

# PROBLEMS BARED



HENRI VAN ZEYST



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“What I would really like to do is  
to rewrite the message of our classics  
with their penetrating clarity and insight  
into the basic principles of a wholesome life  
in a new, young idiomatic language”.

Vijayalakshmi Pandit

# Foreword

The following “Essays on Buddhism” do not constitute a graduated course on Buddhist Psychology, Logic, Criteriology, Ontology and Ethics, such as can be found in “The Norm” now in course of publication.

Each essay forms a separate unit and can be read independently without reference to other essays. However, they have this in common that the approach is non-dogmatic, even when sayings of the Buddha are quoted by way of illustration. The approach is individualistic and psychological, which may enable each one to solve his own problem for himself.

Henri van Zeyst





# Introduction

This collection of essays has been called “*Problems Bared*”. The title indicates exactly what the teaching of the Buddha is intended to do. It is a revelation, to an individual, of the truth about his own existence, which is normally not so apparent (*paṭicchannanvavivareyya*). It is like a lamp brought into the darkness for those with eyes to see physical forms. One’s existence has to be seen and understood for oneself in the light of the Dhamma.

Yet what most Buddhists do is, instead of looking at their existence they look at the light. They memorise and repeat words and phrases never attempting to know the truth these words point to; or they keep on arguing about the right interpretation. They never look in the direction pointed, they keep on looking at the pointing finger. They think it is a dogma to be believed and defended, or a theory to be discussed as an intellectual pastime. They never realise that the teaching actually leads one to (*opanayiko*), the understanding of the fact within one’s own experience. Having acquired the ability to repeat certain words and phrases, they believe that they have learnt the Dhamma. This belief is not altogether wrong, for they have learnt it, but the tragedy is, that they have not studied it or understood their experience through it.

Some who think that they have mastered the Dhamma have only found support for their own prejudices in it. It is like a man looking into a clear pond, and instead of seeing the gems beneath, seeing

his own face reflected on the surface. Most people do not see the Dhamma even when it is pointed out, because there is too much dust in their eyes.

Yet it is very important for a Buddhist to understand the Dhamma correctly. The purpose is not to satisfy his curiosity, but to understand the problem of his existence and thereby solve it. The practice of Buddhism is actually a solution of the problem of one's existence. This path of practice pointed out by the Buddha begins in right understanding.

When the problem of one's existence is properly understood the solution automatically follows. One then starts practising the Dhamma, not because other people desire it, but because one wants it oneself. It then becomes not really a practice, but living in accordance with one's existence. (*dhammānudhamma vatti*). It is like a log that has fallen into the river, if there is no obstruction to it, or if it does not sink it will automatically drift into the sea.

In "*Problems Bared*" the author attempts, as far as he is able to help the reader in understanding his own existence in the light of Buddhism, in order to solve his own problems. The title is not merely suggestive of the theme running through these pages, it is even revealing of the authors' attitude to the problem. He does not pretend to solve any problems. That is left to the individual concerned. But it is his firm conviction that "a problem will be solved automatically when it is seen in its correct set up, environment, cause, nature, that is, when it is laid bare".

Thus, when we understand our problems they cease in that understanding. Our not understanding (*avijjā*), is our greatest fetter, obstacle, hindrance, sin or whatever you like. A systematic endeavour to remove an obstacle in the mind will merely drive it underground to become a "complex". And every complex (*sabbe saṅkhārā*) is a conflict (*dukkha*).

The author is one who has sought the truth by trying to understand the truth through Buddhism unlike most scholars of Bud-

dhism. True Buddhism cannot be found by searching for it. It could be discovered only by him who seeks the truth. For Buddhism is truth, if it is the teaching of an Enlightened One. Buddhism is like a shadow which runs away from you when you run after it, but pursues you when you go your own way. No one can find out what the Buddha taught except by testing the truth of what is presented to one as Buddhism, by the way it lights up one's experience. Buddhism is revealed by the light in one's experience while one's experience is revealed in the light of Buddhism, just as the sun is recognised by the way it lights up the earth and the earth is seen in the light of the sun.

That the author was a seeker of the truth is revealed by his life. He was a Roman Catholic priest in Holland. He gave up his priesthood in 1938 through personal conviction. It was personal conviction which made him a Buddhist too; and those convictions have remained with him up-to-date. He even became a Buddhist monk and was well known as Bhikkhu Dhammapāla. As a monk he was a great inspiration to many Buddhists in Ceylon and abroad. He also rendered yeoman service for the cause of Buddhism, by way of illuminating talks and writings, and also through the Kandy Buddhist Association and the All Ceylon Buddhist students' Union which he founded. He is an eloquent speaker and a challenging writer. His speeches and works have always appealed more to the intellect than to sentiment.

It is this very emphasis of the intellect that seems to have made him give up his life as a monk in 1947. He was not satisfied with the tradition-bound Buddhist practice of today, with the accent on emotion rather than on reason. As he says, it was not always easy to satisfy the devotional hunger of the pious or to conform to traditional rituals which may have sentimental value, but very little rational foundation. I do not condemn, but it is my conviction, which seems to have a certain appeal to others like minded.

Even after his reversion to the household life, he has been functioning as a co-editor of the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism (1957–1967). He also gave a series of broadcasts over the English National service of the Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation, and of late has written a comprehensive presentation of his thoughts in a number of volumes still under print.

The author is one of the very few westerners who have plunged deep into the profound ocean of Buddhism and brought out many gems of rare value. He is fully qualified to speak on the subject. The following pages will speak for themselves in the same manner as his earlier works have done.

Rev. M. Punnañi,  
1st March 1970,  
Buddhist Information Centre,  
50, Green Path,  
Colombo 3,  
Ceylon

# The Problem of Conflict

We are living in a world of striving, of progress and success, as has never been witnessed before. It is not only the world and its treasures, it is the universe which is about to be opened up and conquered, and it is impossible even to imagine, where all this will lead to.

It would seem, therefore, a total anachronism in such a world, where the search for comfort, happiness and security is foremost, to talk of Buddhism which speaks of suffering and sorrow as an essential characteristic of its teaching. But, of course, Buddhism does not speak of sorrow only. Suffering is recognised as a universal fact, to which the Buddha claims to be able to put an end:

One thing only do I teach:  
Woe and how its end to reach.

In this search for happiness, however, Buddhism does not follow the only recognised path of seeking satisfaction. Buddhism recognises the problem of conflict and provides a solution to the problem. Not satisfaction, but solution.

What is the problem? There is conflict everywhere, between nations, between races, between ideologies, between religions, between families, between individuals ...; there is conflict within the individual. It is not so much between the haves and the have-nots, because even the haves have their problems and their conflicts. With all

demands satisfied, there still remains the conflict of finding security for the endurance of satisfaction. With all comfort and ease there still remains the discomfort of disease and also the final and only certainty that this does not last. It is the conflict between the desire for permanent security and the knowledge of impermanence.

This very knowledge of impermanence has made man to seek his security elsewhere. Many seek it in an everlasting life hereafter, and they are prepared to surrender the joys of their present life as a sacrifice and a payment of guarantee for a better life hereafter. Many others seek it in the perpetuation of their name for future generations and they pay for it with the labour of their lives to leave behind a name which will be remembered for ages to come, a name of honour and achievement.

But the actual conflict remains in the present between the desire for permanence and the actual fact of impermanence.

Why this search for security and continuance? There is, obviously, lurking in the background of the unconscious the spectre of fear of insecurity, which becomes all the more menacing in view of the apparent impossibility to build up a fortress of safety. Within living memory we have been through two devastating world-wars, several unprecedented economic world-crises, revolutions and catastrophes of earthquakes and famine. And notwithstanding all those eliminating factors, the human world-population is bursting its bonds at an alarming rate, completely disproportionate to the supply of foods required for its maintenance. And we continue our search for happiness.

It is clear that this search is but an escape from the problem of insecurity. All striving, and that means all progress, is an indication of this uneasiness, which is the driving force of action, of all effort to achieve. Thus we chase and are being chased round and round in a circle, because we have not paused to investigate the actual problem. A search for happiness is an escape from sorrow; and a continued search indicates that the goal has not been reached.

What is that goal of happiness, the goal of all striving? The feeling and the knowledge of satisfaction and ease are so short-lived that they contain in themselves a source of unease. In the very moment of satisfaction there is the fear of its discontinuance and of the insecurity of the next moment. And so the most intensive effort is not directed to the satisfaction of the moment. but to the continuation of that satisfaction.

How can continuation be achieved? There is obviously only one way to enjoy the continuation of happiness, and that is by the continuation of myself. And thus, all striving and effort are directed towards the extension and the projection of the ego. Without the ego there can be no lasting satisfaction. But with the strengthening of that ego there arises the conflict with other egos, with other interests. Thus the problem of the conflict lies within the self; the problem lies in the approach.

Any positive approach is idealistic. Any kind of striving has an end in view; and because it is viewed;idealistically even before an attempt is made, the goal remains within the self, which is the source of the conflict. Thus the very attempt of a search for happiness contains the seed of its failure, because it continues the very cause of the conflict within the ego.

Thus, *dukkha*, which is frequently translated as sorrow or suffering, is actually much more than that, as it forms one of the three chief characteristics found in everything that is a composition (*saṅkhāra*) or a conditioned event. The intrinsic unrest, imbalance, disharmony of whatever state that is dependent on conditions for its arising, continuation and cessation, is the inherent conflict, innate in every complex. This applies most of all to the psychological complex which forms an individual. Every complex is a conflict: *sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*.

In the natural stream of life, where everything is impermanent, the misconception of continued activity gives rise to the thought of a continued self-entity, underlying this activity as a substance or soul.

This misconception of a self as a permanent ego obviously places the natural impermanence of the total process of life in opposition. This opposition between an illusory self (which in a struggle for survival must oppose all that is impermanent) and the actual process of life and thought constitutes the conflict which thereby forms an essential part of every complex.

The conflict, therefore, is natural and even essential, so long as this opposition is maintained, the opposition between the actual impermanence of all that is and the ideal permanence which is the object of all strife and striving. An ideal, however noble and sublime, finds its source in the human mind itself as an idea or concept, and can, therefore, never surpass its limitations and can never become actual.

It is this constant frustration of the limitations of the impermanent process of life and thought, endeavouring to surpass those boundaries in a fruitless attempt to surpass itself into a self-created ideal world, which constitutes the problem of conflict.

A refusal to recognise the conflict merely leads to an attempt at escape which can only create a further conflict. The minimum requirement for the solution of a psychological problem is the direct recognition thereof. But this is also the most difficult part of the problem, as the self-created concept not only refuses to, but even cannot recognise the core of the problem which is itself, just as nobody can cure himself through self-analysis.

This is the blind alley from which there is no escape. And until the mind becomes aware of the impossibility of escape, it will continue in its attempt, for in continuance lies its only salvation. The ego cannot sacrifice itself. But in increased activity (of which our modern restlessness is so typical) it will explore new avenues of search as well as of escape. Politics, business, social service, religion, are not essentially different from the more crude escapes of carnal pleasures.



For many it will be a struggle for survival through many lives, till one day, one moment, the perspective will change completely, when it will be seen that the very effort to force an escape constitutes the problem, when it will be understood that the fight against the conflict is a mere dream, because the conflict itself is only mind-made.

There is no permanent self, substance, soul, ego, for whatever constitutes that delusion is but a desire for continuation, for stability and security in that universal stream of impermanence.

But once, when it is understood (not just intellectually, but also emotionally and completely) that this very impermanence is the real life of a constantly new birth, in which every experience is fresh, in which every event is a new discovery, in which every occurrence is a challenge for immediate action, then at that same moment the mind will be free and unfettered, free from the burden of psychological memories which prevent one from seeing things direct as they are, free to approach with the innocence of a new mind the apparent problem, which is no problem any more, because there is no conflict, no self, no opposition, no burden of the past. no worry for the future.

Such discovery can come only to a mind which is calm, which has ceased to agitate, to be disturbed by desires of achievement and attainment. For, only a mind which is calm can see things as they are, can act freely and honestly without being influenced, can see that there is no problem where there is no conflict.

In that peace of mind there is no restlessness, no search for happiness and satisfaction, but the peace of completeness which has solved all problems in the realisation that there is no conflict. In that realisation there cannot arise further desires and thus there will be no more becoming, *bhava nirodha*, which is Nibbāna.



# Fear as a Source of Religion

Fear is a painful emotion, caused by an apprehension of impending danger or evil. Whatever threatens the secure continuance of a complacent self is considered evil, because its very nature of insecurity shows the shakiness of the foundations on which has been built the entire structure of the self.

As long as man, as a child, lives in a primitive and vital unself-conscious union with nature, there is no arising of a thought of dualism. But when critical intelligence develops, a dualism is set up in actuality between a desire for permanently continued security and the experience of the insecurity of impermanence. This dualism is the cause of fear. And for the understanding of fear it will be necessary, therefore, to understand the reason and origin of dualism.

Whatever is not “self” is seen as a potential threat and enemy to the “self”. As long as the threat is tangible and the enemy visible, we can try to do something to ward off the danger. But if the enemy (for that we think it to be) is unknown, it becomes a cause of fear and even fright. With the advance of science in its many fields, we have come to know a great many things about nature and its working, things like lightning and thunder, sun- and moon-eclipses, which no longer frighten the grown-up man, even though he cannot

control them. Fear, therefore, lurks in the unknown and is born in the imagination as a reaction thereto.

The great unknown is, of course, the future, and having experienced over and over again the uncertainty of the present, all possible safeguards are being sought by man to make his future secure. Wealth and position provide but scanty protection in the present, and none whatsoever after death, which is the only certainty in life. Thus, speculation about a future life keeps the flame of hope eternally burning, but the wick on which the flame burns is fear.

This fear is not a mere sentimental element in the religious attitude of the still young in mind; it is the very essence of religion and the source of all religious activity, whether it be praise, prayer or sacrifice, whereas the element of love in divine worship has been effectively squashed by that well-known retort in the first letter of St. John<sup>1</sup>, "he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen".

A mere physical feeling of weakness or impotence need not necessarily produce a sensation of fear. For, even in the animal world where survival is the birthright of the physically strong only, we find a spirit of total surrender without fear, prevailing in the young baby monkeys, who cling to their mother jumping from branch to branch, and still more in the kitten which is carried without the slightest resistance by the scruff of its neck. In love there is no fear; but in love there is no duality either. And thus it stands confirmed that fear arises from duality.

Fear arises in the duality of attraction and repulsion, of attachment and aversion, of affection and animosity. Affection or attachment is a symptom in the process of expanding self-consciousness. Without "self" there can be no attachment, and without "self" there is nothing to be afraid of. But can detachment, and hence fearlessness, come through renunciation?

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<sup>1</sup>4.21

Renunciation, as an act of giving up, is only an act of craving, *i.e.*, of attachment, in the opposite direction. But it is still attachment, and that is also fear. Ascetic renunciation is often a desire to escape, and that is fear of a challenge, fear of an experience, fear of the unknown. Detachment, on the other hand, cannot be the goal of striving, but it will be there when fear subsides. And thus, as long as renunciation is brought about through fear, *i.e.*, through escape, there cannot be actual detachment. Renunciation is by choice; and choice is born of resistance, of opposition to the actual. Choice is attachment, and thus renunciation is attachment to the opposite, however noble that may be. And in the very choice of escape there is fear, there is attachment, there is craving.

The most common way of escape is the search for company. Why do we want companionship in some form or other of its many varieties? Whether we seek a companion and call her a “sister” in a religious order, or “comrade” in the political field, a “guru” to get his advice, or a “priest” to console us, a “mate” to set up a home, or just someone, anyone, to have a drink with and a dance—and whether the companionship is with one or with a crowd, the church, the party—it is all the same, expressed in different forms: fear to be alone, physically, emotionally, intellectually, psychologically.

Most problems of individuals are not concerned with themselves, but with society and environment: what will people say if I do or if I don't do this or that? And what will happen to me, if I do not conform? It is obviously not the act which causes one to worry, but the effect of such act upon others in relationship. As such relationship is for most people more important than the action, both the intention and the result are warped and perverted. Why is it that fear of the environment makes people such “squares” to fit in snugly in a well-sheltered hole?

It is again fear of the unknown, fear to be found out, fear to be nobody, to be naked, to be uprooted, to be alone. One believes that it is education, position, influence, money, which can give that

feeling of confidence and security, which however is really nothing but a feeling of being superior. But in being alone one cannot be superior, one cannot be inferior; one just *has* to be oneself; and *that* alone can be known; *that* alone is truth.

Do we ever try to be alone? Not with a book, not with the radio on, but to be just alone with nature as it is around us, when we can observe the mere falling of a leaf, the crawling of an insect, the cry of a baby ... and our own reactions thereto? It is then that we can discover a wealth of vision and experience which cannot be described in words, which cannot even be remembered and brought back in memory, but a wealth which is always there, always new and fresh, and which in its very aloofness provides an abundance of security, which has no basis, which is not static and which is hence incorruptible, a joy which is so charged with completeness and fullness of understanding that all fear is cast out and only love remains.

If there is love, there is no seeking a result, no discipline for the sake of morality, no giving for the purpose of acquisition. In love there is no end and hence no disappointment. Love is a necessity, as the water flowing from a spring; it is a complete gift of mind and heart, without the expectation of anything in return, not even love. And that is the reason why love is without fear, while where there is fear there is no love.

Love has no concern for self, for comfort, for security. But when there is no love, the quest for comfort and security becomes predominant. And with the search for mental security is created the need of authority. It is this self-created need of authority which has built the entire structure of civilisation, of which religion is one of its strongest fortifications. Religion, as society, is built on selfishness which is but a synonym for fear. It is in selfishness that spiritual gain is sought through spiritual exploitation. Virtue is practised for the sake of merit; the bliss of heaven is craved for as an escape from worldly sorrow; and the demand for such spiritual consolation has

created a host of spiritual teachers, each one claiming an authority not his own.

Thus, in order to become free of fear one has to become free of authority. This, however, is easier said than done. First of all, a difficulty arises that every effort to become free of one authority may result in the submission to another. Many there are who have renounced their religious faith only to become enslaved to a political creed, which has resulted in a substitution of authority and fear. Another difficulty arises from a set goal of striving. For, whether the goal is submission or freedom, it is a pre-conceived idea to which all striving is submitted. Even striving to become free of fear is striving to become subjected to a concept, which is not only the very opposite of freedom, but which is also inspired by fear of the very concept from which one is trying to escape.

Why are we afraid to stand alone? We are afraid that others may see something in us which we do not like in ourselves. We are concerned about feelings, not any feeling, but those feelings with which we have identified ourselves: the feeling of nationalism, the feeling of belonging to a religious institution, the feeling of having to achieve an end. It is the fear of failure, of not living up to a required standard, of not being acceptable in our social environment. Thus it is standards which make us afraid, standards of morality, of behaviour, of political thinking, of discipline of any type. We rather adjust ourselves to what other people think and say, we comply with established practice, we condemn that which is new for its lack of conformity; for, all that is easier than to wake up with a jolt and to have to find a new solution to a new problem. And yet, to be free one has to be first of all free of fear. It is no good to throw away all discipline and say: Now I am free! For, one can be bound to indiscipline and lawlessness as much as to the rules of discipline before.

Is it not possible to have a completely different approach to the problem? Conflict is always with us; every complex is a conflict

(*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*), but neither an attempt at escaping, nor a fight against it provides a solution. An attempt at escaping merely drives the conflict underground and converts the psychological fear into an unconscious obsession. A fight against the problem of conflict merely intensifies the conflict, as in the person who develops a psychological head-ache because he has a physical tooth-ache.

Isn't the cause of any conflict an inner contradiction in the sense that the cause is to be found in the conflict itself? On the other hand, is a contradiction not an absolute and intrinsic impossibility in so far as there cannot be an affirmation and a negation of the same concept at the same time? Then if a contradiction is an impossibility, so is a conflict in the ultimate sense; and that is the reason why a conflict cannot be solved by either escape or resistance. It can only be dissolved by the realisation of the unreality of the conflict. When a child has understood the unreality of the cause of its fear, its fear will have vanished without having been conquered.

But authority thrives on fear; its vested interests in priest-craft and state-craft cannot allow such a faithful to pass out of the reach of their influence. And so the conflict is maintained in the public and the private mind, in the spiritual and economic sectors, all of which stress the necessity of security which is an inherent admission of the fear of insecurity.

Fear is the awareness of insecurity. Instead of looking this lack of security straight in its face and analysing its causes and results, we are all the time building up our defences within the established social pattern through conformation and imitation. Thus are formed habits and traditions within which the mind grows old and stale, and becomes incapable of understanding. Instead of discovering what is true for ourselves, we are content with quotations from others. One has only to listen for a few minutes to any symposium on religion or politics to be stoned and stunned by quotations from the great teachers with or without acknowledgement. There is in evidence a great accumulation of learning, a gathering of the thoughts of



others which do not brook contradiction even though investigation is honoured at least by name.

But to become really aware of the meaning and the origin of insecurity, there should be no fear preventing the mind getting freed from its own net of habits and traditions, imitations and conformations. Virtue, which becomes habitual, or which is imitative, is not virtue in the sense of strength, but is merely accumulative; it is a sign of weakness, of fear, of desire, and hence no virtue at all.

As long as there is fear, the mind is clouded and torn between opposites. As long as one is afraid to step out, afraid of consequences, afraid of insecurity and the unknown, one is already lost and nothing can be achieved. Life never comes to the aid of those who merely yield to some demand out of fear. But if one really wants to do something, if one has such a strong inner urge that one must act, one will do it irrespective of consequences. One may have to go hungry, one may have to struggle to get through, and finally one may not even succeed. But that is not the main thing. Achievement is only a product. The main thing is to have acted without fear as a worthwhile human being, without having reduced one's life to a mere copy from a text-book or a standard pattern. The moment one ventures out a miracle takes place within; one is reborn as a free individual. The result may not be what was expected, the game may not be the safe play as anticipated; but in the very gamble there is the freshness of an eager mind, the vital urge of enquiry, the zest of living, whereas in security there is the likelihood of being smothered by fear, the dullness of society, the tameness of death.

Out of a desire for security is born a discipline which is fear suppressed, and which makes of life one constant struggle to conform our actions, to adjust our feelings and ideas according to the dictates of the state or the religion, of the society or the party. All we want is to belong, which is in reality but a sense of frustration. To belong, to arrive, to achieve is to be dead, for there all action has ceased. But to

live means to think deeply, to feel intensely, to act independently, to be oneself. For then alone can there be that completeness which does not know the distinction between self and others, which does not feel a differentiation in separation, which has no desire for acquisition or expansion, which has no thought of self, just because it is complete.

But when this sense of completeness is absent, when to be alone becomes a cause of fear, then the desire for acquisition, for security, for self-expression leads to a desire for power, which is sure to bring with it exploitation, opposition and hate. It makes no difference whether this desire for power is political or spiritual, for the lust for power in any form is corrupting and can never lead to truth.

All over the world and in practically every individual there can be noticed a certain amount of unrest, which in the young and inexperienced is called a lack of discipline, and in those more wise in the ways of the world ambition. This unrest, whether it is the spontaneous dissatisfaction of the young, or the planned ambition of those who call themselves mature, has but one aim: it wants to be different. And whether the difference is to have more of something or less of something else, it is a dissatisfaction with the present, a sense of frustration, a feeling of insecurity, which seeks satisfaction, fulfilment and security in a different and ideal world. The young ones, not knowing where to search, express their dissatisfaction in bizarre ways sometimes, but ways which are certainly more spontaneous and creative than the cunning and crafty ways of the old ones who know (or at least think to know) precisely what they want, and who set about getting it with the ruthlessness of a steamroller. And those who are neither young nor ambitious are full of averse criticism of both, without understanding the cause of this unrest and, therefore, without capability to present a solution apart from their criticism. The most one may hear from public speakers who lament this current drift is that this lack of discipline must be cured with more discipline, an advice which has the logic of arithmetic behind it, without the insight of applied psychology. For, if unrest shows

an aversion for discipline, an extra dose of control can hardly meet the situation with any chance of success.

Thus, two questions arise: What is and why is there discipline? And is discipline necessary?

Discipline is a mental and moral training, resulting in a system of control for the purpose of maintaining order. The maintenance of order, therefore, is taken for granted as being necessary for a systematic arrangement of a sequence according to a fixed pattern. Whether the pattern makes any sense is not questioned, but it has to be followed to avoid chaos. Thus, the traffic-rule of keeping to the left is accepted and enforced by law, although in many countries the traffic is equally well controlled by an opposite law of keeping to the right. It is, therefore, not the *rule* which is important, but the *order* of conformity. It does not matter what we do, as long as we all do the same thing! For, order gives power. To a collective nation at war killing is not wrong!

Order gives power, because in "order" can be realised a unified action without apparent contradiction or conflict. Thus the object of order is the avoidance of chaos. But do we ever pause to reflect on whether the insistence on order has eliminated chaos and conflict? Has not the aggregation of power in the hands of a few resulted in the formation of power-blocks which have merely intensified the conflict? As an individual, be it a person or a nation, cannot maintain itself in single opposition to a power-block, it is forced to join and thereby strengthen the block and itself and also intensify the conflict. Discipline, therefore, although it may produce order and power, certainly does not solve any conflict and chaos.

Then, is discipline necessary? We think it is necessary because we think of its absence as chaos, and in chaos there is no security. In disorder we cannot lay our hands on the thing wanted at the time it is wanted, and that feeling of uncertainty does not inspire self-confidence. It is like driving a new-model car at night, when we only know that the familiar gadgets are not in their accustomed

places. Then there is a problem with a dual approach. One is that of fear of an accident, if by mistake a wrong manipulation produces the opposite of the effect desired. The other approach is that of an intense alertness which is constantly alive to every move and every action. The approach of fear is more likely to produce the chaos of an accident, than the approach of awareness which is without discipline and without fear.

A problem, such as truth, is not a thing to be thought about; it is a fact. And if the truth of being a hypocrite is seen as the fact of a poisonous snake, there will be no discussion as to how to cease being a hypocrite. One need not then ask how to be free; for then one is already free. And thus the understanding of a truth is not more important than the understanding of a falsehood; for, the understanding of one is the understanding of all.

That is how enlightenment comes in a flash and cannot be brought about by argument or in instalments. Thus the truth of insecurity has to be understood so that fear may cease. Fear cannot be conquered, but in understanding the cause of fear, its foundation will disappear and therewith fear itself, for “fear arises in the fool, but not in the wise man”.

# Doubt

Doubt or scepticism is a frame of mind which has a very peculiar position in Buddhist psychology. Although it is never classified as a virtue, *i.e.*, as a skilful thought (*kusala citta*), still it can hardly be called a vice, as it can never combine with either greed or aversion, love or hate (*lobha, dosa*). Among all the 121 mental states indeed, there is only one to be found with this inclination to disbelieve, which is then considered as unskilful, because of its perplexity (*vicikicchā*), rooted in utter delusion (*momūha*), accompanied by absolute indifference which prevents it to combine with either good or evil, which does not admit any resolve (*adhimokkha*), or any impetus (*chanda*), with which it is incompatible.

Although associated with energy (*virīya*), at least to the extent of sustaining the process of doubt, its unbalanced state of indecision will prevent any pleasurable interest (*pīti*). This indecision is not a wavering in choice as regards an object which could have been due to excitement or agitation (*uddhacca*), but it is a complete lack of interest and of realisation of the actual nature of things. It is rather a settled inclination to disbelieve, which forms a severe handicap, preventing the opening of the mind to intellectual freedom.

If it were a mere disinclination to believe without sufficient ground, it might even be a virtue and a factor leading to enlightenment (*sambojjhāṅga*), namely a spirit of enquiry or investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*). But the cynical view of the assumption of impos-

sibility of knowledge is an obstruction (*nīvaraṇa*) to moral progress and a fetter (*saṃyojana*) preventing one even from entering the path of holiness (*sotāpattimaggā*). As such it may be compared with the unpardonable sin in Christianity<sup>2</sup>, which closes the door to salvation with the wilful rejection of the hand stretched out in rescue.

The objects of such unskilful perplexity are usually enumerated as the following six: doubt about the Teacher, his character, his knowledge and attainment; doubt about the doctrine, its efficacy of leading to deliverance and the possibility of realisation, doubt about the order or community of saints and the usefulness of the path of holiness; doubt about the method of training and its helpfulness in the development of higher virtue, meditation and insight; doubt about the nature and composition of the aggregates of existence, of the elementary qualities, of the organs and the fields of operation of the physical and mental senses; doubt also about the conditionality of the processes of origination, causality and cessation of the various phases of birth, life and death, physical and mental. They all have one factor in common, and that is the refusal to act, because of the lack of initiative, lack of confidence, lack of understanding.

When there is not even an initial confidence (*saddhā*) in the Teacher, there cannot be a desire to experiment with, to follow up, his teaching, his path; no spirit of investigation to find out for oneself. There will be no open mind to make an impartial enquiry. There will be no fair chance to the possibility of success, no regard, no reverential or even affectionate attitude towards those who have handed over the doctrine from generation to generation. Wrong concepts regarding the composition of nature as substanceless and soulless will prevail and force a search in the wrong direction, preventing a recovery which would be misunderstood as a retrogression, a decline and deterioration.

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<sup>2</sup>Mt. xii, 31

This is the basic reason for the apparently unconquerable obstacle placed in the way of real progress by an obstinate refusal to see.

On the other hand, it must be fairly obvious that there is not only room for reasonable doubt, but even a justification and a necessity for sceptical enquiry. Not only dreams and imagination lead us to illusion, hallucination and distortion, but even our normal physical senses, which are the only instruments of perception, appear to be so unreliable that great philosophers, such as Berkeley, denied the existence of a physical world different from our ideas. This led him to maintain that there is nothing but the mind and its content, giving those objects of consciousness a reality of subsistence in the consciousness of God. From a more materialistic, philosophical view-point it would appear to be more reasonable to doubt not the actuality of the sense-impressions, but their interpretation as given by the mind.

That the phenomena, experienced by the senses as perception (*saññā*) and interpreted as concepts (*sañkhāra*) in the mind (*viññāṇa*), are open to investigation, has been doubted, as no independent enquiry can be held in which the mind itself as the suspect is not at the same time the judge. Physical defects, such as squinting or double-sighting under the influence of alcohol provide sense-distortions which find their origin neither in the object, nor in the mind, but only in the sense-organ. Optical illusions are a frequent occurrence, and may sometimes find their origin in mental pre-conception, which is a premature judgement based on past experience or wishful thinking. Rectification of such experience can easily be made by a closer investigation, but such corrective inspection will not take place unless the factor of doubt has been introduced.

Now, this doubt, which is a hesitation to accept things at their face-level, cannot be introduced during a dream-state, because the physical senses are at that time not functioning and are, therefore, not able to check the working of the image-forming mind. Thus,

there is no logic in dreams, no order of sequence, no explanatory detail, but an apparently direct understanding of conditions and motives, which makes doubt impossible. And so, the possibility of doubting is one of the clearest symptoms of being awake, of the functioning of the intellect. And neither illusions nor hallucinations need be the cause of actual deception and do not even give rise to a theoretical problem, as the physical defects which are their origin can easily be rectified by means of change of position, of light, of lenses, etc.

Still, although for practical purposes various tests and checks are sufficiently satisfactory to eliminate doubt, the sceptic, for whom the inclination to disbelieve has become the basis of his philosophy, finds that he has no plank left, no criterion, by which to make any valid observation. If one of the senses supports the experience of another, it too may be deceived; measurement and movement are not final criteria to justify observation, because they only provide support by offering further observations, which may be equally illusory. Even comparing notes with the experiences of others does not exclude the possibility of a hallucination of their presence. Hence it is held by such sceptics that absolute certainty cannot be attained.

Rationalist philosophers have claimed that knowledge of reality, although not obtainable by means of sensory observation, can be obtained by means of intuition and reasoning, as they are used in mathematics. There are established principles, self-evident truths, axioms, which lie outside the field of logic, and which therefore cannot be proved. Yet we know them to be correct without any doubt, just because they do not rely on knowledge dependent on sense-perception. In other words, they are abstract truths. Still, an axiom, such as the impossibility of two parallel lines ever meeting, holds only good in a close-knit system such as Euclidean geometry. But, Einstein in his relativity-theory has shown the limitations of such principles, by means of which he undermined the supposed necessity of everything physical obeying the rules of Euclid and his



arithmetic, and of basic mathematical principles holding true of all reality.

The fundamental error in all this type of thinking is the search for the absolute. Once it is realised that the search for the absolute is an absurdity, then the absence of absolute certainty also ceases to be a problem. The absolute, both in its positive aspect of internal coherence and self-sufficiency, and in its negative aspect of the absence of relationship and dependence, remains obviously unattainable; for, any existence of relationships is a denial of the absolute. And thus, abandoning the search for absolute certainty as a search for security in conflict, one can live with doubt and insecurity, without conflict.

And so there is no need to abandon the knowledge provided by sense-experience, as long as such experience is accepted and understood for what it is. Any attempt to go beyond the actual world of events with its character of change and impermanence, is an idealism in search of a substance below the phenomenon, an actor behind every action, a soul surviving all change. The object-matter of such a search, however, remains within the limited field of the mind conducting the enquiry, and is therefore obviously mind-made. It is the mind which creates its own god according to its likeness.

But as long as the mind is prepared to accept its findings as a working hypothesis to be improved upon or even to be discarded in favour of more developed experimental knowledge, there is no danger in making use of such knowledge, always protected and safeguarded by the possibility of doubt, which is the only factor which can give impetus to enquiry leading to enlightenment.

Still, there is a way of certainty which is not of achievement. In Buddhism, at every crucial moment, can be discerned an approach of negative thinking. One may not be certain of the meaning and contents of the truth, because the truth as an abstract concept has no relationship with actuality; it is not an object of knowledge. But a falsehood can be known immediately. And on this basis of knowing the false as false, a dismissal of the false is possible.

It is not a striving with a desire for positive attainment (which would always be self-centred), but a rejection of the false on its own intrinsic demerit, which dissolves the problem rather than solving it. There is no problem, if there is no antithesis between a “self” and “other-than-self”. All striving for attainment, even for the supreme attainment of enlightenment, is based on “self” and has to be discarded as the raft constructed for the purpose of crossing the river. It is this negative way of thinking which can dissolve all doubt. Once it is seen that absolute certainty and truth are just unobtainable ideals and ideations, the universal impermanence (*anicca*) becomes the actual fact, which ceases to be a conflict (*dukkha*), just because there is no self (*anatta*) who wants to attain an ideal, thereby causing the problem of opposition.

The physical approach to objects brings the bodily sense-organs sometimes in direct contact (as in the case of touch), but mostly in indirect contact with the object of sense. Mental contact with physical objects is always indirect through the physical senses, which provide sensation and awareness of colour, shape, temperature, taste, all of which are called secondary properties of matter because they are impressions derived from the primary properties of extension, cohesion, caloricity and motion (*paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vāyo*), none of which has any degree of substance or abiding entity, but which in their activity produce the process which is observed.

Now it is clear that physically there cannot be a fixed or permanent standard or measure wherewith to gauge the changing qualities of a passing process. And therefore, on this ground alone already, any attempt to arrive at certain knowledge from experience can only produce relative information, which is necessarily open to doubt, and, if possible, further investigation.

Such further investigation can only be conducted on the exclusive lines of negative thinking. For, having established that the secondary material qualities are mere mental derivations from so-called primary properties, and having realised that those primary

or essential properties do not belong to an object, but constitute the object in action, the nature of such object stands revealed as an impermanent process of attraction and repulsion, of extension and cohesion, of combustion and vacillation. It is fluctuation in matter as well as in mind which is thus essential to keep the process moving. Without such fluctuation there would be no movement and no process. In a restricted sense we may even say that without wavering or doubt, there would be no mental action.

Whatever name is given to those mental states, such as impressions (*phassa*), sensations (*vedanā*), percepts (*saññā*), concepts (*saṅkhāra*), ideations or sense-data-such awareness is not only quite distinct from external physical objects, but is private to the recipient in so far as separate individuals may receive different impressions from the same object or event. Therefore, although such sense-data have been stimulated by an external event, the mental reaction to such stimulus is a synthesis in the mind, which forms a composed picture in which shape is not segregated from colour, size from solidity, etc.

It is said in Buddhist philosophy that no two impressions can be received simultaneously; but it must also be remembered that sensations are not known immediately when received, but only when perceived and further processed into concepts or ideas. Knowledge, therefore, is not of sensations, but of mental constructions. And as the mind only functions with those operations, all perceptions are therefore only of the effects of external action.

This does not cause any real difficulty as long as we keep in mind the essential nature of all things, namely, that of a substanceless process of phenomena. For, action can only be perceived in its reaction. Any thought *about* an experience is not the experience itself, but comes immediately after the event, and is only the reaction to that stimulus. Any concept of a perception of beauty is only a reconstruction, as it were, but not a living experience. And when

an experience is really lived through, there cannot be any thought or concept about it, *at that time*.

Thus, here again, by means of negative thinking, we come to realise that any concept of actuality cannot be reality, and that any living experience can only be lived and not thought about or conceived.

The physiological events are only the conditions of perception; and perception is not of the events, but is the mental reaction thereto. Any damage, therefore, to the receiving organ, to the transmission line, or to the conceptive mind and its physical mechanism, will produce a distortion, if not a total interruption. More than that, the conceptive mind has been conditioned by millions of receptions, influenced by past experiences, affected by self-projective desire, modelled by environment, shaped by education—and so every idea is moulded in the preconceived formations of *sañkhāra*.

Recognition, as well as misinterpretation, can thus easily be explained by those innate tendencies which are the characteristics we are born with, *i.e.*, Karma.

While certain differences in the perception of several people can be accounted for by physical defects, such a colour-blindness, many variations are of a non-physical nature and must therefore be rooted in a different mental attitude, difference in attention, or in past experience. A theory, therefore, which is based entirely on a materialistic explanation of representation cannot be accepted, although it has many important merits to its credit, explaining the limited and relative accuracy of perception.

The doctrine of karma does not attempt to introduce a new perplexity in this already sufficiently clouded issue, but it accounts for the intuitional clarity of awareness of relationships which are not observable by logical deduction, and also for the density of perception of certain values which would appear otherwise to common sense as most natural and obvious.

Doubt, therefore, is a weapon to be used or abused in many ways; and it is a dangerous one. As a disinclination to believe it can stultify the mind with a blind refusal to go forward and investigate. Such is the blind faith denounced by the Buddha, which has nothing in common with confidence in the perception of others. It is impossible for a single individual within a single life-span to experiment with everything that crosses his path of knowledge.

And thus, to doubt the findings of others in the experimental fields of science would be most frequently a useless waste of time, particularly so when the outcome of such scientific experiments have passed the stage of a working hypothesis and have proved their workability in our everyday of events. But that does not mean that everybody should always accept without investigation what has been accepted for ages.

Thus, no one doubted that the world was flat, till improved instruments encouraged people like Copernicus to take a look beyond the horizon, as it were. And although many centuries have passed since then, there will be even at this moment millions and millions of people who are not able to prove scientifically that the world is either round or flat. But as any doubt in this respect will not be of any assistance to obtain the necessary foreign exchange to go round the world ourselves for personal verification, such doubt ceases to be reasonable.

A disinclination to an initial belief on which to base investigation into matters which are really matters of life and death can only bring about a mental torpor which can easily develop into a helpless mental stupor, which can only be covered up by a supernatural faith, an acceptance of things, because I cannot understand.

When, however, a disinclination to believe is replaced by an inclination to disbelieve, there remains a mental alertness, which is far more promising than mere logical deductions. Because in such mental alertness lies the germ of intuition which is knowledge not come through the senses. It is a direct experience, which is neither sensed

nor perceived, which is not conceived or thought about, but which is an immediate realisation, holding good only for that moment.

It is not quite what is understood in our present times by extrasensory perception, on which much valuable research has been carried out recently. For, clairvoyance is a kind of perception with an object of cognition so widely different as to make any further comparison impossible. Perhaps the simplest way of indicating their differences is that clairvoyance perceives the external object although not through the external senses; while intuition is aware of the inner nature of the object of thought. Intuition is like the awareness of beauty which is a harmonious combination of qualities which delight the mind. Such harmony cannot be produced, for, apart from the conditioning stimulus there must be the corresponding thrill to the challenge which causes the awareness of beauty. Similarly, intuition is an immediate apprehension by the mind without reasoning, an apprehension which seizes the very nature of the object as it is; and it knows that it is so beyond any doubt.

Such a momentary flash will indicate the direction for further action, if action is necessary at all. For, such a moment of enlightenment, arising out of doubt, may well illuminate the entire scene, and thus show up the false deductions and conclusions, which were built upon false premises and axioms.

It may be the revelation of a totally new approach, it may be the dissolution of a problem, of all problems, because of its inherently incoherent structure. And thus it may be the ending and cessation of all conflict.

But doubt does not build up towards a projected goal. Doubt has a negative approach, which at least is indecisive. It is the state of an open mind, which it is so difficult to acquire. Our minds are cluttered and confused with all the acquisitions, intended to fortify the position of the "self". And the cessation of such acquisition is the first step to clear the view. This clearing, however, cannot be done even by thousands of acts of renunciation, which only increase

one's spiritual possessions. But if the object of this acquisition and accumulation is discovered to be a fictitious self, then all desire and craving, all striving and struggle become meaningless.

It is the perfect enlightenment of a Buddha and an arahant, which casts out not only all perplexity, but even the possibility of doubt, the possibility of wilful scepticism, in the knowledge that insight has been reached, that the perception of *saññā* is also the wisdom of *paññā*.

Thus, serene tranquillity instead of mental agitation can bring about the ending of all doubt through insight into the real nature of things, and thereby give peace to the wavering mind, rest to the searching heart, and the final release of Nibbāna.





# Existence I: Of Material Life

No philosophy of life is complete, no conception of man's spiritual life is adequate, unless we bring ourselves into a satisfactory and harmonious relation with the life of the universe around us. To ignore that man lives in a magnificent universe, almost as wonderful as man himself, would be to grasp life only by halves. Physics, geology, cosmology, criminology, the conception of sex are not outside the realm of religion. It is exactly the lack of interpenetration which has resulted in scientific materialism. It is by keeping religion and science in separate air-tight compartments, that science has become irreligious and religion unscientific. Just as the human mind can only work through the body, and the body without the mind would be a corpse, so it is science which ought to be the backbone of religion.

Where many have tried to follow the path of science, aiming at the greatest happiness for all, and where they sometimes appear to have been very successful in bringing about greater ease, more comfort and longer life, they have brought about at the same time death and destruction, The path of religion also has to show much virtue and holiness, aiming at a life of perfect beatitude hereafter, but that same path is also bestrewed with envy, hate, corruption and religious wars.

To find a way out of this chaos we have to go back to the most elementary principles from where to build up, as from a common platform, a truly scientific religion and a religious science, that is a religion which is based on verifiable facts and a science which accepts a moral responsibility for the results of its actions.

The problems which have vexed mankind for many ages appear to arise from the different views on the constitution of matter. In all philosophical, scientific and theological speculations on this subject a sharp distinction can be found between matter and mind, the physical and the psychical element in man, sometimes called spirit, and endowed with supernatural existence and eternity, sometimes totally denied or reduced to a by-product of matter.

It may be said with a fair amount of probability that, if the nature of matter would not be a secret any more, every other problem would be solved too. But as things stand, even the most thorough materialist does not know what matter is. The name "matter" is given to certain mechanical, chemical, electrical or organic phenomena, which are all so closely related as to give them a form and a name of substance. Mental and physical phenomena are so much interdependent, that it is impossible to make a real distinction between them. The most we can do is to make a logical distinction for the sake of better understanding their nature.

There are some who take both kinds of phenomena to be manifestations of a substratum, which in the case of physical phenomena is called a substance, and in the case of mental phenomena is called a soul. It is this idea of a substratum underlying all phenomena which has led to the animistic concept of matter, and which is thus chiefly responsible for all theories and speculations of soul. And therefore we may say that the problem of the nature of matter is the basis of all problems.

Matter, which in itself is said to be devoid of discriminative consciousness (*avinibhoga*), yet forms the background and the fuel which give rise to sensation and the perception thereof in conscious-

ness. Matter is the non-mental, not the dead material considered in itself (if that would be possible), but the material element conceived in the senses. It is the external in so far as it affects the internal. It is the passive side of life in which the mind plays the active part. Such passive aspect of an action is far from being helplessly dead, for it is in actuality the aim of action, and thus it is an active inducement to action. And therefore, matter is not the thing as we feel and see it, but is a form of energy in which there are different forces at work which cannot exist individually and separate from each other. In their different proportions they constitute matter in its different forms. Thus the different material qualities, as we shall now consider them in some detail, are not mere abstract ideas. But while the mathematician investigates the behaviour of matter under the influence of certain conditions which he can calculate—while the physicist tries to discover the properties of matter—and while the chemist searches for the results by combining some material forces—the Buddhist philosopher considers matter (*rūpa*) as food for the mind (*nāma*), as an object for the subject, as personality seen from its non-mental side, remembering all the time that the distinction is purely logical and not real.

The material elements have their own intrinsic nature and their own characteristic mark without the implication of a substantial entity. An element (*dhātu*) in the Buddhist sense is, therefore, not the opposite of a phenomenon, but is a quality in itself, not less real because of the changing nature of phenomena. The phenomenal universe is unreal from an absolute viewpoint, because it contains nothing of an abiding nature, such as a soul, substance or entity. But this unreality from the absolute viewpoint is not a complete negation, for what is unreal in the ultimate sense may be real in the actual or relative sense. In actuality, then, the phenomena of matter, dependent on conditions and impermanent in their process, are quite real; just as chemical elements have not become less real

for the fact that we know them to be composed of atoms which have been proved to be but electronic charges.

Such are the elements of Buddhist conception, not ultimate entities which constitute matter as components, but elementary material qualities which are different forms of energy. These forms cannot exist individually and separate from each other. They are not produced by one another, but in their different proportions they qualify and are the form of energy which is known to us as matter. Their functional qualities are characteristic marks of an elementary nature, bearing no more than the old names of earth, water, fire and air, or as they are described in the Samyutta-Nikāya<sup>3</sup>, as the qualities that “stretch and cleave and burn and move”.

Their functional qualities are respectively: extension, cohesion, caloricity and oscillation (*paṭhavi*, *āpo*, *tejo*, *vāyo*).

Extension (*paṭhavi*) is the elementary material quality of impenetrability, a property in virtue of which two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time. Magnitude is the most obvious characteristic of material things, for thereby can their shape be determined and thereby they become visible. It does, however, not only stand for geometrical extensions of length, width and height, but also for solidity in its different degrees of hard and soft, smooth and rough, heavy and light, rigid and slack, polished and jagged, all relative concepts reflecting the general principle of resistance. It is this power of resistance, due to impenetrability, which gives to solid bodies a more or less fixed locality. It is repellent energy, which gives to matter the characteristics of dimension, expansion, weight and pressure. Its main concern, so to speak, seems to be the keeping of the body in equilibrium. Hence, there is a tendency of non-co-operation and isolation, with the inherent tendency of self-preservation, which dislikes combining and mixing

Cohesion (*āpo*) is the elementary material quality of internal self-preservation, a property in virtue of which the different parti-

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<sup>3</sup>I, p. 23

cles of a body are not scattered about, but cling, cleave and adhere together. It is on this property that the density of a body depends, its quantity in a unit of bulk. Hereby a body resists any change in the arrangement of its molecules, which is called viscosity. It is a tendency to the conservation of matter and energy, but at the same time a tendency to attract and to unite with other kindred matter. This affinity is a magnetic and centripetal energy. With the characteristics of attraction and co-operation. It does not stand, therefore, for liquid only, but for all characteristics which are of a fluid condition, such as affinity, attachment, adaptability and subtleness. It promotes change and exchange of locality and shape, as long as the internal composition is not affected.

In the same way as the impenetrability of the element of extension is the energy of self-preservation through resistance, so cohesion is the energy of self-preservation through integration. Though opposed in their manner of working, repelling and attracting like magnetic poles, they can yet produce a harmonious process which even leads to the delusion of the stability of matter, though in reality there is nothing but a process of change.

Caloricity (*tejo*) is the elementary material quality of thermal energy in its different aspects of cold (*sītatejo*) and warmth (*unhātejo*). The perception of the different degrees of cold and heat is, of course, entirely subjective, and will differ in different individuals. But temperature as mere caloricity is an elementary quality inherent in all matter. This is essentially so, because caloricity affects the elementary qualities of extension and cohesion, *i.e.*, of solidity and fluidity. Increase in temperature will melt solids and make liquids evaporate. It is, however, not combustion which involves a chemical change in the object; and thus it is not fire which should be thought of in this connection, neither mechanical heat produced by some external agency in a combination of certain substances. It is rather the physiological source of thermal energy which is found in all bodies whatever may be their temperature. It is then not the intensity

of heat or cold, *i.e.*, the quantity of temperature, but the quality of the power through which growth and maturity are effected, as well as decay. Its presence thus is a sign, a characteristic of vitality. Different objects require different quantities of heat to raise their temperatures equally, e.g., lead requiring more than iron, an old man more than a young one, which shows that calorificity is an intrinsic quality of matter which has the characteristics of heat and temperature, but which is in fact the communication and absorption, the radiation and disintegration of thermal energy.

Vibration (*vāyo*) is the elementary material quality of oscillation, which should not be understood as the swinging of a pendulum to and fro between two points, but as an internal motion due to the opposition between the repelling force of extension (*pathavi*) and the attracting force of cohesion (*āpo*) in matter. This is the basis for the manifestation of activity. Modern science has accepted this vibrating and pulsating energy in its electronic theory. This elementary material quality with its chief characteristics of oscillation and friction, appearance and disappearance, change, becoming and ceasing, evolution and involution, is the dynamic force in the whole of nature. To this quality are due the phenomena in other qualities. It is through vibration that extension and solidity are repelling and are felt as pressure. It is through vibration that cohesion becomes magnetic and concentrated. Through vibration is produced the friction which generates calorificity. All contacts with the sense-organs are based on vibration which thereby becomes the great means of communication.

Thus we see how these four elementary material qualities, unsubstantial as they are, are yet the foundation and the essence of all existence.

But life is more than this material existence. There is the factor of volitional activity which is only found in mental action, called karma. Still, this material existence does not only provide the means or the instruments for the mind to work with. One might almost say

that matter has a mind of its own. Not, of course, the fully developed mind of consciousness, but a sensitivity of reaction, a tendency to further evolution, a retentiveness of characteristics, which show in their undeveloped stages the individual outlines which are to be found in the existence of personality.

Consciousness is named eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, etc., according to the sense-organ in which it takes rise, for consciousness is not a spiritual entity which feeds independently on the senses and their objects. It is on sense-contact that sensation arises, giving further birth to perception and consciousness. Thus, it is in the sense-objects, that is in the world of events, that can be found already the rudiments of mental reaction. The material elementary qualities of extension and cohesion, which solidify and unify material objects, which reject and which attract that which will strengthen and that which will weaken its own process of existence respectively, these material qualities already are the germ of further developed qualities of repulsion in hate and attraction in love, which later in a fully evolved mental state form the basic tendencies which fortify the "ego".

This is not saying that there is hatred in a stone, or love in water, but the basic tendencies of love and hate being attraction and repulsion in the establishment of self are to be found in so-called in-organic matter as extension and cohesion, serving the same although unconscious purpose of self-preservation.

The material elementary quality of oscillation is but the natural companion of this constant swaying between the opposing forces of solidity and absorption, of repulsion and attraction. It is also the rudimentary vibration, the process of change between becoming and cessation, which sets in motion the desire for that which is not; and which becomes the driving impulse of all action, unconscious and latent in inorganic matter, but developed and evolved into conscious and dynamic forces, which form the motives of all volitional activity. It becomes the oscillation of so-called free will, which is not free at

all but which is swayed between attraction and repulsion, between the motives to keep the self alive.

In this constant energy of motion is engendered naturally and spontaneously a friction with the opposites, which produces the material elementary quality of calorificity, the vital heat without which there can be neither material nor mental activity. It is in the heat of this friction that becoming is burnt up in cessation, that matter is grasped by the mind, that desire becomes craving, that life leads to death, that ignorance develops into mental formations and that karma leads to rebirth.

Thus one should comprehend the interpenetration of the physical and the mental worlds of events. For, just as the body without the mind would be a corpse, so the human mind can work only through the body. From the analysis of the most elementary principles can be understood the basic structure of existence. For, although matter is devoid of discriminative consciousness, it forms not only the background and the raw material on which the mind can work, but it is the passive side of action, and so full of action in itself, that it has not been possible to draw a sharp line of division between inorganic matter and organic action, between life and death.

This controversy has sprung to life again with the latest successes in heart-transplant operations, where clinical death is kept at bay by surgical skill.

In Buddhist philosophy life is more than the beating of a heart, for in Buddhist philosophy the faculty of life (*jīvitindriya*) is an essential factor of existence, not only as a mental quality (*cetasika*) but also as a material component, by means of which matter evolves, becomes and decays, by means of which matter becomes food for the mind in the one process of becoming which is existence.



# Existence II: Of Personality

There have been schools of philosophy, from the time of the ancient Greeks onward who confused the possibility of reality with the reality of possibility. On such confused thinking were based dogmas in an attempt to prove their validity *a priori*, *i.e.*, not from factual conclusions, but from presumptive deductions. Plato, St. Anselm, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kierkegaard and Heidegger have in their respective centuries based their conclusions on the reality of the possible.

Buddhist philosophy has always refused to be drawn into such vain speculations, and even maintains that a distinction should be drawn not only between the possible and the real, but also between the actual and the real. And as existence may be possible, or actual, or real, it will be necessary to enlarge on this point. An event or a thing is possible if its existence is ideal or conceptual, *i.e.*, if it can be thought of; and as long as there is in its concept nothing incongruous, nothing contradictory, even if its existence is not a fact, it could be a fact and thus it is possible. *E.g.*, a mermaid, or a *kinnara*, which is thought to be a female, half human and half fish or bird, respectively, is quite possible, although nobody has actually come across such a species. When existence is a fact, it is either actual or real, which is distinction frequently overlooked, and perhaps referred to as subjective and objective.

The existence of a thing may be known to us as a fact either from personal experience or through the experience of others, whose authority we accept as reliable. Thus, e.g., the existence of the polar bear, living in the icy Arctic regions, is factual and we accept its existence even though we have never seen one, except in illustrations. But there are lots of other things we come across in daily life, which sometimes turn out to be quite different from what they appeared to be. It is not only the hare in the moon which through a telescope is seen as a series of mountains and valleys, or the snake on the garden-path which turns out to be a rope, but with the progress of analytical science there is hardly anything which is ultimately the same as we thought it to be. Now, an object or an event as we think it to be, has an actual existence in the way it acts on us or the way we react to it; our knowledge at this stage is subjective, and there have been eminent philosophers who maintained that our knowledge can never go beyond this stage, because we cannot go beyond our own thinking, the subject. They do not necessarily deny that there is any other existence which is not subjectively known, but which belongs to the object; they only say that the object-in-itself cannot be known, for as soon as it becomes known, that knowledge is subjective. Thus, actuality is known, and reality is not.

Even simple, every-day experiences, such as the experience that fire burns, is an actual fact, not only proved by striking a match and lighting a cigarette, but even in the analysis of the process of combustion in a chemical combination. Still, all that is actual. All our knowledge is actual, but when we understand the truth of a thing, that is realisation, a glimpse of reality. We see, we meet, we know other people, we recognise them, have given them names, classified them in families, in races, which is all actual relationship.

But when it is understood that the so-called individual is nothing but a process of actuality, both within himself and in relation to others, then such understanding is no more a factual understanding

of a particular phenomenon, but it is a comprehension of the totality of the process, unrelated and unconditioned; and that is reality, the comprehension of the essence of existence (*yathā-bhūta-ñāna-dassana*).

To exist is to act, and action is an individualised projection. It is only the projection which is known and that projection in actuality is called existence, a beautiful word, expressing exactly what it means, *existo*, a standing outside itself, an egression, a projection, therefore, of actuality outside reality.

Although it would be possible, (that means it does not contain an inherent contradiction), that there is reality without actuality, without being projected as experience in an individual, the reverse is impossible. There can be no existence, no actuality, without reality, without the essence of nature, whatever that may be. Thus, the fact of actuality, of existence as a process of becoming, of projection, points to the fact of a non-becoming reality. Unfortunately, the mere glimpse of recognition of a non-becoming reality transforms it into an object of desire, and the mind sets to work in a process of grasping, of striving and attainment of a goal with many names, God, paramātman, the Absolute, Truth, all spelt with capital letters!

Our comprehension of such abstractions does not go beyond an occasional glimpse, which is actual, may be, but far from complete, and hence not real. We have not grasped the essence, paradoxically, just because we tried to grasp it. For in grasping there is separation, which is opposition and isolation, which is essentially incomplete. It is exactly this kind of incomplete actuality which we are constantly trying to produce, a self-projection without self-knowledge. But it is also in this failure of individual self-expression that the background of existence is sensed, the realisation of something other than our actual selves. Thus, in the defeat of becoming and of self-projection there is the beginning of fulfilment of true being. In the realisation that our individual lives are illusory existences without essence, without substance, without soul, and active

nothingness—in that realisation is seen the first glimpse of the reality of the whole, of which individuals are not just parts, but in which, as non-*ex*-istents, as not standing out, we live and move and have our being.

Existence is a standing aloof from being; it is a manifestation of being, just as actuality is the manifestation of reality. But manifestation is always in differentiation and individualisation; hence existence is in individuality, but being is in the absolute, unmanifested. Being is the undifferentiated (*avyākata*) and the unconditioned (*asāṅkhata*), which cannot be comprehended by limited individual understanding rightly called ignorance (*avijjā*), which in its deluded state personifies even the absolute, and calls it God.

Buddhism does not believe in the reality of either parts or one whole as entities which can be related to one another. Not only in Buddhism, but even to the commonest sense it ought to be clear that as soon as a part is placed in opposition to the whole, the entirety is broken up, the whole ceases to be the whole, and any further comparison becomes impossible. The fingers are not related to the hand for without fingers there is no hand. Individuals are not related to the human race, for there is no human race without individuals. Likewise there are no individuals who form a part of the race; they are the race. It is the misunderstanding of seeing passing phenomena as entities, which allows those phenomena to be viewed as existential parts of a totality of being. In reality, those phenomena do not exist, but they just are the essence of the process which in its true nature does not exist either, but only proceeds, becomes, arises and ceases.

Our modern training is to see things in classes, in categories, in species. That is thought to be necessary in order to be able to refer to an event as belonging to a fixed class. But thereby too much attention is being paid to the things which people and events have in common, because it is by their common factors that we can place them in the same group. But thereby is ignored all that

which is peculiar to the individual, that which makes him distinct from everybody and everything else. Thus our approach to events and people is prejudiced by our knowledge of the class; and that prejudice prevents us from noticing what we see. Everything which comes within the field of our observation is at once referred to a class, where memory can store it for further use and future reference. It is through memory that we possess things, that we compare and judge; and our judgements have ultimately only one reference: ourselves. What is pleasant and makes the "I" grow is called good; the unpleasant which prevents the expansion of "self" is called bad. Thus we always think of others as related to us; as far as we are concerned their only existence is our existence. Existence then is but a relationship in opposition, established for the purpose of usefulness. It prevents us to be what we are, as we live in projecting ourselves and in possessing and assimilating that which we are not. Thus we truly exist, *i.e.*, we live outside ourselves, and thereby we *are* not; but to the accumulation of experience in memory we add the emptiness of our imagined "self", which thereby becomes "mine".

In this sense, psychologically, existence has no essence, the individual has no soul, phenomena have no substance, the process has no subject, the action has no actor. In the understanding of relationship, all individual experience and existence, which the Buddha labelled conflict (*dukkha*) because it places the "I" in opposition to the "other-than-self", will naturally and spontaneously disappear.

The denial of substance or soul, which is the negation of essence in existence, is not a negation of being; it rather affirms a unity of the process of life which does not allow of individualism, and which therefore is far different from nothingness and annihilation. Only he lives truly who lives completely, not individualistically; and in that completeness of being, alone, can be found the peace of perfection which comes from truth.

What then is a complete life? He leads a complete life, who does not approach life in opposition. Every approach, however, is oppo-

sition; for an approach is made from some starting-point, which is with reference to "self". But to live without expectation, without approaching, means to live entirely in the present only. To live in the present means to live without dependence on psychological values which belong to the past, without the trappings of ancestral or national glory, without the backing of a titled name, of qualifications or property, without the security of a settled future either in this life or in another. For, all these make one live outside oneself, or live in isolation within oneself but always in opposition, in conflict, due to incompleteness. The understanding of life's entire interdependence, total insecurity and absolute absence of any entity will make opposition and conflict an impossibility. And that means completeness, perfection and truth.

In that completeness there can be no room for any particular point of view of religion, of faith based on authority, of authority based on fear; no room for any particular shade of political conviction of the right or of the left, based on economic exploitation, based on isolation and opposition in a bid for power; no room for a bigoted scientific materialism, stressing the needs of the body in order to camouflage the greed of the mind; no room for a conventional society based on tradition, public opinion, herd-instinct and lack of originality and creativeness. For, all these are partial approaches to life, which in their partiality create opposition, problems and conflicts.

But a complete life does not seek anything; it is a process of living, always new and hence always fresh; it does not judge a new contact by comparing it with some past experience, but it fully responds to each challenge immediately, directly, spontaneously, without a projecting purpose or future intention. A complete life does not need authority for guidance, as it has no goal to achieve; it does not need examples to imitate or to worship, for it is creative in its ever new becoming; it does not require values, for it does not want

to be fettered; it does not want any security, for it cannot live in stagnancy.

In a misunderstood effort to understand things in themselves we try to objectify them in the abstract by effacing our subjectivity; we try to see them as concrete facts by making an abstraction of our own existence, which makes the whole process of comprehension most unrealistic. We cannot disunite the object from the subject, as the subject exists in the object, just as an element cannot be disunited from its properties: water is wet, fire is burning. The objective world without the subjective perspective is as unreal as the subjective individual without his objective projection. But as we constantly place one in opposition to the other, we are under the constant delusion of separation without being aware that thereby we try to place ourselves (*i.e.*, that imagined isolated “self” ) outside ourselves (which is the subjective-objective world of events which has no isolation or opposition).

Thus, there is the tendency to treat the physical sciences as distinct from those which deal more direct with the mental aspects of life. Yet, a complete picture of existence cannot be obtained by a one-sided aspect. Material phenomena not only are known exclusively through registration in the mind, but their tendencies of attraction and repulsion are so reminiscent of love and hate, which form the basic elements of all mental life, that it is practically impossible to draw a sharp line of demarcation between matter and mind.

And again, when the mind or mental activity is analysed, there is so much unconscious activity that it is frequently impossible to distinguish an automatic reflex from a volitional and conscious thought.

Sensation (*vedanā*) is mostly the passive reception in the sense-organs of a physical contact which frequently is not further communicated to the conscious mind. A reflex action to such sensory reception would be no more than a perception (*saññā*) which is hardly different from a physical reaction, such as the winking of an

eye, and which cannot be controlled by a conscious thought, even if awareness of the physical contact is perceived in the senses. A still further development, in which the physical reaction is accepted as a mental disturbance without its proper nature being known, can produce a vague reaction of acceptance or rejection, not very different from the material basic tendencies of cohesion and extension. It is the stage of formation (*sankhāra*) in which a general image is formed or conceived which produces the mental concept according to the innate and karmic tendencies of the individual.

Only when the process is completed thus far, can there be question of a conscious thought with purpose, intention and volition, without which no mental life can be said to exist. It is not an interpenetration of matter into mind or *vice versa*, but rather one process of evolution which can be viewed in its different stages. And only when the process is viewed as a whole, not as an entity, but as a coherent evolving and involving process of becoming and ceasing, which proceeds without entity, substratum, substance or soul, either material or spiritual, there can be the understanding of existence without contradiction, opposition, or conflict. Then only existence ceases to be a problem, because it is no longer suffering under the artificial divisions of out and in, in time and space, of self and non-self which are the causes of selfishness, the root of all conflict.

The cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*) is the equivalent of the cessation of becoming in existence (*bhava-nirodha*), and that is the true nature and essence of the perfect liberation from all delusion, called Nibbāna.



# The Psychology of Rebirth

All religions believe in rebirth, Buddhism and Hinduism explicitly, Christianity and Islam implicitly. Without the idea of rebirth, *i.e.*, of a life after death, all religious striving, moral restraint, mental purification, etc., would be meaningless. This life is considered by all as a preparation for a future life as a school of learning in which to qualify for perfect understanding and celestial bliss. However varied the many concepts of rebirth may be, it can basically be thought of only in terms of continuity. Some believe in the continuity of an individual soul with personal immortality, others believe in the continuity of action, which (as in the case of causality) does not require a permanent entity to pass from state to state. This causality again may be thought of as a strict law of destiny in which self-surrender and fatalism can hardly be distinguished, or it may be viewed as mere conditionality, according to which a cause does not necessarily produce a definite effect, as there are so many other factors which by their influence tend to alter, strengthen, weaken or even destroy the expected result.

But, whatever the shade of opinion in this regard may be, it contains essentially a preoccupation with death. as a portal to a new life. While still living in the present, the mind is thus preoccupied with a life yet to come. And this life is considered not of another—

except perhaps by a logical extension for the sake of argument—but it is one's own life with which one is personally concerned when thinking of the future.

We see then, that at the bottom of the problem lies the illusion of separation of self and others. It is this consciousness of individuality as a separate entity which is the cause of all our social struggle in this life as well as of all our religious struggle to obtain a better future life. All questions about what will happen after death—which necessarily entail questions about what did happen before birth, *e.g.*, why was I born, and how will I survive, how can I make myself better conditions of living in a next life, how can I secure now that future bliss?—all these questions are ultimately rooted in the one single problem: how can I continue improved? And this problem, therefore, is the door, which will open to all other compartments which form a part of the extremely complicated structure, which is our present life with its social conventions, religious traditions, economic restrictions, national limitations, racial prejudices, philosophical assertions and theological dogmatism—and all the rest which follows in their wake.

Though we all believe in a life after death, in one form or another, yet this belief has made no difference whatsoever to our present life. Some believe in the existence of a hell, but that does not prevent them from committing those very actions the penalty for which is ever-lasting hell-fire, according to their own doctrine and belief. Rebirth has not affected our life at all. And that shows that it is not really a conviction, but simply an escape for the mind, so as not to face the actual problem of discontinuance. We do not believe in rebirth (our actions show that), but we want rebirth, because we want to continue.

This apparently vast question about rebirth, then, is actually a very limited one, based on a desire for personal continuance. Now, this desire, like any other desire, could not arise if there were fulfilment; for, desire is a symptom of a deficiency, a need, a want. And

so, this desire for continuation is an admission of the fact of discontinuity which I do not like. I do not like discontinuity, for there would be no "I". Thus, the "I" idea contains the seed of all problems which are born from the fear of that "I", that it may not continue. It is this fear which prevents us from looking directly at the problem of rebirth, for in this state of fear in the mind there can be no understanding. Thought is influenced by outside motives which colour all relationship with the tinge of selfish emotion and isolation, which is separation. A narrow personal thought cannot but create further limitations, which are ignorance and misunderstanding of the whole process. For an understanding of the totality to be complete, thought must be integral. And the integrity of a thought requires first of all the knowledge of its own cause, its process and its conditioning. As long as this is not fully understood and realised, the thought is not free, and will therefore express itself in an action which leads to further bondage. Thus, intentional thought produces purposeful action, which will again produce a corresponding result.

That is rebirth. The intention of a thought and the purpose of an action are the expressions of a desire to continue. They are the projections of the "ego", which is thus reborn in the effect thereof.

The manifold projections of the "ego" are naturally according to one's characteristic inclinations. And thus they constitute at the same time the different spheres in which these self-projections are expressed, or to put it in the language of the ignorant, they form the heavens and hells in which different individuals are reborn.

It is the self-consciousness, (to continue under improved conditions), which has thereby created the distinction and the opposition of good and evil, other names for the pleasurable and the not pleasurable. In moral code language these are called virtue and sin. Virtue is that which gives strength (*virtus*) to the self, and sin is its opposite. Hence, virtue will give the desired continuance under improved conditions, and that is called heaven; while sin produces the opposite effect, which is called hell. It is typical of the deep

roots of this desire for continuance, that the opposite of continued life in heaven is not the punishment of annihilation, but continuance under unfavourable conditions. The “ego” wants to continue anyhow. And so we all believe in rebirth in different spheres.

If we now try to look at the problem of rebirth with a detached view, we see first of all that—though all religious practices are meant to secure a happy rebirth—it is not rebirth at all that is wanted, but continuation of the “I”. There can be rebirth only if there is death; and the “I” does not want to die. Hence it does not want to be reborn, but only to continue. That is the reason why people have standards of morality, systems of character-forming, methods of mind-control, organisations of spirituality—all of which will mould the mind and give it a definite shape according to a fixed pattern, so that it can continue securely, thereby preventing it to be made truly anew, to be reborn in the real sense.

Why do we not want to be reborn? And why is it necessary to be reborn? We do not want to be reborn, for that would mean death to all that constitutes the “I”, just as the seed must die to itself completely in order to be reborn as a plant. All the experiences of the past have been carefully stored up by the “I”-consciousness as memory, for each one of them contained something of the self. It is their accumulation which constitutes the “I” without the past, *i.e.*, without memory of previous experiences, the “I”-concept cannot arise. Thus, the “I” is not of the present, but of the past; the “I” is a dead ghost. And yet, we cling to that mere apparition, because we are afraid of the present without a name, without a label, without a history, without experience, without security, without foundation, without a past, without continuance, without a future; for if there is no past, there cannot be a future either. In brief, in the present the “I” is not, and thus the dead past is made to continue to serve in the future. Hence the shadow of the past, though really dead, is kept alive. And as long as that does not cease, the imagination of a

deluded mind has something to feed upon, whereby it can continue from life to life. But that is not to be born again and anew!

When people are afraid to lose their life—and that is at the bottom of their desire for continuance—it signifies that they have identified themselves with the body. For, if well understood, it is not life that they can love; there is not one life which possesses another life, and hence can lose it. Man has no life, but he is alive. Either life is lost and all is ended, or life cannot be lost. Fear of death, therefore, arises from attachment to and identification with the body and its sensate values.

Rebirth in the true sense, which can and should take place at every moment, is the only way to be really alive at every moment. Every moment should be the end and the beginning of all our undertakings and hence of life itself. That might not make for a coherent life; but let consistency take care of itself; it is stagnancy, a sign of senility and death.

When we face a challenge in life and meet it with the memory of past experiences, there can be no real meeting, for life and death have nothing in common. A new problem cannot be solved by an old solution; but every fresh problem must be met afresh in full understanding. As long as the mind is filled with the accumulations of past memories and experiences, there cannot be fresh and full understanding of any new experience. For then, what is new will be merely translated in terms of the old, at most an adaptation of a western classic in an oriental setting. It will be classified and judged according to the old system, but not understood in the present, not lived with, and loved.

Thus, in order to live fully and truly, constant rebirth is necessary, *i.e.*, a constant letting go of the old, so that (in the words of Rabindranath Tagore), “The dust of dead words cannot cling to thee”.

Life is the unknown, and that cannot be understood in terms of the known. The ever-new present, the unknown, can only be

understood if we allow it to speak for itself. But if we keep giving all sorts of explanations and definitions, we shall never understand what the present has in store for us. In mental silence, passive alertness and watchfulness alone can comprehension arise. In the cessation of all intellectual safeguards true understanding can come about. In death alone can there be rebirth. And the more one dies in life, the greater is the good that naturally and spontaneously comes out of such a man for the benefit of others, *i.e.*, for the whole. If a man employs his consciousness to cooperate with the law of evolution, then in his non-resistance to the process of change he survives. And not only does he survive, but he has secured freedom from struggle for life, as his conscious but effortless and selfless awareness has done spontaneously the work of natural selection.

But the kind of rebirth with which most people and all religions are concerned, is a kind of transmigration in which the individual will have become greater, purer, more enlightened, not to speak of the carnal gratifications offered in some heavenly abodes, which are an insult to the human mind. It is expected that during many incarnations the individual will gather experience and thus slowly grow to truth. But truth is not something which can be developed; it cannot progress, and we cannot progress towards it either. In its completeness and fullness it exists in everything, and thus accumulation of experience in different lives cannot bring the truth any nearer. Truth is not in the future, but here in the present. Accumulation of experience then merely strengthens the memory on which the "I" feeds. While desire for rebirth in its best form seeks for the realisation of truth elsewhere, the truth which is the living reality upholding everything as well as ourselves is ignored and overlooked where it is nearest at hand.

In ignorance we do not understand what it is in us that is immortal; and so, some attribute immortality to the body, to the senses, to the mind, to an individual ego, soul or spirit. Yet, in all these there is nothing of a static, permanent nature. But, just as in a river the

waves and eddies pass away, and yet the river flows on for ever, so the process of life is everlasting, not as a static entity, but as a dynamic force manifesting itself ever anew in psychophysical combinations. Its very renewal from moment to moment constitutes its immortality. And thus, though the “ego” may die and individual life may cease, yet life is immortal and the isolated aspects thereof are but the delusion of the misconception of self (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). It is that truth, partly forgotten and partly misunderstood, which causes in people this practical non-belief in death. But if they want to stand still, stop at one place and refuse to be constantly reborn, then of course, everything becomes confused and produces disharmony and conflict.

Now as regards the idea that rebirth is the opportunity for the continuance of the “I”, though it is altogether mistaken to think of the I-process as some entity which can continue, yet there is some truth in the fact that the self is being reborn. For, every action which is a self-projection, *i.e.*, an action performed with purpose and craving, every such action re-creates the self. The “I”, the self, does not exist by itself as an entity; it is but a bundle of sensations, perceptions, differentiations and ideations (*Vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāṇa*). It is identification with sensations, preserved in memory, which constitutes the “I”-identification with the process of thinking in its different forms.

The mind is all the time occupied with the I-idea. Every experience is at once related to that concept, to find out whether it will strengthen the “I” (and then it is accepted as good), or weaken it (and then it is condemned as evil). This self-consciousness depends on sensations; the mind is filled with craving for sensate values, trying to continue therein, grasping to grow, acquiring in order to establish security.

Our whole life with all its economical, political and religious institutions with their tariff-barriers, national frontiers, racial walls and ideological curtains, is thus based on this desire for continuance.

And thus those actions create the “I”, or rather give rebirth to the “I”, for the church, the party, the country, the race are but extensions of the “I”, which continuance is so much desired. Yet, this “I” is certainly a delusion, for no permanent entity can be dependent in its arising on impermanent phenomena. Yet, for all that the rebirth of a self is a delusion, it does continue as a process, just as a hallucination may continue notwithstanding its unreality. The idea of continuity in rebirth as an entity is then caused by a mistaken identification (*sakkāya-dīṭṭhi*).

To understand rebirth in all its psychological implications, all this should be thoroughly understood and realised. For then we shall also comprehend at once the significance of the different spheres of rebirth. Before consciousness loses completely its sense of isolation and separateness, *i.e.*, before the cessation of the delusion of self-consciousness as an individual entity, there are different stages to which people have given different names. As long as the mind is engrossed in sensate values, it remains the slave of the body, all the time concentrating on possessions, comfort, power, and imagining that happiness can be found in these sensations. In these spheres of sense (*kāmaloka*) there are again many different layers according to frustration to be suffered or ambition satisfied. Living for sense-satisfaction becomes more and more entangled in various activities procuring that satisfaction, frequently with the unavoidable consequences of disappointment. In creating contacts for further expansion of satisfaction and ambition, there is also the burden of increasing liabilities and responsibilities. Once controlled by the senses, there is no time or liking for reflective thinking.

But when satisfaction and disappointment are placed by the mind side by side, a more detached view of both can be obtained, when at least awareness of the impermanence and ultimate unreality of sense-pleasures may arise, when failings and disappointments do not only appear as mere consequences of success and expectation, but rather as the unavoidable goal of all striving for happiness.



Then one might begin to seek elsewhere the possibility of a more stable happiness; and from the worldly joys one will turn to spiritual joy, from emotional satisfaction to intellectual gratification, from a selfish search for the pleasures of the senses in sensual appetite to the more refined pleasures of knowledge in art and science. Thus, from a slave to the body one becomes a slave of the mind. Then the need of control and discipline will be felt, and man turns religious and moral. Such a life will henceforth be led in the spheres of form (*rūpaloka*) where character will be moulded according to examples given for imitation.

To the extent of the mind knowing the higher, it has ceased to care for the lower. And thus the mind will become absorbed in mental states of spiritual ecstasy of intense, sacred joy (*pīti*) or the bliss of well-being (*sukha*), or beyond it all in the rest of perfect equilibrium (*ekaggatā*). Those are the states of purity and holiness (*brahmaloka*), where desires for sense-pleasures cannot intrude, though even here is not yet found that perfect comprehension of ultimate deliverance.

Thoughts may rise higher still in further simplification of the process, when life begins to be natural, harmonious and free from form, free from entanglements which are due to striving, craving and clinging. In utter nakedness of mind and heart it is possible to reach those spheres where space does not restrict, where consciousness has no bounds, where unreality becomes fact and the very perception thereof becomes imperceptible. Such are the formless spheres (*arūpaloka*) where time and space and individuality have no more meaning, where escapes are seen as self-deception, where conflicts vanish as delusion, where problems are understood as baseless, where effort ceases as goalless, till the sudden dawn of realisation that rebirth is no more.



# Dependent Origination I

All religions striving, moral restraint, mental purification, virtuous conduct, all meritorious action, spiritual detachment, supernatural aspiration, etc.—all are meaningless, unless this life is considered as a preparation for a future life. But all questions about what will happen after death necessarily entail other questions about what did happen before birth, and how that came about. And thus, eschatology or the doctrine about the last things (which seems the very purpose of religion and thereby appears to be more important) is not in reality of greater consequence than the doctrine of origination, which is but another aspect of the same truth, showing the dependent origination of the conflict in the past, its problem in the present and (unless it is solved here and now) its continuance and renewed arising in the future.

Origination, in fact, can be considered from a threefold aspect.

The most common view is that of an individual existence birth to death, originating at conception and ceasing at the dissolution of the component parts. Apart from being the most common, it is also the most deceptive view, as it regards an individual life-span as a rounded-off unit with a definite beginning and a determinable ending. Although this is the common view, it is not accepted by any religion, nor by any system of rationalistic thought, science or materialistic philosophy. All religions accept a life hereafter as some sort of succession, if not continuation, of the present existence, and

there is no scientific view which accepts the origination of this lifespan as an absolute creation.

Thus, the well-known formula of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) is analysed by Buddhaghosa into causes in the past, producing effects in the present, which in turn become causes in the present to produce effects in the future. It is a paraphrase on the Buddha's own saying that the beginning of things cannot be known. It is interesting to note at this stage already, that the Buddha did not deny the origination of things; neither did he confirm an ultimate or creation, but merely stated that such an idealistic beginning cannot fall within the scope of ordered thinking (*acinteyya*).

A process, within the teaching of the Buddha—based on the essential characteristic of soullessness (*anatta*), no soul, no self, no substance, no abiding entity of any sort—is of necessity a continuous flux without any static structure to which it would be possible to ascribe any phenomenal properties such as beginning, duration and cessation in the absolute sense. A process has no beginning, but is in the process of becoming as well as in the process of change, and therefore is always beginning and ceasing, although without an absolute origin or cessation. Events have no beginning, but are beginning always; and this constant beginning or becoming is only possible, because events are also constantly ending and ceasing.

This is the process of origination, dependent on cessation, which can make us see that birth arises out of death, as much as death is the direct result of born: whatever is composed is by its very nature decomposable (*sabbe saṅkhārā anicca*).

Birth and death, and the apparent lifespan between those two termini, form of course the obvious aspect in which to view the process of origination and cessation, even when it is admitted that birth is not an unconditioned beginning and death is not an ultimate ending. Still, this view with its concessions of a past and a future tends to be so individualistic that it becomes extremely difficult to extract the absolute truth (*paramattha sacca*) from the conventional truth

(*voham mean*). And that may lead to many mis-statements which cannot be reconciled with the basic and unadulterated truth of Buddhism. An aspiration to attain Nirvāṇa is perhaps the most blatant of such impossible contradictions, a vulgar, cheap and meaningless attempt to introduce a refinement of spiritual values in the base desires of emotional and intellectual selfishness.

If, thus, we have not actually disposed of this narrow and incomplete view of the process of origination and cessation in one single life-time, it has at least been put out of action by the Buddha's own words regarding the inconceivability of a beginning, by Buddhaghosa's commentary on conditions in the past and results in the future, and also by the general attitude of science and philosophy regarding the impossibility of the absolute, being subject to change.

There are two other aspects possible, which not only throw a very different light on this problematic process, but which are both in perfect agreement with the Buddha's doctrine, even though the two aspects are mutually as far removed from one another as the microcosm from the macrocosm. This is possible, because the microcosm of a single unit of human thought is a summary, a miniature, an epitome, representing the macrocosm of the universe, the total cosmic process of evolution and involution.

Taking the microcosmic aspect first, we see that a single, complete human thought has been analysed into 17 thought-moments. This, of course, is rather arbitrary, as, in fact, it would be impossible to divide and separate something which is intrinsically as dynamic as sound or light-waves. Still, in a way in which light can be analysed in a light-spectrum from infra-red to ultra-violet, so different stages of thought can be recognised, because not every thought-unit grows to completeness. An incomplete thought, therefore, presents itself as a cross-cut of the process of thinking, providing thereby, as it were, a sectional representation of a thought. For, in every thought we find the fourfold division of dependent origination: con-

ditions in the past, producing effects in the present, which in turn become causes in the present to produce effects in the future.

The conditions in the past which are ignorance (*avijjā*) and past karma (*saṅkhāra*) are found in every thought as the unconscious (*bhavaṅga*), the under-current (*bhavaṅga-sota*) with the residue of all past thoughts, which flow on, till a disturbance (*bhavaṅga-calana*) is caused by the introduction of a new object. If this disturbance is strong enough, it might become an obstruction in the unconscious flow, thereby causing an interruption of the unconscious (*bhavaṅg'upaccheda*).

This disturbance is sometimes merely received without causing a further reaction; and then the feeling is received but not perceived. *Vedanā* did not become *saññā*.

But if the disturbance were strong enough, these first three moments of a single thought-unit will rise from the unconscious (*bhavaṅga*) to be perceived by the sense-doors (*pañcadvaravajjana*), which in the chain of dependent origination is called the re-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāna*), that which links the condition of the past to the effect in the present. It is still far from full awareness, but just a turning to the entrance of the senses without particularisation, without perceiving as yet the cause of the disturbance, without perceiving even which particular sense-door was approached. It is turning towards the field of sensation, marking the first step towards cognition, away from the unconscious.

The immediately following moment perceives the impact of the sense-object as a visible shape, a sound, an odour, a flavour or a touch, thus specifying through the thought-in-formation (*nāmarūpa*) the reaction in the senses (*salāyatana*). It would be premature to speak at this stage of consciousness, where there is only perception (*saññā*), but it grows out into a reaction which is the acceptance of the impression, a passive reception of the stimulus by a recipient cognition, called *sampaṭicchana*, leading to the next step of investigation (*santīraṇa*), which only examines without passing

judgement. It is mere analysis of the contact (*phassa*) which has established a sensation (*vedanā*).

Only now comes the deciding factor (*vothāpana*) which establishes the received and perceived object in some class or definition, thereby differentiating it from others, which is the proper work of the mental formations, the *saṅkhāra* of the *pañcakkhandha*, the five mental aggregates. It is a synthesis following the preceding analysis, but although the object is received, perceived and conceived (*vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra*), the thought is still in its embryonic stage of conception or ideation.

Many thoughts do not proceed beyond this and their effects remain fruitless from a karmic point of view. But, if at this stage the soil is found sufficiently fertile for these effects of past action to take roots in the present, they can become activated, so as to become causes in the present to produce effects in the future.

This takes place when mere sensation (*vedanā*) turns into craving (*taṇhā*) which revitalises the process of becoming in *saṃsāra*, according to the doctrine of dependent origination; it is the moment when in a thought-unit the still passive perception of differentiation (*vothāpana*) blossoms out into the full sense of apperception. Up to now the thought was constituted of mere knowledge in different degrees, received, perceived and conceived; but here sets in the knowledge of that knowledge, together with its acceptance or rejection thereof, liking or dislike, attachment or aversion, greed or hate, in other words: karma. Thus, apperception (*javana*) is the interpretation to oneself of the impressions perceived.

This is the most important, active part of the entire process, the conative impulse, the intellectual release of tension, the sudden leap on to the object. *Javana* means swiftness which intentional movement is karma with craving (*taṇhā*). This movement gathers momentum: craving becomes clinging (*upādāna*), and begets becoming (*bhava*), the three factors which in this present existence condition the shape of to come. The maximum duration of this

swift movement of *javana* is only seven moments, but a single one would be sufficient to produce that apperception of realisation which constitutes the enlightenment of a Buddha or an arahant.

With very great intensity there will follow two more resultant moments of identification and registration (*tadārammaṇa*) which correspond to the future results in the process of dependent origination, namely, birth and decay. For, identification is indeed the birth of the ego; and the registration of such birth is indeed the beginning of the process of decay in which birth through conflict leads to death (*jāti-jarā-maraṇa*).

Such is the dependent origination and cessation of a single thought in the microcosm of the mind, which as a single wave in the ocean arises, vibrates and ceases, but with such an un-imaginable speed, that commentators say that more than a hundred-thousand million thought-moments could pass within the time required for the shortest flash of lightning or the winking of the eye.

If this microcosm of a single unit of human thought is, in fact, a summary, a miniature, an epitome, representing the macrocosm of the universe, *i.e.*, the total cosmic process of evolution and involution—we should be prepared to find there also a dependent origination in the slow process of development from the unevolved, inorganic stages of matter to the highly complicated and problematic involutions of the human mind, which we consider to be at the apex of evolution and achievement.

Evolution, just as revolution, has no absolute, no definite beginning. Just as one does not begin a revolution without a background of discontent, without a piling up of conditions averse to the existing circumstances, which ultimately threaten to become unbearable and then suddenly boil over in a seething agitation—so evolution does not have a definite beginning of creation, but is the result of growth, of progress and decay. For, evolution always involves a change, frequently so subtle that it cannot be observed, yet always a change



which is both growth and decay; for, nothing can become, unless it also ceases.

But, although there is no ultimate beginning, no creation which is the self-contradictory transition from a static passivity into a dynamic activity, yet there is the fundamental ingredient which forms the determining principle, the common ground, the basis of evolution at any stage, which is found in universal energy, physical as well as mental. Change is energy. But energy is not a directing, external force. It is the fundamental, brutal force, which in a stupid, unconscious, sensual, passionate and even cruel way, with violent impetus, exerts its need for motion, for change, for evolution. This unconscious, brutal energy, inherent in all motion, change and action, is the fundamental ignorance, which is not the beginning but the basis of evolution and which all further development rests in dependent origination. It is the fundamental illusion (*avijjā*) of the undifferentiated, neither matter nor mind.

This fundamental energy, which is universal, must exert itself, just as any action must act, in order to be itself; for without exertion, without action, it is not. It is this blind will for life and striving for survival which provides it with the characteristic of evolution, which constitutes its nature, which composes its activity, and which is therefore called *saṅkhāra*, composition, based on fundamental illusion (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhāra*).

Will for life and striving for survival can never succeed with mere individual energy; and thus arises the need for reproductive energy to survive as a class or group in its most primitive form. This need for reproduction, therefore, follows of necessity from the blind will to live which constitutes the nature of evolution (*saṅkhāra-paccayā vinnānam*, i.e., *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*, or rebirth consciousness).

Once the reproductive urge for survival has established some sort of continuity—if not of the individual or of the species at least of structural characteristics—further energy is naturally directed towards functional organisation. And here the dual aspect of na-

ture becomes discernible in the purely mechanical activity of inorganic matter being directed towards physical, chemical or mineral compositions which provide the basic distinctions of form and class (*viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*).

A further development sees the origin of biological existence with sense-reaction and recognition (*nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanam*), in which a sensational response to stimuli takes over from mere physical or chemical motion, but where existence still remains a passive effect, dependent on previous conditions.

These senses, however, in their varied degrees of perfection, produce the reaction which forms through contact (*saḷāyatanā paccayā phassa*) the distinction between the internal and the external. For, in contact is germinated the distinction between attraction and rejection. It is here, therefore, in the long process of evolution that are born the rudimentary principles which mark individualism.

This distinction between internal and external contacts leads further to a distinction between various types of feeling (*phassa-paccayā vedanā*). The biological sensational becomes the individualised sentiment, which is going to provide the turning point and the arising of the ego. For, dependent on sensation arises craving (*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*) which is the discriminative distinction between likes and dislikes. This distinction is not based any more on physical activity and biological reaction, necessitated by the need of survival. The need to live has developed into a greed to live and hence forms the discriminative faculty which now takes the initiative, turning the passive development of evolution into an active urge. It is the appearance of the mind with self-determination and volitional activity.

From now on, a mere distinction between likes and dislikes becomes the egotistical reflective attachment to likes and rejection of dislikes, the purposeful clinging to the choice of craving (*taṇhā-paccayā upadānam*). For, now it is not the physical need for survival, not even an animal greed to continue, but a passionate, emotional will-to-live, which is the culmination in this process of becoming

(*upādāna-paccayā bhavo*), a blind agitation, an impulsive excitement, which provides the drive to continue the chase without respite or relief.

This intensifying on the goal-in-view gives a conscious outlook on life, which, however, does not always give an intellectual guidance. For, the mind as emotion is not able to discern its own motives and, thus, the life arising from this will-to-become (*bhava-paccayā jāti*) is one of reason and intellect, of knowledge and experience, of cleverness and skill, but not of comprehension and insight.

Because of this lack of comprehension, of total understanding, of integration, there arises the problematic position which shows itself in opposition and conflict (*jāti-paccayā jarā-maranam*). And that is life as it unfolds itself, as it makes itself, as it unmakes itself. For, in evolution there is also involution; in beginning there is also ending, in birth there is death; in origination there is cessation.

Only when there is no more becoming, there will also be no more cessation, no more opposition, no more separation, no more conflict.

The main point—nay the only point to understand here is that all this process is conditioned, dependent on conditions (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) and that therefore with the cessation of those conditions the results will not arise again. That is the only salvation a Buddhist has in his own hands to effect: the cessation of becoming (*bhavanirodha*).

In a later chapter I shall have the opportunity to speak of another chain of conditioned effects which is not merely a negation of conflict, but which makes positive use of conflict to lead to the solution of the problem caused by ignorance, either in a particular thought, an life-span, or in the mighty cycle of saṃsāric evolution.



# Dependent Origination II

The scheme of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda-ñāya*) is a systematically arranged project, elucidating in detail what has been stated already in outlines in the second and third noble truths, regarding the cause and cessation of conflict (*dukkha*). It is, therefore, the ground-plan, showing the origin of disharmony and conflict, not only by indicating its root-cause, craving (*taṇhā*) as was done in the second noble truth about the origin of conflict (*dukkha-samudaya*), but by tracing its source through all the conditions which have co-operated, in the past as well as in the present, to bring about this actual problem.

As this present conflict is thus dependent on all those conditions the whole scheme is called the system of dependent origination. It is a group of conditional circumstances and not a law of causality in the strict sense. When, therefore, in this scheme of eleven propositions each time a condition is mentioned this should not be understood to be an exclusive cause but rather a necessary antecedent and prerequisite in the logical sense. Thus e.g. it is not ignorance alone which is a condition (*paccaya*) still less a cause, of the arising of volitional activities, as Nyanatiloka Maha Thera has said: “Each of the twelve conditionally arising phenomena is dependent on various conditions besides that given in the formula”.

The inter-relationship and inter-dependency of these twelve links is then more extensive than the connection of one link with the

immediately preceding one. For, though each link in a chain has only direct contact with two links, one on either side, yet the fact of its suspension depends on all the links of the whole chain. Thus, the whole system of dependent origination hangs so closely together that some scholars, as Dr. Paul Dahlke, have not hesitated to draw particular attention to the use of the prefix in the Pāli name: *paṭicca-samuppāda*, as if thereby were indicated a dependent simultaneous arising.

And certainly, many of the links are placed in a series of before and after only to make description possible, and not necessarily to indicate a succession of events in time. Actually there are several, if not all, which are mutually dependent. Thus it is said in the Dīgha Nikāya<sup>4</sup>: “Dependent on mind-matter originates consciousness; dependent on consciousness arises mind-matter” (*nāma-rūpa-paccayā viññāṇam; viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpam*). Thus, where normally conscious thought arises in a pre-existing rational individual, it is also true that consciousness of the past becomes the re-linking factor to a new life with its sensations, perception and ideations.

It is a grave misconception to imagine that this process of dependent origination is a comprehensive causal law in which one link produces the next one. To produce causally is far different from a conditional occasioning. The effect is not in the condition, though without it, it would never have come about. Hence, allegorically, the whole chain of events is depicted as a blind man (ignorance) who goes about alone and strikes against some object (*karma*). He falls down (rebirth-consciousness) and wounds himself, thereby causing himself mental grief and bodily pain (mind-matter). The wounds begin to fester and develop into various abscesses (six senses). Going about, he hurts himself each time those abscesses are touched by some object (contact), increasing his pain (sensation). With the desire to get cured (craving) he obtains some quack remedies (clinging) which he applies to his wounds (new karma). The result, of

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<sup>4</sup>II, 63

course is that the wounds become worse (rebirth) and finally after much suffering cause his death (decay-death).

Usually the process is spread out for consideration over and entire life-span with its antecedent conditions in a past life and its future expectations in a life to come, although the entire process is equally applicable to the genesis and the cessation of each single thought, as we have seen on an earlier occasion. But always we have three periods: past, present and future. Ignorance (*avijjā*) and volitional activities (*kamma-saṅkhāra*) belong to the past. The last two factors, birth (*jāti*) and decay and death (*jarā-maraṇa*) are effects to be expected in the future. The intermediate eight belong to the present, some of them as effects of past conditions, some as new conditions which will give rise to future effects.

Ignorance, which stands in the beginning, and death, which stands at the end, are not ultimates. For, ignorance too was conditioned in the past, and death will result in further rebirth in the future. The entire scheme of dependent origination and the arrangement of its links are therefore only one rotation of the ever-turning wheel of saṃsāra.

Ignorance (*avijjā*) is the condition in the past, when man had passions and made them grow in delusion. Volitional activities (*saṅkhāra*) are the reactions of that misunderstanding in the past when evil tendencies were formed. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is the beginning of existence in the present at the moment of conception. Mentality and corporeality (*nāma-rūpa*) are mind and body in formation during the embryonic state. The six senses (*saḷāyatana*) can only begin to operate from the time of birth. Contact (*phassa*) is first established with the outer world, while individuality is not distinguished. Feeling (*vedanā*) is the stage when pleasure and pain are experienced as subjective reactions. Craving (*taṇhā*) is the arising of sensuality at the age of puberty. Without the strenuous effort to satisfy clinging (*upādāna*) is passion full-grown in adolescence. Becoming (*bhava*) is the action under the influence of desire. Birth

(*jāti*) is the result of such action in the next life. Decay and death (*jarā-maraṇa*) are the consequences of being born.

People are always eagerly looking for a beginning, but the wheel of repeated births and deaths is not a lineage of succeeding individuals, but a turning which is action, a movement which is craving, round a centre which is the delusion of self. In that wheel, the twelve factors of dependent origination are the spokes, while the rim is life as it appears in its daily routine. The beginning of life does not lie in any birth, but in the centre of that infinite circle, the centre which is “self”. All individuality turns round that “self” which, however, has no magnitude, as the empty hub of the wheel. Once that hub is broken, the wheel cannot turn any more, and saṃsāra’s end is reached.

Thus the beginning of ignorance cannot be shown<sup>5</sup>, because it is not an ultimate beginning, but a constantly arising process which has no beginning, but is beginning, which has no end and yet can come to an end by no more beginning, by no more becoming. The view of those who believe in a supernatural cause or creation and thus uphold an ultimate beginning or creation, is contrary to their other view of the existence of eternity. If eternity of life is possible in the future, why should it be impossible in the past? It is clear that to approach the subject of the origination of things by starting from an ultimate beginning without origin, cannot be done by scientific, logical or empirical investigation. To approach this subject intellectually and factually the starting point must be the experimental events of this life in this world. Thus, the doctrine of dependent origination will not be a fruitless speculation, because it is based on actuality, not with a starting point or some imaginary time in the untraceable past, but with actual facts of the present which are open to investigation and experiment.

If it is ignorance that has brought about the problem of conflict, it will be understanding alone which can solve the conflict. It must

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<sup>5</sup>*Na paññāyati*: S. II, 178



be understood then, that this conflict has been brought about by a misconceived self in its search for satisfaction. A search of this type implies some amount of selfishness and dissatisfaction. Thus the very search for happiness involves the seeker in opposition, which is conflict. That conflict, therefore, cannot be brought to an end by a search for satisfaction. The goal is not bliss, but truth; and that is the highest bliss. That means that happiness may be and will be the effect of the solution of the problem, but it should not be, and cannot be the goal of striving. It is in understanding alone through full awareness that the symptoms of a disease become indications of its nature. Although this understanding must awaken in each one for himself, it does not come entirely by itself. There will be certain conditions which support the efficiency of the process of awakening by way of natural influence (*pakat'upanissāya*). Company, education, and environment are of this kind. The sights of illness, decrepitude and death were some of the conditions which brought about the change in prince Siddhattha's life. Sometimes a chance remark may produce long-lasting effects, even though it did not have that efficiency in itself.

Suffering, sorrow, disharmony and conflict do not contain a cure or a solution, but the knowledge of an illness, though painful in itself, may be the reason for consulting a doctor, who through the application of his medicines or through an operation effects a cure. Similarly, the understanding of life as a conflict whenever life presents itself as a problem, may become the driving force to seek a remedy. Still, no individual, be he a doctor, a teacher or a god, can help or save somebody else, but a person can help himself by putting good advice into practice.

The acceptance and practice of good advice is confidence (*saddhā*), which is not the same as faith. For, faith is in things which cannot be known; knowledge destroys faith, and faith destroys itself, for it is based on that which it cannot know. Confidence, however, is not a mental acceptance of that which cannot be known; it is an

assured expectation, not of an unknown beyond, but of what can be tested and experienced and understood by everyone for himself (*paccattarā veditabbo viññūhi*).

Just as there are eleven stages, building up from ignorance (*avijjā*) to the turbulent height of conflict (*dukkha*) under the cloud of delusion (*moha*), so there are eleven stages to undo that work in the light of understanding (*paññā*) to reach the final rest of insight (*vipassanā ñāṇa*). And it appears that one by one those stages of delusion correspond to the stages of understanding, so that each step towards deliverance undoes the work of one step towards conflict.

Thus, as the actualisation of the will-to-live was rebirth (*jāti*) leading to the arising of conflict (*dukkha*), so confidence (*saddhā*) is the birth of understanding which leads away from conflict. When that first step in the right direction is taken, it will give at the same time that first taste of happiness which, though not the goal of striving, yet will make the task of undoing lighter. If this joy (*pa-mujja*) of having found and escape-route from this round of birth conflict and death would not be experienced, there might be none with enough courage to start breaking down the self-defensive structures of delusion. In a way as becoming (*bhava*) was the will-to-live burdening the mind with new karma, so its opposite step is the joy of unburdening, a foretaste of deliverance, resulting from confidence in the teacher.

The increase of that joy will become sheer delight (*pīti*), for it breaks down the fear which forms the base of all clinging (*upādāna*). Delight and clinging are both degrees of interest; but that interest, which in clinging was subjective, will here in delight become objective interest. Whereas the characteristic of clinging is grasping the object with a further motive, with a view to security in the future, delight, on the other hand, is concerned with the immediate; it produces spontaneous action instead of purposeful activity, thereby breaking down the cares and fears of clinging.

But even this delight, and zest (*pīti*) will make place for a serene tranquillity (*passaddhi*), when the emotion of joy becomes better understood. This tranquillity then is the antidote to the excitement of craving (*taṇhā*), the calming down of the agitation which is characteristic of all possessiveness. Craving is the awareness of insecurity; tranquillity is a sense of serenity and equilibrium.

Just as craving, which is a feeling of insecurity, arose from feelings of disharmony (*dukkha-vedanā*), so serenity and tranquillity of mind give rise to a feeling of well-being (*sukha-vedanā*), *i.e.*, of security and harmony.

Under the cloud of delusion sensations become stimulating conditions for the arising of craving; but in the light of understanding this feeling of well-being leads to concentration (*samādhi*); for the contact (*phassa*), which gave rise to feelings which stimulated grasping, is contact with delusion; but concentration gives contact with reality. In concentration, therefore, we find the right opponent to make good the harm done by contact in delusion. In concentration there is no argument, no speculation, no conceptual thinking, but the immediate contact with reality through intuition. This concentration, therefore, leads naturally on to the understanding and seeing of things in their true nature (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*). Where the six senses of body and reason grasp only the actuality of things in delusion, there understanding comprehends the reality. Reality cannot be experienced through experiment; it can only be understood if all things are seen as aspects in the process of impermanence. An aspect is only a reflection and hence not true in the complete sense. The understanding of the real nature of things is, therefore, the understanding of their completeness, of the entirety of the process. Thus, actuality in the senses leads to conflict, but insight in reality leads to deliverance, because conflict arises from opposition which is impossible in a totality of comprehension which includes all.

The lack of understanding reality creates worry, a resultant of craving, but the understanding of the real nature of things is the door which opens to the truth. Here one stands in the gateway which is the exit leading out into a world of confusion and delusion, but which is also the entrance into a life of understanding and freedom. When the mind grasps matter (*nāma-rūpa*) the outcome is confusion, conflict and delusion, but right comprehension will give rise to weariness, repulsion and even disgust (*nibbidā*) with such a delusive world. Thus, here again, the grasping of the world in the process of mind-matter (*nāma-rūpa*) will have to be undone by disgust with that same world.

This weariness, however, does not make a man a hater of mankind, but the wiliness of human society becomes repulsive on account of its artificiality, conventionality and hypocrisy. This detachment is not necessarily a life of renunciation in a monastic order; it is never a morbid asceticism which aims at mortification of the flesh or at subjection of the mind. It is rather a detachment from any view which implies opposites, like self and the world, matter and mind.

And thus, this weariness leads to dispassion (*virāga*) which is a of loosening the fetters of delusion. This unlinking process of passionlessness restores to harmony the restlessly evolving process of relinking consciousness (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*). For, dispassion is not the absence of emotions, but a co-ordination of feeling and thinking.

If thoughts and feelings are not coordinated, but developed independently, there will be possessive grasping either intellectually or emotionally; there will be opposition and conflict. But when thought and feeling are in harmony, the intellect will prevent feelings from becoming sentimental, and the heart will give warmth to the reasoning faculty; and then, without opposition there will be no grasping and no conflict.

We have seen already how this relinking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) is conditioned by the binding, volitional ac-

tivities (*saṅkhāra*) which are purposeful actions. *i.e.*, karma. To make the antithesis complete we may rightly expect and find indeed that dispassionate thought-feeling leads to free, unbound action (*kriyā*), action which is pure because it arises spontaneously from the presently understood need; action which is complete because it does not project itself into the future with a purpose. Such action, which is neither bound by craving, nor incomplete through striving, is truly a free action, an action of deliverance (*vimutti*).

The knowledge of that freedom is the knowledge of extinction (*khaya ñāṇa*), *i.e.*, the extinction of all conflict and delusion; it is the final overcoming of all ignorance (*avijjā*) with which the scheme of dependent origination opened. In the light of understanding (*paññā*), all delusion (*moha*) will thus vanish, and with it all conflict (*dukkha*). And in that sense, deliverance is indeed the highest bliss.

In this manner, then, can be brought about the dependent cessation of a dependent origination. The process is often long and tedious. Many times failure will cause discouragement, and yet victory is so close at hand. The supreme act of realisation, which sets free both mind and heart which have been enslaved for thousands of lives, is that of a single moment. The delay in realisation is mostly due to an anxiety to achieve. But achievement there is none in the realisation of *anatta*. The freedom of deliverance is always there, but desire caused by delusion has confused the issue and has made a problem where there was no conflict.

When it is seen that conflict has arisen in dependence on delusion, the very understanding thereof will comprehend the impossibility of any problem or conflict arising, when there is no opposition, no self. Delusion cannot be overcome, just because it is a denial of reality, but it will cease when it is seen and understood as such. And that is enlightenment!



# The Path of Perfection

In one of the discussions in the course of the recently held seminar on National Awakening, on the question: How is science involved?—it was clearly pointed out that mere technology and mechanisation, although very important in a developing industrialisation, were a far cry from the scientific attitude required in every aspect of life. It was also pointed out that such scientific attitude was to be found in the teaching of the Buddha, who did not claim any supernatural authority, but always insisted on a spirit of investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*).

But, as long as in education, *e.g.*, the word of the teacher or of the textbook is accepted without comment and the passing of examinations depending on book-knowledge rather than intelligence is of supreme importance, it is not surprising that in religious matters also the word of the Buddha and the texts are treated as the sacred words of the omniscient guru, an attitude condemned by the Buddha himself.

For every aspect of life and doctrine a saying of the Buddha is quoted, either in support or in condemnation; and I for one shall not be surprised to hear one of these days from some of our learned pandits and spiritual leaders, that the Buddha himself approved or disapproved, or both, the concept of District Councils, because it was found or not found in the constitution of the state of the Licchavis.

What is needed is not political science in Buddhism, but a scientific attitude, *i.e.*, the spirit of enquiry and investigation, instead of a docile acceptance of dogmatism, as found in books or texts. It is so easy to say that all things are sorrowful when we hear a baby cry. It is so easy to console ourselves, when another of those fine china-ware cups get broken, by saying that all things are impermanent. It is so easy to postpone any serious thinking about problems and conflicts by reminding ourselves that saṃsāra is long. But surely, that is not the scientific, the intelligent attitude, which (we are never slow to tell the world at large) is the most salient characteristic of the Dhamma, so much so that some like to say that Buddhism is not a religion at all.

One of the main reasons for our faithful acceptance of dogmatic propositions is our lack of co-ordination in our perceptions, through which lack we fail, to investigate, analyse, compare, synthesise and understand. We know and we repeat, but, we do not understand, we do not comprehend. We have knowledge, but no insight. We know the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the formula of Dependent Origination, also in reverse order and in a negative way: “Dependent on ignorance arises karma, and with the cessation of ignorance there is also the cessation of karma”. But nothing is done to make ignorance cease, and thus karma accumulates and saṃsāra continues, happily and in sorrow.

The Noble Eightfold Path said to be a path leading to the cessation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha-gāmini-paṭipadā*). Still, how many have made serious enquiries about this path?

Let us do it now.

The Aṅguttara Nikāya, one of the five main divisions of the collection of sayings of the Buddha, called the Sutta Pitaka, has an arrangement of those discourses all its own. For, here the Suttas are not grouped according to length, or to subject, or to place of occasion, but according to number. Thus, a discourse on the five aggregates of existence (*pañcakkhandha*) will be found in the Book



of Fives, a discourse on the nine spheres of rebirth in the Book of Nines, and so forth, up to eleven.

Now, in the teaching of the Buddha his doctrine of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, which last one is the final of those four noble truths, is perhaps the best known, most important, not only, but also the one most frequently mentioned and referred to by him. It must come, therefore, at least as a surprise that in the entire Book of Eights in this collection of numerical or graduated sayings of the Aṅguttara Nikāya there is not a single discourse or sutta, dealing with the Noble Eightfold Path, the *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*.

The early commentators, who themselves were separated from the Buddha-era by about 1000 years, have remained totally silent on this surprising fact; and it would seem rather presumptuous to attempt a solution now, after more than 2500 years of dedicated silence. Yet, silence can be sometimes very much more eloquent than many words, and the omission of the Eightfold Path from the Book of Eights is at least significant. It could not have dropped out of the collection through carelessness in the oral transmission of the Buddha's sayings. Still less could it have disappeared through an intentional omission or a commentarial cut, for the teaching of the eightfold path has remained elsewhere in the discourses so firmly entrenched that it verily constitutes one of the major features of the Buddha-Dhamma.

A suggestion that this eightfold path was too well known to need a repetition in the Book of Eights is not convincing in the light of the almost tedious repetition of other equally well-known and even more essential doctrines, such as that of the three characteristics of all beings: *anicca-dukkha-anatta*, impermanence, conflict and the absence of an abiding entity in any form of existence.

I offer for consideration two well-known facts which may shed some light on this mysterious omission.

First, the Buddha's very first discourse, the Dhammacakkappa-vattana sutta, (which mentions the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path), was preached to beginners, or rather to unbelievers, the five early companions of the Bodhisatta during the many years of his unsuccessful struggle for enlightenment. It was only by relinquishing this path of self-mortification that the Bodhisatta found the middle path which he now proclaimed to still unwilling ears. The sincerity with which he spoke, the supernatural peace which reflected itself from his entire being, made them his first followers, although conviction of the truth of the Buddha's words was not forthcoming. Only one of the five disciples understood enough to make him enter the stream of holiness as a *sotāpanna*, but this initial exposition led none to the perfection of arahantship. What the Buddha taught in that first discourse was undoubtedly a *noble* path, but not the Path of Perfection. This perfection of arahantship came to all five disciples only after listening to the second discourse, dealing with the teaching of *anatta*, explaining that all phenomena, physical and mental compositions and even the uncomposed Nibbāna, have no substance, no soul, no abiding entity or no-umenon. It was this comprehension, this supreme insight (*sammā-nāṇa*) into the real nature of things, which set them absolutely free (*sammā-vimutti*) in the deliverance of arahantship, which made them perfect.

Further, mention is made on several occasions by the Buddha of a path which leads to perfection, a path which has ten constituents, the usual eight of the *ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga* and the two factors of insight and deliverance just mentioned. And this tenfold noble path has *not* been omitted from the Book of Tens in the same numerical collection of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.

It is then suggested that there is a Noble Eightfold path and a Perfect Tenfold Path, one leading to discipleship, the other leading to sainthood.

The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) which is the last of the Four Noble Truths (*caturariya saccāni*) should be seen

and understood as part thereof. Together these four noble truths constitute, as a whole, an admirable piece of ordered thinking, which finds a counterpart in the *Āditta-pariyāya-Sutta*, the so-called Fire sermon. First the subject is stated and analysed in all particulars, then the nature of the cause is explained; action to be taken in this respect is detailed; and finally, the method and the results of such action are shown. The subject under discussion is the universal conflict of dukkha which expresses itself in many forms of physical pain, emotional distress, mental disturbance, social insecurity, etc. The cause of this conflict is diagnosed as desire for well-being, attachment to possessions, need for social stability, craving for security, etc., which are all expressions of the one single basic greed for continuation, of self-existence in the many fields of self-activity, self-expression, self-expansion. causing contrast, obstruction, defiance and conflict in general, but all-and-one based on the centre of this activity, the self.

The understanding of no-self (*anatta*) alone can do away with the cause of the conflict and therefore will bring about a cessation of this expansionist activity of the self and lead to a cessation of conflict all round.

A method of how to bring about this understanding is then detailed in the Noble Path under three sections of virtue, concentration and insight (*sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*). It is clear already from the conventional order in which the eight limbs of this path are always referred to, that no order of succession is indicated. One does not cultivate the insight of right understanding and right intention before getting down to the development of virtue in right speech, right action, etc. As a path or a method it is one, and on that one path every word, deed or thought, that is one's entire life, ought to be rightly inspired, performed with correct attention and concentration, based on proper understanding and guided by good intention.

It is not a road on which the traveller can mark his progress, step by step, mile by mile, as it were, for "the road is there, but no

walker thereon" (*maggam atthi, gamako na vijjati*). The path and the traveller are one in the one action of living. On the path of love the lover does not think of self, and in that unity of comprehension there is no conflict possible. It is thus, that the noble path leads to the cessation of conflict.

This is not the goal or destination of achievement, for the noble path is not a method towards the acquisition of nobility of virtue, or of wisdom, or of power over self and others. It is a road to freedom and ultimate deliverance, which cannot be reached by striving and accumulation, and hence cannot be marked by progress. There is no goal of idealism as held forth in the lofty theories of supernatural religions, in the sublime promises of political idealism, in the grandiose abstractions of philosophical speculations. There is no goal of satisfied achievement in improved economic conditions in a classless society, no final comfort and leisure in a materialistic individual security. All those remain modes of living, fashions, measures, guides, which ultimately keep their followers enslaved in their very methods.

It is the nature of our present-day conflicts that we are not searching for a solution, but for a method to solve our problems. And as there are at least twice as many methods as there are problems, the actual conflict is entrenched in the search for a method. Problems can be reduced to very few, possibly even to one single problem how to achieve self-satisfaction. Every political view of extreme right and extreme left, and all the moderate views of the middle, of the left of the middle, of the middle of the right, or where ultimately the left alone is right, and all right is left off, has the same aim, purpose or goal of bringing satisfaction to all. The reason why they cannot unite in this, is the fact that they differ in their methods. Thus, the goal is forgotten and the methods rule supreme in conflict and chaos.

It is precisely here that the Buddha's Path of Perfection is different, for it is not a method leading to satisfaction. Happiness is

here not the goal of striving, the path is not progressive but instantaneous. From whatever angle one approaches the teaching of the Buddha, whether one takes the analytical aspect of his philosophy or the synthetic aspect of his morality, the conditionality of existence, the in-substantiality of all phenomena, the interdependence of all relationship or the soullessness of the mental process—whether the search is for an absolute truth or for the ultimate good—one always comes to that central theme of *anatta*, the doctrine of the absence of any kind of entity of abiding nature. For, the good is only relative; the truth is conditioned; the origination is dependent; a goal of achievement is non-existent, because the self is delusion.

Thus, a search for happiness is bound to fail, and likewise a search for truth. A search, any search, becomes possible at all, if the object of the search is known. A search for the unknown cannot take place in either reason or intellect. When we try to convince ourselves that we are searching for the truth, we are only looking for an image, an extension of a self-deluded mind.

But understanding of truth may come in a flash, as the understanding of a falsehood, or as a sudden revelation of beauty, a sudden perfection of goodness. There is no abstract law of goodness, beauty and truth. But anything can be true to itself, and it will be perfect and beautiful too, when it does not contain the conflict of self-possession, the conflict of fear which is based on misunderstanding (*a-vijja*).

Thus, the path is foremost one of understanding, not an intellectual grasp, not a logical conclusion, not an emotional conviction, but a direct and comprehensive understanding through complete seeing a thing as it is (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*), the right as right, the false as false. This understanding which is a perfect comprehension, is the key to awakening and enlightenment, to sainthood and arahantship. Without this, all virtue is but puritanism, all concentration is but self-hypnosis, all inspiration is but imagination.

Yet, there is a difference in the virtue, concentration and wisdom (*sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*) of a follower on the Noble Eightfold Path, and the perfection, contemplation and insight (*adhisīla*, *adhicitta*, *adhipaññā*) of one on the tenfold path who is no longer a disciple (*asekha*) but a perfect one, an arahant.

Virtue forms part of the eightfold path and still includes the observance of precepts as part of one's ethical training, the moral obligations of the man in the world by which are regulated all aspects of social life in right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*) and right living (*sammā-ājīva*). Even the observance of a greater number of precepts does not bring about that higher virtue (*adhisīla*) which is found in perfection, not as a restraint, but as coming from inner necessity. For, that alone is virtue which needs no persuasion of righteousness, no inducement of reward, no compulsion of authority, no background of fear, but which comes from clear understanding and perfect comprehension, without a sense of duty but as the result of an inner necessity. Then there will be truth, not in a mere abstention from lies, from harsh language, slander and frivolous talk, but in dedication to sincerity of living, without compromise, without hypocrisy, without selfishness. Such is the *adhisīla*, the supreme virtue, which the Buddha declared to be superior to the most noble and highest virtue (*ariya parama sīla*) on which such great stress is laid usually, and in praise of which so many monks and learned men speak in various ways<sup>6</sup>.

Similarly, the concentration of unified attention (*sammā-sati*) and one-pointed meditation (*sammā-samādhi*), which on the Noble Eightfold Path as a process of mental purification leads to tranquillity of mind and spiritual ecstasy perhaps, cannot lead to emancipation and has, therefore, to be sublimated and refined in *adhipaññā*, which is the purest form of insight only found in the *adhipaññā-dhamma vipassanā*. This is not only the understanding of the unsubstantiality and voidness of the object of contemplation, but rather

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<sup>6</sup>D. I., 174

the dissolution of the identifying consciousness. It is the breaking up of mental forms and the end of mental formations. It is the comprehensive insight that occurs by knowing an object to consist of mere phenomena, and by seeing the dissolution of this conscious thought together with the object conceived. In this comprehension lies the realisation of the void of all existence, of the dissolution of all binding factors, of the ultimate deliverance (*sammā-vimutti*) which is the ending of the tenfold path of perfection.

Finally, the right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right intention (*sammā-saṅkappa*) of the Noble Eightfold Path find a deeper meaning in the *adhicitta* of the tenfold path of perfection. Here it is not the controlled mind, but the freed mind; for, the tenfold path of perfection gives an additional two factors, *sammā-ñāṇa* and *sammā-vimutti*, not to be found in the Noble Eightfold Path. The wisdom (*paññā*) of understanding and intention, even on the highest level, is to be supplemented by perfect insight (*ñāṇa*). It was the first glimpse of this insight which made of *aññā Kondañña* (and of him alone) an enterer of the stream of holiness (*sotāpatti-magga*), while the others, without this insight, remained mere followers on the Noble Eightfold Path. It is this comprehensive insight which shows up the false as false and thereby discerns the truth. It shows the true nature of all desire (even the desire for spiritual advancement) as misguided self-delusion and thereby gives that immediate and absolute and perfect freedom (*sammā-vimutti*), which cannot be desired, acquired or developed, just because it is not objective and because there is no subject, no I, to acquire, to achieve, to become.

This is truly a path with no one to walk on it; it is a salvation from oneself, which is the ultimate deliverance.

It is not a path of progress, of a search for, or an approach to a goal. When life ceases to be a search, when it ceases to be a process of grasping, then right living will bring perfect freedom from all bondage and deliverance from all fetters. When right effort ceases to search for substitutes and escape-routes, it will be solely directed

towards the unveiling of a delusion. And when a delusion is seen as such, it can no longer delude the mind which is set free. Then the path ceases to be a method, but is the actual solving of a problem in conflict.

Conflict ceases with the cessation of the problem of opposition. And when perfect insight intimately and totally comprehends the delusion created by the imagination of a self-expanding thirst for continuity and security, then there is that perfect, complete, supreme and absolute deliverance which is not conditioned, not originated. Which has neither beginning nor cessation, the end of the Path of Perfection.



# Concentration and Meditation

At the outset it would be useful to define our subject clearly to make sure that our thoughts meet. I do not want to suggest that my definitions are final, but only that I shall use certain terms within those circumscriptive limitations. Thus I feel it necessary to make a distinction between concentration and meditation.

Concentration, of course, according to the meaning of the word, is a bringing together to one point for purpose of intensification such things as army troops, power, thoughts. The two main points which strike us as essential here are:

1. the bringing together, and
2. the purpose.

Rays of light can be concentrated and focussed on one point, thereby increasing the heat so much that a flame is kindled. That is the way the Olympic torch is lit. Another way of concentration is condensation, when, e.g., the compactness of a liquid is increased by evaporation of unwanted matter. That is the way we make condensed milk. Concentration of power takes place when all one's strength is gathered to deliver one mighty blow. The mind, too, can be concentrated in a similar way by focussing all our attention on one point, by eliminating all foreign thoughts, thereby increasing

our mental pressure, in the hope to find a solution to a problem, or to obtain a perfectly clear picture of the point at issue.

Applied to the spiritual field, things are not much different. All religions have developed their own spiritual exercises, which is indeed the very name given to a specific method of concentration, spread out over thirty days by the founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. This name might also be given to the forty types of concentration in Buddhism, which are at great length explained by Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga*. In Hinduism, several forms of yoga employ different methods of discipline, varying between physical self-restraint or *haṭha-yoga*, the path of devotion or *bhakti-yoga* and mental concentration or *rāja-yoga*.

All are forms of concentration, which I wish to group under the name of mind-culture or its Pāli name: *bhāvanā*. This word *bhāvanā* is derived from the word *bhava*, *bhāveti*, becoming, or causing to become, to grow, *i.e.*, to cultivate.

This cultivation of the mind, or mind-culture, is a method, in the practice of which concrete ideas and images are presented and introduced in order to fix the mind. The object-matter of this fixation is not important, but it should be chosen according to the inclinations, the abilities, the mental dispositions of the subject who practises concentration. There are those who are more emotional than intellectual, and for them the devotional aspect will have greater appeal.

Devotion involves a dedication of oneself to a person, a purpose or an ideal, with loyalty, with surrender, with worship. This culture of devotion is found in *bhakti-yoga* among the worshippers of Vishnu and his various incarnations as Rama or Krishna; it is also found among the devotees of Shiva, where devotion takes the aspect of austerity and penance; and among the Christians where it is expressed in divine worship and veneration of the saints. The divine power or Shakti becomes the object of devotion in a female form, the Mother. In later developed forms of Mahayana Buddhism this

devotional attitude is found practically to predominate all other aspects of religion, when salvation is considered possible only through the grace and blessing of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, who has postponed his own enlightenment for the purpose of saving others who call on him for help.

In early Buddhism, however, with its emphasis on insight through analytical knowledge, the devotional aspect is not found; or if it is hinted at all, it is more likely a later interpolation. The veneration of deities is non-existent in the canonical texts, but we find to the contrary the gods paying homage to the Buddha.

One of the forty object-matters for concentration is called *Bud-dhanussati*, a recollection of the nine excellent qualities of the Buddha. But even here we do not find a prayerful attitude, but a recollection (*anussati*) that the Buddha was a person fully emancipated (*arahān*) and self-enlightened (*sammā-sambuddha*), perfect in wisdom and virtue (*viññā-carāṇa sampanna*), accomplished in his self-set task (*sugata*), one who has fully understood the world in all its aspects (*loka vidu*), an unsurpassed tamer of the human heart (*anuttara purisadhamma sarati*), a teacher of both gods and men (*sattha devamanussānam*), a Buddha indeed, the Blessed One (*bhagavā*). Here is no prayer, no praise, no veneration, no supplication, no donation, no dedication, but only the object of recollection and concentration.

Another exercise in mind-culture has the inhabitants of the heavens as object-matter, but as this is not directed towards a devotional attitude in respect of an individual deity, its purpose is not *bhakti*, but rather the culture of a desire for a good life to come as a reward for a virtuous life here and now.

A predominant feature in these spiritual exercises is their rational outlook of analysis. Discursive thinking and concrete images form the concentration stage, when the ten stages of progressive dissolution of a corpse provide the object-matter of impurity (*asubha-bhāvanā*), or when the process of nutrition is followed mentally in

great detail, in order to build up a spirit of detachment, based on the loathsomeness of food (*āhāra-paṭikula*). Analysis of material things, earth, water, fire and air, lead to mental absorption, when matter as such has given way to the mere abstractions of extension, cohesion, calorificity and vibration (*paṭhavi, āpo, tejo, vāyo*). Watchfulness on inhaling and exhaling of the breathing process (*ānāpāna-sati*) stands in a class different from the breath-control exercises of the yogi; for, in the Buddhist system of concentration there is no retention, no control, no regulation of breathing, but a simple watchfulness (*sati*) which notes the nature of each breath, as long or short, as smooth or interfered with by foreign thoughts. The breath is the object-matter, but the object of purpose is watchfulness of the mental states arising during this process.

Mindfulness is indeed the key-word in concentration. It is an objective way (not a purposeful way) of looking at a thing freed from considerations of one's personal reactions to that thing. And this opens up a difference in view-point altogether.

Most exercises in concentration either fill the mind with new ideas about the good qualities of god, saints, people and places, about the good effects of virtue, knowledge, etc., and all these become the object-matter of concentration, having self-improvement as the object-purpose—or they steady the mind by concentrating on old ideas, on things which are there already, breathing, a corpse, a historical event, the birth, the enlightenment, etc. But they have all one point in common: they want to guide the thought in a particular direction, which of course is chosen in advance. And this guidance can be done, as in politics, in the democratic way of gentle persuasion, or in the totalitarian way of forced suppression. For, thoughts can be persuaded to move in a particular direction by means of fascination (which is only a different word for temptation), which can become so strong as to develop into a trance or ecstasy. The other method is to make thought immovable by concentrating it on one

single object, which also may develop into one-pointedness of mind (*cittakagata*) and a self-induced hypnotic trance.

The purpose-object of these methods is the exclusion of undesirable thoughts either by sublimation or by suppression. Similes are given to illustrate both. A young calf is let free in a meadow with an abundance of delicious fodder at which it will keep nibbling here and there till finally it lies down to ruminate. Or, a young calf is tied to a post at which it will keep tugging to become free, till it accepts the position and lies down quietly near the post. In the end, both may fall asleep. The similes are meant to show different approaches: watchfulness of whatever may come and concentration of attention on one single point.

Of great importance, naturally, is the choice of the object-matter. The object in itself is not very important, as it is only a means to fix the mind. Hence, the choice should be made according to one's inclination and capacity, purpose and need.

It goes without saying that the less material the object-matter is, the purer the concentration will be, but also the more difficult. This object is called the *kammaṭṭhāna*, the place of work, the artist's studio. And as the purpose of mind-culture is the purification of the mind, the choice should be such as to counteract one's principal defect. Hence, concentration on love is not to be advised to a passionate character. A dull-witted mind should not attempt to analyse its actions and intentions and mental states, for it will leave it more confused than before. Concentration on distasteful objects as found in a cemetery, or on various aspects of food or the body, may be good for a lustful character; but not for one easily overcome by fear.

But, when made use of in the proper conditions of aptitude, place and time, most of the exercises could lead to an abstraction which in its first stages of absorption may be merely resulting from a process of formal logic. It is as in a boxing match where the opening movements are dedicated to finding one's proper footing. Here the mind will employ a fair amount of logic (*vitakka*) to make

the mind agreeable and amenable, to be followed and joined by greater application (*vicāra*).

These movements are the safeguard actions, which spar, sometimes in attack, other times in defence, with distracting thoughts and feelings. Their only usefulness exists in the weakening of the different obstacles on the road to perfection. But, far from being perfection themselves, such mental states may even become obstacles. Still, if skilfully handled, they may be a great help in the overcoming of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), but nothing more than that. If, however, practised with attachment, or sought for the purpose of spiritual delight, they will merely create new obstacles which may prove insurmountable, owing to their subtle and spiritual nature. Thus, a discursive tendency (*vitakka*) may easily become a speculative tendency, where higher truths are merely analysed for one's intellectual satisfaction, without being lived and realised. Further and sustained application of thought (*vicāra*) might develop into attachment to one's own opinion and become stubbornness.

Even so, they remain of absorbing interest to the exclusion of all other concern. And thus the objects which held the mind enthralled in sensuality and anger cease to be of importance; and with the casting out of those first hindrances there is induced the means of attaining quietude. This is the reason why this line of concentration is called the culture of tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvanā*). And certainly, sensuality and anger (*kāyachanda and vyapāda*) are among the most disturbing elements in the way of mental peace.

Sensuality is suppressed by concentration on the ten stages of corruption of a corpse, on the 32 constituent parts of the living body, on the impurity of food and the process of nutrition. Anger is suppressed by the liberating thought of loving kindness, individual as well as universal, concrete as well as abstract.

With the overcoming of these two formidable hindrances, progress will appear easier, but the obstacles will also become more subtle. For, with the apparent defeat of the two most crude passions,

there might set in a self-complacency which can only lead to sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*). And thus, interest must be maintained and developed into a delightful zest and spiritual joy (*pīti*). Physical and mental laziness can be overcome by concentration on the various postures of the body; thus, concentration on walking will keep both body and mind alert. But this spiritual joy should not be developed into a state of mental inebriation, for that might lead into a further obstacle, the state of agitation and worry (*uddhacca-kukucca*). Agitation is the unsettled state of mind, which anticipates achievement. Worry, on the other hand, is the unsettled state of mind which repents the past. Anticipation implies the element of desire, which causes mental unrest by looking into the future. Worry is a mental unrest caused by regret for the past. But concentration must be of the present, if it is to develop into the equanimity of spiritual well-being. Concentration of any analytical type is helpful in overcoming this obstacle and producing the bliss of well-being (*sukha*) where all desires are suspended. The final hindrance of doubt (*vīci-kicchā*), which leads to a wavering and unsteady indecision, can be overcome by the final stage of mental absorption in one-pointedness of thought (*ekaggatā*).

These are the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which are subdued in the five stages of progressive mental absorption (*jhāna*), when the mind is pacified because the external disturbances are excluded and the internal perplexes and complexes are lulled to sleep.

This tranquillity of the thought-process may create the illusion of attainment, but in the comparative freedom from sense-pleasures there may remain an attachment to emotions. It is this attachment to mental delights which has still to be got rid of in a set of further and more subtle forms of concentration, less material and hence called formless (*arūpa*). These exercises are instigated by a desire for virtue, for perfection, for wisdom, for truth. They are called collectively the illimitables, for they have no limitation: unbounded space, infinite consciousness, nothingness and imperceptibility. They seem

strange objects for concentration, as no logical or material basis of thought can be found here; and the goal does not appear any longer as the purification of thought, but rather the suspension of the thinking process. And that is indeed the effect of ecstasy at this highest level of attainment: the cessation of feeling and perception (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*).

They are actually concentrations on abstractions: the limitations of time and space are surmounted by being absorbed in infinite space; the narrow restrictions of the reasoning mind are overcome in infinite consciousness; the confines of ego-centric selfishness are lost in the limitless horizons of not being, till perception itself becomes imperceptible.

The mind as reason and intellect cannot dwell on abstractions such as beauty and truth, which can only be experienced, even ecstatically, in concrete beautiful things which can keep one spell-bound; in truthful, honest and sincere action which may lead to the ecstasy of self-sacrifice; in the presence of genuine benevolence and altruistic love which know of no barriers of opposition and conflict.

Still, however, wonderful may be such ecstasy—the trance, the absorption, the rapture, to the extent of suspension of the functions of body and mind—it is not a definite solution or dissolution of the problems of conflict, arising from contact, from association or dissociation, from relationship between self and non-self. For, such cataleptic suspension of sensation, of perception, of the passions, is also a suspension of mental apprehension of actuality. and is thus, in fact, an escape from conflict rather than a solution. Physical and mental activity cannot remain debarred from functioning indefinitely; and then the acuteness of the problem will be experienced all the more. Ecstasy is like a high-pressure experience, like a pumped-up balloon, ready to rise and float away. And if there is no more to concentration than this temporary flight of escape from actuality, it is just another means to acquire what others have achieved with



less effort by means of ganja, LSD, or just a bottle of some double distilled juice.

If the conflict is created by the individual mind, the solution must be found there also, not by escaping, but by concentration. When the object-matter of concentration is no longer a chosen object, but the actual operation of the mind itself, then concentration ceases to be the one-pointed ecstasy of tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvanā*), but is the actual meditation of insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Then the questions of God and soul, of eternity, of creation, cease to have any meaning, for the one question now has become: why do I want... God... beauty... truth?... unless I am not truth? Then, not: who is God? What is truth? but: who am I?

And the answer cannot be found outside myself, but only in the actual process of actuality. Why do I want to concentrate, to meditate at all? The usefulness and also the limitation of concentration should have been understood by now. A question about the use of meditation does not arise, because now I am actually meditating, not running away from, but quietly listening to whatever comes this way, as a flower drinking in the morning dew. In an absolute surrender the mind remains fully awake and passively alert to even the slightest movement of thought, watching its inner reactions in its sentiments, in its arguments, in its opposition, not taking part, but watching without without appropriation or rejection, in a loving attitude without possessiveness, an open approach without method, without goal, without predetermined object-matter or objective purpose.

Then, without any thought of “I” or “mine”, every experience is seen just as such, without the colourings of likes and dislikes, without the, frame of choice. It is not being in any mode, but pure existence. It is no more the high-pressure experience of ecstasy of the inflated balloon, but rather a relaxation, when the inflated ego slowly escapes with the air of the pricked balloon. It is the realisation that the unrest of impermanence (*anicca*) has become a

conflict (*dukkha*) only, because of the opposition of self and no-self. In the realisation of no-self alone (*anatta*) all problems are dissolved.

This is indeed a mystic experience which cannot be described, cannot be communicated, cannot be shared, cannot be taught. It is not an emotion which can be observed, analysed and remembered, but a complete and total transformation, only comparable to the awakening from a dream.

Scholastic speculations have been able to devise analytical methods of a gradual realisation in sixteen stages, based on the cognition first and the subsequent comprehension of each of the four noble truths, once covering the world of desire, and then repeated concerning the worlds of form and formlessness. But in this, from very early times, opinions in the various schools of original Buddhism have differed, as they differ up to this present time. Texts can be found to illustrate the opinion of a gradual realisation (*anupubba-abhisamaya*), as well as the standpoint of instant realisation (*ekakkhaṇa-abhisamaya*).

There does not appear to be any vital opposition, but merely a different method of approach to an explanation of a realisation which is beyond verbal expression. Buddhaghosa employs the simile of a lamp which combines four functions all in one act: the flame burns the wick, dispels the darkness, reveals the light and uses up the oil; so this supreme knowledge comprehends the fact of conflict, abandons the cause thereof, shows the path and realises the extinction of the defilements.

The question of whether the defilements should be cleared away, before realisation can begin to dawn, is mere speculation, as in realisation all defilements are cleared.

It is the realisation of the void (*suññā*) of the I-concept which makes impossible any movement, any evolution, any rebirth of that concept, of that supreme delusion, of that basic ignorance which caused the anguish, the opposition, the conflict, called *dukkha*.

This is the meditation which not only concentrates on the non-substantiality of objects and phenomena, but which abandons even the subject of the meditator, thereby resulting in a twofold emancipation, the deliverance of heart and mind (*ceto-vimutti*, *paññā-vimutti*), the extinction of the defilements and the extinction of ignorance.

Thus we see that concentration (*samādhi*) leads to one-pointedness of mind (*citt'-ekaggatā*) and through the various stages of mental absorption to the ecstatic bliss of jhāna and spiritual attainment (*samāpatti*), where all hindrances and defilements are put to sleep, where the mind soars into the uncharted heights of formless spheres (*arūpaloka*) and the utmost refined subtleties where both feeling and perception are suspended (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). But it remains a suspension, and a return has to be made to that moment and that place of the parting of the ways of concentration and meditation, the moment of neighbourhood concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), where one way leads to concentration (*samādhi*), ecstasy (*jhāna*) and tranquillity (*samatha*), and the other opens up to insight (*vipassanā*), truth (*sacca*) and awakening (*abhisamaya*). And that is the realisation that there are no hindrances, no fetters, no problems, no more conflict, no more striving, no more "I"; for, with insight (*aññā*) comes the knowledge of deliverance from all delusion.

Gone are the chains; the barriers all behind.

Cut are the cords; the net of craving torn.

Crossed is the flood; the load laid down.

Fear cometh never Yore.



# Determinism and Free Will

In this article I wish to consider some aspects of determinism and free will, with particular reference to moral responsibility and the concepts of good and evil.

In respect of conduct, be it voluntary or involuntary, one can visualise three different viewpoints. There is the view of some who maintain that we are sometimes free and sometimes not. And there are others, who think that this viewpoint is too superficial and who, therefore, are of one of the two opposing views, namely, that we are either always free, or never; in other words, that either we have a free will in the choice of our action, or that we do not have a free will at all, and that all our action are predetermined. And on the particular view taken in respect of voluntary conduct depends the attitude towards ethics. As much confusion is caused by the inaccurate usage of a vague terminology, it will be essential to come to terms with definite meanings.

“Will” may be either a wish, desire, volition, or a deliberate choice with purpose and resolve. The first to make a distinction between the act of willing, which regards the end, and the choice, which regards the means to the end, was Aristotle<sup>7</sup>. This difference between an act of willing and a choice is the same as that between

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<sup>7</sup> *Ethics*, edited by Eudemos, III, 2

intellect and reason. Intellect is the act of understanding in a general way, *e.g.*, the understanding of first principles; but reason is the knowledge of conclusions derived from principles. Similarly, desire is a general way of willing, but choice is a volition, directed purposely towards a specified object. It has been pointed out that thus desire, or inclination of will, is passive, while the purposeful choice of will is active, the first being determined, therefore, and the second one free.

We shall see later, whether this juxtaposition of passive determination and active freedom is justifiable. But for the present we may say that the will, as appetite, regards the end which is desired for itself; whereas choice is the desire for some thing as a means, for the sake of obtaining something else<sup>8</sup>.

In Buddhist philosophy these two aspects of desire are referred to as a proclivity (*anusaya*), *i.e.*, a disposition, a tendency, on the one hand, and as the mental factor of volition (*cetanā*), which forms the essence of karmic activity, the cause of rebirth, on the other hand.

Another distinction which, however, sometimes beclouds the issue is a differentiation in will as appetite and cognition. The will as appetite is a desire to satisfy natural demands, such as hunger and thirst, the sex-urge, etc. The desire rooted in cognition is based on reasoned choice. The first is innate, the second is acquired. The view of those who maintain that the will is sometimes free and sometimes not, finds its origin in not sufficiently distinguishing between the inborn tendency to desire satisfaction and the purposeful choice of a means of satisfaction. "Man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free", says Jean Paul Sartre <sup>9</sup>, "he is wholly and forever free, or he is not free at all".

That there cannot be any freedom in innate tendencies, whether they be natural appetites or inherited dispositions, is not open to

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<sup>8</sup>cp. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, London 1920, vol. IV, Question 83, pp. 147-55

<sup>9</sup>*Being and Nothingness*

doubt; as *post factum* there can be no argument about possibilities. Tendencies, evil as well as good, are inherited, whether we follow the theories of the Buddha, of Darwin or Häckel, whether we like them or not. Therefore, they are not subject to choice; they are determined in the past by previous action (karma) of which these tendencies are results (*vipāka*), either through ethical remuneration or biological inheritance.

And so the quest is narrowed down to voluntary conduct, *i.e.*, volitional activity which is performed with an intention (*cetanā*), with a purpose, with a will-to-achieve, desire to make (*bhava-taṇhā*) or desire to break (*vibhava-taṇhā*). That such activity is motivated is also beyond doubt, but the crucial question is whether the choice of action is free.

Any choice must lie between two or more possibilities, which appear to differ from one another and oppose one another at least in some respect. The result is that a choice is always *pro* or *contra*. Unless we understand this opposition and contradiction, a rational choice will not be possible. Contradictions, however, are non-existent, for, within a pair of opposites there is no real opposition, as one is but the extension of the other. Good and evil are usually shown as opposites, but when good actions are performed for the sake of acquiring virtue or merit, they do not differ essentially from evil actions which are performed for the sake of acquiring possessions, fame, power, etc. Both fall in the same category of acquisition, and are therefore not opposed to one another. If there is no opposition and, therefore, if the nature of so-called good and evil is well understood, there is no choice possible, as acquisition of any kind leads to selfish isolation, the cause of all conflict.

Peace and war are not contradictory, for war is usually taken as a means to peace; and both peace and war are but means for establishing a self-security, which again is an act of isolation, bound to lead to conflict. When this is understood, there will be no choice between peace and war, but there will be peace which is not the

opposite of war, which is not a preparation for war, which is not the armed security of a ceasefire, but an impossibility to revert to war or to the means leading to war, the so-called peace being one of those means.

Choice, therefore, is always unintelligent, while to real understanding there cannot be an alternative between two courses of action, and hence no choice. In other words, in right thinking all contradiction will cease, and there will be immediate action. To avoid this immediate action, however, the mind introduces a slowing down process, which is called deliberation or deliberate choice. Choice confuses the issue and causes the conflict by introducing a false second factor, while deliberation is another delaying tactic which avoids immediate action. Our difficulty, therefore, is not how to make a right choice, but how to think rightly so that there will be no choice, no deliberation, but immediate action, as a result not of desire but of full comprehensive awareness.

Choice is desire conditioned through sensation (*vedanā-paccayā tanhā*) and sensations arise in dependence on contact in the senses which are conditioned by the mental-physical complex (*nāma-rūpa*), which is inherited through rebirth (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) from past formations (*saṅkhāra*), acting in ignorance (*avijjā*).

In the teaching of the Buddha there is no entity of an abiding nature, neither as a physical substance nor as a spiritual soul; and, therefore, all references to the mind, the will, the individual, and so on, must be understood in this light of the Buddha's teaching of *anatta*. There is no individual actor, but only action<sup>10</sup>; there is no mind, but only thought, the act of thinking; there is no will to be free or not, but only the act of willing, of desire which arises in dependence on sensation (*vedanā-paccayā tanhā*). The object of choice influence the process of choosing; and without objects there can be no choice. The choice, therefore, is conditioned and not free. But there is no will to be either free or determined, for desire or

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<sup>10</sup> *Kammassakarako n'atthi*, Vism. XIX, s. 20



volition arises in dependence on conditions. Such conditions may be internal or external, inherited or acquired, and they will condition or influences the choice at the moment when sensations are awakened. But there is no pre-determination, as there is no entity to be so disposed before a choice is presented.

“Is the will determined or free?” This could be another one of those undecided questions (*avyākata*). “Is the world eternal or not eternal?”— questions which can never be answered, not even by the Buddha, because of the inherent wrong in the question itself. Just as there is no entity like the world to be either eternal or not, for the world is only a passing process of unsubstantial phenomena to which such attributes are not applicable—so there is no entity like a will to be either determined or free, for the will is only a process of willing which arises and passes in dependence on arising and passing conditions, and which, therefore, can be neither determined nor free.

Now, coming to the question of moral responsibility, it has been frequently asserted that moral responsibility is linked with freedom of will, and if there were no free will there can be no moral responsibility to an act which is not free. Moral responsibility is attached to choice, and the introduction of a so-called freedom of choice is beclouding the issue. Choice, as we have seen already, is always conditioned and is therefore never free. Choice is a resultant action, conditioned by lack of understanding, for in full comprehension and insight there cannot be the possibility of two contradictory courses of action, methods or means. If there is an apparent choice between contradictions, it is an imaginary choice, because contradictions cannot coexist. Such imaginary choice is thus nothing but a misconception. The immorality of an act is therefore not dependent on a supposedly wilful choice of evil.

To understand this we have to digress slightly to grasp the nature of evil which is said to determine our moral responsibility, mistakenly thought to be based on the choice of a free will.

Evil is usually thought of as something harmful, but that is only a secondary thought, because harm is the result of evil and does not constitute its nature. Evil is an abstract value, mostly in the moral sphere although not exclusively, and opposed to good, another abstract concept of value. If good is called that which is right, *i.e.*, according to the rule, then evil is that which is wrong or against the established rule. But as long as the so-called rule is subject to alteration, the concepts of good and evil cannot be standardised either. This is clearly visible in the changing standards of morality among different peoples at different times, who each have produced its own peculiar school of ethics. The right, the rule, the standard becomes the law, the ideal; and a digression therefrom is stamped as evil. The moral aspect of good and evil is only one aspect of the problem which finds its roots much deeper than in the surface soil of social behaviour and religious conduct.

In time as well as in place the individual exists before society. He makes society to strengthen this individuality, and then becomes a slave of his own institution. Thus, the individual's moral values of good and evil are not established by his social relationship, but by his personal integration or disintegration. And so, whatever assists his becoming whole is wholesome or desirable; and whatever obstructs his growth towards completeness and perfection is imperfect and evil. Evil, then, becomes the undesirable, the opponent to the ideal standard of the "self". The integration, the completeness, the perfection of "self" becomes the goal of all striving; and the security, the salvation, the liberation from all opposition is viewed as the supreme good and bliss. The individual feels naturally stronger when opposition is less, and thus the "self" (and whatever supports it and makes it grow) is good, while all that opposes it is evil. Thus, the good becomes pleasurable and gratifying; and the supreme good is identified with the highest bliss. This attempt to sublimate the self-gratifying motive to an ideal for doing good shows that "satisfaction" is the vital spot, for even the actual motive is substituted.

Evil, then, is that which does not give satisfaction, that which is harmful to the building up of the “self”. This constitutes in Buddhism the actual problem of evil. For, whether an action is wholesome (*kusala*) or not, such action leads to rebirth which may or may not be happy, but which can never be more than a new problem fraught with conflict (*dukkha*). Rebirth in heaven, as a reward for meritorious deeds, is a prolongation of saṃsāric existence, and therefore, an extension and not a solution of the conflict. This conflict between the actual impermanence of the process of becoming and the ideal, but illusive goal of a permanent existence can only be overcome by the realisation that there is no permanent entity, substance or soul, to enjoy such permanent existence, and that, therefore, the conflict is not real. But, if the conflict is not real, evil also is not real, but is born from a misconception. This misconception, or delusion (*moha*), or ignorance (*avijjā*) is then the only evil. And so, understanding, as perfect comprehension (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), is the first step on the Noble Eightfold Path, which leads away from conflict (*dukkha-nirodha-magga*).

Evil—should it be determined as the absence of moral values which are mainly social demands and obligations—evil lies beyond the biological expectancies based on adaptation and survival. That such ethical values lie beyond the biologic needs of man does, however, not give them an intrinsic value, still less a supernatural value. The fluctuation of human relationship, which varies with the changing times and understanding, will also to a very great extent determine the so-called moral attitude, which is an appreciation of what is thought to be good and evil.

It is generally admitted that there is an evolution of morality, a development of moral consciousness, a growing sense of distinction between good and evil, with the obvious necessity of making a choice.

A biological necessity, based on adaptation for the sake of survival, may produce social demands and obligations of etiquette,

which are still far removed from an acknowledgement of moral values and which with changing fashions do therefore not require either the posing or the solution of a problem. But if survival is at stake, it is no longer a question of fashion, of etiquette, of behaviour; it is always the survival of “self” which is predominant. The animal instinct, which has no moral basis, will try to kill before being killed.

But with the evolution of self-consciousness into a rational life, in which various new relationships are set up, the egocentric attitude will be widened and cause thereby an extension of the human interest to others. The interests of others may even become supremely important—not immediately from a supernatural, spiritual, altruistic motive, but merely from a growing awareness that individual strength is increased in joined action. The herd instinct is the first symptom of society beyond the family; and it has certainly no moral basis but is grounded on the foundation of self-interest.

Still, an evolution of morality is generally admitted although it will be seen also that the adoption of a standard of morality would be a rejection of all future evolution and creativeness. And so, instead of speculating on standards of value of good and evil, it would be clear that these concepts have only relative value, that there is no good or evil in the abstract, and that events may be called good or evil only in dependence on the result produced (*vipāka*). Thus, a concept of evil seems to emerge which has no stigma attached to the physical deed, but to the mental aspect thereof, *i.e.*, the intention (*cetanā*). An act is not evil because it is faulty in execution, it does not become evil because of a lack of success; but it is evil, if it is evil in its source which is the intention. With an evil intention, *i.e.*, a purpose to satisfy greed, to express hatred, to intensify the delusion of an isolated “self”, with such an evil purpose at its source, an act will be unhealthy to the core and no good result may be expected.

But intention is not the same as purpose. Purpose is the aim, the goal, the end for which one strives. Purpose is associated with attainment, achievement, possession, which involve craving, desire,

clinging. But intention, which springs from understanding, derives from necessity. If understanding is wrong or incomplete, the act will be sponsored by a wrong intention; and the result will be evil, even if the purpose is achieved. Good and evil, therefore, do not exist by nature, but rather by choice. “By mind all things are made<sup>11</sup>”. It is by choice and by will that values are attached. And that is always dependent on conditions, in arising as well as in ceasing.

And so the dilemma has arisen between the rejection of an evolving morality, which can come about only through the functioning of a free will—and the acceptance of moral standards together with an overall determinism which rejects a free will. If “will” is free, there cannot be a standardised morality; but if morality is evolving in dependence on changing conditions, then “will” is equally dependent on those conditions.

Once again, there cannot be a will which is free in its choice of means, but determined in its end. There cannot be a will which is created and conditioned, and at the same time free.

And so emerges slowly the Buddha’s view, that the existence of a “will” is as much a contradiction as the existence of a mind, or of a physical substance, or of a spiritual soul. Just as thought arises through sense-contacts, so “will” arises as an act of volition through sense-contacts and through the not-understanding (*avijjā*) of the world of events.

A conflict is not situated in a choice between opposing interests, but in the ignorance of what those interests are. When there is perfect comprehension of the composition of the apparent conflict, *i.e.*, when it is fully understood that the conflict is due not to a choice of means, but to a misconception of an idealistic goal—when the choice in a conflict is seen as an escape rather than a solution, for an escape is sought in ignorance—then “will” has ceased to arise, to be conditioned, to create an illusive “self”. Then there is no choice, no desire, no willing, no volition, no craving, no karma, no

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<sup>11</sup>Dhp. V. I

rebirth, and that alone is the dissolution of a conflict which never was real, but which was based on ignorance, on self-delusion, on self-projection, and thereby created the “I”, the soul, the substance, the permanent continuation of which appeared as the only desirable goal and essential basis of existence.

But when existence is seen as a changing process, attachment will become impossible, desire will become absurd, volition will become incongruous. And likewise it will be seen that such a changing process cannot tolerate any standard, any rule, any model. And thus, any kind of determinism is as much a contradiction as a free will, when there is no entity of will, but merely a process of conditioned volition which will cease in perfect understanding, which is the realisation of the ceasing of all delusion, which is Nibbāna.

# Synthesis of Mind and Matter

In this I wish to discuss this evening the subject of mind-matter as a synthesis.

Throughout the 25 centuries and more of ordered, classified, logical thinking there has been recurrent a basic error with its emphasis on one of its two extremes, which have divided the many schools of philosophy into the main camps of idealism and materialism. Between these two general views (each with many various aspects), human thought has been oscillating and fluctuating throughout the centuries. Every time an extreme appeared to have reached its outermost limit, there was a recoil with a reactive effect, springing back to its opposite.

The swing of the pendulum of thought from one extreme to the other has to pass each time through that centre where alone rest can be found, but which rest is always frustrated by the effort to escape one extreme and to attain its opposite. It was on that centre that the Buddha has based his middle Path which not only avoids the extremes of materialistic self-indulgence and idealistic self-mortification, but which forms a synthesis of the doctrines which treat of matter and mind. The philosophic pendulum has always moved as if matter and mind were the two poles, always choosing one or the other as its basis of a world-conception. Some-

times a feeble attempt was made to fuse the material, physical world with the mental, meta-physical world, but the union was never an amalgamation and the joint of the union remained always clearly discernible. At most it was the mind working with or on matter, or matter influencing the mind. But hardly ever was there one daring enough to declare that there is no mind apart from matter. Thus we find in philosophy a separation between substance and phenomena; in religion a separation between soul and body; in psychology a separation between mind and matter. The idealists will give, of course, priority to the substance, the soul, the mind; whereas the materialists claim superiority for the phenomena, the body and matter.

The teaching of the Buddha, although rightly claimed to be one of analysis (*vibajjhavāda*), does thereby not attribute to any view with a static basis, be it of matter or of mind. Here we have a doctrine of becoming, re-becoming and ceasing to become; of birth which is life, rebirth which is death, and no-more-becoming which is Nibbāna. It is in this process of becoming that life is not only equal to death, but is identical with it. And in this light should be seen, therefore, any aspect which for purpose of analysis may appear static momentarily, but which in actuality is nothing but a process of becoming and ceasing, of evolution and involution, of affirmation and denial, all at the same time.

Julian Huxley envisaged human evolution and biological evolution as two phases of a single process, although separated by what he called a critical point, after which the properties of the evolving material underwent a radical change. He also tried to establish an ideological basis for man's cultural evolution, from which basis it might be possible, he thought, to define the position of the individual human personality in the process.

It is in particular during the last fifty years or so that scientists are turning more and more towards various theories of evolution. The most daring and epoch-making was Darwin's theory of the origin of species by means of natural selection, which at the end of



the last century was all-round decried as sheer heresy by the ultra-conservative spirit of dogmatic beliefs in a historic fact of creation. But then it was discovered that the evolution of species could be accepted together with a theory which put an absolute creation further back in history, thereby safeguarding the interests of science as well as those of an almighty God-Creator. Thus, a biological evolution was no longer considered heretical, as long as the original impulse remained an act of creation and the individual appearance of the human intellect was ascribed to the direct creation of a human soul.

After that compromise, revealed religion again stood firm and unmoved, while the march of science progressed and philosophers continued thinking their own thoughts. And so, when in 1938, a French Jesuit, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, arranged his free thoughts on paper, publication was disallowed. Only when his death delivered him a few years ago from human bondage and authority, a publication became possible; and his work was hailed as a vision of unity, meeting a spiritual need of our time (according to Arnold Toynbee), fill its influence was felt in the progressive minds of young ecclesiastics taking part in the Oecumenical Vatican Council of very recent years. From there the new spirit spread through the continent, resulting among others in the composition of a new catechism, a declaration of faith for adults, officially published and approved by the Cardinal and the Bishops of Holland in 1966, yet condemned by Rome!

And now, creation is seen no more as a historical fact in the beginning, but as a continued dynamic support in movement, in growth, in evolution. The remaining difference between this ultra-modern Christian concept of world-events and the 25 century old Buddhist concept of evolving an involving world-cycles is that same difference between the external force of causation and the inner urge of reproduction. The external force is still personified and deified, while the inner urge is the expression of a natural disposition, composition and decomposition. Naturally, not supernaturally, inner

urges, impelling forces, innate tendencies, will meet other growing interests, with which they may amalgamate or come in conflict, thereby setting up new combinations, spheres of influence, centres of resistance, a sometimes passive, sometimes leading to active conflict, conquest or loss, rebirth or death.

It is not a process of reproduction of a separate entity, but rather a remodelling under new influences. A poet continues to live in his poems, and his influence thus may endure for many centuries. It is the continued process of action and reaction, where the action does not produce a reaction, but becomes the reaction, something like several drinks making one drunk.

Now let us apply all this to the various aspects of world-phenomena, not only the phenomenon of man. Let us to see man not as the culmination of this biological evolution, but as one aspect, one phase, one set of events, with its endless variations, permutations and combinations, fundamentally reduceable to a synthesis of mind and matter. But it is exactly this distinction in that lies the danger which is much more than potential for it is very and almost real: the danger of thinking of matter in its inorganic state as something dead, and of of the mind as something vital; and of of both as some sort of combination: the mind living in and working with the body as its instrument, a combination which is life, and which in separation becomes death, after which each goes its own way, the body to corruption, and the mind as soul to life eternal.

It has indeed rightly been said that science has not yet found a place for man in its representations of the universe. Physics appears to have put some order in the construction of the atom and thereby has been able to exercise some control over its energy. Biology has shown us some order in the construction of organic life, which has led us to various concepts of evolution. But the anthropological view of man—man with so much animal in him, and yet so different—the anthropological view of man fails to place him, because there is so much contradiction in him which has not been understood. In

fact, it would appear that man has understood the entire universe, except himself. And this misunderstanding of his own complexity for dependent on ignorance arise karmic formations, (*avijja-paccayā saṅkhāra*)—this misunderstanding of his own complexity—is due mainly to his desire to be in the centre of his universe. His ego-entity cannot be scientifically explained through evolution, and thus it is introduced, infused, instilled from without by an act of creation of a human soul, which unlike the animal principal of life is permanent, individual and rational. Once this basis of a permanent soul outside the cycles of evolution and involution is accepted, there is also accepted a gulf which cannot be spanned between matter and mind. It is the end of physiology and of psychology, of physics and of philosophy; it is the end of scientific thought.

To understand man as a phenomenon in the world of events, he must be understood as a part thereof, not as its centre, its masterpiece, its culmination—in a way similar to the understanding of the movements of the earth which can only be brought about when the earth is no longer considered the centre of attraction in the solar system.

The phenomena of mind and matter, therefore, should be seen in the totality of one process of dependent origination, rather than individual creation. However much the concept of evolution is being adopted in the present by animistic and theistic religions, there always will be for them a point in time when the growth of evolution was set in motion, the beginning of time, the act of creation, the passing from the static to the dynamic, when the absolute became the relative and thereby ceased to be God.

To obtain a coherent picture of the synthetic process of what has been split by artificial fissure into the distinction of matter and mind, we should do well to remember that in Buddhist terminology they are always treated as one unit: *nāma-rūpa*, mind-matter. *E.g.*, dependent on rebirth-consciousness arises mind-matter (*viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*). For, all though Buddhist philosophy, called

Abhidhamma, has a fairly extensive treatment of matter (*rūpa*) in its section on Ontology, where matter is analysed into 28 factors they are aspects rather than elements. Matter (*rūpa*) becomes food for the mind (*nāma*), an object for the subject, personality as seen from its non-ethical side. But it should be remembered all the time that the distinction is purely academic and not real.

In the fifth century B.C., we find the pre-Socratic philosophers in Greece as much as the followers of the Buddha agreed on one common conviction, that matter is not what it appears to be. This is indicated by its very name in Pāli: *rūppati'ti rūpaṃ*: matter is that which appears. In itself (*i.e.*, ideologically) matter is devoid of discriminative consciousness, yet forms the background and the fuel which give rise to sensation and consciousness. Thus, in Buddhist philosophy, matter is a material phenomenon, conceived by the senses.

It is well known that the elementary material qualities (*mahābhūta*) are in no sense to be compared even with the 90 odd elements of modern chemistry. They are not elements but elementary qualities, *i.e.*, degrees of character, showing the basic trait of solidity or extension (*paṭhavi*), of viscosity or cohesion (*āpo*), of temperature or caloricity (*tejo*) and of movement or oscillation (*vāyo*). They are the tendencies of non-co-operation and isolation, inherent in self-preservation, as well as the tendencies of integration and unification, equally important for self-preservation, although opposed in the nature of their activity as repulsion and attraction. This very opposition in action produces the characteristics of friction and heat, movement and temperature, oscillation and caloricity. In these four basic characteristics of the process of self-preservation in inorganic matter can easily be recognised the involved distinctive marks of fully developed mental life, with all its innate tendencies and leanings towards self-preservation: *āpo*, with its absorbing loves and attachments; *paṭhavi*, with its repelling hates and antipathies; *vāyo*,

with its constant frictions and conflicts; *tejo*, engendering its emotional feelings and passions.

Masculinity and femininity are the prerogatives of the human species only when they are opposed in sex-problems. But they exist and function without conflict not only elsewhere in the organic world, but even in inorganic structures. They co-exist in individual flowering plants, but they are also found in the actively and the passively storing capacities, which involve a selective competency, closely akin to emotion. As much as infantile sexuality is entirely disconnected from the function of reproduction, so masculinity and femininity are expressed in many ways besides the generative organs. Female activity is that which gives form to the formless; it is that which develops, grows and multiplies. In order to do so, there must be the passive attitude of receiving and assimilating, and also the art of expressing. Male activity on the other hand is that which initiates, directs and intensifies. It is the active attitude which gives strength to growth, guidance to sensation and reason to action. But long before reason comes on to the scene of evolution, there is action and passion even in the tiniest molecule, a giving and taking, with the sole aim of survival, to establish an equilibrium between the positive and the negative, not only in a magnetic field, but primarily between becoming and cessation. It is the natural struggle for endurance, continuance and survival, which culminates in the search for a permanent soul which is neither male nor female.

The physical sense-organs are also listed as material qualities through which contact is established (*saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso*). And although they may not be found in inorganic matter in the same form as they are found in the animal kingdom, still there is no doubt about the existence of a reaction which is not altogether mechanical, *e.g.*, the stretching of tendrils in a creeping plant towards another object for support before contact is made; or the refusal to react in the normal way of closing up in self-defence of the mimosa, also called “touch-me-not”, in a down-pour of rain; or the warping of

boards and the expanding of metal when exposed to heat. We speak of metal fatigue, which may be described as a disease of metal. When subjected to an alternating load, after a great many reversals, the whole character of the metal may alter; and this change can happen quite suddenly and cause it to break up under quite small forces, a phenomenon not very different from a mental fatigue and a nervous break-down. Admittedly they do not constitute sensation or emotion, but basically, they are of the same type of reaction by means of which nature protects itself, consciously or not. Most of our sense-reactions are performed as simply automatic reflexes before any conscious control can be set in motion.

Then there is the aspect of nutrition, in which four kinds of food are distinguished. There is the edible food which is the material quality of integration (*oja*), with which we shall be mainly concerned today, as the other three kinds of nutrition are the nutriment of sensation which is contact (*phassa*), the nutriment for the growth of action which is volitional mental activity (*manosañcetanā*), and the nutriment for the reproduction of life which is rebirth-consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*). They all have one thing in common, in that they are a process of grasping. And so the intrinsic value, of the process of integration is not to be found in a number of accessory food-factors, such as vitamins and calories, but in the fact of assimilation, *i.e.*, in the process of grasping. Food is in itself but the fuel which maintains that process, the value of which entirely depends on the manner in which it is being grasped and assimilated. Thus, the light of a flame is not in the wax of a candle, but in the process of combustion which lays hold of the wax, the wick and the oxygen in the air, *i.e.*, in the process of grasping. Food becomes nutriment only if it is properly digested, *i.e.*, assimilated, when it becomes the material quality of integration, which is also the principle of growth, of formation, of becoming, and hence of life.

Life itself is in Buddhism not confined to biological forms; for we find not only the mental factor (*cetasikā*) of vitality and the control-

ling power (*indriya*) which is the faculty of life, but also the material aspect of life (*jīvita-rūpa*). This physical basis of life is called protoplasm and has now been artificially produced in laboratories. It takes one full month of uninterrupted physical and chemical activity to produce protoplasm; and at that rate it would take 1000 years to produce a protozoa, which is only a unicellular organism on the lowest step of animal life. No scientist has had that much time to wait for the results of his experiments, whereas nature in the course of evolution has had many millions of years at her disposal to develop life from lifeless chemicals.

The, most salient features (*visesakara-rūpa*) of individual life are its adaptability, growth and reproduction. The power of adaptation (*kammaññatā*) is the material property of wieldiness and workableness which different materials possess in different ways, and which can be made to differ for each under various conditions. Thus, metals become more workable when heated. Buoyancy (*lahuta*) is the material quality which has the capacity of freeing itself from inertia and sluggishness. Plasticity (*muduta*) is a material condition peculiar in a high degree to some materials, which enable them to be stretched and compressed and then regain their original position. Always soft and smooth it is opposed to rigidity. They are salient features of matter, no doubt, but they are also found as mental factors (*cetasikā*) under the identical names and with the same characteristics.

Perhaps the most valid criterion of life is metabolism, which is the intricate process of the breaking down of foodstuffs, the utilisation of the reactions, in order to generate and to release the necessary for the functioning, the repair and the growth of Neoplasm—none of which is mental, but ever so much vital. These functions are called in Buddhism the typical (*lakkhaṇa rūpa*), namely the integration (*upacaya*), the continuation (*santati*) and the disintegration (*jaratā*), all summed up in the most typical characteristic of all: change (*aniccatā*).

I do not have sufficient time to complete the description and application of all the material qualities mentioned in Buddhist Abhidhamma, but the most important ones have been touched upon. And they certainly suffice to illustrate my position that there is no mind apart from matter, and that all the evolved characteristics of the human race are established basically in the material functions of existence.

Existence itself is a process of becoming which includes cessation. And change (*aniccatā*) is certainly its chief characteristic. There is no static matter and there is no static mind; there is no stability in existence, but its very fluidity constitutes its essential nature of a process. In this process there may be progression and retrogression, for these are mere relative concepts. And if this process of change constitutes for some a conflict, it is only because in ignorance a desire is created for endurance and permanence, which can only be experienced in that mental fiction, called a mind. Some make it a material substance, others make it a spiritual soul, but neither matter nor mind are ever an entity, are ever separate in existence or in function, but only arise, continue and cease as a synthesis (*saṅkhāra*), dependent on conditions, constituting a process and passing away, leaving impressions, influences, effects, which in their turn become the new conditions on which new life is based.



# Evolution and Beyond

Man's recent successes in outer space have provided him with countless possibilities of still further advances, even beyond the wildest imaginations of our present day fiction writers. What was once considered to be beyond the scope and compass of human ingenuity has now been brought well within its reach. Similar situations have arisen in the past, from time to time, as results of revolutions in scientific inventions, some of which took place so long ago that not only the name of the inventor, but even the epoch of its occurrence has been forgotten in history. One such invention was that of the wheel which has truly revolutionised all former modes of movement and transport. The discovery of the potentialities of fire is mythologically claimed to be of divine origin. Combinations of forces, released by the wheel and the spark have given us this present jet-age in which we can now over-reach ourselves leave our earth-bound atmosphere, and search the heaven for we do not know what. It has enabled human beings to take a look at the earth from far away, from the outside, from another planet—and at the same time to set their feet on a soil so foreign, barren and breathless, that life in any form known to us here is impossible there, without air, without water, without vegetation. And yet, that is the future we also are heading for, the future of our planet, the earth.

But, such outlook is only so full of despair, because of our narrow view. A similar situation must have arisen in ages past, when this

earth was entirely covered with a boiling mass of muddy matter. When slowly the surface was cooling down and the covering waters were receding, the creatures living in the slimy mud might have despaired seeing the growing restrictions of life as known to them. It would have been quite inconceivable then that any life could continue to exist for long, if not surrounded by and submerged in water. And yet, life adapted itself to different atmospheric pressures and changing climatic conditions. Life learned to extract the needed oxygen from the air rather than from the water, and food was derived from extracts of the earth.

This process of adaptation must have taken millions and millions of years, in comparison to which the 300 years of our budding science are but a few specks of dust floating on the surface of an immense and fathomless lake. And yet here we are, not merely surviving, but ruling the earth, and imagining to dictate to the universe. We are sitting on the top-branch of the tree of life, from where we can survey the entire universe at our feet, sometimes forgetting that we are merely a product, and not the creator of it all.

It is strange that throughout the development of the theory of evolution, man has always viewed that process as something extraneous which does not concern him any more. We accept in theory the advent of life from a crystallising world-life, which from the humble beginnings of mini-micro-organisms through ramifications, multiplications and reproductions, now shows the mighty tree, of which we, the *homo sapiens*, form the top-most branch the peak of perfection, the culmination of culture. But, does the human psyche differ specifically in its natural origin, composition and growth from that of man's predecessors?

The majority of scientists in their different fields of experimental knowledge would deny a breach of continuity, in view of all that has been said about the intelligence of animals. Man's superiority is, of course, clear from the many manifestation of inner activity in human behaviour. But are the differences such as to belong to

different classes, or are they merely differences in degree? For those who are committed already to some form of belief in a supernatural creation—the origin of the human intellect has an absolute beginning with the creation of an individual human soul. For others, who find it impossible to accept a supernatural intervention, which would reduce the absolute himself to a relation—a theory of evolution would indicate a process in which a continuity, not of an entity, but of a growth, would explain the process naturally, showing differences of degree, but not of kind.

In this controversy we are confronted with certain phenomena, both in the world of physics, as well as in that of the mind. It is pointed out that certain definite changes in the construction of inorganic matter do not take place with a gradually progressive method, but with a certain leap. *E.g.*, the freezing of water does not necessarily take place when the temperature is lowered to zero centigrade. For, when the temperature is lowered systematically without disturbance, water under normal pressure of the atmosphere might remain liquid for a few degrees below freezing point. But, when a slight movement or vibration is introduced, the water will freeze at once, with a leap as it were, and not in the slow and gentle process which is normally provided by nature. Although in this particular experiment the progress of evolution appears to be suspended for a while, the sudden change from the liquid to the solid state still remains one of degree and not of kind, the chemical composition has remained unaltered.

Something similar is observed in the evolution of psychic behaviour in animals, when animal instinct explodes into human intellect. It is, of course, practically impossible to penetrate into the field of animal consciousness, apart from observing their behaviour, their reactions, their capacity for learning. But the analogies between the various forms of life in man and animal are so many and so close, that a fairly accurate account of evolution in its various stages is possible.

Still, a more exalted and more detached view of this world, as by an astronaut, might help man to see himself as part of this growing and evolving process, even though we for the moment appear to occupy the top-branch. Certainly, in the biological sphere man is the final product of evolution here on earth. But, evolution is a process which must evolve, which cannot stand still and which contains nothing to indicate that it has exhausted itself in its latest product: man. Man is final only in the sense of the latest. But in the conceit of our achievement we like to imagine, not only that we are the latest and finest product of evolution, but also the final outcome of the process, the acme of perfection, beyond which there is no further evolution possible. This, of course, is not based on evidence, for the process of evolution cannot be divided in stages, even though there are discernible the distinct growths with each one's peculiar characteristics, which divide races, and groups, and species. In the absence of historical data to serve as milestones to indicate the stages and the changes of the ages, separating the various attainments of life—the arrival of the phenomenon of man cannot be pinpointed as an act of creation; for in this process of growth it must have taken millions of years of an imperceptible graduation of evolution, before the less-advanced types of life could be distinguished and classified as different species.

In this process there must have been numerous set-backs, which as obstacles to progress formed a challenge of resistance which was finally overcome, in a way the waves of the incoming tide advance, and retreat to advance further, engulfing and absorbing the sand-castles built by children on the shore, the overall pattern being one of progress in the process. Thus, from the nature of evolution, that is through analysing the process, it can be surmised that there has been no general retrogression at any stage and that there will be not any in the future either. Here, of course, we are treading on dangerous grounds. First of all, the starting point of this survey is still from our top-branch where we find ourselves. Adhering to this

analogy just a little while more, we see that if a tree is growing, there is no logical reason why it should not continue to grow, except when the conditions of growth, the various kinds of nutriment in the soil and the air, are being exhausted, or when the reproductive organs themselves become defective, impotent and incapable of the nutriment necessary for growth. This we see happening in our own physical body which is born, grows and ultimately decays and dies, not because of unavailability of nutriment, but because of the incapability of assimilation. The efficacy of the mechanism is wearing out.

This obstacle is overcome in nature by its various methods of reproduction. Lower organisms depend on the formation of new cells which multiply by mere fission, that is, by means of division. Higher organisms multiply by means of reproduction. In the first method, the method of multiplication by means of division, if there is no fission there will be disintegration and cessation. In the second method, the method of multiplication by means of reproduction, the product survives at the cost of cessation of the producer in due course. Thus, in both cases there is progress at the cost of cessation, there is evolution at the cost of involution. And this reverse aspect of evolution is something which is to be anticipated in the entire process. With growth through assimilation there must be at the same time the disintegration of the nutriment, without which it cannot be assimilated. And from that reverse aspect there is involution, retrogression and decline, leading to cessation.

But from our vantage point of growth there is nothing to indicate that we are on the return journey, which means we are still on the outward journey; evolution has not reached its terminus, and we are not its final perfection.

This aspect of evolution, as envisaged earlier by Darwin as a theory of evolution by natural selection, which explains the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence, was endorsed by Mendel and Huxley, among others, who incorporated some of their own

original and separate ideas. It still stands as a splendid culmination of evolutionary and genetic studies. But it also remains as one aspect of evolution according to which the organs, the individuals, the species adapt themselves in the progressive evolution of living forms.

But there is another aspect of evolution which has not attracted the attention of biologists as much as it deserves. In the struggle for existence on the physical plane it is not always the physically fittest who survives. There is ample evidence that cunning, artfulness and ingenuity are much more powerful allies in this struggle than mere brutal force, physical fitness and muscular strength. If man has not only survived, but even rules the world, it is due to his superior intellect. And this intellect has not merely provided him with the knowledge to supplement his inferior physical strength with the immense power developed in the machines of his inventions, but has provided him (or at least some) with that power of will and insight which makes them born leaders, with greater efficiency, penetrating insight and an almost prophetic creativeness, which causes others to follow them in admiration and obedience.

Existence is not so much a product of environment, of natural selection, but rather an emergence of forms, the essence of which was always latent and was merely abiding the opportunity to burst forth.

This essence is a potentiality of existence which only becomes actuality when conditions are favourable. It is not merely an adjustment to environment, as getting used to a different climate, as an adaptation of new modes of living, but an emerging of faculties which has no meaning earlier and which developed the organs through which these faculties could express themselves, a making use of the environment, as man makes his tools.

In this sense, man should not merely take a look at evolution, but see himself as evolving, become conscious of the process of evolution which is himself, and realise that this process continues in himself,

with himself and through himself. Yet man is not the centre of the universe, as it was thought earlier in simple faith and ignorance. In a certain sense he is much more than that, he is the universe; for in him and him alone are found all the successive layers of evolution, the strata of conscious life. For in him alone can be found the material basis of attraction and repulsion, evolved in the psychological conflicts of love and hate, the contacts of sensation, the reaction of perception, the formation of ideas, the birth of consciousness, the five aggregates of grasping at existence (*pañca upādānakkhandha*). And that is not the end. For his vision goes far beyond and thereby becomes even a guide to evolution.

Buddhism with its stress on internal factors in evolution may prove to be one of the most fertile scientific ideas of this century. It may seem a truism to some, but it would also be a discovery of the first importance for anyone who realises its far-reaching implications.

The idea which Buddhism has been promoting for more than 25 centuries, and which would be worthwhile the consideration of modern students of evolutionary biology, is that in addition to a selective process in the evolution of the species, there is another selective process, which is determined to play at least an equally important role, a process of internal selection which is not a passive adaptation and submission to the changing environment, but which acts directly towards mutations on the level of what are now known as chromosomes, active transformations even before the occurrence of cell-division. In other words, it is the active part played in evolution by a wilful selection of material, rather than a passive submission to a natural selection on the basis of fitness. Then, evolution appears not so much as a struggle for survival, but as a search for capacity for coordinated activity in continued existence.

This selective evolution, seen from within, is of course only possible on the conscious level, and that brings into focus the teaching of the Buddha on karmic activity which has volitional conscious activity as its essential basis: karma is *cetanā*, volition. It is in his

doctrine of dependent origination (which according to Buddhaghosa covers the past, present and future) that the Buddha during the night of his enlightenment disclosed this principle, under which random mutations in production, called *saṅkhāra* or the karmic formations of the past, become the subject of this selective process inside the organism. This selective process is called *paṭisandhi-viññāṇa* or the re-linking consciousness. It is this selection or volition (*cetanā*) of past karma formations which now grasps and lays hold of the present in being reborn. This rebirth-consciousness determines by its selection the nature and the sphere of the life-to-come (*viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ*). This volitional selection is, of course, dependent on the compatibility of the internal organisation or the karmic tendencies of the past, with the processes of the organism to be selected, and takes therefore place before environmental influence begins its competition as the external factor in natural selection which forms the basis of Darwin's evolution theory.

In a philosophic sense, this Buddhist concept of dependent origination in the evolutionary process with its twofold aspect of internal selection of the battle-ground of mind and body, before the commencement of the natural selection which is the actual conflict, is therefore complementary to the Darwinian principle, and for that reason carries significant implications, not only for the biological sciences, but especially for the psychological and social sciences, which are the prime concern of the Buddhadhamma.

A result of recent developments is molecular biology, a school of thought has been developing since 1940, which moves exactly along these lines, seeking to fill a vacancy in the Darwinian principle of external adaptive selection (which is more or less passive) by a new type of selection, acting directly on the formations within the organism at the molecular and chromosomal levels.

Existence, as we have said already, is not so much a product of environment. but rather an emergence of forms, the essence of which was always latent under other forms and was abiding the opportu-



nity to burst forth, in a way similar to the correct tuning of a wireless set which enables one to produce the music which was already there in the atmosphere. It is not an adjustment of the music to a new environment, but an emerging, that is a rebirth of faculties, which had no meaning earlier, but which in their creative actuality developed the organs through which to express themselves, dependent on the formations of mind and body arises the activity of the sense-organs (*nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanam*). Reactions to exterior influence point to an interior and prior awareness, a rudimentary consciousness which precedes the emergence of life, the critical passage from the inorganic molecule to the organism of the cell. In the history of evolution the first symptoms of life do not appear on the solid earth with its essential characteristic of repulsion (*pathavi*) nor in the air with its essential characteristic of oscillation (*vāyo*) movement or change, nor in the fire with its all consuming nature; but the first signs of life appear in water, which characterises the cohesion (*āpo*) in matter and which makes symbiosis an actuality. Seeds begin to sprout in water; sperms are moved in semi-fluid viscosity; for its it the element of cohesion (*āpo*) which is the source of attraction, which identifies similarity, which builds up and enlarges by means of assimilation and absorption, and which therefore is not a mechanical adjustment or passive submission to a process of natural selection, but rather a sign of symbiosis or life-in-common, which evolves actively from within, as much as it is stimulated into reaction by the influence of the environment.

Such an evolution, expressing itself psychically, is thus never a totally new beginning of creation, but rather a metamorphosis in rebirth. Evolution is not a planned development either. The earth was probably born by accident. And so was man; so is each individual! The individual is not caused by copulative action. That merely provided an opportunity which in nature is more frequently missed than taken. Even man's intentional action, called karma, will rarely find the perfect environment to produce its result, called *vipāka*.

The most suitable environment to express what was impressed, is frequently not more than a token which reveals the connection, perhaps, without being able to reproduce the actuality. And that is the reason why we feel so frequently to be misfits in our surroundings, feelings of ambition, of impotence, of conflict, all symptoms of schizophrenia, or split-personality.

But, the conflict itself may produce an accident which forces a complete change of attitude, of outlook, of approach—not reasoned, not planned, and hence without self-interest. And that may well be like the sudden opening of a door, a breaking down of a wall, a mental shock which disturbed the sleep and dream of self-complacency. Or that may be just that streak of light which brings into focus a detail hitherto unobserved, but which now completely alters the vision of the whole.

There are various terms for that experience; intuition, insight, enlightenment, all of which, like inspiration, revelation, invention, are also products of evolution. No enlightenment is possible without the necessary preparation by intellect and emotion. No invention without scientific enquiry. No inspiration without perspiration. Enlightenment comes at the saturation point, but with a sudden invasion of the truth, which usually cannot take place because of our evasiveness our preoccupation, our search for security. In such a search we do not allow the truth to evolve. We expect a revelation as from some external source, when the truth has to evolve from within, till it bursts open as a flower with all its beauty and fragrance. Evolution has to grow from within, not towards a goal, not according to plan, but from sheer necessity, just as eye-sight was evolved as a reaction from within, to the irritation of the light without. What is needed is not so much a discovery, but a release of tension, a relaxation of intentional effort, an awareness of actuality, which then will naturally evolve into what is there already, but which could not be recognised on account of our intensive search,

our concentration on an ideal, our fixation of mind on preconceived ideas.

It is not possible to speculate on the nature of the experience of enlightenment, because no speculation can ever be the experience itself. A memory of an experience is only a psychological hankering after a repetition for the sake of sense-gratification. If such psychological memory is there at all, it is the surest sign that there was no complete experience. Only the incompleteness of an experience will leave behind a residue of dissatisfaction, which makes the mind hunger for completion and the heart thirst for gratification. That is the stuff desire is made of, desire for the possession of a physical need which has become psychological greed. An experience can never be complete when the mind itself still sees the distinction between the experience as an event, and the experiencer as the subject. For, then there is no total awareness of the experience, but a partial awakening only, and a partial continuance of the dream of an "I"-satisfaction and continuation, which can only bring about further conflict.

This happens when evolution is seen as a process of adaptation, a struggle for survival, a selection for the purpose of continued existence. Then it is not the understanding of the experience, but at most a sensation thereof, which can be stored up in the psychological memory, to be called back to reinforce the self when interest in life falls low.

But when an experience is understood to be an aspect of the process of evolution, without a clinging to the sensation, because there is no substance in the phenomenon, no experiencer in the experience, no actor in the act—then such an experience can become truly a revelation, just as an open door reveals the freedom of nature. To experience that awareness, it would be folly to cling to the door; it would be equally folly to cling to the "I" as experiencer, for that is not the freedom, not the experience, not the enlightenment.

The experience itself, being an evolution, cannot be repeated; on account of its unrelatedness to any self, it is absolute; in the understanding thereof, everything else is understood. In the solution of one problem, all problems are solved, because they all are based on the one possible conflict between the actual experience and the ideal experiencer. When that one conflict is understood, it is no more. And no further conflict can arise, because of the impossibility of further misunderstanding. Such awakening would be the finale of all evolution, further than which there is no beyond.

# About the Author

Henri van Zeyst was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 1905. Educated throughout in Catholic schools and colleges, he spent his final years of studies in philosophy and theology and the first year of his priestly ordination in an Italian monastery near Florence. At the age of 31 he was sent to London to be in charge of a new foundation of his Order, where he was also teaching Dogmatic Theology to the scholastics of Christus Rex Priory in North London. An intensive course of comparative religion brought him in contact with Buddhism. Within a year of his coming to Sri Lanka he was ordained a Buddhist monk there in 1938 under the name of Bhikkhu Dhammapāla. From 1956 to 1968 he worked at the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism at the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya of which he was in the final years of that period the Senior Assistant Editor and Administrative Officer. During the last stages of his life he was residing in a meditation centre at Nilambe, Kandy, giving instructions to those who came to him for guidance on meditation.

He died on 15 September, 1988.