra, where a layperson instructs Boddhisattvas and arahants in the true underlying meaning of the Dharma, including upaya. [46] One immediate nuance of this instrumentality, is the way in which the Lotus Sutra has the Boddhisattva Avalokitesvara talking about taking a whole variety of forms (e.g. traditional Hindu gods like Shiva, Vishnu, etc.) or descending into the deepest recesses of hell, if that would pull someone a little bit further along in their own progress.[47] With this perspective, a lot of the details of distinctive Mahayana schools make sense, when treated not as ultimate doctrines but as complementary practices, with the devotional Pure Land and the meditation Ch'an/Zen traditions for example, able to be reconciled on this plane of instrumentality. Such features echo the Pali Canon criterion 'whatsoever leads to dispassion, peace, etc., that is the dhamma'.

Another fundamental Mahayana theme emerged with the Prajnaparamita ('perfection of wisdom') literature, which became the foundation for further Ch'an/Zen and Tibetan developments. Its ultimate conditioned or sunyata ('empty') character of things was elaborated by Madhyamika figures like Nagarjuna, who also employed ruthless dialectical negation. Practical functionalist implications permeate the Prajnaparamita corpus. Its earliest sutra, the Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 lines (Astasahasrika Prajnaramita) talks not so much about Perfect Wisdom but 'training in Perfect Wisdom.' [49] This is why it is the 'perfect wisdom that tames and transforms', which implies dealing with negative blocks and fostering positive change.[50] Revealingly, its chapter 16 section on 'Enlightenment and Emptiness' immediately follows on from its section on 'Perfect Wisdom and Skill in Means' and precedes the section 'Requisites of going forth to Enlightenment'. Interestingly, and crucially, comes the caution that 'names and signs are also sources of attachment.'[51] In this setting, verbal formulations, i.e. truth statements, are to be treated with caution, since "a Bodhisattva is not even trained in all-knowledge . . . because a Bodhisattva trains himself in non-attachment to all dharmas", including conceptual formulations [52]. Moreover, the Buddha is represented with the popular, and rather functionalist phrase, as "the supreme physician who accords [appropriate] medical treatment to the sickness of the world."[53] A similar diagnostic remedial analogy on the role of sunyata, and on the dangers of misconceiving it (as a theory, or as dogmatism) comes in the later Kasyapa Parivarta (Ratnakuta) [54].

The Prajnnaparamita's most famous summation came in the influential Diamond Sutra (Vajrachchedika-prajaparamita-sutra), with its warning that any "object is a matter of linguistic convention, a verbal expression without factual content. And yet the foolish common people have seized upon it."[55] Doherty has a clear and persuasive instrumentalist sense of the role of the Diamond Sutra, since "it underscores both its own status as a discursive phenomenon and the contradictions involved in mistaking its declarations for either literal or metaphorical truth. Decoding its own procedures it enacts that detachment from codes which it seeks to induce in the reader. Thus in presenting language as an instrument of deception it seeks to unmask that deception and the motives which help to perpetuate it through the kind of desire which attachment to language induces . . . if language functions to structure homogeneous 'self' and a 'world', then the Sutra functions to expose these two types of mental constructs as contingent and arbitrary."[56]

Sunyata implications achieved full explicit force with Nagarjuna (2nd-3rd century BCE), the leading light of the Madhyamika school. It would though be a mistake to treat the M5dhyamika's sunyata emphasis as just the result of abstract philosophical reasoning, as sunyata was both the result and spur to experiential 'transformative' meditation insight.[57] A classic presentation of Nagarjuna's stance comes in the Madhyamikakarika. He deals with concepts in a double fashion, as 'the teachings of the dharma by the various Buddhas is based on the two truths, the relative truth and the absolute (supreme) truth.'[58] However, it should be remembered that the absolute of the truth was not static 'correspondence', absolute ontological objects or levels, but rather was the operation, or process, of emptiness. Truth was in fact no-truth, to look back to the Diamond Sutra, and forward into Zen formulations. Moreover, ultimately there was

identity between the two levels. In his Vyavaharasiddhi, Nagarjuna still acknowledged the practical use of relative truth for "though all phenomena, such as mantras etc, arise dependently and thus neither are existing nor non-existing, they are none the less efficient. Likewise all interior and exterior phenomena arise dependently, and though they are thus mere metaphorical concepts, Buddha has formulated his dharmas with a specific practical purpose (samdhaya)."[59] Nagarjuna indicates a functionalist process when he talks in the Madhyamikakarika of "the real [i.e. instrumentalist] purpose of sunyata." [60] This is echoed more recently by King and Patel. [61]

The practical purpose arising through the application of sunyata can be more specifically pinpointed as breaking various trsna-driven egotistic (negative) fetters and instead developing certain (positive) characteristics. As Nagarjuna himself said 'by taking any standpoint whatsoever one is attacked by the twisting snakes of passions. But those whose mind has no standpoint are not caught.' [62] Thus, at the higher level of truth (itself empty):

> Grasping ceases to be where, internally and externally, (the ideas of) individuality and self identity are destroyed. From the cessation of grasping the cessation of birth also follows. There is moksha (release) from the destructiveness of karmic defilements which are but conceptualisation. These arise from the mere conceptual play (prapanca) which are in turn banished in sunyata. [63]

This maintains traditional Buddhist features like anatta (no-soul), liberation, the cycle of rebirth and the detrimental role of clinging, grasping attachment, desire (trsna)--with trsna-driven false conceptions and dualistic elaborations ceasing and being undercut by emptiness. In the Sunyatasaptatikarika Nagarjuna advised 'karma has passions as its cause (klesanitimittaka) . . . when one correctly understands that karma is empty (sunya) because the truth is seen, karma does not arise.'[64] This is because the passions (klesas), the cause of karma, have been cut through the transformative power of the insight of emptiness. Or, as he says later, "by seeing correctly that things are empty (sunya) one is not infatuated." [65] Other testimony to this perception of sunyata's functionalist role in cutting negative fetters can be seen, as for example the Maha-pra-jnparamitag-sastra (traditionally attributed to Nagarjuna, but only preserved in the Chinese translation from Kumarajiva), Candrakirti (late 6th century CE), the early Chinese Middle Treatise, and the present Dalai Lama. [66] Contemporary scholars like Streng and Ingram have also noticed this. [67] Sunyata's effective soteriological efficacy gets us back into basic Buddhist premises which state that (second of the Four Noble Truths) the cause of duhkha 'frustration' is trsna, ignorant ego-driven clinging attachments to objects--material and conceptual.

Trsna-driven egotistic grasping could manifest itself around language itself, with sunyata able to challenge this through its deconstructionist dynamics. Jiju Kennet, a modern Western Soto Zen Roshi, accordingly reorientates Nagarjuna and sunyata away from metaphysical abstraction. For her 'the purpose being religious rather than metaphysical, these words were written for the purpose of freeing energetic intellects from mental

blocks which they set up of themselves to bar their path to spiritual understanding.' [68] What she does is to highlight the functionalist/instrumentalist nature of Nagarjuna's thrust, redirecting speculation onto applied training. Robinson's study of early Madhyamika brings such language implications of sunyata to the fore:

> Emptiness characterises every term in the system of expressional truths . . . Verbal thoughts and expression are 'constructed' or 'imagined' (vikalpyate). They express only metaphorically, and there is no such thing as a literal statement . . . Once this is granted the functional value of language is admitted by the Madhyamika. [69]

His use of the term 'functional' is interesting. It evokes both this whole article's thrust, and has striking overlaps with Wittgenstein's 'language game' and crucial 'use' of language, which from a Buddhist perspective form a very serious and profound game. [70] Analogous comments on the provisional use (and misuse) of language have come from Sangharakshita, since 'the dialectic of Nagarjuna, by exposing the contradictions inherent in the Buddhist doctrines themselves when taken literally, serves as a reminder of the supremely important fact that these doctrines, constituting the conceptual formulations of Wisdom, possessed not absolute but only relative validity, and were not ends in themselves but only means to an end. By shattering the hard shell of literalism in which Buddhism was then imprisoned, Nagarjuna not only saved it from suffocation and probable death but also gave it room for future development.'[71] Sangharakshita here reasserts the functionalist role of teachings, as a raft or conventional methods, rather than as fixed absolute ontological Truth statements which could become the source of subtle attachments.

In such a functionalist framework, sunyata should also be able to be seen as inculcating particular Buddhist virtues, as indeed suggested by Shantideva in the 7th-8th century:

> He who maintains the doctrine of Emptiness is not allured by the things of the world, because they have no basis. He is not excited by gain or dejected by loss. Fame does not dazzle him and infamy does not attract him. Scorn does not repel him, praise does not attract him. Pleasure does not please him, pain does not trouble him. He who is not allured by the things of the world knows Emptiness, and one who maintains the doctrine of Emptiness has neither likes nor dislikes. [72]

Here what is being referred to is not just the danger of trsna, but also inculcating the core Buddhist upeksa ('equanimity'). Sunyata is itself not a positive 'thing', replete with the dangers of being grasped and clung onto, rather it was seen as being able to generate positive transformations in the trainee. In a modem setting Sangharakshita has also similarly noted sunyata's dynamic implications:

> The remembrance of emptiness, far from decreasing one's own powers of spiritual activity, increases it enormously. It becomes easy, effortless, spontaneous, full of joy. Because the obstacle to activity,

> which is the [egotistical trsna-driven] self has been removed. The activity of the self is not really activity at all, and is always frustrated. The activity of emptiness is true activity and is never frustrated. The activity of emptiness is compassion. [73]

Sunyata ('emptiness') then becomes a lever not just to undercut clinging attachments but also to generate appropriate detached compassion.

At this point Mahayana Buddhism reasserts the whole point of doctrines not just existing in themselves but as having a purpose. This is well suggested with Santina's talk of provisional devices of 'discoursive soteriology' which are "validated merely by their effectiveness in producing the soteriological change which is wanted. The devices of discoursive sotetiology are illusory no doubt, but that does not prevent them from exercising their intended function."[74]. From a pragmatic point of view it could be said that Nagarjuna's ruthless dialectical negation, if carried through, was a perfect mechanism for short-circuiting traditional (but potentially diversionary) abstract metaphysical speculation. Actual practice could be reinstated, along with meditation and realisation, rather than discussion and argument about doctrines.

Madhyamika insights can be clearly recognised in the Ch'an/Zen tradition. [75] Huang Po (d. 850 CE), an early Ch'an master considered that sunyata could counteract conceptual clinging attachments, since "with the merest desire to attach yourselves to this or that, a mental symbol, is so formed, such symbols in turn, giving rise to all those sacred writings which lead you back to undergo the various kinds of rebirth. So let your symbolic conception be that of a void, for then . . . . "[76] Traditional Buddhist formulations, "such as Enlightenment, the Absolute, Reality, etc." were "mere concepts for helping us through samsara." [77] As for language itself, clear functionalist views come in Engo's comment in the Hekiganroku that "every word and phrase is a means, for the moment, of leading students to realisation." [78] Zen Buddhism can be readily seen as profoundly, overtly and primarily functionalist in character; with its koans, behaviour patterns and discourses of masters fluid and above all aiming at awakening the potential of the trainee by whatever formulation, or indeed non-formulation, was appropriate for that particular situation. An interesting, and revealing situation emerges if we consider the main rival to the Mdhyamaka, namely the Vijnanavadin ('idealism') school, subject to Madhyamaka criticism for appearing to slip into Absolutist frameworks. However, the Lankavatara Sutra, a central Vijanavadin text, counsels the higher state of training "where all means of logical proof are not seized upon, where there is no seizing upon the real truth but a disregard for it, as being a likely cause of infatuation." [79] This suggests a practical (i.e. instrumentalist) readiness actually to downplay the potential absolute status of their formulations. Admittedly, epistemological concerns and claims arise in Dharmakirti's Pramanasiddhi. [80] We may though be able to argue that his seemingly absolute epistemology still reveals functionalist concerns, with him talking about "the path to freedom from [samsaric] existence, because through accustomating it as the direct antidote to self-grasping one eliminates all faults and attains a completely transformed state."[81] Moreover, there is deliberate highlighting of the medical analogy, itself related to upaya, since like the physician, "in order to save generations of beings from their

disease of passions with which they are ill, I teach people with my doctrines, knowing the power of their senses."[82]

Indeed in a citta-mattra ('mind-only') setting, all truth statements (e.g. like the Four Noble Truths, or the Vijnanavadin's own particular alaya-vijnana ('storehouse consciousness') framework) themselves are products of the mind (manas). The mind might be a central junction point of reference but all truth claim statements would still fall into the compounded realm of language. They might be more or less factually true, but they were inherently conditioned by their existence in and mediated through the realm of form, as filtered through the mind. They might be able to point towards the highest truth, but that truth was itself beyond description. Within the Vijnanavada framework, knowledge consisted of parikalpita 'constructed/imagined' illusions about the material world, the subtler paratantra ('other-dependent') awareness of the flow of underlying dharmas, etc., and the parinispanna ('absolutely accomplished') knowledge which was characterised by thusness (tathata) and sunyata ('emptiness'), i.e. an absolute setting of Truth that was a non-setting as otherwise it could become the focus for clinging. With the mind as the central junction point or filter, doing something about the mind becomes a clear practical imperative generated from the epistemological framework. Vijnanavadin metaphysics are thereby translated into Yogacara mind discipline, i.e. meditation. All this would give a functionalist thrust to Jackson's own introductory comment to the Dharmakirti's Pramanasiddhi to "accept as axiomatic that Buddhist works are written for the purpose of assisting their readers to attain enlightenment."[83]

Other 'positive' sounding Mahayana concepts can be considered for their degree of functionalism. In King's analysis of the language appearing in connection with tathagatagarbha (Buddha-nature), she argues, "it is not a matter of substantialist monism", for "the decision to say that the Buddha nature exists aboriginally appears to be a pragmatic one; this is the statement that will most encourage practice. Yet it is also quite clear that this does not mean that Buddha nature 'exists' in the normal sense; aboriginal existence has nothing to do with either being or non-being. Why? Because it has to do with a person's actions or practice of the Buddha way, which is not essentially ontological, and because it has to do with change or transformation, with what appears 'Thus', which is never thing like but always in flux [anicca]. The ontology of flux is related to the soteriology of practice . . . Hence to say that the Buddha nature (aboriginally) 'exists' is the very opposite of giving it a substantial or thinglike character. Rather it is to encourage practice, to indicate the primacy of practice."[84] Consequently she considers 'positive' and 'negative' language to be "often soteriological, rather than strictly philosophical, in intent."[85] Yet again, the soteriology boils down to its appropriate and crucially functionalist dynamics, in reducing attachments. What of the Mahayana strands of faith? Certainly the Nichiren Shoshu tradition has blunt assertions over the truth of its statements concerning the status of the Lotus Sutra and of Nichiren, embedded in the practices of chanting the Namu-myoho-renge-ky6 ('Veneration to the Sutra of the Good Law') and performing Gongyo (chanting of the Lotus Sutra chapter 2 and chapter 16). The Nichiren tradition is controversial, particularly over exclusivist claims like "Buddhahood can only be revealed by chanting Namu-myoho-renge-kyo".[86] Yet the whole point of the chanting is that it does function effectively, in generating

'conspicuous benefits' and 'inconspicuous benefits' for oneself, or others. It provides results. This should not obscure the conceptual underpinning for the tradition, nor should this obscure their strong ('correspondence') claims as to the absolute truth of their statements, but it remains noticeable that Soka Gakkai literature is also conspicuous in affirming and thus valuing this results-efficacy criterion. [87] The efficacy of chanting the Lotus Sutra chapters does not depend on knowing their formal meaning, as the very action generates effects. One does not chant to understand the truth, but to release its power.

To conclude this section finally we could consider another Buddhist path of faith, the Pure Land tradition. There we would seem also to have absolute truth statements, with full 'correspondence' frameworks of truth in the shape both of Amitabha ('infinite light') Buddha and of his Pure Land, for which total unconditional faith was prominent, with the 'original vow' and success of Amida being truths independent of other humans' choices and actions. Yet a closer look has such seeming Pure Land correspondence becoming more subtle and, one could argue, ultimately functionalist. After all the Amitayur dhyana sutra, replete with descriptions of both Amitabha and the Pure Land, also explicitly acknowledges its own use there of metaphors. [88] Traditionally, at the surface level, the very absolute truth of the Amida's original vow and success in creating a Pure Land then implies the functionalist efficacy of subsequent practices, i.e. the whole point of the nembutsu recitation is not to state a doctrinal truth, but to use it as the instrument to gain rebirth in the Pure Land. Amitabha Buddha is true, but true as what? As Amitabha, a Sambhogakaya manifestation (within the tri-kaya setting) of the Dharmakaya (beyond descriptions); as Buddha, the same Buddha-nature that is also present and able to be awaken in the devotee.

Subtle positions emerge from modern Pure Land figures. Hosen Seki is clear enough on the ultimately provisional (though highly transformative) nature of such traditional language.

> Why did the Buddha speak of a land 'to the west?' Why a westward country? One reason is again to do with concentration of the mind. If the Buddha had said that the land is everywhere (which it is), then our mind, already scattered and dispersed in its daily confusion, could not concentrate its vision. 'Everywhere' pulls too hard at our mental limitation. But when the Buddha says 'Western country', our thought goes at one in that single direction. Of course many will think that this Pure Land is really situated in the western quarter. According to a person's capacity, he believes what he believes . . . even though we are now truly in the Pure Land, human illusion prevents us from seeing it so. Therefore Gautama Buddha couches this teaching in terms of an immensely desirable country--an offer no one could find unattractive [89]

This echoes the whole thrust of the Mahayana's upaya, with language designed to have a 'practical' effect on the listener. The literal 'out there' description of the Pure Land is a

skilful means, rather than being a fixed separate absolute. Similar subtlety comes over Amitabha.

> We cannot measure the Infinite with our limited knowledge. This means that the Infinite Light and Life is manifested as this Dharma repository in order to be understandable to our limited intellect. So this universal truth is presented to us in the form of an understandable and acceptable myth; but the truth behind 'myth' makes the myth truer by far than what we take for reality in our deluded lives . . . the light of the Infinite penetrates every corner of existence, and there is nothing that obstructs it. We are the Amida's light today, tomorrow, and forever. [90]

Amitabha then has become a symbol, but a symbol of transforming depth both in terms of role as a myth, and in terms of relating to the depths of the individual. This stance has also been put forward with relation to Pure Land dynamics by Sangharakshita. [91]

Another modern Pure Land figure, Takeuchi Yoshinori also seems to use the Pure Land ultimately, but hugely importantly as a symbol or lever for transformation here and now, as 'the symbolic world (in which all Buddhas continually praise the name of Amida Buddha and guarantee the truth of that name and birth in the Pure Land through its invocation) is discovered directly underfoot of the present'. [92] Indeed for him the Pure Land as a symbol seems both relative and absolute, through it being indeed a highly effective symbol, as (in shades of Bultmann) he noted:

> In connection with which the problem of human finitude of the human world is taken up, lies the idea of a Paradise in the West. From my standpoint (and it may be argued that hereby I myself am demythologizing the meaning of the Pure Land in the West), this means that we have to give ample consideration to what the symbol of a Pure Land signifies . . . it becomes present in the present from the future, in the form of an arrival from the transcendent yonder shore to the hither shore of the present world . . . Accordingly I find the symbol, of the Pure Land in the West exceedingly significant and possessed of a meaning too weighty to be displaced or replaced by any other symbol. [93]

Seeming absolute faith in the truth of Amitabha, in the Pure Land framework, becomes a massive spur and instrumentally effective lever. If faith works wonders in dissolving egotistic clinging, then (pragmatically speaking) absolute faith in the truth of Amitabha is needed to dissolve such fetters.

Conclusions

Here we come full circle. This article started by suggesting that Buddhism suffers from the danger of philosophy, and of superficial cross-cultural comparisons. In fact a more precise suggestion would be that Buddhism suffers from the danger of particular types of

philosophy. An interesting Western figure to mention is Braithwaite, whose criticism of Russell's type of correspondence/realism, and his own modification of logical positivism have some resonance with Buddhism. Particularly evocative are Braithwaite's argument for "allowing use as well as verifiability to be a criterion for meaning". [94] Here Braithwaite explicitly acknowledges Wittgenstein's 'language game' use-framework--with other related figures influencing this functional/pragmatic epistemology being William James--and Jung's 'subjective truth', i.e. what works for the individual. Braithwaite argues for 'a connotative rather than an emotive theory' of ethics for the individual, for "he is not asserting any proposition or necessarily evincing any feeling of approval; he is subscribing to a policy of action", at which points he quotes the functional-sounding New Testament passage "by their fruits ye shall know them". [95] That he is sensitive enough to the nature of spirituality is clear by his acknowledging "the resolution proclaimed by a religious assertion may then be taken as referring to inner life as well as to outward conduct". [96] A final nuance is Braith-waite's flexible view on the role of sacred literature and of formulations, as he asks "if the religious stories need not be believed, what function do they fulfil in the complex state of mind and behaviour known as having a religious belief? . . . . it is an empirical psychological fact that many people find it easier to resolve upon and carry through a course of action which is contrary to their natural inclinations if this policy is associated in their minds with certain stories." [97] All this brings to mind the operation and implications surrounding upaya, and of the transformational experiential thrust of most Buddhist strands.

This study also comes full circle with Jacobson's pinpointing of Buddhism in general, and Nagarjuna in particular, as manifesting very early process philosophy. [98] Anicca, (dependent origination), as indeed Nagarjuna's sunyata, focus the emphasis on the here and now, this moment, replete with its dynamic movement. Jacobson contrasts process philosophy with absolutist abstraction (the legacy of Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, Leibniz and Hegel), the latter perspective having dominated Western thought down the centuries and being seen by Jacobson as "the concentration camp of what can be defined and formulated"! [99] He pinpoints three particular manifestations of process philosophy. One was the full blown legacy of Buddhism and Nagarjuna, second was the isolated classical Greek figure Heraclitus (universal flux) and third were some modern US figures--in particular Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Dewey (our initial 'nstrumentalist' reference point). Within Jacobson's appreciation, two citations highlight some of their philosophical critiques of traditional philosophy. First, Hartshorne's awareness of 'the need to be free from theory. We have to respond to situations always more complex than we can understand, and we have to respond with more than understanding. Buddhist meditation has this as its purpose. We might begin with the importance of nonconceptual, nontheoretical apprehension of reality.' [100] Dewey also called for 'a reconstruction in philosophy', in his 1920 lectures in Japan, where some of the shared 'process' concerns with Buddhism seem to have emerged. [101] Elsewhere from Dewey we hear "where egotism is not made the measure of reality and value, we are citizens of a vast world beyond ourselves with which a sufficiently experiential probing may give us a sense of unity". [102] For Buddhism, since the root cause of dukkha, and the main obstacle to realising Nirvana, is egotistical trsna, then anything that undercuts trsna is to be used. It is precisely because of the important spiritual significance given to the end (Enlightenment)

that Buddhism by and large takes an ultimately instrumentalist functional view of its own teachings and practice. Far from devaluing these 'means', it thereby reaffirms their actual practical use within the Buddhist training process. Functionalism seems an appropriate key for better understanding the operational dynamics, existentialist goal and epistemological criteria through which Buddhism mostly operates.

NOTES

[1] SCOTT, D. (1985) Ashokan missionary expansion of Buddhism amongst the Greeks, Religion, 15, pp. 131-141; idem. (1986) Buddhist attitudes to Hellenism: a review of the issue, Studies in Religion, 15, pp. 433-41. The Milindapanha 'Questions of Milinda' is one such example.

[2] See BATCHELOR, S. (1994) The Awakening of the West (London, Aquarian) for various examples.

[3] Thus KALANSURIYA, A. (1979) Two modern Sinhalese views of Nibbana, Religion, 9, pp. 1-12, argues against what he sees as narrow ('empirical-philosophical') approaches; as does RAJAPAKSE, R. (1986) Buddhism as religion and philosophy, Religious Studies, 16, pp. 51-55.

[4] HOFFMAN, F. (1982) The Buddhist empiricism thesis, Religious Studies, 18, pp. I51-158. He considers 'empiricism understood as a theory of knowledge which holds that some or all knowledge or the materials of knowledge is either derived from sense experience or is in some senses dependent on sense experience'. In that setting he does not consider Buddhism as a form of empiricism, which is true insofar as Buddhism claims to go beyond the senses for insight. However Hoffman also approvingly used Edwards' definition (Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 1967) of empiricism, the 'theory that experience rather than reason is the source of knowledge and in this sense is opposed to rationalism' (p. 383). Buddhism would, however, fit into this type of definition, given the centrality of experience in its system. See also HOFFMAN, F (1985) Buddhist belief 'IN', Religious Studies, 21, pp. 381-387. Buddhism's experiential and experimental character is perhaps lost sight of amidst Hoffman's unhappiness with the term 'empiricism'. Functionalism or instrumentalism may be more effective alternative terms to use.

[5] SOUTHWOLD, M. (1983) Buddhism in life. The Anthropological study of religion and the Sinhalese practice of Buddhism (Manchester, Manchester University Press) p. 186: 'instrumental activity as action directed to altering the state of the world, one's environment, as a means of altering one's subjective state of experience, which it is taken to determine. The strategy of ameliorating experience by such means I shall call the "instrumental strategy". The system of assumptions, thoughts and action--including the necessary basis of action in belief about facts of which this strategy is part, I shall term "instrumentalism" '. This sociological usage is distinguished from what he calls 'sapientism'.

[6] See QUINTON, A. (1977) Inquiry, thought and action: John Dewey's theory of knowledge, in: R. PETERS (Ed.) John Dewey reconsidered (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul) pp. 1-18, esp. 'Instrumentalism' pp. 9-14.

[7] HARVEY, P. (1992) An outline of Buddhism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 196.

[8] Anguttara Nikaya V.1-3 (I.189), trans. F. Woodward (1936) The Book of the Gradual, Sayings (Anguttara-Nikaya), (London, Pali Text Society) Vol. V, pp. 3-4.

[9] SANGHARAKSHITA, B. (1987) A Survey of Buddhism, (London, Tharpa) p. 167.

[10] HARVEY, op. cit., note 7, p. 196.

[11] PREMASIRI, P. (1989) Ethics of the Theravada Buddhist tradition, in: CRAWFORD (Ed.) World Religions and Global Ethics, (New York, Paragon) p. 57.

[12] SADDHATISSA, H. (1970) Buddhist Ethics. Essence of Buddhism (London, Allen & Unwin), pp. 110-14.

[13] PREMASIRI, op. cit., note 11, p. 59. [14] GROSS, R. (1985) The householder and the world renunciant: two modes of sexual expression in Buddhism, Journal of Ecumenical Studies, 22, p. 81. 'Buddhism has coexisted with monogamous, polygonous, polyandrous, and even homosexual commitments but [crucially] judging each by the degree to which it lessened egocentricity and advanced inner liberty. This same attitude has meant that divorce, childbearing and contraception have not been treated dogmatically but rather judged case by case . . . Generally, Buddhism has favoured monogamy, responsible childbearing and child rearing, and marriages. It has disapproved of divorce, irregular sexuality (for example oral or anal intercourse), and homosexuality--but not rigidly or without regard to intentions or special circumstances that might change the evaluation'; cited in CARMODY, D. & CARMODY, J. (1988) How to live well: Ethics in the World Religions, Wadsworth, Belmont, pp. 120-121.

[15] ALEXANDRIN, G. (1981) Buddhist economics, Eastern Buddhist, 21(1) pp. 36-37.

[16] Ibid., p. 52.

[17] SCHUMACHER, E. (1974) Buddhist economics, in: Small is Beautiful (London, Abacus) p. 1. Cf. SIVARAKSA, S. (1992) Seeds of Peace. A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society, (Berkely, CA, Parallax Press) pp. 44-47 for outer and inner correlation and balance.

[18] See BATCHELOR, M. (Ed.) (1992) Buddhism and Ecology (London, Cassell).

[19] PREMASIRI, op. cit., note 11, pp. 62-3.

[20] Ibid., p. 63.

[21] SADDHATISSA, H., op. cit., p. 28.

[22] PREMASIRI, op. cit., note 11, p. 43.

[23] SADDHAT1SSA, op. cit., note 21, p. 68.

[24] KING, W. (1980) Theravada Meditation (Pittsburgh, PA, Pennsylvania State University) p. 31.

[25] BUDDHAGHOSA, (1976) Path of Purification (Visuddhi Magga), trans. B. Nyanamoli (London, Shambala) esp. pp. 84-406 for elaborations on the kasinas, pp. 406-408 for various benefits.

[26] Table from King, op. cit., note 24, p. 31; see pp. 31-34 for general instrumentalist role of meditation (Nirvana), and the more specific directioning. Kumarajiva's dhyana-samadhi treatise is another example of a functionalist matching of temperaments for certain meditation exercises. See CONZE, E. (1956) Buddhist Meditation (London, Unwin) pp. 11-13.

[27] Truth claims categories in Buddhism and in Western philosophy are discussed in Is Enlightenment Possible? Dharmakirti and rGyal tshab rje on Knowledge, Rebirth and Liberation, trans. and commentary by R. Jackson (1993) (New York, Snow Lion) pp. 43-107.

[28] Vinaya 2.10, trans. Woodward 1973, London, Oxford University Press. Some Sayings of the Buddha, p. 186. Also trans. I. Homer (1992) The Book of the Discipline. Vol. V (Culavagga) (Oxford, Pali Text Society) p. 359. Woodward's translation brings out the point a little more clearly perhaps.

[29] Majjhima-nikaya no 22, Alagaddupama sutta (= 1.130-142), trans. I. Horner (1975) The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikaya) (London, Pali Text Society) Vol. I, p. 173.

[30] Majjhima-nikaya no 63, Cula-Malunkya sutta, (= 1.4226-432), trans. I. Homer, Vol. II, 97-101, p. 101.

[31] JAYATILLEKE, K. (1963) Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge (London, Allen and Unwin) pp. 470-471.

[32] Majjhima-nikaya no 63, Cula-Malunkya sutta, (= I.426-432), trans. Horner, Vol. II, p. 101.

[33] Majjhima-nikaya no 58, Abhayarajakumara sutta, (= I.392-396), trans. Horner, Vol. II, pp. 60-64, esp. pp. 62-63.

[34] JAYATILLEKE, op. cit., note 31, p. 358.

[35] Anguttara-nikaya 1.188, trans. F. Woodward (1936) The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara-Nikaya) (London, Pali Text Society) Vol. I, pp. 171-72.

[36] Ibid., p. 172.

[37] The Dhammapada 12.4 (= verse 160), 20.4 (= verse 276) trans. J. Mascero (1973) (London, Penguin) pp. 58,75. THERAN (1954) The Dhammapada (London, Murray) is a useful literal version.

[38] JAYATILLEKE, op. cit., note 31, p. 391, with a wider discussion of saddha pp. 383-400, including a secondary post-Buddha increase of dogmatism, p. 400.

[39] SANGHARAKSHITA, (1985) Eternal Legacy. An introduction to the Canonical literature of Buddhism (London, Tharpa) p. 34.

[40] LING, T. (1979) Buddha, Marx, and God (London, Macmillan) p. 44. [41] SANGHARAKSHITA, op. cit., note 39, pp. 55,60.

[42] LING, op. cit., note 40, p. 44.

[43] SANGHARAKSHITA, op. cit., note 39, p. 29. [44] PYE, M. (1978) Skilful Means (London, Duckworth).

[45] Lotus Sutra ch. 3, trans. B. Watson (1993) (New York, Columbia State University) p. 56-71.

[46] The Vimalakirti nirdesa sutra, trans. C. Luk (1972) (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul) ch. 2 on upaya.

[47] Lotus Sutra, ch. 25, trans. Watson, pp. 301-02. [48] Submitted to Journal of Chinese Religions, current study.

[49] The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, trans. Conze, E. (1975) The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary (Bolinas, CA. Four Seasons Foundation) text tr. pp. 83-300, ch. II.5 (verses 42-44), p. 100.

[50] Ibid. ch. III. 1 (53), p. 104.

[51] Ibid., ch. VIII.2 (190), tr. p. 144. [52] Ibid., ch. I.3 (16), pp. 88-89.

[53] Verses on the Perfection of Great Wisdom trans. Conze, 9-73, ch. XXXII. 6, conclusion, p. 71.

[54] 'Of all theories, Kasyapa, Sunyat a is the antidote. Him I call the incurable who mistakes Sunyata itself as a theory (drsti). It is as if a drug, administered to cure a patient, were to remove all disorders, but were itself to foul the stomach by remaining therein. Would you, Kasyapa, consider the patient cured? . . . Likewise Kasyapa, Sunyata is the antidote for all dogmatic views; but him I declare incurable who misapprehends Sunyata itself as theory'. Cited in: T. MURTI (1972) The Central Philosophy of Buddhism. A Study of the Madhyamika System (London, Unwin) p. 164.

[55] Trans. Conze (1973) The Short Prajnaparamita texts (London, Luzac) p. 138.

[56] DOHERTY, G. (1983) Form is emptiness. reading the Diamond Sutra, Eastern Buddhist, 16(2), pp. 114-23.

[57] see STRENG, F. (1978) The process of ultimate transformation in Nagarjuna's Madhyamika, Eastern Buddhist, 11(2), pp. 12-32. Conze comments that 'emptiness is not a theory, it is a ladder . . . a severely practical concept as a medicine the investigation of emptiness is the chief task of Buddhist wisdom. Only systematic meditation can disclose its profundity'. Conze, E. (1962) Buddhist thought in India (London, Allen and Unwin) p. 243. Nagarjuna's method and investigation of emptiness is only properly performed by systematic meditation.

[58] Madhyamikakarika 24.8, trans. K. Inada (1970) Nagarjuna. A translation of the Mulamadhyamikakarika (Tokyo, Hokuseido) p. 146.

[59] Fragment (contained in Santaraksita's Madhyamakalamkaravrtti), trans. Lindtner (1987) Nagar-juna. Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nagarjuna (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas) p. 95.

[60] Madhyamikakarika 24.7, trans. p. 146.

[61] KING, S. (1991) Buddha Nature (Albany, NY, State University of New York Press) p. 109. For King 'Madhyamakans use sunya to destroy all views; they "sunyatize" sunyata to deconstruct the later, to be clear that sunyata is not Truth nor a valid view about [it] .' Patel, in his consideration of Nagarjuna's paradox of negation ('no proposition has its own intrinsic thesis') argues that to see this as an 'argumentative/systematic' (absolutist?) statement is missing the point. Instead he prefers to ask 'then what function does it serve?', since 'the functionality of a negative statement centres around its efficacy in furthering Buddhist soteriology'. PATEL, K. (1994) The paradox of negation in Nagarjuna's philosophy, Asian philosophy, 4(1), pp. 17-32.

[62] Yuktisastika, trans. Lindtner, op. cit., note 59, pp. 103-119, verse 51 p. 117. [63] Madhyamikakarika 18.4-5, trans. p. 114.

[64] Sunvatasaptati-karika 38-39, trans. Lindtner, op. cit., note 59, pp. 51-52.

[65] Sunvatasaptati-karika 65, trans. p. 65.

[66] Maha-prajnaparamita-sastra, 'craving is the root of clinging . . . if one would seek to become free from suffering, he should first put an end to trsna . . . words are [just] a means to get the meaning . . . so, in order to destroy their clinging, it is taught that all things are really sunya . . . if people cling even to impermanence and suffering, then the Buddha would teach that even these are sunya, not ultimate.' Extensive extracts and commentary in RAMANAN, K. (1966) Nargarjuna's Philosophy as Presented in the Maha-prajnaparamita-sastra (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas) verses 200a, 720b, 296c, 291b, trans. pp. 106-107, 183, 193;CANDRAKIRTI Commentary on Nagarjuna's Guide to the Middle Way ('Emptiness is taught in order to lay to calm all verbal differentiations, the net of concepts') in: P. WILLIAMS (1990), Mahayana Buddhism (London, Routledge) p. 70; Middle Treatise, regarding Nagarjuna's famous four-fold negation noted that 'it was declared to demolish the four kinds of attachment.' See verses in ROBINSON, R. (1967) Early Madhvamika in India and China (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas) p. 56. The Dalai Lama discusses the 'imprint or benefit' of emptiness in weakening forces like desire and hatred. GYATSO, T. (Dalai Lama) (1975) The Key to the Middle way, in: The Buddhism of Tibet (New York, Harper & Row) pp. 79-80.

[67] Streng earlier rejected the absolutist metaphysical nuances of Murti's (Hindu-coloured?) treatment of sunyata, using an interesting phrase in a letter dated 2 June 1977 to Jacobson: "the term 'emptiness' functions as mental judo". Cited in JACOBSON, N. (1983) Buddhism and the contemporary worm (Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press) p. 15. P. Ingram believes 'the whole point of Nagarjuna's concept of Emptiness is that . . . if we experience everything as empty of "own being", including our philosophical doctrines, we cease clinging (upadana) to them'. INGRAM, P. (1990) Buddhist shunyata and the Christian trinity: a response to Michael von Bruck, in: R. CORLESS & P. KNITTER (Eds) Buddhist Emptiness and Christian Trinity. Essays and Explorations (New York, Paulist Press) esp. p. 71. This was in opposition to what Ingram calls the uncritical absolutist interpretation of Bruck. See the essay by VON BRUCK, M. Buddhist shunyata and the Christian trinity. The emerging holistic paradigm, in ibid., pp. 44-66.

[68] KENNET, J. (1976) Zen is Eternal life (Emeryville, CA, Dharma) p. 19. [69] ROBINSON, op. cit., note 66, p. 49.

[70] See GUDMUNSEN, C. (1977) Wittgenstein and Buddhism (London, Macmillan).

[71] SANGHARAKSHITA (1987) A survey of Buddhism (London, Tharpa) p. 347. [72] Dharmasangiti Sutra, Siksasamuccaya passage cited in DE BARY, W. (1972) The Buddhist Tradition (New York, Vintage) p. 97.

[73] SANGHARAKSHITA (1982) Crossing the Stream (Glasgow, Windhorse) p. 208, amid his section 'The Way of Emptiness' pp. 205-209.

[74] SANTINA, P. D. (1986) Madhyamika Schools in India (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas) p. 41; pp. 30-41 for more elaboration. [75] See the interesting article by CHENG, H.

(1979) Zen and San-lun Madhyamika thought: exploring the theoretical foundation of Zen teaching and practice, Religious Studies, 15, pp. 343363.

[76] The Wan Ling Record 46, trans. J. Blofeld, The Zen teachings of Huang Po (London, Buddhist Society) pp. 122-123.

[77] Ibid. (4, tr. ibid.) p. 69.

[78] Hekiganroku case 3, trans. K. Seida, Two Zen Classics. Mumonkan and Hekiganroku (New York, Weatherhill) p. 152.

[79] Lankavatara Sutra, trans. D. Suzuki (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul) p. 74.

[80] Is Enlightenment Possible? op. cit., note 27.

[81] Ibid., p. 413, including the commentary by rGyal tshab rje. [82] Ibid., p. 170.

[83] Ibid., p. 61.

[84] KING, op. cit., note 61, p. 112.

[85] Ibid., p. 113.

[86] UK Express, the Soka Gakkai official organ, March 1994, p. 9.

[87] CAUSTON, R. (1988) Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism. An Introduction (London, Rider) pp. 123-129.

[88] Amitayur dhyana-sutra, trans. S. Beyer (1974) The Buddhist Experience: Sources and interpretations (Encino CA., Dickenson) p. 117. Beyer's translation replaces the older one in the Sacred Books of the East.

[89] SEKI, HOSEN trans. and commentary, (1973) Buddha tells of the Infinite. The Amida Kyo (Tokyo, Japan Publications) pp. 15, 49.

[90] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

[91] Sangharakshita, op. cit., note 9, p. 379, the "realities are the same, but in one case [Prajnaparamita (Wisdom)] they are indicated by means of conceptual and in the other by means of imaginative symbols. Such a transposition is obviously attended by very great advantages. While a philosophy only titillates the rational surface of our being, poetry stirs it to its depth. Because they engage the darkest and most deeply submerged desires and urges of our personality the symbols of the Amitabha myth are collectively able to orientate our whole being towards realisation."

[92] YOSHINORI, T. (1983) The Heart of Buddhism (New York, Crossroad) p. 141. [93] Ibid., p. 135.

[94] BRAITHWAITE, R. An empiricist's view of the nature of religious belief (the ninth Arthur Stanley Eddington Memorial Lecture, November 1955), in: B. MITCHELL, (Ed.) (1971) The Philosophy of Religion (Oxford, Oxford University Press) p. 72. My thanks to my colleague Arthur Giles for pointing out this analogous overlap, and also for wider helpful comments.

[95] Ibid., p. 80.

[96] Ibid., p. 83.

[97] Ibid., p. 86.

[98] JACOBSON, N. (1988) The Heart of Buddhist Philosophy (Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press) p. 9.

[99] Ibid., p. 46.

[100] HARTSHORNE., cited in ibid., p. 83.

[101] See AMES, V. (1982) Zen and American Thought (Honolulu, HI, University of Hawaii Press) pp. 214-235, 'Dewey and Zen'.

[102] DEWEY, cited in Jacobson, op. cit., note 98, pp. 83-84.

TABLE I. Appropriate meditation exercises according to type of person

Type of person	Subject and themes
Devotional	Buddha, dharma, sangha, sila, benevolence, devas
Intellectual	Calmness or peace, death Repulsiveness of food, four material elements
Passionate/sensual	Body constituents Corpse/cemetery
Angry/irritable	Four sublime abodes (brahma-vihara)
Dull and unstable	Respiration

All types	Ten basinas
All types (after 4th jhana)	Four formless objects (ayatana)