Buddhism for Today

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To Christmas Humphreys
who commands affection
even when he provokes
objection

PREFACE

Buddhism is not something to *believe* but something to *do*. It has been aptly termed a 'do-it-yourself religion', and this is an aspect which should appeal to modern Western man, who is now seeking ever more desperately to find a way out of the mess he has got himself into.

In the following essays, most of which are based on lectures given at the Buddhist Society and elsewhere, I have tried to present Buddhism not as something romantic, airy-fairy or wildly esoteric, but as an eminently practical way—the cool, level-headed middle way between the extremes to which man normally runs. But here a word of warning is perhaps needed. Some Western exponents of Buddhism have gone out of their way to emphasize its 'commonsense' or 'scientific' character. It should therefore be stressed that such a presentation is one-sided. Buddhism cannot be properly grasped from this side alone. It is not merely a 'religion of reason': its inner kernel is transcendental. There is, in some sense, a Beyond to which the Buddhist path leads. This path has been described as the Middle Way, and it may reasonably be suggested that it starts from a point somewhere near the exact midpoint between the warring camps of 'science' and 'religion' as the West understands these terms. In order to start on Buddhism, therefore, it is probably necessary to make the mental effort to put oneself at this mid-point.

These essays do not attempt to give a systematic presentation of the whole Buddhist teaching. I have made no attempt to eliminate the repetitions to be found in them, as I believe (very much in keeping with the Buddhist tradition as handed down in the scriptures of all schools) that repetition is of great importance for hammering home those points which need to be made. Some of the views I have expressed are probably unorthodox by any standards, but they represent one man's attempt to see the truth. Western Buddhism is still in its infancy, though it is a sturdy child. Though I have my own preferences, which are probably blindingly obvious to the reader, I am not totally

committed to any one school and am firmly convinced that we can learn from all. I would only emphasize that I do not believe in the idea of a fundamental break in the tradition as it leads from the 'dry intellectualism' of Theravada to the 'inspired lunacy' of Zen. Perhaps the link is to be found, as I strongly suspect, in the profound dialectic of the Madhyamika school which might be termed the logical counterpart, or correlative, of Zen.

I have not hesitated to enter into technicalities where this seemed necessary. These are briefly explained, where further explanation seemed called for, in the Appendix. I might say that I had considered adding a further essay on 'Buddhism and Politics', but thought better of it. Let the reader make the attempt for himself, if he wishes, to see current political events in a Buddhist light. It should prove illuminating. Finally I must acknowledge that a few passages here reprinted have already appeared in the pages of *The Middle Way* and *Sangha*, to whose editors my thanks are due. The passage quoted from Kierkegaard is taken from *Selections from the Writings of Kierkegaard*, translated by L. W. Hollander, Austin, 1923.

PEACE TO ALL BEINGS

CONTENTS

I

Having Taken the First Step

What does it feel like when one has fairly recently embarked on a course of Buddhism? The answers will vary a great deal, no doubt, but there ought to be some general characteristics and some problems common to the majority of 'newborn' Buddhists in the West. Let us assume that you are a person who has quite recently, or within the last year or so, begun to take Buddhism seriously as a personal way of life. You may by now be just looking around a bit in your new mental surroundings and trying to take stock of what has happened, now that the first novelty of the situation has worn off. You have, I sincerely hope, tried to do a bit of meditation, though it would not surprise me in the least to hear that you have found this difficult and disappointing. If so, I would like to tell you straight away that you should not be discouraged. This is quite the normal thing. Meditation may *seem* disappointing and even almost useless for quite a long time, but if you persevere in it, results are bound to come. But these results may not be at all the sort of thing you expect. And *you* may not even be the person who first becomes aware of them. So press on regardless, and don't *look* for results. If you can see the point of this piece of advice you have already in fact made useful progress. Insights often come very subtly.

People's motives for taking up Buddhism may vary a great deal on the surface. But fundamentally you have probably come to it because, in one way or another, it seems to promise you *security*. If you haven't realized before that this was a good part of your motive, you might usefully use your next meditation period trying to find out whether I was right or not. If you have realized this, then you may agree that you find the

formula 'I go to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha for refuge' strangely comforting. And so it should be in one way, even although fundamentally you have to learn 'to be a refuge unto yourself'. That is perhaps the first of the many paradoxes you will encounter in attempting to tread the Buddhist path.

Now if we consider this problem of security a little further, we soon find that we do indeed crave for it. The obvious reason is that we find life frankly unnerving—unnerving, in fact, because *insecure*. Here, then, we find straight away two of the three 'Signs of Being': all things are marked by impermanence and suffering. *Because* they—and we—are impermanent, they are frustrating and cause us all kinds of anguish. Buddhism offers a way out of this situation by treading the Noble Eightfold Path. I am assuming that, having 'taken the first step', you are now familiar with the Four Noble Truths and the steps of this Path. So I just want to mention a few points which may arise at this stage. The first step of the path is known as Right Understanding or Right View. This is seeing things as they are. Usually we don't really want to see things as they are. There are large areas of experience which we would much rather know nothing about. This is the origin of repression, to use a Freudian term which is misleadingly translated. The German for 'repression' in the psychoanalytical sense is *Verdrängung*, 'thrusting away'. It is really successful self-deception. Getting rid of our repressions is therefore not doing what we like, as seems to be popularly imagined, but ceasing to deceive ourselves.

Fundamentally, Buddhism is just a technique of self-undeception. This is not easy, though sometimes it may be fun. It needs some study of theory as well as practice. It is perfectly true that you will never gain enlightenment by intellectual knowledge alone, but if you haven't studied the theory to some extent you will almost certainly never be able to start properly on the practice. Before you can develop your intuition you must know what it is — or at least what it isn't — and self-deception in this respect seems to come terribly easy to many people. Intuition, or as I much prefer to call it, insight, is not an emotion, but the best way to develop it is by getting to know one's emotions as thoroughly as possible. When these

emotions have been really seen for what they are, they no longer stand in the light. Now the biggest emotional blockage we have is that which surrounds the ego-idea. Since it is to the ultimate elimination of this idea that the whole Buddhist training is directed, it may be as well to have a good look at it. In so doing we may get a shock.

By the ego (or self) in Buddhism we mean of course the concept 'I am', though this is much more a feeling than a purely intellectual concept—which is the very reason why it is so much more difficult to uproot. From the psychological point of view we must take it to include not only what in Freudian terms is called the ego, but also the id and even the super-ego. Though not wholly adequate, the Freudian conception goes a good way towards giving us the basic idea. This ego of ours is a composite and dynamic set of functions which are not by any means all conscious or under any form of normal conscious control. Its nature is in fact blind ignorance and it fights desperately to maintain that ignorance. It is most important for us to realize from the outset that this is the case, because this is the root-cause of all our troubles. The three unhealthy roots of human nature are greed, hate and ignorance, and all our suffering is due to these three. Ignorance is the most fundamental, and greed and hate spring from it.

Now the power of ignorance is broken by knowledge, which is seeing correctly. So all we have to do is to learn to see. A-VID-YĀ 'unwitting' or not seeing is no mere passive principle—it is an active force which opposes discovery of the truth at every turn. No need to look for an external devil: the Father of Lies is within every one of us. We all know the story of the Emperor's new clothes. In Buddhism the precise opposite of this situation occurs: the clothes go walking in the procession, but there's no emperor inside them. The whole show is laid on for the honour and glory of a character who doesn't really exist. Here, then, is our second paradox, and it is certainly no less startling than the first one: the ego is the most ruthlessly gluttonous all-devouring monster there is, and yet really all the time there's no such thing! All its activities without exception are simply 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

signifying nothing'. How can we solve *this* riddle? How can we ever come to grasp the nature of this peculiar monster that 'has no mouth and no belly, yet gobbles up the entire world' (as some old Chinese monk might have said, but probably didn't)?

Clearly there must be a sense in which the self exists, and another sense in which it doesn't. Let us first of all have a frank look at it in the sense of something existing. It is not a pretty sight. Underneath all our lofty ideals, our pious thought and holy aspirations we are all alike. *Our* little personal petty self is the really important thing to us. It is out to grab all it can get, whether in the way of affection and admiration and sympathy or of more apparently tangible satisfactions in the way of sex, money, power, nice things to eat and drink and smell and touch and hear—*all* sorts of things—and it doesn't care in the very least how it gets them. We don't all want—at least consciously—all of these things perhaps, but we usually want a lot of credit for not wanting some of them or at least doing without them, even if by necessity rather than choice. All these are aspects of greed, including the last, which is of course conceit. They are the things the ego battens on. Equally impressive and perhaps even more horrifying is the list of items under the heading of hate: we are all capable in our minds of murderous rage, sadism, treachery and disloyalty of every conceivable kind. Until we have found and identified the seeds of *all* these things in our own hearts, we cannot claim to have made much progress in self-knowledge.

What can we do about this situation? First, face it. Second, penetrate to its roots. Buddhism is not something airy-fairy or romantic, it is *practical*. It is first and last something to *do*. To penetrate to the roots of greed, hate and delusion is not very easy and it requires certain techniques. But the great thing is to keep going at it and not to be diverted by irrelevancies, interesting by-paths, plausible excuses or pseudo-mystical fantasies born of conceit and ignorance. A certain discipline is required, in fact. This can be summed up in one word—restraint. Restraint is not repression. In its simplest form it can be something as apparently 'easy' as sitting still. It is just not

automatically yielding to every impulse that arises while not, on the other hand, pretending that that impulse does not exist. A good part of Buddhism, in modern terms, is 'sales-resistance': cultivating at least a degree of immunity to the appeals of the outside world which are today constantly attempting, quite deliberately and purposefully, to arouse new desires in us. It is being deaf to the blandishments of the hidden persuaders whether from within or without, or better perhaps, hearing them without reacting. Who is the rich man who, like the camel, cannot pass through the eye of the needle? He is not only the millionaire, the expense-account johnnie, the take-over charlie: he is anybody who has too many *mental* encumbrances, too many *wants*.

Here then is an exercise: sit down with a straight back for ten minutes resolved not to make a single voluntary bodily movement during that time, and just *observe* what happens. You may get some surprises, but whatever happens you are bound to learn something. If you find, as will probably be the case, that a lot of thoughts and mental images arise, try to discover where they come from, to catch them at the very moment of arising. You won't succeed easily, but you will begin to see something of the mechanism of desires and emotions, and this is immensely valuable. Perhaps the most widespread meditational practice in all schools of Buddhism is *ānāpāna sati* or mindfulness on breathing. Just watch the ebb and flow of your breath without interfering and, as far as you can manage, with undivided attention. This is the surest way to achieve calm, concentration, self-knowledge and insight.

There is no Buddhism worthy of the name without practice, but study is also required. This is especially so in the West, where we have not the background of Buddhist thought which exists in Eastern countries. We have to learn as adults what Eastern people have absorbed from childhood. The study of Buddhist theory should therefore not be neglected. Those who deny its necessity do so usually out of conceit, laziness or ignorance—or a combination of all three.

The obvious problem which arises here is: 'Where shall I start?' There are many schools of Buddhism, and their scriptures,

even those readily available in English, are voluminous. There is Theravada and Mahayana and Zen, and there are numerous books about all of them. Unguided and indiscriminate reading will probably only lead to mental indigestion. The answer must be practical and not romantic. You may be immensely taken with, say, the Buddhism of Tibet. But to attempt to 'take up' Tibetan Buddhism as a serious way of life in this country under present conditions is just not practicable. In fact it would almost certainly land you in difficulties and dangers. In point of fact it may well be doubted whether the Tibetan system is really exportable at all. With Zen the position is rather more favourable, as certain facilities do, to a limited extent, exist for studying and even attempting to practise this. But it should be borne in mind that Zen, too, is simply one school of Buddhism which has developed on its own lines for definite historical reasons. It may even be, as is sometimes claimed, the flower of Buddhism. But a flower needs roots to grow. The roots of Zen are those basic principles which are common to all schools.

If we ask where these basic principles are set out, the answer is in the Pali Canon of the Theravada school, which is at home today in Ceylon and South-East Asia. When all allowance has been made for possible distortions in transmission, it is in this canon that we have the only certain record of what the Buddha actually said. Other schools claim to go beyond these principles —no school denies their validity as a basis, though it may neglect some of them in practice. The Ven. Nyanatiloka, a German who lived for half a century as a monk in Ceylon, set out these principles succinctly in his booklet *The Word of the Buddha*. This work should be in the hands of every Western Buddhist. Here we have the Four Noble Truths, the Three Marks of Phenomenal Existence, the analysis of man into the Five Skandhas, and the formula of Dependent Origination which the Tibetans represent graphically as the Wheel of Life, and which I prefer to call the Vicious Circle. These things should be carefully studied and even memorized, and examined in meditation. Nor should we neglect here that culture of the healthy aspects of emotion which is subsumed under the

Brahma Viharas or 'Divine Abidings': the development of Friendliness, Compassion, Shared Joy and Imperturbability. From this we see that Buddhism offers an actual technique for putting into practice the biblical injunction 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'.

The seeds of all later, so-called Mahayana developments are there in this basic Buddhism. The only reason why people find it apparently unsatisfying is its seemingly negative approach. In the Mahayana there is greater explicit stress on two main things: compassion and the higher wisdom. But we need not worry. Compassion grows inevitably as one trains oneself in Buddhism, and the higher wisdom cannot be gained until the lower wisdom has been developed. It is to this task that the basic training is directed. Before we can begin to grasp the nature of Reality, which is transcendental, we must first grasp the nature of the mundane, the phenomenal world as our senses present it to us. This basically means knowing ourselves. Knowing ourselves means facing our own insecurity. Recognizing the equal insecurity of others is compassion.

Why do we feel so insecure? If we can answer this question we are on the right track. It is due to our recognition that all things are transient. We seek to achieve a stability in the world which, by the very nature of things, cannot be. But Buddhism teaches us more than this: all things are not only transient, they are 'empty'. This applies to our precious selves as much as to anything else. Man, said the Buddha, is a mere compound of five things, the five *skandhas* or aggregates. He has a physical body, feelings, perceptions, emotional reactions and consciousness. None of these constitutes any sort of 'self' or 'soul' which is permanent and unchanging, nor is there any such thing outside of them. His consciousness is just a series of states of awareness, conditioned by the other factors reaching back into a limitless past. All we are actually aware of is the present moment, or rather consciousness *is* just that awareness. There is no separate entity behind it which is *aware*. In the jargon of some modern philosophers, everything about man is contingent or adjectival, not substantival. The further implications of this must be left for study and meditation, but this is a fundamental

principle of all Buddhism. The search for a 'self' behind all this is futile. If you don't believe this you can try to take up the Buddha's challenge and find it.

I will not argue this point further here, but if there is a feeling of resistance to its acceptance, this feeling should be very carefully examined. It is the basis of our habitual ego-reactions. We *want* so badly to have a 'self' and we expend a vast amount of energy in trying to build one up and support it in every way we can think of. That, fundamentally, is why we feel insecure in the world. One can usefully devote a great deal of time to meditating on this point alone.

The most notable contribution made to psychology by Alfred Adler was his analysis of the inferiority complex. People who, for one reason or another, feel inferior, says Adler, tend to over-compensate and present an appearance of conceit and aggressiveness. Since Adler's psychology is very much one of social adaptation at not, perhaps, a very profound level, he did not pursue this idea as far as he might have done. But as far as it goes it is quite good Buddhism, though we might prefer to rename his complex the 'insecurity complex'. We might even go so far as to say that for the Buddhist everybody's ego practically consists of an inferiority or insecurity complex, for such an assumption certainly explains a great deal. Every form of ostentation we may indulge in is a way of bolstering up the ego, whether in cruder or more subtle form. The large car which seems designed to look as wide as possible is as much an example of ego-boosting as the padded shoulders worn by the tough. Of course the compensation for insecurity may take a reverse form of exaggerated modesty and simpering sweetness, or of unnecessary and slightly ostentatious self-sacrifice. This latter is a form of compensation we choose when all else fails, and it has the advantage of making us feel very holy. Martyrdom is in fact the last consolation of a disappointed ego. And the hall-mark of a person who has really gone far in the conquest of self is genuine unobtrusiveness.

The formula of Dependent Origination is too complex to go into in detail here, but I would just emphasize the importance of studying this too. It shows by picking out twelve prominent

factors how it is that we go round and round the weary cycle of rebirths, and how karma operates. It is not a simple formula of causation, but rather of conditioning. Ignorance (*avijjā*) is a necessary condition for our being here—hence if we were not ignorant we would not have been reborn. And birth is a necessary condition for death—if we had never been born we could not die. Thus too, feeling based on sense-impressions is a necessary condition for the arising of craving: if there were no such feeling there would be no craving. But we can stop the craving from arising or at least prevent its developing into grasping. This is the point at which karma comes into play. Karma is volitional activity born of desire, and as such produces pleasant or unpleasant results in the future. Whatever condition of body and mind we may happen to be in now is due to our past karma; it is *vipaka* or karma-resultant. In accordance with this *vipaka* we are liable to act in future, but if we have understanding we can control our future actions and thus their future effects.

The aim of the Buddhist training, of whatever school, is to break away from the cycle of becoming. This means somehow attaining that Transcendental Reality which is not karma-bound and therefore permanent, secure and free from suffering. We do not, as unenlightened individuals, know what this is: at best we have a vague intuition of something wholly other. Its true nature is hidden from us by the veils of our ignorance. The state of enlightenment is called Nirvana, which is, be it noted, selfless (*anattā*) or void (*śunya*). This means that we cannot grasp it as long as the self-concept or feeling is operative. It is beyond the realm of duality which is that of subject and object or self and other-than-self.

Probably most people have at times had a feeling while in the normal sense 'wide awake', as if really they were dreaming and would soon wake up. This is actually quite true as far as the first part is concerned. Life as we know it *is* in one sense a dream. The Buddha was the Awakened One, and our normal state is perhaps somewhat about half-way between ordinary sleep and true enlightenment, or wakefulness. We can therefore usefully regard the Buddhist training, if we like, as a way of making ourselves wake up. Sometimes in sleep we become

aware of being asleep and want to wake up. Finally we succeed, but it is often a struggle. The struggle to wake up to enlightenment is far greater than this, because the resistance is stronger. The resistance is stronger for a very simple reason: to the ego it seems like death. This is fair enough, since in fact it *is* the death of the ego. And since we have no real experience of the egoless state, it is unimaginable and therefore frightening to us. It also seems unreal and so we are sceptical about it, but this scepticism too really springs from fear. We should have to give up all our attachments to attain it, and that is too high a price to pay. We are like the rich young man to whom Christ said 'Sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor'. He went sorrowfully away.

What then must we do, now that we have taken the first step and embarked on the course of Buddhism? We need to have a chart and compass to help us on our way. But first we need to know where we are supposed to be going. The goal of Buddhism is Enlightenment or Awakening or Nirvana, the Deathless State which is the end of all suffering and frustration, the one permanent and supremely desirable thing. Buddhism claims to be a way of attaining this. There are five factors to be developed which, if they are predominant in our minds, will tend increasingly to bring us to the goal. They are Faith, Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration and Wisdom. The first of these may come as a surprise to some people. 'I thought,' they may say, 'you didn't have to have *faith* in Buddhism'. In fact faith is an important factor to develop. We can call it confidence or trust if we prefer it. But unless we have some confidence that there is such a goal as Nirvana, we shall not even start taking Buddhism seriously at all, and we need also to trust the Buddha as the teacher who has shown the way to reach that goal. At the very least we need to be free from that sort of nihilistic scepticism which is so common today and which prevents us from believing wholeheartedly in *anything* worthwhile. When we say 'I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha', we are expressing faith in the Teacher, the Teaching and the Order of monks who have preserved it and handed it on.

If we have faith we next need to put forth effort, so we need energy. Right Effort is a step of the Eightfold Path. It means getting rid of wrong states of mind and developing right ones. Clearly a certain amount of vigour is required to do this, and faith will strengthen our will to persevere. Clearing up our mental muddle calls for increased self-knowledge, and this is gained by Mindfulness. Mindfulness is being aware of one's own nature and observing one's own reactions, being fully cognisant of what one is about all the time. It is developed by training, such exercises as mindfulness on breathing and on walking being especially beneficial. With full mindfulness self-deception becomes impossible. It is the way of uncovering the subterfuges of the ego. The Buddha described it as 'the one and only way' to the liberation of beings. It is an absolutely indispensable factor in all Buddhist training. Being mindful one is, too, in some degree automatically concentrated, but the practice of mental concentration can be carried further, to *samadhi*, which is mental one-pointedness. By a combination of these two factors, the mind can be sharpened to an instrument capable of cutting through the veils of ego-created illusion. The last of the five factors is Wisdom. Wisdom in this connection means discernment. It includes investigation and study of the Dhamma. It also includes the investigation of all mental phenomena in order to penetrate to their essence, which is voidness. When this lower, still mundane wisdom has been sufficiently developed, a basis has been created for the arising of the higher Insight-Wisdom, the perfection of which is Enlightenment. When that has been attained, the job is done.

But these factors must be developed in such a manner that they are properly balanced. Faith must be balanced with Wisdom, and Energy with Concentration. Faith without Wisdom can overreach itself and turn into that kind of blind faith which Buddhism does not encourage. On the other hand, Wisdom without Faith is sterile. Energy unaccompanied by Concentration can easily lead to restlessness, while Concentration without sufficient Energy leads to sloth. It is the function of Mindfulness, by watching over the other four factors, to see that the proper balance between them is maintained.

These five factors are called *indriyas* or 'ruling factors'. This means that they can and should dominate the mind and give it direction. They are the five guides to keep us on the way. Having taken the first step, and with these as guides, but especially under the leadership of Mindfulness, let us walk on.

II

Karma and Rebirth

A great deal of the basic Buddhist teaching is either fairly obvious on reflection or readily verifiable, even though full comprehension, as opposed to intellectual assent, may depend on training. The doctrine of rebirth, however, is one that to a greater extent than most has to be taken on trust. To most Europeans, at least, the idea of a series of lives on earth is unfamiliar, and they may tend to reject it as arbitrary and unfounded. This fact proves nothing at all as to the truth or otherwise of the doctrine in question, since it clearly depends on their personal conditioning. Those whose thinking is mainly dominated by the outlook of any of the more orthodox kinds of Christianity will tend to think in terms of a single life on earth, followed by an eternal life in some other sphere, however vaguely this may be conceived. On the other hand, those who, under the influence of science (or what they conceive to be such) have abandoned traditional beliefs, generally take for granted that this present life is all we have, and that the death of the body involves the total extinction of the personality in any shape or form. Probably those for whom, in the West, any other alternative presents itself as a serious possibility are in a tiny, if perhaps growing, minority. Not even all western people who take an active interest in Buddhism are convinced that the doctrine of rebirth is true.

Now since Buddhism does not demand blind faith of its adherents, those who claim to be Buddhists, or near-Buddhists, might do well to ask themselves whether they *really* believe in rebirth, and if so why. Is such a belief based on emotion, on reason, or on experience? Can it indeed be said to be ever based on experience? Some people would deny such a possibility, but

on the other hand there are those who seem to have memories of past lives. I am not myself one of these, but I have heard and read accounts which seem to me in some cases to carry a considerable measure of conviction. Some do not: the romantic dreams of good ladies who are convinced that they were Egyptian princesses are not very convincing. But other cases are in a different category. Yet for me personally this second-hand experience can do no more than give indirect support to my belief.

That there is a strong emotional element in my own belief in rebirth, I am well aware. The will to survival is strong in me, and the idea of death as an absolute end is abhorrent. This is a psychological fact to be faced, and having faced it squarely, as one should, one must naturally be on one's guard. There may be a predisposition to accept all too easily a teaching which promises some form of survival. On the other hand, there is no need to lean over backwards too far and reject out of hand something that one wants to believe, merely on the grounds that it looks like wishful thinking. Whatever the true situation may be, it is clearly true, either way, quite irrespective of my or anybody else's wishes in the matter. Neither am I unduly impressed by 'scientific' arguments tending to suggest that survival is impossible, and that any belief in its possibility is therefore an outworn superstition. The problem of the relation of what we call 'mind' to what we call 'matter' is enormously complex—so much so that any simple scientific answers to the questions involved are very hard to come by. Above all, we must remember that 'matter' itself has turned out to be something extremely problematical, and the 'materialist' hypothesis is nowadays at least as hard to defend with rational arguments as the 'mentalist'. While, then, we cannot ignore what science has to say, we should nevertheless be extremely wary of accepting its arbitration as final in a matter which may not lie entirely within its province.

Having admitted, then, a strong emotional desire to believe in some form of survival, let me add as a matter of autobiographical fact that for many years I denied myself the luxury of entertaining such a belief because I thought it was

unscientific. It was, as a matter of fact, a reading of G. N. M. Tyrrell's *The Personality of Man* which led me to see that such was, to say the least, not necessarily the case. I then began to consider the problem afresh, and it seemed to me that the question of future existence was bound up with that of past existence. In other words, if I am to go on from here, then I have presumably also come *from* somewhere in the past. To start at a definite point in time, and then to go on for ever, seemed to me unreasonable. Rightly or wrongly I felt that some form of reincarnation or rebirth was almost an inevitable corollary if survival were a fact at all. This train of thought was one of the chief factors which led me to investigate the teachings, first of the *Bhagavadgitâ*, and then of Buddhism.

These are some of the reasons which predispose me to a belief in rebirth, a belief which further study and attempted practice of Buddhism has strengthened to something close to certainty. But one might also turn the argument round the other way. Instead of saying 'Why do *I* believe in rebirth?', we might perhaps ask 'Why doesn't *everybody* believe in it?' As far as the Christian West is concerned, the answer to this question is, in one sense, clear enough—because the orthodox Christian tradition has rejected it. Yet the number of people who, after due consideration, sincerely hold to the traditional Christian view of an eternal heaven and hell is probably comparatively small. In fact it has proved so difficult to accept that leading churchmen today are very shy of it. One senses a painful embarrassment among them when the subject is raised. In Buddhist and Hindu countries, on the other hand, a belief in some form of rebirth or reincarnation has proved less unacceptable. In so far as people in those countries have abandoned such a belief, it is probably due far more to an exaggerated respect for western culture than on account of any inherent difficulty in the doctrine itself. Pandit Nehru, for instance, has said somewhere that while not committed to reincarnation as a dogma, he is attracted to it as an idea. With some of our bishops one has almost the opposite impression—that they are committed to a dogma which they find unattractive as an idea. And on the other hand there are now some Christians who

openly profess a belief in reincarnation. This is an extraordinarily interesting fact. Christianity is a great religion, for which we must all have profound respect, but its teaching about the after-life is felt even by some of its leading exponents to be a weak point. Buddhism cannot be said to share this particular weakness, at any rate.

Yet, when all is said and done, some of us may still have doubts. Hence it should be stressed that, after all, Buddhism is not, fundamentally, something to *believe* (as Christianity is normally taken to be), but something to *do*. If one has doubts on this point they should be faced and admitted, and it may be best to regard the teaching in this respect as a provisional hypothesis which further experience may confirm. In connection with the doctrine of *karma* the rebirth-hypothesis has at least the merit of consistency. But it is far more important to practise the Buddhist mind-training than to worry about the precise interpretation of a particular doctrine. Let us then turn to a consideration of the doctrine of karma.

The basic principle of karma is 'as a man sows, so shall he reap'. We are all believers in karma to the extent that we consider our actions have consequences for ourselves. But unless there is rebirth it is impossible to see how this principle can work itself out in full. The Christian teaching goes at best halfway towards answering this point. The word *karma* (or in Pali *kamma*) means 'action'. Strictly speaking, it should not be used to denote the consequences of such action, the correct term for which is *vipaka*. Karma is often regarded from different points of view: as regards its effects on the individual, and as regards its wider effects on other beings. In Theravada Buddhism the stress is on the individual, while the Mahayana schools tend to emphasize the latter, more 'universal' aspect of karma. In any case, however, it is its effect on the individual which is of first importance from the point of view of the Buddhist training. Certainly I should always consider the effects of my actions on others, and this will itself affect the karmic quality of the actions themselves. On the other hand, the way in which others are affected by my action will itself depend on *their own* karmic conditioning. Conversely, the way in which I am

affected by the actions of others will depend on *my* karma.

Karma as action is primarily mental. We are karmically responsible for an action which we have willed. That is why karma has been defined by the Buddha as *cetanā*—volition. The effect of an act of will is, apart from all else, to produce a modification in the mind of the person who wills. Thus we can say that karma is mental conditioning. In fact it is habit-formation. Lighting one's first cigarette is a karmic action which is very liable to lead to the habit of smoking. But if my first cigarette makes me feel sick the effect will be one of revulsion, and I may never wish to smoke again. This too is conditioning. If I enjoyed the cigarette this will create a predisposition to smoke some more. If I did not, there will be a predisposition to reject cigarettes in future. Now these predispositions are not themselves karma, but *vipaka* or resultant. Yet the pattern they form will tend to determine my future karmic acts of accepting or rejecting proffered cigarettes (or buying my own !).

It is important to understand the distinction between karma and resultant. Each act contributes something to the pattern in the mind which is itself the resultant of *all* unexpended past karma. A volitional act is not totally determined by this pattern, but the effects of the pattern may be very strong, so that resistance to it may set up considerable tension. The greater our self-awareness, the less we are under the sway of these patterns. Where awareness has been repressed, we have a complex and tend to act compulsively for, perhaps, no obvious reason. Modern psychology is therefore at one with Buddhism in its insistence that such repressed material should be brought to light. Unless and until this is done, we are not free agents. But we would, of course, claim that Buddhism provides a more radical cure than psycho-analysis.

Some karmic acts are called wholesome or *kusala* (lit. 'skilful') because they produce beneficial results. Others are called unwholesome or *akusala*, because their effects are harmful, i.e. productive of suffering. While the results referred to apply to the doer of the deed, it goes without saying that an act beneficial to others, and intended to be so, is also beneficial to

the doer, and *vice versa*. Some actions are morally neutral and their effects are also neutral, while the acts of an enlightened person are not classifiable under the rubrics of wholesome and unwholesome at all. He will naturally not perform any unhealthy acts, while those which would normally be considered healthy will be neutral as regards their effect on him, since he has gone beyond the state of being influenced by karma. They may, however, be extremely beneficial to others, to the extent that their *own* personal conditioning enables them to derive such benefit.

In all this process there is no need to postulate the existence of any sort of presiding deity who distributes rewards and punishments for our actions. The process is entirely automatic. We reward and punish ourselves, whether we know it or not. We may rather loosely, though conveniently, refer to the process as cause and effect, provided that we remember that no thing ever arises from a single cause. 'Causes' and 'effects' are invariably multiple, and in fact infinitely complex. All things without exception come to be by a vast process of *mutual conditioning*, in which 'causes' as usually understood are only the leading factors which can be singled out as being relatively decisive in a given situation. In a certain sense it is true enough to say that 'Hitler started World War II', since without the presence of his distinctive and terrible personality this war might have been avoided. But it requires little thought to see that such a statement is a gross over-simplification of an infinitely complex situation.

Unwholesome acts arise from the unhealthy roots of Greed, Hate and Delusion. Wholesome acts arise when these are not, for the moment, operative. We may say that in fact their opposites, the healthy roots of Non-Greed, Non-Hate and Non-Delusion operate instead, though actually if this were completely the case, we should be enlightened and our actions would be karmically neutral. In the case of a normal human being this unfortunately does not apply, so it is best to consider the nature of the unhealthy factors, which are those we have to get rid of. How, then, does an unwholesome deed 'come home to roost'? Let us for the moment omit all question of

future lives, and consider its possible effects in this life. An act of hate—which may be a purely mental act—will poison my mind and induce such conditions as restlessness, resentment, and the like. These states are themselves unpleasant, and furthermore they blind me to the further consequences which may ensue. If the act was, the first time, purely mental, as for instance a flaring up of temper, its tendency will be to repeat and thereby strengthen my hate, and I may therefore be more inclined to physical violence. Eventually I may yield to this inclination, and if society then punishes me for this act, I may become embittered and turn into a 'hardened criminal'. On the other hand, if I recognize the justice of the punishment and accept it inwardly, this means that the effects of my previous bad karma are brought to an end. The effects of a karmic action can, therefore, be exhausted in one life. But if this is not the case, Buddhists hold that they are carried over to the next existence, and condition its nature for better or worse. This is of course the normal situation.

Let us now turn once again to Rebirth. Buddhists prefer this term to 'reincarnation', since there is no soul-entity which is carried over from life to life. We shall discuss this point later. In connection with the question of *belief* in rebirth, which I have already partly discussed, there is actually a rather interesting paradox here. One may to begin with, and even later, have a strong attachment to the idea of rebirth. To this extent it may be regarded, perhaps, as a piece of wishful thinking. On the other hand, if one has some grasp of the true Buddhist view of the matter, it becomes something not at all to be desired. The wishful thinking is not the belief that rebirth is true, but that it is something nice. The whole object of the Buddhist training is to escape, finally and for good, from this apparently 'nice' thing. How, then, does rebirth work? At the moment of death the higher mental functions cease and the unconscious patterns created by past karma come to the surface. Chief of these is the force of craving, *tanhā*. We cannot exactly call this 'wishful thinking', but it might be termed 'wishful feeling'. Dependent on the enormous force of this *tanhā* there is an instinctive grasping at a new physical base, a new conception

takes place and a fresh life is started, whether in human form or in some other guise dependent on the nature of karmic conditioning. Is this in principle so difficult to understand? A dying person normally fights for life as long as his existing body is able to stand the strain. How could this terribly strong urge be simply dissipated at death? We know that in the faculty of telepathy the mind seems to 'leap' from one body to another in some sense. If we accept that this is possible, as we must, then we can perhaps form an idea of how the mental 'leap' at death takes place. It is not a very pleasant process, but viewed in this light it can seem rather horribly convincing.

As for what is reborn, we have to remember that just as in this life every part of our body and mind is constantly changing, so the rebirth process is in essence a mere continuation of this. My mental processes are a mere 'stream of consciousness' in which no 'thing' is carried on even from one moment to the next. Yet each mental state is conditioned by that which preceded it, and in turn conditions that which follows. In this sense I am truly 'reborn' every moment, though I *seem* to be one and the same person. The Hindu idea of reincarnation postulates an abiding soul which transmigrates from one body to another. In the Buddhist view this is merely what *seems* to happen, but not what really happens. In the Questions of King Milinda, the sage Nagasena was asked whether that which is reborn is the same as that which died. He replied 'Neither the same nor different', and instanced the candle-flame. Is the flame which burns in the second watch of the night the same as that which burnt in the first watch? It is neither the same nor different. In practice even Buddhists can and do talk of a person being reborn in another state. This is strictly speaking incorrect, but is convenient provided one understands what is really meant.

On some of the details concerning rebirth there is controversy. For instance there is argument about whether rebirth is instantaneous or whether there is an interval between births. The Tibetans postulate an interval of forty-nine days. Some people talk about periods of many years and even centuries. But in one sense at least rebirth must be instantaneous, since

time has no real meaning apart from our consciousness, so that there can never 'really' be a time-interval between two moments of consciousness. If there is no consciousness, there is no time. On the other hand, if there is some form of consciousness, that is another state one has been reborn into. According to the Pali Canon, one can be reborn in various realms, sub-human, human or super-human. Below the human state there are said to be various 'realms of woe', and above this a variety of 'heavens'. But all such states are temporary, and when the karma which has produced them is exhausted, they come to an end. The Buddhist hells, though said to be very unpleasant, are not eternal. The canonical descriptions given of them are rather horrifying and, one hopes, exaggerated. They may be thought of, perhaps, as states resembling a prolonged and severe nightmare. Doubtless they represent the extreme form in which massive repressed and acute feelings of guilt may finally come to manifest themselves. Other unhappy states are rebirth as *petas* or 'hungry ghosts', and as animals. Here too, some people object strongly to the idea that human beings can be reborn as animals. It is difficult to see why, and at any rate the scriptures definitely assert the possibility. Human birth, incidentally, is said to be difficult to achieve. The heaven-states, though very delightful, are also finite, and the ultimate return to earth after such a state must be disconcerting. The Buddhist should not therefore strive for such states, but aim to transcend them and attain to the peace of Nirvana. Here there is no karma, no decay and death, and hence no rebirth. It is really the only sensible thing to strive for. If we were less stupid, which is to say less blinded by ignorance and craving for lesser things, we should realize this.

III

The Origin of Suffering

We all know, or think we know, the Four Noble Truths. Some of us who have been Buddhists for a few years, have read a few books and been to various lectures, as well, perhaps, as having done a bit of meditation, are sometimes inclined to dismiss the subject of these Truths as elementary. But it seems to me that, in Buddhism, one can scarcely do better than return now and again to basic, so-called 'elementary' principles and review them again and again in the light of increasing knowledge. Only in that way can we be sure of establishing our Buddhism on a firm basis.

The Four Noble Truths, then, are the Truth of Suffering, of the Origin of Suffering, of the Extinction of Suffering, and of the Path leading to the Extinction of Suffering. I have here used the conventional translation of *dukkha* as suffering, though I am aware that some objections can be raised to this. Now it is perhaps worth while noting that these four truths are not given in their proper chronological order. In time-sequence the second must obviously be regarded as preceding the first, and the fourth the third, since the origin is antecedent to the result, suffering, and treading the Path precedes the goal, which is the ceasing of suffering. Here, however, I shall in fact have very little to say about Truths 3 and 4, which are transcendental, but will be concerned with the second in particular, which obviously also involves the first. There is, however, one point I should like to make about the third Noble Truth.

In one sense, this Truth seems almost like a superfluous statement, as a mere obvious corollary of the second Truth. If craving causes suffering, then the end of craving *must* surely

involve the end of suffering. In one sense anyone can see that. If I stop over-eating, I won't go on getting indigestion. But as long as the *desire* to overeat persists, I may avoid indigestion but will feel frustrated instead. To avoid suffering I must contrive not to *want* to overeat. The glutton may concede the point in theory, while regarding it as impossible of fulfilment in practice. He can't even imagine the state of not wanting to overeat! He therefore probably subscribes to that favourite Western saying: 'You can't change human nature!' The Buddhist answer is of course that you *can*, if you learn how. That knowledge of the possibility and method of changing human nature in its essential aspect constitutes the third and fourth Truths. The first and second Truths reveal the nature of the situation which requires to be changed. The whole thing is thus rather like those 'before' and 'after' pictures we see in advertisements.

The full truth of any part of the Buddhist teaching, even sometimes of the more obvious-seeming parts, can only be realized by mind-training, or meditation. This, when achieved, is *bhāvanamayapaññā*, or wisdom resulting from mental development, and it cannot be conveyed in a lecture. We have to gain it for ourselves. But we can prepare ourselves for this knowledge by reflection and study, *cintamayapaññā* and *sutamayapaññā*. It is in these lesser but still important realms that we must move here. Some simple reflection should lead us to perceive a measure, at least, of causal connection between craving and suffering. Study of the scriptures can lead to a more thorough grasp of the fact, while practice alone can lead to penetration of the true nature of the whole situation. It is all there in our own minds, and we have actually only to learn to watch mindfully in order to see it in action. This can be quite fascinating, indeed absorbing, and the absorbed state of watchfulness, if we can reach it, is in fact that which leads on to insight.

Let us then now look at the canonical definition of the second Noble Truth on the Origin of Suffering:

'Now this, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering: the craving, which tends to rebirth, combined with

pleasure and lust, finding pleasure now here, now there, namely sensual craving, craving for existence, craving for non-existence.'

I do not think that people consider often enough the full implications of this statement. Actually it shows this craving to be quite a complex process, manifesting in a variety of different ways. We are given the definite statement first of all that craving itself tends to rebirth. Some people think that belief in rebirth is itself a form of wishful thinking. In a sense this may be true for some, but really, if the Buddhist teaching is correct, the situation is a little different: rebirth itself is an actuality, in fact an unpleasant actuality, which is *conditioned* by wishful thinking. The *real* trouble with wishful thinking is in fact not that it doesn't work, but that it often *does*. We may really get what we wished for, but it is never as nice as we had hoped. We *do* sometimes marry our dream prince or princess, but we don't live happily ever after. That is where the romantic attitude of the fairy-tale breaks down!

Next, in this formula, we are given a clear hint of another feature: the *restlessness* which characterizes this craving, which 'finds pleasure now here, now there'. In other words it won't stay still in one place for long. We are attracted all over the place by it. We are constantly on the look-out for fresh distractions. That is, of course, why advertising is such good business. The inevitable counterpart of pleasure-seeking is boredom. When we find a new pleasure we are temporarily less bored, and so we keep on looking for ever new sensations. It is a wearisome process, but it makes up an enormous amount of our lives if we let it. This alone is suffering of quite a serious order, even though we may declare loudly how much we are enjoying ourselves. That is why the unemployed rich are often scarcely less unhappy than the unemployed poor.

The statement then goes on to specify the three types of craving which exist. They are given, I think, in order of subtlety. The first and most obvious kind is really that which we have already discussed: sensuous craving. We all know what that is, though it has many forms. We can readily and constantly observe its manifestations in ourselves and others.

The next is the craving for continued existence. This too is not hard to see. We want to go on living, not to die. The third aspect of craving may seem, at first sight, less universal: the craving for extinction. To some people this may even seem hard to understand or accept at all. Yet I think that in some form or other this too is always present in us, however subtly. For instance, we want to go to sleep at night. Of course we hope to wake up again in the morning, but it seems obvious that a continuous spell of full consciousness is such a burden that we periodically want to lay it down. And when something very embarrassing has occurred, we may say: 'I could have died with shame'. Just a phrase, perhaps, but it corresponds to *some* degree of psychological reality. We can probably all imagine circumstances in which we would not wish to go on living.

The Freudian death-wish is, then, a reality, the existence of which was pointed out by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. This is just one more example of how modern psychology is beginning to find out things which Buddhism has taught all along. We cannot fully understand the nature of our craving, and thus find the way to its ceasing, unless we have recognized its negative as well as its positive aspect. It may seem very curious, but it is an undoubted fact that the desire for life is balanced by a hate of life, a longing for its extinction. The very existence of such a tension and latent conflict between these two opposite forces within us must in itself be a potent source of suffering.

The death-wish itself has two aspects, which we might call the suicidal and the destructive, as they refer respectively to the ego and to that which is outside of the ego. The life-wish similarly, of course, also has the same two aspects. The external or destructive aspect of the death-wish is something we should take particular note of just because it is an aspect of our nature which some of us don't like to see or admit to, and it is therefore liable to be denied and repressed. It is the root of cruelty and sadism, seeking to harm and destroy other beings. It cannot be too strongly stressed that this tendency does exist in all of us, whether we like it or not. Just in passing I would like to stress the importance of facing ruthlessly *all* the unpleasing

aspects of our own nature and seeing that there is no crime or perversion which is totally strange to us. To imagine otherwise is to fall a victim to conceit and self-deception, and to run the risk of developing psychological repressions. Of course recognizing our unpleasant tendencies is not the same thing as yielding to them. In fact it is the first and necessary step towards becoming genuinely free of them. However, important though this point is, it is to a simpler and even more fundamental aspect of our mental processes that I want to turn now.

This is in the nature of a quite simple manifestation one can come to experience in meditation. It is not a particularly advanced stage of meditation, and there is nothing very glamorous or thrilling about it, but it is an experience to which it is probably worth while paying a good deal of attention. When some of the more superficial layers of mental activity have been temporarily stilled, we may come to a point where we can watch a kind of background activity in the mind which is, I suspect, always present though we may not be directly, or at least closely, aware of it most of the time. It seems like a continuous and rapid alternation of two impulses which we might term positive and negative, or desire and aversion in a very simple form. They seem to me to be actually nothing more or less than the desire and aversion for continued existence itself. If one can get this experience, I think the thing to do is to try to bring it into sharp focus and then to investigate it. The practice may not feel very pleasant, and there may well be a certain tendency to run away from it. The reason for this is clear enough: what we are here investigating in that common phenomenon, known usually to all of us as boredom. But it is, I am quite sure, well worth our while to make the slight effort necessary and really get down to investigating a little more closely the true nature of this boredom. When the desire to escape from watching the process becomes strong, that desire itself can also be watched, since it is really part and parcel of the whole situation we are trying to observe. If we are a little persistent, of course, the factor of *piti* or interest will manifest itself as always, and then we shall have the paradoxical situation of finding that we have become interested in our very boredom!

Possibly I should leave you with this suggestion and let you get on with it to see what you find out for yourselves, but instead it may be helpful if I give some indication of what occurred to me as a result of this simple exercise. How is it that we find this alternation of life-wish and death-wish? The answer seems to be this: the will-to-live, the craving for continued existence, is strong and continually reasserts itself. But this is bound up with the desire for pleasant sensation. When this pleasant sensation is not immediately forthcoming there is a reaction, a sense of the unpleasant aspect of life. I want to go on, yes—but not just anyhow: I want nice sensations. Therefore the will-to-live is continually thwarted in its aim. It always seeks for a state which shall be pleasanter than that which it finds — most of the time — at any given 'present moment'. The present moment therefore is rejected and indeed felt to be unendurable. Accordingly the death-wish emerges on the heels of the life-wish. But of course no sooner has this come up than fear ensues. If I die I won't have those pleasant sensations I hope for in the future. The death-wish is rejected in its turn, and up comes the life-wish again. But of course this has not really altered anything in the basic situation as it was immediately before. The life-wish finds itself in no better case now than it did just previously. And so it goes on. Of course this alternation is extremely rapid. The whole cycle can be gone through with the greatest of ease—if that is the right expression—many times in the course of a second. I think this is basically what is happening all the time when we are conscious of being really bored. And if we have seen thus far into the process, I think we have gone some distance towards understanding the fundamental nature of *dukkha*. We may suffer many more intense and obvious forms of distress—physical pain, worry, loss of dear ones, all the usual ills that flesh is heir to. But even if—perhaps especially if—we are for the moment spared such things, this most insidious and basic form of *dukkha* is liable to make its presence felt. It is for this reason that we can have a life of ease without, so the saying goes, a care in the world, and yet be really miserable at heart.

Of course we try if at all possible to find some ways of

escaping from this situation. Thus we have the familiar figure of the person who cannot bear to be alone and clutches desperately at any distraction which offers itself. Incidentally, with the ever-increasing mechanization of our present-day civilization and the ever-shortening working week, this may soon become quite a serious social problem. It is doubtful whether even the delights of the 'telly' can cope in the long run with the ever-growing army of distraction-seekers with more and more time on their hands and less and less idea of what to do with it. There is little doubt that this has a real bearing on the problem of juvenile delinquency. Even crime is an escape from boredom. But interesting and socially important as this aspect of the matter undoubtedly is, I do not propose to pursue it further here, except to say this: if we want to solve this problem in others, we must first find the solution for ourselves. Those who seek a solution in flogging have not come to terms with the sadism in their own natures, which is just another expression of the same basic situation.

Of course, the kinds of escape we have considered so far are so extremely unsatisfactory in their nature as to be little more than an abject confession of failure. There are, however, other avenues of escape which have at least some superficial appearance of success, which at least are not so immediately and totally disastrous. After all, the search for pleasure may, on a short-term basis, be reasonably successful. Boredom may very well be kept at arm's length for quite a while. A certain degree of temporary satisfaction may be attained, so that we have the feeling that life is, after all, quite worth living. The real point about the pleasures of the senses is not, of course, that they are not pleasant—they are. But they always end in frustration and so do not constitute a genuine escape from the situation. Either they leave us, or we get tired of them, so that either way we are frustrated, sooner or later. Then one of two things usually happens: either we seek for ever more powerful stimuli, even cruder sensations because we no longer react so strongly to those we have become used to—or alternatively we become progressively disgusted with the cruder sensations and seek ever subtler forms of satisfaction. There is a limit to either process,

though the latter is perhaps more akin to the true path.

Going back further, we find of course that according to the formula of dependent origination craving itself is ultimately dependent on ignorance. This is in a sense quite clear. If we had more understanding we should be able to see the true nature of the situation, and therefore Right Understanding, or better Right View, is the first step in the path which leads to the overcoming of suffering. It is a seeing, at least to a certain minimum extent, of the true nature of things as they are. This involves actually having some fairly clear perception, as a fact, of the folly of trying to grasp at things which are impermanent and without self-nature, and expecting them to do the impossible by yielding us lasting happiness. Obviously, if ignorance is so great that this situation is not even dimly perceived, we cannot begin to tread the path. However, in this lecture I am dealing with the question of the origin of suffering, not with its cure—though it is only through perceiving the origin that we can learn to effect the cure. And in connection with this question of the origin of suffering, I feel bound to point out another seeming paradox which arises at this point. This is the fact that the arising of some measure of right understanding, or right view, may in itself temporarily actually *increase* our suffering. This is a point which I think should be squarely faced and investigated. In fact it is not so surprising, and we can find parallels in our daily life. After all, there are various diseases which can be cured, but the course of treatment for which is not entirely pleasant. Here it is a matter of dealing with the unhealthy emotions. And we are after all deeply attached to our emotions. Our normal reactions are deeply rooted by habit, and to uproot a habit is difficult and often painful. We may recognize something as a bad habit just as we recognize that we have a bad tooth, but we don't usually much enjoy the process of extraction in either case. However, just as a skilful dentist can reduce the pain and discomfort of an extraction to a minimum, so we can learn to deal with our bad habits and attachments by skilful means. If we see clearly enough the harm they are doing us, the more ready we shall be to do so. The reason for extracting a bad tooth is, after all, that

it will cause us more suffering if it stays in than if it is pulled out. It will not only ache, but probably poison our system in all sorts of ways. The trouble is that the incentive may be less, because bad habits are not usually so much acute as chronic: their effect is generally less like the sharp pain of a bad tooth than like its more subtly poisoning effect, which may go on unnoticed for a long time. Or better still, attachment is more like the eating of sweets which perhaps caused the tooth to decay.

Of course through the Buddhist training there are ways and means of dealing with this situation, but the first thing is to see it. This is done by mindfulness. The point is therefore that understanding, in order to qualify in the Buddhist sense for the epithet 'Right', must first reach a certain degree of intensity or clarity. Only then will it lead on to the second step of the path, which really involves establishing such a state of mind as will be conducive to further progress. But it seems to be a fact that, if understanding, though in some measure present, yet falls below the level necessary for this to happen, it may actually act as a deterrent. We instinctively turn away from becoming too much aware of the unsatisfactory nature of existence. There may therefore be a psychological resistance to proceeding further in that direction, and this resistance in itself is productive of conflict and suffering.

According to temperament and situation, the results of this kind of reaction, which is really an inadequate response, will vary. They may be resignation, despair, self-pity, or some form of activity which, whatever its ostensible object, is really intended to drown thought. The activity may consist of indulgence in sense-pleasures, or even in the busy, extravert organizing of other people's affairs. There may well be a certain hysterical, feverish quality about it, an over-assertiveness that does not ring quite true, and a constant fear of being alone and unoccupied. We might say that, in terms of dependent origination, the primal ignorance which determines our sankharas, our basic patterns of thought and behaviour, is fighting to maintain itself against the threatening insight which might destroy it. The well-known hindrances to meditation are liable to

manifest themselves, especially perhaps restlessness, possible alternating with sloth-and-torpor. Many forms of flight from reality which the psychologists have classified and labelled as different kinds of neuroses have this origin. It is important to remember in this connection that we are all, as unenlightened beings, more or less neurotic.

There are a good many people who have come to Buddhism because they are unhappy, and who realize to quite an extent why they are unhappy, but who yet feel unable to undertake the necessary steps to free themselves from this state. Their attitude may often best be summed up in the biblical phrase: 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'. Self-reproach, and declaring oneself a miserable sinner, is of course not the Buddhist way of dealing with this situation. One may not be able to avoid feeling impulses one knows to be unhealthy, or more exactly, unskilful—*akusala*, and even perhaps yielding to those impulses. But one can and should try to avoid adding self-deception to one's other misdeeds. One should even, I would suggest, have a certain degree of tolerance for one's own weakness. An attitude of ironical tolerance of one's past folly —which is anyway over now and can't be undone, is better than self-reproach, which breeds self-hate. And we should no more hate ourselves than we should hate others. By learning not to hate ourselves, in fact, we can learn how not to hate others.

Na hi verena verāni sammant' idha kudacanam, averena ca sammanti — eso dhammo sanantano.

Hatred is not at any time stilled by hatred, hatred is stilled by non-hatred—that is the eternal law.

This law applies to hating ourselves just as much as to hating others. Rather we should investigate the roots of that hate which we find within us, and we shall always find that fundamentally it is based on an inadequate response to the human situation—to the particular human situation in which we find ourselves.

Fundamentally, the ego is made up of desires and aversions, rooted in ignorance, To give them up completely means giving up the ego completely. This is a large task, and we are bound

to encounter failures on the way—plenty of them. We must be prepared to accept this fact, and try neither to underestimate nor to overestimate their importance. This means awareness, and above all never trying to pretend that something is not present in our minds just because we would prefer to ignore it. If we feel bored, we should learn to watch and study our very boredom instead of frantically running away from it. And we should always realize that in fact we are most probably not free from the petty greeds and hates which we see operative in other people. With increasing insight into our own motives we shall probably find we are more aware of their real motives too —perhaps more so than they are themselves, or at least so it may seem. This is to some extent a sign of dawning insight, but it should not lead us into conceit. Rather should we feel tolerance and compassion for other beings entangled in the same snares that we are caught in ourselves.

Buddhism teaches not only the nature and origin of suffering, but also its ceasing and the path which leads to its ceasing. The third truth tells us that suffering ceases with the end of craving. This is the truth of Nibbana. It is transcendental, only to be realized for oneself as the result of training. I do not propose to talk about this here. But at a lower level we can become notably calmer and more balanced, and therefore happier, by understanding something of how our minds habitually work, and by realizing that in understanding itself we have the key to enlightenment. By seeing the process at work we have already robbed it of some of its power to harm us.

IV

Faith, Hope and Charity

Are these three well-known Christian virtues also Buddhist virtues at all? It has been doubted with respect to all three.
'Buddhism is the religion of reason and self-help—where does faith come in? Wasn't it just because the Christians and all the others insisted "You've got to have faith" that I came to Buddhism?'
Hope: 'Buddha, the pessimistic atheist, taught a doctrine of resignation'.
Charity: 'The goal of Buddhism is essentially selfish—"work out *your own* salvation with diligence" and, in effect, devil take the hindmost'.
All these arguments have been put up with a certain show of plausibility to suggest that the portals of Nirvana, going one, or even two, better than Dante's Inferno, are inscribed 'Abandon Faith, Hope, Charity All Ye Who Enter Here'.

They do not, of course, bear very close examination. If I take up Buddhism because it preaches reason and self-help, which it does, surely that means I have some faith in reason and in my own powers to help myself—or at least some hope. To call the Buddha a pessimist begs quite a lot of questions, and even to call him an atheist needs some explaining to avoid misconceptions. And to label selfish a doctrine which so radically rejects the very idea of self is frankly nonsensical.

Let us then see what faith, hope and charity mean in Buddhist terms, beginning with hope. The condition of man in the world is a precarious and unhappy one, the Buddha tells us, but it is not without hope. Hope implies some acceptance that there is at least a chance of some improvement on the present situation, a possibility of something positive. The

inmates of Dante's Hell, condemned to endless torment, had no such hope. The materialist to whom physical death is the absolute end fears, it is true, no hell, but he too can have no hopes beyond this life. Indeed, since all life must undoubtedly one day cease on this planet, he cannot even console himself with any lasting hopes for humanity, or for life itself as he in any way knows it. His hopes for himself are exclusively bound up with this life, and even for others they are in the same terms and on the same strictly limited conditions. Now Buddhism preaches neither eternal life as usually imagined, nor annihilation, but something different, which is harder to grasp. But at least it permits of hope in a wider context than that of the chancy survival of the physical body for a few more years.

We may say, then, that hope means *looking for a chance*. The converse of hope is despair, which makes it almost impossible to seize any chance which may be offered. Let us then have hope. Let us not be *such* dyed-in-the-wool anti-wishful-thinkers that we can never even believe it possible that something desirable might occur. Let us at least be open to a little hope. Even in this life it brings benefits, and from such hope there can spring faith in others and charity towards them, which are not negligible things. An attitude of despairing anti-wishful-thinking is still fashionable in some quarters and has done great harm. For instance, it has poisoned international relations for a long time, and now at last it seems as if there are signs that some hope, and with it faith and charity, are creeping in to dissolve the cold-war mentality.

Faith is deeper than hope because it implies trust. Where hope seeks for a chance of not despairing, faith *seizes a chance*. It casts out doubt and takes the chance which is offered it, entrusts itself to it, and goes with it. Now this attitude is obviously, for many people at least, far more difficult, and at first sight it is hard to justify intellectually. Most people would say: 'Well, of course one can always *hope*', but the *act of faith* is far more radical. It looks too much like just throwing caution to the winds. And naturally it is true that faith can be misplaced. We undoubtedly need criteria for distinguishing true faith from false faith. Hope and faith are also generally, I

IV

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also abandons thoughts of self and thus begins—even if at first almost incidentally—to function *selflessly*. But this selflessness is the characteristic of true love and friendship also.

Faith goes forward blindly. Is then true faith really blind, or is it not really, as it were, shutting its eyes in order to see more effectively with a different organ? That is what we have to find out. The eyes are useful instruments for getting what we want *in this world*. But suppose what we want is *not of this world*? What use then are the eyes? They are attracted by everything that glitters, whether gold or not. Try shutting them and see what happens then: that is what faith tells us. 'Mysticism' comes from the Greek word *myein*, 'to close the eyes'.

There are obvious objections to this. A humanist, for instance, may say that he sees no reason for committing himself to this kind of transcendental faith: his faith may be limited and his ultimate hopes vain, but at least he has his feet on the ground, and he can exercise charity without going through any doubtful metaphysical experiments. There would seem to be no easy answer to this except that of personal experience. And the fact that misplaced faith may be dangerous is obvious enough: Hitler inspired faith in a whole nation with disastrous results. Even religions have often enough led their believers into evil deeds by faith. To this objection, at any rate, there is at least a negatively satisfying rational answer: in Buddhist faith there is, at worst, nothing to lose. It is not the faith of a fanatic, and deeds born of true Buddhist faith will do no harm, even if we were to assume that they did no good. In any case it is hardly a matter of outward deeds at all, though these may come as a by-product.

Human life is dominated by fear. Hope alternates with fear. I hope something will happen, because I fear it won't. I fear something will happen because I hope it won't. Faith transcends hope and fear, and thus casts out fear. Love too casts out fear, and in this way too love and faith are akin. The basic fear, it has been said, is the fear of the unknown *within ourselves*. From dread of this unknown, we cling to the familiar, even though it is unsatisfactory. As a lady said to me: 'I cling to

my own misery'. That is profoundly true—we all do. But there can be only one basic reason for this—fear of the unknown. This unknown lurks within us and we will do almost *anything* except face it. Faith means *facing* this unknown. All that we know is brought to us by the six senses—the five outer senses with mind as the sixth. And all this is transient, unsatisfactory, insubstantial. If there *is* a true reality beyond these senses, it must be of a different nature. The question then is: Can it in any way be known? Let us note the form of the question: not 'Can *we* know it?' but 'Can it be known?' The answer would seem to be that *we* cannot know it, but it *can be known*. The ego cannot know reality, but when the ego is not operative, reality can be known.

The ego is of the nature of all the things it knows: transient, unsatisfactory, insubstantial. To go beyond implies the dissolving of the ego. This at least is how it seems. But of course this does not mean that if I 'dissolve my ego' *I* cease to have something which previously *I* had. It just means that a wrong concept has been got rid of so that the true position is now revealed. If a man mistakes a piece of old rope for a snake he is frightened. When he realizes it is only a piece of rope he has lost a wrong concept and with it his fear. But the piece of rope hasn't changed. It was only a piece of rope to begin with. The ego-concept is harder to get rid of but the principle is the same. Let us say that in fact I do not have a permanent ego, but rather that a new 'ego' is born every moment. Each such moment is a thought or act of consciousness, i.e. there is awareness *of* something. These moments form a continuous series in time, linked by memory and conditioned by habit. The continuity of memory and habit binding the momentary links produces the *feeling* 'I': 'I want', 'I don't want' and so on. Thus all sensations and perceptions, together with willing and thinking, are referred to an 'I' situated in this physical body. Probably we should say the 'ego-feeling' rather than concept, because that is more what it is. It is like an *inherited emotion*—not genetically inherited, but inherited from one moment of consciousness to the next. It becomes a concept when we intellectualize it, but really it is feeling—feeling as one of the

qualities of these moments. We might even say that the moments *crave* for this feeling of 'I-ness', just as a smoker craves for cigarettes. This explains why reason is not sufficient to get rid of it. The ego is not real, and its world, whether in any sense real or not, is dreadfully insecure, but familiar. What may lie beyond may be more real, or the only reality, but it is unknown, and therefore dreaded.

The need for faith and its role now become clear. The ego has got to commit suicide. Faith is a leap over the precipice. Why should we seek this faith which is so uncomfortable? Professor Suzuki in his 'Veranda Talk' says:

'When a man gets to the edge he will have a fear of jumping, but a certain urge will carry him over. The moment he decides to put aside his fear is exactly the moment he jumps.'

He also says:

'A man thinks he's jumping into a bottomless pit, but he finds when he jumps that the lotus flower rises to meet him. It is a going down as well as a coming up.'

Here speaks the voice of experience, the voice of a man who has jumped. Can he describe his experience? No, but the image of the lotus rising up conveys to us all that we need to know —or can know—in advance. Whatever happened was not so terrible after all, and it was infinitely worth while. No other single thing we can do is comparably worth while. That fact shines out of his words. Before we jump, the lotus is hidden and there is merely a yawning abyss. We should not even try to think what it is like after the jump, because any answer is bound to be wrong. That is why faith is necessary. And yet the lotus is really inside us all the time—deep down in the murky depths of our own unconscious nature, out of which it grows like a real lotus out of the mud. But we might say that this lotus has a subtly pervasive scent, if only we have keen enough nostrils to smell it. Once we have caught a whiff of that scent it can lead us in the right direction. But if like dogs we prefer to sniff at lamp posts, we will miss it.

What comes after this experience has no name. There are still stages to be traversed, after that first jump, before full

enlightenment is reached. But the thing is with faith to make that first jump, not bothering overmuch about concepts and labels. Some would speak of the Grace of God, others would say that when the little self has been destroyed our true Self stands revealed. These are words which may help us along, but if insisted on all such words become a hindrance, and we merely replace a petty wrong concept by another one of a higher order. That is the reason why Buddhism, so disconcertingly for some, dispenses with all talk of either God or 'Higher Self'. Yet if we wish to have it in Christian terms we can scarcely do better than listen to the words of Master Eckhart describing what he calls 'true obedience'.

'When man in obedience goes out of himself, then God must of necessity go in there; for if a man wills nothing for himself, then God must will for that man in like fashion as for himself. When I have given up my own will into the hands of my superior and will nothing for myself, then God must will for me, and if he neglect me in this, he neglects himself. Thus it is in all things: when I will nothing for myself, then God wills for me. Now attend! What does he will for me, if I will nothing for myself? In that I entrust myself to him, he must of necessity will all that which he wills for himself, neither more nor less, and in the same way as he wills for himself. And if God did not do this—then by the truth which is God, God would not be just and would not be God, which is his natural being.'

In another striking passage Eckhart refers to the 'citadel of the soul' into which the intellect cannot look. But more than this:

'This citadel is so truly one and onefold, and this unique oneness is so far above all shapes and all powers that no power nor form can ever gaze on it, nor can God himself. In all truth, and as truly as God lives! God himself never looks in it for a moment and has never looked therein, in so far as he acts according to the mode and characteristics of his Persons. This is noteworthy, for this only One is without mode or property. And therefore, if God should ever look therein, it would cost him all his Divine names and his personal characteristics: he

must altogether abandon these, if he is ever to look therein. But in so far as he is a unique One without any mode or properties: in so far as he is neither Father nor Son nor Holy Ghost in this sense, but "that which eternally is", which is neither this nor that; look! just in so far as he is one and simple, he can enter what I call the "citadel in the soul".'

The act of faith is the letting-go of the ego, so that That which has no name can flow in.

What now is the role of charity in Buddhism—or friendliness, as we decided to call it? Here again let us turn to Eckhart for an answer. He says: 'If you love yourself, you love all men as yourself'. Now of course most of us might feel that we have too much, rather than too little self-love. The trouble is that we haven't yet learnt *how* to love ourselves. Our normal form of self-love is a more or less refined form of 'clinging to our misery'. Why we do this should by now be perhaps reasonably clear. It is the only thing we know—even if it is the devil we know. The saying 'love thy neighbour as thyself' is older than Christianity. It is older than Buddhism too, being part of the old Jewish wisdom of the Old Testament—though Christians sometimes forget this. It is the merit of Buddhism to have laid down a precise course of training for performing this difficult act. First of all, as Eckhart clearly saw, one must know how to love oneself properly. This means knowing ourselves. When we know what is wrong we can deal with it. Our suffering is rooted in greed, hate and illusion. The ego itself is an illusion, and too often it manifests in the form of acts of greed and hate —of desire and aversion. We cling to desires, we even cling to aversions, because we suffer from a compulsive delusion that it is necessary to cling to something. Actually we should cling to *nothing*. Perception of this fact is wisdom, which sees both the disease and the cure.

The wisdom which sees the nature of the disease cannot but will the cure. Only ignorance, which is un-seeing, un-witting (*avijjā*) *can* will otherwise. Nor can such wisdom make any distinction between you and me. By curing myself I *cannot help* helping you. The process is automatic, and requires no separate act of will. Its only limit lies in your degree of

receptivity. This is no different from my own case, for the only limit to my power of self-help lies in my own degree of receptivity to that power. The more I can clear out the rubbish in my own mind—'drive out the merchants from the temple', as Eckhart puts it, the more That which is nameless can flow in, and That which is Wisdom and Love cannot fail to have its effects on my dealings with others. One who is enlightened, or even on the path, quite automatically helps others without fussing and worrying about them: his serenity has a supremely infectious quality. Strictly speaking, to be too consciously 'unselfish' is just another manifestation of the ego. It is closely akin to the pride that apes humility, which is not only intensely irritating to others but extremely dangerous. The true sage is compassionate without fuss and worry. Thus too we can see that the alleged conflict between the ideal of the all-compassionate Bodhisattva and the Arahant headed for his 'private nirvana' is sheer nonsense.

This does not mean that we should not deliberately practise friendliness. We certainly should do so, as a means of overcoming the hate in ourselves. There is a standard practice for this, along with the other qualities of compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. The goal of these meditations is reached when absolutely no distinction is made between oneself and others. In such a state, too, it can scarcely be said that any distinction exists between Wisdom and Love, since both are present when all false distinctions are removed. Faith, by 'letting-go' of the world of discriminations, leads to the same goal. And where we make no discrimination, we see the misery caused by discrimination.

St Paul said of faith, hope and charity: 'and the greatest of these is charity'. Let us not dispute this. One thing only might be urged, that for modern man faith is often harder to come by than charity. How can we perform the 'gesture of faith' which even Kierkegaard admitted was beyond him? Suffering is the spur—since without it we should have no motive for seeking anything, which is why the Buddha put it first in his entire system. But if we are sufficiently acutely aware of suffering we have the most powerful incentive to go out and look for a way

to end it. And in any case we have nothing to lose by trying the Buddhist way. Buddhist faith is not belief, and in approaching it one need not 'believe' in anything such as reincarnation and so on. It is quite simply something to try. In fact even the gamble of faith in Buddhism costs nothing, since by a delightful paradox we pay in worthless currency: all you have to put down are the devalued notes of an inflated ego.

V

Detachment

One way of regarding the Buddhist training is to consider it under the aspect of detachment. Detachment is one of those simple things which we discover to be very profound and in its higher stages intensely difficult. By becoming progressively more detached one gradually penetrates to the heart of Buddhism. Its importance is repeatedly stressed under various aspects throughout the whole range of the Buddhist scriptures. For instance in the formula describing how one enters the first *jhana*: 'Detached from sensual objects, o Monks, detached from unwholesome states of mind, the monk enters into the first *jhana*, which is accompanied by initial and sustained application (*vitakka-vicara*), is born of detachment (*viveka*) and filled with rapture and joy'. The second *jhana* is then said to be 'born of concentration'. We thus see that detachment is a prerequisite for all concentration. The calm and concentrated mind is a detached mind. While this is obvious enough when we stop to think about it, it may help us to realize why it is that, even in purely mundane matters, we so often fail to concentrate our minds. We all know the picture of the man with furiously knitted brows and a wet towel round his head, who is desperately trying to 'concentrate' on some problem. Of course he usually fails. The reason, surely, is not far to seek: he is going about it precisely the wrong way. He is not detached. He is in fact very much *at*tached. He may be detached from sense-objects for the moment, but not from unwholesome states of mind. His state of mind is probably dominated by *uddhacca-kukkucca*, 'restlessness and worry', and so long as this remains the case he will probably get nowhere with his problem. His body too, reflecting this mental tension, is probably

tense and strained. He should first try to relax, physically as well as mentally, and then he might make some progress.

At this point perhaps we might pause to consider an objection which is not infrequently made to the cultivation of detachment. There are people who positively regard it as morally wrong to be detached. One should not, they say, become detached and aloof from life, but should be actively involved in it—*engagé* as the French say. Detachment is the equivalent of that opprobrious term we used to hear so much about—'escapism'. Their argument is of course a very simple one: there is so much evil in the world of one kind or another that it is our job to go out and fight it. Now I am not going to argue that such people—let us call them as a generic term the crusaders as opposed to the introspectives—do not on occasion do a lot of good. A society, or a world, which has a few dedicated crusaders in it is probably in its mundane way—which is the best its nature can rise to—healthier than one which discourages or represses their activities. Certainly they may often succeed in preventing or abolishing, or at least reducing, much genuine evil. Let us then take off our hats to them, perhaps even sometimes join or support them, provided they are not mere fanatics. But let us also consider their position a little more closely. *Why* does the average 'crusader' function as he does—irrespective of the particular cause he elects to take up? What *really* makes him tick? The answer to this question may put the whole matter in a rather different light.

Most of our crusader friends, whether they go in for party politics or for other similar, perhaps semi-political causes they believe in, are convinced that they do so out of love for their fellow-beings, whether human or animal. Partly this is certainly true of the type of person I have in mind. They do, passionately, want to help the poor, the sick, the oppressed, the suffering. But in fact their motives are usually not quite as pure as they themselves honestly believe them to be. The key to the situation, I think, lies in the word 'passionately'. They are under the sway of emotions, not all of which are, in the Buddhist view, entirely healthy. Conceit often plays a large if probably unconscious part. And surprisingly often too they are really moved

far more by hate than by loving-kindness. Hatred, even of the oppressor or the criminal, is not really the right motive because it is not grounded in the right view.

Now I am not seeking to disparage these people or to belittle their efforts, nor is their attitude to life even my main theme today. I merely want to elucidate something of their situation in the context of my real theme, which is detachment. So let us take a concrete example where in fact I agree wholeheartedly with the positive aims of the crusaders: the case of capital punishment and flogging. In this country we have at the moment a strange situation which actually satisfies nobody, probably. We have abolished flogging and half-abolished capital punishment. The situation as it stands is quite illogical and there are passionate advocates on both sides, for making the law either more humane or less humane in both respects. Those who demand more severity are apparently in the majority, though in fact the weight of statistical evidence is against them. Their reaction is certainly an emotional one, rooted in hate. They really seek, without knowing it, a 'safe' or 'legitimate' outlet for their own aggressive emotions. These emotions in turn are rooted in their own basic feeling of insecurity. And the further trouble is of course that such emotions when held collectively are always much worse than when merely held by an individual, not only on account of being multiplied, but because at a lower level. That is why those who oppose such a view must be very careful indeed of their own state of mind. They must try not to let themselves be trapped in an opposite emotional reaction. They must seek to find a way of reducing the build-up of emotional tension so that in a calmer atmosphere wiser counsels may have a chance to prevail. Emotional appeals will anyway probably be useless, since the stronger emotions will be ranged on the other side. If you want, in fact, to abolish capital punishment you must not want to hang the executioner. Supporters of capital punishment often claim that its opponents show too much sympathy for the murderer and not enough for his victim. It does not seem too much to ask that a Buddhist — or a Christian — should be able to feel

compassion for both, and even for the hangman as well, for he is certainly not creating much good karma for himself.

Now I am not at all arguing that a Buddhist should necessarily stand aloof from such campaigns as this. I *am* arguing that whatever he does he should know his own true motives, his real emotional reasons for either acting or not acting. I would also suggest that it is truly necessary for society as well as for the individual concerned that there should be those who in fact keep themselves very much aloof from the current problems that happen to agitate the world at any given moment. It is not for our crusading friends to disparage those who are genuinely detached. If the crusader *for* capital punishment is a victim of his own unresolved aggression and insecurity, how often is not his opponent in virtually the same case! A slight shift in viewpoint and sometimes the roles are even reversed—a Saul becomes a Paul. For St Paul, great man though he undoubtedly was in many ways, remained a fanatic to the end of his days. He served a better cause, but in many ways he served it ill. The tragedy of Christianity from his day to ours has been its Pauline intolerance, which is probably one reason why many of us have come to Buddhism.

The reformer looks around him and sees something wrong in society. This is usually not difficult, as there are plenty of things wrong with most societies. What does he do then? He becomes what is significantly called an agitator. Now you can only agitate others if you yourself are agitated. What has *really* happened to our would-be reformer is that, his own emotions having been suitably stirred up, he feels it his duty to go out and stir up the emotions of other people. I know. I have gone through this phase myself. If you suggest to him that he should first calm his own emotions he is aggrieved, thereby developing some more agitation. He will probably tell you that is the easy way out, and he may even admit that in any case he doesn't know how to do it. Of course if you can get him that far it may be possible to indicate to him the contradiction involved. If he cannot help himself to that extent, how can he expect to be able to help others? Even in the field of Buddhism there are those who seem to think they can

become Bodhisattvas and 'liberate all beings' without first liberating themselves. Such Buddhists, of course, should take to heart the advice of the great Zen patriarch Hui-neng 'to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings of our own mind'. The fact is we are all far too ready to turn our good intentions outwards, and most of us will make almost any excuse to avoid the introspection necessary to deal with our own problems. With all regard, then, for our friends the crusaders and the would-be Bodhisattvas, the boot of escapism is on the other foot. When we have discovered where *that* pinches, we may turn to setting the world to rights if we still think we can.

Without considering such world, or social problems any further at this point, let us turn, then, to the problem within and the question of detachment. What is it we have to get detached from? In a sense of course it is the outside world. That at least is how it seems to us. I am not going to enter here into a metaphysical discussion about whether there really *is* an outside world at all or not. In point of fact, from the standpoint of the Buddhist training it scarcely matters whether there is or there is not. Perhaps we just project the whole thing from some mysterious inner centre. In any case what we have to get rid of is our preoccupation with it—with the things of the senses, in fact. What actually happens, of course, is this: we have an unsatisfactory feeling in the only place where we can have such a feeling, which is within ourselves. This feeling may take various forms, but whatever its precise nature or mode of manifesting it is something unpleasant and therefore fundamentally that which in Buddhism is known as *dukkha*. It may be quite vague in character, but we feel it somehow nevertheless. We therefore look out into the world, either to see what it is that is causing this *dukkha*, or to help us forget it, by grasping at something which we assume to be pleasant. The result in either case is not really very satisfying, because we are not really looking in the right direction. Both the origin of *dukkha* and its cure are to be found within, so it is not the slightest bit of use looking outside for them. By looking outside, we are actually increasing the *dukkha* and ensuring its continuance. But creatures of habit as we are, we are strongly conditioned to

looking outside, and indeed nature has equipped us with some remarkably efficient sense-organs for doing so.

With our outward-turned senses we can do various things about the world we see and hear, smell, taste and touch. We can try to grasp something outside and extract enjoyment from it. We can try to alter what we see in some way to make it conform more to our idea of what it ought to be like. Or we can vent our ill-temper on it in a fit of destructiveness. There is a lot of this sort of purposeless destructiveness about nowadays. There always has been, really, but we have now made it a special problem, the 'problem of modern youth'. The truth is that modern youth has in some ways rather more opportunities for being destructive than it used to have. This is due in large measure to the nature and values of the society we live in, a society which has developed more efficient means of destruction than were ever dreamed of before. The fact that it has also developed more wealth and therefore more means of apparent enjoyment, available to more people than ever before, does not seem to have done very much to reduce the general feeling of dissatisfaction each one of us has deep down inside. All this, of course, goes a long way towards confirming the Buddhist analysis of the situation, that the origin of this suffering, of *dukkha*, lies in craving. Our society is built up fundamentally on a system of artificially stimulated craving all along the line. We accordingly have the simultaneous picture of more and more people craving for more things, and quite often getting them, and of both society and individuals showing more and more taste for bigger and bigger forms of 'motiveless' destruction. Greed and hate, in fact, are perhaps more nakedly at work in our society than ever before. That means they are at work in every one of us, and they can only be dealt with in and by each one of us.

Greed and hate arise from ignorance: from not understanding, not seeing the true situation as it really is. The individual is a microcosm of society, and each one of us reflects this situation, in some form, individually. Now it may be very dreadful, but so far nobody has found a way whereby society can collectively overcome its ignorance and set itself fundamentally to

rights. Even the Buddha did not show a method of bringing this about. But for each individual there is a way. 'Cease to do evil, learn to do good. Purify your own mind—that is the teaching of all the Buddhas.' And one of the prerequisites of purifying one's own mind is the cultivation of detachment. If we ask 'Detachment from what?'—the answer is 'from the five hindrances': sensual craving and ill-will, sloth, restless worry and indecision. These are things we all know only too well, and though their final conquest is difficult, they are things we can detach our minds from temporarily with a little effort. The first two of these five are obviously aspects of greed and hate. Probably we can see that there is a need to cut these down as much as possible. But if we fail to do so it may be at least in part because one of the other three hindrances is preventing us: we may be too indolent or too excited, or we may dither in a state of indecision and doubt.

Now the trouble is that we may see quite clearly, in a way, that our emotions of, say, greed or hate or fear are overmastering us, and yet feel quite unable to do anything about them. Then we probably dismiss the whole problem with the words 'Oh yes, that's all very well, but I just haven't got the will-power'. In fact it is just here that the value of detachment comes in. What we think of as a failure of will-power may really be much more a failure of technique. Let us take the case of a man who, as he thinks and as others probably also think, cannot control his temper. The deeper reasons for this failure may be various, but they will probably include some strong form of frustration or repression. It is not very difficult to see that the chances of gaining control of any situation are likely to be increased the more one understands that situation. Now what is called repression in psychology is really a 'thrusting away'—in other words it is basically a refusal to see something, a form of deliberate self-deception. To gain insight into the situation we must have some willingness to understand it. So we need to realize here, right at the outset, that there is a form of clinging present: clinging to ignorance. In order to cope with this there must be a degree of detachment—we must be able to regard the situation coolly and simply learn not to

mind too much whatever it is we may be about to discover. We must be prepared to stop working on the old and foolish principle 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise'.

It is possible that even this much of the chain of events may be fairly clear to us, and yet we may still not feel able to go any further. Intellectual awareness of an emotional situation is not in itself enough, though this does not mean that it is of no use. It is just a preliminary stage, and it should be strongly emphasized that progress is in stages. The desire for perfection at a single jump is just another obstacle born of impatience and conceit. It is not an 'all-or-nothing' situation, but a case of 'one step at a time'. Perhaps we have already laid a certain foundation on which progress can be made, even without realizing it. For the man who has said to himself 'I haven't the will-power to correct this fault' has at least made one vital admission. He has in some measure accepted his own inadequacy. He has to learn, however, that what he really lacks is not necessarily will-power so much as insight. The next step is merely and simply to recognize *this* fact. It will prove more helpful than may at first appear. For in fact seeing ourselves as we are *is* the cure.

The next step then is to find out why we do not already 'see ourselves as we are'. The answer is, of course, as already indicated, that we don't want to, that there is a clinging to ignorance. Why this should be so is perhaps after all not hard to see. To the person with normal eyesight, physical blindness is a terrible thing. We can only too well imagine the feeling of helplessness and insecurity the blind person must suffer from. It is therefore not at all nice to think that though our physical eyes may be all right, we suffer from mental blindness. So we prefer to be blind to the blindness. This is attachment to ignorance with a vengeance. No wonder it is frustrating, for it is a terrible strain to keep up. Most of our unhealthy emotions are nothing but by-products of this tension, caused by deliberately keeping our mental eyes tight shut while all the time pretending they are wide open. Only the practice of mindfulness can help us here.

What is mindfulness? There are professing Buddhists who are extremely vague about what mindfulness really is, and

there are even some who are actually afraid of it and who therefore go about telling themselves and others that it is not really necessary, though it is obvious that the Buddha himself placed considerable stress on it, to say the least. In principle mindfulness is quite simple. It is just detached watching. Watching one's breathing is a method which is probably suitable for practically everybody. First of all it brings calm, which enables one to watch one's thoughts and emotions more easily, and reduces the fear of what may come up—an important point. If mindfulness is pursued for a while, some such experience as the following may occur: a kind of 'unreal' feeling may arise in which one seems to be aware of various emotional states — perhaps self-pity, anger or the like — without being fully involved in them. One may start thinking 'Am I really having this emotion or not? Am I somehow putting on an act?' What is really happening is just that feelings are simply being experienced with detachment. And in such a state one can allow many things to come up to the surface which were previously repressed. But being detached, one is not trapped by these emotional states and sees them as mere effects of past conditioning. And in this way they can be harmlessly dissolved.

The interesting thing is that when such a situation is operative, everything really seems to go on just as before, with only one slight difference. 'I' am not fully in the situation. There may even be a distinct feeling of puzzlement as to where precisely 'I' am anyway. Am I, for instance, the emotion or the watcher? Or neither, or both? By following up this particular clue we may find that the practice leads us on further to a greater degree of understanding of the impersonality of all things—of our own fundamental egolessness, in fact. But that is not the point I wish to make here. The point is here simply that by becoming calm and detached we have, so to speak, 'accepted the unacceptable'. As a result of this practice we shall find a reduction in our own feeling of tension, greater calm and, most probably, some increased insight into our own nature and the way things *really* work.

We can now see, then, the practical answer to our ill-tempered friend's problem. He cannot restrain his temper by

will-power, but by detached mindfulness he can gradually dissolve it. And the same, of course, applies to all our failings and weaknesses. But there is one form of attachment we must guard especially against because it makes the cure much more difficult. This is conceit. We all have conceit, of course, but if it is strong it is a particularly dangerous obstacle to progress. Conceit is really attachment to a false picture of the ego. Put negatively, it is a refusal to accept oneself as one is. It may manifest in the feeling 'I cannot possibly have these weaknesses', or 'I have overcome these weaknesses'. Combined with certain forms of, for instance, sexual repression it may take the form of a sort of 'purity complex': 'I am above all these horrid feelings of sex, they no longer exist for me', and the like. It may sober anyone who thinks this to realize that according to Buddhism these things are only decisively weakened at the Second Path, and abandoned at the Third. It stands to reason that for a person with this kind of attitude the development of true detachment and hence of true mindfulness will be exceptionally difficult. We must not be ashamed to admit to ourselves (if not perhaps necessarily to others) that we possess our full store of *all* the normal human weaknesses. In fact there is no perversion of sex, sadism, selfishness or meanness, cowardice or treachery which is fundamentally completely alien to us. As somebody said the other day 'we each have an Eichmann inside us'. To cure our condition we must learn to face the monster within in all his grisly horror.

At this point there comes an interesting and subtle twist. You may say 'Yes, I suppose that's true. But somehow there *are* a few things down there inside me which I just *can't* bring myself to face.' Now this is of course quite different from denying that they are there at all. It means in fact that repression, i.e. self-deception, has not been completely successful. Now it may indeed be true that to face up fully to some of the contents of one's unconscious may be too hard to bear. It might be impossible to maintain detachment. Emotional involvement and perhaps even quite serious trouble might result. But there is still a way. What we *can* do is to accept honestly *that* situation: 'There is a dark corner where I still dare not look'. It is

the mental equivalent of saying 'I have a sore place which I dare not touch'. The technique from then on is basically the same as before, only at one remove. There is just a secondary emotion of fear to be dissolved before the primary situation which is the cause of that fear can be investigated. If that secondary fear is itself treated with the detachment we have used on other and less frightening emotions, it too can be dissolved. Later we may even look back and wonder why it was that we ever feared to look in that particular dark corner.

To sum up: detachment is not a kind of selfish flight from the world, but the necessary precondition for coping with the world. It is absolutely essential as a means of dealing with our own emotions. Nor is it in any way incompatible with charity or compassion—as indeed any doctor or nurse can tell you. It is not 'escapism' as is sometimes alleged, but its very opposite. The degree of physical detachment and withdrawal which the individual undertakes may vary considerably—it will be much greater for the monk than for the average lay person. There can be no successful higher meditation without detachment from the things of the senses, and it is an essential ingredient of Right Mindfulness. Incidentally it can even be quite fun. By being detached we can observe ourselves with ironic amusement. By so doing we may suddenly discover that some of the things about ourselves that we once took with deadly seriousness are in fact extremely funny. In this way we may find that detachment actually enables us to enjoy our own *dukkha*!

VI

The Buddhist Conception of Immortality

The Buddhist conception of Immortality, or the Deathless State (*amatam* in Pali or *amrtam* in Sanskrit) is perhaps best considered, initially at least, by considering what it is not. In other words, what does it contrast with? To most people with a Christian background, immortality is a concept which contrasts with that of annihilation. In other words we are faced, in the usual Western view, with the alternative possibilities that I either have an immortal soul which will go on living in some form after my bodily death, or I have not, and death comes as the absolute end. And so to state that Buddhism teaches neither of these things is naturally puzzling to many people. Yet according to the Buddhist teaching these things do not apply either to the ordinary person, or to the enlightened man, though their paths are admittedly different. In fact to state the problem in such terms is to put it wrongly, and the answer to the question of immortality cannot be found until the question itself is posed correctly.

Now in the Buddhist view, our ordinary life in this world is unsatisfactory, productive of pain and frustration. The suffering of life is due to craving and can be eliminated by the uprooting of craving. The way to get rid of craving, and hence of suffering, is given in the Noble Eightfold Path in its aspects of ethical discipline and mental training, culminating in the arising of insight and wisdom. This, according to the Buddhist teaching, is the path to the Deathless State. Now the craving which leads to suffering is stated to be of three kinds: craving for sense-objects, craving for eternal life, and craving for extinction. The third of these three forms of craving may seem surprising till we remember the Freudian death-wish, and in fact

most people can probably be induced to agree if pressed that such a wish is actually present somewhere in their minds, even if perhaps seldom admitted to normal consciousness.

All these forms of craving are said to be rooted in ignorance —that fundamental ignorance of the nature of things as they are which is only overcome by enlightenment. The first form of craving—for sense-objects—need not detain us long in this connection. It may be equated with the lusts of the flesh which are recognized by Christians as a major obstacle to spiritual progress. The other two—craving for eternal life and craving for extinction—are associated in Buddhism with false views regarding the self. In order to attain complete liberation, both of these false views must be eliminated. The argument concerning the self, in its simplest form, might perhaps be stated like this: supposing that I have such a thing as a 'real self', then this must be either independent of the body, so that it can survive the death of the body, or else not independent of the body, so that at the death of the body it too dies. In other words, there is a self now, and it will continue after death, or else there is a self now, but it will *not* continue after death. But if no such self can be found in this life, then these two alternatives do not arise: there is *no* self now, so obviously there will be none after death.

We must return later to consider the question of whether such a self can really be found or not, but for the moment let us observe the interesting corollary: if in fact there *seems* to be a self now, there may equally *seem* to be just such a self in future. Therefore, while Buddhism denies the reincarnation of an actually existing ego, self or soul, it can and does accept that such a process *appears* to operate. Relatively, I exist now, and relatively, I shall be reincarnated (unless I achieve enlightenment in this life) in the same sense in the future. Indeed Buddhism teaches that this process has been going on for endless time in the past, and—failing enlightenment—will continue indefinitely into the future. The prospect may seem consoling to some, but since life is predominantly suffering, this form of 'eternal life' is actually a curse and not a blessing. The Deathless State, then, does not mean this accursed form of

eternal life, which is life-and-death, but is in contrast to it.

It is only possible to touch briefly here on the famous doctrine of *anattā* or 'no-self'. Of course to the man in the street the idea that 'I have no self' is ridiculous, but to those with some knowledge of philosophy and psychology it is less surprising today. After all, two centuries ago David Hume could find only 'particular perceptions' whenever he tried to 'catch myself'. Incidentally, Hume seems to have found this not incompatible with some form of metempsychosis. Freud, too, actually went far towards analyzing the 'self' away. The Buddhist analysis deals with the matter in terms of the five aggregates or *skandhas*, which together make up the 'empirical ego'. These are body or corporeality, feelings, perceptions, mental formations (i.e. volitions and the like), and consciousness. Neither in nor behind any of these things can any permanent, unchanging ego or self be found. Such a thing may possibly be there, but if so it is imperceptible, and there is thus nothing we can do about it. Yet it is on the basis of these things that the concept of 'self' arises. Despite its irrationality this concept is very firm and difficult to dislodge, and the Buddhist training is designed to do just this.

The self-belief is associated, as we saw, with craving, and it is this very craving which leads to rebirth, to the renewed uprising of consciousness in a fresh body. This is rather delightfully illustrated in verse 334 of the *Dhammapada*:

> 'The craving of the thoughtless man grows like a creeper:
> He jumps from life to life like a monkey in search of fruit
> in the forest.'

With this verse we may compare another one (*Dhp.* 21):

> 'Heedfulness is the path to the deathless, heedlessness is
> the path to death.
> The heedful do not die, the heedless are as if dead already.'

Thus a clear distinction is made between the heedless man 'jumping from life to life' and the heedful who has attained the deathless state. The deathless is thus clearly equated with the ending of the round of rebirths. But what is it? It cannot be the annihilation of the ego, for there is none to annihilate,

and for the same reason it cannot be an eternal state of existence into which the ego enters. To adopt either of these opinions would be merely to fall into wrong views once again.

But if we still have no clear idea of what Nirvana, the Deathless, *is*, at least we have here a hint, an indication of how it may be attained: by being 'heedful'. What does this involve? It involves, of course, Satipatthana or the practice of mindfulness. In this practice, which is the seventh step on the Eightfold Path, we become 'wise to ourselves' by applying 'bare attention'. Specifically, we attend to four things: body, feelings, states of mind and contents of mind. Since in any case we cannot expect to understand what Nirvana is without having experienced it, it will probably be best if we look a little more closely at this method which is said to lead to the gaining of the experience. An article in *Sangha* by a young German who is now the Bhikkhu Vimalo throws light on this. He writes:

'It is perhaps necessary to tackle our problems in an indirect way. I mean by an indirect or negative approach, coming to it without any conclusion, without any premeditated course of action that enables us to do something about it. As all these things are born out of the desire for security, they are not conducive to understanding.'

And later:

'How eager we are to learn a technique that will free us from our obstacles! We always want to be sure that at the end of the long path there will be gratifying results. When we are not afraid of making mistakes, but really investigate them, then through them we can come to an ever wider and deeper understanding of ourselves. Then it does not matter so much if we make a mistake. It can reveal more to us about how the mind works than our following of a well laid-out course of action.

'By watching ourselves we become aware how, through sense-perceptions, conditioned reactions arise. The mind reacts to sense-perceptions in a certain pattern and brings up fear, desire, aversion, etc. Only through a direct experience of the falseness and inadequacy of this pattern can there be equanimity and guarding of the senses. The main thing is to watch

and to discover the whole conditioning of the mind, from which all the inadequate responses arise such as anger, craving, attachment, seeking gratification and so on. When we discover the true nature of all these things then there is nothing to rejoice at or catch hold of. We have given all these things their value. But it is essential to see it directly and clearly. Perception of truth will free us. Therefore the Buddha always stressed that the elimination of suffering can come about only through Satipatthana. Awareness is the key to an understanding of the mind, of all its many layers.'

This is admirably put, and in very broad outline it gives the answer as to the principal method to be adopted. Clarification of the mind is in itself liberation. At the same time the article contains a clear warning to us not to try to jump ahead and seek to imagine what it must be like when we have arrived at the goal. If this is sound advice with regard to lesser problems, in which we are all too prone to prejudge the issue, how much more necessary is it when it concerns the supreme problem of problems! The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao, and the Nirvana that can be imagined is not the real Nirvana. In fact it logically *must* be incomprehensible to the finite mind. I am not even sure that we can honestly say we are certain that there is such a thing. There is just a method to be tried out, and whether it will bring results we do not know till we have tried. Theorizing does not really help. In the words of the Buddha, as recorded in the *Middle Length Sayings* of the Pali Canon, we find certain statements. In point of fact we have no certain means of knowing that even these are authentic. This too is an assumption, if perhaps an overwhelmingly probable one. Here at least is what he is recorded to have said:

'For, whether the theory exists, or whether it does not exist, that the world is eternal, or temporal, or finite, or infinite—certainly there is birth, there is decay, there is death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, the extinction of which, attainable even in this present life, I make known unto you.

'There is, for instance, an unlearned worldling, void of regard for holy men, ignorant of the teaching of holy men,

untrained in the holy doctrine. And his heart is possessed and overcome by Self-illusion, by Scepticism, by Attachment to mere Rule and Ritual, by Sensual Lust, and by Ill-will; and how to free himself from these things, he does not really know.

'The learned and noble disciple, however, who has regard for holy men, knows the teaching of holy men, is well trained in the noble doctrine, he understands what is worthy of consideration, and what is unworthy. And knowing this, he considers the worthy, and not the unworthy. What suffering is, he wisely considers. What the origin of suffering is, he wisely considers; what the extinction of suffering is, he wisely considers; what the path is that leads to the extinction of suffering, he wisely considers. And by thus considering, three fetters vanish, namely: Self-illusion, Scepticism and Attachment to mere Rule and Ritual. But those disciples in whom these three fetters have vanished, they all have 'entered the Stream', have forever escaped the states of woe, and are assured of final enlightenment.'

This 'entering the Stream' is not itself final enlightenment, but denotes the reaching of a stage after which final enlightenment is assured. Two other stages, marked by the breaking of further fetters, intervene before the state of Arahant or enlightened person is reached. It may just be noted here that the first three fetters, dropped at the initial stage, are largely intellectual in character; while at the second stage (the 'once-returner'), the purely emotional fetters of desire and aversion are decisively weakened, being dropped at the third stage as regards all worldly things. Finally, at the fourth stage, all ten fetters are gone and enlightenment is achieved. On quite general grounds, this scheme of things looks plausible. It is surely obvious that the purely intellectual views which the first three fetters largely represent would be the easiest to break through, while emotional reactions of desire and aversion would naturally offer stronger resistance.

This question of the breaking of the first three fetters—what we may call the 'decisive break-through'—is crucial, and deserves a little fuller consideration. What is it that is destroyed at this moment, and how is it achieved? As to the *How*, we

are told that this takes place through understanding and mindfulness, and through 'wise consideration'. Stated thus, it may seem easy, but in fact it must of course be the result of intense meditative effort, culminating in a moment when, as it is said, 'Nirvana is glimpsed'. In other words a profound flash of insight shows us the nature of reality. As a result, the ego-belief in its two basic forms, eternity-belief and annihilation-belief, is destroyed. At this stage, be it noted, the operative word is 'belief'. It is this, and not the craving associated with it, which is destroyed: the intellectual, not the emotional aspect. But this intellectual belief is not destroyed by a purely intellectual process. It is radically destroyed by the coming to an *experience* whereby that belief is clearly perceived to be baseless, just as when we strike a light and perceive that what we mistook for a snake in a dark room was merely a piece of old rope. But it is said, and we may well believe it, that even after this experience it takes time and effort to get rid of the habitual reactions associated with the wrong belief. Nevertheless, as a result of such an experience a permanent change in character is wrought, which makes further developments sooner or later inevitable. It is probably fairly clear, also, that the ending of the ego-belief would in fact involve the ending of serious doubt as to the truth of the teaching, as well as reliance on external aids such as ritual. It does not however follow that from then on the rest of the path is easy. That depends on character or, what is the same thing, previous conditioning. Types with violent emotional tendencies would probably still have to endure much before further progress could be achieved. All the same, a fundamental peace of mind would be present which had not been previously known.

The main outlines of the pattern, of the map of the approaches to the goal, may now be a little clearer. Liberation is achieved by insight, and this is gained by introspection. But equally we may say that when there is a real stilling of the mind, insight develops. The less the mind is agitated, the more clearly can truth be seen. Thus calm and insight go together. Whatever helps to create the one also tends to produce the other. Calm can be achieved through concentration. This is the

method of Samadhi, which is the eighth step on the path, as mindfulness is the seventh. The two methods support one another, and can be fruitfully combined. But the method of mindfulness is repeatedly stressed as the one most certain to achieve results.

The most essential thing about mindfulness is that it must be practised dispassionately, without passing judgement or expecting any specific results. This avoids the danger of morbidity and keeps it at an impersonal level. In this way we can come to know by actual experience that our emotions and reactions are in fact impersonal things, and by this realization the ego-belief is systematically undermined. There is a famous story told in the Dhammapada commentary which many people have found helpful. This is the tale of Bahiya who was misled by the veneration of the villagers into believing himself an Arahant. On discovering his mistake he hastened to the Buddha for instruction. 'This must you learn, Bahiya,' said the Buddha, 'that in the seeing, there is only that which is seen; in the hearing, only that which is heard; in the thinking, only that which is thought. Since this is so, Bahiya, you are not here. Since you, Bahiya, are not here, therefore you, Bahiya, are neither in this world, nor in the next world, nor betwixt the two. This alone is the end of suffering.' Hearing this, Bahiya was enlightened on the spot. According to this, then, enlightenment seems to consist in overcoming the duality of subject and object. The ego-belief is a belief that there is an 'I' which thinks 'my' thoughts. When I transcend this belief, finally and completely (which is not by mere intellectual speculation), then I cease to exist, or rather the actual realization dawns with overwhelming power that 'I' never was there in the first place. Nothing, of course, has really gone except an imaginary concept which never did correspond to anything in reality. Perhaps now we can dimly grasp the meaning of the Zen saying: 'There is no difference between an enlightened man and an unenlightened man, but only the enlightened man knows this'. But at least the concept of self, we may say, has ceased to be, never to be born again.

This brings us back once more to the question of rebirth. What is it that is reborn? One answer is: the illusion of self. This illusion arises, we say, from the senses: the seeing produces the illusion of a seer, the hearing of a hearer, and, too, the uprising of thoughts produces the illusion of a thinker. But in fact we have just the arising of consecutive moments of consciousness of six different kinds. Around us all is changing, within us all is changing, and consciousness merely registers the successive 'constellations' which momentarily arise out of the flux. In one very real sense, then, this is the meaning of rebirth, the rebirth of consciousness from moment to moment. It can be found very elaborately analyzed in the Abhidhamma Pitaka of the Pali Canon. Now it may be argued that this is actually the only rebirth there is. There are those who suggest that this is all that is really meant by rebirth, and that therefore rebirth in the sense of an apparent 'reincarnation' from life to life is simply based on a misunderstanding, or was taught by the Buddha as an expedient for those who could not accept the truth.

Certainly rebirth from life to life cannot easily be proved, and all one can say, perhaps, is that as an idea it seems more acceptable to some than to others. Nevertheless, true or not as a fact, it is hard to maintain that it is not an integral part of the Buddhist teaching, and it might be suggested that if the Buddha had wished to deny it he would have done so unmistakably. Nevertheless, for those who find such a view a stumbling-block, it is perhaps legitimate to point out that blind faith in any doctrine has no place in Buddhism, which is essentially something to do, not something to believe. If therefore in other respects the teaching commends itself to you, try it out without worrying too much. Thereby you may eventually come to some insight whereby you will realize the truth of this matter. Alternatively it can be taken as a working hypothesis which may be found helpful in the gaining of understanding.

In any case, too much attention should not be given to speculation on such matters. As it is said in the *Middle Length Sayings*:

'Not knowing what is worthy of consideration, and what is

unworthy of consideration, he considers the unworthy and not the worthy. And unwisely he considers thus: "Have I been in the past, or have I not been in the past? What have I been in the past? How have I been in the past? From what state into what state did I change in the past?—Shall I be in the future or shall I not be in the future? How shall I be in the future? From what state into what state shall I change in the future?"—And the present also fills him with doubt: "Am I or am I not? What am I? How am I? This being, whence has it come? Whither will it go?"—These are called mere views, a thicket of views, a puppet-show of views, a toil of views, a snare of views; and ensnared in the fetter of views the ignorant worldling will not be freed from rebirth, from decay, and from death; from sorrow, pain, grief and despair; he will not be freed, I say, from suffering.'

We have here, surely, the clearest possible indication that we should not seek to live in the past or the future, but to live in the present and accept it as it is. After all, all we actually ever know is the present moment, and that is gone before we can grasp it. Clinging to the past, then, is obvious folly, for it is gone, and grasping at the future is a waste of time, for it will not come till it is ready. And grasping at the present is frustrating, for it will not stay. Therefore we should have no views and grasp at nothing. If we can *really* learn to do this we can perhaps achieve the Deathless State.

Not unnaturally, of course, curiosity remains persistent with most of us, however unreasonably, as to what this Deathless State is like. An especially tantalizing question often asked is what happens to an enlightened person at death. All that can usefully be said about this, perhaps, is to point out that the old idea once very prevalent in the West, that this involves total extinction, is undoubtedly wrong, just as wrong in fact as some of the persistent Western efforts to explain away the doctrine of *annattā* or non-self. There is no justification anywhere in the scriptures for the suggestion that the Buddha preached some sort of 'metaphysical self' and denied merely the reality of the 'little self'. Such views simply bear witness to the tenacity of the self-idea which Buddhism teaches us to overcome. Partly,

too, they stem from the epoch of pre-Freudian psychology when, despite Hume, most Western people still firmly believed in the existence of a real self. This is not to imply that Freudian, or even Jungian psychology are sufficient in themselves to bring us to enlightenment—they certainly are not—but there is no doubt that they can help a good deal in at least disposing of some of the more elementary hindrances.

That Nirvana has after all some positive content, however inconceivable, emerges perhaps most clearly from the famous passage in the *Udana*:

'There is, monks, an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an uncompounded; if, monks, there were not this unborn, unbecome, unmade, uncompounded, there would not be here an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded. But because there is an unborn, an unbecome, an unmade, an uncompounded, therefore there is an escape from the born, the become, the made, the compounded.'

But concerning one who has attained final release, it is said in the *Sutta Nipata*:

'No measuring is there of him that has disappeared, whereby one might know of him that he is not; when all qualities are removed, all modes of speech are removed also.'

And of such it is said in the *Dhammapada*:

'Their course cannot be traced, like that of birds in air.'

Perhaps we had best leave it at that.

VII

Dualistic Thinking

We frequently hear references made to the need to 'overcome dualistic thinking', and we are told that the goal of Buddhism is something called Non-Duality. Zen is something, we gather, that is not bound by ordinary logic because it is not on the plane of dualism, and accordingly we find that in Zen, apparently, anything can happen and frequently does. If we object to something that seems nonsensical, we may be loftily told that we are still shackled by conceptual thought—and our poor logical objection is thus firmly overruled. Of course such an attitude is not the monopoly of Zen: a great part of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is deliberately cast in a form which seems designed to exasperate the logician beyond endurance: 'A is A, *therefore* A is not A'.

To the plain man who thinks he is capable of doing at least a little elementary reasoning, all this kind of thing is very liable to appear as plain nonsense, and we cannot altogether blame him if he dismisses it out of hand as unworthy of serious consideration. If he thinks this is the whole, or the essence, of Buddhism, he may decide there and then that he wants no part of it. Or he may thankfully turn to Theravada as at least presenting him with something sensible. On another type of person the effect may be different. The meeting with 'Zen nonsense' may act on him as a kind of tonic, giving him a feeling of liberation and exhilaration. He, or she, may say in effect: 'Ah well, I never was much of a one for logical thinking. How wonderful to rise above it all and give my intuition free play!' The danger here is obvious. Because Zen is not, in the ordinary sense, bound by logic, does that mean that anything illogical is therefore necessarily Zen? If I read a few books and

go to a few lectures on Zen it is possible that I may get that impression. As a result I may be inspired to utter some such pronouncement as: 'That dog is a cat because it barks' and feel convinced that somehow this is the voice of *prajnā*-intuition speaking. Let us concede the remote possibility that it might be the case. But the odds are in fact about a million to one that I am simply deceiving myself and talking plain ordinary nonsense, not inspired Non-Sense . . . Zen is not quite so easy as that, and anyway there must be *some* standard, even if it is not the conventional one. The real freedom of Zen comes from intense discipline, not from the premature relaxing of rules, whether moral or intellectual. It is sometimes said that there is no morality in Zen, but as long as I want to go to bed with my neighbour's wife or pinch his teaspoons, I haven't got Zen. And before a Zen monk is allowed to approach one of those so-amusing koans at all, he has probably spent several boring years being mindful of his breathing. And before we try to transcend dualistic thinking we need to have a very clear idea of what such thinking actually is. When we know what it is, as clearly and exactly as possible, we *may* be in a position to transcend it. This requires the practice of some humdrum but necessary virtues, such as humility and patience.

Dualistic thinking is our ordinary, everyday, unenlightened mode of thought. This means for one thing that it is the result of prolonged and profound conditioning, which is not quickly or easily broken down. We may have moments when we see, more or less clearly, its falsity, but most of the time we are hopelessly trapped by it. Furthermore, the first flashes of insight when we do get them are usually so brief, feeble and rare that they are rapidly overwhelmed by the returning tide of old habits. It is just like when we are learning a new and difficult technique in some purely worldly matter. We may say 'I think I see the idea more or less, but I still can't grasp it properly'. There is also the element of 'beginner's luck'. You take a golf-club in your hands for the first time in your life, hit the ball—and hole out in one! It may take twenty years of persistent effort before you do that again. Still, you do know then that it can be done.

The way of all Buddhism is the Noble Eightfold Path. This involves three stages: Morality, Mind-Training and Wisdom. The third arises from the other two, and the second cannot be undertaken safely without the first. When mind-training is completed, Wisdom replaces 'mere morality'. In that sense, and in that sense only, is it true to say 'there is no morality in Zen'. The same *could* be said of Theravada or any other school.

Mindfulness and Concentration are the pillars of Mind Training in all schools of Buddhism, and it is through Mindfulness that we can learn the nature of dualistic thinking. Dualism is the mode of our perception of the world, and of our reaction to that perception. Dualism means thinking in terms of this and that, Yes and No, A and B, subject and object. It is not only thinking, of course, but also feeling, and in fact dualistic *feeling* is much harder to overcome than thinking. But it is with the thinking aspect that we will first concern ourselves here. The purest form of dualism is in that kind of logic which always starts with two alternatives, each of which can in turn be subdivided into similar pairs. Thus we can start with the alternative A or B, and proceed by analyzing B as C or D, D as E or F, and so on. Thus we say that a certain colour is either red or not-red. If it is not red it is either blue or not-blue. If it is not blue it is either yellow or not-yellow, etc. We often think in this way, and feel very clever when we have hit on the trick. Old George does not agree with my opinion, therefore he is either a fool or a knave . . .

Since we can do this thing rather easily (in fact we can build machines which do it), let us apply the method to dualism itself. Dualism postulates two alternatives. What then is non-dualism? Obviously it is some way of 'thinking' or 'seeing' which does not divide things into two. Considered dualistically, the non-dual view must, then, see things in some other way. We may jump to the conclusion that the opposite of dualism is necessarily monism: seeing things as one, not two. But by dualistic logic this conclusion is fallacious. Monism is only one alternative. Not-two may be more than two, or less than two. Non-dualism, then, may be pluralism as well as monism. This is significant, because we do in fact find a measure of disagreement

between the experts as to whether Buddhism is essentially monistic or pluralistic. To some the essence of Buddhism lies in the idea that 'all life is one', while many competent scholars have declared the Buddhist teaching, at least in the Hinayana schools, to be radically pluralistic. Both these views are rejected as extremes by the Ven. Nyanaponika in his *Abhidhamma Studies*, and Prof. Takakusu would also seem to be in agreement with him. The Zen standpoint is expressed in the words: 'If all things go back to the One, where does the One go back to?' But if Buddhism rejects not only dualism, but also monism and pluralism as well, where then does it stand? It looks as if the truly Non-Dual is not covered by any of these terms. Dualistic logic sticks at this point, so let us now go back and apply the proper Buddhist method of examining and analyzing our own experience.

In one sense we certainly perceive the world as multiplicity. An unbroken stream of impressions comes in at the five outer sense-doors and at the mind-door during all our normal waking life. Our awareness of all this is what we call consciousness, our discrimination of the various features is what we call perception. On the basis of these two factors our concepts of duality and multiplicity are formed. We perceive and discriminate the many, but our consciousness feels itself to be unitary and opposes itself as a 'subject' to the 'objective' world of perceptions, so there we have duality: subject and object, or myself and that which is not myself. The multiplicity is reduced to the duality of 'I' and 'Not-I'.

Duality, then, is rooted in the idea of a unitary self which is set in opposition to the rest of the world in its totality. The way to transcend dualism would then be by overcoming the ego-belief. If there is no unitary ego, duality becomes plurality, but a plurality of interrelated factors in which no one element is unchanging and stable, and where therefore no one element can arrogate to itself the 'privilege' of selfhood. In such a system the individual factors shift disconcertingly as in a kaleidoscope, only more so, since each single 'factor' is itself a miniature kaleidoscope of still smaller elements, and so on *ad infinitum*. Seen thus, 'things' are nothing but continually

changing pictures arbitrarily picked out by perception, and so duality, multiplicity and unity alike become meaningless terms, since the very concept of number disappears when there are no fixed, or fixable, items to be counted. It is not even that the number of single items is infinite—they are literally innumerable, since absolutely no objective standard of enumeration exists. Standards of enumeration are based on perception and therefore arbitrary. Objectivity is only a particular mode of subjectivity. Life is neither one nor many, neither the same nor different.

It seems to me that the origin of dualistic thinking, as well as its ceasing, is clearly explained in the eighteenth sutta of the *Middle Length Sayings*. I am afraid that with great respect I must venture to alter Miss Horner's translation a little, but I am emboldened to do so by the example of the Ven. Nyanatiloka's *Buddhist Dictionary*, which has, I see, been followed by some other scholars. It is a question of the meaning of the word *papanca* which Miss Horner renders 'obsession', but which can also, apparently, mean 'diversity', and correspondingly for its related verb *papanceti*. In this very important sutta the Buddha first gives a brief statement which is then elaborated by the Ven. Kaccana the Great, on whose words the Buddha sets the seal of his approval.

Kaccana tells the monks: 'Visual consciousness arises because of eye and material shapes; the meeting of the three is sensory impingement; feelings are because of sensory impingement; what a man feels, he perceives; what he perceives he reasons about; what he reasons about he diversifies (*tam papanceti*, trs. Horner 'what one reasons about obsesses one'); owing to his having diversified, the evaluation of diversifying perceptions besets a man in regard to material shapes cognizable by the eye, past, future, present'. The same is repeated for ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. Based on contact of sense-organ, sense-object and sense-consciousness there arise feeling, perception, reasoning and 'diversification'. In other words, our way of thinking is conditioned by the very process of our perception of the world. If this is so, then as long as we are attached to

our sense-perceptions of the world we cannot expect to get away from dualistic thinking.

Now lest I should seem over-bold in altering Miss Horner's translation, I should perhaps add that of course 'obsession' comes into the picture too. We *are* obsessed by the 'diversity' which we perceive. We relate our perceptions to ourselves, that is to the ego or assumed experiencing self. We relate this 'self' not only to present perceptions but to past ones, and to those we expect to experience in the future. As long as we do this, we shall never be free of the obsession, and therefore never be free of dualistic thinking. It is to be observed, though, that *feeling* comes first, according to the sutta: 'Feelings arise because of sensory impingement; what a man feels he perceives; what he perceives he reasons about'. We must get back then through perception, which is 'distinguishing a thing by its marks', to feeling, and behind *that* to the bare sense-consciousness—bare seeing, hearing, etc. There is a moment here of bare consciousness without emotional reaction. If we can get back to *that*, we are safe!

Now the problem I posed at the beginning was that of finding a criterion whereby the non-logical might be distinguished from the simply nonsensical, the sublime from the ridiculous. It is not easy in practice. First, let us see once again what is wrong with our ordinary view of the world. It is perhaps not in one sense totally false. But it is arbitrary. The diversifying is a process of arbitrary selection of data. Therefore there is no real guarantee that what seems like commonsense is really any more sensible than something we may think of as nonsense. Let us see just how arbitrary our assumptions can be. Some people today are still sceptical of telepathy. It is outside of their experience and they don't believe in it. Others *have* experienced it, and therefore know that it works, though they don't know how. Some scientist may even have a theory of *how* it works but that doesn't really add anything very useful to the situation. A hundred years ago well-fed Victorian businessmen, full of beef and beer, would have laughed their commonsensical heads off at the idea of conversing with New York by wireless telegraphy. Now they know you can do it, even if they don't

really know quite how. Even the scientists can only explain a part of the process, but all agree that it *works*. Dualistic thinking, then, can only cope with things in the thinker's realm of experience. It is therefore, even on its own ground, an unsafe guide to truth. Furthermore, logic can be used to prove that any system of logic is wrong. So then where are we?

Let us face this situation squarely and see what its emotional consequences are. We don't like to because it increases our sense of insecurity. As long as we can *believe* in dualistic thinking we feel secure. For after all, if we can't believe in the dual, how much less can we believe in the non-dual? The sensation which can hit us at this point is perfectly frightful. There seems to be *nothing* to hold on to anywhere. Actually, if we only know it and can accept it, that is exactly the state of mind we *need* to get into! But we must have the courage to face it. Only from facing this situation of total insecurity can we learn the necessary lesson.

There are, however, other, subtler snares. We may turn our back on the world of commonsense and plunge into a world of mere fantasy. That way, if pursued too far, madness lies. We may find another world of phenomena such as the occult, in which peculiar things happen which are admittedly beyond the ken of commonsense, which may even bring us much comfort, and which for that very reason are a trap, since they too are not what we are looking for. In fact as long as we are still looking for emotional satisfaction we shall never find it. We can perhaps use such things to broaden our minds by widening our experience of the possible — but it is better to leave them severely alone.

Plainly when the path is beset by so many perils, a severe school of self-criticism is needed. Conceit is always lurking in the background. Every step of genuine progress on the path is in fact beset by two perils at least. One is conceit that we have progressed so far, the other is attachment to the gains we have made. It is pleasant to know that we are less ignorant than we were. It is hard, sometimes, to remember that we have still much ignorance to clear away. Another thing some people do is to cling desperately to concepts and preconceived ideas of

what they will find further along the road. This is fatal, because till we get there we don't know what we shall find. A special concept some people have is that of the intuition, which they seem to think of as a kind of instrument, alternative to the intellect, which they can just switch on and use. I don't think this is very much like the true situation at all. Personally, I rather mistrust this word intuition altogether. I prefer to speak of insight—*vipassanā*. Insight sounds, too, more impersonal, and therefore gives the ego less of a foothold. True enough, some people *are* more intuitive than others, but to gain insight still requires hard work and self-discipline. And, as I said before, the first flashes of insight are rare and uncertain, and liable to be overwhelmed by the following emotions — the returning tide of old habits. We must therefore try to cut these off before they can establish themselves again. If we must use the term intuition, we should at least be very clearly aware that it is something very different from emotion. Persistent training in mindfulness can help us here as nothing else can.

This I think draws our attention to a difference in approach between what is valid for dualistic thinking and what is valid for that which transcends it. We can settle many problems of everyday life by measuring and counting. If I want to know how far it is from A to B, it is possible to measure the distance which turns out to be, say, three miles. Even then there may be a natural obstacle in the way, so that in fact I have to walk four and a half miles to get there, but that too can be allowed for in the calculation. Now the sphere in which such calculations and considerations apply is vast, and for the practical purposes of living they are valid, though it does make quite a difference whether I cover those four and a half miles on foot or by car. Dualistically considered, there is the situation that opposed to myself there is the not-I, which is spatially extended, and 'I' traverse this extended spatial 'not-I' from one point (fixed) to another point equally fixed. In Buddhism too we talk of treading the path, which is rather like the same situation. But in reality there is no path and no person who treads it. What really happens is rather more like exposing a block of ice to the hot sun. It gets smaller and smaller, until finally it

disappears. This is a less comfortable idea. I may like the idea of treading the path, even if it seems rather like toiling up a mountainside for the sake of enjoying the glorious view of Nirvana from the top. But just to melt away like a block of ice —that's different!

Insight might be likened to the situation when some of the ice begins to melt. Since I *am* the block of ice, it means a shrinkage of *me*. And as long as only a little of the ice has melted, it may very easily freeze again, so that *I* am not much smaller than I was before. So gaining insight is a different *kind* of process from dualistic thinking. Where the one is like measuring, the other is more like melting. Or, expressed differently again, it is not so much *getting* something, as *losing* something. One test might be, then, that as long as we have the feeling of *getting* something, or some*where*, we are wrong. If the feeling of getting *rid* of something arises, then we are more probably on the right track. What we have to get rid of is, of course, greed, hate and delusion.

One test then for genuine intuition or insight is: growth or shrinkage. Another is the linguistic test. What can be weighed and measured can be expressed in words. That is what words are for—to enable us to cope with the situations of everyday life. Words are based on perception, which we defined as 'distinguishing a thing by its marks', but which in fact amounts to 'creating' that thing out of the raw materials which the senses present. Words lead to conceptualizing, and we must use concepts if we are to organize our daily life. But concepts are arbitrary and therefore ultimately false. They are not good tools for going beyond the dual. Beyond the sayable lies the unsayable. And, as Wittgenstein said: 'Philosophy will, in the end, mean the unsayable by clearly showing what can be said'. Even Buddhist philosophy can do no more than this. Thus another test for insight will lie in this: the clearer and the more penetrating it is, the harder it will probably prove to put into words. We may just *see* with increasing clarity that *any* verbal formula which is presented to us is inadequate—that it does not cover the true situation. There may, of course, be a formula which is slightly less inadequate than others.

So we must be very careful of words. Of course the Buddha had to use words in order to preach, although there *is* the legend of the origin of the Zen sect. Instead of speaking a single word to the assembled monks, the Buddha just held up a flower. Mahakasyapa smiled, and thereby became the first Zen patriarch, the bearer of a wordless transmission. Perhaps it was really so—at any rate the story is a wonderful parable of the true situation. But all the same the Buddhist scriptures *do* use words, and use them moreover with the greatest exactitude. Often they use Pali or Sanskrit terms which are exceedingly difficult to translate into English. We have had one example of this fact already. Let us now for a moment look a little more closely at this word *non-dual* itself: *advaita* in Sanskrit—a term which is used by the Vedanta as well as in Buddhism. In form it is negative, and in so far is itself dualistic, since it seems to imply an opposite, *duality* or *dvaita*. You see, while we use words we just can't get away from the two poles of positive and negative, of yes and no. But the meaning of *advaita* is really neither positive nor negative. It is the Real, whatever that is. The dual is simply the unreal, though it seems real enough to us. When we no longer react dualistically to our experience, then the Real will become manifest, not in words, but as it *is*. Perhaps an analogy may make this clear. If a man is drunk, he may see two lamp posts where 'really' there is only one. When he sobers up, he won't see two lamp posts any more. But in fact there *was* only one lamp post there all the time. We are drunk or drugged with greed, hate and delusion, and as long as that is the case we see things double: hence duality. Of course if we press the analogy too far we shall fall into monism again. But at least this may give us some idea of the true situation. The point is not to see even one lamp post, but on the contrary, the lamp post is there simply that we may *see*. We should not cling to the lamp post any more than we should cling to the finger pointing at the moon. Seeing is not done with words but with vision. And when it is day the moon will disappear and we shall leave the lamp post to the dogs. Perhaps we can see now a little better why it is said in the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* that 'A is A, *there-*

fore A is not A'. Words are by their very nature dualistic. If we use words for the purpose of transcending the dual, we must use them in a special way, so that they cancel themselves out. If we assert that A is A, then we *must* contradict that statement, for in fact it is necessarily false. Things are fleeting, composite and constantly changing, so it is quite simply not true to say that A is A. The A of one moment had no real duration, there will never be the same A again. I am not the same I that I was five minutes or five seconds ago. That is strictly true, *therefore* I am not I. Words just try to fix the image of what once, fleetingly, *was*. At best they *were* true once—they never are or can be true now! Nevertheless, there is continuity, so that though I am not I, I am not entirely other. I am neither I nor not-I: *na ca* so *no c'aññ*o. If this is hard to grasp it is just because there is nothing to grasp. The very act of grasping is a mistake. Greed is folly, for it seeks to have and to hold what is not there. Aversion is equal folly, for why should we reject what is not there either?

What it all boils down to is the fact that dualistic thinking, whether it looks like it or not, is really emotional thinking. Even the materialist who thinks he is very down-to-earth and matter-of-fact is still indulging in emotional thinking, however hotly he may deny it. Scientifically, of course, he hasn't a leg to stand on, for materialism was quite literally exploded when they learnt to split the atom. He is actually just clinging to his materialist point of view because it gives him a sense of security. But we should not rush off into the other extreme of abandoning all commonsense in favour of more highly-coloured emotions. False intuition is probably worse than plain common-sense, for it has no base in either realm, dualistic *or* non-dual. Let us therefore watch our own reactions mindfully and try to steer a middle path.

VIII

Theravada and Zen

First I should like to make it quite clear that I am by no means unaware of the presumption involved in my undertaking to speak on the tremendous subject of Theravada and Zen. I can claim for my remarks no authority whatever—they merely represent the thoughts which have come to my very unenlightened mind in trying to consider these two schools and their relationship. The question of the nature of this relationship has interested me profoundly for some years now, and I am emboldened to try to set out my thoughts — and such thoughts of other and wiser people as have seemed to me to throw light on the matter—because it is an undoubted fact that these two schools of Buddhism are actually the ones which seem to exert the most attraction on the Western—or at least the British—mind, and it has therefore seemed worth while to try to find out why this should be. Other schools of Buddhism, such as the Prajnaparamita and even the Shin or Pure Land school have indeed their Western adherents, but it seems that the main streams of 'British Buddhism' will tend most strongly —with whatever modifications may be consciously or unconsciously introduced—to run along the lines of the doctrine of the Pali Canon or of Zen—in particular, Rinzai Zen—or, conceivably, even to seek some kind of combination or compromise based on these two. This may be a good thing or a bad thing, but it rather looks to me as if that were in fact the tendency at the present moment.

To make my own personal position clear, and therefore to enable my particular prejudices to be discounted as far as possible, I would say that I am of opinion that for me at least the best way of trying to put the Buddhist way into practice

is by following the teachings to be found in the Pali Canon, on the assumption, which to me seems overwhelmingly probable, that here we have at least the nearest approach to the authentic doctrine taught by the All-Enlightened One. In other words, if I must have a label, I accept the label Theravada. But I do not consider that this should preclude me from taking a lively interest in other branches of the teaching. I even believe it possible that they may have something to offer which can help me in my attempt to tread the Path. In any criticisms I may make, whether favourable or unfavourable, of any school of Buddhism, I wish to make it perfectly clear that such criticisms, being made by a very unenlightened person, may quite well be entirely wrong. Nor am I unaware of the inevitable limits of purely intellectual, armchair criticism: the only test is that of experience, as the Buddha himself told the Kalamas. In fact, next to the Theravada, the only school which attracts me to any marked extent is Zen. But this may be due to the simple fact that it is the only other school which I feel I know anything much about, and certainly the only other school whose principles I have ever made the faintest attempt to practise. If Theravada is my first love, Zen is my second, with whom I unashamedly flirt occasionally. And if this seems peculiar, I can only add that I do not seem to be alone in this. I also know a number of Zen enthusiasts who say that they feel about Theravada rather as I feel about Zen. There must then be some psychological reasons why this situation should tend to arise, and it is perhaps these reasons, and their possible justification, which I am really concerned to investigate.

At first sight it might seem that within the Buddhist field Zen and Theravada could scarcely be further apart: the cold rationalism which is often ascribed to the Southern School, with its precise and repetitive analytical exposition—all this seems poles apart from the warm, dynamic, irrational approach of Zen, which enlists humour in its cause, avoids words where possible and when they are unavoidable resorts to bewildering and baffling paradoxes, and which does not even shrink from the application of physical violence in its ruthless drive to reach the flash-point of *satori*. How can these two be combined?

What is their common denominator? If I feel drawn now to the one, now to the other, is it not merely because my restless unenlightened mind seeks to escape from the discipline imposed on it by recklessly jumping from one to the other? It could be. The thing we most fear—and if Buddhism has taught me nothing else, it has taught me this—is to discover our own emptiness. A very brief experience of even quite elementary *satipatthana* practice soon makes this clear. The ego may be a mythological beast, but when cornered it fights back like any other beast. And it wants to live to fight another day, so it may come about that it produces the suggestion that some other method might be quite nice for a change—in reality because it hopes in that way to gain a respite. Let's try Zen for a change, it pleads, that's much more fun. That could be true, and it is certainly part of true mindfulness to watch out for such tendencies.

And yet there may be more in the matter than this. I once discussed the question of the two schools briefly with Professor Ogata, and was interested to learn that he agreed with me that in many ways they were closer together than appears on the surface. But my actual starting-point was from a discovery of my own. It came in fact from a reading of the Ven. Nyanaponika's *Abhidhamma Studies*. To the average person who studies Buddhism, the coldly analytical approach of the Theravada reaches its peak in the books of the Abhidhamma Pitaka, where the elaborately formal classification of the contents of consciousness pursues its relentless path in a dry-as-dust manner which seems to achieve the ultimate in sheer unadulterated boredom. Who, one may well feel, other than some hoary old ascetic long-since dead to the world, could possibly bear to wade through this dreary stuff? Let us fling this deadly stuff into the farthest corner of the room and plunge into the crazy surrealistic world of Zen! It may be baffling and topsy-turvy, maybe you haven't a clue to what it's all about or what it's trying to do, but at least it's strangely alive and thrilling, and to a generation that has become conditioned to Picasso and the Goon Show its irrelevant asides and defiance of respectability are no insuperable barrier to acceptance. And anyway the

whole world seems to be upside down, so maybe Zen is really the only thing that's right way up. Let's try it and see if maybe we can't get the hang of it as we go along! Unworthier —but very human—motives may also play a part: we find fairly frequent references to Zen in the more highbrow journals these days. It is becoming the done thing to talk about Zen, in fact the current definition of an intellectual snob might be one who has heard of Zen.

Yes, we've certainly all heard about Zen nowadays. But whoever heard of Zen in the Abhidhamma? This, surely, is like looking for horns on a rabbit, or beer at a Band of Hope beanfeast. Even Zen wouldn't be crazy enough to look for Zen in the Abhidhamma.

Consider how the whole thing starts off. The beginning of *Dhammasangani*, the first book of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, is as follows: 'Which are the things that are wholesome? At a time when a state of wholesome consciousness belonging to the sensuous sphere has arisen, accompanied by joy and associated with knowledge, referring to any one (object), be it an object of sight, sound, smell, taste, a tangible object, or a mental object, at that time there is: sense-impression, feeling, perception, volition, consciousness, thought, deliberation, interest, pleasure, mental one-pointedness . . . ' and so on through a list of fifty-six separate factors, concluding with the words: 'These, or whatever other conditionally arisen uncorporeal things there are at that time, these things are wholesome'. In the same way it then proceeds, according to exactly the same stereotyped formula, to detail what is present in other states of consciousness, all elaborately classified and pigeon-holed according to the sphere of consciousness, the karmic value (i.e. wholesome, unwholesome or neutral), the emotional value, the presence or absence of knowledge, and spontaneous or non-spontaneous occurrence. In all, eighty-nine different types of consciousness are dissected in this way. It is claimed that this exhausts all the possible types of human consciousness. It is also pretty likely to exhaust the patience of most readers, the more so, since closer inspection of the lists seems to suggest that there is a considerable degree of repetition in them: what are

apparently the same elements seem to occur several times under slightly different names at different places in the lists. This fact may tend to increase our feeling of impatience with the whole thing and lead us to feel that it is merely the result of unprofitable speculation and not necessarily conducive to enlightenment.

How fresh and delightful does Zen appear by contrast! Here we are told the story of how a father gave his son an object-lesson in the art of successful burglary, or how a famous Zen master, invited to a solemn dinner, rudely upset the table all over his host, and so on. We may wonder what this, too, has to do with enlightenment, but at least it is fun! And yet both these methods are supposed to be Buddhism. It is all very puzzling. Perhaps if we could only get to some higher vantage-point, we could at least see the connection.

But to revert to the problem of the lists: why do we find this kind of duplication of terms? We have, for instance, the Faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom duly listed, and a little further on we have the 'powers' of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. The path-factors of right understanding, intention, effort, mindfulness and concentration are again separately listed, partly duplicating these once more, and then we find non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion, described as wholesome roots, immediately followed by the 'wholesome ways of action' non-covetousness, non-ill-will and — yet again — right understanding! I think the answer has been given by the Ven. Nyanaponika. He quotes James Ward in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on Psychology, who writes: 'In psychology a difference of aspects is a difference in things'. According to Nyanaponika, then, these apparently identical units in the list are included to show an intricate network of relationships. He uses this simile: 'Let us suppose a man is, as the head of his family, in charge of the household purse; in his professional capacity, he is a cashier, and in his club its treasurer. In such a manner his general skill in reckoning is applied to different aspects of his life and to different social groups to which he belongs. Consequently, his skill serves different purposes, for the attainment

of which he has to combine it, in each case, with partly quite different qualities of his own. It brings him also into contact with quite different sorts of people.' Applying this principle to our lists, the Ven. author continues:

'By the various functions of a mental factor, quite different lines of development, i.e. different external relations, might be started, e.g. "One-pointedness of mind" (*cittass-ekaggatā*) may be deliberately cultivated as a "Factor of Absorption" (*jhan-anga*) and be developed up to the degree of a complete absorption of mind (*appanā*). Or, with the emphasis on its liberating quality, "One pointedness" may have the aspect of the Path Factor "Right Concentration", and for the purpose of Clear Insight (*Vipassanā*), be developed only up to Approximate Concentration (*upacara-samadhi*). Or, "One-pointedness" may appear as "Calm" (*samatha*) in the "Pairwise Combination" of Calm and Insight.

'It will be at first a single function of aspect of a mental factor that initiates a certain external relation with the following moments of consciousness, but this does not exclude that also other aspects of the same factor manifest themselves more prominently in later stages of consciousness. In the same way, the relative weakness or strength of any factor might be without visible consequence just now, but might produce effects at any later moment when conditions are favourable. The net of relations, conditions or causes, extending from a single moment of consciousness, may reach very far back, in space as well as in time. The relational system of the factors within a single moment of consciousness does not only extend to the future, but also to a multiplicity of past states of consciousness which are its conditions. That is to say: the mental factors are far from being self-contained units, but are "open" towards the past as well as the future, and, though meeting in one moment, they are related to quite different "layers" of those time periods. From that we can gauge the highly dynamic nature of the processes going on in a single moment of consciousness.'

It seems to me that when we are shown these seemingly dry and arid lists in this light they take on a different aspect—they

suddenly spring to life and are shown to be elements in a complex and highly dynamic situation. Our interest may thus perhaps be aroused, and we may even begin to find it all quite thrilling! In that case, the factor of *piti* or interest, zest, has been aroused in us.

In a remarkable analysis Nyanaponika goes on to show how a contemplation of the rise and fall of these infinitely subtle and complex combinations of factors, which is going on all the time—whether the states of consciousness are wholesome or otherwise—can lead to a realization of *anattā*, or *suññatā*, the 'voidness' of all these mental states. And yet what a dynamic voidness it is! How everything comes out of it! Are we not here coming closer to the Zen spirit with this recognition?

In a later passage he writes: 'In order to do full justice to the dynamic nature of consciousness, not only its actual functions, but also its inherent potentialities have to be considered . . . it is imperative to look out for the 'seeds' embedded in a given situation . . . for example, an *actual*, but limited, control wielded by the Spiritual Faculties implies the *potential* increase of that control; an *actual*, but weak, liberating influence exercised by the Path Factors implies the *potential* strengthening of their liberating effect. Besides, potentiality means sometimes that the respective state of mind *gravitates* to the direction indicated by the "potentiality". Therefore, by giving due attention to the "potentiality", one may foresee future developments and either assist or counter them, in time.' At this point I would just interject the remark that it seems to me that a trained Zen master is able to see just such things in his pupils, and that his sometimes extraordinary actions are aimed at precipitating the right results. This of course also means that any sort of crazy-gang antics by the unqualified may be very amusing, but are not Zen.

The final portion of Nyanaponika's book deals with Time. The nature of the present moment in all its complexity may be said to be the theme which runs through this. I cannot quote more here, except for one short passage which again emphasizes the Abhidhammic way of regarding it: 'A glance into the "antecedents" and the subsequent "life-story" of the factors of

a single moment of consciousness will show us (1) that the simultaneity of these factors has to be conceived as something fluid and not static, (2) simultaneous factors, as far as they are variable (non-constant), meet each other at quite different stages of their own "life-history": Some factors might already have been parts of precedent moments, but are disappearing with the dissolution of the present one; some arise only now and re-occur in future moments; and again, the life-time of others may be limited to this moment only. Such a differentiation is certainly of significance, just as it makes a difference whether we meet with certain people or ideas in youth, manhood or old age.' In this survey of a part of the Abhidhamma, Nyanaponika showed that it was not all analysis, and thus is borne out what he said in his introductory remarks: 'Only by applying both methods, the analytical and the synthetical, can the impersonality (*anattatā*) and the unsubstantiality (= voidness, *suññatā*) of all phenomena be understood fully and correctly.

The aim of Zen is the same. Professor Suzuki, in his *Essence of Buddhism*, being the expanded version of two lectures he gave before the Japanese Emperor, insists on the vital distinction between *prajñā* wisdom and *vijñāna* or the discriminating consciousness. 'Prajna is thus *acintya*, "beyond-thinking" or "no-thinking". All thinking involves the distinction of this and that, for to think means to divide, to analyze. *Acintya* non-thinking, means not to divide, that is, to pass beyond all intellection, and the whole of the Buddhist teaching revolves round this central idea of no-thought, or no-thinkingness, or no-mind-ness, or *acintya-prajna*, showing that no spiritual truth could be grasped by ratiocination.' From the Abhidhammic point of view could we not say that this is reaching a standpoint of contemplating phenomena as an entire process, in their ceaseless rise-and-fall? Analysis has played its part, and synthesis takes over. The ego-concept has been dissolved, and the dualistic thinking in terms of 'this and that' has disappeared.

At this stage a brief word on the historical conditions of the rise of Zen may be helpful. As is known, primitive Buddhism in India split up into sects, out of some of which arose that

which we know as the Mahayana. Basically, the Mahayana approach is that it views things, or professes to do so, from the standpoint of the Enlightened Man, while Theravada talks in the relative terms which can be understood by the unenlightened. I would suggest that those who created the Mahayana were, if not fully enlightened, nevertheless very far advanced spiritually—I am well aware of my own presumption in speculating in such terms—but that some of them at least got rather bogged down in metaphysical speculation—just the very thing in fact which Gotama was so anxious to avoid. They developed various theories which while perhaps true were possibly not always relevant to the goal of liberation. Also, they thought they detected a flaw in the Theravada outlook: they felt the ideal of the arahat unsatisfying, and hankered after an ideal which should to a greater extent embody the practical application of *karuna*, 'Compassion'. Thus arose the idea of the Bodhisattva dedicated to saving all beings. The ultimate outcome of this development in Japan was the rise of the Shin school, the devotees of Amida Buddha, who were to be saved by faith alone. It is easy to pour scorn on this, and in fact it looks like a one-sided development, in that karuna has allowed itself to be divorced from its concomitant prajna or wisdom. According to tradition the Zen school was founded in India and brought to China by Bodhidharma about A.D. 520, but Zen as we know it seems to be mainly the work of Huineng some 200 years later. It may be assumed that Bodhidharma (if he existed) was an arahat—certainly Zen inclines, as Suzuki admits, rather to the arahat than to the bodhisattva ideal. He was however faced with the task of teaching his doctrine to the Chinese, whose language he may have mastered only very imperfectly. Further, being himself dissatisfied with some of the Mahayanistic tendencies in India, he may in any case have rejected some of the then-current Indian scriptures with their involved metaphysics. All this would incline him towards the use of a method as direct as possible, and with as little use of 'mere words' as possible. He was also aided, no doubt, by the existence of the Chinese tradition of Taoism, which does have some affinities with Buddhist thought, and at

least gave a useful starting-point. In some such way many of the basic methods of Zen may have in fact arisen. This might well explain the Zen idea of

> A special transmission of insight outside the scriptures,
> no dependence on words and letters,
> direct pointing to the soul of man,
> seeing into one's own nature.

Thus historically we have in Zen a rejection in principle of much that had led the Mahayana away from the original teaching, and certainly it inculcates a sturdy self-reliance which knows of no prayers to any Bodhisattva. Zen is, in the Japanese terminology, emphatically *jiriki* or 'self-power', not *tariki* or 'other-power'. Its aim is the achievement of that non-dual experience which in fact, as the Theravada can prove quite logically, is actually present in the present moment, before we rush in the next moment and spoil it. As our English Bhikkhu Paññāvaddho has recently written in *Sangha*:

'As the senses have the qualities of separateness and individuality of attention, it is only possible to receive one "bit" of sense information at any instant. This "bit" must be of an indistinguishable nature, except at a later period in relation to other "bits"; and as "self" is also in the nature of sensation, there is no self present at the instant that the "bit" of sense data is "perceived". So the situation at any instant is non-dual, there being no two things present, and a non-dual situation cannot be in any way perceived except at a later instant when the first instant has disappeared. Truly speaking, there never was any duality, and what we call duality is only an appearance arising from the sankharas or formed pattern of thought which is derived from kamma. This in effect is the reasoning which can show that Samsara and Nibbana are not different.'

The Bhikkhu goes on to point out that this is of course only reasoning, not experience. True Zen speaks from the experience, omitting the reasoning. But we can see from this that the paradox of Nirvana = Samsara is also good Theravada and not just some sort of Zen joke.

There is no need to declare in favour of one school as against the other. The path each one of us chooses will be decided by

his own past conditioning. But I hope I have shown that the two are not really so mutually exclusive as sometimes appears, or is alleged. I personally believe that they have this in common, that they are the two most direct Buddhist paths. If we want a verbal formula for the goal of both, 'the attainment of the Non-Dual' will do as well as anything. Hui-neng, the sixth century Chinese Patriarch, who did so much to make Zen what it is today, said: 'Still your mind. Think neither of good nor of evil. In that moment what is your original face before your parents were born?' The 'original face' is the non-dual situation before your 'parents' (this-and-that, duality) were born. The ultimate paradox of Zen is that there is no paradox till we put one there . . .

IX

From Kierkegaard to Zen

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (d. 1855) was a Danish philosopher who certainly seems to have believed in making things unnecessarily difficult for himself. From one point of view his life is an excellent example of how to ensure oneself the maximum amount of suffering, just in case life does not happen to bring along enough of this in the ordinary course of events. In fact he seems to have developed a positive mania for hurling himself at brick walls, and to have been regularly surprised when he picked himself up bruised, stunned and bleeding. Moreover, he never seems to have learnt from experience the simple lesson that this form of activity does not pay. One might therefore be prone to conclude that a man incapable of assimilating such an elementary lesson as that can have little to teach us as a philosopher, except by the force of his negative example. Now I must admit that I have always found the negative example of other people's foolish behaviour not only a fascinating study but also the source of real assistance to me, by helping me to avoid at least a few of the more obvious mistakes. But to relegate Kierkegaard to the humble position of that kind of negative exemplar—except in a purely secondary and minor capacity—would be ridiculous, though it would probably have appealed to that philosopher's well-developed sardonic sense of humour, for only those who have never read him suffer from the delusion that Kierkegaard was as humourless as some of his modern existentialist imitators appear to be.

Kierkegaard is now known—or misknown—as the founder of 'existentialist thought'. Unlike some of his modern followers, he was a Christian, and his existentialism sprang directly from the dilemma which he felt Christianity posed for him. Like his

hero Socrates, he set out deliberately to be a 'corrupter of youth' in the sense of leading a one-man revolt against smugness and intellectual and spiritual complacency, as represented by the Danish popularizers of Hegel's philosophy and the official Church. In this struggle he literally killed himself, and his life ended in the tragedy of seeming failure.

In the years 1843-6 he set forth his ideas in a whole series of books with humorous verve and a great deal of well-calculated mystification. Unfortunately it would lead us too far to follow up even a few of the fascinating and amusing bypaths pursued in these books, but essentially, for all their wisecracking and whimsy, they conveyed a serious and remarkable message calculated to shake the Danish public out of its mood of self-satisfied complacency. Kierkegaard distinguishes three stages or spheres of human life, the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious, all of which are explained and exemplified in the various works of this period, from *Either-Or* through *Stages on Life's Journey* to the *Unscientific Postscript*. Kierkegaard's aesthetic way of life is that of the selfish hedonist, as exemplified by the witty but unedifying account of the Seducer, and over against this is set the ethical ideal with its concept of duty to one's fellows, respect for the marriage-bond, and so on—very worthy as far as it goes, but somewhat dull and, in Kierkegaard's view, fundamentally a quite inadequate response to the needs of the human situation. Kierkegaard was a Christian. He believed firmly that salvation was in and through Christ. But there was no easy path to salvation in spite of Christ's sacrifice: the ethical way, though obviously preferable to the aesthetic, was only a preparatory stage for a tremendous leap in the dark, for the heart of religion is paradox. The paradox is exemplified for Kierkegaard by Abraham, who obeyed God's command to slay his son Isaac, having faith against all reason that his sacrifice would be averted at the last moment. In his magnificent *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard uses the story of Abraham to point the difference between faith and reason:

'It is said to be difficult to understand the philosophy of Hegel, but to understand Abraham, why, that is an easy matter! To proceed further than Hegel is a wonderful feat, but to proceed

further than Abraham, why, nothing is easier! Personally, I have devoted a considerable amount of time to a study of Hegelian philosophy and believe I understand it fairly well; in fact, I am rash enough to say that when, notwithstanding an effort, I am not able to understand him in some passages, it is because he is not entirely clear about the matter himself. All this intellectual effort I perform easily and naturally, and it does not cause my head to ache. On the other hand, whenever I attempt to think about Abraham I am, as it were, overwhelmed. At every moment I am aware of the enormous paradox which forms the content of Abraham's life, at every moment I am repulsed, and my thought, notwithstanding its passionate attempts, cannot penetrate into it, cannot forge on a hair's breadth. I strain every muscle in order to envisage the problem—and become a paralytic at the same moment.' . . . 'I am not unacquainted with the sufferings and dangers of life, but I do not fear them, and cheerfully go forth to meet them . . . But my courage is not, for all that, the courage of faith, and is as nothing compared with it. I cannot carry out the movement of faith: I cannot close my eyes and confidently plunge into the absurd—it is impossible for me; but neither do I boast of it . . .'

The problem of faith as exemplified here by Abraham then turns for Kierkegaard into a sort of koan, with which he wrestles seemingly in vain. Perhaps he never did quite solve his problem: in *The Concept of Dread* we find a solution adumbrated in the synthesis of the spirit which, in Kierkegaard's terminology, embraces soul and body, but the basic fundamental panic dread (*Angst*) which has its roots in original sin, is merely modified and given a new form, not removed. It would seem that, despite the most penetrating flashes of insight, he was unable to achieve a state of inner harmony. He died, still fighting himself as well as others. His last words were prophetic, though, of the effects of his efforts: 'The bomb has exploded, the conflagration will follow'.

Perhaps Kierkegaard's failure is partly to be accounted for by his excess of faith in a rather primitive form. It has been pointed out that he accepted the basic framework of the

Athanasian creed, and from a Buddhist point of view this can only be described as 'attachment to wrong views'. Abraham's faith was the faith that a personal God had placed him in a terrible position and would pull him out again, and this was what Kierkegaard believed. Modern existentialists tend to go to the other extreme. They have lost Kierkegaard's faith in God and have nothing to put in its place. If Kierkegaard's message to the world was of a task of appalling difficulty, at least it harboured an ultimate hope. For the followers of Jean-Paul Sartre there is, fundamentally, none. In this form of existentialism, at least, there is just existence in a world of extreme insecurity, with no form of escape, however dimly envisaged, to any realm of ultimate release, other than the negative one of death as the utter and final end of the whole futile play.

Unlike Kierkegaard, who was a brilliant stylist, Sartre writes in a beastly jargon of desperate obscurity, and I am grateful indeed to Mr Stuart Hampshire who, in a review in the *Observer* of Sartre's *L'Etre et le Néant*, succeeded in reformulating some of the leading ideas in easier terms. From this I shall now quote:

'To exist as a man is to have intentions in the light of which the world, otherwise mere undifferentiated Being, is divided for me into instruments that I need. While I am conscious, I am always imagining and contriving that things should be other than they are. I am always pursuing possibilities. My nature and character at any moment are identical with the plans that I am freely pursuing. I have no real nature apart from my own renewed choices of what I am to be. I am in this sense empty, and my actions are a perpetual flight from this nothingness inside me. It follows that I am responsible for every phase of my consciousness, including my emotions. Emotions are a form of arrested action, a kind of magical behaviour to which I resort when practical manipulations are unavailing. Through my active intentions I become conscious of myself as separated from other things. But, as an embodied consciousness, I am always acting and observing only from one particular standpoint within a world of which I am part. I find that I have come to the surface, as a consciousness, at a particular point in

the ocean of Being, the whole world being for me arranged around this casual position. Sartre accuses Descartes of representing men as metaphysical Robinson Crusoes, outside the world of things which their consciousness impartially reconstructs. Descartes ignored the fact of man's "engagement" in the world, a fact which becomes plain to anyone, together with his consciousness of himself, as soon as he finds himself the object of meanings and intentions that he has not originated himself. Each man is to every both an object in the path of his intentions and a rival free consciousness of a world from another point of view. Sartre ingeniously explains various types of personal feeling and of sexual behaviour as following from this central contradiction. All my patterns of feeling and behaviour have been chosen by me to serve my overriding intentions; there is always a motive behind the character traits which I may dishonestly represent as given facts in my nature. If I am to describe myself honestly, I must describe myself as the man who is trying to do and to be such and such things in the future. Competing with Freud, Sartre has his own psychopathology of everyday life, Sartre dismisses the subconscious mind as an impossible hybrid. An Existentialist knows that he always has a plan to find for himself, a definite character or role by his actions in the world. If he stops to reflect on this emptiness and nothingness of his nature at any particular moment, he will feel anguish, the consequence of realizing his freedom without exercising it. If, ignoring his freedom, he realizes only his immersion in the world of undifferentiated things, he will feel nausea, the nausea that we feel in front of any viscous, shapeless substance that extends meaninglessly in all directions. He is therefore wise if he never dwells on one aspect of his being to the exclusion of the other; he will continually exercise his freedom in concrete projects in this world.'

Obviously Sartre has some important recognitions here: man's inner emptiness and nothingness and the anguish which it produces—perhaps a better explanation than that of Kierkegaard, who attributed anguish to our sense of sin, whereas the reverse seems at least equally likely. To put Sartre's thought still more succinctly, he seems to say: 'I am nothing but my

consciousness—conceived actively as mainly a set of volitions —which alone distinguishes me from the undifferentiated mass of being. If I stop to think what I am trying to do in the world I am filled with anguish, if I give up wanting to do things I experience nausea. So the best thing is to go on planning and acting to escape these unpleasant sensations which constantly lie in wait for me.' Both Sartre and Kierkegaard see the anguish of the world pretty clearly, and Sartre even comes near to seeing the Buddhist explanation of its origin. But Sartre's 'solution' to the problem is obviously even more hopeless than Kierkegaard's. There might be hope for him if he could overcome his 'nausea' and renounce his vaunted freedom, which after all does not amount to much. But to do this he would need a little of Kierkegaard's faith.

This brief review may have helped to show how existentialism is partly feeling its way in the general direction of Buddhist thought, and it is perhaps one of the guarantees of the rightness of Buddhism for us, that other systems of thought can be seen to reflect partial, if often distorted, aspects of it. Certainly a study of existentialism may well prove helpful as an introduction to some important aspects. If Sartre has a fairly good grasp of at least some of the negative aspects of Right Understanding, Kierkegaard has in a way something like a concept of the Path and a higher degree of Right Motive. His rejection of the aesthetic or hedonistic view of life shows another aspect of Right Understanding which Sartre, with his lack of any positive faith, frankly dare not face, and his evaluation of ethics as strictly subordinate to the truly religious aspect is in keeping with the Buddhist attitude. But above all his single-minded determination to grapple with the paradox of faith places him spiritually far above the reach of Sartre, even if his efforts should have to be judged as misconceived or substantially wasted. But of course it is hard to conceive that such titanic efforts *were* in fact wasted, even if their direction seems to have been wrong. It might be, for instance, that he laid excellent foundations for more decisive progress in another life.

In both Kierkegaard and Sartre we see one important aspect

of what, from the Buddhist point of view would be termed correct view in the sense of frustration and inadequacy, a deep awareness, in fact, of the *dukkha* aspect of life. To Kierkegaard this appears in the form of a sense of sin, while for Sartre it appears, perhaps even more interestingly, as a sense of nothingness. But Sartre's view of nothingness is too utterly negative, and he falls into the trap of annihilationism, whereas Kierkegaard's transcendentalism is equally tainted with eternalism, between which as between Scylla and Charybdis goes the Buddhist Middle Path. It is, according to the Buddha, through not knowing this middle path and through attachment that we wander ceaselessly along the weary round of rebirths. Kierkegaard, with his greater readiness to renounce all, is, it would seem, nearer to this path than Sartre. The only trouble is that Kierkegaard's paradox is not a true koan, since it is a problem posed, not by life itself, but by an arbitrarily conceived external agent. Sartre postulates no such external agent, but he too cannot solve his problem because he dare not turn inward and face it, but insists on exercising his puny 'freedom' in concrete projects in this world, in other words in turning outwards, away from where the real problem lies. The nausea which he experiences on looking within is just the desperate defence of the ego which is terrified of being found out. In fact, if Kierkegaard could have tackled Sartre's problem, he might have solved it.

To show the lines such a solution must take, let us again look briefly at Sartre's attitude, and then at John Blofeld's introduction to his translation of *The Zen Teaching of Huang Po*. Stuart Hampshire quotes Sartre as saying in effect:

'If he stops to reflect on this emptiness and nothingness of his nature at any particular moment, he will feel anguish, the consequence of realizing his freedom without exercising it. If, ignoring his freedom, he realizes only his immersion in the world of undifferentiated things, he will feel nausea, the nausea that we feel in front of any viscous, shapeless substance that extends meaninglessly in all directions. He is therefore wise if he never dwells on one aspect of his being to the

exclusion of the other; he will continually exercise his freedom in concrete projects in this world.'

Blofeld paraphrases Huang Po as follows:

'Huang Po gives us few instructions as to how to "meditate", but he does tell us what to avoid. If, conceiving of the phenomenal world as illusion, we try to shut it out, we make a false distinction between the "real" and the "unreal". So we must not shut anything out, but try to reach the point where all distinctions are seen to be void, where nothing is seen as desirable or undesirable, existing or not existing. Yet this does not mean that we should make our minds blank, for then we should be no better than blocks of wood or lumps of stone; moreover, if we remained in this state, we should not be able to deal with the circumstances of daily life or be capable of observing the Zen precept: "When hungry, eat". Rather, we must cultivate dispassion, realizing that none of the attractive or unattractive attributes of things have any absolute existence.'

Achieving this state is enlightenment, is liberation. According to the Zen teaching this enlightenment can be achieved in a flash. This is sudden enlightenment. Now a superficial reading of the Zen scriptures can lead to the delusive idea that such a sudden flash of enlightenment is easy. Actually, however, the Zen technique employed is one of intense effort. A tremendous concentration of psychic energy must obviously be built up, one way or another, to achieve such a break-through. The kind of paradoxical problem known as a koan is one method. Perhaps if we look again at Kierkegaard's example of Abraham, it does have some of the properties of a koan. Since a koan is non-intellectual, it cannot be really analyzed, but only somehow experienced. But the experience might go something like this: Abraham is ready at God's command to sacrifice his son Isaac. Only in the very last moment before the knife descends does God intervene and spare Isaac. This story, remember, was believed by Kierkegaard as literal fact. As such it was of intense emotional significance for him. We must be like Abraham and be prepared to destroy all our deepest worldly hopes and desires. Even our normal conceptions of good and

evil must go. At this very moment all is transformed, and yet, somehow mysteriously, everything is as it was before. At first, in the terms of a Zen saying, mountains are mountains and trees are trees. Then, mountains are no longer mountains and trees are no longer trees—for we have abandoned all discrimination. Finally, we see that after all, mountains *are* mountains and trees *are* trees. So long as we stay this side of enlightenment such things, of course, can only be seen as in a glass darkly. I don't know, but I think that to achieve this realization the Zen way we must be ready to endure what Abraham endured. But we need not despair, for there is a way we can all tread, and it matters not one ha'porth whether we call it Zen or Theravada.

An aged Zen master made his home in a tree. One day the governor of the province came to him and said 'What is the teaching of Buddhism?' The master replied in the famous stanza found in the Dhammapada:

'Not to do any evil,
To cultivate the skilled,
To purify one's own mind—
That is the teaching of the Buddhas.'

The governor, who had doubtless expected something more original, replied 'Well, any child of three knows that'. 'Any child of three may know it,' said the sage, 'but even an old man of eighty finds it difficult to perform.' This is Buddhism in a nutshell, good Zen, good Mahayana and good Theravada. 'Not to do any evil' is to refrain from harming any sentient being, including oneself, by thought, word or deed. 'To cultivate the skilled' is not merely to perform 'good deeds', but by right effort to set up skilled states of mind — those conducive to enlightenment. 'To purify one's mind' is to cleanse and sharpen one's mind by mindfulness and concentration so that the veil of illusion is pierced. When this has been done, Right Understanding comes to fruition and enlightenment has been realized. It is, in fact, the Noble Eightfold Path. In one way the steps of the Path are successive, in another they must be trodden simultaneously, since they are interlinked and support each other. Thus if some right understanding of the nature of

things is present, we will have right motive, the will to proceed. Having a degree of right motive, we will speak and act rightly towards others, and choose our way of life accordingly. This will cause skilled states of mind to grow and unskilled ones to decline, which is right effort. Examining our states of mind and discovering their voidness is right mindfulness, while right samadhi is concentration on the Deathless element. When this has, so to speak, been brought into focus, enlightenment has dawned. This somehow involves seeing things as they always were.

Zen is the Japanese form assumed by the word *Dhyana*, which can be roughly rendered 'meditation'. The patriarch Hui-neng said 'to meditate means to realize inwardly the Essence of Mind. Dhyana means to be free from attachment to all outer objects, and Samadhi means to attain inner peace.' That is the goal. This goal cannot be reached by reasoning, by pure intellection. What the intellect *can* do, however, is to prove to itself its own inadequacy for this purpose. It is therefore quite possible to push the intellectual path right to the brink, and *then* to take the 'existential leap' into the Unknown. This was the way of the Madhyamika school of Nagarjuna. In this school the logical method was used to prove that *all* logical methods *must* break down, so that reality must therefore be found on the supra-logical plane. This is logic laughing at itself. Kierkegaard saw that ultimate truth involves paradox. For him the need was for a 'leap' from objective thinking into subjective faith, whereby the truth of Christianity might be realized. This is at least analogous to the Zen method. But it does not seem that he actually attained inner peace. Sartre certainly has not done so, and indeed appears to despair of the possibility. He is in fact more than normally aware of the perturbed state of the ordinary mind. This is of course a good starting-point, but a bad place to stick. Again, there seem to be some in the West, perhaps chiefly in America, who mistake the 'immediacy' and 'spontaneity' of Zen for a mere throwing off of inhibitions, doing things on impulse, and blurting out whatever comes into one's head. Unfortunately it is not as easy as that, and one of the greatest mistakes which can be

made about Zen is the idea that it is easy, that compared with, say, Theravada, it is what examiners call 'a soft option'. This is like telling a desperately anxious person that all he has to do is to stop worrying. It may be true, but it is not helpful. For one thing it requires faith—a faith akin to Kierkegaard's, if not even greater, more unconditional. Kierkegaard's faith was in the God of Abraham, fundamentally something external. Perhaps if Kierkegaard had been a Jew instead of a Christian, he would have succeeded, for the Jewish faith teaches that Divine Grace is implanted in man and does not have to be sought without. Jesus too probably meant the same when he said 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you'. In any case the faith that moves the mountain of Zen is faith in that which is *within*, as far as it can be said to be anywhere. Better still, it is just faith in *That*! To start with one's naturally perturbed mind and to have faith that that very mind *is* the Buddha-Nature, perhaps that is the faith required for Zen. A faith so strong indeed that it burns up the five hindrances of sensuality, ill-will, sloth-and-torpor, worry and doubt! Probably only direct contact with a teacher who had attained the goal could arouse such faith in most of us, and this may be the meaning of the 'direct transmission from mind to mind' of which the Zen tradition speaks.

For most people who have not had that inestimable privilege we have to try to build up the necessary potential in other ways. Mindfulness enables us to know the perturbing elements which are present, and to see their essential emptiness. By various exercises such as concentration on breathing we can achieve a degree of calm which, coupled with awareness, leads to that penetrative concentration of which insight is born. This is, of course, quite different from self-hypnosis leading to some vacuous trance-condition, against which Hui-neng constantly warns us:

'When our mind clings to neither good nor evil, we should take care not to let it dwell on Vacuity, or remain in a state of inertia. Rather should we enlarge our study and broaden our knowledge, so that we can know our own mind, understand thoroughly the principles of Buddhism, be congenial to others

in our dealings with them, get rid of the idea of 'self' and that of 'being', and realize that up to the time when we attain Bodhi the 'true nature' (or Essence of Mind) is always immutable.'

Zen is not Existentialism, and Existentialism is not Zen. But if Sartre can teach us much about our normal unenlightened condition, Kierkegaard can give us a valuable clue to the dilemma and the way out. It is all very simple—and for that reason very difficult. A pupil once asked the Master 'What is emancipation?' The Master simply replied 'Who put you under restraint?'

X

The Heresy of Holiness

There is a well-known story of Bodhidharma, the Indian sage who brought the doctrine later known as Zen to China. When the Emperor asked him what his teaching was about, he replied, 'Vast emptiness—with nothing holy in it'. To some people this is a very delightful saying, while to others it is obscure and painful. Perhaps what Bodhidharma was driving at is also implied in the apocryphal saying attributed to Jesus. On being asked by the disciples, 'When wilt thou be manifest to us, when shall we see thee?' he answered, 'When ye shall be stripped and not ashamed'. These seem to me to be two very important sayings, each in the nature of a test. Those who find them 'hard sayings' are probably infected with the heresy of holiness. This heresy perhaps finds its clearest expression in Psalm 18, 20-23:

'The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His ordinances were before me, and His statutes I did not put away from me. I was blameless before Him, and I kept myself from guilt.'

A modern version of the same attitude is the *New Yorker* joke of the monk saying to his companion, 'But damn it, man, I *am* holier than thou!' Another example is the case of a lady who wrote to me saying that she had been told by some occult organization, 'We cannot help you unless your motives are perfectly pure'.

It is very important to be absolutely clear in our own minds about the meaning of these words 'holiness' and 'purity', as

they can lead to a very grave misunderstanding of the Buddhist teaching, and even to quite serious consequences in terms of mental health. I think we must begin by distinguishing sharply between the two terms, and considering them separately. Bodhidharma was quite right when he said that there was nothing holy anywhere. For in the ultimate sense there is no thing or person to *be* holy. There are simply skilled and unskilled states of mind, or that which, having transcended even skilled states, has no name though we label it Nirvana. We may indeed feel awe when we try in vain to contemplate this state, but it is not something to be worshipped as holy—a totally useless proceeding—but to be striven for. And if we haven't got the guts to strive for it, it is better to shut up than to pay lip-service to it with sweet words of holiness.

Of course this does not mean that we should practise a cult of deliberate *un*holiness. That would merely be falling into the opposite error, and Buddhism is the middle way between extremes. Unlike holiness, which on analysis turns out to be just an empty concept with no reference to any reality, the concept of *purity* has some real basis, provided this is properly understood. But purity is misunderstood, and badly misunderstood, as soon as it is associated with the concept of holiness. Unfortunately, for many people the very word 'purity' has acquired emotional connotations which can be so strong as to obscure its real meaning. We must therefore strip it ruthlessly of all such implications and realize that purity in Buddhism means a state comparable to chemical purity. When Hui-neng said 'the essence of mind is intrinsically pure' it is obvious that he meant it is pure in somewhat the same sense as distilled water is pure. The concept of holiness here would be nothing but a defilement, to be speedily got rid of.

What, then, is wrong with holiness? Let us perhaps consider what it feels like to be holy. I must confess to doing some guesswork here, as I haven't had the experience—probably I tend much more strongly towards the opposite heresy of unholiness. But it seems to consist in something like this: feeling holy I have a kind of nice warm sensation inside, a glow of conscious virtue. I devote myself with enthusiasm to good

works and beautiful thoughts and try to prevent gross mundane desires and impulses from arising in my mind. Wherever I go I spread sweetness and light—or at least I think I do—and nothing vulgar is admitted to my consciousness if I can help it. It's all very lovely and I feel terribly terribly spiritual. Actually I may really be able to do some good and perhaps even to impart some of the joyous glow I actually do feel to others. But of course it's difficult to keep it up. Sometimes it's a bit hard to keep horrid vulgar dirty thoughts and unworthy desires from encroaching on the virgin purity of my mind, and sometimes I may even — oh horror ! — find myself inexplicably doing things I am ashamed of. Perhaps when this happens I may even begin to have doubts and wonder what *could* have gone wrong. At such times it all seems rather puzzling and unfair.

Well of course, for the person actually afflicted with such an attitude, it may really be difficult to see just what *is* wrong. But to the others it is probably painfully obvious. I have been trying to cut myself in two and to identify my 'self' with those parts of my make-up which I feel I can approve of, pretending that the rest are not really part of 'me'. In terms of Jungian psychology, I am trying to ignore my shadow, or what in Buddhist terms would be called the unhealthy roots. Now in contrast to the psychology of Jung, Buddhism maintains that, ultimately, it is actually possible to eliminate these roots completely. It is not easy, but it can be done. The price to be paid is, of course, the complete elimination of the ego. The holy heretic has, also of course, simply not paid this price. He has plenty of ego, and he has merely identified this ego with *his idea* of the good, the beautiful and the true. Since his idea of goodness and beauty is inadequate, and of truth even more so, it doesn't work, and he is merely landed in conflict, which in some situations, as we shall see, can even have quite dangerous consequences. In fact the more successful, temporarily, he is in convincing himself of the truth of the 'beautiful' picture he has created, the greater the danger. Buddhism is based on self-knowledge, the heresy of holiness on self-deception.

How, then, does the fantasy of holiness arise? Its primary element is conceit—one of the most dangerous of all mental

factors, and, incidentally, one of the last to be got rid of. This conceit is probably most dangerous of all when it masquerades as humility, as in the holiness condition it tends to do. If you must be conceited, at least don't pretend you aren't. I'm shockingly conceited, and so are you—all of you ! In Christian theology Pride (*superbia*) is the primary sin, which led to the fall of Lucifer, the brightest of the angels. The Greeks too were well aware of that overweening pride they called *hubris*, which laid many a tragic hero low. This subtle factor needs constant watching, and it is quite obviously present the more strongly we are convinced we are free of it. Now conceit is nothing but an *inflation of the ego-concept*, which itself is *based on delusion*. All true Buddhist training therefore tends to a *deflation* of this concept.

The basic unhealthy roots of human nature are Greed, Hatred and Delusion. The basic element of Delusion is nothing other than the ego-concept itself. When this is inflated, the delusion of grandeur arises. When this reaches a pathological stage it is called Paranoia. Combined with craving, conceit produces various other unhealthy states, and this can occur even when combined with *objectively virtuous actions*, or as the result of *actual progress* (perhaps only slight) in meditation. In the Discourse on the Noble Ones' Heritage in the *Gradual Sayings* it is said: 'There is no abolition of conceit in one who takes it thus: "I see thoroughly with insight, I see well with insight"; there is abolition of conceit in one who takes it thus: "Only formations see formations with insight, comprehend, define, discern and delimit them". There is no ending of attachment in one who is pleased with insight thus: "I am able to see with insight"; there is ending of attachment in one who takes it thus: "Only formations see formations with insight, comprehend, define, discern and delimit them".' This is said in respect of quite a high level of meditative achievement. How much more then does it apply to the lower levels.

Of course there are other possible manifestations of the heresy of holiness, as when conceit is mixed with hatred or delusion instead of greed. Holiness grounded in hate may lead to a grim kind of puritanism which, given the opportunity,

may lead to active persecution of others who do not measure up to its narrow and arbitrary standards. The killjoy and the inquisitor belong to this type. Where delusion is the chief root there is often a seeking after psychic powers, which unfortunately may in fact be gained, with probably disastrous consequences. Another sad example of what can arise from such forms of conceit is seen in a letter written, shortly before his death, by a member of a Buddhist group on the continent. Since this letter has been published by the recipient, in a spirit of naïvely misguided admiration, I feel at liberty to quote from it. 'At the X-ray examination the surgeon said "Intestinal obstruction. We must operate at once." . . . I asked the surgeon various questions which astonished him, and told him, "I have not the slightest anxiety, nor am I disturbed". . . .The thought arose in me whether I should not wish to arise direct from this operation into the World of Stream-Winners (a world unknown to the Pali Canon !). I would have had the time to develop this wish with the necessary strength to succeed. But I rejected the idea, saying to myself that I still have the task of leading my wife and two children to the stage of Stream-Entry. I will try to survive all the operations and devote the rest of my life mainly to this task. I am very pleased to tell you that my wife also regularly takes refuge in the Three Jewels and meditates on mettā. Nor am I worried about my daughter, but my son is still rather indifferent.' I can only say that I have more than a sneaking sympathy with that man's son. A more total misconception of what Buddhism is all about, on the part of a professing Buddhist, is difficult to imagine—at any rate if we omit the lunatic fringe.

And now I should like to quote from an article written in *Sangha* by our English bhikkhu, the Ven. Paññāvaddho. He discusses how the holiness conceit may lead to the development of schizophrenia. He deals with the case of a person with strong hate, which of course makes for much unhappiness. He writes: 'This person may then turn to the possibility of relief by attempting to alter his own character to that of, perhaps, saintliness. This would be perfectly all right if the person concerned had any true idea of what was meant by saintliness;

but, of course, this usually involves such ideas as doing "good" acts and thinking "good" thoughts, so that when any "bad" thoughts or acts arise, they are heavily suppressed. . . . Having instilled this idea into the mind, any other ideas which do not accord with the "saint" complex, are suppressed. This means that the potential of "unsaintliness", or the unhealthy kamma, is still there and, in fact, has been strengthened by the volition required to suppress the unacceptable ideas. This continues to go on with the "saint" and "sinner" aspects being driven further apart until the weight of the "sinner" aspect suddenly arises and, like an erupting volcano, pours out the suppressed potential. This temporarily relieves the tension, but as soon as the character swings back to the "saint" condition, self-recrimination sets in, which only feeds the instability of mind and makes the situation worse.' He adds that: 'The mixture required for Schizophrenia is, a character having hate as the main root; conceit, well developed and probably the main aspect of greed; sufficient perplexity to prevent the mind facing the truth of the situation; and the healthy mental factors also fairly well developed to build up the tension and make the person wish to change his character. People who have greed as the chief unhealthy root, are usually too soft and easy-going to fall into Schizophrenia, and those rooted in delusion are usually too dull.'

Now this of course shows a very real and serious danger in the attitude of 'holiness', and the interesting thing is how it perverts the very factors in us which should be healthy, and turns them to destructive uses. Fortunately there is a remedy for such conditions. Jesus said, 'When ye shall be stripped and not ashamed'. True purity of mind, in other words, comes about through the practice of mindfulness. As it says in the *Gradual Sayings* I:

'And of what sort is purity of mind? Herein a monk, if he has some personal sensual desire, is aware: There is in me sensual desire. If there is none he is likewise aware of it. Also he is aware of how the arising of sensual desire not yet arisen comes about, and how it is abandoned when arisen. and how in the future there is no such arising.'

The same is then stated in turn of malevolence, sloth and torpor, excitement and flurry, doubt and wavering. Knowing the conditions which are actually present in our minds, and the roots from which they spring, we can at least hope to be able to deal with them. Without such awareness, we are at their mercy. Even the Ven. Anuruddha was once in a rather bad way, as is also referred to in the *Gradual Sayings*:

'Now the Ven. Anuruddha went to see the Ven. Sariputta . . . "Here in this world, friend Sariputta, with the deva-sight purified and surpassing that of men, I can see the thousandfold world system. Strenuous and unshaken is my energy. Mindfulness is set up in me untroubled. My mind is collected, one-pointed. Yet for all that my mind is not released from the cankers without grasping." "Well, Anuruddha," said Sariputta, "as to your statement about seeing the thousandfold world system, that is just your conceit. As to your statement about being strenuous and unshaken, and so forth, that is just arrogance. As to your statement about the heart not being released from the cankers, that is just worrying. It would indeed be good for the Ven. Anuruddha if he were to abandon these three conditions, if he were not to think about them, but were to focus his mind on the deathless element." '

This comes to much the same thing as was said by the Patriarch Hui-neng:

'If we direct our mind to dwell on purity we are only creating another delusion, the delusion of purity. Since delusion has no abiding place, it is delusive to dwell upon it. Purity has neither shape nor form; but some people go so far as to invent the "Form of Purity", and treat it as a problem for solution. Holding such an opinion, these people are purity-ridden, and their Essence of Mind is thereby obscured.'

The purpose of moral behaviour in Buddhism is quite clearly stated: like other aspects of the practice, it is for gaining release from suffering. Moral behaviour is that which does not inflict suffering, on others or on ourselves, and its further purpose is as an indispensable precondition for the higher training. It is not an end in itself, and least of all is it a means of boosting

the ego. Nor does Buddhism see anything laudable in the voluntary acceptance of unnecessary suffering. Martyrdom is merely the last consolation of a disappointed ego. But the thing to do with the ego is not to boost it and pamper it, but to find it out, expose it for the sham it is, and finally get rid of it. Unless we are quite clear on this question of holiness and purity we shall never succeed in doing this. Alternatively, of course, unless we are clear on the question of the ego we may be trapped into the heresy of holiness only too easily. Now in the quotation from *Gradual Sayings* it was said that a monk should not reflect thus: 'I see well with insight', but thus: 'Only formations see formations with insight'. What does this mean? It means, if you like, that though there is seeing, there is no seer. Since every discoverable part of our body and mind alike is in a continual state of flux, with nothing permanent about it, how can there be a seer? If I have, or am, a permanent self which persists through all these changes, it cannot be found and therefore represents a totally unnecessary hypothesis. Yet the succession of feelings, perceptions and thoughts gives rise to the *concept* of a self as the experiencer of these things. At the moment of profound insight known as "entering the stream", this situation is clearly perceived to be spurious, and from then on there can never be any belief in a self again. Before then we may doubt the self philosophically, but we are not free of its baleful influence. Since all attachments and desires, and aversions, are related to this fictitious ego-concept, and indeed have no real meaning apart from it, there is constant emotional pressure to maintain the security of the concept, and anything which tends to weaken it is bound to meet with strong resistance in one form or another. So compulsive is the power of this concept that even painful feelings, being related to the ego, are preferred to no feelings.

It is therefore against the background of this situation that we must view the whole question of holiness, its cause, its dangers, and its cure. Its cause is not hard to see. We all want to feel real. 'But I *am* real,' cried Alice, and burst into tears. . . . It may be that, wanting desperately to feel real as we do, we experience a good deal of suffering and discover Buddhism as

a possible way out. We start to study and practise a bit of Buddhism, and it begins to work. This means that it attacks the ego. Now we are in a dilemma: another kind of suffering has been set up—fear of losing the ego. Now of course human nature is pretty cunning, and we all have a wonderful capacity for self-deception. So the process of self-deception starts off. The ego adopts various disguises and even tries to pretend it isn't there. Of course there is a further paradox here, because it really isn't there anyway—but as long as the factors which create the concept are there, the concept will be continually reborn. You can try blocking the bath-tap with your finger for as long as you like, but unless you turn the tap off the water will still flow, and it's no use pretending it won't. The ego-concept arises dependent on conditions, just as the water flows out of the tap dependent on conditions. The situation really is that the ego is prepared, in the last resort, to let us put our finger to the tap and pretend to stop the flow, but it is terrified we shall really turn the tap off. The danger of 'holiness' should by now be clear—basically this stems from the fact that it is dishonest, not representing the real situation, and therefore bound eventually to lead to trouble. What about its cure?

The cure for holiness, like for most other things, is mindfulness. By turning the attention inwards and inspecting the situation we can usually depend on finding what is really operating. If we practise mindfulness and clear comprehension of the four things prescribed in the *Satipatthana Sutta*, we can clear up any situation. The four are body, feelings, states of mind and contents of mind. If we get to know, in the words of the sutta, 'the mind with attachment as a mind with attachment, the mind with greed as a mind with greed, the mind with confusion as a mind with confusion', and so on, the kind of self-delusion which breeds conceit and holiness becomes progressively eliminated. The way of mindfulness is the way to enlightenment, in all schools of Buddhism, in Zen as well as in Theravada. Mindfulness means simply becoming aware of the existing situation, whatever it is, without attempting to interfere. This is perhaps also the nearest I can get towards imagining what enlightenment is like. If I can gain a fairly

sharp insight into one single aspect of my own nature, that must be à little like enlightenment. It is gained by non-attachment. When this world can be seen with complete lack of attachment that *is* Nirvana. As long as we can achieve this realization, it matters not at all whether we have approached the goal along the path marked Zen or that labelled Theravada. The two paths differ superficially rather than fundamentally, and each has certain advantages. As I have publicly accepted the label 'Theravada' I would like to draw attention to one enormous advantage of Zen. Zen has, among other things, deliberately and consciously enlisted humour into the service of enlightenment. This is a tremendous help, especially as without it the Zen way would be pretty arduous. Laughter has a liberating effect, and Zen especially teaches one to laugh at oneself. No holiness-complex can possibly stand up to that kind of treatment for long without breaking down. That is why 'holy' people are humourless. Those who have real mental purity, on the other hand, are generally great humorists. In fact we may say that one lesson which all real Buddhist practice should not fail to teach, but which Zen especially points and underlines, is that the joke, in life, is *permanently* on you. In effect it says, 'Look, chum. *You* made your bed, and *you've* got to lie on it. Now laugh that one off!' Humour can give a fine cutting edge to the sword of mindfulness, with which we have to cut through our own ignorance and folly. Quite seriously, I believe this to be one of the major contributions of Zen to Buddhism.

It is just possible that this may give rise to a certain misunderstanding in another direction. Is it not possible, one may say, that laughter may extinguish compassion? But so long as the laughter is confined to oneself, this cannot arise. I have not in fact the right to laugh at *you* and shrug off your troubles by saying '*You* made your bed, you must lie on it!' If there is anything I can do to help you in your troubles, I should do it, and if not I should give such sympathy as I can, and otherwise refrain from interfering. Compassion is an aspect of Buddhism which is strongly stressed in the Mahayana. It is there said to be an aspect of Prajna or Perfect Wisdom. And indeed we

cannot be truly compassionate without wisdom. True compassion sees the nature of the trouble, and sees the remedy, if there is one. Buddhism is the supreme therapy, and he who has cured himself can, alone, fully know and diagnose the ills of others. Compassion which is not based on knowledge is at best a hit-and-miss affair which may even make things worse. Real Compassion is not a sentimental wallowing in feelings of pity, which is fundamentally just another form of ego-boosting: 'See how compassionate I am'. A busy doctor curing disease has no time for such feelings—he just gets on with the job. He can and should show sympathy in most cases—though not all—but still must contrive to be somehow detached. What a skilled doctor can do within the restricted limits of his training, an enlightened person can do perfectly, which is to say within the limits of the possible.

In another way, the whole problem boils down to knowing where one is on the scale, which usually means not overestimating one's own attainment. Here the Theravada teaching is helpful, since it is much more explicit than most schools on the various stages to be gone through as one progresses. That is one good reason why those who practise Zen should make a study of Theravada, just as those who practise the Theravada method should also study a bit of Zen. Each one can benefit from the other, and where there seems to be a conflict, it is probably the student who has misunderstood. This also helps us to avoid becoming Zen-snobs or Theravada fundamentalists, both of which are unhealthy states akin to holiness.

Reality is indescribable, but the poetic hints of Zen, besides its humour, sometimes seem to open a window through which we may be able to glimpse something of its nature, which is after all also our own true nature. But real insight can only come through training, and here the explicit instructions of the Theravada school give us guidance which it would be wise not to ignore. Nirvana, the indescribable reality, says Zen, *is* Samsara, this very world of birth-and-death, with all its suffering. The anxious student of Theravada may say 'Find me a Pali text which declares such a thing!' Instead of getting involved in acrimonious dispute, let us rather consider how the

statement is meant. Samsara, the Theravada school would certainly agree, is the product of ignorance, nothing more. The way of mindfulness, which leads to enlightenment, is to pierce to the bottom of my own ignorance. When this has been fully achieved, enlightenment is won. But this surely means that wisdom is coterminous with ignorance! It is only the *seeing* that is different. Therefore Nirvana and Samsara are indeed one. Nevertheless, the paradoxical fact remains that we are not enlightened—we *haven't* realized Nirvana. And of course we won't succeed by merely pretending we have. We have to go right through—the hard way. It is perfectly true: the essence of mind is intrinsically pure, and it is *only* illusion, attachment and aversion which tarnish it. We need to polish the mirror, vigorously, before it shines out, bright and pure. But the object of the operation is not to see your own silly face in it. To gain grace—we must *lose face*.

XI

The Unity of Buddhism

Sometimes it seems that we are so much aware of the diversity of Buddhism that we do not realize the underlying unity of the various schools. It seems therefore that it might be useful to do something to redress the balance a little and to try to show something of that unity and its characteristic features. Buddhism as a historical phenomenon has been, and is, subject like all things to change and development. But the interesting fact is that when one examines the situation more closely one finds that it is really only the inessentials, the external trappings, that have changed, and the same fundamental message and method can be found in all schools alike, with possibly some insignificant exceptions where there may have been a real deviation. This fact is solid proof of the vitality of that message and method, and at least affords some evidence in favour of its ultimate validity. In what follows I shall try to avoid being too technical and to explain such difficult terms as are unavoidable. Probably most people who know anything of Buddhism are aware that there are various schools, such as the Theravada or Old Wisdom School of Ceylon and South-East Asia, the Mahayana or New Wisdom School in Tibet, China and Japan, with various subdivisions and, arising out of the Mahayana but so distinct as to be virtually an independent branch, the Ch'an or Zen school of China and Japan.

Of Zen let it first be said unequivocally that this is a genuine Buddhist school, and that occasional attempts to pretend that Zen is somehow not Buddhism are completely wrong-headed. A second preliminary point I should like to make is this: it is often thought that there is a great contrast—a great gulf fixed —between Zen and Theravada, that school which claims with

some justification to be at least the nearest to the original teaching of the Buddha. Zen, we are told, is intuitive while Theravada is intellectual, and never the twain shall meet. On the contrary, I hope to show that the link between these two schools is an especially close one, far closer than seems to be believed by the majority of the adherents of either school in East or West. And finally, in contrast to these two schools I shall have to say some things about the Mahayana schools in general which may sound relatively almost disparaging. I hope nobody will misunderstand this. My reasons are mainly practical, as I shall explain. It is anyway a fact that it is Zen and Theravada which attract most people in the West, and I think with good reason. They are the schools which seem to offer a simple and effective, if not necessarily easy, method of practice, and practice is the essence of Buddhism. I say *a* method, because to a large extent the method is one and the same, though some differences do exist. That is why, although labels are really of no importance, I can cheerfully call myself a Zen Buddhist one moment and a Theravada Buddhist the next. Having studied and tried to practise according to both schools for approximately equal periods of time, I have not yet succeeded in discovering any fundamental difference.

There are various approaches to Buddhism, that is to say to Enlightenment, to the End of Suffering. The Pali and Sanskrit word for 'approach' is *upaya*, usually translated as 'skilful means' or 'device' — colloquially 'gimmick'. *Any* gimmick which does the trick is justified. Zen in particular doesn't mind what gimmicks it uses, including physical violence or things as rude as anything in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. But in the classic Zen phrase, these are fingers pointing at the moon, and their aim is always to direct attention to the goal. It takes a master to use such tricks with success. But just as there may be different ways into a house—through the front-door or the back-door, or even through a window or down the chimney—they all lead into the same house. Now in Buddhist psychology people can be classified according to the unhealthy root which is most prominent in them: Greed, Hate or Delusion. We all have all three, but in most of us one predominates strongly.

Perhaps the various approaches are specially suitable for different types. It has occurred to me as at least possible, for instance, that Theravada is the method for Hate types, Mahayana for Greedy types, and Zen for Confused types. This thought may be worth considering. The only trouble is that we don't usually know which type we belong to, so it may not be particularly useful, without skilled advice, in seeking one's appropriate school.

Let me now give you, in the briefest of outlines, my theory of the origins of the Buddhist schools. It may be slightly unorthodox, but I hope it will at least provide food for thought. There is an old Zen saying to the effect that in the beginning mountains are mountains and trees are trees; later, mountains cease to be mountains and trees cease to be trees; and finally, one discovers that after all mountains *are* mountains and trees *are* trees! I would like to suggest that the first stage represents Theravada. Here mountains are mountains. The second stage, in which mountains have ceased to be mountains, is Mahayana, and in Zen, mountains have again become mountains and trees trees. This simile can at least serve to illustrate my thesis of the close relationship between Theravada and Zen.

I cannot go far into the arguments of scholars about the origins of the schools. But the Theravada school is historically the only surviving one of the so-called Hinayana schools, from some branch of which the Mahayana also arose. The Mahayana may have closer affinities with the so-called Sarvastivadin school of Hinayana, which however probably differed from the Theravada only on rather minor points. This school is known to have held a view that 'everything is' (*sarva asti*), which seems to contradict the more usual Buddhist view that 'everything is not', but exactly what the Sarvastivadins meant by this statement is doubtful. But it is important to note that Mahayana polemics against the Hinayana are primarily directed against these Sarvastivadins, and not against the Theravadins who were perhaps scarcely known. In any case the Mahayana claim is far more than it transcends, than that it actually refutes, the older teaching. In fact it clearly developed out of certain aspects of that teaching and cannot be understood

without it. An understanding of Theravada is therefore an essential basis for the understanding of Mahayana. Zen in turn professes a lofty scorn of scriptures, but does use selected ones from the Mahayana schools. An intellectual understanding of historical Zen therefore presupposes some familiarity with general Mahayana teachings. I am going to suggest, however, that an equally valid and more direct approach to Zen is in fact through Theravada.

The basic teachings of Theravada are common to all schools of Buddhism. In a still unpublished account I recently read of a layman's initiation into basic Zen in Japan, the master began by explaining 'There is no self' and went on to stress the importance of morality and discipline in Zen. After this he told his pupil about the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Ten Perfections. These latter are not commonly stressed much in the Theravada teaching, though they are mentioned there: the rest is of course indistinguishable from the most orthodox Theravada, as were the instructions to the pupil to meditate by watching his breathing. The stress laid on morality and discipline here is as characteristic of genuine Zen, as its absence is characteristic of the phonier types of pseudo-Zen found nowadays in the West.

To put the matter bluntly and unequivocally, no one can claim to be a Buddhist, Zen or otherwise, who does not know the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. They are the essence of Buddhism. After all, it is no good having hilarious fun and games with koans if you don't know what they are for. The Buddha made four statements about life: (1) Life is by its very nature unsatisfactory and full of suffering (*dukkha*), (2) The root-cause of this suffering is craving, or attachment (*tanhā*), (3) By the ending of craving suffering ceases, and (4) There is a way which leads to this goal, the Noble Eightfold Path. The steps of this path fall into three divisions: Wisdom, Ethics and Mind-Training. Right Understanding and Right Aims constitute Wisdom. The ethical steps are Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. On the basis of such an ethical code we can undertake the mind-training: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right

Concentration. Through this practice Wisdom is turned into Perfect Wisdom, and Enlightenment is achieved. This is Nirvana, the End of Suffering. There is, then, mundane wisdom at the beginning of the path, and transcendental wisdom at the end of it. Without a basis of elementary or mundane wisdom, we should never even start. To see how we constantly frustrate ourselves by our own desires is the beginning of mundane wisdom. To overcome this situation we must discipline ourselves and learn to control our minds. Mindfulness and Concentration are the two basic forms of Buddhist meditation. Without this meditation there is no Buddhism. Basically, mindfulness is getting to know oneself with ruthless honesty. Concentration leads to absorption or *samadhi*, out of which insight is born. There are various methods of practising both these things, but the practice of watching one's breathing is an effective way used by many, possibly all schools, certainly both Theravada and Zen. Chang Chen-Chi, in his *Practice of Zen*, gives a vivid brief account of this and other methods. Right Understanding involves other things: knowing the Three Marks, (1) All things are continually changing, (2) they are frustrating, and (3) they are void of anything which can rightly be called a 'self'. It also involves some understanding of Dependent Origination or, as I prefer to call it, the Vicious Circle, which shows how through ignorance we are conditioned so that desire and grasping arise, which lead on through ever renewed rebirths always ending in Decay and Death, Sorrow, Lamentation and Despair. This is the key to karma and rebirth, as the Tibetans show graphically in their pictures of the Wheel of Life. The aim of all Buddhism is to learn to break away from this eternal, painful, meaningless cycle. When that happens, Nirvana supervenes, the 'peace that passeth understanding', of which nothing can be said. The ignorance of a former generation of Western scholars thought this was total annihilation. Buddhists know better and call it the Deathless State.

When the Buddha lived and taught, round about 500 B.C., the records tell us that many followed his teaching and gained release from suffering. They realized Nirvana in this very life, and at death were no more reborn. These were known as

Arahants or perfected men. The Buddha declared that his teaching was eternal, since it conformed to the eternal laws of the universe. Yet as a teaching among men it would be subject, like all else, to decay and decline. Its outward forms have indeed changed, sometimes greatly, yet to this day it seems that the essential kernel has survived in at least some measure through all the outward changes. In recent years it has come West in several distinct guises. The Pali Canon of the Theravada school claims to preserve the Buddha's own words. Modern scholarship has made it difficult to maintain a fundamentalist Theravada position; nevertheless it is in the Pali Canon, if anywhere, that what we know of the original teaching is almost certainly enshrined. The rest is all demonstrably, and indeed admittedly, derivative. Now this Canon is clear and explicit in its instructions, and presents a coherent system, and above all, it works. There are unquestionably people alive today who have gone very far indeed through following its instructions. Despite some problems of scholarly detail, therefore, I am convinced that we can accept the authority of the Pali Canon as a firm basis. The fact that after a long and complicated history, during which the early texts have been largely forgotten, Zen has retained a *practice* so close to that of Theravada, which also demonstrably produces results, is astonishing and provides a further guarantee.

Now the Pali Canon, which is extremely voluminous, consists of three parts: the Vinaya or code for monks, the Suttas or Discourses, and the vast compilation of the Abhidhamma, or Further Teaching, most of which has never been translated. The suttas are discourses ascribed to the Buddha and his chief disciples. The bulk of them are almost certainly authentic, though there may be distortions and additions. The Abhidhamma is in parts rather like a vast card-index to the suttas. Yet it contains some very valuable material and a penetrating psychological analysis far surpassing anything the modern West has yet achieved. Since the authors were probably arahants this is not surprising. The basic aim of the Abhidhamma is to demonstrate by all possible modes that all things, including and especially the human mind, are void of selfhood.

A special section of the Sutta division of the Canon consists of the so-called Jatakas or 'birth-stories', which tell of the previous lives of the Buddha, and of the various virtues, such as charity, forbearance, and so on which he practised as a Bodhisattva, that is, as one training to become a Buddha, a fully-enlightened World Teacher. Both the Jatakas and the Abhidhamma are presumably rather later than the bulk of the suttas. I think these, or something very like them, provided the basis for the development of Mahayana.

Let us see what I think happened. There is a criticism of Buddhism frequently heard in the West that it is selfish. The arahant, it is argued, is too much concerned with his personal salvation. He has insufficient compassion for other beings. I believe this criticism to be misguided, as I shall attempt to show. At any rate, similar criticisms were also clearly made in the East. Though compassion is a prominent Buddhist virtue, it was felt that the arahant ideal did not sufficiently stress this element. The aim should be to save all beings from suffering. Why should one not aspire to become a Buddha, dedicated to the saving of humanity, instead of an arahant intent on personal salvation? It appears likely that the Jatakas inspired this new aspiration. It seems that people began to vow to become Bodhisattvas, pledged to countless lives of selfless service. The merit thus acquired might be distributed to others less resolute and help them on the path which they felt unable to tread to the end by their own efforts. This may have been a popular movement away from the 'aristocratic', Aryan movement which continued to train for arahantship. What was certainly a popular movement was the natural response to this of those who were only too pleased to rely on the Bodhisattvas to help them to salvation, instead of depending on their own efforts. This at least was a decisive watering-down of original Buddhism. Personally I think the Bodhisattva ideal as thus envisaged is a slightly romantic notion. The Buddhist solution is individual because this is in the nature of the problem. And the Buddha did *not* claim to save all beings, but only those who followed his teaching, because it is not possible for a man to be freed except by his own efforts. He can of course be greatly

helped, but he must himself put forth Right Effort and tread the path himself.

Nevertheless, when the Mahayana schools emerge into the light of history, they are committed to the Bodhisattva doctrine. Whether it was right or wrong, it was too powerful a force to be resisted. It had therefore to be accepted. Compassion, personified in the ideal figure of the Bodhisattva, became one of the pillars of the Mahayana. The other pillar is Wisdom, and here I think the development started from the Abhidhamma. Perhaps the actual starting-point was in the Abhidharma of the Sarvastivadins, which differed textually from the Pali, though its scope and methods were the same. All the factors of existence, mental and physical, were broken down into minute elements called *dharmas*. The Sarvastivadins were thought, though probably wrongly, to hold that these dharmas had ultimate reality. The Theravadins are still sometimes credited with the same wrong view, but this is definitely incorrect. At any rate the misunderstanding here, if such there was, was all to the good, for it probably added emphasis to the Mahayana insistence on Emptiness (*śunyatā*), which is the usual term instead of the Theravada *anattā* or non-self. The elaboration of the theme of emptiness in all its metaphysical implications fills a great deal of Mahayana literature. Sutras were composed in which the Buddha discussed such matters with various Bodhisattvas, and these were made interesting by the introduction of a splendid mythological background, perhaps imitated from the Kindred Sayings of the Pali Canon, where the Buddha is shown as instructing various heavenly beings. By this brilliant device of 'animated Abhidhamma', set against a sort of glorious Oriental scenic backdrop, the dry-as-dust discourses were enlivened and made more palatable. My impression is that the actual doctrinal advance on the Theravada teaching here is less than is commonly believed.

Now it may be that the Bodhisattva idea was retained by the masters of Mahayana purely as an *upaya* or 'approach' for certain types of minds, in the knowledge that in due course such aspirants would grow out of their naïve misconceptions. It may be that they misconceived the implications of the

Arahant ideal of the older schools. Certainly it is probable that we who are unenlightened cannot resolve the apparent duality implied in these two terms owing to our very ignorance. If the Arahant ideal appears selfish, this cannot be right, for where all idea of self is absent, how can selfishness find a footing? The training of arahantship involves purging the only mind we have of all its defilements until, to use a Mahayana term, the Buddha Nature shines forth. It is no more selfish than the self-concern of a sick man to get better. If the *desire* to become an Arahant is at first a selfish desire, this aspect will be purged away by the training. On the other hand, it is impossible to feel sure that the *desire* to become a Bodhisattva does not in the first instance also spring from tainted roots. The desire to help others is laudable in itself, yet it often arises from a wish to escape from one's own problems instead of facing and solving them. Nor can we ignore the probability that in the urge to 'save all beings' there lurks an element of conceit. This does not mean that *actual* Arahants are selfish or Bodhisattvas conceited. That would be absurd. But we ignorant worldlings are obviously all both. By treading the Path, however we imagine the goal, we will ultimately shed these faults—by shedding *ourselves*. Personally I admit to a bias towards the Arahant idea. This may mean that I am more selfish than conceited. But from this point of view—supported by some historical and practical considerations—I feel that the Bodhisattva ideal is something of a deviation. Yet I also have an impression—or intuition?—that this is only a provisional standpoint and that the whole distinction is only a provisional one. For as, in my self-concerned way, I gain a little more self-knowledge, I find that I seem to understand others better, and see a little into the nature of *their* suffering. My understanding, though still very limited, is not then confined to my own petty self, but has at least *something* of a universal quality. Thus it seems to me that insight and compassion go hand in hand. If so, then at the top there is no difference! In that case we can try to tread the path uncommitted to arbitrary theories, content to have faith that when Wisdom *and* Compassion have been sufficiently developed, we shall *know* how to act.

There can be various signs of decadence in a system such as Buddhism. One is the development of a popular cult. The other is the tendency to philosophize rather than to meditate. It seems to me that both these tendencies are present in the Mahayana. Not that meditation ceased, or that nobody gained Enlightenment. Far from it. The Mahayanists certainly saw with complete clarity that the basis of *dukkha* or suffering lies in dualistic thinking—in the idea of a separate self independent of the rest of the universe, and inevitably at odds with it. They realized that logical thought alone cannot lead to a full understanding of the nature of the situation, and some of them proceeded to prove this—by logical means! This was most brilliantly done by the Madhyamika or 'Middle' school, who showed that conventional logic must inevitably defeat itself. These two features, the Bodhisattva ideal and the Abhidhamma method made vivid, constitute the twin pillars of the whole Mahayana, Compassion and Wisdom. Other Mahayana masters developed psychic powers and evolved methods of meditation by various special techniques known as Tantra.

All of these streams, embedded in a vast mass of original and commentarial literature, found their way to China and later Japan. The Chinese were a people of few words and on the whole they did not take too kindly to Indian metaphysics and philosophical word-spinning. Nevertheless, helped by their native tradition of Tao, they absorbed the essence of the teaching. Somehow, on the basis of some kind of fusion of Mahayana Buddhism with the Chinese mind, Ch'an or Zen arose. It is a mistake to suppose that the Zen masters were ignorant of the scriptures—far from it. Even the reputedly illiterate Hui-neng quotes extensively from them. We must assume his alleged illiteracy to have been symbolic rather than literal. Zen was existential—it realized the urgent necessity of actualizing the experience. Too much insistence on book-learning was recognized as a hindrance. Radical new techniques, some of them perhaps tantric, were introduced to bring about this vital experience of enlightenment, which was after all the sole aim of Buddhism. Though committed technically to the Mahayana doctrines, the Zen masters soft-pedalled the Bodhisattva idea

and in effect went back to that of the arahant, as Suzuki has shown. Hui-neng made his audience take the Bodhisattva's vow to deliver an infinite number of sentient beings, but added significantly: 'of our own mind'. He goes on to define these as 'the delusive mind, the deceitful mind and the evil mind'. These are the beings we have to deliver—in ourselves! He also established that the purpose of *dhyana* (absorbed meditation) is *prajñā* (insight-wisdom). The Zen method of gaining this is strikingly similar to that given in the Samannaphalasutta of the Digha Nikaya of the Pali Canon, though this text is probably unknown in Zen circles. In the course of time Zen developed unorthodox methods, and later still these were standardized and crystallized to some extent. Thus arose the *mondo* or question-and-answer, and the *koan* or 'insoluble riddle'. Though these cause much fun for people in the West who mostly haven't a clue to their real purpose, they are not by any means essential to Zen practice. A special Zen literature developed, full of interesting and often highly amusing stories which are mystifying but somehow seem to be always pointing to something beyond their obvious meaning—or lack of meaning. I shall forbear from quoting any here: many are in any case well-known if little understood.

Chinese Ch'an and its offshoot Japanese Zen are still very much alive. Some Zen monasteries are, I understand, decadent, but the best are undoubtedly very good. The Zen masters of Japan will no doubt have a hearty laugh at a recently published statement by a Western writer that 'one is reluctantly brought to the conclusion that neither Yoga, nor any other Asian form of mysticism, has any significant advice to offer'. The most significant advice a Zen master might give to the author of these words might be to go and boil his head!

The practical side of Zen is magnificent. To what extent it can be undertaken safely in the West without the help of a fully-fledged master and with any hope of success, is perhaps doubtful. Experiments are proceeding. We all have our favourite Zen books, and mine, to date, is Chang Chen-Chi's *The Practice of Zen*, which I found enthralling reading. The study of Zen stories is fascinating and undoubtedly can be a

powerful stimulus when coupled with suitable practice. And yet I must confess, I find Zen theory disappointing. Of course Zen would say it does not set much store by theory. But one must have some. Chang Chen-Chi insists strongly that some *intellectual* understanding is essential for everybody. One may of course seek assistance in the Mahayana sutras. But these are often so far above the heads of uninstructed readers as to be more baffling than illuminating. They are after all the product of a long development, produced by masters skilled in practice and deeply learned. The Pali Canon is, I think, after all the best introduction to Zen or any other form of Buddhism. If it is indeed, as some of it certainly is, the authentic word of the Buddha—why should we be in a hurry to go beyond it—at least till we are sure we have grasped what it has to say? Here we have the basic essentials clearly set out by the greatest master of them all. It is a fact supported by experience that those who have studied Theravada Buddhism find Zen and other branches of Mahayana much less bewildering than those who have not.

In principle, then, it seems to me to matter little whether one calls oneself a Zen Buddhist or a Mahayana Buddhist or a Theravada Buddhist. Historical development has produced the different schools, but enlightenment can certainly be achieved in all of them, which means that they have all preserved the essence of the teaching. Hard-and-fast distinctions are simply delusory. If we stick to the basic teachings of Theravada for our staple diet of theory, and to the practices which it has in common with Zen, it does not matter a row of beans what we call it. Why not call it simply Buddhism and leave it at that? There are various arts in Japan which have developed under the influence of Zen and which are considered to be useful adjuncts to the Zen training, which I am sure they are, though they do not replace study and meditation. They include Judo, swordsmanship and archery, as well as the more peaceful arts of calligraphy, flower-arranging and tea-drinking. In England too we drink a lot of tea, but our method is somewhat different from the Japanese. One version of the English tea-ceremony consists of a slatternly waitress pushing a chipped and lipsticky

cup across a counter at us so that half the contents are spilt. If you can take that and drink it without any feeling of annoyance, then maybe you have got a little bit of Zen! But we should always remember that our background and conditioning are too remote from those in which Zen grew up and still flourishes to enable us to plunge into it unprepared without making the most laughable mistakes. That is why it was possible for Beat Zen and suchlike idiocies to grow up, if grow up is the right term.

Appendix

The Buddha's dates are approximately 560-480 B.C. Without entering into controversy, it may be stated that the original teaching probably approximated to what is today known as the Theravada. Another early school, now extinct but once influential, was that of the Sarvastivadins. Outside of the Theravada countries, ordinations are according to the Sarvastivadin ritual. The later schools called collectively Mahayana or 'Great Vehicle' developed many new ideas, including that of the Bodhisattva pledged to deliver all beings. Out of the Mahayana grew the school known in China as Ch'an and in Japan as Zen.

The basic teaching common to all schools is summed up in the Four Noble Truths:

(1) All forms of existence are unsatisfactory and subject to Suffering (*dukkha*).

(2) Suffering is produced by Craving (*tanhā*).

(3) The extinction of Craving leads to the extinction of Suffering, which is Nirvana.

(4) The way leading to the extinction of Suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path:

(I) Right View or Right Understanding (especially of the Four Truths, of Karma, Dependent Origination and the Three Marks).

(II) Right Motive or State of Mind.

(III) Right Speech.

(IV) Right Action.

(V) Right Livelihood.

(VI) Right Effort.

(VII) Right Mindfulness (clear awareness).

(VIII) Right Concentration (Samādhi).

For further details the various handbooks should be consulted, e.g. Nyanatiloka, *The Word of the Buddha*, or Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*.

APPENDIX

Words in the following glossary are Pali unless otherwise stated (P=Pali, S=Sanskrit, C=Chinese, J=Japanese). I have not consistently employed all the diacritic marks usual in transcribing Sanskrit and Pali words. Vowels should be pronounced as in Italian, consonants approximately as in English, but note that

(i) *c* always = English *ch*,

(ii) aspirated consonants are like the simple consonant with following *h* (thus *th* as in *boathook*, *ph* as in *uphill*),

(iii) *y* is always a consonant as in *yes*. Thus *dhyana* = *dh-yana* two syllables).

(iv) *ś* in Sanskrit is approximately *sh*; *ñ* as in Spanish.

AMATAM (P), AMRTAM (S). The Deathless State. A synonym for Nirvana.

ANAPANA SATI. Mindfulness as to Breathing. A method widely practised in Zen as well as Theravada. Cf. Marie B. Byles, *Journey into Burmese Silence*, George Allen & Unwin, 1962, or Nyanatiloka, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*.

ARAHA(N)T. One who has gained Enlightenment.

AVIDYĀ (S), AVIJJĀ (P). Ignorance. The basic 'unwitting' which causes all our troubles.

BODHISATTVA (S). A future Buddha. According to the Mahayana, one who has pledged himself to save all beings before entering Nirvana; as such contrasted with the Arahant.

BRAHMA VIHARAS. The four 'Divine Abidings'. Meditations on *Metta*, *Karuna*, Sympathetic Joy (*Mudita*) and Equanimity (*Upekkha*).

CETANĀ. Volition. A volitional act productive of Karma.

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION (*Paticca Samuppāda*). The doctrine that all physical and psychical phenomena are conditioned. The twelve steps of the formula are represented graphically by the Tibetans as the 'Wheel of Life', perhaps better called 'The Vicious Circle'. The formula is:

1. *Ignorance* conditions the *sankhāras* or karmic predispositions.
2. The *Sankhāras* condition Consciousness (at conception or rebirth).
3. *Consciousness* conditions Mind-and-Body.

4. *Mind-and-Body* condition the Six Sense-Bases (Mind as the sixth).
5. The *Six Sense-Bases* condition sensory *Contact* (of eye and sight-object, etc.).
6. *Contact* conditions Feeling.
7. *Feeling* conditions Craving (*tanhā*).
8. *Craving* conditions Clinging (*upadana*).
9. *Clinging* conditions Becoming (continuation of the life-process).
10. *Becoming* conditions Birth (in next existence).
11. *Birth* conditions
12. *Decay and Death.*

A full explanation cannot be given here, but steps 1 and 2 refer to a past life and steps 11 and 12 to a future life (if craving has not been cut off in the meantime). The formula is perhaps easier to understand if taken in reverse order: if there were no *Birth* there would be no *Decay and Death*; if there were no *Becoming* there would be no *Birth*, and so on right back to *Ignorance*.

In a wider sense Dependent Origination also means that all things are conditioned and interdependent: 'No thing springs from a single cause'.

DHAMMA (P), DHARMA (S). A word of many meanings. Among these are:

(1) The Truth, the Law, the true nature of things. The Buddha's Teaching.

(2) Anything at all, conditioned or unconditioned (including, therefore, Nirvana).

(3) A 'Psychic Atom': one of the ultimate, irreducible factors of existence, from the interplay of which the phenomenal world comes into being. Though not capable of further analysis, these *dharmas* are 'void of self-nature'.

DUKKHA. Suffering or Unsatisfactoriness. Though an all-inclusive term it implies primarily mental suffering in Buddhism. The inherently frustrating nature of all transient phenomena, and therefore of everything we ordinarily know. The aim of the Buddhist training is the elimination of *dukkha*. Nirvana is the state free from *dukkha*.

INDRIYAS. The Controlling Faculties: in particular Faith,

Energy, Mindfulness, Concentration and Wisdom. These are the positive factors to be developed in meditation. Faith should be balanced with Wisdom, and Energy with Concentration, but Mindfulness should be developed to the extreme.

JHANA (P), DHYANA (S). Mental absorption. The four lower ('form') *jhanas* and the four higher ('formless') *jhanas* are stages of *samādhi*. From *Dhyana* the Chinese *Ch'an* (Japanese *Zen*) is derived, but here with a specialized meaning.

KARMA (S), KAMMA (P). Action. Any volitional act which will bring results in the future; cf. *cetanā*. More loosely, 'cause and effect'. One's own mental conditioning. Strictly speaking, the results of karma are called *vipaka*. Those in whom craving has ceased produce no further karma.

KARUNA. Compassion. The second of the *Brahma Viharas*. One of the twin pillars of the Mahayana, the other being *Prajñā* (Wisdom).

KOAN (J), KUNG-AN (C). Lit. 'public document'. A kind of riddle, logically insoluble, set as a 'problem' for meditation in (chiefly) the Rinzai school of Zen.

KUSALA. Skilful or wholesome. A term applied to karma productive of beneficial results. The opposite is *akusala*, 'unskilful'.

MĀDHYAMIKA. The 'Middle Way' school of Mahayana Buddhism, which seeks to show the untenability of all logical propositions. Anticipating and transcending such modern schools of thought as Logical Positivism and the like, it shows how all statements about the Absolute are ultimately wrong. Sometimes misunderstood as annihilationism, it in fact represents the 'middle way' between Being and Non-Being. The Void (*Sunyatā*) is no mere negation, but the only Reality. *Samsara* (our ordinary world of *birth-and-death*) is simply Nirvana wrongly viewed. Cf. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, George Allen & Unwin, 1955.

MAHĀYĀNA. The 'Great Vehicle'. Collective name for the 'New Wisdom Schools' of Buddhism, based essentially on the Madhyamika philosophy, and emphasizing the Bodhisattva ideal.

METTĀ. Friendliness or Loving-kindness. The first of the *Brahma*

Viharas. The Buddhist expression of goodwill towards all beings.

MONDO (J). 'Question and Answer'. A special kind of Zen 'conversation' similar in purpose to the Koan.

NIRVANA (S), NIBBANA (P). Literally 'blowing out' of the three 'fires' of Greed, Hate and Delusion. The goal of Buddhism. Ultimate bliss: a state free from *dukkha*, to be gained in this life by the appropriate training. It is perceived when all notion of 'self' has been completely dissolved.

PALI. The language of the Theravada scriptures. A language akin to, but probably not identical with that actually spoken by the Buddha. In form much like a simplified Sanskrit.

PALI CANON. The Scriptures of the Theravada school. In three sections known as *Pitakas* (baskets):

1. *Vinaya Pitaka*. The code of discipline for monks.
2. *Sutta Pitaka*. Discourses attributed to the Buddha and his chief disciples.
3. *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The 'further teaching'; largely codified from the *Sutta Pitaka*, an analysis of all mental states into elaborate categories.

The *Vinaya* and *Sutta Pitakas* have been translated almost complete into English, but a large part of the *Abhidhamma* has not. The *Sutta Pitaka* is of the most general interest. It consists of five sections:

1. *Digha Nikaya* (transl. as *Dialogues of the Buddha*).
2. *Majjhima Nikaya* (*Middle Length Sayings*).
3. *Samyutta Nikaya* (*Kindred Sayings*).
4. *Anguttara Nikaya* (*Gradual Sayings*—in numerical groups).
5. *Khuddhaka Nikaya* (*Minor Anthologies*, including the *Dhammapada*).

The standard English editions are by the Pali Text Society. Selections in *Some Sayings of the Buddha* (*World's Classics* 483). For the *Abhidhamma* there is Nyanatiloka, *Guide through the Abhidhamma Pitaka* and the valuable *Abhidhamma Studies* by Nyanaponika Thera.

PAÑÑĀ (P), PRAJÑĀ (S). Wisdom. In the highest sense = Enlightenment. Wisdom develops through the practice of the Eightfold Path. It denotes 'seeing things as they are', and is the

opposite of *Avijja*, the blinding ignorance to which we are normally subject.

PETA (P), PRETA (S). A 'hungry ghost'. One of the unfortunate states into which unwholesome karma can cause one to be reborn temporarily.

PITI. Joyful interest. A stage in the meditative process, often accompanied by peculiar physical sensations. It follows *vicara* (q.v.).

PRAJÑĀPĀRAMITĀ. Transcendent Wisdom. The name of a class of Mahayana sutras based on the Madhyamika philosophy. Cf. E. Conze, The *Prajñaparamita Literature.*

SAMADHI. Concentration or Absorption. The eighth step of the Eightfold Path. A high degree of meditative attainment, but not the goal.

SANGHA. The Order of Buddhist monks.

SANKHARA. Anything compounded or conditioned. In particular the 'traits of character' forming the pattern of one's mental life, and conditioning the type of karma one produces.

SARVASTIVADINS. An early school of Buddhists who declared that 'all *dharmas* exist' in past, present and future. Cf. T. Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism.*

SATIPATTHANA. Mindfulness. The *S. Sutta* is No 10 of the *Middle Length Sayings.*

SATORI (J), WU (C). The Zen term for Enlightenment, but also used for lesser flashes of insight on various levels.

SKANDHAS (S), KHANDHAS (P). The five 'Aggregates' making up the human personality: Body, Feelings, Perceptions, *Sankharas* and Consciousness. Neither within nor outside of these is anything in the nature of a 'self' to be found.

ŚUNYATĀ (S). The Void. The usual Mahayana term instead of *Anattā.* All conditioned things are 'void' of self-nature, but Ultimate Reality is also 'Void', because inaccessible to logical thought. The Void is the only Reality from which all conditioned things proceed.

SUTTA (P), SUTRA (S). A discourse ascribed to the Buddha or one of his chief disciples. The only Mahayana *sutra* not formally ascribed to the Buddha is the *Platform Sutra of Hui-neng,* a famous Zen classic.

TANHĀ (P), TRSHNĀ (S). Craving (lit. 'thirst'). The intense attachment to sense-objects which produces *dukkha* and leads to the continued round of birth-and-death. Cf. Schopenhauer's will-to-live.

THERAVADA. The only surviving 'Old Wisdom School' of Buddhism, the scriptures of which form the Pali Canon. Intensely conservative and probably the nearest thing we know to 'primitive Buddhism'. In any case a knowledge of the Theravada system is essential to an understanding of the teachings of the Mahayana schools. Found today in Ceylon and South-East Asia.

THREE MARKS. All conditioned things are characterized by three features:

1. *Anicca*, impermanence.
2. *Dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness.
3. *Anattā*, non-self or insubstantiality.

The mark of *anattā* also applies to Nirvana or Ultimate Reality ('the Void' in Mahayana terminology). To gain Enlightenment it is necessary to have a profound awareness (not merely intellectual understanding) of the Three Marks.

UPAYA. A device or expedient for teaching. A provisional statement, in relative terms, of the truth. A skilled teacher is resourceful in inventing such devices.

VICARA. Sustained application to the object of concentration. The second stage in the development of *jhana*.

VIPAKA. The result of karma. The conditions we find as a result of our past acts, though not usually recognised as such. Our reaction to such conditions is fresh karma.

VIPASSANĀ. Insight. A profound awareness (short or full Enlightenment) of the nature of things resulting from meditation. As knowledge by experience, as opposed to mere intellectual understanding, it is what is commonly called 'intuition'.

VITAKKA. Initial application to the object of concentration. The first stage in the development of *jhana*.

VIVEKA. Detachment. Seeing without one's ego being involved.

UDDHACCA-KUKKUCCA. Worry and flurry. One of the hindrances to meditation. Restlessness, turmoil and anxiety.

ZEN (J), CH'AN (C). Technically known as the Buddha Heart

School. Said to have been founded in China by Bodhidharma about 520. Chief tenets: a special transmission from mind to mind, seeing into one's own nature. In the Rinzai sub-sect the Koan is extensively used. The name is derived from S. *Dhyana*, but later the emphasis was switched to *Prajñā*. Numerous works in English, notably by D. T. Suzuki, Alan Watts, Christmas Humphreys. For a Chinese view cf. Chang Chen-Chi, *The Practice of Zen*.

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