

ON THE PROBLEM OF NIRVĀṆA.

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THE problem of Nirvāṇa has hitherto been only half solved. Whereas there is no longer any dispute about the *saupādisesa-nibbānaṃ*, opinions concerning *anupādisesa-nibbānaṃ* are still as far from unanimity as they were when the question arose. The view is more and more gaining ground among Western scholars that the Buddha absolutely denied the *attā*, and therefore necessarily understood by his doctrine of *parinibbānaṃ* the absolute annihilation of being, while the assertion to the contrary, first advanced by Professor Max Müller, seems almost to be at the point of becoming extinct. Nevertheless, there are still a great many reasons and passages, not yet considered at all or not sufficiently considered, which decidedly favour the latter assertion, and to expound some of them the present essay is written.¹

First a few words on a third opinion. Professor Jacobi and others believe that the Buddha 'omitted the *ātman* out of his reflections because he could not attain to an inner certainty on it.'² That means nothing else than that the

¹ A full treatment of the question, together with an edition and translation of all the passages of the Piṭakas which refer, either directly or indirectly, to Parinibbāna, I hope soon to publish in a special work on the Problem of Nirvāṇa.

² 'Der Ursprung des Buddhismus aus dem Sāṅkhya-Yoga' in Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, 1896, Philologisch-historische Klasse, p. 43 fl.

Buddha had not been able to arrive at certainty concerning the Tathāgata's 'being or not being, or being and not being, or neither being nor not being' after death. Against this → I would ask : Why did the Buddha combat as a false view (*ditthigataṃ*) the doctrine of the Sceptics¹ which pretended that it was impossible to arrive at certainty on just this point (among others)? The answer surely is that his reason of declining such a possibility was none of the four² which, he said, induced the Sceptics to do so. But it is expressly stated³ that there are no other reasons than those four! I cannot but believe that the question I have here raised is included among those many which the Tathāgata —'well knowing'—did not explain to his Bhikkhus.⁴ My study of the Nikāyas has led me to the conviction that the incomparable security in which the Buddha is said to have met every one of his many opponents is a real historical feature ; and is only explicable if we grant that the master, when a youth, had indeed, as he often said, very seriously studied all the systems attainable to him. The Buddha certainly does not belong to those who are silent because of their not knowing enough, but to those who do so because they know too much. The mere stating of the Avyākatas is demonstrative in this respect.

Thus I suppose, as a matter of course, that the Buddha had answered, though not to his disciples, yet to himself,

¹ *Amarā-rikkhepikā* ; see *Brahmajālasuttanta* II., 23-29. These are the same as the *Ajñānikas* (Agnostics) of the Jaina texts ; see my Dissertation 'Über den Stand der indischen Philosophie zur Zeit Mahāvīras und Buddhas,' Strassburg, 1902 (Trübner), pp. 3, 7, 9, 46 fl.

² Fear of a false declaration, of a sinful clinging, of a dispute, and mental laziness.

³ *Brahmajālasuttanta* II., 28.

⁴ *Samy. Nik.* LVI., 31. This is also the opinion of Professor Oldenberg ; see his 'Buddha,' fourth edition, p. 323, note 1, and p. 326 : 'Involuntarily we get . . . the impression . . . that the Perfect One knew inspeakably more than he thought fit for telling his disciples.'

the great question concerning the to be or not to be, and I proceed to show why I think his answer cannot have been a negative one.

A quite general consideration, such as may in the first instance induce people, as it induced myself, to believe *a priori* in the positive answer, is the following one.

Professor Max Müller asked whether a religion which attains at last to the Nothing would not thereby cease to be a religion. To this it may easily be replied that Buddhism has never been regarded as a religion in the usual sense. It is, however, another thing if we put the question in this way: 'Is it possible that a thinker who had drunk out to the bottom the cup of knowledge—and we cannot help believing that the Buddha was such a thinker—could attain to the conviction that there was absolutely nothing behind or above or besides this transitory world we conceive by our senses and supply by our fancy—this world of terrestrial and celestial things and beings?' I say no! We cannot by any means believe the Buddha, such as we know him from the Suttas, capable of such a limitation of intellect, such a *testimonium paupertatis*, as would place him far under all the great thinkers of all times.

But this is, of course, not an argument for everybody, and I would ask it to be considered only as a *plus* to what we shall find out in the further course of the argument.

Without any doubt the question of Parinibbānaṃ is, although not identical with, yet dependent on the question of the *attā* or substance, so that, if it were certain that the Buddha declined the idea of a substance in every sense, the answer concerning the Parinibbānaṃ would of course be that it was annihilation in every respect. But this is by no means certain.

As we know, *e.g.*, from Saṃy. Nik. IV., p. 400, and Pugg. Paññ., p. 88 (cp. Buddhaghosa ad Jāliya-Suttanta), the sense of the doctrine of *anattā* is that there are no substances in the world which last either for a time (as the Uchedavādinas think) or for ever (as is the opinion of the Sassatavā-

dinas), but that existence is something between being and not being, that it is becoming. Hence we are not entitled to say that Buddha denied the soul, but only that for him duration in time was duration of a flux and not immutability in any sense, not the stability of a substance.

The extent of the notion of *anattā* is evident, *e.g.*, from Saṃy. Nik. XXII., 94, vol. iii.: 'What is that, O Bhikkhus,' the Buddha says, 'which is not granted by the wise of the world, and of which I also say: It does not exist? A material thing (*rūpaṃ*), O Bhikkhus, which is eternal, firm, everlasting, not subject to change, is not granted by the wise of the world, and I also say: It does not exist. Feelings (*vedanā*), O Bhikkhus, which are eternal; perceptions (*saññā*), O Bhikkhus, which are eternal; dispositions (*sankhārā*), O Bhikkhus, which are eternal, firm, everlasting, not subject to change, are not granted by the wise of the world, and I also say: They do not exist. Thinking (*viññāṇaṃ*), O Bhikkhus, which is eternal, firm, everlasting, not subject to change, is not granted by the wise of the world, and I also say: It does not exist. This is that, O Bhikkhus, which is not granted by the wise of the world, and of which I also say: It does not exist.'

Accordingly, the notion of *anattā* embraces the five Khandas or constituent parts of nature, not more. It embraces (1) the four or (including *ākāso*) five material elements and whatever consists of them; (2) every kind of consciousness or spiritual existence: not only that of sensual beings as we are (*kāmaloko*), not only that of the Mahābrahmins and other gods like them (*rūpabrahmaloko*), but even the most ethereal, unlimited consciousness existing in the very highest spheres of nature (*arūpabrahmaloko*). It does, however, not embrace a being, provided there be such a being, which can not be called either corporeal or spiritual or both (*nāmarūpaṃ*) in any sense, that is the existence of the Absolute One.

I cannot here explain the reasons why, to my way of thinking, philosophy is forced to accept the metaphysical

conception of the Absolute One, although, if this idea be realized in perfect sharpness, we are as unable to think as to deny that the Absolute One is either identical with, or different from, the world.¹ I only state that the Absolute One in its very sense, as also, for instance, in the sense of Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad 7², is something without and beyond the three Avacaras of Buddhism, and therefore not touched by the doctrine of *anattā*.

So the doctrine of *anattā* cannot be claimed as a proof against the positive alternative of the problem of Nirvāṇa. It seems, on the contrary, for the following reasons, to strengthen this position.

As insinuated, the Parabrahman, or Absolute One, is so singular a notion that it must be looked upon at once as identical with and different from the world: the former, because there cannot be any things beside it (else it would not be the Absolute); the latter, because the principles of Nature: Time, Causality, Plurality, are incompatible with the *ekamevādvitīyam*.³ Now, as is well known, the older Upaniṣads show already this double statement, but not as such, in as much as the two sides are not yet looked on together—at least, not with a clear consciousness of their being contradictory. And the next development out of this indifference or non-discrimination was not a uniting, but a going asunder.

Upaniṣad speculation began to degenerate, and the pantheistic side of the Parabrahman came to be emphasized

¹ Cp. my little essay: 'Māyā-Lehre und Kantianismus,' Berlin, 1904 (Raatz).

² *Nāntaḥ prajñam, na bahiḥ prajñam, nōbhayataḥ prajñam, na 'prajñāna-ghanam,' na prajñam nāprajñam, adṛṣṭam, aryaarahāryam, agrāhyam, alakṣānam, acintyam, aryapadeśyam, ek'ātmya-pratyaya-sāraṇam, prapañcōpśaamam, śāntam, śivam, advaitam caturtham manyante; sa ātmā, sa vijñeyah.*

³ Cp. Malayagiri's refutation of the *ātma-vāda* in his commentary to Nandī, p. 429.

more and more. First rendered prominent by Uddālaka Āruṇi (Chānd. Up. VI.), as a kind of *svabhāva-vāda* with a *prakṛtiḥ parā*, later on called *ātman*, as highest principle,¹ the *tat tvam asi* = 'You are a part of the all-pervading substance,' became by-and-by the highest formula of orthodox Vedāntism. As such it remained a pantheistic formula more than a thousand years, until at last Çankarācārya reformed Vedānta into a clear *māyā-vāda*,² while the pantheistic Vedānta also continued, and continues down to to-day as the Viśiṣṭādvaita. This is the one line of development. The other branched out somewhat later, at about the time of the so-called Middle Upaniṣads (Kāṭhaka, etc.), and started from the Kṣatriyas, not the Brāhmans. It did not recognise the authority of the Veda, and therefore was held heterodox. It developed the *neti neti* of a Yājñavalkya into a severe *tat tvam nāsi*, and so became directly opposed to, and more orthodox, in the good sense of the word, than the other party. It pretended that every thing, from the lump of clay up to Brahmā (Sāṃkhya-Kārikā, 54; Majjh. Nik., 49), was produced and subject to time, and therefore *anātman*, 'not Self,' that is: different in every respect from the unknowable Absolute One. It consequently combated as the greatest and worst of all 'confusions' the *aviśeṣa* (Āsvagh. Buddhac. XII., 29) or pantheistic identification of the world with the Absolute One (*tat tvam asi*; *so loko so attā*³). The first step in this direction had probably been made before Buddhism arose; but it was the Buddha, without any doubt, who banished out of the world the last

¹ Cp. my above-mentioned dissertation, pp. 31, 32; further, p. 41, middle.

² That Bādarāyaṇa was not yet a *māyā-vādin* is Professor Thibaut's important discovery.

³ "World and Self are one; that shall I be after death; eternal, firm, everlasting, not subject to change, like the everlasting one; thus shall I stay": is not that, O Bhikkhus, a mere, complete doctrine of fools (*bāladhammo*)?" (Majjh. Nik., 32.)

glitter of immutability, and liberated, on the other hand, from the last terrestrial feature it still possessed, viz., consciousness, the notion of the Absolute¹; it was the Buddha who, for the first time, saw clearly that only ignorance can devise any relation at all between nature and the Supernatural One, and that a true ethic must therefore necessarily be atheistic; it was the Buddha and no one else who made the doctrine of *anattā* a moral principle, and that not by denying the Absolute One, but presupposing it as the true self, the only reality.

That the doctrine of *anattā* has indeed this supposition, is proved, e.g., by the Alagaddûpama-Sutta (Majjh. Nik., No. 22). The Buddha, after having preached the *anattā* and declared the liberated one as beyond nature and inconceivable already in this life, continues (p. 140) :

‘Teaching this, O Bhikkhus, explaining this, I am falsely, without reason, wrongly, not truthfully, accused thus by some Samaṇas and Brāhmaṇas : “An unbeliever is the Samaṇa Gotama; the real entity’s destruction, annihilation, dying away (*sato satassa ucchedaṃ vināsaṃ vibhavaṃ*) is what he preaches.” What I am not, O Bhikkhus, what is not my doctrine, that I am accused of by these venerable Samaṇas and Brāhmaṇas, who say : “An unbeliever preaches.” Formerly, as now, O Bhikkhus, it is *dukkhaṃ* I am preaching, and the extirpation (*nirodho*) of *dukkhaṃ*² Therefore, O Bhikkhus, what is not yours, throw that off! Then your having left it will become your health and welfare for a long time. Feeling, Bhikkhus, is not yours; throw it off! Craving The dispositions. Thinking,

¹ Even to Yājñavalkya the *ātman* is *vijñāna-ghana* (Brh. Up. II., 4, 12), and the only Upaniṣad which protests against this, viz., the above-mentioned Māṇḍukya, was hardly known to Buddha, whose two principal teachers also had not arrived at *saññāvedayitanirodha*.

² Cp. Saṃy. Nik. IV., 4, 4 : ‘To apprehend perfectly what is *dukkhaṃ*, the holy life is led with the Perfect One.’

Bhikkhus, is not yours ; throw it off ! Then your having left it will redound to your health and welfare for a long time. What do you think, O Bhikkhus : if a man would take away, or burn, or employ according to his needs, all the grasses and boughs and branches and leaves in this Jeta Wood, would you then possibly think thus : “ U s takes the man away, us is he burning or employing according to his needs ” ?’

‘ Certainly not, master.’

‘ And why not ?’

‘ Because, O master, it is not our self (*attā*) nor what belongs to it (*attaniya*).’

‘ Thus, verily, O Bhikkhus, (I tell you) : What is not yours, throw that off ! Then your having left it will redound to your health and welfare for a long time. And what, O Bhikkhus, is not yours ? Bodily form craving the dispositions thinking is not yours ; throw it off ! Then your having left it will redound to your health and welfare for a long time.’

The sense of this declaration can only be : ‘ As the proprietor of the wood is not hurt when its grasses, etc., are taken away, even so, O Bhikkhus, in giving up your individuality (the *khandhā*) you are not giving up your real entity (*santaṃ sattam*).’ This is the more obvious as the formula which the Buddha teaches his followers to apply to every thing in nature, viz. : *N’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmi, na m’eso attā*, is applied by the Sāṃkhya doctrine in almost exactly the same form, viz. : *Nāsmi, na me, nāham*, to exactly the same object, viz., the whole of material and spiritual things, but with the single aim of expressing the Puruṣa’s not being *prakṛti* or *vikṛti*. Indeed, the end seems to be quite the same in both the systems : To reduce to a *cause* (*pratyaya*) every thing in nature, and thereby to prove that our real entity must not be looked for in, but beyond, the world. The only difference is that the Buddha, well aware that it would avert the attention of

his disciples from the practical and shortest way to salvation, declines to speak of the transcendental.¹

Like the doctrine of *anattā*, the more direct utterances of the Buddha on Parinibbāṇaṃ and the deceased Perfect One are proofs of the contrary rather than of Nihilism. An interesting example is the following one.

It is beyond doubt that in Buddha's opinion there rests of the *parinibbuto* not the slightest shade of an individuality. 'The wise,' it is said, 'expire like this lamp' (Sutta-Nipāta, 235). 'As the flame, blown down by the vehemence of the wind, goes out, and can be named no more (*atthaṃ paleti na upeti saṃkhaṃ*): even so the sage, liberated from individuality (*nāmakāyo*), goes out and can be named no more'² (*ibid.*, 1074). This image of the flame is a favourite one, and was doubtless used by the Buddha himself. What it means, is best shown by the Aggi-Vacchagotta-Sutta (Majjh. Nik., No. 72). Vacchagotta, wishing to know what becomes of the Tathāgata after death, asks if he will be reborn? or if not, whether he will both reappear and not reappear? or neither reappear nor not reappear? The answer being always that his position does not fit the case, he is then enlightened by the Buddha in the following way (p. 487):

'This is, O Vaccha, a deep thing, difficult to see, difficult to discover, tranquil, excellent, unimaginal, internal, (only) to be found out by the wise; you will hardly understand it, you having different views, endurance, inclinations, effort, and teaching. Therefore, O Vaccha, I shall ask you concerning this matter; answer me as you like. Now, what do you think, Vaccha: if a fire should be

¹ I cannot discuss here the knotty question concerning the chronological relation of the two systems. I only note that Buddhist Agnosticism may be directly derived from the older Upaniṣad speculation (*neti neti*), while Sāṃkhya Pluralism is evidently later.

² That is: he is beyond all categories (*vādapatho*); *ibid.*, 1076.

burning before you, would you then know : “ This fire is burning before me ” ?

‘ I should, Master Gotama.’¹

‘ And if you, Vaccha, should be asked : “ This fire which is burning before you, through what does it burn ? ” Thus asked, Vaccha, what would be your answer ?’

‘ My answer, Master Gotama, would be : “ This fire which is burning before me, does so by seizing upon hay and wood.” ’

‘ And now, Vaccha : if this fire before you should go out (*nibbāyeyya*), would you then know : “ This fire before me has gone out ” ?’

‘ I should, Master Gotama.’

‘ And if you, Vaccha, should be asked : “ This fire, gone out before you, to what direction has it gone : to the east, or west, or north, or south ? ” Asked thus, Vaccha, what would be your answer ?’

‘ This does not fit, Master Gotama, because, Master Gotama, the fire burns in consequence of its seizing upon hay and wood, and, after having completely consumed them, and not seizing upon any other, it is called “ gone out without food.” ’

‘ Even so, O Vaccha : whatever material form (*rūpaṃ*) a man may declare as the Tathāgata’s, that form the Tathāgata has left behind, cut off at the root, made like the stump of a Tāla tree, made a non-existing thing, that cannot reappear in future. And the Tathāgata, O Vaccha, when thus liberated from the category of materiality, is deep, unmeasurable, difficult to fathom, like the great ocean. That he reappears, is not right ; that he does not reappear, is not right ; that he both reappears and does not reappear, is not right ; that he does neither reappear nor not reappear, is not right.’ There follow similar phrases with regard to the other Skandhas, whereupon Vaccha praises the clearness of Buddha’s speech and declares himself his follower.

¹ I shorten the repetitions.

This Suttanta, according to Professor Garbe,¹ was invented in order to veil the absolutely negative sense of Parinibbānaṃ. But this is an unproved hypothesis. The fact that the cream of the story is also contained in Sutta-Nipāta V., 7, and Udāna VIII., 10 (not to speak of other texts), seems rather to prove that the Buddha himself used to explain the matter in this way. At least the comparison of the dying saint with the expiring flame must be looked at as employed by the Buddha himself. And this is enough. For firstly the common Indian view is, since the oldest time, that an expiring flame does not really go out, but returns into the primitive, pure, invisible state of fire it had before its appearance as visible fire.² Secondly, there are several Upaniṣads which apply the image of the expired flame directly to the *paramātman*. Śvet. Up. VI., 19, for instance, speaks of the latter as of 'a fire, the fuel of which has been consumed' (*dagdhēndhanam ivānalam*), and Nṛsimhōttaratāpini-Up. 2 (middle) has the sentence: 'That Self is pure spirit, like fire after it has burnt what it had to burn' (*Ayam ātmā cid-rūpa eva yathā dāhyaṃ dagdhvā'gnir*). Of special importance is the third verse of the Maitreyī-Up.,³ as it shows the image in question in connection with the Yoga philosophy which is known to have influenced the Buddha more than any other system. It runs as follows: *Yathā nirindhano vahniḥ sva-yonāv*

¹ See his introduction to 'Der Mondschein der Sāṃkhya-Wahrheit' in *Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischen Klasse der Königlich-Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*.

² This view is, *e.g.*, shortly before the Buddha's time expressed in Śvet. Up. I., 13: *Vahner yathā yoni-gatasya mūrtir na drśyate n'aiva ca liṅga-nāsaḥ*, etc., and is still to be found in so late a text as *Milindapañho* IV., ed. p. 327.

³ The first chapter of which must be older than *Maitrāyaṇa-Up.*, because it is quoted by the latter (*Maitreyī-Up.* I., 1; I., 2; I., 3-7, quoted in *Maitrāyaṇa-Up.* IV., 2; IV., 3; and VI., 34, resp.). The Upaniṣad is in the *One Hundred and Eight*, edited in Poona in 1895.

upaśāmyati tathā vṛtti-kṣayāc cittaṃ sva-yonāv upaśāmyati.
 'As fire for want of fuel comes to rest in its own birthplace,
 so for the cessation of its motions the thinking principle
 comes to rest in its own birthplace.'

I also cannot grant that the Brahmajālasuttanta justifies in any way the nihilistic conception of Parinibbānaṃ. For the sixty-two *ditṭhi-gatāni* are not condemned in every respect by the Buddha, but only as far as their imperfectness and exclusiveness is concerned—just as Mahāvīra declared to be 'heretics' all those who alleged the absoluteness (*ekāntatva*) of one of his own principles (*kāla*, *purākrta*, *puruṣakāra*, etc.). This is quite evident, e.g., from the Buddha's attitude in regard to the *Nevasaññi-nāsaññi-vāda*. He declines this doctrine of his teacher Uddaka¹ only in so far as it claims to lead to final deliverance, but himself adopts the *nevasaññānāsaññāyatanam* in the sense of the highest heaven attainable in this world. Thus he also adopts, but not absolutely, the four *sakal'ādeśās* (*atthi, n'atthi, atthi ca n'atthi ca, n'ev' atthi na n'atthi*) of the *Amarāvikkhepikā*, and so on. Farther, the *Aparantakappikā*, or 'those who speculate on the future' (Brahmajāla-Suttanta II., 37 fl.), as well as the *Sassatavādino* and *Ekaccasassatavādino*, are throughout meant² to believe in an individual *attā* which lasts in time, without being altered (*saccato thetato*), either for ever or till its annihilation. The Buddha, however, and none but the Buddha, teaches the *anattā* and shows the way to deliverance from time.³ All the *Saññivādino* cannot be really delivered, in the Buddha's opinion, because there is

¹ Whom he highly respected all his life; see, e.g., Majjh. Nik., 36.

² Cp. Puggala-Paññatti, p. 38.

³ Cp., e.g., Udānaṃ VIII., 1: *Tad amhaṃ, bhikkhave, n'eva āgatiṃ vadāmi na gatiṃ na thitiṃ*, etc., and Sutta-Nipāto, 860: *Kappaṃ n'eti akappiyo*. The deceased Tathāgata is not eternal in the sense of 'everlasting,' because he does not 'last' at all, having been delivered from time.

no absolute extinction of individuality unless by *saññāvedayitanirodho*. Nor can *asaññivādo*, because it is—like all other *ditthiyo*—a product of *tanhā*, lead to any other state than a very long unconscious life or dreamless sleep in the heaven of the *Asaññasattas*.

From this we can also understand why the Buddha, who did not acknowledge that the *brahmasahavyatā*, taught by the Brahmanic priests, was sufficient for salvation, did acknowledge it as leading to rebirth in the highest stages of *Rūpabrahmaloko*, or in *Ākāśānañc'āyatanaṃ* or *Viññānānañc'āyatanaṃ*, or, in the best case, in *Ākiñcaññ'āyatanaṃ*.¹ The *Brahma* (neuter) or *Ātmā*, as well as the *Puruṣa* of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, was, as a rule, taught to be *sacetano nirguṇaḥ*, and, consequently, in the Buddha's conception is not beyond individuality on account of its consciousness or spirituality. Now, Infinite *ākāśa* was taught as the highest principle by the school of Atidhanvan Śaunaka (Chānd. Up. I., 9),² and All-pervading *viññāna* (*prajñāna*, *prajñā*)³ by numerous schools (Cp. Ait. Up. III., Kauṣ. Up. III., etc.). So the Buddha, who wished to embrace all systems in his own, felt compelled to construct an *Arūpabrahmaloko* by means of these two views and those of his two principal Yoga teachers. His idea seems to have been that those who strive to become identified, after death, with the soul of the world as infinite *ākāśo* or *viññānaṇi* respectively, attain to a state in which they have a corresponding feeling of infiniteness, without, however, having really lost their individuality.

The great stumbling-block in our problem is, to most people, the silence of Gotamo about the state of a deceased Tathāgato. If he had not regarded the 'extinc-

¹ This results by a comparison of Majjh. Nik., 43; Saṃy. Nik. V., p. 115; and Tevijja-Suttantaṃ.

² Cp. Taitt. Up. II., 7: *yad eṣa ākāśa ānando na syāt*.

³ Very often *prāṇa* corresponds to this notion, in exactly the sense of Ed. v. Hartmann's 'Unbewusstes.'

tion' or 'blowing out' as resulting in annihilation—Professor Hopkins asks¹—why did he hesitate to give an explanation which 'would have strengthened his influence among those to whom annihilation was not a pleasing thought'? I should like to answer by some other questions: Do you give a tinder-box as a toy to your little boy? Is there no danger at all in popularizing a doctrine like that, *e.g.*, of Kauṣ. Up. III., 1, 1? Could not the Buddha have had the conviction² that there were very few who would not misunderstand his explanation of the most difficult of all philosophical conceptions? that most people would eagerly rush upon his metaphysics and neglect the more important thing, *viz.*, *sīla*? I would further ask the objector to consider that such an explanation would have forced the Buddha to endless disputes with other teachers, and that in that case he would have necessarily become in the general opinion just that what he so much abhorred: a *ditthiko* or 'speculative philosopher.' The Buddha did not wish to be a philosopher; he wanted to teach a practical way to salvation, and, in doing so, he avoided intentionally whatever would have made him unsuccessful.

If the word of Spencer is true—that the history of religion is the history of the dispersonification of God—then Buddhism is the natural end of this process.³ For this is the only religion which acknowledges so absolutely the total difference between Nature and the Supernatural that it forbids its followers even to speak of the latter, without, however, denying or sceptically doubting its existence.

¹ Religions of India, p. 321.

² Cp. the account of his *mahābodhi*, Majjh. Nik., 36.

³ This idea of mine has been employed by Karl B. Seidenstücker in his little essay 'Gott und Götter' ('Der Buddhist,' 1. Jahrgang, No. 4).