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# The Buddhist Mental Attitude

## 佛教徒的心態

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*Editor's note: The author, Miguel Ángel Polo Santillán Professor Miguel Polo teaches oriental philosophy, with an emphasis in ethics and Buddhism, at the University of San Marcos in Lima, Peru. Founded in 1551, it is the oldest university in the Americas and the top public university in Peru. Professor Polo received his BA, MA, and PhD from San Marcos. He was greatly influenced by Professors Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, prolific translators of Buddhist texts in the Spanish language. This article was inspired by the reading of the first chapter of Rahula's book (1978) of the same title.*

### Abstract:

One of the key aspects of Buddhism is the mind. The distinction between the mind itself and its contents has

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### 摘要：

佛教的一個核心概念就是「心」。心的本身及其內容之間的區別，蘊涵了接受真理的方式；換句話說，也就是佛教徒對於心的內容，比如信仰、思想、教義等應有的態度。本文即是探討這種佛教徒應有心態的幾個鮮明特徵，比如對形而

an implication in the way of accepting the truth, in other words, in the attitude the Buddhist should take towards the contents of the mind, like beliefs, ideas, doctrines, etc. This article explores the distinctive features of a Buddhist mental attitude, such as the initial rejection of metaphysics, absence of authority, seeking of truth and detachment from the doctrine. In the conclusions, we add our assessment to that attitude.

### Introduction:

The mind (manas), its contents and states, is a major concern within the entire Buddhist tradition. One of the classic texts of the Buddhist tradition, *the Dhammapada*, tells us that the human condition is made by the mind<sup>1</sup>, which leads it. Therefore, the observation of the mind received special care so as not to allow it to house greed, hatred or ignorance. Aiming directly at the mind, as they say in Zen Buddhism, led Buddha Gotama to turn away from metaphysics, unnecessary speculations and to tell his disciples to take special care not to make the teachings (Dhamma) an object of attachment, to which the mind and its creation, the ego, dwell again (saying: “I have the Truth”). In this brief article, I will summarize the mental attitude of Buddhism in the following topics: rejection of metaphysics, absence of external authority, seeking for the truth and detachment from the doctrine.

### Rejection of metaphysics:

Buddha Gotama is called the “Great Doctor for the Ills of the World,” which indicates that the attitude of the founder was not to speculate about metaphysical subjects. His attitude was unusual for his time, because the wise men of India had a strong tendency for abstraction about the great metaphysical themes: God, soul and the world. These issues appear nowadays in the *Upanishads*, the source of high and true metaphysical and mythical speculations. Within this intellectual and religious atmosphere, the attitude of Buddha Gotama was practical, but never reaching to the point of pragmatism as to assume that there is no truth to seek. That is, the practice was never the criterion of truth, but the understanding of the reality of things.

One of the sutras shows a dialog with the ascetic Potthapada, who asked the following questions:

- **Is the world eternal?**
- **Is the world not eternal?**

上學的最初捨棄、權威的缺位、尋求真理，以及不執著教義。在最後的結論中，會附上對這些心態的評估。

### 簡介：

心 (manas)，心的內容和心的狀態，是整個佛教傳統所關注的焦點。佛教的一部經典——《法句經》告訴我們，人類的處境唯心所造，由心所致<sup>1</sup>，因此要特別觀照心念，不要讓心懷有貪瞋癡。如禪宗講的「直指人心」，佛陀不做純哲學性、無謂的推測思考，而且他告訴他的弟子要特別小心，不要讓他的教誨（佛法）成為所執著的對象，讓心以及心的創造物——自我，有所著住（認為我得到了真理）。在這篇文章中，我將佛教的心態歸納為：捨棄形而上學、外在權威的缺位、尋求真理、以及不執著教義等四個主題。

### 捨棄形而上學：

釋迦牟尼佛被稱為「世間大醫王」，這說明這位創始人的意圖，不是研究形而上、純哲學性的問題。在那個時代，他這種態度是異於尋常的，因為當時印度的智者，強烈傾向將一些偉大的哲學問題（例如上帝、靈魂、世界）予以抽象化。這些討論，可見於現存的奧義書中，這是高級以及真實神秘主義哲學的源泉。在這種的學識與宗教氛圍中，佛陀的態度顯得非常務實，但絕不至於像實用主義那樣——認為沒有所謂的「真理」可尋。也就是說，實行並非驗證真理的標準，而是對事物實相的瞭解。

有一部經典，記載了佛陀與苦行者布吒婆樓的對話。布吒婆樓提出以下的問題：

- **世間有常？**
- **世間無常？**
- **世間有邊？**
- **世間無邊？**

<sup>1</sup> We must clarify that it is not about the idealistic thesis that the mind is what creates the world and that nothing exists outside of the mind, although this philosophy emerged in Buddhism in later times. The thesis of the Buddha has an antropomoral sense, that is, what it tells us is, that the mind is significantly involved in what we are and what we do.

<sup>1</sup>我們必須澄清，這並非關於唯心論，即心造世界，一切不出於心外，儘管這種觀點出現在後期的佛教哲學中。佛的論點有一種人類道德感，也就是說，它告訴我們，我們是誰以及我們的所行，是與我們的心息息相關的。

- Is the world finite?
  - Is the world infinite?
  - Is the soul the same as the body?
  - Is the soul one thing and the body another?
  - Is consciousness the man's soul or the one is different from the other?
  - Does one who has gained the truth live again after death?
  - Does he not live again after death?
  - Does he both live again and not live again after death?
  - Does he neither live again nor not live again after death?
- To each of these questions the Buddha gave the same answer,

“That, too, Potthapada, is a matter on which I have expressed no opinion.”

Potthapada replied: “But why has the Exalted One expressed no opinion on that?”

The Buddha answered:

“This question is not calculated to profit, it is not concerned with the Dhamma, it does not redound even to the elements of right conduct, nor to detachment, nor to purification from lusts, nor to quietude, nor to tranquillisation of heart, nor to real knowledge, nor to the insight of the higher stages of the Path, nor to Nibbana. Therefore it is that I express no opinion about it.”

*(Potthapada Sutta, HUMPHREYS (1977), pp. 55-57)*

The text adds that the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths because they lead to detachment, to inner tranquillity, to Nibbana. You should not confuse this anti-metaphysical attitude with skepticism or empiricism, but if you search for the purification of the mind, then you should not be distracted with ideas and theories that do not lead to that goal.

The same questions were asked by one of his disciples called Malunkyaputta, who thought to leave the order if the Buddha did not respond. Buddha Gotama said that when Malunkyaputta became a monk he, Buddha Gotama, never promised to answer these questions. And he told him a parable—that has become classic in Buddhism – so that he could understand the reason:

“Suppose, Malunkyaputta, that a man was wounded by a poisoned arrow and when he is carried to a surgeon by friends and relatives, say: “I will not let this arrow be removed until I know who fired it.

If a ksatriya (caste of warriors), a brahmin (priestly caste), a vaisya (caste of merchants and farmers) or a sudra (low caste),

what is his first name, what is his family name, if he is of tall, short or medium stature, what is the color of his skin, from which village, town or city he comes.

☞ To be continued

- 是命是身？
- 命異身異？
- 如來終？
- 如來不終？
- 如來終不終？
- 如來非終非不終？

針對這些問題，佛陀給了這樣的答覆：

「世間有常。乃至如來非終非不終。我所不記。」

布吒婆樓接著問：「世尊！於此等何故不記說耶？」

佛陀回答：「此等不適合於義、不適合於法，而且非根本梵行，又不導於出離、離欲、止滅、寂靜、證悟、正覺、涅槃也。是故我不記說也。」

（《布吒婆樓經》，韓福瑞，1977英譯本，第55-57頁）

經文繼續提到，佛陀教導「四聖諦」，因為它們能帶來離執、寂靜，以及涅槃。所以我們不應該將這種背棄形而上學的態度，與懷疑主義或是經驗主義混為一談，因為如果追求的是心靈的淨化，就不應該專注在與這個目標無關的思想和理論。

佛陀的弟子之一，摩羅迦子也問了同樣的問題，而且他想如果佛不回答他的問題，他就要離開僧團。但是佛陀說，當摩羅迦子出家時，他從未允諾要回答這些問題。佛陀並告訴摩羅迦子一個寓言——之後成為佛教的經典故事——幫助他明白其中的道理。

摩羅迦子！猶有人被塗厚毒之箭所射，彼之親友、同事、親族、血緣為彼遣請箭醫療治。

然彼言：『尚未知射予之人是王族耶？婆羅門耶？庶民耶？或奴隸族耶之期間，此箭不得取出。』

又彼言：『在未知射予之人是何名、是何姓之期間，此箭不得取出。』

彼又如是言：『在未知射予之人為高、為中、為矮之期間，此箭不得取出。』

彼又如是言：『在未知射予之人為黑色、或黃色、或金色皮膚之期間，此箭不得取出。』

☞待續