

The Mahāyāna Treatment of the Viparyāsas

By Edward Conze

(London)

The theory of the "perverted views" (*viparyāsa*) is fundamental to Buddhism. Its purpose is to make the concept of ignorance, which is the root evil, amenable to meditation. It states that it is a mistake to seek 1. permanence in what is essentially impermanent, 2. ease in what is inseparable from suffering, 3. selfhood in what is not linked to any self, and 4. delight in what is essentially repulsive, unlovely and disgusting.

The Hinayāna view¹ has been well summed up by Candrakīrti when he says²:

"The first perversion consists in seizing upon the five skandhas as permanent, when in fact they are impermanent and perish every instant.

"Inevitably the impermanent oppresses³;

And what oppresses gives no ease.

Therefore whatever has no permanence

That also must be seen as ill".

For this reason whatever is impermanent is ill, — and all composite things are impermanent. In consequence the second perversion consists in that the five skandhas, which are essentially ill, are seized upon as at ease (*sukham*). Furthermore:

"At the start a mixture of sperms and of blood;

Urine and faeces as long as it grows;

In its essence a foul heap of filth;

What mad desire attracts you towards it?

What is the pleasure of lying on the belly of a woman,

Who is nothing but a mass of filth

Covered with a skin which moisture permeates?"

In fact, this body is in its whole self and always essentially⁴ repulsive. The third perversion consists in being so deluded as to seize upon it as something lovely, and to feel an inclination (*abhiniveśa*) for it.

Finally, the five skandhas are devoid of a self, empty of the own-being of a self, because their attributes do not conform to those that must be expected of a 'self'. For the skandhas are unstable and doomed to rise and fall. The fourth perversion consists in seizing upon them as one's own self

¹ Explained in some detail in my article in *East and West* vii 4, 1957, pp. 313—318. Reprinted in *The Middle Way* XXXII 3, 1957, pp. 91—6.

² *Prasannapadā* XXIII 460, 7—461, 8.

³ *pīḍā*, *gnod*, 'tourment', see J. MAY, *Candrakīrti, Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛtti*, 1959, p. 190.

⁴ lit. in its own-being (!); see page 39.

and feeling an inclination for them; one settles down in that which is not one's self as if it were one's own self.

These are the four perverted views, which are the root-cause of mental confusion (*sammoha*).⁵

Continuing the Hīnayānistic trend of thought⁶, the Mahāyāna makes six innovations: 1. it adds a fifth *viparyāsa*, "the realistic error", which is regarded as more fundamental than the other four; 2. in other words, it maintains that any form of discrimination is equivalent to an intellectual perversion; 3. it claims that, like everything else, the perverted views, as well as their objects, have no real existence, 4. repudiates the distinction between conditioned and unconditioned dharmas, on which the Hīnayāna theory of the *viparyāsas* was based, 5. distinguishes several stages in the rejection of the perverted views, and 6. believes that only a Bodhisattva, steeped in perfect wisdom, can completely overcome them. The Mahāyāna teachings about "perverted views" are scattered through a number of treatises, and it may be of some value to combine the various incidental hints given to us into one single more or less coherent account.

1. The realistic error: "All dharmas have arisen (*samutthita*) from the perverted views, they are unreal, non-existent, wrong and false. As long as he courses in any dharma whatsoever (conceived as an objective reality), the Bodhisattva courses in perverted views, and not in that which is real"⁶. Candrakīrti⁷ points out that it is a mere *viparyāsa* if the six kinds of objects are apprehended as real, although in fact they are "merely imagined and devoid of own-being", and the error is of the same kind as if one were to ascribe reality to a mirage or a dream. Jacques MAY⁸ lists a number of instances where the *asad-viparyāsa* is mentioned in Mahāyāna works. A commentary to the *Mahāyānasamgraha*⁹ explains that the imaginary character of the world as it appears lies in that through *viparyāsa* it gives the impression of being an object when in fact it is not. The falsehood of this view is illustrated by the well-known simile of the traveller who imagines that the water in a mirage is real water, when it is not. In its discussion of *viparyāsa* the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*¹⁰ says that "if holy men with regard to this world which is but a whirl of confusion and error (*bhrānti*) form the

⁵ Mahāyāna documents often take the four *viparyāsas* just for granted, e. g. *Ugradattaparipṛcchā* in *Śikṣāsamuccaya* 198, 11—13; *Dhyāyitamustisūtra* in *Pras.* XVI 296; *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* 478 = *Pañcaviṃśati* 118; *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* XX 377 = *Śatasāhasrikā* XLIV 108 = *Pañcaviṃśati* fol. 404 sq.; *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* VI 139; Nāgārjuna, *Le traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, II, 1949, p. 1076. — Likewise they continually refer to the corresponding three marks, although they often subject them to a radical re-interpretation, as in *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* ch. 3 where Vimalakīrti says to Mahākātyāyana: "Ultimately all the elements neither arise nor cease; this is the meaning of impermanence. The five grasping skandhas are empty through and through, and do not spring from anything; this is the meaning of suffering. There is no duality of self and no-self; this is the meaning of no-self" (p. 19 of R. ROBINSON's typed translation (1953); cf. also p. 35 *ibid.*)

⁶ *Suvikrāntavikrāmparipṛcchā* 64 b—65 a.

⁷ *Pras.* XXIII 457—8.

⁸ p. 166 n. 519.

⁹ E. LAMOTTE, II 1, 1938, p. 90.

notion that 'there is something', then their notion of the object (*vastu*) of holy cognition is not the correct one. To say that 'there is something' is the prattling of fools, and not the talk of holy men". Or the *Suvikrāntavikrāmi-paripṛcchā*¹¹: "Forming with regard to something unreal the notion that it is real, they are seized by the perverted views, and it is hard to set them free; in this way all the foolish common people err about, — not associated with anything, not dissociated from anything, and yet tied with bonds". In its discussion of the dedication of merit to the enlightenment of all beings the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*¹² states that it would be a case of perverted perception, thought and views¹³ if one were "to treat as an objective support¹⁴ or a sign¹⁵ an entity or object which does not exist". One would be as guilty of perversion as a person who, under the influence of greed, hate or delusion, would discriminate¹⁶ a non-existent entity and ponder on it, — thinking that there is permanence in the impermanent, etc." Perversion can be avoided only if one does not perceive the thought which makes the dedication, and does not identify it as 'this is that thought'¹⁷, and if one realizes that the dharmas dedicated to enlightenment are all "extinct, stopped, departed and reversed", and that Buddhahood, the dharma to which they are dedicated, can never be extinguished¹⁸. But if a person should perceive signs and make discriminations, then he would be "one who perceives the truly real in that which is not truly real as if it were truly real"¹⁹. As finally another *Sūtra*²⁰ puts it: If someone "falls in love" with the phantom of a woman created by a conjurer, he may well try to purge his mind of greed by reflecting on that non-existent woman as impure, impermanent, etc. On the whole his activities are rather futile, and so are those of the Hīnayānists who strenuously think of dharmas as impermanent, etc., when in fact they are unproduced²¹ and unborn. They surely labour under a delusion. The man in question "produces the notion of a woman with regard to what is not a woman, and he imagines something which is not real". What he does is to superimpose a fiction on something which does not exist²².

2. Furthermore, any kind of discrimination is regarded as a perversion, and so is any affirmation or negation²³, any assumption of separate reality.

¹⁰ pp. 106—7.

¹¹ VII 98 b—99 a.

¹² A VI 139.

¹³ These three kinds of *viparyāsa* are defined in *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* p. 333.

¹⁴ *ārambaṅikuryāt*; H(arihadrā) p. 333, make the special marks into a range of observation.

¹⁵ *nimittikuryāt*; H. 333, by defining their general marks.

¹⁶ *vikalpya* = *adhyāropya* H 334.

¹⁷ A VI 142.

¹⁸ A VI 149 and H 348.

¹⁹ A VI 151.

²⁰ quoted *Pras.* XXIII 463.

²¹ It seems to be somewhat of a moot point whether an unproduced dharma is permanent or impermanent. The interested reader may compare pages 218 and 205 of the *Laṅkāvatāra*.

²² *asat-samāropa*. See J. May p. 195 n. 645.

²³ *Madhyāntavibhāgaṅikā* p. 50: *aviparyāsa-arthenety anadhyāropānapavādā-arthena . . . viparyāso hi vikalpaḥ*.

Suchness alone lies outside the range of perverted knowledge²⁴. To seize on anything as existent or non-existent, on any kind of multiplicity (*vicitritā*), that is "perversion"; in fact, perversion is the automatic result of assuming multiplicity of any kind²⁵. The very belief in separate dharmas is due to a "perversion of perception"²⁶. Any kind of dualism as such is pernicious, a sign of fall from grace, and any kind of division²⁷ is alien to the Dharma. For, as a Sūtra has it²⁸: "The dharmic nature of the Tathāgata has not been brought forth from duality²⁹. Therefore those who course in duality do not make right efforts, but their efforts are all wrong". Intent, as so often, on mystification the *Large Prajñāpāramitā* conveys the same message in a series of pronouncements which have at least the merit of showing the manifold meanings of which the word *prapañca*³⁰ is capable³¹. There the attribution of permanence and impermanence, etc., to the skandhas is described as something which delays (*prapañca*) the Bodhisattva, and which should therefore be avoided. In a genuine reunion (*abhisamaya*) the multiplicities (*prapañca*) of existence and non-existence no longer exist, and re-union takes place when these obstacles to spiritual progress (*prapañca*) are absent. Intent on that which is free from discursive ideas (*aprapañcyo niṣprapañcyo*), one should therefore not cause any delay (*aprapañcyan na prapañcayati*) by thinking that dharmas are permanent or impermanent, etc. "For own-being causes no delay (*prapañcayati*) to own-being, nor non-existence to non-existence. But apart from own-being and non-existence one could not apprehend any other dharma which might cause delay, or whereby or wherein one might be delayed". All dharmas, in fact, are free from all multiplicity (*niṣprapañcyā*), because they have no own-being.

3. Since discrimination is the basic error, the recognition of the "perverted views" as perversions cannot be regarded as true knowledge having ultimate validity; for they make a distinction between permanence and impermanence, ease and ill, self and not-self, the lovely and the repulsive. The position has been stated with some clarity in the *Suvikrāntavikrāmipari-ṣṛcchā*³²: "All dharmas have arisen from (*-samutthita*) perverted views. But a perverted view is not associated with, or dissociated from, anything; because with regard to it no objectively existing entity (*vastu*), or even its possibility (*sambhava*) can be apprehended. For a perverted view is unreal,

²⁴ ibd. it is said about *tathatā*: *vikalpa-anāmbanātvan na viparyāsavastu*.

²⁵ *Laṅkāvatāra* p. 279 v. 111. Similarly pp. 280—1, vv. 120—126.

²⁶ *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* XIII 278: *saṃjñā-viparyāsa-prādurbhūta*.

²⁷ *prabheda*, *Pras.* XXIII 463.

²⁸ quoted in *Pras.* XXIII 463.

²⁹ *na dvaya-prabhāvita*. See J. MAY p. 194 and E. CONZE, *Vajracchedikā*, 1957, pp. 98—9 for the shades of meaning.

³⁰ Some years ago I had some correspondence about this term with Prof. Lessing, and his manifest interest in the problems involved seems to me to justify to some extent my offering just this particular contribution for his *Festschrift*.

³¹ *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā*, Gilgit Ms, ch. 69, f. 259 b—260 a, = *Pañcaviṃśati*-fol. 491—3. The *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* regards this passage as a discussion of the error (*vipratipatti*) concerning the perverted views (V 8, 11).

³² VII 98 b.

false, fraudulent in its nature, and vain. No dharma (= real entity) which could be called 'perverted view' is therein apprehended. 'Perverted view' that is an unfounded disquisition (*vipratilambha*) of beings, a teasing of beings, the imagining of what is unreal on the part of beings, vain conceits, vapourings, futile discourings (*prapañca*) on the part of beings. Just as a little child, when teased with an empty fist³³, forms the notion that there is something real in it; just so the foolish common people are teased by a perverted view which has never been³⁴, and in their delusion think to themselves that this is real". "When perverted views have been cognized as unreal, and also the fact that perverted views do not exist in perverted views, then all dharmas have been fully understood as unperverted"³⁵.

4. The Hīnayāna theory of the *viparyāsas* had been based on the assumption that the conditioned dharmas are actually impermanent, ill, etc., and definitely distinct from the Unconditioned, which is actually permanent, etc. The Mahāyāna, pursuing its own logic, naturally questioned this assumption. In emptiness the distinction between the conditioned and the unconditioned is swallowed up. Nāgārjuna points out that obviously "the impermanent does not exist in the empty"³⁶, and Candrakīrti³⁷ infers that "if impermanence has no existence, how can a permanence, or an assumption of permanence, which contradicts it, constitute a perversion?" Nāgārjuna devotes an entire chapter³⁸ to the subject, and his arguments, as interpreted by Candrakīrti, can be summed up as follows: Greed, hate and delusion, the basic *kleśas*, result from imaginations³⁹. In greed we are attracted by what is agreeable, falsely and by mere superimposition; in hate we are repelled by what appears to be disagreeable, without sufficient reason, arbitrarily and by mere superimposition; the delusion results from the four perverted views which superimpose the attributes of permanence, ease, self and attractiveness on the data of experience which do not contain them. Since it is obviously wrong to conceive the impermanent as permanent, one might well believe that it is right to regard the impermanent as impermanent. In the Hīnayāna this had indeed been the intention of this teaching. But it would be clearly untrue to attribute impermanence, ill, etc. to emptiness, or to dharmas which are empty of own-being, or to dharmas of which the own-being has never been produced. Both permanence and impermanence are misconceptions indicative of perversity⁴⁰. "Since there is thus nothing that is not a perverted view, in relation to what could a perversion be?" The implication here is that correlative terms give sense only in relation to one another, and that one of the pair alone and by itself can neither exist nor be conceived. In other words, in a universe where there is *only* perversion there can be no per-

³³ see F. EDGERTON, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, 1953, s. v. *ullāpana* and *rikta-muṣṭi*.

³⁴ The text has *ucchedena*, which I do not understand.

³⁵ *Suv.* 66 b.

³⁶ *Mādhyamikakārikā* XXIII 13. *na-anityam vidyate śūnye*.

³⁷ *Pras.* p. 461.

³⁸ i. e. chapter XXIII.

³⁹ *saṃkalpa* = *vitarka*, Candrakīrti, 'discursive reasoning'.

⁴⁰ *vaiparityam*, *Pras.* XXIII 462.

version at all, at least by way of an attested fact. Some of Nāgārjuna's, or perhaps Candrakīrti's, arguments in support of this somewhat paradoxical thesis seem to be invalidated by a number of equivocations. The *viparyāsa* are sometimes treated as psychological attitudes, sometimes as logical propositions, and sometimes even as an ontological condition, with the result that it is hard to avoid the suspicion that a certain amount of sophistry is involved.

Nevertheless the conclusion, whatever may be the route that has led to it, is quite sound, as can be seen when we consider one by one the four dualities which form the theme of the perverted views.

In the case of the fourth *viparyāsa* the fictitious nature of the opposition between the "lovely" and the "repulsive" is quite obvious. The elaborate meditations on *aśubha*, which are so often recommended, are clearly no more than the self-defence of celibate monks who resist the pressure exerted on their libido. They do not, however, reflect the factual existence of things, their "own-being", or their dharmic constitution. The offensiveness of entrails is no more an ultimate fact than the allure of swelling breasts seen through silk in the sun.

As for the distinction between *permanence* and *impermanence*, the *Mahāyānasamgraha*⁴¹ observes that on some occasions the Lord has pronounced dharmas to be permanent⁴², on other occasions he has described them as impermanent⁴³, and on others again as neither permanent nor impermanent. Aśaṅga attempts to account for these divergences by the special categories of the Yogācārins, which do not concern us here. The most extensive Mahāyāna treatment of the problems posed by the relationship of permanence and impermanence is found in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, although its discussions are not always very clear. Pages 204—210 discuss the question whether the Buddha assigned impermanence to all worldly things when he taught that "impermanent indeed are all composite things, doomed to pass away once they have been produced". The Buddha concludes his exposition by saying⁴⁴ that he is "neither for permanence nor for impermanence". It would, indeed, be futile to describe things as either permanent or impermanent, because there are no external existents, but merely one's own mind; because a variety of marks is unacceptable; because all duality is the result of that false discrimination which begets and nourishes karma and

⁴¹ E. LAMOTTE, II 1, p. 126.

⁴² e.g. *Laṅkāvatāra* p. 116. Here the text seems corrupt, and NANJIO's edition offers a choice of no fewer than five readings. Only the first part seems fairly certain, "because the genesis of their marks is really a non-genesis". The second either says that all dharmas are permanent because of their permanence (so Tib.), or because of their impermanence (so the other documents). In other passages some things are being called "permanent", but not, as would appear from SUZUKI's translation on p. 204, gold, *vajra* and the relics of the Buddha. They do not "remain the same until the end of time", but for a *kalpa*, and are instanced as exceptions to the universality of momentariness, which is the topic of pp. 234—6.

⁴³ e.g. *Laṅkāvatāra* pp. 115—6; "because the genesis of their marks involves impermanence".

⁴⁴ pp. 208—9, trsl. *Buddhist Texts*, ed. E. CONZE, 1954, no. 180.

all its evil consequences; and because the three marks (i. e. impermanence, ill and not-self) have issued from nothing but verbal discriminations.

The *Lañkāvatāra* is very concerned to show that ultimate reality is neither permanent nor impermanent, not only in the sense that both these marks are merely absent and inapplicable, but in the sense that they are transcended. "The Permanent and Unthinkable" which is ultimate reality and the "Suchness which the Tathāgatas have attained within themselves through their holy (*ārya*) cognition" is specifically called "permanent, because it is like space, Nirvāṇa and stopping"⁴⁵. Here "permanent" may, however, well mean "non-impermanent", as suggested by the somewhat cryptic remarks on pp. 60,13—61, 2 and 61,9—12. For in fact the Tathāgata, "who has gone beyond all idle reasonings (*sarvaprapañca-alīta*)" is neither permanent nor impermanent⁴⁶. Pages 217—19 explain why that should be so, and why in fact the Tathāgata is in a condition in which he is positively not impermanent, and also not permanent in the usually accepted sense. "The triple world, as distinct from the Tathāgatas, originates from the discrimination of unrealities. Where there is duality, there is permanence and impermanence, but from non-duality [these two can] not [arise]. The isolated is indeed non-dual, because all dharmas are marked with non-duality and non-production. For that reason the Tathāgatas are neither permanent nor impermanent. As long as there is verbal discrimination, so long there are the faulty notions of permanence and impermanence. Fools seize upon these notions which are impeded by the extinction of all those mental (or intellectual) processes which are based on discrimination, but not of those which are based on the insight into [absolute] solitude (or isolatedness)."

"Those who always see the Buddhas
As free from both permanence and impermanence,
And yet as brought forth from (*prabhāvita*) these two,
They are not swayed by the false views.
With either permanence or impermanence
Efforts made for enlightenment are bound to be futile,
Knowledge based on discrimination is worthless;
May thus all thought of permanence and impermanence be
impeded!"

Ill and *ease* are also both equally unreal. Nāgārjuna devotes his 12th chapter to showing that "ill" is not real, partly because its production cannot be explained, and partly because those who believe to experience it are as unreal as the objective factors which seem to occasion it. Since ill is about as real as "the scent of flowers growing in the sky (*khapuṣpa*)", its apparent reality is indeed nothing but a delusion and a result of *vīparyāsa*. The irreality of *sukha* seems, on the other hand, not to have attracted much comment, very largely because it is only too obvious to all thinking people.

⁴⁵ Pp. 59—61. On p. 218 the same is said of the "cognition which marks his attainment of re-union (*abhisamaya*)".

⁴⁶ Pp. 189—190.

Likewise, both *self* and *not-self* are equally alien to true reality. Nāgārjuna⁴⁷ states that in some places the Buddhas have spoken of a "self"⁴⁸, at others they have taught a "not-self"⁴⁹, and in addition they have also taught that there is neither a self nor a not-self⁵⁰. Candrakīrti⁵¹ explains this aphorism convincingly by pointing out that the Buddhas are physicians rather than teachers, that they always consider the mentality and spiritual maturity of their interlocutors, and vary their teachings in accordance with it. There are exceedingly coarse-grained people, like the Cārvākas, corresponding in Europe to the mechanical materialists and to David Hume, who deny the existence of a self in such a way that the spiritual life is deprived of any meaning. To convert them, the Buddhas have spoken of a "self". There are others, more refined, but still given to egoism, and confirmed in their self-seeking by their belief in the existence of a self. The Buddhas teach them the non-existence of a self so as "to weaken their attachment to the false view of personality and to engender in them a desire for Nirvāṇa". Other people, finally, are "near to Nirvāṇa, free from all love for self, and capable of really understanding the true words of the Buddha". They are taught that there is neither self nor not-self. The view of a not-self is in fact no more true than that of a self, to which it is an antidote. "Just as the people who have no cataract do not perceive the hairs, flies, etc., seen by those who suffer from this eye-disease, so the Buddhas cannot at all see as real the self or not-self which fools have imagined". Likewise in his *Ratnāvalī*⁵² Nāgārjuna says:

"In real truth no self or not-self can be got at.

The Great Sage has made us ward off all views about them.

What can be seen or heard He has pronounced to be neither truthful nor fraudulent.

Any thesis must lead to a counter-thesis. Neither one nor the other is to the point (*arthataḥ*)".

This theory is by no means confined to the Mādhyamikas, and is already stated in the *Kāśyapaparivarta*⁵³: "To believe in a self is an extreme view; to believe in a not-self is an extreme view". In the middle between the two lies the Middle Way, "the contemplation of dharmas as they really are"⁵⁴.

5. On the basis of all this new insight three stages in the removal of the perverted views must be distinguished. I. On the first, we recognize them for what they are, acquire the belief that they are likely to be erroneous, and intellectually cease to regard things as more permanent, bliss-bestowing and owned than they actually are. We also come to understand that we can

⁴⁷ XVIII 6.

⁴⁸ See the quotations at *Pras.* XVIII 354. They are made much of by the Puḍgala-vādins and their modern successors.

⁴⁹ See the quotations *ibid.*

⁵⁰ In this connection one may also remember the canonical account of the occasion when the Buddha refused to tell the Wanderer Vacchagotta whether the self exists or not. See E. LAMOTTE, *Traité*, pp. 32—3, H. OLDENBERG, *Buddha*, 1959, pp. 287—8, 508.

⁵¹ XVIII 356—360.

never be upset by anything that actually happens, but that the disturbance invariably derives from the way we view it, and that, once the perverted views are withdrawn from the situation, all upsets can be traced to some disordered passion in ourselves, for which the external event merely provides the occasion.

II. On the second we reject them also with our will and emotions. We cease to seek for permanence in impermanent things, give up all hope of deriving happiness of any kind from worldly things, and it would not occur to us to call anything our own. For the first stage only intelligence is required, for the second an uncommon capacity for detachment and self-effacement. In fact on this stage the growth of two cardinal virtues provides us with an ever more impenetrable armour against the upsets of life, in that trance (*samādhi*) generates an unshakeable inward calm, while wisdom (*prajñā*) shows the disturbing event to be utterly insignificant.

III. The first two stages can be reached also by the Hīnayānists, whereas the third is accessible only to those who apply the methods of the Mahāyāna and who through them can completely reject⁵⁵, completely overcome⁵⁶ the perverted views. We step above, or transcend, perverted views when 1. we see no longer any difference between impermanence and permanence, etc., and 2. when we meet with no object with which we could associate either the three marks or their opposites⁵⁷. Abolished is then the difference between impermanence and permanence, suffering and ease, self and not-self, delight and disgust. Truly, then one has stepped above all that can upset.

It is obvious from the *Samādhirāja*⁵⁸ that the Mahāyāna is concerned with describing things as they appear on the highest spiritual level of effortless and completed self-extinction. That Sūtra identifies the man who has crossed to the other shore with the man who is "free from perverted views (*aviparyasā-cittaḥ*)", and then proceeds to define his freedom from the *viparyāsa* as the state in which he does not review or apprehend any dharmas which might cause greed, hate or delusion. Candrakīrti⁵⁹ maintains that the insight into the paradox of the absence of all perversions (see p. 38) is greatly

⁵² II 3—4.

⁵³ p. 87.

⁵⁴ For a good explanation of this term see S. SCHAYER, *Ausgewählte Kapitel aus der Prasannapadā*, 1931, p. 70 n. 50.

⁵⁵ *parivarjayitavya*, *Pañcaviṃśati* 221 = *Śatasāhasrikā* 1465, in the description of the fifth *bhūmi*. — The commentary to the *Vibhaṅga* says that eight of the *vippallāsā* are forsaken on the path of the Streamwinner; the perverted perceptions and thought which mistake the repulsive for the lovely are attenuated on the path of the Once-Returner, and forsaken on the path of a Never-returner; the perverted perceptions and thought which mistake ill for ease are forsaken on the path of the Arhat. — The correlation of the abandonment of the perverted views with the *bhūmis* of the Mahāyāna is rather obscure, and requires further study; cf. *Daśabhūmika* pp. 29, 12, and 63, 3.

⁵⁶ *atikrānta* in the *Hṛdaya*. For the context see my *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 1958, p. 97.

⁵⁷ *sarva-vastūnām anupalabdhitām upādāya*, *Pañcaviṃśati* 221.

⁵⁸ quoted in *Pras.* XXIII 472.

⁵⁹ *Pras.* XXIII 469.

beneficial because it removes ignorance and all its consequences. The deeper understanding of ignorance, which now incidentally includes within it all that the Hīnayānists prized as "wisdom", automatically eliminates it by showing that it is not there. It is not by fighting against the perverted views, but by simply not apprehending them, that the Yogin puts a stop to ignorance. And the *Suvikrāntavikrāmīpariṣcchā*⁶⁰ adds "Where non-perversion has been understood (in the sense that perverted views are unreal, see page 38)⁶¹ no perverted view is left, and there is also no more need for practice (*caryā*). "If someone no longer discriminates about his practice, this practice of his may well be called a "non-practice".

6. In the Mahāyāna, ontological and soteriological views always go hand in hand, and the fuller and deeper understanding of the perverted views is closely connected with the distinctive features of a *Bodhisattva's* life.

People may be said to make a difference between *permanence* and *impermanence* if they hurry out of this impermanent world into the permanence of Nirvāṇa. They may be said to ignore that difference if they postpone entry into ever-lasting Nirvāṇa, do not object to living in the impermanency of "birth-and-death", and do not mind how long it takes to reach personal liberation, — treating time as the insignificant thing that it is. "Seeking all-knowledge without seeking it before the time, — this is the Bodhisattva's course"⁶².

The identity of *ill* and *ease* is not disclosed to those who wish to avoid suffering at all costs. But it can be experienced by those greatly compassionate heroes who joyfully welcome suffering if and when it helps other creatures, for "suffering endured for the sake of others brings happiness"⁶³. Many attempts have been made to drive out the fear of suffering by some kind of spiritual reasoning: suffering is a part of the beneficial purpose of the Absolute; there are cosmic and karmic reasons for it; it adds to the harmony of the whole; it has a "sacramental" meaning, and sanctifies our life; evil is really nothing, and only the good is something; and so on. All this is rather cold comfort to the sufferer, and *Candide* has, on the whole, found more followers than *Pangloss*. The Mahāyāna is not content with inducing people to acquiesce in their sufferings, but more ambitiously attempts to transcend suffering by identifying it with its very opposite. If the recipient of this teaching is lacking in the highmindedness expected of him he will, of course, feel no better off than before.

How can the identity of *self* and *not-self* be fully understood by people who in their actual practice oppose their own advantage to that of others? If a man exerts himself for the purpose of obtaining salvation and liberation for himself, and if he enters the freedom of Nirvāṇa, which cuts him off from

⁶⁰ VI 67 a.

⁶¹ cf. also *Śatasāhasrikā* 1411 = *Pañcaviṃśati* 198: *svabhāvo hi prakṛtir-aviparītā*.

⁶² *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, ch. 5, p. 38 of ROBINSON's typed translation (1953).

⁶³ Candragomin: *para-arthe duḥkhaṃ sukhaṃ*; quoted in HAR DAYAL, *The Bodhisattva doctrine*, 1932, 159.

the other suffering creatures whom he leaves behind, he can be said to make a difference between himself and others. Not so the Bodhisattva⁶⁴.

To sum up: The perverted views were originally taught⁶⁵ 1. as an empirically verifiable mistake which distorts easily ascertainable features of the world around us, and 2. as a metaphysical error which consists in that man, really identical with the Absolute, looks for a realization of his true self in identifying himself with the things of this world which in every respect are the reverse of the Absolute. This is how far the Hīnayāna interpreted the *viparyāsa*. For the Mahāyāna likewise they are based on a misconception of man's relation to the Absolute.

Though, of course, all this talk about man's relation to the Absolute is clearly essentially erroneous, because the very definition of the Absolute (as the Un-related) excludes the possibility of such a relation. To define perverted views as a misconception of the Absolute therefore constitutes a manifest absurdity. In all religious thinking statements about the Absolute are as unavoidable as they are impossible. For the true nature of things can be found only in their relation to an inexpressible Absolute. In consequence each of these statements is as true as its opposite, and any relation between the finite and the Infinite that may be postulated is only provisionally manufactured in order to achieve some practical purpose. Either their difference may be stressed, thereby exalting the transcendence of the Absolute, or their identity, thereby exalting its immanence. Comparing everything in this world to its disadvantage with the Absolute, the Hīnayānists aimed at the total rejection of the world, at a total renunciation of all that is not the Absolute, as essentially alien to us. The Mahāyāna points out that once someone has given up everything for the Absolute, he simply is the Absolute, both nothing and everything else.

Ordinary persons confuse conditioned and unconditioned things, mistaking the one for the other; the saints of the Hīnayāna neatly keep them apart, and claim that people are upset because they cannot make the division; the Mahāyānists again proclaim their sameness, and blatantly identify them. In other words, with the foolish common people we have the affirmation of the perverted views, with the Hīnayānistic saints their negation, and with the Mahāyānists the negation of that negation. The negation of the negation may easily be mistaken for an affirmation, and the appearance may be created that the Mahāyānistic saint has again become an ordinary person. This is one of the most untractable among the problems which bedevil the study of the Mahāyāna. Nine-tenth of the paradoxes and obscurities of the Mahāyāna scriptures result from the inability of ordinary language to do justice to the manifold meanings of the two simple words "not"⁶⁶ and „is“. Perhaps the much-vaunted methods of modern logic may one day clarify the issue. In the meantime there is

⁶⁴ For more details see HAR DAYAL, pp. 16—18, 179—181.

⁶⁵ As I have shown in my article quoted in note 1.

⁶⁶ This was quite obvious on page 40, in connection with the *Laṅkāvatāra* views on permanence and impermanence.

much scope for misunderstanding, and to some extent modern "Zen" has been tailored for people who believe that they can win the highest without in the least altering or reforming themselves.

It should be quite obvious that no one can reach the third stage without first going through the second, and becoming totally changed in the process. Otherwise the thesis that all things are the same, and that one should not want one thing more than another, will be regarded as equivalent to the levelling of all values, and to the proposition that one thing is as good as another, and that Shakespeare is no better than shove-halfpenny. In fact, however, we have to deal with an identification of all values which leaves their differentiation intact. It is very hard to distinguish verbally the transcendental state from that of the ordinary people. But that is merely the fault of the language we use. "There is nothing holy here" might be cited in support of the profanisation of the world in which no room any longer is found for the holy. A passage in the *Laṅkāvatāra*⁶⁷ shows that something very much more subtle is intended. There we hear that this world, which is but a whirl of confusion and error (*bhrānti*)⁶⁸ also appears to holy men (*ārya*), though they remain without intellectual perversion or non-perversion, as long as they are free from the ideas of existence and non-existence. But if some outsider makes a distinction between a perverted and an unperverted attitude to this *bhrānti*, then he arrives at a duality of clans, — that of the holy men, and that of the foolish common people.

Finally it may be useful to say a few very inadequate words about the type of person whom these doctrines aim at producing. The theory of *viparyāsas* is very much akin to the philosophy of Epiktetos, according to which the origin of all our troubles lies in that we mistake that which is in our power for that which is not. In consequence we make things do that which is not in them, instead of just following the "nature of things". The difference between the Stoa and the Mahāyāna lies in that the Stoics try to maintain the *Nūs*, or reason, at all costs against unreason, whereas for the Buddhists reason and nonsense are one and the same. Because they feel that they have something to maintain, the Stoic sages are somewhat rigid, ponderous, humourless, sour and censorious, whereas the Bodhisattvas are cheerful, free and easy, and a bit naive. Since they have nothing to defend, the Mahāyānists can actually conform themselves even to the nature of things as they appear. But, and that is the difficulty, they do not really return to the condition of ordinary people. They may be despicable beggars, without any social position, but the charisma of the saint clings to them. Samantabhadra as a courtesan or the Ma-Jang-fu Kwan-yin⁶⁹ are quite unlike the tarts who patrol the pavements round Picadilly Circus. These

⁶⁷ pp. 106—7.

⁶⁸ This is a word often used for the object of perverted perception, cf. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* pp. 341—2.

⁶⁹ See e. g. D. T. SUZUKI, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Third Series, 1934, p. 372, and F. SIERKMA, *The gods as we shape them*, 1960, pl. 28.

sages may be said to drift passively, but nevertheless they arduously continue their struggles. What these people do can indeed be done, but it cannot be thought. Logic and consistency, so much prized by the Stoics, are alright as far as they go. In the Mahāyāna they are abandoned for the rhythm of a spiritual practice which is a law unto itself and leaves them far behind.

Note: A large part of Dr. Conze's article reproduces sections from his book "Buddhist Thought in India", meanwhile published by G. Allen & Unwin Ltd, of London.